

*The
Proofs
of
Bahá'u'lláh's
Mission*

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*Selections from the writings of
Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá,
Shoghi Effendi, and the
Universal House of Justice*



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THE PROOFS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S MISSION

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God is My witness, O people! I am come to you with a Revelation from the lord, your God, the lord of your fathers of old. look not, O people, at the things ye possess. Look rather at the things God hath sent down unto you. This, surely, will be better for you than the whole of creation, could ye but perceive it. Repeat the gaze, O people, and consider the testimony of God and His proof which are in your possession, and compare them unto the Revelation sent down unto you in this Day, that the truth, the infallible truth, may be indubitably manifested unto you. ... What would it profit man, if he were to fail to recognize the Revelation of God? Nothing whatever. To this Mine own Self, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the All-Wise, will testify.

If thou deniest Me, by what proof canst thou vindicate the truth of that which thou dost possess?

— *Bahá'u'lláh*

CONTENTS

Preface	vii
The Life and Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh	xi
The Search for Truth	1
The Independent Investigation of Truth	2
The Condition of the Seeker of Truth	5
Seeking Knowledge of God	11
The Mission of God's Manifestations	15
The Divine Intermediary Between God and Humanity	16
All the Manifestations of God Proclaim the Same Faith	22
A New Age Has Begun	30
Bahá'u'lláh is the Manifestation of God for this Age	34
The Mission of Bahá'u'lláh	38
The Proofs of God's Manifestations	43
The Necessity of Recognizing the Manifestation of God	45
People in Every Age Have Opposed the Manifestation	54
Understanding Why People Reject God's Manifestation	58
The True Standard for Judgement	70
The Proofs of All the Manifestations Are the Same	74
Miracles Are Not a Sufficient Proof	79
The First Proof: His Person	83
The Person of the Manifestation	84
Bahá'u'lláh's Character and Personality	89
His Knowledge is Innate	92
He Endured Suffering and Hardship	95
He Upheld His Claim in the Face of All Opposition	100

The Second Proof: His Word	107
The Word of God as a Proof	108
Bahá'u'lláh Revealed the Word of God	112
His Revelation Establishes Unity	117
His Revelation Raised Illumined Individuals	120
He Foretold Things to Come	125
The Third Proof: His Teachings	131
The Manifestation of God is a Divine Educator	132
Bahá'u'lláh is the Divine Educator for this Age	137
His Teachings are Suited to the Needs of this Age	142
His Teachings Provide the Basis for Individual Transformation	151
His Teachings Provide the Basis for a New Civilization	156
The Consequences of Rejecting Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings	162
Signs of the Fulfillment of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings	169
The Fourth Proof:	
Interpretation of the Holy Books	179
Understanding the Meaning of the Holy Books	180
The Meaning of "Return"	187
The Promise of the Day of God	195
Bahá'u'lláh Fulfills the Promises of the Holy Books	199
The Establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth	204
The Divine Summons	211
The Proofs Have Been Made Manifest	212
Reunion With God	216
Bahá'u'lláh's Call to Humanity	219
References	224
Bibliography	233

Preface

Across the world, billions of people hold the belief that God has spoken to humanity through a human intermediary, with teachings that should be the basis for individual and social life. Perhaps the greatest challenge that could be presented to a human being then, is a claim by another individual that He, too, was sent by God with a Message that can heal the ills afflicting society.

Such was the call of Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the Bahá'í faith, Who lived in Persia in the nineteenth century. In an age of great messianic expectation, He inaugurated a new religion that now claims the allegiance of over five million people residing in every country. Indeed, after only a century and a half the Bahá'í faith has become the second most widely spread religion in the world after Christianity.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote over a hundred volumes that address the spiritual, moral, and social issues facing humanity. The purpose of this book is to provide, in one volume, selections from the Bahá'í writings that explain the proofs and evidences of Bahá'u'lláh's claim to be the Intermediary between God and humanity for the current age.

While those who believe that God has spoken to humanity may disagree on Who that Intermediary might be—recognizing only the Founder of their own and perhaps one or two preceding religions—the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh emphatically assert that the Founders of

the world religions are all agents of one civilizing process, revealers of one, eternal “Faith of God.” These souls, called *Manifestations* of God by Bahá’u’lláh, have a twofold station. As representatives of the same Divine Being, their spirit is one. Yet, each comes to earth as a distinct individual, at a specific time, and with a prescribed mission. Their purpose is to educate and guide humanity, to stimulate the progress of social development, and to prepare the world for the coming of the next Divine Messenger. Bahá’u’lláh describes their collective mission by using the analogy of teachers in a school, who teach children at their current level of understanding, building on what was taught before and preparing them for the next grade to come.

Bahá’u’lláh states that He is the Manifestation of God for this Day. He has come with the teachings of God to resolve the current problems of humanity and establish the unity of the entire human race.

Because all of the Manifestations of God are one, the evidences and proofs of the mission of one are the same for all the others. Thus, Bahá’u’lláh establishes the truth of His own mission by presenting the same proofs that validate the truth of the mission of Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, and the founders of the other world religions.

For ease of reference, this book is divided into eight parts, each divided further into sections. Within each section, one or more extracts from the Bahá’í writings are shared to illustrate the topic. The passages are numbered; references are provided in the back of the book to enable the reader to find the extract in the original text. A brief commentary introduces each part of the book.

The style of the passages presented vary. This is because the book draws from five sources—the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the writings of the Báb, His forerunner, and the writings of the successive authorities of the Bahá'í Faith: 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of justice. While the styles differ, the sources represent an accurate reflection of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings on the topics presented.

This introductory volume can only provide a sampling of the many passages from the Bahá'í writings that address this important theme. The objective is to present the breath of the issues related to Bahá'u'lláh's claim. The interested reader is encouraged to investigate further—through a more detailed study of the Bahá'í writings, its history, or the experience of its world community—any premise raised in the text that he or she feels is not adequately resolved. Since most individuals accept, without in-depth investigation, the truth of the religion into which they were born, readers considering the arguments in this book might also benefit by studying the way in which the Founder of their religion was challenged by those around Him when presenting His own claim. Indeed, what is the evidence that supports the validity of that claim today?

Bahá'u'lláh is not simply a prophet for the Bahá'ís; He claims to be the divine Intermediary between God and all humanity for the next one thousand years. The teachings He brought from God are the source of human individual and social development and resolve the problems facing the world in this age. It is incumbent upon every fair-minded individual, therefore, to reflect upon the evidence

supporting so great a claim—that God’s healing remedy may be applied, that human suffering might soon be alleviated, and that the long-awaited Kingdom of God may, through the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, now be established on earth.

The Life and Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh^[1]

As the new millennium approaches, the crucial need of the human race is to find a unifying vision of the nature of man and society. For the past century humanity's response to this impulse has driven a succession of ideological upheavals that have convulsed our world and that appear now to have exhausted themselves. The passion invested in the struggle, despite its disheartening results, testifies to the depth of the need. For, without a common conviction about the course and direction of human history, it is inconceivable that foundations can be laid for a global society to which the mass of humankind can commit themselves.

Such a vision unfolds in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the nineteenth-century prophetic figure whose growing influence is the most remarkable development of contemporary religious history. Born in Persia, November 12, 1817, Bahá'u'lláh began at age twenty-seven an undertaking that has gradually captured the imagination and loyalty of several million people from virtually every race, culture, class, and nation on earth. The phenomenon is one that

1 This section is an abridgment of the statement, *Bahá'u'lláh*, produced by the Bahá'í World Centre.

has no reference points in the contemporary world, but is associated rather with climactic changes of direction in the collective past of the human race. For Bahá'u'lláh claimed to be no less than the Messenger of God to the age of human maturity, the Bearer of a Divine Revelation that fulfills the promises made in earlier religions, and that will generate the spiritual nerves and sinews for the unification of the peoples of the world.

If they were to do nothing else, the effects which Bahá'u'lláh's life and writings have already had should command the earnest attention of anyone who believes that human nature is fundamentally spiritual and that the coming organization of our planet must be informed by this aspect of reality. The phenomenon lies open to general scrutiny. For the first time in history humanity has available a detailed and verifiable record of the birth of an independent religious system and of the life of its Founder. Equally accessible is the record of the response that the new faith has evoked, through the emergence of a global community which can already justly claim to represent a microcosm of the human race.

Bahá'u'lláh's writings cover an enormous range of subjects from social issues such as racial integration, the equality of the sexes, and disarmament, to those questions that affect the innermost life of the human soul. The original texts, many of them in His own hand, and others dictated and affirmed by their author, have been meticulously preserved. For several decades, a systematic program of translation and publication has made selections from Bahá'u'lláh's writings accessible to people everywhere, in over eight hundred languages.

The Birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission

Bahá'u'lláh's mission began in a subterranean dungeon in Tīhrán (Teheran) in August 1852. Born into a noble family that could trace its ancestry back to the great dynasties of Persia's imperial past, He declined the ministerial career open to Him in government, and chose instead to devote His energies to a range of philanthropies which had, by the early 1840s, earned Him widespread renown as "Father of the Poor." This privileged existence swiftly eroded after 1844, when Bahá'u'lláh became one of the leading advocates of a movement that was to change the course of His country's history.

The early nineteenth century was a period of messianic expectations in many lands. Deeply disturbed by the implications of scientific inquiry and industrialization, earnest believers from many religious backgrounds turned to the scriptures of their faiths for an understanding of the accelerating processes of change. In Europe and America groups like the Templars and the Millerites believed they had found in the Christian scriptures evidence supporting their conviction that history had ended and the return of Jesus Christ was at hand. A markedly similar ferment developed in the Middle East around the belief that the fulfillment of various prophecies in the Qur'an and Islamic Traditions was imminent. By far the most dramatic of these millennialist movements had been the one in Persia, which had focused on the person and teachings of a young merchant from the city of Shíráz, known to history as the Báb. For nine years, from 1844 to 1853, Persians of all classes had been caught up in a storm of hope and excitement

aroused by the Báb's announcement that the Day of God was at hand and that He was Himself the One promised in Islamic scripture. Humanity stood, He said, on the threshold of an era that would witness the restructuring of all aspects of life. New fields of learning, as yet inconceivable, would permit even the children of the new age to surpass the most erudite of contemporary scholars. The human race was called by God to embrace these changes through undertaking a transformation of its moral and spiritual life. His own mission was to prepare humanity for the event that lay at the hearts of these developments, the coming of that universal Messenger of God, "He Whom God will make manifest," awaited by the followers of all religions.

The claim had evoked violent hostility from the Muslim clergy, who taught that the process of Divine Revelation had ended with Muḥammad, and that any assertion to the contrary represented apostasy, punishable by death. Their denunciation of the Báb had soon enlisted the support of the Persian authorities. Thousands of followers of the new faith had perished in a horrific series of massacres throughout the country, and the Báb had been publicly executed on July 9, 1850. In an age of growing Western involvement in the Orient, these events had aroused interest and compassion in influential European circles. The nobility of the Báb's life and teachings, the heroism of His followers, and the hope for fundamental reform that they had kindled in a darkened land had exerted a powerful attraction for personalities ranging from Ernest Renan and Leo Tolstoy to Sarah Bernhardt and the Comte de Gobineau.

Because of His prominence in the defense of the Báb's cause, Bahá'u'lláh was arrested and brought, in chains and on foot, to Tīhrán. Protected in some measure by an impressive personal reputation and the social position of His family, as well as by protests which the Bábí pogroms had evoked from Western embassies, He was not sentenced to death, as influential figures at the royal court were urging. Instead, He was cast into the notorious Síyáh-Chál, the "Black Pit," a deep, vermin-infested dungeon which had been created in one of the city's abandoned reservoirs. No charges were laid but He and some thirty companions were, without appeal, kept immured in the darkness and filth of this pit, surrounded by hardened criminals, many of them under sentence of death. Around Bahá'u'lláh's neck was clamped a heavy chain, so notorious in penal circles as to have been given its own name. When He did not quickly perish, as had been expected, an attempt was made to poison Him. The marks of the chain were to remain on His body for the rest of His life.

It was in these circumstances, and faced with the prospect of His own imminent death, that Bahá'u'lláh received the first intimation of His mission. The experience of Divine Revelation, touched on only at secondhand in surviving accounts of the lives of the Buddha, Moses, Jesus Christ, and Muḥammad, is described graphically in Bahá'u'lláh's own words: "During the days I lay in the prison of Tīhrán, 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.”

Bahá'u'lláh's Exile

Eventually, still without trial or recourse, Bahá'u'lláh was released from prison and immediately banished from His native land to the neighboring territory of 'Iraq, then under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. This expulsion was the beginning of forty years of exile, imprisonment, and bitter persecution.

By 1863, Bahá'u'lláh concluded that the time had come to begin acquainting some of those around Him with the mission which had been entrusted to Him in the darkness of the Síyáh-Chál. This decision coincided with a new stage in the campaign of opposition to His work, which had been relentlessly pursued by the Shi'ah Muslim clergy and representatives of the Persian government. Fearing that the acclaim which Bahá'u'lláh was beginning to enjoy among influential Persian visitors to Iraq would reignite popular enthusiasm in Persia, the Sháh's government pressed the Ottoman authorities to remove Him far from the borders and into the interior of the empire. Eventually, the Turkish government acceded to these pressures and invited the exile, as its guest, to make His residence in the capital, Constantinople. Despite the courteous terms in which the message was couched, the intention was clearly to require compliance.

In late April 1863, Bahá'u'lláh, on the eve of His departure for Constantinople, called together individuals among His companions, in a garden to which was later given the

name Ridván ("Paradise"), and confided the central fact of His mission. Over the next four years, although no open announcement was considered timely, the hearers gradually shared with trusted friends the news that the Báb's promises had been fulfilled and that the "Day of God" had dawned.

The conditions surrounding Bahá'u'lláh's departure from Baghdád provided a dramatic demonstration of the potency of these principles. In only a few years, a band of foreign exiles whose arrival in the area had aroused suspicion and aversion on the part of their neighbors had become one of the most respected and influential segments of the population. They supported themselves through flourishing businesses; as a group they were admired for their generosity and the integrity of their conduct; the lurid allegations of religious fanaticism and violence, sedulously spread by Persian consular officials and members of the Shi'ah Muslim clergy, had ceased to have an effect on the public mind. By May 3, 1863, when He rode out of Baghdád, accompanied by His family and those of His companions and servants who had been chosen to accompany Him to Constantinople, Bahá'u'lláh had become an immensely popular and cherished figure. In the days immediately preceding the leave-taking a stream of notables, including the Governor of the province himself, came to the garden where He had temporarily taken up residence, many of them from great distances, in order to pay their respects. Eyewitnesses to the departure have described in moving terms the acclaim that greeted Him, the tears of many of the onlookers, and the concern of the Ottoman authorities and civil officials to do their visitor honor.

Soon after the exiles' arrival in Constantinople, it became apparent that the honors showered upon Bahá'u'lláh during His journey from Baghdád had represented only a brief interlude. The Ottoman authorities decision to move Him and His companions to the capital of the empire rather than to some remote province deepened the alarm among the representatives of the Persian government. Fearing that the developments in Baghdád would be repeated, the Persian ambassador pressed insistently for the dispatch of the exiles to some more distant part of the empire.

The place chosen for this final banishment was the grim fortress-town of 'Akka (Acre) on the coast of the Holy Land. Notorious throughout the empire for the foulness of its climate and the prevalence of many diseases, 'Akka was a penal colony used by the Ottoman State for the incarceration of dangerous criminals who could be expected not to survive too long their imprisonment there. Arriving in August 1868, Bahá'u'lláh, the members of His family, and a company of His followers who had been exiled with Him were to experience two years of suffering and abuse within the fortress itself, and then be confined under house arrest to a nearby building owned by a local merchant. For a long time the exiles were shunned by the superstitious local populace who had been warned in public sermons against "the God of the Persians," who was depicted as an enemy of public order and the purveyor of blasphemous and immoral ideas. Several members of the small group of exiles died of the privations and other conditions to which they were subjected.

Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings for Humanity

Central to Bahá'u'lláh's writings is an exposition of the great themes which have preoccupied religious thinkers throughout the ages: God, the role of Revelation in history, the relationship of the world's religious systems to one another, the meaning of faith, and the basis of moral authority in the organization of human society. Passages in these texts speak intimately of His own spiritual experience, of His response to the Divine Summons, and of the dialogue with the "Spirit of God" which lay at the heart of His mission. Religious history has never before offered the inquirer the opportunity for so candid an encounter with the phenomenon of Divine Revelation.

In June 1877, Bahá'u'lláh at last emerged from the strict confinement of the prison-city of 'Akka, and moved with His family to "Mazra'ih," a small estate a few miles north of the city. After a brief two-year stay at Mazra'ih, Bahá'u'lláh moved to "Bahjí," a large mansion surrounded by gardens, which His son 'Abdu'l-Bahá had rented for Him and the members of His extended family. The remaining twelve years of His life were devoted to His writings on a wide range of spiritual and social issues, and to receiving a stream of Bahá'í pilgrims who made their way, with great difficulty, from Persia and other lands.

Throughout the Near and Middle East the nucleus of a community life was beginning to take shape among those who had accepted His message. For its guidance, Bahá'u'lláh had revealed a system of laws and institutions designed to give practical effect to the principles in His writings. Authority was vested in councils democratically

elected by the whole community, provisions were made to exclude the possibility of a clerical elite arising, and principles of consultation and group decision making were established.

At the heart of this system was what Bahá'u'lláh termed a new Covenant between God and humankind. The distinguishing feature of humanity's coming of age is that, for the first time in history, the entire human race is consciously involved, however dimly, in the awareness of its own oneness and of the earth as a single homeland. This awakening opens the way to a new relationship between God and humankind. As the peoples of the world embrace the spiritual authority inherent in the guidance of the Revelation of God for this age, Bahá'u'lláh said, they will find in themselves a moral empowerment which human effort alone has proven incapable of generating. "A new race of men" will emerge as the result of this relationship, and the work of building a global civilization will begin. The mission of the Bahá'í community is to demonstrate the efficacy of this Covenant in healing the ills that divide the human race.

Bahá'u'lláh died at Bahjí on May 29, 1892, in His seventy-fifth year. At the time of His passing, the cause entrusted to Him forty years earlier in the darkness of Tíhrán's Black Pit was poised to break free of the Islamic lands where it had taken shape, and to establish itself first across America and Europe and then throughout the world. In doing so, it would itself become a vindication of the promise of the new Covenant between God and humankind. For alone of all the world's independent religions,

the Bahá'í faith and its community of believers were to pass successfully through the critical first century of their existence with their unity firmly intact, undamaged by the age-old blight of schism and faction. Their experience offers compelling evidence for Bahá'u'lláh's assurance that the human race, in all its diversity, can learn to live and work as one people, in a common global homeland.

PART I

The Search for Truth

The failure of human beings to independently investigate truth is foremost among those ills that currently ravage society. For without such an impartial investigation, it is impossible for civilization to progress beyond the prejudices and passions that contribute to the disintegration of the social order.

While the importance of finding truth might be selfevident in the arena of science—or even in daily political, economic, and social interactions—the need for an impartial investigation of truth is particularly vital when considering the issue of religion. This is because religion provides the foundation for individual and collective development. Yet, for the most part, children unquestioningly embrace the religion of their parents. The proliferation of various sects and denominations, as well as the record of harm inflicted in the name of God, are sufficient to demonstrate that this blind acceptance leads to the dissemination of superstition along with any truth passed on in the name of religion.

The impartial investigation of truth depends upon the effort and pure qualities of the seeker. Only in this way can the individual attain to the true knowledge of God.

1

The Independent Investigation of Truth

The best beloved of all things in My sight is justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes. 1.1

Ye observe how the world is divided against itself, how many a land is red with blood and its very dust is caked with human gore. The fires of conflict have blazed so high that never in early times, not in the Middle Ages, not in recent centuries hath there ever been such a hideous war, a war that is even as millstones, taking for grain the skulls of men. Nay, even worse, for flourishing countries have been reduced to rubble, cities have been levelled with the ground, and many a once prosperous village hath been turned into ruin. Fathers have lost their sons, and sons their fathers. Mothers have wept away their hearts over dead children. Children have been orphaned, women left to wander, vagrants without a home. From every aspect, humankind hath sunken low. loud are the piercing cries of fatherless children; loud the mothers' anguished voices, reaching to the skies.

And the breeding-ground of all these tragedies is prejudice: prejudice of race and nation, of religion, of political opinion; and the root cause of prejudice is blind imitation of the past—imitation in religion, in racial attitudes, in national bias, in politics. So long as this aping of the past persisteth, just so long will the foundations of the social order be blown to the four winds, just so long will humanity be continually exposed to direst peril. 1.2

The first teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the duty incumbent upon all to investigate reality. What does it mean to investigate reality? It means that man must forget all hearsay and examine truth himself, for he does not know whether statements he hears are in accordance with reality or not. Wherever he finds truth or reality, he must hold to it, forsaking, discarding all else; for outside of reality there is naught but superstition and imagination. 1.3

Religion must conform to science and reason; otherwise, it is superstition. God has created man in order that he may perceive the verity of existence and endowed him with mind or reason to discover truth. Therefore, scientific knowledge and religious belief must be conformable to the analysis of this divine faculty in man. 1.4

Furthermore, know ye that God has created in man the power of reason, whereby man is enabled to investigate reality. God has not intended man to imitate blindly his fathers and ancestors. He has endowed him with mind, or the faculty of reasoning, by the exercise of which he is to investigate and discover the truth, and that which he finds real and true he must accept. He must not be an imitator or

blind follower of any soul. He must not rely implicitly upon the opinion of any man without investigation; nay, each soul must seek intelligently and independently, arriving at a real conclusion and bound only by that reality. The greatest cause of bereavement and disheartening in the world of humanity is ignorance based upon blind imitation. It is due to this that wars and battles prevail; from this cause hatred and animosity arise continually among mankind. ...

Therefore, depend upon your own reason and judgment and adhere to the outcome of your own investigation; otherwise, you will be utterly submerged in the sea of ignorance and deprived of all the bounties of God. ... We must not be content with simply following a certain course because we find our fathers pursued that course. It is the duty of everyone to investigate reality, and investigation of reality by another will not do for us. If all in the world were rich and one man poor, of what use are these riches to that man? If all the world be virtuous and a man steeped in vice, what good results are forthcoming from him? If all the world be resplendent and a man blind, where are his benefits? If all the world be in plenty and a man hungry, what sustenance does he derive? Therefore, every man must be an investigator for himself. Ideas and beliefs left by his fathers and ancestors as a heritage will not suffice, for adherence to these are but imitations, and imitations have ever been a cause of disappointment and misguidance. Be investigators of reality that you may attain the verity of truth and life.

1.5

2

The Condition of the Seeker of Truth

Behold how the sun shines upon all creation, but only surfaces that are pure and polished can reflect its glory and light. The darkened soul has no portion of the revelation of the glorious effulgence of reality; and the soil of self, unable to take advantage of that light, does not produce growth. The eyes of the blind cannot behold the rays of the sun; only pure eyes with sound and perfect sight can receive them. Green and living trees can absorb the bounty of the sun; dead roots and withered branches are destroyed by it. ... Therefore, we must ever strive for capacity and seek readiness. As long as we lack susceptibility, the beauties and bounties of God cannot penetrate. Christ spoke a parable in which He said His words were like the seeds of the sower; some fall upon stony ground, some upon sterile soil, some are choked by thorns and thistles, but some fall upon the ready, receptive and fertile ground of human hearts. When seeds are cast upon sterile soil, no growth follows. Those cast upon stony ground will grow a short time, but lacking deep roots will wither away. Thorns and thistles destroy others completely, but the seed cast in good ground brings forth harvest and fruitage. 2.1

In short, it behoves us all to be lovers of truth. Let us seek her in every season and in every country, being careful never to attach ourselves to personalities. Let us see the light wherever it shines, and may we be enabled to recognize the light of truth no matter where it may arise. Let us

inhale the perfume of the rose from the midst of thorns which surround it; let us drink the running water from every pure spring. 2.2

We should, therefore, detach ourselves from the external forms and practices of religion. We must realize that these forms and practices, however beautiful, are but garments clothing the warm heart and the living limbs of Divine truth. We must abandon the prejudices of tradition if we would succeed in finding the truth at the core of all religions. ...

If five people meet together to seek for truth, they must begin by cutting themselves free from all their own special conditions and renouncing all preconceived ideas. In order to find truth we must give up our prejudices, our own small trivial notions; an open receptive mind is essential. If our chalice is full of self, there is no room in it for the water of life. The fact that we imagine ourselves to be right and everybody else wrong is the greatest of all obstacles in the path towards unity, and unity is necessary if we would reach truth, for truth is one.

Therefore it is imperative that we should renounce our own particular prejudices and superstitions if we earnestly desire to seek the truth. Unless we make a distinction in our minds between dogma, superstition and prejudice on the one hand, and truth on the other, we cannot succeed. When we are in earnest in our search for anything we look for it everywhere. This principle we must carry out in our search for truth.

Science must be accepted. No one truth can contradict another truth. Light is good in whatsoever lamp it is

burning! A rose is beautiful in whatsoever garden it may bloom! A star has the same radiance if it shines from the East or from the West. Be free from prejudice, so will you love the Sun of Truth from whatsoever point in the horizon it may arise! ... This is what is meant by the "Search after Truth."

It means, also, that we must be willing to clear away all that we have previously learned, all that would clog our steps on the way to truth; we must not shrink if necessary from beginning our education all over again. We must not allow our love for any one religion or any one personality to so blind our eyes that we become fettered by superstition! When we are freed from all these bonds, seeking with liberated minds, then shall we be able to arrive at our goal.

2.3

The state in which one should be to seriously search for the truth is the condition of the thirsty, burning soul desiring the water of life, of the fish struggling to reach the sea, of the sufferer seeking for the true doctor to obtain the divine cure, of the lost caravan endeavoring to find the right road, of the lost and wandering ship striving to reach the shore of salvation.

2.4

But, O my brother, when a true seeker determines to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy. He must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of

the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay, from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments. He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth. Even as thou dost witness in this day how most of the people, because of such love and hate, are bereft of the immortal Face, have strayed far from the Embodiments of the divine mysteries, and, shepherd less, are roaming through the wilderness of oblivion and error. That seeker must at all times put his trust in God, must renounce the peoples of the earth, detach himself from the world of dust, and cleave unto Him Who is the Lord of Lords. He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence, and refrain from idle talk. For the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endure a century.

That seeker should also regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul. He should be content with little, and be freed from all inordinate desire. He should treasure the companionship of those that have renounced the world, and regard avoidance of boastful and worldly people a precious benefit. At the dawn of everyday he should commune with God, and with all his soul persevere in the quest of his

Beloved. He should consume every wayward thought with the flame of His loving mention, and, with the swiftness of lightning, pass by all else save Him. He should succor the dispossessed, and never withhold his favor from the destitute. He should show kindness to animals, how much more unto his fellow-man, to him who is endowed with the power of utterance. He should not hesitate to offer up his life for his Beloved, nor allow the censure of the people to turn him away from the Truth. He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfill. With all his heart should the seeker avoid fellowship with evil doers, and pray for the remission of their sins. He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. How often hath a sinner, at the hour of death, attained to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the celestial Concourse. And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire. Our purpose in revealing these convincing and weighty utterances is to impress upon the seeker that he should regard all else beside God as transient, and count all things save Him, Who is the Object of all adoration, as utter nothingness. These are among the attributes of the exalted, and constitute the hall-mark of the spiritually-minded. ...

When the detached wayfarer and sincere seeker hath fulfilled these essential conditions, then and only then can he be called a true seeker. Whensoever he hath fulfilled the conditions implied in the verse: "Whoso maketh efforts for Us," he shall enjoy the blessing conferred by the words: "In Our ways shall We assuredly guide him."

Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker's heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being. At that hour will the mystic Herald, bearing the joyful tidings of the Spirit, shine forth from the City of God resplendent as the morn, and, through the trumpet-blast of knowledge, will awaken the heart, the soul, and the spirit from the slumber of negligence. Then will the manifold favors and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul. Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of divine Revelation and the evidences of an everlasting manifestation. ...

When the channel of the human soul is cleansed of all worldly and impeding attachments, it will unfailingly perceive the breath of the Beloved across immeasurable distances, and will, led by its perfume, attain and enter the City of Certitude.

2.5

3

Seeking Knowledge of God

How shall we know God? We know Him by His attributes. We know Him by His signs. We know Him by His names. We know not what the reality of the sun is, but we know the sun by the ray, by the heat, by its efficacy and penetration. We recognize the sun by its bounty and effulgence, but as to what constitutes the reality of the solar energy, that is unknowable to us. The attributes characterizing the sun, however, are knowable. If we wish to come in touch with the reality of Divinity, we do so by recognizing its phenomena, its attributes and traces, which are widespread in the universe. All things in the world of phenomena are expressive of that one reality. Its lights are shining, its heat is manifest, its power is expressive, and its education, or training, resplendent everywhere. What proof could there be greater than that of its functioning or its attributes which are manifest? This plant or this flower we ask: Does it exist or not? Can this plant-this flower comprehend the reality of man? Can it put itself in touch with the human existence or reality? Evidently not. It is entirely out of tune with the human kingdom; it is not possessed of the capacity, although both man and the flower have been created. But the difference in the degrees between the vegetable and the human is ever a hindrance, an obstacle. Inasmuch as the degree of capacity appertaining to this plant is inferior to our human kingdom, it is entirely impossible for the plant, which is inferior, to comprehend man, who is superior,

although both are accidental, or created. We are created; likewise, this plant is existent, this mineral exists, this wood exists. But can this flooring here comprehend those who are standing upon it? It cannot, because sight and hearing are properties or faculties belonging to a higher kingdom than the mineral. The difference between these two kingdoms, the vast difference between the mineral kingdom and the human kingdom, is a hindrance to comprehension.

How, then, can the reality of man, which is accidental, ever comprehend the Reality of God, which is eternal? It is self-evidently an impossibility. Hence we can observe the traces and attributes of God, which are resplendent in all phenomena and shining as the sun at midday, and know surely that these emanate from an infinite source. We know that they come from a source which is infinite indeed. 3.1

In the beginning of his human life man was embryonic in the world of the matrix. There he received capacity and endowment for the reality of human existence. The forces and powers necessary for this world were bestowed upon him in that limited condition. In this world he needed eyes; he received them potentially in the other. He needed ears; he obtained them there in readiness and preparation for his new existence. The powers requisite in this world were conferred upon him in the world of the matrix so that when he entered this realm of real existence he not only possessed all necessary functions and powers but found provision for his material sustenance awaiting him.

Therefore, in this world he must prepare himself for the life beyond. That which he needs in the world of the Kingdom must be obtained here. Just as he prepared himself

in the world of the matrix by acquiring forces necessary in this sphere of existence, so, likewise, the indispensable forces of the divine existence must be potentially attained in this world.

What is he in need of in the Kingdom which transcends the life and limitation of this mortal sphere? That world beyond is a world of sanctity and radiance; therefore, it is necessary that in this world he should acquire these divine attributes. In that world there is need of spirituality, faith, assurance, the knowledge and love of God. These he must attain in this world so that after his ascension from the earthly to the heavenly Kingdom he shall find all that is needful in that eternal life ready for him.

That divine world is manifestly a world of lights; therefore, man has need of illumination here. That is a world of love; the love of God is essential. It is a world of perfections; virtues, or perfections, must be acquired. That world is vivified by the breaths of the Holy Spirit; in this world we must seek them. That is the Kingdom of everlasting life; it must be attained during this vanishing existence. ...

Is it not astonishing that although man has been created for the knowledge and love of God, for the virtues of the human world, for spirituality, heavenly illumination and eternal life, nevertheless, he continues ignorant and negligent of all this? Consider how he seeks knowledge of everything except knowledge of God. ... Day and night you must strive that you may attain to the significances of the heavenly Kingdom, perceive the signs of Divinity, acquire certainty of knowledge and realize that this world has a Creator, a Vivifier, a Provider, an Architect—knowing

this through proofs and evidences and not through susceptibilities, nay, rather, through decisive arguments and real vision—that is to say, visualizing it as clearly as the outer eye beholds the sun. In this way may you behold the presence of God and attain to the knowledge of the holy, divine Manifestations.

You must come into the knowledge of the divine Manifestations and Their teachings through proofs and evidences. You must unseal the mysteries of the supreme Kingdom and become capable of discovering the inner realities of things. Then shall you be the manifestations of the mercy of God and true believers, firm and steadfast in the Cause of God.

3.2

PART II

The Mission of God's Manifestations

The Bahá'í teachings indicate that the knowledge of God is achieved through knowledge of His Divine Messengers—the Manifestations of God who are the founders of the world's religions. These include such individuals as Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, Muḥammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh states that all of these luminous souls are intermediaries between God and humanity, that they all proclaim the same Faith, that they all work for the education of humanity, and that they all are agents of one civilizing process. Each of these beings, Bahá'u'lláh explains, shares the same spiritual reality. Viewed from this perspective they may be considered one and the same person. Yet, each has been given a specific mission to perform that is suited to the capacity and needs of the people of the age in which He appears. In this regard, a distinction can be seen, and one of these individuals may appear to be greater than the others.

Bahá'u'lláh claims that He is the Manifestation of God for this Day—a new age in the unfoldment of human destiny. His mission is to establish the unity of all the people of the earth, thereby ushering in the age of maturity of the human race.

4

The Divine Intermediary Between God and Humanity

The door of the knowledge of the Ancient Being hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, closed in the face of men. No man's understanding shall ever gain access unto His holy court. As a token of His mercy, however, and as a proof of His loving-kindness, He hath manifested unto men the Day Stars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity, and hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self. Whoso recognizeth them hath recognized God. Whoso hearkeneth to their call, hath hearkened to the Voice of God, and whoso testifieth to the truth of their Revelation, hath testified to the truth of God Himself. Whoso turneth away from them, hath turned away from God, and whoso disbelieveth in them, hath disbelieved in God. Everyone of them is the Way of God that connecteth this world with the realms above, and the Standard of His Truth unto every one in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. They are the Manifestations of God amidst men, the evidences of His Truth, and the signs of His glory. 4.1

The Bearers of the Trust of God are made manifest unto the peoples of the earth as the Exponents of a new Cause and the Revealers of a new Message. Inasmuch as these Birds of the celestial Throne 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. For they all drink from the one Cup of the love of God, and all partake of the fruit of the same Tree of Oneness. These Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity. In this respect, if thou callest them all by one name, and dost ascribe to them the same attributes, thou hast not erred from the truth. ...

The other station is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation, and to the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfills a definite mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation. ... It is because of this difference in their station and mission that the words and utterances flowing from these Well Springs of Divine knowledge appear to diverge and differ. Otherwise, in the eyes of them that are initiated into the mysteries of Divine wisdom, all their utterances are, in reality, but the expressions of one Truth. As most of the people have failed to appreciate those stations to which We have referred, they, therefore, feel perplexed and dismayed at the varying utterances pronounced by Manifestations that are essentially one and the same. ...

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: "I am God," He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His names and His

attributes, are made manifest in the world. ... And were any of them to voice the utterance, "I am the Messenger of God," He, also, speaketh the truth, the indubitable truth. ... Viewed in this light, they are all but Messengers of that ideal King, that unchangeable Essence. ... And were they to say, "We are the Servants of God," this also is a manifest and indisputable fact. For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain. Thus in moments in which these Essences of Being were deep immersed beneath the oceans of ancient and everlasting holiness, or when they soared to the loftiest summits of Divine mysteries, they claimed their utterances to be the Voice of Divinity, the Call of God Himself. 4.2

When we consider existence, we see that the mineral, vegetable, animal and human worlds are all in need of an educator.

If the earth is not cultivated, it becomes a jungle where useless weeds grow; but if a cultivator comes and tills the ground, it produces crops which nourish living creatures. It is evident, therefore, that the soil needs the cultivation of the farmer. Consider the trees: if they remain without a cultivator, they will be fruitless, and without fruit they are useless; but if they receive the care of a gardener, these same barren trees become fruitful, and through cultivation, fertilization and engrafting the trees which had bitter fruits yield sweet fruits. These are rational proofs; in this age the peoples of the world need the arguments of reason.

The same is true with respect to animals: notice that when the animal is trained it becomes domestic, and also

that man, if he is left without education, becomes bestial, and, moreover, if left under the rule of nature, becomes lower than an animal, whereas if he is educated he becomes an angel. ...

Now reflect that it is education that brings the East and the West under the authority of man; it is education that produces wonderful industries; it is education that spreads great sciences and arts; it is education that makes manifest new discoveries and institutions. If there were no educator, there would be no such things as comforts, civilization or humanity. If a man be left alone in a wilderness where he sees none of his own kind, he will undoubtedly become a mere brute; it is then clear that an educator is needed.

But education is of three kinds: material, human and spiritual. Material education is concerned with the progress and development of the body, through gaining its sustenance, its material comfort and ease. This education is common to animals and man.

Human education signifies civilization and progress that is to say, government, administration, charitable works, trades, arts and handicrafts, sciences, great inventions and discoveries and elaborate institutions, which are the activities essential to man as distinguished from the animal.

Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true education; for in this state man becomes the focus of divine blessings, the manifestation of the words, "Let Us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness." This is the goal of the world of humanity.

Now we need an educator who will be at the same time a material, human and spiritual educator, and whose authority will be effective in all conditions. So if anyone should say, "I possess perfect comprehension and intelligence, and I have no need of such an educator," he would be denying that which is clear and evident, as though a child should say, "I have no need of education; I will act according to my reason and intelligence, and so I shall attain the perfections of existence"; or as though the blind should say, "I am in no need of sight, because many other blind people exist without difficulty." ...

It is clear that human power is not able to fill such a great office, and that reason alone could not undertake the responsibility of so great a mission. How can one solitary person without help and without support lay the foundations of such a noble construction? He must depend on the help of the spiritual and divine power to be able to undertake this mission. One Holy Soul gives life to the world of humanity, changes the aspect of the terrestrial globe, causes intelligence to progress, vivifies souls, lays the basis of a new life, establishes new foundations, organizes the world, brings nations and religions under the shadow of one standard, delivers man from the world of imperfections and vices, and inspires him with the desire and need of natural and acquired perfections. Certainly nothing short of a divine power could accomplish so great a work. We ought to consider this with justice, for this is the office of justice.

A Cause which all the governments and peoples of the world, with all their powers and armies, cannot promulgate and spread, one Holy Soul can promote without help or

support! Can this be done by human power? No, in the name of God! ...

Therefore, the Universal Educator must be at the same time a physical, human and spiritual educator; and He must possess a supernatural power, so that He may hold the position of a divine teacher. 4.3

The measure of the revelation of the Prophets of God in this world, however, must differ. Each and every one of them hath been the Bearer of a distinct Message, and hath been commissioned to reveal Himself through specific acts. It is for this reason that they appear to vary in their greatness. Their Revelation may be likened unto the light of the moon that sheddeth its radiance upon the earth. Though every time it appeareth, it revealeth a fresh measure of its brightness, yet its inherent splendor can never diminish, nor can its light suffer extinction.

It is clear and evident, therefore, that any apparent variation in the intensity of their light is not inherent in the light itself, but should rather be attributed to the varying receptivity of an ever-changing world. Every Prophet Whom the Almighty and Peerless Creator hath purposed to send to the peoples of the earth hath been entrusted with a Message, and charged to act in a manner that would best meet the requirements of the age in which He appeared. God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established. 4.4

5

All the Manifestations of God Proclaim the Same Faith

Reality or truth is one, yet there are many religious beliefs, denominations, creeds and differing opinions in the world today. Why should these differences exist? Because they do not investigate and examine the fundamental unity, which is one and unchangeable. If they seek reality itself, they will agree and be united; for reality is indivisible and not multiple. It is evident, therefore, that there is nothing of greater importance to mankind than the investigation of truth. 5.1

The holy Manifestations Who have been the Sources or Founders of the various religious systems were united and agreed in purpose and teaching. Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muḥammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are one in spirit and reality. Moreover, each Prophet fulfilled the promise of the One Who came before Him and, likewise, Each announced the One Who would follow. Consider how Abraham foretold the coming of Moses, and Moses embodied the Abrahamic statement. Moses prophesied the Messianic cycle, and Christ fulfilled the law of Moses. It is evident, therefore, that the Holy Manifestations Who founded the religious systems are united and agreed; there is no differentiation possible in Their mission and teachings; all are reflectors of reality, and all are promulgators of the religion of God.

The divine religion is reality, and reality is not multiple; it is one. Therefore, the foundations of the religious systems are one because all proceed from the indivisible reality; but the followers of these systems have disagreed; discord, strife and warfare have arisen among them, for they have forsaken the foundation and held to that which is but imitation and semblance. Inasmuch as imitations differ, enmity and dissension have resulted. For example, Jesus Christ—may my spirit be a sacrifice unto Him!—laid the foundation of eternal reality, but after His departure many sects and divisions appeared in Christianity. What was the cause of this? There is no doubt that they originated in dogmatic imitations, for the foundations of Christ were reality itself, in which no divergence exists. When imitations appeared, sects and denominations were formed.

If Christians of all denominations and divisions should investigate reality, the foundations of Christ will unite them. No enmity or hatred will remain, for they will all be under the one guidance of reality itself. Likewise, in the wider field if all the existing religious systems will turn away from ancestral imitations and investigate reality, seeking the real meanings of the Holy Books, they will unite and agree upon the same foundation, reality itself. As long as they follow counterfeit doctrines or imitations instead of reality, animosity and discord will exist and increase. 5.2

These holy Manifestations have been as the coming of springtime in the world. Although the springtime of this year is designated by another name according to the changing calendar, yet as regards its life and quickening it is the same as the springtime of last year. For each spring is the

time of a new creation, the effects, bestowals, perfections and life-giving forces of which are the same as those of the former vernal seasons, although the names are many and various. This is 1912, last year was 1911 and so on, but in fundamental reality no difference is apparent. The sun is one, but the dawning points of the sun are numerous and changing. The ocean is one body of water, but different parts of it have particular designations—Atlantic, Pacific, Mediterranean, Antarctic, etc. If we consider the names, there is differentiation; but the water, the ocean itself, is one reality.

Likewise, the divine religions of the holy Manifestations of God are in reality one, though in name and nomenclature they differ. Man must be a lover of the light, no matter from what dayspring it may appear. He must be a lover of the rose, no matter in what soil it may be growing. He must be a seeker of the truth, no matter from what source it come. Attachment to the lantern is not loving the light. ... The word of truth, no matter which tongue utters it, must be sanctioned. ... If we investigate the religions to discover the principles underlying their foundations, we will find they agree; for the fundamental reality of them is one and not multiple. By this means the religionists of the world will reach their point of unity and reconciliation. They will ascertain the truth that the purpose of religion is the acquisition of praiseworthy virtues, the betterment of morals, the spiritual development of mankind, the real life and divine bestowals. All the Prophets have been the promoters of these principles; none of Them has been the promoter of corruption, vice or evil. They have summoned mankind to all good. They have united people in the love of

God, invited them to the religions of the unity of mankind and exhorted them to amity and agreement. 5.3

... I wish you to be fair and reasonable in your judgment, setting aside all religious prejudices. We should earnestly seek and thoroughly investigate realities, recognizing that the purpose of the religion of God is the education of humanity and the unity and fellowship of mankind. Furthermore, we will establish the point that the foundations of the religions of God are one foundation. This foundation is not multiple, for it is reality itself. Reality does not admit of multiplicity, although each of the divine religions is separable into two divisions. One concerns the world of morality and the ethical training of human nature. It is directed to the advancement of the world of humanity in general; it reveals and inculcates the knowledge of God and makes possible the discovery of the verities of life. This is ideal and spiritual teaching, the essential quality of divine religion, and not subject to change or transformation. It is the one foundation of all the religions of God. Therefore, the religions are essentially one and the same.

The second classification or division comprises social laws and regulations applicable to human conduct. This is not the essential spiritual quality of religion. It is subject to change and transformation according to the exigencies and requirements of time and place. ... For example, it was lawful in Abraham's cycle to eat the flesh of the camel, but during the time of Jacob this was prohibited. Such changes and transformations in the teaching of religion are applicable to the ordinary conditions of life, but they are not important or essential. Moses lived in

the wilderness of Sinai where crime necessitated direct punishment. There were no penitentiaries or penalties of imprisonment. Therefore, according to the exigency of the time and place it was a law of God that an eye should be given for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It would not be practicable to enforce this law at the present time—for instance, to blind a man who accidentally blinded you. ... The exigencies of the time of Moses justified cutting off a man's hand for theft, but such a penalty is not allowable now. Time changes conditions, and laws change to suit conditions. We must remember that these changing laws are not the essentials; they are the accidentals of religion. The essential ordinances established by a Manifestation of God are spiritual; they concern moralities, the ethical development of man and faith in God. They are ideal and necessarily permanent—expressions of the one foundation and not amenable to change or transformation. Therefore, the fundamental basis of the revealed religion of God is immutable, unchanging throughout the centuries, not subject to the varying conditions of the human world. ...

I wish you to be reasonable and just in your consideration of the following statements:

At the time when the Israelites had been dispersed by the power of the Roman Empire and the national life of the Hebrew people had been effaced by their conquerors—when the law of God had seemingly passed from them and the foundation of the religion of God was apparently destroyed—Jesus Christ appeared. When He arose among the Jews, the first thing He did was to proclaim the validity of the Manifestation of Moses. He declared that the Torah,

the Old Testament, was the Book of God and that all the prophets of Israel were valid and true. He extolled the mission of Moses, and through His proclamation the name of Moses was spread throughout the world. Through Christianity the greatness of Moses became known among all nations. It is a fact that before the appearance of Christ, the name of Moses had not been heard in Persia. In India they had no knowledge of Judaism, and it was only through the Christianizing of Europe that the teachings of the Old Testament became spread in that region. Throughout Europe there was not a copy of the Old Testament. But consider this carefully and judge it aright: Through the instrumentality of Christ, through the translation of the New Testament, the little volume of the Gospel, the Old Testament, the Torah, has been translated into six hundred languages and spread everywhere in the world. The names of the Hebrew prophets became household words among the nations. ...

From another horizon we see Muḥammad, the Prophet of Arabia, appearing. You may not know that the first address of Muḥammad to His tribe was the statement, "Verily, Moses was a Prophet of God, and the Torah is a Book of God. Verily, O ye people, ye must believe in the Torah, in Moses and the prophets. Ye must accept all the prophets of Israel as valid." In the Qur'an, the Muslim Bible, there are seven statements or repetitions of the Mosaic narrative, and in all the historic accounts Moses is praised. Muḥammad announces that Moses was the greatest Prophet of God, that God guided Him in the wilderness of Sinai, that through the light of guidance Moses hearkened to the summons of God, that He was the Interlocutor of God and the bearer

of the tablet of the Ten Commandments, that all the contemporary nations of the world arose against Him and that eventually Moses conquered them, for falsehood and error are ever overcome by truth. There are many other instances of Muḥammad's confirmation of Moses. I am mentioning but a few. ...

Today the Christians are believers in Moses, accept Him as a Prophet of God and praise Him most highly. The Muslims are, likewise, believers in Moses, accept the validity of His Prophethood, at the same time believing in Christ. Could it be said that the acceptance of Moses by the Christians and Muslims has been harmful and detrimental to those people? On the contrary, it has been beneficial to them, proving that they have been fair-minded and just. ...

Why not put an end to this religious strife and establish a bond of connection between the hearts of men? Why should not the followers of one religion praise the Founder or Teacher of another? ... Inasmuch as our God is one God and the Creator of all mankind, He provides for and protects all. We acknowledge Him as a God of kindness, justice and mercy. Why then should we, His children and followers, war and fight, bringing sorrow and grief into the hearts of each other? God is loving and merciful. His intention in religion has ever been the bond of unity and affinity between humankind. 5.4

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?'" ...

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.

6

A New Age Has Begun

Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One. The Call of God hath been raised, and the light of His countenance hath been lifted up upon men. It behoveth every man to blot out the trace of every idle word from the tablet of his heart, and to gaze, with an open and unbiased mind, on the signs of His Revelation, the proofs of His Mission, and the tokens of His glory. 6.1

When the holy, divine Manifestations or Prophets appear in the world, a cycle of radiance, an age of mercy dawns. Everything is renewed. Minds, hearts and all human forces are reformed, perfections are quickened, sciences, discoveries and investigations are stimulated afresh, and everything appertaining to the virtues of the human world is revitalized. Consider this present century of radiance, and compare it with the past centuries. What a vast difference exists between them! How minds have developed! How perceptions have deepened! How discoveries have increased! What great projects have been accomplished! How many realities have become manifest! How many mysteries of creation have been probed and penetrated! What is the cause of this? It is through the efficacy of the spiritual springtime in which we are living. Day by day the world attains a new bounty. In this radiant century neither the old customs nor the old sciences, crafts, laws and regulations have remained. The old political principles

are undergoing change, and a new body politic is in process of formation. Nevertheless, some whose thoughts are congealed and whose souls are bereft of the light of the Sun of Reality seek to arrest this development in the world of the minds of men. Is this possible? ...

The purpose is that the world of existence is dependent for its progress upon reformation; otherwise, it will be as dead. Consider: If a new springtime failed to appear, what would be the effect upon this globe, the earth? Undoubtedly it would become desolate and life extinct. The earth has need of an annual coming of spring. It is necessary that a new bounty should be forthcoming. If it comes not, life would be effaced. In the same way the world of spirit needs new life, the world of mind necessitates new animus and development, the world of souls a new bounty, the world of morality a reformation, the world of divine effulgence ever new bestowals. Were it not for this replenishment, the life of the world would become effaced and extinguished. If this room is not ventilated and the air freshened, respiration will cease after a length of time. If no rain falls, all life organisms will perish. If new light does not come, the darkness of death will envelop the earth. If a new springtime does not arrive, life upon this globe will be obliterated.

Therefore, thoughts must be lofty and ideals uplifted in order that the world of humanity may become assisted in new conditions of reform. When this reformation affects every degree, then will come the very Day of the Lord of which all the prophets have spoken. That is the Day wherein the whole world will be regenerated. Consider:

Are the laws of past ages applicable to present human conditions? Evidently they are not. For example, the laws of former centuries sanctioned despotic forms of government. Are the laws of despotic control fitted for present day conditions? How could they be applied to solve the questions surrounding modern nations? Similarly, we ask: Would the status of ancient thought, the crudeness of arts and crafts, the insufficiency of scientific attainment serve us today? Would the agricultural methods of the ancients suffice in the twentieth century? Transportation in the former ages was restricted to conveyance by animals. How would it provide for human needs today? If modes of transportation had not been reformed, the teeming millions now upon the earth would die of starvation. Without the railway and the fast-going steamship, the world of the present day would be as dead. How could great cities such as New York and London subsist if dependent upon ancient means of conveyance? It is also true of other things which have been reformed in proportion to the needs of the present time. Had they not been reformed, man could not find subsistence.

If these material tendencies are in such need of reformation, how much greater the need in the world of the human spirit, the world of human thought, perception, virtues and bounties! Is it possible that that need has remained stationary while the world has been advancing in every other condition and direction? It is impossible.

Therefore, we must invoke and supplicate God and strive with the utmost effort in order that the world of human existence in all its degrees may receive a mighty impulse,

complete human happiness be attained and the resuscitation of all spirits and emanations be realized through the boundless favor of the mercy of God. 6.2

Now the new age is here and creation is reborn. Humanity hath taken on new life. The autumn hath gone by, and the reviving spring is here. All things are now made new. Arts and industries have been reborn, there are new discoveries in science, and there are new inventions; even the details of human affairs, such as dress and personal effects—even weapons—all these have likewise been renewed. The laws and procedures of every government have been revised. Renewal is the order of the day.

And all this newness hath its source in the fresh outpourings of wondrous grace and favor from the Lord of the Kingdom, which have renewed the world. The people, therefore, must be set completely free from their old patterns of thought, that all their attention may be focused upon these new principles, for these are the light of this time and the very spirit of this age. 6.3

It is a blessed century; it is a blessed day. The philosophers of history have agreed that this century is equal to one hundred past centuries. This is true from every standpoint. This is the century of science, inventions, discoveries and universal laws. This is the century of the revelation of the mysteries of God. This is the century of the effulgence of the rays of the Sun of Truth. Therefore, you must render thanks and glorification to God that you were born in this age. 6.4

7

Bahá'u'lláh is the Manifestation of God for this Age

This is the day of Bahá'u'lláh, the age of the Blessed Perfection, the cycle of the Greatest Name. ... This is the springtime of manifestation. The vernal shower has descended from the cloud of divine mercy; the life giving breeze of the Holy Spirit is wafting the perfume of blossoms. From field and meadow rises a fragrant breath of thanksgiving like pure incense ascending to the throne of God. The world has become a new world; souls are quickened, spirits renewed, refreshed. Truly it is a time for happiness.

7.1

Every spring has an autumn, and every autumn has its spring. The coming of a Manifestation of God is the season of spiritual spring. For instance, the appearance of Christ was a divine springtime. Therefore, it caused a great commotion and vibrant movement in the world of humanity. The Sun of Reality dawned, the cloud of mercy poured down its rain, the breezes of providence moved, the world became a new world, mankind reflected an extraordinary radiance, souls were educated, minds were developed, intelligences became acute, and the human world attained a new freshness of life, like unto the advent of spring. Then gradually that spring was followed by the autumn of death and decay. The teachings of Christ were forgotten. The Christly bounties ceased. Divine moralities disappeared. Day ended in night. The people

became negligent and oblivious. Minds weakened until conditions reached such a crisis that material science rose in the ascendant. Knowledge and sciences of the Kingdom became obsolete, the mysteries of God deepened, and the traces of the bounties of Christ were completely obliterated. The nations were enmeshed in superstition and blind imitation. Discord and disagreement arose, culminating in strife, war and bloodshed. Hearts were torn asunder in violence. Various denominations appeared, diverse sects and creeds arose, and the whole world was plunged into darkness.

At such a time as this Bahá'u'lláh dawned from the horizon of Persia. He reformed and renewed the fundamentals and realities of Christ's teachings. He endured the greatest difficulties and underwent the severest ordeals.

Praise be to God that the teachings of God are revoiced, the light of reality has dawned again, the effulgence is increasing daily, and the radiance is shining more gloriously in the zenith. From the cloud of mercy a deluge is descending; the Sun of Reality is brilliant in its eternal station. Again we are hopeful that the same springtime may pitch its tent and that these boundless bestowals may appear once more among us. 7.2

Incline thine ear unto the voice of thy lord, the lord of all mankind, calling from the Divine Lote-Tree: Verily, no God is there but Me, the Almighty, the All-Wise! Cast away all that is on earth, and attire the head of thy kingdom with the crown of the remembrance of thy Lord, the All-Glorious. He, in truth, hath come unto the world in His most great glory, and all that hath been mentioned in the Gospel hath been fulfilled. The land of Syria hath been honored by the

footsteps of its Lord, the Lord of all men, and North and South are both inebriated with the wine of His presence. Blessed is the man that inhaled the fragrance of the Most Merciful, and turned unto the Dawning-Place of His Beauty, in this resplendent Dawn. 7.3

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 forth is there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow. The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely. This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list. The evanescent is as nothing before Him Who is the Ever-Abiding. 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. 7.4

Who can ever believe that this Servant of God hath at any time cherished in His heart a desire for any earthly honor or benefit? The Cause associated with His Name is far above the transitory things of this world. Behold Him, an exile, a victim of tyranny, in this Most Great Prison. His

enemies have assailed Him on every side, and will continue to do so till the end of His life. Whatever, therefore, He saith unto you is wholly for the sake of God, that haply the peoples of the earth may cleanse their hearts from the stain of evil desire, may rend its veil asunder, and attain unto the knowledge of the one true God—the most exalted station to which any man can aspire. Their belief or disbelief in My Cause can neither profit nor harm Me. We summon them wholly for the sake of God. He, verily, can afford to dispense with all creatures. 7.5

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 human race, as the Creator of a new World Order, and as the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization. 7.6

8

The Mission of Bahá'u'lláh

O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the preeminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes. 8.1

It is binding and incumbent upon the peoples of the world, one and all, to extend aid unto this momentous Cause which is come from the heaven of the Will of the ever-abiding God, that perchance the fire of animosity which blazeth in the hearts of some of the peoples of the earth may, through the living waters of divine wisdom and by virtue of heavenly counsels and exhortations, be quenched, and the light of unity and concord may shine forth and shed its radiance upon the world. 8.2

God's purpose is none other than to usher in, in ways He alone can bring about, and the full significance of which He alone can fathom, the Great, the Golden Age of a long-divided, a long-afflicted humanity. Its present state, indeed even its immediate future, is dark, distressingly dark. Its distant future, however, is radiant, gloriously radiant—so radiant that no eye can visualize it.

“The winds of despair,” writes Bahá’u’lláh, as He surveys the immediate destinies of mankind, “are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divides and afflicts the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appears to be lamentably defective.” “Such shall be its plight,” He, in another connection, has declared, “that to disclose it now would not be meet and seemly.” “These fruitless strifes,” He, on the other hand, contemplating the future of mankind, has emphatically prophesied, in the course of His memorable interview with the Persian orientalist, Edward G. Browne, “these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come. ... These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family.” “Soon,” He predicts, “will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.” “After a time,” He also has written, “all the governments on earth will change. Oppression will envelop the world. And following a universal convulsion, the sun of justice will rise from the horizon of the unseen realm.” “The whole earth,” He, moreover, has stated, “is now in a state of pregnancy. The day is approaching when it will have yielded its noblest fruits, when from it will have sprung forth the loftiest trees, the most enchanting blossoms, the most heavenly blessings.” “All nations and kindreds,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá likewise has written, “...will become a single nation. Religious and sectarian antagonism, the hostility of races and peoples, and differences among nations, will be eliminated. All men will adhere to one religion, will have one common faith, will be blended into one race, and become a single

people. All will dwell in one common fatherland, which is the planet itself."

What we witness at the present time, during "this gravest crisis in the history of civilization," recalling such times in which "religions have perished and are born," is the adolescent stage in the slow and painful evolution of humanity, preparatory to the attainment of the stage of manhood, the stage of maturity, the promise of which is embedded in the teachings, and enshrined in the prophecies of Bahá'u'lláh. The tumult of this age of transition is characteristic of the impetuosity and irrational instincts of youth, its follies, its prodigality, its pride, its self-assurance, its rebelliousness, and contempt of discipline.

The ages of its infancy and childhood are past, never again to return, while the Great Age, the consummation of all ages, which must signalize the coming of age of the entire human race, is yet to come. The convulsions of this transitional and most turbulent period in the annals of humanity are the essential prerequisites, and herald the inevitable approach, of that Age of Ages, "the time of the end," in which the folly and tumult of strife that has, since the dawn of history, blackened the annals of mankind, will have been finally transmuted into the wisdom and the tranquility of an undisturbed, a universal, and lasting peace, in which the discord and separation of the children of men will have given way to the worldwide reconciliation, and the complete unification of the divers elements that constitute human society.

This will indeed be the fitting climax of that process of integration which, starting with the family, the smallest

unit in the scale of human organization, must, after having called successively into being the tribe, the city-state, and the nation, continue to operate until it culminates in the unification of the whole world, the final object and the crowning glory of human evolution on this planet. It is this stage which humanity, willingly or unwillingly, is resistlessly approaching. It is forth is stage that this vast, this fiery ordeal which humanity is experiencing is mysteriously paving the way. It is with this stage that the fortunes and the purpose of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh are indissolubly linked. It is the creative energies which His Revelation has released ... that have instilled into humanity the capacity to attain this final stage in its organic and collective evolution. It is with the Golden Age of His Dispensation that the consummation of this process will be forever associated. It is the structure of His New World Order, now stirring in the womb of the administrative institutions He Himself has created, that will serve both as a pattern and a nucleus of that world commonwealth which is the sure, the inevitable destiny of the peoples and nations of the earth. Just as the organic evolution of mankind has been slow and gradual, and involved successively the unification of the family, the tribe, the city-state, and the nation, so has the light vouchsafed by the Revelation of God, at various stages in the evolution of religion, and reflected in the successive Dispensations of the past, been slow and progressive. Indeed the measure of Divine Revelation, in every age, has been adapted to, and commensurate with, the degree of social progress achieved in that age by a constantly evolving humanity. ...

“That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race can neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day, this period of newness and consummation. Humanity has emerged from its former state of limitation and preliminary training. Man must now become imbued with new virtues and powers, new moral standards, new capacities. New bounties, perfect bestowals, are awaiting and already descending upon him. The gifts and blessings of the period of youth, although timely and sufficient during the adolescence of mankind, are now incapable of meeting the requirements of its maturity.” “In every Dispensation,” He moreover has written, “the light of Divine Guidance has been focused upon one central theme. ... In this wondrous Revelation, this glorious century, the foundation of the Faith of God, and the distinguishing feature of His Law, is the consciousness of the oneness of mankind.”

8.3

PART III

The Proofs of God's Manifestations

The Bahá'í writings assert that the progress of individuals and society as a whole depends upon recognizing the Manifestation of God in His Day. Every individual has the capacity to recognize Him.

The Manifestation of God appears in such a way, and reveals such teachings, as is determined by God. Because these things do not conform to the desires or understanding of the people, each Manifestation faced rejection and persecution. The foremost opponent of the new Manifestation is the clergy, the custodians of the traditions of the previous religion. The people, blindly following in their footsteps, fail to recognize the truth.

The Scriptures of every religion testify to this pattern. Bahá'u'lláh, like the Manifestations of God before Him, was opposed by the clergy and the people—attacks that continued for more than forty years. The arguments used to reject Him, however, were the same used throughout time to reject Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad and others. Bahá'u'lláh encouraged a careful examination of the statements and deeds of those who reject the Manifestation in every age as a means of attaining certitude in the new religion of God.

How can we know that Bahá'u'lláh—or any other Manifestation—is Who He claims to be? If we could know in some way that He is the bearer of God's message for humanity in this Day, our response would be obvious: we should embrace His Cause and put His teachings into practice. But how can such a claim be evaluated?

Since most people accept without investigation the religion of their parents, the truth of the station of the Founder of one's own religion is also accepted without question. But what is the evidence for the claim of Moses, of Buddha, of Jesus, or of Muḥammad? For their followers, it is difficult to imagine a time when such proofs were demanded. However, at the time of the appearance of each of these individuals, the people required such evidence.

The Holy Books of all religions deal with the question of the proofs validating the claim of the Representative of God on earth. Jesus's statement: "ye shall know them by their fruits" is a consideration of this theme.

Bahá'u'lláh explains that the proofs validating the station of the Founder of one religion are the same proofs that validate the claim of all these Founders. The proofs include the person and deeds of the Manifestation, His revelation of the Word of God, and His teachings that transform individuals and society. The prophecies in the Holy Books are another evidence of the truth of the new Manifestation; however, these Books are interpreted in various ways—even to reject the new Manifestation when He comes. Their true meaning, therefore, must be sought from the Manifestation Himself.

9

The Necessity of Recognizing the Manifestation of God

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. 9.1

He hath endowed every soul with the capacity to recognize the signs of God. How could He, otherwise, have fulfilled His testimony unto men, if ye be of them that ponder His Cause in their hearts. He will never deal unjustly with anyone, neither will He task a soul beyond its power. He, verily, is the Compassionate, the All-Merciful. 9.2

The appearances of the Manifestations of God are the divine springtime. When Christ appeared in this world, it was like the vernal bounty; the outpouring descended; the effulgences of the Merciful encircled all things; the human world found new life. Even the physical world partook of it. The divine perfections were upraised; souls were trained in the school of heaven so that all grades of human existence received life and light. Then by degrees these fragrances of heaven were discontinued; the season of winter came upon the world; the beauties of spring vanished; the excellences

and perfections passed away; the lights and quickening were no longer evident; the phenomenal world and its materialities conquered everything; the spiritualities of life were lost; the world of existence became like unto a lifeless body; there was no trace of the spring left.

Bahá'u'lláh has come into this world. He has renewed that springtime. The same fragrances are wafting; the same heat of the Sun is giving life; the same cloud is pouring its rain, and with our own eyes we see that the world of existence is advancing and progressing. The human world has found new life. 9.3

From the days of Adam until today, the religions of God have been made manifest, one following the other, and each one of them fulfilled its due function, revived mankind, and provided education and enlightenment. They freed the people from the darkness of the world of nature and ushered them into the brightness of the Kingdom. As each succeeding Faith and Law became revealed it remained for some centuries a richly fruitful tree and to it was committed the happiness of humankind. However, as the centuries rolled by, it aged, it flourished no more and put forth no fruit, wherefore was it then made young again.

The religion of God is one religion, but it must ever be renewed. Moses, for example, was sent forth to man and He established a Law, and the Children of Israel, through that Mosaic Law, were delivered out of their ignorance and came into the light; they were lifted up from their abjectness and attained to a glory that fadeth not. Still, as the long years wore on, that radiance passed by, that splendor set, that bright day turned to night; and once that night grew triply

dark, the star of the Messiah dawned, so that again a glory lit the world.

Our meaning is this: the religion of God is one, and it is the educator of humankind, but still, it needs must be made new. When thou dost plant a tree, its height increaseth day by day. It putteth forth blossoms and leaves and luscious fruits. But after a long time, it doth grow old, yielding no fruitage any more. Then doth the Husbandman of Truth take up the seed from that same tree, and plant it in a pure soil; and lo, there standeth the first tree, even as it was before.

Note thou carefully that in this world of being, all things must ever be made new. look at the material world about thee, see how it hath now been renewed. The thoughts have changed, the ways of life have been revised, the sciences and arts show a new vigor, discoveries and inventions are new, perceptions are new. How then could such a vital power as religion—the guarantor of mankind’s great advances, the very means of attaining everlasting life, the fosterer of infinite excellence, the light of both worlds—not be made new? This would be incompatible with the grace and loving-kindness of the lord.

Religion, moreover, is not a series of beliefs, a set of customs; religion is the teachings of the lord God, teachings which constitute the very life of humankind, which urge high thoughts upon the mind, refine the character, and lay the groundwork for man’s everlasting honor.

Note thou: could these fevers in the world of the mind, these fires of war and hate, of resentment and malice among the nations, this aggression of peoples against peoples,

which have destroyed the tranquillity of the whole world ever be made to abate, except through the living waters of the teachings of God? No, never!

And this is clear: a power above and beyond the powers of nature must needs be brought to bear, to change this black darkness into light, and these hatreds and resentments, grudges and spites, these endless wrangles and wars, into fellowship and love amongst all the peoples of the earth. This power is none other than the breathings of the Holy Spirit and the mighty inflow of the Word of God. 9.4

Question: Those who are blessed with good actions and universal benevolence, who have praiseworthy characteristics, who act with love and kindness toward all creatures, who care for the poor, and who strive to establish universal peace—what need have they of the divine teachings, of which they think indeed that they are independent? What is the condition of these people? Answer: Know that such actions, such efforts and such words are praiseworthy and approved, and are the glory of humanity. But these actions alone are not sufficient; they are a body of the greatest loveliness, but without spirit. No, that which is the cause of everlasting life, eternal honor, universal enlightenment, real salvation and prosperity is, first of all, the knowledge of God. It is known that the knowledge of God is beyond all knowledge, and it is the greatest glory of the human world. For in the existing knowledge of the reality of things there is material advantage, and through it outward civilization progresses; but the knowledge of God is the cause of spiritual progress and attraction, and through it the perception

of truth, the exaltation of humanity, divine civilization, rightness of morals and illumination are obtained.

Second, comes the love of God, the light of which shines in the lamp of the hearts of those who know God; its brilliant rays illuminate the horizon and give to man the life of the Kingdom. In truth, the fruit of human existence is the love of God, for this love is the spirit of life, and the eternal bounty. ... The love of the human world has shone forth from the love of God and has appeared by the bounty and grace of God.

It is clear that the reality of mankind is diverse, that opinions are various and sentiments different; and this difference of opinions, of thoughts, of intelligence, of sentiments among the human species arises from essential necessity; for the differences in the degrees of existence of creatures is one of the necessities of existence, which unfolds itself in infinite forms. Therefore, we have need of a general power which may dominate the sentiments, the opinions and the thoughts of all, thanks to which these divisions may no longer have effect, and all individuals may be brought under the influence of the unity of the world of humanity. It is clear and evident that this greatest power in the human world is the love of God. It brings the different peoples under the shadow of the tent of affection; it gives to the antagonistic and hostile nations and families the greatest love and union. See, after the time of Christ, through the power of the love of God, how many nations, races families and tribes came under the shadow of the Word of God. The divisions and differences of a thousand years were entirely destroyed and annihilated. The

thoughts of race and of fatherland completely disappeared. The union of souls and of existences took place; all became true spiritual Christians.

The third virtue of humanity is the goodwill which is the basis of good actions. Certain philosophers have considered intention superior to action, for the goodwill is absolute light; it is purified and sanctified from the impurities of selfishness, of enmity, of deception. Now it may be that a man performs an action which in appearance is righteous, but which is dictated by covetousness. For example, a butcher rears a sheep and protects it; but this righteous action of the butcher is dictated by desire to derive profit, and the result of this care is the slaughter of the poor sheep. How many righteous actions are dictated by covetousness! But the goodwill is sanctified from such impurities.

Briefly, if to the knowledge of God is joined the love of God, and attraction, ecstasy and goodwill, a righteous action is then perfect and complete. Otherwise, though a good action is praiseworthy, yet if it is not sustained by the knowledge of God, the love of God, and a sincere intention, it is imperfect. ...

Now, today, we meet with people in the world who, in truth, desire the universal good, and who according to their power occupy themselves in protecting the oppressed and in aiding the poor: they are enthusiastic for peace and the universal well-being. Although from this point of view they may be perfect, if they are deprived of the knowledge and love of God, they are imperfect.

Galen, the physician, in his book in which he comments on the treatise of Plato on the art of government, says

that the fundamental principles of religion have a great influence upon a perfect civilization because “the multitude cannot understand the connection of explanatory words; so it has need of symbolical words announcing the rewards and punishments of the otherworld; and that which proves the truth of this affirmation,” he says, “is that today we see a people called Christians who believe in rewards and punishments; and this sect show forth beautiful actions like those which a true philosopher performs. So we all see clearly that they do not fear death, that they expect and desire nothing from the multitude but justice and equity, and they are considered as true philosophers.”

Now observe what was the degree of the sincerity, the zeal, the spiritual feeling, the obligation of friendship, and the good actions of a believer in Christ, so that Galen, the philosophical physician, although he was not of the Christian religion, should yet bear witness to the good morals and the perfections of these people, to the point of saying that they were true philosophers. These virtues, these morals, were obtained not only through good actions, for if virtue were only a matter of obtaining and giving forth good, as this lamp is lighted and illuminates the house—without doubt this illumination is a benefit—then why do we not praise the lamp? The sun causes all the beings of the earth to increase, and by its heat and light gives growth and development: is there a greater benefit than that? Nevertheless, as this good does not come from goodwill and from the love and knowledge of God, it is imperfect.

When, on the contrary, a man gives to another a cup of water, the latter is grateful and thanks him. ... If we look

for the truth, we see that this insignificant kindness of the man is due to conscious feelings which exist; therefore, it is worthy of praise, whereas the light and heat of the sun are not due to the feelings and consciousness; therefore, they are not worthy of eulogy or of praise and do not deserve gratitude or thanks.

In the same way, when a person performs a good action, although it is praiseworthy, if it is not caused by the love and knowledge of God, it is imperfect. Moreover, if you reflect justly, you will see that these good actions of other men who do not know God are also fundamentally caused by the teachings of God—that is to say, that the former Prophets led men to perform these actions, explained their beauty to them, and declared their splendid effects; then these teachings were diffused among men and reached them successively, one after the other, and turned their hearts toward these perfections. When men saw that these actions were considered beautiful, and became the cause of joy and happiness for mankind, they conformed to them.

Wherefore these actions also come from the teachings of God. But justice is needed to see this, and not controversy and discussion. Praise be to God, you have been to Persia, and you have seen how the Persians, through the holy breezes of Bahá'u'lláh, have become benevolent toward humanity. Formerly, if they met anyone of another race, they tormented him and were filled with the utmost enmity, hatred and malevolence; they went so far as to throw dirt at him. They burned the Gospel and the Old Testament, and if their hands were polluted by touching these books, they washed them. Today the greater number of them recite and

chant, as is suitable, the contents to these two Books in their reunions and assemblies, and they expound their esoteric teaching. They show hospitality to their enemies. They treat the bloodthirsty wolves with gentleness, like gazelles in the plains of the love of God. You have seen their customs and habits, and you have heard of the manners of former Persians. This transformation of morals, this improvement of conduct and of words, are they possible otherwise than through the love of God? No, in the name of God. If, by the help of science and knowledge, we wished to introduce these morals and customs, truly it would take a thousand years, and then they would not be spread throughout the masses.

Today, thanks to the love of God, they are arrived at with the greatest facility.

Be admonished, O possessors of intelligence! 9.5

Behold, how, as soon as I revealed Myself, ye have rejected My truth and turned away from Me, and have been of them that have regarded the signs of God as a play and pastime! ...

Will ye be content with that which is like the vapor in a plain, and be willing to forgo the Ocean Whose waters refresh, by virtue of the Will of God, the souls of men? Woe unto you, for having repaid the bounty of God with so vain and contemptible a thing! Ye are, indeed, of them that have rejected Me in My previous Revelation. Would that your hearts could comprehend! ...

Take heed that ye be not of them that have rejected that which hath been sent down unto them from the Heaven of God's transcendent glory. 9.6

10

People in Every Age Have Opposed the Manifestation

Consider the past. How many, both high and low, have, at all times, yearningly awaited the advent of the Manifestations of God in the sanctified persons of His chosen Ones. How often have they expected His coming, how frequently have they prayed that the breeze of divine mercy might blow, and the promised Beauty step forth from behind the veil of concealment, and be made manifest to all the world. And whensoever the portals of grace did open, and the clouds of divine bounty did rain upon mankind, and the light of the Unseen did shine above the horizon of celestial might, they all denied Him, and turned away from His face—the face of God Himself. Refer ye, to verify this truth, to that which hath been recorded in every sacred Book.

Ponder for a moment, and reflect upon that which hath been the cause of such denial on the part of those who have searched with such earnestness and longing. Their attack hath been more fierce than tongue or pen can describe. Not one single Manifestation of Holiness hath appeared but He was afflicted by the denials, the repudiation, and the vehement opposition of the people around Him. ...

Examine the wondrous behavior of the Prophets, and recall the defamations and denials uttered by the children of negation and falsehood, perchance you may cause the bird of the human heart to wing its flight away from the

abodes of heedlessness and doubt unto the nest of faith and certainty.... 10.1

Judge thou fairly, I adjure thee by God. What proof did the Jewish doctors adduce wherewith to condemn Him Who was the Spirit of God (Jesus Christ), when He came unto them with truth? What could have been the evidence produced by the Pharisees and the idolatrous priests to justify their denial of Muḥammad, the Apostle of God when He came unto them with a Book that judged between truth and falsehood with a justice which turned into light the darkness of the earth, and enraptured the hearts of such as had known Him? Indeed thou hast produced, in this day, the same proofs which the foolish divines advanced in that age. Unto this testifieth He Who is the King of the realm of grace in this great Prison. 10.2

From the beginning of the world until the present time each “Manifestation” sent from God has been opposed by an embodiment of the “Powers of Darkness.”

This dark power has always endeavored to extinguish the light. Tyranny has ever sought to overcome justice. Ignorance has persistently tried to trample knowledge underfoot. This has, from the earliest ages, been the method of the material world.

In the time of Moses, Pharaoh set himself to prevent the Mosaic Light being spread abroad.

In the day of Christ, Annas and Caiaphas inflamed the Jewish people against Him and the learned doctors of Israel joined together to resist His Power. All sorts of calumnies were circulated against Him. The Scribes and Pharisees

conspired to make the people believe Him to be a liar, an apostate, and a blasphemer. They spread these slanders throughout the whole Eastern world against Christ, and caused Him to be condemned to a shameful death!

In the case of Muḥammad also, the learned doctors of His day determined to extinguish the light of His influence. They tried by the power of the sword to prevent the spread of His teaching.

In spite of all their efforts the Sun of Truth shone forth from the horizon. In every case the army of light vanquished the powers of darkness on the battlefield of the world, and the radiance of the Divine Teaching illumined the earth. Those who accepted the Teaching and worked for the Cause of God became luminous stars in the sky of humanity.

Now, in our own day, history repeats itself. 10.3

Witness how every time the Day Star of Divine bounty hath shed the light of His Revelation upon the world, the people of His Day have arisen against Him, and repudiated His truth. They who were regarded as the leaders of men have invariably striven to hinder their followers from turning unto Him Who is the Ocean of God's limitless bounty. ...

Thou hast known how grievously the Prophets of God, His Messengers and Chosen Ones, have been afflicted. Meditate a while on the motive and reason which have been responsible for such a persecution. At no time, in no Dispensation, have the Prophets of God escaped the blasphemy of their enemies, the cruelty of their oppressors, the denunciation of the learned of their age, who appeared in the guise of uprightness and piety. Day and night they

passed through such agonies as none can ever measure, except the knowledge of the one true God, exalted be His glory.

Consider this wronged One. Though the clearest proofs attest the truth of His Cause; though the prophecies He, in an unmistakable language, hath made have been fulfilled; though, in spite of His not being accounted among the learned, His being unschooled and inexperienced in the disputations current among the divines, He hath rained upon men the showers of His manifold and Divinely-inspired knowledge; yet, behold how this generation hath rejected His authority, and rebelled against Him! He hath, during the greater part of His life, been sore-tried in the clutches of His enemies. His sufferings have now reached their culmination in this afflictive Prison, into which His oppressors have so unjustly thrown Him. God grant that, with a penetrating vision and radiant heart, thou mayest observe the things that have come to pass and are now happening, and, pondering them in thine heart, mayest recognize that which most men have, in this Day, failed to perceive. Please God, He may enable thee to inhale the sweet fragrance of His Day, to partake of the limitless effusions of His grace, to quaff thy fill, through His gracious favor, from the most great Ocean that surgeth in this Day in the name of the Ancient King, and to remain firm and immovable as the mountain in His Cause. 10.4

11

Understanding Why People Reject God's Manifestation

Should you acquaint yourself with the indignities heaped upon the Prophets of God, and apprehend the true causes of the objections voiced by their oppressors, you will surely appreciate the significance of their position. Moreover, the more closely you observe the denials of those who have opposed the Manifestations of the divine attributes, the firmer will be your faith in the Cause of God. 11.1

They are Veiled and Refuse to Investigate Truth

... During the days of Jesus Christ the Jews were expecting the appearance of the Messiah, praying and beseeching God day and night that the Promised One might appear. Why did they reject Him when He did appear? ... Because they did not investigate the truth or reality of Christ and were not able to recognize Him as the Messiah of God. Had they investigated sincerely for themselves, they would surely have believed in Him, respected Him and bowed before Him in reverence. They would have considered His manifestation the greatest bestowal upon mankind. They would have accepted Him as the very Savior of man; but, alas, they were veiled, they held to imitations of ancestral beliefs and hearsay and did not investigate the truth of Christ. 11.2

And now regarding His words, that the Son of man shall “come in the clouds of heaven.” By the term “clouds” is meant those things that are contrary to the ways and desires of men. ... These “clouds” signify, in one sense, the annulment of laws, the abrogation of former Dispensations, the repeal of rituals and customs current amongst men, the exalting of the illiterate faithful above the learned opposers of the Faith. In another sense, they mean the appearance of that immortal Beauty in the image of mortal man, with such human limitations as eating and drinking, poverty and riches, glory and abasement, sleeping and waking, and such other things as cast doubt in the minds of men, and cause them to turn away. All such veils are symbolically referred to as “clouds.” ...

It is evident that the changes brought about in every Dispensation constitute the dark clouds that intervene between the eye of man's understanding and the divine Luminary which shineth forth from the dayspring of the divine Essence. Consider how men for generations have been blindly imitating their fathers, and have been trained according to such ways and manners as have been laid down by the dictates of their Faith. Were these men, therefore, to discover suddenly that a Man, Who hath been living in their midst, Who, with respect to every human limitation, hath been their equal, had risen to abolish every established principle imposed by their Faith—principles by which for centuries they have been disciplined, and every opposer and denier of which they have come to regard as infidel, profligate and wicked, they would of a certainty be veiled and hindered from acknowledging His truth. Such things are as “clouds” that veil the eyes of those whose inner

being hath not tasted the Salsabíl of detachment, nor drunk from the Kawthar of the knowledge of God.^[1] Such men, when acquainted with these circumstances, become so veiled that without the least question, they pronounce the Manifestation of God an infidel, and sentence Him to death. You must have heard of such things taking place all down the ages, and are now observing them in these days. 11.3

They Weigh the Cause of God with Their Own Deficient Knowledge

It is the veil of idle imaginations which, in the days of the Manifestations of the Unity of God and the Day Springs of His everlasting glory, hath intervened, and will continue to intervene, between them and the rest of mankind. For in those days, He Who is the Eternal Truth manifesteth Himself in conformity with that which He Himself hath purposed, and not according to the desires and expectations of men. Even as He hath revealed: "So oft, then, as an Apostle cometh to you with that which your souls desire not, do ye swell with pride, and treat some as impostors, and slay others."

There can be no doubt whatever that had these Apostles appeared, in bygone ages and cycles, in accordance with the vain imaginations which the hearts of men had devised, no one would have repudiated the truth of these sanctified Beings. ... To this the Scriptures bear witness. Thou hast, no doubt, heard about it.

1 Salsabíl is a fountain or river in Paradise. Kawthar is the river in Paradise from which all other rivers derive their source.

Consider the Dispensation of Jesus Christ. Behold, how all the learned men of that generation, though eagerly anticipating the coming of the Promised One, have nevertheless denied Him. Both Annas, the most learned among the divines of His day, and Caiaphas, the high priest, denounced Him and pronounced the sentence of His death. ...

For this reason He hath written: "He that is exalted among you shall be abased, and he that is abased shall be exalted." References to this theme are to be found in most of the heavenly Books, as well as in the sayings of the Prophets and Messengers of God. 11.4

Thus, you know that before the observations of modern times—that is to say, during the first centuries and down to the fifteenth century of the Christian era—all the mathematicians of the world agreed that the earth was the center of the universe, and that the sun moved. ... But there are some verses revealed in the Qur'an contrary to the theory of the Ptolemaic system. One of them is "The sun moves in a fixed place," which shows the fixity of the sun, and its movement around an axis. Again, in another verse, "And each star moves in its own heaven." Thus is explained the movement of the sun, of the moon, of the earth, and of other bodies. When the Qur'an appeared, all the mathematicians ridiculed these statements and attributed the theory to ignorance. Even the doctors of Islam, when they saw that these verses were contrary to the accepted Ptolemaic system, were obliged to explain them away.

It was not until after the fifteenth century of the Christian era, nearly nine hundred years after Muḥammad, that a

famous astronomer made new observations and important discoveries by the aid of the telescope, which he had invented. The rotation of the earth, the fixity of the sun, and also its movement around an axis, were discovered. It became evident that the verses of the Qur'an agreed with existing facts, and that the Ptolemaic system was imaginary.

11.5

They Blindly Follow the Clergy

Why is it that the advent of every true Manifestation of God hath been accompanied by such strife and tumult, by such tyranny and upheaval? This notwithstanding the fact that all the Prophets of God, whenever made manifest unto the peoples of the world, have invariably foretold the coming of yet another Prophet after them, and have established such signs as would herald the advent of the future Dispensation. To this the records of all sacred books bear witness. Why then is it that despite the expectation of men in their quest of the Manifestations of Holiness, and in spite of the signs recorded in the sacred books, should such acts of violence, of oppression and cruelty, have been perpetrated in every age and cycle against all the Prophets and chosen Ones of God? ...

Whatever in days gone by hath been the cause of the denial and opposition of those people hath now led to the perversity of the people of this age. To maintain that the testimony of Providence was incomplete, that it hath therefore been the cause of the denial of the people, is but open blasphemy. How far from the grace of the All-Bountiful and from His loving providence and tender mercies it is to single out a

soul from amongst all men for the guidance of His creatures, and, on one hand, to withhold from Him the full measure of His divine testimony, and, on the other, inflict severe retribution on His people for having turned away from His chosen One! Nay, the manifold bounties of the Lord of all beings have, at all times, through the Manifestations of His divine Essence, encompassed the earth and all that dwell therein. Not for a moment hath His grace been withheld, nor have the showers of His loving-kindness ceased to rain upon mankind. Consequently, such behavior can be attributed to naught save the petty-mindedness of such souls as tread the valley of arrogance and pride, are lost in the wilds of remoteness, walk in the ways of their idle fancy, and follow the dictates of the leaders of their faith. Their chief concern is mere opposition; their sole desire is to ignore the truth. Unto every discerning observer it is evident and manifest that had these people in the days of each of the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth sanctified their eyes, their ears, and their hearts from whatever they had seen, heard, and felt, they surely would not have been deprived of beholding the beauty of God, nor strayed far from the habitations of glory. But having weighed the testimony of God by the standard of their own knowledge, gleaned from the teachings of the leaders of their faith, and found it at variance with their limited understanding, they arose to perpetrate such unseemly acts.

Leaders of religion, in every age, have hindered their people from attaining the shores of eternal salvation, inasmuch as they held the reins of authority in their mighty grasp. Some for the lust of leadership, others through want of knowledge and understanding, have been the cause of

the deprivation of the people. By their sanction and authority, every Prophet of God hath drunk from the chalice of sacrifice, and winged His flight unto the heights of glory. What unspeakable cruelties they that have occupied the seats of authority and learning have inflicted upon the true Monarchs of the world, those Gems of divine virtue! Content with a transitory dominion, they have deprived themselves of an everlasting sovereignty. Thus, their eyes beheld not the light of the countenance of the Well-Beloved, nor did their ears hearken unto the sweet melodies of the Bird of Desire. For this reason, in all sacred books mention hath been made of the divines of every age. 11.6

They Fail to Understand that a New Manifestation Must Appear

When the Unseen, the Eternal, the divine Essence, caused the Day-star of Muḥammad to rise above the horizon of knowledge, among the cavils which the Jewish divines raised against Him was that after Moses no Prophet should be sent of God. Yea, mention hath been made in the scriptures of a Soul Who must needs be made manifest and Who will advance the Faith, and promote the interests of the people, of Moses, so that the Law of the Mosaic Dispensation may encompass the whole earth. Thus hath the King of eternal glory referred in His Book to the words uttered by those wanderers in the vale of remoteness and error: “‘The hand of God,’ say the Jews, ‘is chained up.’ Chained up be their own hands! And for that which they have said, they were accursed. Nay, outstretched are both His hands!” “The hand of God is above their hands.”

Although the commentators of the Qur'an have related in divers manners the circumstances attending the revelation of this verse, yet thou shouldst endeavor to apprehend the purpose thereof. He saith: How false is that which the Jews have imagined! How can the hand of him Who is the King in truth, Who caused the countenance of Moses to be made manifest, and conferred upon Him the robe of Prophethood—how can the hand of such a One be chained and fettered! How can He be conceived as powerless to raise up yet another Messenger after Moses? Behold the absurdity of their saying; how far it hath strayed from the path of knowledge and understanding! Observe how in this day also, all these people have occupied themselves with such foolish absurdities. For over a thousand years they have been reciting this verse, and unwittingly pronouncing their censure against the Jews, utterly unaware that they themselves, openly and privily, are voicing the sentiments and belief of the Jewish people! Thou art surely aware of their idle contention, that all Revelation is ended, that the portals of Divine mercy are closed, that from the day-springs 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 have ceased to be made manifest. Such is the measure of the understanding of these small-minded, contemptible people. These people have imagined that the flow of God's all-encompassing grace and plenteous mercies, the cessation of which no mind can contemplate, has been halted. 11.7

They Fail to Understand that the Law of Religion Must Be Renewed

And when the days of Moses were ended, and the light of Jesus, shining forth from the dayspring of the Spirit, encompassed the world, all the people of Israel arose in protest against Him. They clamored that He Whose advent the Bible had foretold must needs promulgate and fulfill the laws of Moses, whereas this youthful Nazarene, who laid claim to the station of the divine Messiah, had annulled the law of divorce and of the sabbath day—the most weighty of all the laws of Moses. 11.8

Among them is the tradition, “And when the Standard of Truth is made manifest, the people of both the East and the West curse it.” The wine of renunciation must needs be quaffed, the lofty heights of detachment must needs be attained, and the meditation referred to in the words “One hour’s reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship” must needs be observed, so that the secret of the wretched behavior of the people might be discovered, those people who, despite the love and yearning for truth which they profess, curse the followers of Truth when once He hath been made manifest. To this truth the above-mentioned tradition beareth witness. It is evident that the reason for such behavior is none other than the annulment of those rules, customs, habits, and ceremonials to which they have been subjected. Otherwise, were the Beauty of the Merciful to comply with those same rules and customs, which are current amongst the people, and were He to sanction their observances, such conflict and mischief would in no wise be made manifest in the world. 11.9

Behold, how, notwithstanding these and similar traditions, they idly contend that the laws formerly revealed,

must in no wise be altered. And yet, is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent. 11.10

*They Fail to Understand the Meaning
of the Holy Books*

Those words uttered by the Luminaries of Truth must needs be pondered, and should their significance be not grasped, enlightenment should be sought from the Trustees of the depositories of Knowledge, that these may expound their meaning, and unravel their mystery. For it behooveth no man to interpret the holy words according to his own imperfect understanding, nor, having found them to be contrary to his inclination and desires, to reject and repudiate their truth. For such, today, is the manner of the divines and doctors of the age, who occupy the seats of knowledge and learning, and who have named ignorance knowledge, and called oppression justice. Were these to ask the Light of Truth concerning those images which their idle fancy hath carved, and were they to find His answer inconsistent with their own conceptions and their own understanding of the Book, they would assuredly denounce Him Who is the Mine and Wellhead of all Knowledge as the very negation of understanding. Such things have happened in every age.

11.11

God Tests Humanity

Know verily that the purpose underlying all these symbolic terms and abstruse allusions, which emanate from the Revealers of God's holy Cause, hath been to test and prove the peoples of the world; that thereby the earth of the pure and illuminated hearts may be known from the perishable and barren soil. From time immemorial such hath been the way of God amidst His creatures, and to this testify the records of the sacred books. 11.12

He Who is the Day Spring of Truth is, no doubt, fully capable of rescuing from such remoteness wayward souls and of causing them to draw nigh unto His court and attain His Presence. "If God had pleased He had surely made all men one people." His purpose, however, is to enable the pure in spirit and the detached in heart to ascend, by virtue of their own innate powers, unto the shores of the Most Great Ocean, that thereby they who seek the Beauty of the All-Glorious may be distinguished and separated from the wayward and perverse. Thus hath it been ordained by the all-glorious and resplendent Pen. ...

That the Manifestations of Divine justice, the Day Springs of heavenly grace, have when they appeared amongst men always been destitute of all earthly dominion and shorn of the means of worldly ascendancy, should be attributed to this same principle of separation and distinction which animateth the Divine Purpose. Were the Eternal Essence to manifest all that is latent within Him, were He to shine in the plenitude of His glory, none would be found to question His power or repudiate His truth. Nay, all created things would be so dazzled and thunderstruck by the evidences of

His light as to be reduced to utter nothingness. How, then, can the godly be differentiated under such circumstances from the froward?

This principle hath operated in each of the previous Dispensations and been abundantly demonstrated. ... It is for this reason that, in every age, when a new Manifestation hath appeared and a fresh revelation of God's transcendent power was vouchsafed unto men, they that misbelieved in Him, deluded by the appearance of the peerless and everlasting Beauty in the garb of mortal men, have failed to recognize Him. They have erred from His path and eschewed His company — the company of Him Who is the Symbol of nearness to God. They have even arisen to decimate the ranks of the faithful and to exterminate such as believed in Him. 11.13

Meditate profoundly, that the secret of things unseen may be revealed unto you, that you may inhale the sweetness of a spiritual and imperishable fragrance, and that you may acknowledge the truth that from time immemorial even unto eternity the Almighty hath tried, and will continue to try, His servants, so that light may be distinguished from darkness, truth from falsehood, right from wrong, guidance from error, happiness from misery, and roses from thorns. Even as He hath revealed: "Do men think when they say 'We believe' they shall be let alone and not be put to proof?" 11.14

12

The True Standard for Judgement

Shake off, O heedless ones, the slumber of negligence, that ye may behold the radiance which His glory hath spread through the world. How foolish are those who murmur against the premature birth of His light. O ye who are inly blind! Whether too soon or too late, the evidences of His effulgent glory are now actually manifest. It behoveth you to ascertain whether or not such a light hath appeared. It is neither within your power nor mine to set the time at which it should be made manifest. God's inscrutable Wisdom hath fixed its hour beforehand. Be content, O people, with that which God hath desired for you and predestined unto you.

12.1

No man shall attain the shores of the ocean of true understanding except he be detached from all that is in heaven and on earth. Sanctify your souls, O ye peoples of the world, that haply ye may attain that station which God hath destined for you. ...

The essence of these words is this: they that tread the path of faith, they that thirst for the wine of certitude, must cleanse themselves of all that is earthly—their ears from idle talk, their minds from vain imaginings, their hearts from worldly affections, their eyes from that which perisheth. They should put their trust in God, and, holding fast unto Him, follow in His way. Then will they be made worthy of the effulgent glories of the sun of divine knowledge and understanding, and become the recipients of a grace that

is infinite and unseen, inasmuch as man can never hope to attain unto the knowledge of the All-Glorious, can never quaff from the stream of divine knowledge and wisdom, can never enter the abode of immortality, nor partake of the cup of divine nearness and favor, unless and until he ceases to regard the words and deeds of mortal men as a standard for the true understanding and recognition of God and His Prophets. 12.2

It behoveth thee to look with divine insight upon the things We have revealed and sent unto thee and not towards the people and that which is current amongst them. They are in this day like unto a blind man who, while moving in the sunshine, demandeth: Where is the sun? Is it shining? He would deny and dispute the truth, and would not be of them that perceive. Never shall he be able to discern the sun or to understand that which hath intervened between him and it. He would object within himself, voice protests, and would be among the rebellious. Such is the state of this people. Leave them unto themselves, saying: Unto you be that which ye desire and unto us that which we desire. Wretched indeed is the plight of the ungodly. 12.3

After the denials and denunciations which they uttered, and unto which We have referred, they protested saying: “No independent Prophet, according to our Scriptures, should arise after Moses and Jesus to abolish the Law of divine Revelation. Nay, he that is to be made manifest must needs fulfill the Law.” ... Know of a certainty that the people in every age, clinging to a verse of the Book, have uttered such vain and absurd sayings, contending that no Prophet should again be made manifest to the world. Even as the

Christian divines who ... have sought to explain that the law of the Gospel shall at no time be annulled, and that no independent Prophet shall again be made manifest, unless He confirmeth the law of the Gospel. Most of the people have become afflicted with the same spiritual disease.

12.4

O brother, we should open our eyes, meditate upon His Word, and seek the sheltering shadow of the Manifestations of God, that perchance we may be warned by the unmistakable counsels of the Book, and give heed to the admonitions recorded in the holy Tablets; that we may not cavil at the Revealer of the verses, that we may resign ourselves wholly to His Cause, and embrace whole-heartedly His law, that haply we may enter the court of His mercy, and dwell upon the shore of His grace. He, verily, is merciful, and forgiving towards His servants.

12.5

Say: O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it.

The eye of My loving-kindness weepeth sore over you, inasmuch as ye have failed to recognize the One upon The True Standard for judgement Whom ye have been calling in the daytime and in the night season, at even and at morn. ...

Who is the man amongst you that can rival Me in vision or insight? Where is he to be found that dareth to claim to

be My equal in utterance or wisdom? No, by My Lord, the All-Merciful! All on the earth shall pass away; and this is the face of your Lord, the Almighty, the Well Beloved.

We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge; and yet behold how ye have allowed your learning to shut you out, as by a veil, from Him Who is the Dayspring of this Light, through Whom every hidden thing hath been revealed. Could ye but discover the source whence the splendor of this utterance is diffused, ye would cast away the peoples of the world and all that they possess, and would draw nigh unto this most blessed seat of glory.

12.6

If it be your wish, O people, to know God and to discover the greatness of His might, look, then, upon Me with Mine own eyes, and not with the eyes of any one besides Me. Ye will, otherwise, be never capable of recognizing Me, though ye ponder My Cause as long as My Kingdom endureth, and meditate upon all created things throughout the eternity of God, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Omnipotent, the Ever-Abiding, the All-Wise. Thus have We manifested the truth of Our Revelation, that haply the people may be roused from their heedlessness, and be of them that understand.

12.7

13

The Proofs of All the Manifestations Are the Same

The divine Manifestations since the day of Adam have striven to unite humanity so that all may be accounted as one soul. The function and purpose of a shepherd is to gather and not disperse his flock. The Prophets of God have been divine Shepherds of humanity. They have established a bond of love and unity among mankind, made scattered peoples one nation and wandering tribes a mighty kingdom. They have laid the foundation of the oneness of God and summoned all to universal peace. All these holy, divine Manifestations are one. They have served one God, promulgated the same truth, founded the same institutions and reflected the same light. Their appearances have been successive and correlated; each One has announced and extolled the One Who was to follow, and all laid the foundation of reality. They summoned and invited the people to love and made the human world a mirror of the Word of God. Therefore, the divine religions They established have one foundation; Their teachings, proofs and evidences are one; in name and form They differ, but in reality They agree and are the same.

13.1

... The proofs applicable to one Prophet are equally applicable to another.

13.2

The first and foremost testimony establishing His truth is His own Self. Next to this testimony is His Revelation. For whoso faileth to recognize either the one or the other He hath established the words He hath revealed as proof of His reality and truth. This is, verily, an evidence of His tender mercy unto men. 13.3

The proof of the validity of a Manifestation of God is the penetration and potency of His Word, the cultivation of heavenly attributes in the hearts and lives of His followers and the bestowal of divine education upon the world of humanity. This is absolute proof. The world is a school in which there must be Teachers of the Word of God. The evidence of the ability of these Teachers is efficient education of the graduating classes. 13.4

What, then, is the mission of the divine Prophets? Their mission is the education and advancement of the world of humanity. They are the real Teachers and Educators, the universal Instructors of mankind. If we wish to discover whether any one of these great Souls or Messengers was in reality a Prophet of God, we must investigate the facts surrounding His life and history, and the first point of our investigation will be the education He bestowed upon mankind. If He has been an Educator, if He has really trained a nation or people, causing it to rise from the lowest depths of ignorance to the highest station of knowledge, then we are sure that He was a Prophet. This is a plain and clear method of procedure, proof that is irrefutable. We do not need to seek after other proofs. We do not need to mention

miracles, saying that out of rock water gushed forth, for such miracles and statements may be denied and refused by those who hear them. The deeds of Moses are conclusive evidences of His Prophethood. If a man be fair, unbiased and willing to investigate reality, he will undoubtedly testify to the fact that Moses was, verily, a man of God and a great Personage. 13.5

... One of the proofs is through the fulfillment of former prophecies, the second proofs are their creative words and phrases which salute the hearts of humanity, the third are their deeds and the fourth are their teachings. 13.6

In yet another passage He saith: "And when he becometh acquainted with any of Our verses he turneth them to ridicule. There is a shameful punishment for them!" The people derisively observed saying: "Work thou another miracle, and give us another sign!" One would say: "Make now a part of the heaven to fall down upon us"; and another: "If this be the very truth from before Thee, rain down stones upon us from heaven." Even as the people of Israel, in the time of Moses, bartered away the bread of heaven for the sordid things of the earth, these people, likewise, sought to exchange the divinely-revealed verses for their foul, their vile, and idle desires. In like manner, thou beholdest in this day that although spiritual sustenance hath descended from the heaven of divine mercy, and been showered from the clouds of His loving kindness, and although the seas of life, at the behest of the Lord of all being, are surging within the Ridván of the heart, yet these people, ravenous as the dogs, have gathered around carrion, and contented themselves

with the stagnant waters of a briny lake. Gracious God! How strange the way of this people! They clamor for guidance, although the standards of Him Who guideth all things are already hoisted. They cleave to the obscure intricacies of knowledge, when He, Who is the Object of all knowledge, shineth as the sun. They see the sun with their own eyes, and yet question that brilliant Orb as to the proof of its light. They behold the vernal showers descending upon them, and yet seek an evidence of that bounty. The proof of the sun is the light thereof, which shineth and envelopeth all things. The evidence of the shower is the bounty thereof, which reneweth and investeth the world with the mantle of life. Yea, the blind can perceive naught from the sun except its heat, and the arid soil hath no share of the showers of mercy. "Marvel not if in the Qur'an the unbeliever perceiveth naught but the trace of letters, for in the sun, the blind findeth naught but heat."

In another passage He saith: "And when Our clear verses are recited to them, their only argument is to say, 'Bring back our fathers, if ye speak the truth!'" Behold, what foolish evidences they sought from these Embodiments of an all-encompassing mercy! They scoffed at the verses, a single letter of which is greater than the creation of heavens and earth, and which quickeneth the dead of the valley of self and desire with the spirit of faith; and clamored saying: "Cause our fathers to speed out of their sepulchres." Such was the perversity and pride of that people. Each one of these verses is unto all the peoples of the world an unfailing testimony and a glorious proof of His truth. Each of them verily sufficeth all mankind, wert thou to meditate upon the verses of God. In the above-mentioned verse itself pearls of

mysteries lie hidden. Whatever be the ailment, the remedy
it offereth can never fail. 13.7

Whoso hath in bygone ages asked Us to produce the
signs of God, hath, no sooner We revealed them to him,
repudiated God's truth. The people, however, have, for
the most part, remained heedless. They whose eyes are
illumined with the light of understanding will perceive
the sweet savors of the All-Merciful, and will embrace His
truth. These are they who are truly sincere. 13.8

God is My witness, O people! I am come to you with
a Revelation from the Lord, your God, the Lord of your
fathers of old. Look not, O people, at the things ye possess.
Look rather at the things God hath sent down unto you.
This, surely, will be better for you than the whole of cre-
ation, could ye but perceive it. Repeat the gaze, O people,
and consider the testimony of God and His proof which are
in your possession, and compare them unto the Revelation
sent down unto you in this Day, that the truth, the infallible
truth, may be indubitably manifested unto you. Follow not,
O people, the steps of the Evil One; follow ye the Faith
of the All-Merciful, and be ye of them that truly believe.
What would it profit man, if he were to fail to recognize the
Revelation of God? Nothing whatever. To this Mine own
Self, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the All-Wise, will
testify. 13.9

If thou deniest Me, by what proof canst thou vindicate
the truth of that which thou dost possess? 13.10

14

Miracles Are Not a Sufficient Proof

Question: It is recorded that miracles were performed by Christ. Are the reports of these miracles really to be accepted literally, or have they another meaning? It has been proved by exact science that the essence of things does not change, and that all beings are under one universal law and organization from which they cannot deviate; and, therefore, that which is contrary to universal law is impossible.

Answer: The Holy Manifestations are the sources of miracles and the originators of wonderful signs. For Them, any difficult and impracticable thing is possible and easy. For through a supernatural power wonders appear from Them; and by this power, which is beyond nature, They influence the world of nature. From all the Manifestations marvelous things have appeared.

But in the Holy Books an especial terminology is employed, and for the Manifestations these miracles and wonderful signs have no importance. They do not even wish to mention them. For if we consider miracles a great proof, they are still only proofs and arguments for those who are present when they are performed, and not for those who are absent.

For example, if we relate to a seeker, a stranger to Moses and Christ, marvelous signs, he will deny them and will say: "Wonderful signs are also continually related of false gods by the testimony of many people, and they are affirmed in

the Books. The Brahmans have written a book about wonderful prodigies from Brahma." He will also say: "How can we know that the Jews and the Christians speak the truth, and that the Brahmans tell a lie? For both are generally admitted traditions, which are collected in books, and may be supposed to be true or false." The same may be said of other religions: if one is true, all are true; if one is accepted, all must be accepted. Therefore, miracles are not a proof. For if they are proofs for those who are present, they fail as proofs to those who are absent.

But in the day of the Manifestation the people with insight see that all the conditions of the Manifestation are miracles, for They are superior to all others, and this alone is an absolute miracle. Recollect that Christ, solitary and alone, without a helper or protector, without armies and legions, and under the greatest oppression, uplifted the standard of God before all the people of the world, and withstood them, and finally conquered all, although outwardly He was crucified. Now this is a veritable miracle which can never be denied. There is no need of any other proof of the truth of Christ.

The outward miracles have no importance for the people of Reality. If a blind man receives sight, for example, he will finally again become sightless, for he will die and be deprived of all his senses and powers. Therefore, causing the blind man to see is comparatively of little importance, for this faculty of sight will at last disappear. If the body of a dead person be resuscitated, of what use is it since the body will die again? But it is important to give perception and eternal life-that is, the spiritual and divine life. For

this physical life is not immortal, and its existence is equivalent to nonexistence. So it is that Christ said to one of His disciples: "Let the dead bury their dead"; for "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Observe: those who in appearance were physically alive, Christ considered dead; for life is the eternal life, and existence is the real existence. Wherever in the Holy Books they speak of raising the dead, the meaning is that the dead were blessed by eternal life; where it is said that the blind received sight, the signification is that he obtained the true perception; where it is said a deaf man received hearing, the meaning is that he acquired spiritual and heavenly hearing. This is ascertained from the text of the Gospel where Christ said: "These are like those of whom Isaiah said, They have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not; and I healed them."

The meaning is not that the Manifestations are unable to perform miracles, for They have all power. But for Them inner sight, spiritual healing and eternal life are the valuable and important things. Consequently, whenever it is recorded in the Holy Books that such a one was blind and recovered his sight, the meaning is that he was inwardly blind, and that he obtained spiritual vision, or that he was ignorant and became wise, or that he was negligent and became heedful, or that he was worldly and became heavenly. 14.1

I do not wish to mention the miracles of Bahá'u'lláh, for it may perhaps be said that these are traditions, liable both to truth and to error, like the accounts of the miracles of Christ in the Gospel, which come to us from the

apostles, and not from anyone else, and are denied by the Jews. Though if I wish to mention the supernatural acts of Bahá'u'lláh, they are numerous; they are acknowledged in the Orient, and even by some non-Bahá'ís. But these narratives are not decisive proofs and evidences to all; the hearer might perhaps say that this account may not be in accordance with what occurred, for it is known that other sects recount miracles performed by their founders. For instance, the followers of Brahmanism relate miracles. From what evidence may we know that those are false and that these are true? If these are fables, the others also are fables; if these are generally accepted, so also the others are generally accepted. Consequently, these accounts are not satisfactory proofs. Yes, miracles are proofs for the eyewitness only, and even he may regard them not as a miracle but as an enchantment. Extraordinary feats have also been related of some conjurors.

Briefly, my meaning is that many wonderful things were done by Bahá'u'lláh, but we do not recount them, as they do not constitute proofs and evidences for all the peoples of the earth, and they are not decisive proofs even for those who see them. ...

14.2

PART IV

The First Proof: His Person

The first proof of the Manifestation of God is His own self. Unlike a philosopher who offers good advice, but does not necessarily practice it, the Manifestation of God lives His teachings. His character is unsurpassed. In addition, His knowledge is innate; its source is God, not human learning.

Unfortunately, if we do not live in the lifetime of the Manifestation of God, we cannot investigate directly the character and personality of these individuals. We are left only with the accounts of others, or stories of how their influence transformed the lives of those who came into contact with them.

There is, however, a second aspect of the personality of the Manifestation that we can observe directly. This is the historical pattern, repeated in every age, of the suffering and hardship inflicted on the Manifestation of God because He proclaimed a new Cause from God and changed the religious teachings practiced for generations. No Manifestation of God escaped this persecution. Yet, despite the personal cost, the Manifestation of God arises fearlessly to proclaim His Cause. Though deprived of any worldly power, He exhibits a divine sovereignty that results in the triumph of His Cause over all its opponents.

Bahá'u'lláh manifested all these proofs. Many souls were transformed by their encounters with Him. Even His enemies testified to His exalted character. Because of His teachings, He endured forty years of imprisonment, exile, and hardship. His followers were persecuted and killed for their beliefs. Yet, those who opposed Him eventually fell from power and were forgotten, while His Cause has spread to all corners of the earth.

15

The Person of the Manifestation

He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation, and His Manifestation can adduce no greater proof of the truth of His Mission than the proof of His own Person. 15.1

Some men and women glory in their exalted thoughts, but if these thoughts never reach the plane of action they remain useless: the power of thought is dependent on its manifestation in deeds. A philosopher's thought may, however, in the world of progress and evolution, translate itself into the actions of other people, even when they themselves are unable or unwilling to show forth their grand ideals in their own lives. To this class the majority of philosophers belong, their teachings being high above their actions. This is the difference between philosophers

who are Spiritual Teachers, and those who are mere philosophers: the Spiritual Teacher is the first to follow His own teaching; He brings down into the world of action His spiritual conceptions and ideals. His Divine thoughts are made manifest to the world. His thought is Himself, from which He is inseparable. When we find a philosopher emphasizing the importance and grandeur of justice, and then encouraging a rapacious monarch in his oppression and tyranny, we quickly realize that he belongs to the first class: for he thinks heavenly thoughts and does not practise the corresponding heavenly virtues.

This state is impossible with Spiritual Philosophers, for they ever express their high and noble thoughts in actions. 15.2

It is evident, then, that the proofs of the validity and inspiration of a Prophet of God are the deeds of beneficent accomplishment and greatness emanating from Him. If He proves to be instrumental in the elevation and betterment of mankind, He is undoubtedly a valid and heavenly Messenger. 15.3

The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to His saying, "His grace hath transcended all things; My grace hath encompassed them all," 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.

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. They are the Treasuries of Divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the Light that can never fade. ... 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. By the revelation of these Gems of Divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty, and grace, are made manifest.

These attributes of God are not, and have never been, vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favored, His holy and chosen Messengers are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light. Even as He hath revealed: "Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel the others."

It hath, therefore, become manifest and evident that within the tabernacles of these Prophets and chosen Ones of God the light of His infinite names and exalted attributes hath been reflected, even though the light of some of these

attributes may or may not be outwardly revealed from these luminous Temples to the eyes of men. 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. Therefore, these illuminated Souls, these beauteous Countenances have, each and every one of them, been endowed with all the attributes of God, such as sovereignty, dominion, and the like, even though to outward seeming they be shorn of all earthly majesty. 15.4

The divine Prophets came to establish the unity of the Kingdom in human hearts. All of them proclaimed the glad tidings of the divine bestowals to the world of mankind. All brought the same message of divine love to the world. Jesus Christ gave His life upon the cross for the unity of mankind. Those who believed in Him likewise sacrificed life, honor, possessions, family, everything, that this human world might be released from the hell of discord, enmity and strife. ... With this small army Christ conquered the world of the East and the West. Kings and nations rose against Him. Philosophers and the greatest men of learning assailed and blasphemed His Cause. All were defeated and overcome, their tongues silenced, their lamps extinguished, their hatred quenched; no trace of them now remains. They have become as nonexistent, while His Kingdom is triumphant and eternal. The brilliant star of His Cause has ascended to the zenith, while night has enveloped and eclipsed His enemies. His name, beloved and adored by a few disciples, now commands the reverence of kings and

nations of the world. His power is eternal; His sovereignty will continue forever, while those who opposed Him are sleeping in the dust, their very names unknown, forgotten. The little army of disciples has become a mighty cohort of millions. The Heavenly Host, the Supreme Concourse are His legions; the Word of God is His sword; the power of God is His victory.

Jesus Christ knew this would come to pass and was content to suffer. His abasement was His glorification; His crown of thorns, a heavenly diadem. When they pressed it upon His blessed head and spat in His beautiful face, they laid the foundation of His everlasting Kingdom. He still reigns, while they and their names have become lost and unknown. He is eternal and glorious; they are nonexistent. They sought to destroy Him, but they destroyed themselves and increased the intensity of His flame by the winds of their opposition.

15.5

And of all men, the most accomplished, the most distinguished and the most excellent are the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth. Nay, all else besides these Manifestations, live by the operation of their Will, and move and have their being through the outpourings of their grace. "But for Thee, I would have not created the heavens." Nay, all in their holy presence fade into utter nothingness, and are a thing forgotten. Human tongue can never befittingly sing their praise, and human speech can never unfold their mystery.

15.6

16

Bahá'u'lláh's Character
and Personality

Again among His signs is ... His demonstrating perfection in all His ways, as testified by the learned and accomplished of many nations. 16.1

... Bahá'u'lláh did not seek position or political station notwithstanding His connection with the government. This occasioned surprise and comment. It was frequently said, "How is it that a young man of such keen intelligence and subtle perception does not seek lucrative appointments? As a matter of fact, every position is open to him." This is an historical statement fully attested by the people of Persia.

He was most generous, giving abundantly to the poor. None who came to Him were turned away. The doors of His house were open to all. He always had many guests. This unbounded generosity was conducive to greater astonishment from the fact that He sought neither position nor prominence. In commenting upon this His friends said He would become impoverished, for His expenses were many and His wealth becoming more and more limited. "Why is he not thinking of his own affairs?" they inquired of each other; but some who were wise declared, "This personage is connected with another world; he has something sublime within him that is not evident now; the day is coming when it will be manifested." In truth, the Blessed Perfection was a refuge for every weak one, a shelter for every fearing one,

kind to every indigent one, lenient and loving to all creatures. He became well-known in regard to these qualities before the Báb appeared. 16.2

If you had come to this blessed place in the days of the manifestation of the evident Light, if you had attained to the court of His presence, and had witnessed His luminous beauty, you would have understood that His teachings and perfection were not in need of further evidence. Only through the honor of entering His presence, many souls became confirmed believers; they had no need of other proofs. Even those people who rejected and hated Him bitterly, when they had met Him, would testify to the grandeur of Bahá'u'lláh, saying, "This is a magnificent man, but what a pity that he makes such a claim! Otherwise, all that he says is acceptable." 16.3

Even His enemies acknowledge the greatness of Bahá'u'lláh, saying He was the miracle of humanity. This was their confession although they did not believe in Him. He was eulogized by Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and Muslims who denied His claim. They frequently said, "He is matchless, unique." A Christian poet in the Orient wrote, "Do not believe him a manifestation of God, yet his miracles are as great as the sun." Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl^[1] has mentioned many poems of this kind, and there are numerous others. The testimony of His enemies witnessed that He was the "miracle of mankind," that He "walked in a special pathway of knowledge" and was "peerless in personality." 16.4

1 Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl was a prominent Bahá'í scholar.

It often happened that in Baghdád certain Muḥammadan 'ulamá, Jewish rabbis and Christians met together with some European scholars, in a blessed reunion: each one had some question to propose, and although they were possessed of varying degrees of culture, they each heard a sufficient and convincing reply, and retired satisfied. Even the Persian 'ulamá who were at Karbilá and Najaf chose a wise man whom they sent on a mission to Him; his name was Mullá Hasan 'Amú. He came into the Holy Presence, and proposed a number of questions on behalf of the 'ulamá, to which Bahá'u'lláh replied. Then Hasan 'Amú said, "The 'ulamá recognize without hesitation and confess the knowledge and virtue of Bahá'u'lláh, and they are unanimously convinced that in all learning he has no peer or equal; and it is also evident that he has never studied or acquired this learning; but still the 'ulamá say, We are not contented with this; we do not acknowledge the reality of his mission by virtue of his wisdom and righteousness. Therefore, we ask him to show us a miracle in order to satisfy and tranquilize our hearts." Bahá'u'lláh replied, "Although you have no right to ask this, for God should test His creatures, and they should not test God, still I allow and accept this request. But the Cause of God is not a theatrical display that is presented every hour, of which some new diversion may be asked for every day. If it were thus, the Cause of God would become mere child's play.

"The 'ulamás must, therefore, assemble, and, with one accord, choose one miracle, and write that, after the performance of this miracle they will no longer entertain doubts about Me, and that all will acknowledge and confess the truth of My Cause. Let them seal this paper, and bring it to

Me. This must be the accepted criterion: if the miracle is performed, no doubt will remain for them; and if not, We shall be convicted of imposture.” The learned man, Hasan ‘Amu, rose and replied, “There is no more to be said”; he then kissed the knee of the Blessed One although he was not a believer, and went. He gathered the ‘ulamá and gave them the sacred message. They consulted together and said, “This man is an enchanter; perhaps he will perform an enchantment, and then we shall have nothing more to say.” Acting on this belief, they did not dare to push the matter further. This man, Hasan ‘Amu, mentioned this fact at many meetings. After leaving Karbila he went to Kirmánsháh and Tíhrán and spread a detailed account of it everywhere, laying emphasis on the fear and the withdrawal of the ‘ulamá.

Briefly, all His adversaries in the Orient acknowledged His greatness, grandeur, knowledge and virtue; and though they were His enemies, they always spoke of Him as “the renowned Bahá’u’lláh.”

16.5

17

His Knowledge is Innate

... Among His signs is the dawning sun of His knowledge, and the rising moon of His arts and skills

17.1

The sun emanates from itself and does not draw its light from other sources. The divine teachers have the innate

light; they have knowledge and understanding of all things in the universe; the rest of the world receives its light from them and through them the arts and sciences are revived in each age.

Abraham and Moses went to no school; Jesus had neither school nor master; Muḥammad never had a lesson; the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh had no professors. ... How can those who depend on mortals be divine messengers? How can a lamp which has to be lighted be eternal? The divine teacher does not come to acquire knowledge. 17.2

The Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh, belonged to the royal family of Persia. From earliest childhood He was distinguished among His relatives and friends. They said, "This child has extraordinary power." In wisdom, intelligence and as a source of new knowledge, He was advanced beyond His age and superior to His surroundings. All who knew Him were astonished at His precocity. ... During the period of youth the Blessed Perfection did not enter school. He was not willing to be taught.

This fact is well established among the Persians of Ṭihrán. Nevertheless, He was capable of solving the difficult problems of all who came to Him. In whatever meeting, scientific assembly or theological discussion He was found, He became the authority of explanation upon intricate and abstruse questions presented. 17.3

Bahá'u'lláh had never studied Arabic; He had not had a tutor or teacher, nor had He entered a school. Nevertheless, the eloquence and elegance of His blessed expositions in Arabic, as well as His Arabic writings, caused astonishment

and stupefaction to the most accomplished Arabic scholars, and all recognized and declared that He was incomparable and unequalled. 17.4

He manifested such virtue, knowledge and perfections that He became a wonder to all the people of Persia. So much so that in Ṭihrán, Baghdád, Constantinople, Rumelia, and even in 'Akka, every one of the learned and scientific men who entered His presence, whether friend or enemy, never failed to receive the most sufficient and convincing answer to whatever question was propounded. All frequently acknowledged that He was alone and unique in all perfections. 17.5

We have not entered any school, nor read any of your dissertations. Incline your ears to the words of this unlettered One, wherewith He summoneth you unto God, the Ever-Abiding. Better is this for you than all the treasures of the earth, could ye but comprehend it. 17.6

This Wronged One hath frequented no school, neither hath He attended the controversies of the learned. By My life! Not of Mine own volition have I revealed Myself, but God, of His own choosing, hath manifested Me. 17.7

Thou knowest full well that We perused not the books which men possess and We acquired not the learning current amongst them, and yet whenever We desire to quote the sayings of the learned and of the wise, presently there will appear before the face of thy Lord in the form of a tablet all that which hath appeared in the world and is revealed in the Holy Books and Scriptures. Thus do We set down in

writing that which the eye perceiveth. Verily His knowledge encompasseth the earth and the heavens.

This is a Tablet wherein the Pen of the Unseen hath inscribed the knowledge of all that hath been and shall be—a knowledge that none other but My wondrous Tongue can interpret. Indeed My heart as it is in itself hath been purged by God from the concepts of the learned and is sanctified from the utterances of the wise. In truth naught doth it mirror forth but the revelations of God. Unto this beareth witness the Tongue of Grandeur in this perspicuous Book. 17.8

O ye leaders of religion! Who is the man amongst you that can rival Me in vision or insight? Where is he to be found that dareth to claim to be My equal in utterance or wisdom? No, by My Lord, the All-Merciful! All on the earth shall pass away; and this is the face of your Lord, the Almighty, the Well-Beloved. 17.9

18

He Endured Suffering and Hardship

Moreover, consider the hardships and the bitterness of the lives of those Revealers of the divine Beauty. Reflect, how single-handed and alone they faced the world and all its peoples, and promulgated the Law of God! No matter how severe the persecutions inflicted upon those holy,

those precious, and tender Souls, they still remained, in the plenitude of their power, patient, and, despite their ascendancy, they suffered and endured. 18.1

At the time when this great Light suddenly arose upon the horizon of Persia, all the people, the ministers, the ‘ulamá and men of other classes rose against Him, pursuing Him with the greatest animosity, and proclaiming “that this man wishes to suppress and destroy the religion, the law, the nation and the empire.” The same was said of Christ. But Bahá’u’lláh alone and without support resisted them all, without ever showing the least weakness. At last they said, “As long as this man is in Persia, there will be no peace and tranquillity; we must banish him, so that Persia may return to a state of quietude.”

They proceeded to use violence toward Him to oblige Him to ask for permission to leave Persia, thinking that by this means the light of His truth would be extinguished, but the result was quite the contrary. The Cause became magnified, and its flame more intense. At first it spread throughout Persia only, but the exile of Bahá’u’lláh caused the diffusion of the Cause throughout other countries.

Afterward His enemies said, ‘Iraq ... is not far enough from Persia; we must send him to a more distant kingdom.” This is why the Persian government determined to send Bahá’u’lláh from ‘Iraq to Constantinople. Again the event proved that the Cause was not in the least weakened. Once more they said, “Constantinople is a place of passage and of sojourn for various races and peoples; among them are many Persians.” For this reason the Persians had Him further exiled to Rumelia; but, when there, the flame

became more powerful, and the Cause more exalted. At last the Persians said, “Not one of these places is safe from his influence; we must send him to some place where he will be reduced to powerlessness, and where his family and followers will have to submit to the direst afflictions.” So they chose the prison of ‘Akka, which is reserved especially for murderers, thieves and highway robbers, and in truth they classed Him with such people. But the power of God became manifested: His word was promulgated, and the greatness of Bahá’u’lláh then became evident, for it was from this prison and under such humiliating circumstances that He caused Persia to advance from one state into another state. He overcame all His enemies and proved to them that they could not resist the Cause. His holy teachings penetrated all regions, and His Cause was established.

Indeed, in all parts of Persia His enemies arose against Him with the greatest hatred, imprisoning, killing and beating His converts, and burning and razing to the ground thousands of dwellings, striving by every means to exterminate and crush the Cause. In spite of all this, from the prison of murderers, highway robbers and thieves, it became exalted. His teachings were spread abroad, and His exhortations affected many of those who had been the most full of hatred, and made them firm believers. Even the Persian government itself became awakened and regretted that which had arisen through the fault of the ‘ulamá.

18.2

The Abhá Beauty Himself—may the spirit of all existence be offered up for His loved ones—bore all manner of ordeals, and willingly accepted for Himself intense

afflictions. No torment was there left that His sacred form was not subjected to, no suffering that did not descend upon Him. How many a night, when He was chained, did He go sleepless because of the weight of His iron collar; how many a day the burning pain of the stocks and fetters gave Him no moment's peace. From Níyávarán to Ṭihrán they made Him run—He, that embodied spirit, He Who had been accustomed to repose against cushions of ornamented silk—chained, shoeless, His head bared; and down under the earth, in the thick darkness of that narrow dungeon, they shut Him up with murderers, rebels and thieves. Ever and again they assailed Him with a new torment, and all were certain that from one moment to the next He would suffer a martyr's death. After sometime they banished Him from His native land, and sent Him to countries alien and far away. During many a year in 'Iraq, no moment passed but the arrow of a new anguish struck His holy heart; with every breath a sword came down upon that sacred body, and He could hope for no moment of security and rest. From every side His enemies mounted their attack with unrelenting hate; and singly and alone He withstood them all. ... My pen is powerless to tell it all; but ye have surely been informed of it. Then, after twenty-four years in this, the Most Great Prison, in agony and sore affliction, His days drew to a close.

To sum it up, the Ancient Beauty was ever, during His sojourn in this transitory world, either a captive bound with chains, or living under a sword, or subjected to extreme suffering and torment, or held in the Most Great Prison. Because of His physical weakness, brought on by His afflictions, His blessed body was worn away to a breath; it was

light as a cobweb from long grieving. And His reason for shouldering this heavy load and enduring all this anguish, which was even as an ocean that hurleth its waves to high heaven—His reason for putting on the heavy iron chains and for becoming the very embodiment of utter resignation and meekness, was to lead every soul on earth to concord, to fellow-feeling, to oneness; to make known amongst all peoples the sign of the singleness of God, so that at last the primal oneness deposited at the heart of all created things would bear its destined fruit, and the splendor of “No difference canst thou see in the creation of the God of Mercy,” would cast abroad its rays. 18.3

Bahá'u'lláh endured ordeals and hardships sixty years. There was no persecution, vicissitude or suffering He did not experience at the hand of His enemies and oppressors. All the days of His life were passed in difficulty and tribulation—at one time in prison, another in exile, sometimes in chains. He willingly endured these difficulties for the unity of mankind, praying that the world of humanity might realize the radiance of God, the oneness of humankind become a reality, strife and warfare cease and peace and tranquility be realized by all. In prison He hoisted the banner of human solidarity, proclaiming universal peace, writing to the kings and rulers of nations, summoning them to international unity and counseling arbitration. His life was a vortex of persecution and difficulty; yet catastrophes, extreme ordeals and vicissitudes did not hinder the accomplishment of His work and mission. Nay, on the contrary, His power became greater and greater, His efficiency and influence spread and increased until His

glorious light shone throughout the Orient, love and unity were established, and the differing religions found a center of contact and reconciliation. 18.4

The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they that have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities! 18.5

19

He Upheld His Claim in the Face of All Opposition

Another proof and evidence of the truth of this Revelation, which amongst all other proofs shineth as the sun, is the constancy of the eternal Beauty in proclaiming the Faith of God. Though young and tender of age, and though the

Cause He revealed was contrary to the desire of all the peoples of earth, both high and low, rich and poor, exalted and abased, king and subject, yet He arose and steadfastly proclaimed it. All have known and heard this. He was afraid of no one; He was regardless of consequences. Could such a thing be made manifest except through the power of a divine Revelation, and the potency of God's invincible Will? By the righteousness of God! Were any one to entertain so great a Revelation in his heart, the thought of such a declaration would alone confound him! Were the hearts of all men to be crowded into his heart, he would still hesitate to venture upon so awful an enterprise. He could achieve it only by the permission of God, only if the channel of his heart were to be linked with the Source of divine grace, and his soul be assured of the unfailing sustenance of the Almighty. To what, We wonder, do they ascribe so great a daring? Do they accuse Him of folly as they accused the Prophets of old?

19.1

Everywhere we hear the call of the spiritual world; in everything we behold the works of God. The church bells are pealing in memory of Jesus Christ although more than nineteen hundred years have passed since He lived upon the earth. This is through the power of the spirit. No material power could do this. Yet people in their blindness deny Christ, seeking to perpetuate their names in worldly deeds. Everyone wishes to be remembered. Through earthly and material accomplishments one will hardly be remembered nine years, while the memory and glory of Christ continue after nineteen hundred have passed. For His name is eternal and His glory everlasting. ...

None of the Prophets of God were famous men, but They were unique in spiritual power. ... What evidence of this could be greater than the accomplishment of Bahá'u'lláh? He appeared in the East and was exiled. He was sent to the prison of 'Akka in Palestine. Two powerful despotic kings arose against Him. During His exile and imprisonment He wrote Tablets of authority to the kings and rulers of the world, announcing His spiritual sovereignty, establishing the religion of God, upraising the heavenly banners of the Cause of God. One of these Tablets was sent to Napoleon III, Emperor of France. He received it with contempt and cast it behind his back. Bahá'u'lláh addressed a second Tablet to him, containing these words, "Hadst thou been sincere in thy words, thou wouldst have not cast behind thy back the Book of God, when it was sent unto thee. ... For what thou hast done, thy kingdom shall be thrown into confusion, and thine empire shall pass from thine hands, as a punishment for that which thou hast wrought. ..." All this happened just as announced by Bahá'u'lláh. Napoleon III was dethroned and exiled. His empire passed away and became nonexistent while the dominion and sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh, the Prisoner, has become eternal through the confirmation of God. This is as evident as the light of the sun at midday except to those who are spiritually blind. If we are afflicted with a cold, we cannot inhale the delicate fragrances emanating from the rose garden of the divine Kingdom.

19.2

When Bahá'u'lláh appeared in Persia, all the contemporaneous religious sects and systems rose against Him. His enemies were kings. The enemies of Christ were the

Jews, the Pharisees; but the enemies of Bahá'u'lláh were rulers who could command armies and bring hundreds of thousands of soldiers into the arena of operation. These kings represented some fifty million people, all of whom under their influence and domination were opposed to Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore, in effect Bahá'u'lláh, singly and alone, virtually withstood fifty million enemies. Yet these great numbers, instead of being able to dominate Him, could not withstand His wonderful personality and the power and influence of His heavenly Cause. Although they were determined upon extinguishing the light in that most brilliant lantern, they were ultimately defeated and overthrown, and day by day His splendor became more radiant. They made every effort to lessen His greatness, but His prestige and renown grew in proportion to their endeavors to diminish it. Surrounded by enemies who were seeking His life, He never sought to conceal Himself, did nothing to protect Himself; on the contrary, in His spiritual might and power He was at all times visible before the faces of men, easy of access, serenely withstanding the multitudes who were opposing Him. At last His banner was upraised.

If we study historical record and review the pages of Holy Writ, we will find that none of the Prophets of the past ever spread His teachings or promulgated His Cause from a prison. But Bahá'u'lláh upheld the banner of the Cause of God while He was in a dungeon, addressing the kings of the earth from His prison cell, severely arraiging them for their oppression of their subjects and their misuse of power.

19.3

When Bahá'u'lláh came to this prison in the Holy Land, the wise men realized that the glad tidings which God gave through the tongue of the Prophets two or three thousand years before were again manifested, and that God was faithful to His promise; for to some of the Prophets He had revealed and given the good news that “the Lord of Hosts should be manifested in the Holy Land.” All these promises were fulfilled; and it is difficult to understand how Bahá'u'lláh could have been obliged to leave Persia, and to pitch His tent in this Holy Land, but for the persecution of His enemies, His banishment and exile. His enemies intended that His imprisonment should completely destroy and annihilate the blessed Cause, but this prison was in reality of the greatest assistance and became the means of its development. The divine renown of Bahá'u'lláh reached the East and the West, and the rays of the Sun of Truth illuminated all the world. Praise be to God! though He was a prisoner, His tent was raised on Mount Carmel, and He moved abroad with the greatest majesty. Every person, friend or stranger, who came into His presence used to say, “This is a prince, not a captive.” ...

For fifty years Bahá'u'lláh faced His enemies like a mountain: all wished to annihilate Him and sought His destruction. A thousand times they planned to crucify and destroy Him, and during these fifty years He was in constant danger.

19.4

Dost thou believe thou hast the power to frustrate His Will, to hinder Him from executing His judgment, or to deter Him from exercising His sovereignty? Pretendest thou that aught in the heavens or in the earth can resist

His Faith? No, by Him Who is the Eternal Truth! Nothing whatsoever in the whole of creation can thwart His Purpose.

...

If this Cause be of God, no man can prevail against it; and if it be not of God, the divines amongst you, and they that follow their corrupt desires and such as have rebelled against Him will surely suffice to overpower it. 19.5

Observe thou with a keen eye. The Sun of Truth shineth resplendently, at the bidding of the Lord of the kingdom of utterance, and the King of the heaven of knowledge, above the horizon of the prison-city of 'Akka. Repudiation hath not veiled it, and ten thousand hosts arrayed against it were powerless to withhold it from shining. Thou canst excuse thyself no longer. Either thou must recognize it, or—God forbid—arise and deny all the Prophets! 19.6

PART V

The Second Proof: His Word

The second proof of the Manifestation of God is His revelation of the Word of God—the Holy Book of His religion. These books are brought by illiterate or uneducated individuals; nevertheless they address the most challenging themes of human existence. Through these Words, the Manifestation of God unites the hearts of humanity and transforms earthly individuals into heavenly souls that manifest divine qualities. These words release a creative power into the world that contributes to the progress of humanity.

Bahá'u'lláh demonstrated this proof to a degree unsurpassed in the history of religion. He revealed thousands of Tablets that would equal, by His own testimony, one hundred volumes. These Writings touch on all aspects of human concern—material, social, and spiritual. Those individuals who recognized Bahá'u'lláh and who came under the transforming effect of His words were united with other believers of vastly divergent backgrounds and were illumined by divine qualities and attributes. Whereas in religions of past ages only the lowly were the first to believe in the new Manifestation, Bahá'u'lláh also attracted souls who were the most learned of their age. While Jesus and other Manifestations of God

had only a handful of followers at the time their earthly existence drew to a close, Bahá'u'lláh's followers numbered in the thousands.

20

The Word of God as a Proof

When the channel of the human soul is cleansed of all worldly and impeding attachments, it will unfailingly perceive the breath of the Beloved across immeasurable distances, and will, led by its perfume, attain and enter the City of Certitude. Therein he will discern the wonders of His ancient wisdom, and will perceive all the hidden teachings from the rustling leaves of the Tree which flourisheth in that City. ...

They that valiantly labor in quest of God's will, when once they have renounced all else but Him, will be so attached and wedded to that City that a moment's separation from it would to them be unthinkable. ... Once in about a thousand years shall this City be renewed and re-adorned.

Wherefore, O my friend, it behooveth Us to exert the highest endeavor to attain unto that City, and, by the grace of God and His loving-kindness, rend asunder the "veils of glory"; so that, with inflexible steadfastness, we may sacrifice our drooping souls in the path of the New Beloved. We should with tearful eyes, fervently and repeatedly, implore Him to grant us the favor of that grace.

That city is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation. In the days of Moses it was the Pentateuch; in the days of Jesus the Gospel; in the days of Muḥammad the Messenger of God the Qur'an; in this day the Bayan; and in the dispensation of Him Whom God will make manifest His own Book the Book unto which all the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book which standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme. In these cities spiritual sustenance is bountifully provided, and incorruptible delights have been ordained. The food they bestow is the bread of heaven, and the Spirit they impart is God's imperishable blessing. Upon detached souls they bestow the gift of Unity, enrich the destitute, and offer the cup of knowledge unto them who wander in the wilderness of ignorance. All the guidance, the blessings, the learning, the understanding, the faith, and certitude, conferred upon all that is in heaven and on earth, are hidden and treasured within these Cities. 20.1

That which is preeminent above all other gifts, is incorruptible in nature, and pertaineth to God Himself, is the gift of Divine Revelation. Every bounty conferred by the Creator upon man, be it material or spiritual, is subservient unto this. It is, in its essence, and will ever so remain, the Bread which cometh down from Heaven. It is God's supreme testimony, the clearest evidence of His truth, the sign of His consummate bounty, the token of His all-encompassing mercy, the proof of His most loving providence, the symbol of His most perfect grace. 20.2

The essential teaching of Moses was the law of Sinai, the Ten Commandments. Christ renewed and again revealed

the commands of the one God and precepts of human action. In Muḥammad, although the circle was wider, the intention of His teaching was likewise to uplift and unify humanity in the knowledge of the one God. In the Báb the circle was again very much enlarged, but the essential teaching was the same. The Books of Bahá'u'lláh number more than one hundred. Each one is an evident proof sufficient for mankind; each one from foundation to apex proclaims the essential unity of God and humanity, the love of God, the abolition of war and the divine standard of peace. Each one also inculcates divine morality, the manifestation of lordly graces—in every word a book of meanings. For the Word of God is collective wisdom, absolute knowledge and eternal truth.

20.3

The evidence set forth by God can never be compared with the evidences produced by any one of the peoples and kindreds of the earth; and beyond a shadow of doubt no evidence is set forth by God save through the One Who is appointed as His supreme Testimony. Moreover, the proof of revealed verses doth, alone and of itself, conclusively demonstrate the utter impotence of all created things on earth, for this is a proof which hath proceeded from God and shall endure until the Day of Resurrection.

And if anyone should reflect on the appearance of this Tree, he will undoubtedly testify to the loftiness of the Cause of God. For if one from Whose life only twenty-four years have passed, and Who is devoid of those sciences wherein all are learned, now reciteth verses after such fashion without thought or hesitation, writes a thousand verses of prayer in the course of five hours without pause of the pen, and produceth commentaries and learned

treatises on such lofty themes as the true understanding of God and of the oneness of His Being, in a manner which doctors and philosophers confess surpasseth their power of understanding, then there is no doubt that all that hath been manifested is divinely inspired. Notwithstanding their life-long diligent study, what pains do these divines take when writing a single line in Arabic! Yet after such efforts the result is but words which are unworthy of mention. All these things are for a proof unto the people; otherwise the religion of God is too mighty and glorious for anyone to comprehend through aught but itself; rather by it all else is understood. 20.4

Therefore, should a person arise and bring forth a myriad verses, discourses, epistles, and prayers, none of which have been acquired through learning, what conceivable excuse could justify those that reject them, and deprive themselves of the potency of their grace? What answer could they give when once their soul hath ascended and departed from its gloomy temple? Could they seek to justify themselves by saying: "We have clung to a certain tradition, and not having beheld the literal fulfillment thereof, we have therefore raised such cavils against the Embodiments of divine Revelation, and kept remote from the law of God?" Hast thou not heard that among the reasons why certain Prophets have been designated as Prophets "endowed with constancy" was the revelation of a Book unto them? And yet, how could this people be justified in rejecting the Revealer and Author of so many volumes of verses, and follow the sayings of him who hath foolishly sown the seeds of doubt in the hearts of men, and who, Satan-like, hath risen to lead the people into the paths of perdition and error? 20.5

21

Bahá'u'lláh Revealed the
Word of God

Another of His signs is the marvel of His discourse, the eloquence of His utterance, the rapidity with which His Writings were revealed, His words of wisdom, His verses, His epistles, His communes, His unfolding of the Qur'an, both the abstruse verses thereof and the clear. By thy very life! This thing is plain as day to whoever will regard it with the eye of justice.

21.1

I am come to you, O people, from the Throne of glory, and bear you an announcement from God, the Most Powerful, the Most Exalted, the Most Great. In mine hand I carry the testimony of God, your Lord and the Lord of your sires of old. Weigh it with the just Balance that ye possess, the Balance of the testimony of the Prophets and Messengers of God. If ye find it to be established in truth, if ye believe it to be of God, beware, then, lest ye cavil at it, and render your works vain, and be numbered with the infidels. It is indeed the sign of God that hath been sent down through the power of truth, through which the validity of His Cause hath been demonstrated unto His creatures, and the ensigns of purity lifted up betwixt earth and heaven.

Say: This is the sealed and mystic Scroll, the repository of God's irrevocable Decree, bearing the words which the Finger of Holiness hath traced, that lay wrapt within the veil of impenetrable mystery, and hath now been sent down

as a token of the grace of Him Who is the Almighty, the Ancient of Days. 21.2

Beware that ye divest not yourselves of the raiment of Divine guidance. ... Repeat the gaze, that ye may perceive the things whereunto the Tongue of the Ancient of Days hath summoned you, that haply ye may be of them that have apprehended the truth. Heard it ye ever reported by your fathers of old, or by the generations that preceded them, even unto the first Adam, that any one coming in the clouds of revelation, being invested with manifest and transcendent sovereignty, having on his right hand the Kingdom of God and on his left all the power and glory of His everlasting dominion, any one preceded by the hosts of God, the Almighty, the All-Compelling, the Most Powerful, and uttering continually verses whose import the minds of the most learned and wisest of men are powerless to fathom, should yet be the bearer of a message that is not of God? Be discerning, then, and speak ye the truth, the very truth, if ye claim to be honest and high-minded.

Say: The verses We have revealed are as numerous as those which, in the preceding Revelation, were sent down upon the Báb. Let him that doubteth the words which the Spirit of God hath spoken seek the court of Our presence and hear Our divinely-revealed verses, and be an eye-witness of the clear proof of Our claim. Say: By the righteousness of the Almighty! The measure of the favors of God hath been filled up, His Word hath been perfected, the light of His countenance hath been revealed, His sovereignty hath encompassed the whole of creation, the glory of His Revelation hath been made manifest, and His bounties have rained upon all mankind. 21.3

These utterances themselves proclaim the true nature of the Faith of God. He it is Who witnesseth unto all things. To demonstrate the truth of His Revelation He hath not been, nor is He, dependent upon any one. Well nigh a hundred volumes of luminous verses and perspicuous words have already been sent down from the heaven of the will of Him Who is the Revealer of signs, and are available unto all. It is for thee to direct thyself towards the Ultimate Goal, and the Supreme End, and the Most Sublime Pinnacle, that thou mayest hear and behold what hath been revealed by God, the Lord of the worlds. 21.4

“Day and night,” an eye-witness has written, “the Divine verses were raining down in such number that it was impossible to record them. Mírzá Áqá Ján^[1] wrote them as they were dictated, while the Most Great Branch^[2] was continually occupied in transcribing them. There was not a moment to spare.” “A number of secretaries,” Nabíl^[3] has testified, “were busy day and night and yet they were unable to cope with the task. Among them was Mírzá Báqir-i-Shirází. ... He alone transcribed no less than two thousand verses every day. He labored during six or seven months. Every month the equivalent of several volumes would be transcribed by him and sent to Persia. ...” Bahá’u’lláh, Himself, referring to the verses revealed by Him, has written: “Such are the outpourings ... from the clouds of Divine Bounty that within the space of an hour the equivalent of a thousand verses hath been revealed.” “So

1 Mírzá Áqá Ján was Bahá’u’lláh’s secretary.

2 “The Most Great Branch” is a title of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

3 Nabíl wrote a history of the time of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh.

great is the grace vouchsafed in this day that in a single day and night, were an amanuensis capable of accomplishing it to be found, the equivalent of the Persian Bayan would be sent down from the heaven of Divine holiness." "I swear by God!" He in another connection has affirmed, "In those days the equivalent of all that hath been sent down aforetime unto the Prophets hath been revealed." "That which hath already been revealed in this land (Adrianople)," He furthermore, referring to the copiousness of His writings, has declared, "secretaries are incapable of transcribing. It has, therefore, remained for the most part untranscribed."

21.5

The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the realm of being. The Great Being saith: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked. ... It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things. Every thing which can be perceived is but an emanation therefrom.

21.6

Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose. Through the mere revelation of the word "Fashioner," issuing forth from His lips and proclaiming His attribute to mankind, such power is released as can generate, through

successive ages, all the manifold arts which the hands of man can produce. This, verily is a certain truth. No sooner is this resplendent word uttered, than its animating energies, stirring within all created things, give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfected. All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequences of the Revelation of this Name. In the days to come, ye will, verily, behold things of which ye have never heard before. Thus hath it been decreed in the Tablets of God, and none can comprehend it except them whose sight is sharp. In like manner, the moment the word expressing My attribute “the Omniscient” issueth forth from My mouth, every created thing will, according to its capacity and limitations, be invested with the power to unfold the knowledge of the most marvelous sciences, and will be empowered to manifest them in the course of time at the bidding of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Knowing. Know thou of a certainty that the Revelation of every other Name is accompanied by a similar manifestation of Divine power. Every single letter proceeding out of the mouth of God is indeed a mother letter, and every word uttered by Him Who is the Well Spring of Divine Revelation is a mother word, and His Tablet a Mother Tablet. Well is it with them that apprehend this truth. 21.7

22

His Revelation Establishes Unity

The real temple is the very Word of God; for to it all humanity must turn, and it is the center of unity for all mankind. It is the collective center, the cause of accord and communion of hearts, the sign of the solidarity of the human race, the source of eternal life. 22.1

The divine religions were founded for the purpose of unifying humanity and establishing universal peace. Any movement which brings about peace and agreement in human society is truly a divine movement; any reform which causes people to come together under the shelter of the same tabernacle is surely animated by heavenly motives. At all times and in all ages of the world, religion has been a factor in cementing together the hearts of men and in uniting various and divergent creeds. It is the peace element in religion that blends mankind and makes for unity. Warfare has ever been the cause of separation, disunion and discord.

Consider how Jesus Christ united the divergent peoples, sects and denominations of the early days. It is evident that the fundamentals of religion are intended to unify and bind together; their purpose is universal, everlasting peace. Prior to the time of Jesus Christ the Word of God had unified opposite types and conflicting elements of human society; and since His appearance the divine Teachers of the primal principles of the law of God have all intended this universal outcome. In Persia Bahá'u'lláh was able to unite people of varying thought, creed and denomination.

The inhabitants of that country were Christians, Muslims, Jews, Zoroastrians and a great variety of subdivided forms and beliefs together with racial distinctions such as Semitic, Arabic, Persian, Turk, etc.; but through the power and efficacy of religion Bahá'u'lláh united these differing peoples and caused them to consort together in perfect agreement. Such unity and accord became manifest among them that they were considered as one people and one kind. ...

The central purpose of the divine religions is the establishment of peace and unity among mankind. Their reality is one; therefore, their accomplishment is one and universal—whether it be through the essential or material ordinances of God. There is but one light of the material sun, one ocean, one rain, one atmosphere. Similarly, in the spiritual world there is one divine reality forming the center and altruistic basis for peace and reconciliation among various and conflicting nations and peoples. Consider how the Roman Empire and Greek nation were at war in enmity and hatred after the Messianic day, how the hostilities of Egypt and Assyria, though subdued in intensity, still flamed in the warring element of these ancient and declining nations. But the teachings of Jesus Christ proved to be the cement by which they were united; warfare ceased, strife and hatred passed away, and these belligerent peoples associated in love and friendship. 22.2

Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of

human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men. Verily, it is the penetrating power in all things, the mover of souls and the binder and regulator in the world of humanity.

Praise be to God, today the splendor of the Word of God hath illumined every horizon, and from all sects, races, tribes, nations, and communities souls have come together in the light of the Word, assembled, united and agreed in perfect harmony. Oh! What a great number of meetings are held adorned with souls from various races and diverse sects! Anyone attending these will be struck with amazement, and might suppose that the se souls are all of one land, one nationality, one community, one thought, one belief and one opinion; whereas, in fact, one is an American, the other an African, one cometh from Asia and another from Europe, one is a native of India, another is from Turkestan, one is an Arab, another a Tajik, another a Persian and yet another a Greek. Notwithstanding such diversity they associate in perfect harmony and unity, love and freedom; they have one voice, one thought and one purpose. Verily, this is from the penetrative power of the Word of God! If all the forces of the universe were to combine they would not be able thus to gather a single assemblage so imbued with the sentiments of love, affection, attraction and enkindlement as to unite the members of different races and to raise up from the heart of the world a voice that shall dispel war and strife, uproot dissension

and disputation, usher in the era of universal peace and establish unity and concord amongst men.

Can any power withstand the penetrative influence of the Word of God? Nay, by God! The proof is clear and the evidence is complete! If anyone looketh with the eyes of justice he shall be struck with wonder and amazement and will testify that all the peoples, sects and races of the world should be glad, content and grateful for the teachings and admonitions of Bahá'u'lláh. For these divine injunctions tame every ferocious beast, transform the creeping insect into a soaring bird, cause human souls to become angels of the Kingdom, and make the human world a focus for the qualities of mercy.

22.3

23

His Revelation Raised Illumined Individuals

It is easy to bring human bodies under control. A king can bring under his rule and authority the bodies of his subjects throughout a whole country. In former centuries kings and rulers have absolutely dominated millions of men and have been thereby enabled to carry out whatsoever they desire. If they willed to bestow happiness and peace, they could do so; and if they determined to inflict suffering and discomfort, they were equally capable. If they desired to send men to the field of battle, none could oppose their

authority; and if they decreed their kingdoms should enjoy the bliss and serenity of immunity from war, this condition prevailed. In a word, kings and rulers have been able to control millions of human beings and have exercised that dominion with the utmost despotism and tyranny.

The point is this: that to gain control over physical bodies is an extremely easy matter, but to bring spirits within the bonds of serenity is a most arduous undertaking. This is not the work of everybody. It necessitates a divine and holy potency, the potency of inspiration, the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, Christ was capable of leading spirits into that abode of serenity. He was capable of guiding hearts into that haven of rest. From the day of His manifestation to the present time He has been resuscitating hearts and quickening spirits. He has exercised that vivifying influence in the realm of hearts and spirits; therefore, His resuscitating is everlasting.

In this century of the latter times Bahá'u'lláh has appeared and so resuscitated spirits that they have manifested powers more than human. Thousands of His followers have given their lives; and while under the sword, shedding their blood, they have proclaimed, “Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!” Such resuscitation is impossible except through a heavenly potency, a supernatural power, the divine power of the Holy Spirit. Through a natural and mere human power this is impossible. 23.1

And among the evidences of the truth of His manifestation were the ascendancy, the transcendent power, and supremacy which He, the Revealer of being and Manifestation of the Adored, hath, unaided and alone, revealed throughout

the world. No sooner had that eternal Beauty revealed Himself ... and rent asunder the veil of concealment, than the signs of the ascendancy, the might, the sovereignty, and power, emanating from that Essence of Essences and Sea of Seas, were manifest in every land. So much so, that from every city there appeared the signs, the evidences, the tokens, the testimonies of that divine Luminary. How many were those pure and kindly hearts which faithfully reflected the light of that eternal Sun, and how manifold the emanations of knowledge from that Ocean of divine wisdom which encompassed all beings! In every city, all the divines and dignitaries rose to hinder and repress them, and girded up the loins of malice, of envy, and tyranny for their suppression. How great the number of those holy souls, those essences of justice, who, accused of tyranny, were put to death! And how many embodiments of purity, who showed forth naught but true knowledge and stainless deeds, suffered an agonizing death! Notwithstanding all this, each of these holy beings, up to his last moment, breathed the Name of God, and soared in the realm of submission and resignation. Such was the potency and transmuting influence which He exercised over them, that they ceased to cherish any desire but His will, and wedded their soul to His remembrance.

Reflect: Who in this world is able to manifest such transcendent power, such pervading influence? All these stainless hearts and sanctified souls have, with absolute resignation, responded to the summons of His decree. Instead of complaining, they rendered thanks unto God, and amidst the darkness of their anguish they revealed naught but radiant acquiescence to His will. 23.2

Amongst the proofs demonstrating the truth of this Revelation is this, that in every age and Dispensation, whenever the invisible Essence was revealed in the person of His Manifestation, certain souls, obscure and detached from all worldly entanglements, would seek illumination from the Sun of Prophethood and Moon of divine guidance, and would attain unto the divine Presence. For this reason, the divines of the age and those possessed of wealth, would scorn and scoff at these people. Even as He hath revealed concerning them that erred: "Then said the chiefs of His people who believed not, 'We see in Thee but a man like ourselves; and we see not any who have followed Thee except our meanest ones of hasty judgment, nor see we any excellence in you above ourselves: nay, we deem you liars.'" They caviled at those holy Manifestations, and protested saying: "None hath followed you except the abject amongst us, those who are worthy of no attention." Their aim was to show that no one amongst the learned, the wealthy, and the renowned believed in them. By this and similar proofs they sought to demonstrate the falsity of Him that speaketh naught but the truth.

In this most resplendent Dispensation, however, this most mighty Sovereignty, a number of illumined divines, of men of consummate learning, of doctors of mature wisdom, have attained unto His Court, drunk the cup of His divine Presence, and been invested with the honor of His most excellent favor. They have renounced, for the sake of the Beloved, the world and all that is therein. ...

All these were guided by the light of that Sun of divine Revelation, confessed and acknowledged His truth. Such

was their faith, that most of them renounced their substance and kindred, and cleaved to the good-pleasure of the All-Glorious. They laid down their lives for their Well-Beloved, and surrendered their all in His path. Their breasts were made targets for the darts of the enemy, and their heads adorned the spears of the infidel. No land remained which did not drink the blood of these embodiments of detachment, and no sword that did not bruise their necks. Their deeds, alone, testify to the truth of their words. Doth not the testimony of these holy souls, who have so gloriously risen to offer up their lives for their Beloved that the whole world marvelled at the manner of their sacrifice, suffice the people of this day? Is it not sufficient witness against the faithlessness of those who for a trifle betrayed their faith, who bartered away immortality for that which perisheth, who gave up the Kawthar of the divine Presence for salty springs, and whose one aim in life is to usurp the property of others? Even as thou dost witness how all of them have busied themselves with the vanities of the world, and have strayed far from Him Who is the Lord, the Most High.

Be fair: Is the testimony of those acceptable and worthy of attention whose deeds agree with their words, whose outward behavior conforms with their inner life? The mind is bewildered at their deeds, and the soul marvelleth at their fortitude and bodily endurance. Or is the testimony of these faithless souls who breathe naught but the breath of selfish desire, and who lie imprisoned in the cage of their idle fancies, acceptable? ...

These holy lights have, for eighteen years, heroically endured the showers of afflictions which, from every side,

have rained upon them. With what love, what devotion, what exultation and holy rapture, they sacrificed their lives in the path of the All-Glorious! To the truth of this all witness. And yet, how can they belittle this Revelation? Hath any age witnessed such momentous happenings? If these companions be not the true strivers after God, who else could be called by this name? Have these companions been seekers after power or glory? Have they ever yearned for riches? Have they cherished any desire except the good-pleasure of God? If these companions, with all their marvellous testimonies and wondrous works, be false, who then is worthy to claim for himself the truth? I swear by God! Their very deeds are a sufficient testimony, and an irrefutable proof unto all the peoples of the earth, were men to ponder in their hearts the mysteries of divine Revelation.

23.3

24

He Foretold Things to Come

In the sayings of Him Who is the Spirit (Jesus) unnumbered significances lie concealed. Unto many things did He refer, but as He found none possessed of a hearing ear or a seeing eye He chose to conceal most of these things. Even as He saith: "But ye cannot bear them now." That Dawning-Place of Revelation saith that on that Day He Who is the Promised One will reveal the things which are

to come. Accordingly in The Kitáb-i-Aqdas,^[4] and in the Tablets to the Kings, and in the Lawḥ-i-Ra'ís,^[5] and in the Lawḥ-i-Fu'ád,^[6] most of the things which have come to pass on this earth have been announced and prophesied by the Most Sublime Pen. 24.1

Yet another of His signs is the promulgation of His Book, His decisive Holy Text wherein He reproved the kings, and His dire warning to that one whose mighty rule was felt around the world—and whose great throne then toppled down in a matter of brief days—this being a fact clearly established and widely known. 24.2

Upon His arrival in prison He addressed an epistle to Napoleon, which He sent through the French ambassador. The gist of it was, “Ask what is Our crime, and why We are confined in this prison and this dungeon.” Napoleon made no reply. Then a second epistle was issued, which is contained in the Súrih-i-Haykal.^[7] The epitome of it is: “Oh Napoleon, as thou hast not listened to My proclamation, and as thou hast not answered it, thy dominion will before

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- 4 The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the “Most Holy Book,” is Bahá'u'lláh's book of laws, the central book of His Revelation.
 - 5 The Lawḥ-i-Ra'ís, is a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh revealed for 'Alí Pasha, the Grand Vizier of Turkey.
 - 6 The Lawḥ-i-Fu'ád, is a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh revealed for Fu'ád Pasha, Foreign Minister of the Ottoman Empire, that foreshadows the downfall of the Foreign Minister, the Grand Vizier and the Sultan himself.
 - 7 The Súrih-i-Haykal, the “Discourse of the Temple” a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh that included the text of the Tablet to Pope Pius IX, the Tablet to Napoleon III, the Tablet to Czar Alexander II of Russia, the Tablet to Queen Victoria and the Tablet to Náṣiri'd-Dín Shah of Persia.

long be taken away from thee, and thou wilt be utterly destroyed.” This epistle was sent to Napoleon by post ... as was known to all the companions of His exile. The text of this warning reached the whole of Persia, for it was at that time that the Kitáb-i-Haykal was spread in Persia, and this epistle was among the contents of this book. This happened in A.D. 1869, and as this Súrih-i-Haykal was circulated in Persia and India and was in the hands of all believers, they were waiting to see what would come to pass. Not long after, in A. D. 1870, the war between Germany and France broke out; and though no one at that time expected the victory of Germany, Napoleon was defeated and dishonored; he surrendered to his enemies, and his glory was changed into deep abasement.

Tablets were also sent to other kings. ...

Briefly, all that was recorded in the Tablets to the Kings is being fulfilled: if from the year A.D. 1870 we compare the events that have occurred, we will find everything that has happened has appeared as predicted; only a few remain which will afterward become manifested. 24.3

Sixty years ago Bahá'u'lláh rose up, even as the Day Star, over Persia. He declared that the skies of the world were dark, that this darkness boded evil, and that terrible wars would come. From the prison at 'Akka, He addressed the German Emperor in the clearest of terms, telling him that a great war was on the way and that his city of Berlin would break forth in lamentation and wailing. Likewise did He write to the Turkish sovereign, although He was that Sulṭán's victim and a captive in his prison—that is, He was being held prisoner in the Fortress at 'Akka—and clearly

stated that Constantinople would be overtaken by a sudden and radical change, so great that the women and children of that city would mourn and cry aloud. In brief, He addressed such words to all the monarchs and the presidents, and everything came to pass, exactly as He had foretold. 24.4

But Bahá'u'lláh upheld the banner of the Cause of God while He was in a dungeon, addressing the kings of the earth from His prison cell, severely arraigning them for their oppression of their subjects and their misuse of power. The letter He sent to the Sháh of Persia under such conditions may now be read by anyone. His Epistles to the Sultán of Turkey, Napoleon III, Emperor of France, and to the other rulers of the world including the President of the United States are, likewise, current and available. The book containing these Epistles to the kings was published in India about thirty years ago and is known as the *Súratu'l-Haykal*. Whatever is recorded in these Epistles has happened. Some of the prophecies contained in them came to pass after two years; others were fulfilled after five, ten and twenty years. The most important prophecies relative to events transpiring in the Balkans are being fulfilled at the present time though written long ago. For instance, in the Epistle which Bahá'u'lláh addressed to the Sultán of Turkey, the war and the occurrences of the present day were foretold by Him. These events were also prophesied in the Tablet He addressed to the city of Constantinople, even to the details of happenings now being witnessed in that city. While addressing these powerful kings and rulers He was a prisoner in a Turkish dungeon. Consider how marvelous it was for a prisoner under the eye and control

of the Turks to arraign so boldly and severely the very king who was responsible for His imprisonment. What power this is! What greatness! Nowhere in history can the record of such a happening be found. In spite of the iron rule and absolute dominion of these kings, His function was to withstand them; and so constant and firm was He that He caused their banners to come down and His own standard to be upraised. For today the flags of both the Persian and the Ottoman Empires are trailing in the dust, whereas the ensign of Bahá'u'lláh is being held aloft in the world both in the East and in the West. Consider what a mighty power this is! What a decisive argument! Although a prisoner in a fortress, He paid no heed to these kings, regarded not their power of life and death, but, on the contrary, addressed them in plain and fearless language, announcing explicitly that the time would come when their sovereignty would be brought low and His own dominion be established.

He said in substance, "Erelong you will find yourselves in manifest loss. Your sovereignties will be laid waste; your empires will become a wilderness and a heap of ruins; hosts from without will invade and subdue your lands; lamentation and mourning will rise from your homes. There will be no throne; there will be no crown; there will be no palace; there will be no armies. Nay, rather, all these will be brought low; but the standard of the Cause of God will be held aloft. Then will you see that hosts and hosts will enter the Cause of God and that this mighty revelation will be spread throughout the world." Read the prophecies contained in the *Súratu'l-Haykal* and ponder carefully over them.^[8]

8 Extracts from the Tablets to the kings and rulers are published in

This is one of the characteristics of Bahá'u'lláh's message and teachings. Can you find events and happenings of this kind in any other prophetic dispensation? If so, in what cycle have similar things taken place? Do you find such specific prophecies and explicit statements concerning the future in the Holy Books of the past? 24.5

O concourse of the fair-minded! Observe and reflect upon the billows of the ocean of the utterance and knowledge of God, so that ye may testify with your inner and outer tongues that with Him is the knowledge of all that is in the Book. Nothing escapeth His knowledge. He, verily, hath manifested that which was hidden, when He, upon His return, mounted the throne. ... All that hath been sent down hath and will come to pass, word for word, upon earth. No possibility is left for anyone either to turn aside or protest. 24.6

The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh. The response of the sovereigns and their subsequent fate is described in *The Promised Day is Come*, by Shoghi Effendi. A more detailed discussion of the prophecies of Bahá'u'lláh can be found in *The Challenge of Bahá'u'lláh*, by Gary L. Matthews.

PART VI

The Third Proof: His Teachings

The third proof of the Manifestation of God is that His teachings are suited to the needs of the age in which He lives. Like a physician that diagnoses the disease and prescribes the appropriate remedy, the teachings of the Manifestation of God are the healing remedy for the ills afflicting society in a given age. These teachings provide the foundation for the progress of civilization.

The teachings are of two kinds. The first is a restatement of fundamental moral principles that remain valid throughout time. The example of the golden rule—an ethic found in every religion—is an example. The second type are the teachings that address specific needs of humanity based on its current level of social development. An example of these teachings is the laws regarding crime and punishment from the time of Moses; it is impossible and unjust to enforce these standards at this time in human history.

Bahá'u'lláh is the Divine Educator for this age. He has restated the moral teachings of past dispensations and has brought the teachings needed to establish the unity of the entire human race. These teachings provide the basis for the emergence of a global civilization. The past century and a

half provides innumerable evidences of the disintegration afflicting society as a result of the rejection of Bahá'u'lláh's healing remedy and a corresponding integration around those principles that form the basis of His Revelation.

25

The Manifestation of God is a Divine Educator

Among the holy, divine Manifestations of God was Moses. The sending of Prophets has ever been for the training of humanity. They are the first Educators and Trainers. If Moses has developed the body politic, there is no doubt that He was a true Teacher and Educator. This will be proof and evidence that He was a Prophet. ... Blessed souls—whether Moses, Jesus, Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha, ... or Muḥammad—were the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity. How can we deny such irrefutable proof? How can we be blind to such light? How can we dispute the validity of Christ? This is injustice. This is a denial of reality. Man must be just. We must set aside bias and prejudice. We must abandon the imitations of ancestors and forefathers. We ourselves must investigate reality and be fair in judgment. 25.1

A clear proof of validity lies in the achievements and here we are confronted by certain irrefutable facts. The prophets have come from the lowliest and most humiliated

of the nations and in each age the prophet has raised his downtrodden nation to the highest zenith of prosperity and success among the nations of the earth. For instance, His Holiness Christ was quite alone. He was a Jew from among the Jews. He came at a time when the Israelites were under the yoke of the Romans. He revived the people till they were transferred from one state of existence into a higher state of existence. ...

A supreme proof is the teaching. For instance the precepts of Christ were sufficient proof of his validity. There is no greater proof than these teachings. They were the light of that cycle and the spirit of that age. All that he said accorded with the needs of the humanity of that time. They were peerless and unique. 25.2

After we have proved the validity of the Manifestations of the Word of God by investigating the divine teachings, we must discover for a certainty whether They have been real Educators of mankind. Among the revelators of the law of God was Moses. When He appeared, all the contemporaneous nations rejected Him. Notwithstanding this, single and alone He promulgated the divine teachings and liberated a nation from the lowest condition of degradation and bondage. The people of Israel were ignorant, lowly, debased in morals—a race of slaves under burdensome oppression. Moses led them out of captivity and brought them to the Holy Land. He educated and disciplined them, established among them the foundations of material and divine civilization. Through the education of Moses these ignorant people attained an advanced degree of power and prestige, culminating in the glory of the reign of Solomon. From

the abyss of bereavement and slavery they were uplifted to the highest plane of progress and civilized nationhood. It is evident, therefore, that Moses was an Educator and Teacher. The purpose and mission of the holy, divine Messengers is the training and advancement of humanity, the cultivation of divine fruits in the gardens of human hearts, the reflection of heavenly effulgence in the mirrors of human souls, the quickening of mental capacity and the increase of spiritual susceptibilities. When these results and outcomes are witnessed in mankind, the function and mission of the Manifestations are unmistakable. Christ, single and alone, without schooling or outward education and trained to labor in the shop of a carpenter, appeared in the world at the time when the Jewish nation was in the greatest abasement. This radiant Youth, without wealth, power of armies or prestige, rescued the Jews who believed on Him from tyranny and degradation and lifted them to the highest plane of development and glory. Peter, His disciple, was a fisherman. Through the power of Christ he shed light upon all the horizons of the world. Furthermore, various people of the Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Assyrian nations were brought together in unity and agreement; where warfare and bloodshed had existed, humility and love were manifest, and the foundations of divine religion were established, never to be destroyed. This proves that Christ was a heavenly Teacher and Educator of the world of humanity, for such evidences are historical and irrefutable, not based upon tradition and circumstantial report. The power of His Word in cementing these nations together is as clear and evident as the sun at midday. There is no need of further demonstration.

25.3

Consider that Muḥammad was born among the savage and barbarous tribes of Arabia, lived among them and was outwardly illiterate and uninformed of the Holy Books of God. The Arabian people were in the utmost ignorance and barbarism. They buried their infant daughters alive, considering this to be an evidence of a valorous and lofty nature. They lived in bondage and serfdom under the Persian and Roman governments and were scattered throughout the desert, engaged in continual strife and bloodshed. When the light of Muḥammad dawned, the darkness of ignorance was dispelled from the deserts of Arabia. In a short period of time those barbarous peoples attained a superlative degree of civilization which, with Baghdád as its center, extended as far westward as Spain and afterward influenced the greater part of Europe. What proof of Prophethood could be greater than this, unless we close our eyes to justice and remain obstinately opposed to reason? 25.4

Christ ratified and proclaimed the foundation of the law of Moses. Muḥammad and all the Prophets have revoiced that same foundation of reality. Therefore, the purposes and accomplishments of the divine Messengers have been one and the same. They were the source of advancement to the body politic and the cause of the honor and divine civilization of humanity, the foundation of which is one and the same in every dispensation. 25.5

In the world of existence the greatest bestowals of God are His teachings. The other bounties of God are limited as regards their benefits and provision. Human existence itself is a divine bestowal, but it is circumscribed with limitations.

Sight and hearing are bounties of God; both are limited. And so it is with all the other bestowals; the circle of their operation is confined, restricted, whereas the sphere of the divine teachings is boundless. Centuries and ages pass away, but their efficacy continues like the spirit of life which animates the world of existence. Without the teachings of God the world of humanity is like the animal kingdom. What difference is there between the animal and man? The difference is this: that the animal is not capable of apprehending the divine teachings, whereas man is worthy of them and possesses the capacity to understand. In the animal kingdom there is no such bestowal; therefore, there is limited progression. At most, evolution in that kingdom is a development of the organism. In the beginning it is small, undeveloped; it develops, becomes larger; but its sphere of intellectual growth is limited. Therefore, the teachings of God are the bestowals specialized for man.

Although the divine teachings are truth and reality, yet with the passage of time thick clouds envelop and obscure them. These clouds are imitations and superstitions; they are not the fundamentals. Then the Sun of Truth, the Word of God, arises again, shines forth once more in the glory of its power and disperses the enveloping darkness.

For a long time the divine precepts of the effulgent Word were obscured by clouds of superstition and error until Bahá'u'lláh appeared upon the horizon of humanity, rent the shadows, scattered the clouds and revealed anew the foundations of the teachings of God. 25.6

26

Bahá'u'lláh is the Divine Educator
for this Age

The Prophets of God should be regarded as physicians whose task is to foster the well-being of the world and its peoples, that, through the spirit of oneness, they may heal the sickness of a divided humanity. To none is given the right to question their words or disparage their conduct, for they are the only ones who can claim to have understood the patient and to have correctly diagnosed its ailments. No man, however acute his perception, can ever hope to reach the heights which the wisdom and understanding of the Divine Physician have attained. Little wonder, then, if the treatment prescribed by the physician in this day should not be found to be identical with that which he prescribed before. How could it be otherwise when the ills affecting the sufferer necessitate at every stage of his sickness a special remedy? In like manner, every time the Prophets of God have illumined the world with the resplendent radiance of the Day Star of Divine knowledge, they have invariably summoned its peoples to embrace the light of God through such means as best befitted the exigencies of the age in which they appeared. They were thus able to scatter the darkness of ignorance, and to shed upon the world the glory of their own knowledge. It is towards the inmost essence of these Prophets, therefore, that the eye of every man of discernment must be directed, inasmuch as their one and only purpose hath always been to guide

the erring, and give peace to the afflicted. These are not days of prosperity and triumph. The whole of mankind is in the grip of manifold ills. Strive, therefore, to save its life through the wholesome medicine which the almighty hand of the unerring Physician hath prepared. 26.1

As the change and alteration of conditions are necessities for beings, so laws also are changed and altered in accordance with the changes and alterations of the times. For example, in the time of Moses, His Law was conformed and adapted to the conditions of the time; but in the days of Christ these conditions had changed and altered to such an extent that the Mosaic Law was no longer suited and adapted to the needs of mankind; and it was, therefore, abrogated. Thus it was that Christ broke the Sabbath and forbade divorce. After Christ four disciples, among whom were Peter and Paul, permitted the use of animal food forbidden by the Bible. ...

Now this change, these alterations and this abrogation are due to the impossibility of comparing the time of Christ with that of Moses. The conditions and requirements in the later period were entirely changed and altered. The former laws were, therefore, abrogated.

The existence of the world may be compared to that of a man, and the Prophets and Messengers of God to skillful doctors. The human being cannot remain in one condition: different maladies occur which have each a special remedy. The skillful physician does not give the same medicine to cure each disease and each malady, but he changes remedies and medicines according to the different necessities of the diseases and constitutions.

One person may have a severe illness caused by fever, and the skilled doctor will give him cooling remedies; and when at some other time the condition of this person has changed, and fever is replaced by chills, without doubt the skilled doctor will discard cooling medicine and permit the use of heating drugs. This change and alteration is required by the condition of the patient and is an evident proof of the skill of the physician.

Consider, could the Law of the Old Testament be enforced at this epoch and time? No, in the name of God! it would be impossible and impracticable; therefore, most certainly God abrogated the laws of the Old Testament at the time of Christ. ...

Consider how very different are the requirements of the first centuries, of the Middle Ages, and of modern times. Is it possible that the laws of the first centuries could be enforced at present? It is evident that it would be impossible and impracticable. In the same manner, after the lapse of a few centuries, the requirements of the present time will not be the same as those of the future, and certainly there will be change and alteration. In Europe the laws are unceasingly altered and modified; in bygone years, how many laws existed in the organizations and systems of Europe, which are now abrogated! These changes and alterations are due to the variation and mutation of thought, conditions and customs. If it were not so, the prosperity of the world of humanity would be wrecked.

For example, there is in the Pentateuch a law that if anyone break the Sabbath, he shall be put to death. Moreover, there are ten sentences of death in the Pentateuch. Would it be

possible to keep these laws in our time? It is clear that it would be absolutely impossible. Consequently, there are changes and modifications in the laws, and these are a sufficient proof of the supreme wisdom of God. 26.2

When Christ appeared with those marvelous breaths of the Holy Spirit, the children of Israel said, "We are quite independent of him; we can do without him and follow Moses; we have a book and in it are found the teachings of God; what need, therefore, have we of this man?" Christ said to them, "The book sufficeth you not." It is possible for a man to hold to a book of medicine and say, "I have no need of a doctor; I will act according to the book; in it every disease is named, all symptoms are explained, the diagnosis of each ailment is completely written out, and a prescription for each malady is furnished; therefore, why do I need a doctor?" This is sheer ignorance. A physician is needed to prescribe. Through his skill the principles of the book are correctly and effectively applied until the patient is restored to health. Christ was a heavenly Physician. He brought spiritual health and healing into the world. Bahá'u'lláh is, likewise, a divine Physician. He has revealed prescriptions for removing disease from the body politic and has remedied human conditions by spiritual power. ...

Briefly, the teachings of the Holy Books need a divine potency to complete their accomplishment in human hearts. In Persia Bahá'u'lláh reared and taught souls, established a bond of affiliation among various peoples and united divergent religious beliefs to such an extent that twenty thousand devoted ones sacrificed themselves for the Cause of God in the glorious unity of martyrdom. No differences

whatever remained among these blessed souls—Christians, Jews, Muslims, Zoroastrians, all blended, unified and agreed through the potency of His heavenly power, not by mere words, not by merely saying, “Unity is good, and love is praiseworthy.” Bahá'u'lláh not only proclaimed this unity and love; He established it. As a heavenly Physician He not only gave prescriptions for these ailments of discord and hatred but accomplished the actual healing. We may read in a medical book that a certain form of illness requires such and such a remedy. While this may be absolutely true, the remedy is useless unless there be volition and executive force to apply it. Every man in the king's army can give a command; but when the king speaks, it is carried out. This one, that one, may say, “Go conquer a country”; but when the king says, “Go!”, the army advances. Therefore, it is evident that the confirmation of the Holy Spirit and impelling influence of a heavenly power are needed to accomplish the divine purpose in human hearts and conditions. 26.3

The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy. Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require. Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.

We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions.

We see it languishing on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned. They that are intoxicated by self-conceit have interposed themselves between it and the Divine and infallible Physician. Witness how they have entangled all men, themselves included, in the mesh of their devices. They can neither discover the cause of the disease, nor have they any knowledge of the remedy. They have conceived the straight to be crooked, and have imagined their friend an enemy.

Incline your ears to the sweet melody of this Prisoner.

Arise, and lift up your voices, that haply they that are fast asleep may be awakened. Say: O ye who are as dead! The Hand of Divine bounty proffereth unto you the Water of Life. Hasten and drink your fill. Whoso hath been re-born in this Day, shall never die; whoso remaineth dead, shall never live.

26.4

27

His Teachings are Suited to the Needs of this Age

I have spoken in the various Christian churches and in the synagogues, and in no assemblage has there been a dissenting voice. All have listened, and all have conceded that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are superlative in character, acknowledging that they constitute the very essence or spirit of this new age and that there is no better pathway to the

attainment of its ideals. Not a single voice has been raised in objection. At most there have been some who have refused to acknowledge the mission of Bahá'u'lláh, although even these have admitted that He was a great teacher, a most powerful soul, a very great man. Some who could find no other pretext have said, "These teachings are not new; they are old and familiar; we have heard them before." Therefore, I will speak to you upon the distinctive characteristics of the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh and prove that from every standpoint His Cause is distinguished from all others. It is distinguished by its didactic character and method of exposition, by its practical effects and application to present world conditions, but especially distinguished from the standpoint of its spread and progress. 27.1

We will now compare the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with the Holy Words which have descended in the former cycles.

First among the great principles revealed by Him is that of the investigation of reality. The meaning is that every individual member of humankind is exhorted and commanded to set aside superstitious beliefs, traditions and blind imitation of ancestral forms in religion and investigate reality for himself. Inasmuch as the fundamental reality is one, all religions and nations of the world will become one through investigation of reality. The announcement of this principle is not found in any of the sacred Books of the past.

A second characteristic principle of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that which commands recognition of the oneness of the world of humanity. Addressing all mankind, He says, "Ye are all the leaves of one tree." There are no differences or distinctions of race among you in the sight

of God. Nay, rather, all are the servants of God, and all are submerged in the ocean of His oneness. Not a single soul is bereft. On the contrary, all are the recipients of the bounties of God. Every human creature has a portion of His bestowals and a share of the effulgence of His reality. God is kind to all. Mankind are His sheep, and He is their real Shepherd. No other scriptures contain such breadth and universality of statement; no other teachings proclaim this unequivocal principle of the solidarity of humanity. As regards any possible distinctions, the utmost that Bahá'u'lláh says is that conditions among men vary, that some, for instance, are defective. Therefore, such souls must be educated in order that they may be brought to the degree of perfection. Some are sick and ailing; they must be treated and cared for until they are healed. ...

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that religion must be in conformity with science and reason. If belief and teaching are opposed to the analysis of reason and principles of science, they are not worthy of acceptance. This principle has not been revealed in any of the former Books of divine teaching.

Another fundamental announcement made by Bahá'u'lláh is that religion must be the source of unity and fellowship in the world. If it is productive of enmity, hatred and bigotry, the absence of religion would be preferable. This is a new principle of revelation found only in the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh.

Again, Bahá'u'lláh declares that all forms of prejudice among mankind must be abandoned and that until existing prejudices are entirely removed, the world of humanity will not and cannot attain peace, prosperity and composure.

This principle cannot be found in any other sacred volume than the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Another teaching is that there shall be perfect equality between men and women. Why should man create a distinction which God does not recognize? In the kingdoms below man sex exists, but the distinction between male and female is neither repressive nor restrictive. The mare, for instance, is as strong and often more speedy than the horse. Throughout the animal and vegetable kingdoms there is perfect equality between the sexes. In the kingdom of mankind this equality must likewise exist, and the one whose heart is purest, whose life and character are highest and nearest to the divine standard is most worthy and excellent in the sight of God. This is the only true and real distinction, be that one man or woman.

Bahá'u'lláh has announced the necessity for a universal language which shall serve as a means of international communication and thus remove misunderstandings and difficulties. This teaching is set forth in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* published fifty years ago.

He has also proclaimed the principle that all mankind shall be educated and that no illiteracy be allowed to remain. This practical remedy for the need of the world cannot be found in the text of any other sacred Books. He teaches that it is incumbent upon all mankind to become fitted for some useful trade, craft or profession by which subsistence may be assured, and this efficiency is to be considered as an act of worship.

The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are boundless and without end in their far-reaching benefit to mankind. The point and

purpose of our statement today is that they are new and that they are not found in any of the religious Books of the past. This is in answer to the question, "What has Bahá'u'lláh brought that we have not heard before?" Therefore, it is conclusive and evident that the Manifestation of God in this day is distinguished from all former appearances and revelations by His majesty, His power and the efficacy and application of His Word. 27.2

Among His teachings was the declaration of universal peace. People of different nations, religions and sects who followed Him came together to such an extent that remarkable gatherings were instituted consisting of the various nations and religions of the east. Every soul who entered these gatherings saw but one nation, one teaching, one pathway, one order, for the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh were not limited to the establishment of universal peace. They embraced many teachings which supplemented and supported that of universal peace. ...

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that although material civilization is one of the means for the progress of the world of mankind, yet until it becomes combined with Divine civilization, the desired result, which is the felicity of mankind, will not be attained. ... And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the promotion of education. Every child must be instructed in sciences as much as is necessary. If the parents are able to provide the expenses of this education, it is well, otherwise the community must provide the means for the teaching of that child.

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are justice and right. Until these are realized on the plane of existence,

all things shall be in disorder and remain imperfect. The world of mankind is a world of oppression and cruelty, and a realm of aggression and error.

In fine, such teachings are numerous. These manifold principles, which constitute the greatest basis for the felicity of mankind and are of the bounties of the Merciful, must be added to the matter of universal peace and combined with it, so that results may accrue. Otherwise the realization of universal peace by itself in the world of mankind is difficult. As the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are combined with universal peace, they are like a table provided with every kind of fresh and delicious food. Every soul can find, at that table of infinite bounty, that which he desires. ... The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are such that all the communities of the world, whether religious, political or ethical, ancient or modern, find in them the expression of their highest wish. For example, the people of religions find, in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the establishment of Universal Religion—a religion that perfectly conforms with present conditions, which in reality effects the immediate cure of the incurable disease, which relieves every pain, and bestows the infallible antidote for every deadly poison. For if we wish to arrange and organize the world of mankind in accordance with the present religious imitations and thereby to establish the felicity of the world of mankind, it is impossible and impracticable—for example, the enforcement of the laws of the Torah and also of the other religions in accordance with present imitations. But the essential basis of all the Divine Religions which pertains to the virtues of the world of mankind and is the foundation of the welfare of the world

of man, is found in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in the most perfect presentation.

Similarly, with regard to the peoples who clamor for freedom: the moderate freedom which guarantees the welfare of the world of mankind and maintains and preserves the universal relationships, is found in its fullest power and extension in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

So with regard to political parties: that which is the greatest policy directing the world of mankind, nay, rather, the Divine policy, is found in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Likewise with regard to the party of "equality" which seeks the solution of the economic problems: until now all proposed solutions have proved impracticable except the economic proposals in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh which are practicable and cause no distress to society.

So with the other parties: when ye look deeply into this matter, ye will discover that the highest aims of those parties are found in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. These teachings constitute the all-inclusive power among all men and are practicable. But there are some teachings of the past, such as those of the Torah, which cannot be carried out at the present day. It is the same with the other religions and the tenets of the various sects and the different parties.

For example, the question of universal peace, about which Bahá'u'lláh says that the Supreme Tribunal must be established: although the League of Nations has been brought into existence, yet it is incapable of establishing universal peace. But the Supreme Tribunal which Bahá'u'lláh has described will fulfill this sacred task with the utmost might and power. And His plan is this: that the national assemblies

of each country and nation—that is to say parliaments—should elect two or three persons who are the choicest men of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity in this day. The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country. The election of these souls who are chosen by the national assembly, that is, the parliament, must be confirmed by the upper house, the congress and the cabinet and also by the president or monarch so these persons may be the elected ones of all the nation and the government. From among these people the members of the Supreme Tribunal will be elected, and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these delegates is fully representative of his nation. When the Supreme Tribunal gives a ruling on any international question, either unanimously or by majority rule, there will no longer be any pretext for the plaintiff or ground of objection for the defendant. In case any of the governments or nations, in the execution of the irrefutable decision of the Supreme Tribunal, be negligent or dilatory, the rest of the nations will rise up against it, because all the governments and nations of the world are the supporters of this Supreme Tribunal. Consider what a firm foundation this is! But by a limited and restricted league the purpose will not be realized as it ought and should. This is the truth about the situation, which has been stated. 27.3

In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved. Continents remained widely

divided, nay even among the peoples of one and the same continent association and interchange of thought were well-nigh impossible. Consequently intercourse, understanding and unity amongst all the peoples and kindreds of the earth were unattainable. In this day, however, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one. And for everyone it is now easy to travel to any land, to associate and exchange views with its peoples, and to become familiar, through publications, with the conditions, the religious beliefs and the thoughts of all men. In like manner all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century—the century of light—hath been endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man.

Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon. The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which

will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendor. The fifth candle is the unity of nations—a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization. 27.4

28

His Teachings Provide the Basis for Individual Transformation

How often have the Prophets of God, not excepting Bahá'u'lláh Himself, chosen to appear, and deliver their Message in countries and amidst peoples and races, at a time when they were either fast declining, or had already touched the lowest depths of moral and spiritual degradation. The appalling misery and wretchedness to which the Israelites had sunk, under the debasing and tyrannical rule of the Pharaohs, in the days preceding their exodus

from Egypt under the leadership of Moses; the decline that had set in in the religious, the spiritual, the cultural, and the moral life of the Jewish people, at the time of the appearance of Jesus Christ; the barbarous cruelty, the gross idolatry and immorality, which had for so long been the most distressing features of the tribes of Arabia and brought such shame upon them when Muḥammad arose to proclaim His Message in their midst; the indescribable state of decadence, with its attendant corruption, confusion, intolerance, and oppression, in both the civil and religious life of Persia, so graphically portrayed by the pen of a considerable number of scholars, diplomats, and travelers, at the hour of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh—all demonstrate this basic and inescapable fact. To contend that the innate worthiness, the high moral standard, the political aptitude, and social attainments of any race or nation is the reason for the appearance in its midst of any of these Divine Luminaries would be an absolute perversion of historical facts, and would amount to a complete repudiation of the undoubted interpretation placed upon them, so clearly and emphatically, by both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

How great, then, must be the challenge to those who, belonging to such races and nations, and having responded to the call which these Prophets have raised, to unreservedly recognize and courageously testify to this indubitable truth, that not by reason of any racial superiority, political capacity, or spiritual virtue which a race or nation might possess, but rather as a direct consequence of its crying needs, its lamentable degeneracy, and irremediable perversity, has the Prophet of God chosen to appear in its midst, and with it as a lever has lifted the entire human race to

a higher and nobler plane of life and conduct. For it is precisely under such circumstances, and by such means that the Prophets have, from time immemorial, chosen and were able to demonstrate their redemptive power to raise from the depths of abasement and of misery, the people of their own race and nation, empowering them to transmit in turn to other races and nations the saving grace and the energizing influence of their Revelation.

In the light of this fundamental principle it should always be borne in mind, nor can it be sufficiently emphasized, that the primary reason why the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh chose to appear in Persia, and to make it the first repository of their Revelation, was because, of all the peoples and nations of the civilized world, that race and nation had, as so often depicted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sunk to such ignominious depths, and manifested so great a perversity, as to find no parallel among its contemporaries. For no more convincing proof could be adduced demonstrating the regenerating spirit animating the Revelations proclaimed by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh than their power to transform what can be truly regarded as one of the most backward, the most cowardly, and perverse of peoples into a race of heroes, fit to effect in turn a similar revolution in the life of mankind. To have appeared among a race or nation which by its intrinsic worth and high attainments seemed to warrant the inestimable privilege of being made the receptacle of such a Revelation would in the eyes of an unbelieving world greatly reduce the efficacy of that Message, and detract from the self-sufficiency of its omnipotent power. The contrast so strikingly presented in the pages of Nabil's Narrative between the heroism that immortalized the life and deeds

of the Dawn-Breakers and the degeneracy and cowardice of their defamers and persecutors is in itself a most impressive testimony to the truth of the Message of Him Who had instilled such a spirit into the breasts of His disciples.

28.1

In the nineteenth century strife and hostility prevailed among the people of the Orient. Apathy and ignorance characterized the nations. They were indeed gloomy and dark, negligent of God and under the subjection of the baser instincts and passions of mankind. The struggle for existence was intense and universal. At such a time as this Bahá'u'lláh appeared among them like a luminary in the heavens. He flooded the East with light. He proclaimed new principles and teachings. He laid a basis for new institutions which are the very spirit of modernism, the light of the world, the development of the body politic and eternal honor. The souls who hearkened to these teachings among the various oriental nations immediately renounced the spirit of strife and hostility and began to associate in goodwill and fellowship. From extremes of animosity they attained the acme of love and brotherhood. ... This is the education and training of Bahá'u'lláh. He has led these souls to this standard and given them teachings which ensure eternal illumination. Anyone who becomes well versed in His teachings will say, "Verily, I declare that these words constitute the illumination of humanity, that this is the everlasting honor, that these are heavenly precepts and the cause of never-ending life among men."

28.2

Consider the wonderful effect of spiritual education and training. By it the fisherman Peter was transformed

into the greatest of teachers. Spiritual education made the disciples radiant lamps in the darkness of the world and caused the Christians of the first and second centuries to become renowned everywhere for their virtues. Even philosophers bore testimony to this. Among them was Galen, the physician, who wrote a book upon the subject of the progress of the nations. He was a celebrated philosopher of the Greeks, although not a Christian. In his book he stated that religious beliefs exercise a tremendous influence upon civilization and that the world is in need of such belief. In proof of this, he said, in substance, "In our time there is a certain people called Christians, who, though neither philosophers nor scholastically trained, are superior to all others as regards their morality. They are perfect in morals. Each one of them is like a great philosopher in morals, ethics and turning toward the Kingdom of God." This is evidence from the testimony of an intelligent outside observer that spiritual education is the light of the world of humanity and that its absence in the world is darkness itself.

Bahá'u'lláh appeared in Persia at a time when the darkness of ignorance enveloped the East, and there was no trace of human love and fellowship. Through divine education and the power of the breaths of the Holy Spirit He so refined the souls of the Persians who followed Him that they attained a station of highest intelligence and reflected the attributes of perfection to the world. Whereas formerly they were ignorant, they became knowing; they were weak, they became mighty; they were without integrity, they became conscientious; they were hostile toward all men, they developed love for humanity; they were spiritually negligent, they became mindful and attentive; they were

sleeping, they became awakened; they disagreed among themselves, they united in love and are now striving to render service to the world of humankind. Service to God and mankind is their sole intention; they have neither wish nor desire save that which is in accordance with the good pleasure of God. The good pleasure of God is love for His creatures. The will and plan of God is that each individual member of humankind shall become illumined like unto a lamp, radiant with all the destined virtues of humanity, leading his fellow creatures out of natural darkness into the heavenly light. Therein rests the virtue and glory of the world of humanity. This is the perfection, honor and glory of man; otherwise, man is an animal and without differentiation from the creatures of that lower kingdom.

28.3

29

His Teachings Provide the Basis for a New Civilization

This is a century of life and renewal. Sciences and arts, industry and invention have been reformed. Law and ethics have been reconstituted, reorganized. The world of thought has been regenerated. Sciences of former ages and philosophies of the past are useless today. Present exigencies demand new methods of solution; world problems are without precedent. Old ideas and modes of thought are

fast becoming obsolete. Ancient laws and archaic ethical systems will not meet the requirements of modern conditions, for this is clearly the century of a new life, the century of the revelation of reality and, therefore, the greatest of all centuries. Consider how the scientific developments of fifty years have surpassed and eclipsed the knowledge and achievements of all the former ages combined. Would the announcements and theories of ancient astronomers explain our present knowledge of the suns and planetary systems? Would the mask of obscurity which beclouded medieval centuries meet the demand for clear-eyed vision and understanding which characterizes the world today? Will the despotism of former governments answer the call for freedom which has risen from the heart of humanity in this cycle of illumination? It is evident that no vital results are now forthcoming from the customs, institutions and standpoints of the past. In view of this, shall blind imitations of ancestral forms and theological interpretations continue to guide and control the religious life and spiritual development of humanity today? Shall man, gifted with the power of reason, unthinkingly follow and adhere to dogma, creeds and hereditary beliefs which will not bear the analysis of reason in this century of effulgent reality?

29.1

“Soon,” Bahá’u’lláh’s own words proclaim it, “will the present day Order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth and is the Knower of things unseen.” “By Myself,” He solemnly asserts, “the day is approaching when We will have rolled up the world and all that is therein, and spread out a new Order

in its stead. He, verily, is powerful over all things.” “The world’s equilibrium,” He explains, “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 signs of impending convulsions and chaos,” He warns the peoples of the world, “can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing Order appeareth to be lamentably defective.”

... This New World Order, whose promise is enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, whose fundamental principles have been enunciated in the writings of the Center of His Covenant, involves no less than the complete unification of the entire human race. This unification should conform to such principles as would directly harmonize with the spirit that animates, and the laws that govern the operation of, the institutions that already constitute the structural basis of the Administrative Order of His Faith.

No machinery falling short of the standard inculcated by the Bahá’í Revelation, and at variance with the sublime pattern ordained in His teachings, which the collective efforts of mankind may yet devise can ever hope to achieve anything above or beyond that “Lesser Peace” to which the Author of our Faith has Himself alluded in His writings. “Now that ye have refused the Most Great Peace,” He, admonishing the kings and rulers of the earth, has written, “hold ye fast unto this the Lesser Peace, that haply ye may in some degree better your own condition and that of your dependents.” Expatriating on this Lesser Peace, He thus addresses in that same Tablet the rulers of

the earth: “Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions. ... Be united, O kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you, and your peoples find rest, if ye be of them that comprehend. Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice.”

The Most Great Peace, on the other hand, as conceived by Bahá'u'lláh—a peace that must inevitably follow as the practical consequence of the spiritualization of the world and the fusion of all its races, creeds, classes and nations—can rest on no other basis, and can be preserved through no other agency, except the divinely appointed ordinances that are implicit in the World Order that stands associated with His Holy Name. In His Tablet, revealed almost seventy years ago to Queen Victoria, Bahá'u'lláh, alluding to this Most Great Peace, has declared: “That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician. This, verily, is the truth, and all else naught but error. ...” “It beseemeth all men in this Day,” He, in another Tablet, asserts, “to take firm hold on the Most Great Name, and to establish the unity of all mankind. There is no place to flee to, no refuge that any one can seek, except Him.”

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whose supreme mission is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual

unity of the whole body of nations, should, if we be faithful to its implications, be regarded as signaling through its advent the coming of age of the entire human race. It should be viewed not merely as yet another spiritual revival in the ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelations, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet. The emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture—all of which must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Era—should, by their very nature, be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society, though man, as an individual, will, nay must indeed as a result of such a consummation, continue indefinitely to progress and develop.

That mystic, all-pervasive, yet indefinable change, which we associate with the stage of maturity inevitable in the life of the individual and the development of the fruit must, if we would correctly apprehend the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh, have its counterpart in the evolution of the organization of human society. A similar stage must sooner or later be attained in the collective life of mankind, producing an even more striking phenomenon in world relations, and endowing the whole human race with such potentialities of well-being as shall provide, throughout the succeeding ages, the chief incentive required for the eventual fulfillment of its high destiny. Such a stage of maturity in the process of human government must, for all time, if we would faithfully

recognize the tremendous claim advanced by Bahá'u'lláh, remain identified with the Revelation of which He was the Bearer. ...

Such is the stage to which an evolving humanity is collectively approaching. The Revelation entrusted by the Almighty Ordainer to Bahá'u'lláh, His followers firmly believe, has been endowed with such potentialities as are commensurate with the maturity of the human race—the crowning and most momentous stage in its evolution from infancy to manhood.

The successive Founders of all past Religions Who, from time immemorial, have shed, with ever-increasing intensity, the splendor of one common Revelation at the various stages which have marked the advance of mankind towards maturity may thus, in a sense, be regarded as preliminary Manifestations, anticipating and paving the way for the advent of that Day of Days when the whole earth will have fructified and the tree of humanity will have yielded its destined fruit.

Incontrovertible as is this truth, its challenging character should never be allowed to obscure the purpose, or distort the principle, underlying the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh—utterances that have established for all time the absolute oneness of all the Prophets, Himself included, whether belonging to the past or to the future.

... Any variations in the splendor which each of these Manifestations of the light of God has shed upon the world should be ascribed not to any inherent superiority involved in the essential character of any one of them, but rather to the progressive capacity, the ever-increasing spiritual

receptiveness, which mankind, in its progress towards maturity, has invariably manifested. 29.2

Who can doubt that such a consummation—the coming of age of the human race—must signalize, in its turn, the inauguration of a world civilization such as no mortal eye hath ever beheld or human mind conceived? Who is it that can imagine the lofty standard which such a civilization, as it unfolds itself, is destined to attain? Who can measure the heights to which human intelligence, liberated from its shackles, will soar? Who can visualize the realms which the human spirit, vitalized by the outpouring light of Bahá'u'lláh, shining in the plenitude of its glory, will discover? 29.3

30

The Consequences of Rejecting Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings

Witness how the world is being afflicted with a fresh calamity every day. Its tribulation is continually deepening. From the moment the Súrih-i-Ra'ís^[1] was revealed until the present day, neither hath the world been tranquillized, nor have the hearts of its peoples been at rest. At one time it hath been agitated by contentions and disputes, at another

1 The Súrih-i-Ra'ís, revealed in 1868, is another Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh (along with the Lawḥ-i-Ra'ís) addressed to the Grand Vizier of Turkey.

it hath been convulsed by wars, and fallen a victim to inveterate diseases. Its sickness is approaching the stage of utter hopelessness, inasmuch as the true Physician is debarred from administering the remedy, whilst unskilled practitioners are regarded with favor, and are accorded full freedom to act. ... The dust of sedition hath clouded the hearts of men, and blinded their eyes. Erelong, they will perceive the consequences of what their hands have wrought in the Day of God. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Informed, as bidden by One Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty. 30.1

... Bahá'u'lláh's great endeavor in the East was to unify mankind, to cause them to agree and become reconciled, thereby manifesting the oneness of the world of humanity, preparing the way for international peace and establishing the foundations of happiness and welfare. But the nations have not hearkened to His summons and message. The Persian and Turkish governments arose against His Cause, and the result is that both these governments have been disintegrated and broken. Had they been attentive to His commands and received His admonitions, they would have been protected. They would have enjoyed happiness and prosperity. They would have been bound together in ties of fellowship and brotherhood, availing themselves of the wonderful bounties of love and unity and dwelling in the delectable paradise of the divine Kingdom. But, alas, the commands and guidance of the Blessed One have been neglected and ignored. Day by day they have followed their own devices and imaginations, until now this fire of war is raging most furiously. 30.2

A tempest, unprecedented in its violence, unpredictable in its course, catastrophic in its immediate effects, unimaginably glorious in its ultimate consequences, is at present sweeping the face of the earth. Its driving power is remorselessly gaining in range and momentum. Its cleansing force, however much undetected, is increasing with every passing day. Humanity, gripped in the clutches of its devastating power, is smitten by the evidences of its resistless fury. It can neither perceive its origin, nor probe its significance, nor discern its outcome. Bewildered, agonized and helpless, it watches this great and mighty wind of God invading the remotest and fairest regions of the earth, rocking its foundations, deranging its equilibrium, sundering its nations, disrupting the homes of its peoples, wasting its cities, driving into exile its kings, pulling down its bulwarks, uprooting its institutions, dimming its light, and harrowing up the souls of its inhabitants. ...

The powerful operations of this titanic upheaval are comprehensible to none except such as have recognized the claims of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. Their followers know full well whence it comes, and what it will ultimately lead to. Though ignorant of how far it will reach, they clearly recognize its genesis, are aware of its direction, acknowledge its necessity, observe confidently its mysterious processes, ardently pray for the mitigation of its severity, intelligently labor to assuage its fury, and anticipate, with undimmed vision, the consummation of the fears and the hopes it must necessarily engender.

This judgment of God, as viewed by those who have recognized Bahá'u'lláh as His Mouthpiece and His greatest

Messenger on earth, is both a retributory calamity and an act of holy and supreme discipline. It is at once a visitation from God and a cleansing process for all mankind. Its fires punish the perversity of the human race, and weld its component parts into one organic, indivisible, world-embracing community. Mankind, in these fateful years ... is, as ordained by Him Who is both the judge and the Redeemer of the human race, being simultaneously called upon to give account of its past actions, and is being purged and prepared for its future mission. It can neither escape the responsibilities of the past, nor shirk those of the future. God, the Vigilant, the just, the Loving, the All-Wise Ordainer, can, in this supreme Dispensation, neither allow the sins of an unregenerate humanity, whether of omission or of commission, to go unpunished, nor will He be willing to abandon His children to their fate, and refuse them that culminating and blissful stage in their long, their slow and painful evolution throughout the ages, which is at once their inalienable right and their true destiny. 30.3

The whole of mankind is groaning, is dying to be led to unity, and to terminate its age-long martyrdom. And yet it stubbornly refuses to embrace the light and acknowledge the sovereign authority of the one Power that can extricate it from its entanglements, and avert the woeful calamity that threatens to engulf it. ...

Must humanity, tormented as she now is, be afflicted with still severer tribulations ere their purifying influence can prepare her to enter the heavenly Kingdom destined to be established upon earth? Must the inauguration of so vast, so unique, so illumined an era in human history be ushered

in by so great a catastrophe in human affairs as to recall, nay surpass, the appalling collapse of Roman civilization in the first centuries of the Christian Era? Must a series of profound convulsions stir and rock the human race ere Bahá'u'lláh can be enthroned in the hearts and consciences of the masses, ere His undisputed ascendancy is universally recognized, and the noble edifice of His World Order is reared and established?

The long ages of infancy and childhood, through which the human race had to pass, have receded into the background. Humanity is now experiencing the commotions invariably associated with the most turbulent stage of its evolution, the stage of adolescence, when the impetuosity of youth and its vehemence reach their climax, and must gradually be superseded by the calmness, the wisdom, and the maturity that characterize the stage of manhood. Then will the human race reach that stature of ripeness which will enable it to acquire all the powers and capacities upon which its ultimate developments must depend. 30.4

Sublime emotions surge in our hearts as we survey the dramatic history and amazing progress of these one hundred years. At the time of the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, the Bahá'í community was contained within the borders of no more than fifteen countries, the vast majority of its members living in His native Iran. The community now embraces the entire planet. ...

We have toiled to build a community at a period when the world has witnessed startling changes which have profoundly altered the character of society and plunged it into an unprecedented state of worry and confusion. Indeed,

the world in its current condition has lost its bearings through the operation of forces it neither understands nor can control. It is a period in which great dynasties and empires have collapsed in rapid succession, in which powerful ideologies have captured the hearts of millions only to expire in infamy, in which two world wars wreaked havoc on civilized life as it was known at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the wake of such horrendous disruptions, there have been unexampled advances in the realms of science, technology and social organization; a veritable explosion of knowledge; and an even more remarkable burgeoning in the awakening and rise of masses of humanity which were previously presumed to be dormant. These masses are claiming their rightful places within the community of nations which has greatly expanded. With the simultaneous development of communications at the speed of light and transportation at the speed of sound, the world has contracted into a mere neighborhood in which people are instantly aware of each other's affairs and have immediate access to each other. And yet, even with such miraculous advances, with the emergence of international organizations, and with valiant attempts and brilliant successes at international cooperation, nations are at woeful odds with one another, people are convulsed by economic upheavals, races feel more alienated than before and are filled with mistrust, humiliation and fear.

Collateral with these changes has been the breakdown of institutions, religious and political, which traditionally functioned as the guideposts for the stability of society. Even

the most resilient of these seem to be losing their credibility as they have become preoccupied with their own internal disorder. This calls attention to the emptiness of the moral landscape and the feeling of futility deranging personal life. Thoughtful commentators write apprehensively about the fall of culture and the consequent disappearance of values, the loss of the fullness of the inner life, a technological civilization facing an increasingly serious crisis. They write, moreover, of the human species as being at the end with its wisdom and being unable to control itself, of the need for divine wisdom and foresight, and of the human psyche as being far removed from recognizing this need.

These ominous comments reflect the universal consequences of a failed understanding as to the purpose of God for humankind. It is in this particular respect that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh sheds new light; it refreshes our thoughts; it clarifies and expands our conceptions. His Teachings imbue us with the abundance of God's love for His creatures; they impress upon us the indispensability of justice in human relations and emphasize the importance of adhering to principle in all matters; they inform us that human beings have been created "to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization" and that the virtues that befit the dignity of every person are: "forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth."

As the members of our community have pursued their plan for teaching His Faith, they have grown to appreciate more adequately the purpose of the multifarious processes of change which have been at work during the course of the

century. “Such simultaneous processes of rise and fall, of integration and of disintegration, of order and chaos, with their continuous and reciprocal reactions on each other, are” our Teachings tell us, “but aspects of a greater Plan, one and indivisible, whose Source is God, whose author is Bahá'u'lláh, the theater of whose operations is the entire planet, and whose ultimate objectives are the unity of the human race and the peace of all mankind.” 30.5

31

Signs of the Fulfillment of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings

The world has—at least the thinking world—caught up by now with all the great and universal principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh over seventy years ago, and so of course it does not sound “new” to them. But we know that the deeper teachings, the capacity of His projected World Order to recreate society, are new and dynamic. 31.1

Indeed, from whatever direction we gaze, the power of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is visibly at work in the world. In the call for a new world order, which has issued like a refrain from the statements of political leaders and influential thinkers, even when they themselves were incapable of defining their own meaning, can be discerned the slow awakening of humanity to the principal purpose of His Revelation. That such a call should have come so

insistently from the head of that republic which is destined, in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words, to be “the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement” and to “lead all nations spiritually,” is an indication of the efficacy and the acceleration of two simultaneous processes, one operating outside and one inside the Cause, which Shoghi Effendi tells us are destined to culminate “in a single glorious consummation.”

31.2

Not by the material resources which the members of this infant community can now summon to their aid; not by the numerical strength of its present-day supporters; nor by any direct tangible benefits its votaries can as yet confer upon the multitude of the needy and the disconsolate among their countrymen, should its potentialities be tested or its worth determined. Nowhere but in the purity of its precepts, the sublimity of its standards, the integrity of its laws, the reasonableness of its claims, the comprehensiveness of its scope, the universality of its program, the flexibility of its institutions, the lives of its founders, the heroism of its martyrs, and the transforming power of its influence, should the unprejudiced observer seek to obtain the true criterion that can enable him to fathom its mysteries or to estimate its virtue.

How unfair, how irrelevant, to venture any comparison between the slow and gradual consolidation of the Faith proclaimed by Bahá’u’lláh and those man-created movements which, having their origin in human desires and with their hopes centered on mortal dominion, must inevitably decline and perish! Springing from a finite mind, begotten of human fancy, and oftentimes the product of

ill-conceived designs, such movements succeed, by reason of their novelty, their appeal to man's baser instincts and their dependence upon the resources of a sordid world, in dazzling for a time the eyes of men, only to plunge finally from the heights of their meteoric career into the darkness of oblivion, dissolved by the very forces that had assisted in their creation.

Not so with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Born in an environment of appalling degradation, springing from a soil steeped in age-long corruptions, hatreds and prejudice, inculcating principles irreconcilable with the accepted standards of the times, and faced from the beginning with the relentless enmity of government, church and people, this nascent faith of God has, by virtue of the celestial potency with which it has been endowed, succeeded, in less than four score years and ten, in emancipating itself from the galling chains of Islamic domination, in proclaiming the self-sufficiency of its ideals and the independent integrity of its laws, in planting its banner in no less than forty of the most advanced countries of the world, in establishing its outposts in lands beyond the farthest seas, in consecrating its religious edifices in the midmost heart of the Asiatic and American continents, in inducing two of the most powerful governments of the West to ratify the instruments essential to its administrative activities, in obtaining from royalty befitting tributes to the excellence of its teachings, and, finally, in forcing its grievances upon the attention of the representatives of the highest Tribunal in the civilized world, and in securing from its members written affirmations that are tantamount to a tacit recognition of its

religious status and to an express declaration of the justice of its cause.

Circumscribed though its power as a social force may as yet appear, and however obvious may seem the present ineffectiveness of its world-embracing program, we, who stand identified with its blessed name, cannot but marvel at the measure of its achievements if we but compare them with the modest accomplishments that have marked the rise of the Dispensations of the past. Where else, if not in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, can the unbiased student of comparative religion cite instances of a claim as stupendous as that which the Author of that Faith advanced, foes as relentless as those which He faced, a devotion more sublime than that which He kindled, a life as eventful and as enthralling as that which He led? Has Christianity or Islam, has any Dispensation that preceded them, offered instances of such combinations of courage and restraint, of magnanimity and power, of broadmindedness and loyalty, as those which characterized the conduct of the heroes of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh? Where else do we find evidences of a transformation as swift, as complete, and as sudden, as those effected in the lives of the apostles of the Báb? Few, indeed, are the instances recorded in any of the authenticated annals of the religions of the past of a self-abnegation as complete, a constancy as firm, a magnanimity as sublime, a loyalty as uncompromising, as those which bore witness to the character of that immortal band which stands identified with this Divine Revelation—this latest and most compelling manifestation of the love and the omnipotence of the Almighty!

We may vainly search in the records of the earliest beginnings of any of the recognized religions of the past for episodes as thrilling in their details, or as far-reaching in their consequences, as those that illumine the pages of the history of this Faith. The almost incredible circumstances attending the martyrdom of that youthful Prince of Glory; the forces of barbaric repression which this tragedy subsequently released; the manifestations of unsurpassed heroism to which it gave rise; the exhortations and warnings which have streamed from the pen of the Divine Prisoner in His Epistles to the potentates of the Church and the monarchs and rulers of the world; the undaunted loyalty with which our brethren are battling in Muslim countries with the forces of religious orthodoxy—these may be reckoned as the most outstanding features of what the world will come to recognize as the greatest drama in the world's spiritual history. 31.3

The Great Peace towards which people of goodwill throughout the centuries have inclined their hearts, of which seers and poets for countless generations have expressed their vision, and for which from age to age the sacred scriptures of mankind have constantly held the promise, is now at long last within the reach of the nations. For the first time in history it is possible for everyone to view the entire planet, with all its myriad diversified peoples, in one perspective. World peace is not only possible but inevitable. It is the next stage in the evolution of this planet—in the words of one great thinker, “the planetization of mankind.” ...

Among the favorable signs are the steadily growing strength of the steps towards world order taken initially near the beginning of this century in the creation of the league of Nations, succeeded by the more broadly based United Nations Organization; the achievement since the Second World War of independence by the majority of all the nations on earth, indicating the completion of the process of nation building, and the involvement of these fledgling nations with older ones in matters of mutual concern; the consequent vast increase in cooperation among hitherto isolated and antagonistic peoples and groups in international undertakings in the scientific, educational, legal, economic and cultural fields; the rise in recent decades of an unprecedented number of international humanitarian organizations; the spread of women's and youth movements calling for an end to war; and the spontaneous spawning of widening networks of ordinary people seeking understanding through personal communication.

The scientific and technological advances occurring in this unusually blessed century portend a great surge forward in the social evolution of the planet, and indicate the means by which the practical problems of humanity may be solved. They provide, indeed, the very means for the administration of the complex life of a united world. ...

Whatever suffering and turmoil the years immediately ahead may hold, however dark the immediate circumstances, the Bahá'í community believes that humanity can confront this supreme trial with confidence in its ultimate outcome. Far from signaling the end of civilization, the convulsive changes towards which humanity is being ever

more rapidly impelled will serve to release the “potentialities inherent in the station of man” and reveal “the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality.” 31.4

Permanent peace among nations is an essential stage, but not, Bahá'u'lláh asserts, the ultimate goal of the social development of humanity. Beyond the initial armistice forced upon the world by the fear of nuclear holocaust, beyond the political peace reluctantly entered into by suspicious rival nations, beyond pragmatic arrangements for security and coexistence, beyond even the many experiments in cooperation which these steps will make possible lies the crowning goal: the unification of all the peoples of the world in one universal family.

Disunity is a danger that the nations and peoples of the earth can no longer endure; the consequences are too terrible to contemplate, too obvious to require any demonstration. “The well-being of mankind,” Bahá'u'lláh wrote more than a century ago, “its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established.” In observing that “mankind is groaning, is dying to be led to unity, and to terminate its age-long martyrdom,” Shoghi Effendi further commented that: “Unification of the whole of mankind is the hallmark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity,

must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life.”

All contemporary forces of change validate this view. The proofs can be discerned in the many examples already cited of the favorable signs towards world peace in current international movements and developments. The army of men and women, drawn from virtually every culture, race and nation on earth, who serve the multifarious agencies of the United Nations, represent a planetary “civil service” whose impressive accomplishments are indicative of the degree of cooperation that can be attained even under discouraging conditions. An urge towards unity, like a spiritual springtime, struggles to express itself through countless international congresses that bring together people from a vast array of disciplines. It motivates appeals for international projects involving children and youth. Indeed, it is the real source of the remarkable movement towards ecumenism by which members of historically antagonistic religions and sects seem irresistibly drawn towards one another. Together with the opposing tendency to warfare and self-aggrandizement against which it ceaselessly struggles, the drive towards world unity is one of the dominant, pervasive features of life on the planet during the closing years of the twentieth century.

The experience of the Bahá’í community may be seen as an example of this enlarging unity. It is a community of some three to four million people [now over five million] drawn from many nations, cultures, classes and creeds,

engaged in a wide range of activities serving the spiritual, social and economic needs of the peoples of many lands. It is a single social organism, representative of the diversity of the human family, conducting its affairs through a system of commonly accepted consultative principles, and cherishing equally all the great outpourings of divine guidance in human history. Its existence is yet another convincing proof of the practicality of its Founder's vision of a united world, another evidence that humanity can live as one global society, equal to whatever challenges its coming of age may entail. 31.5

... We stand at the threshold of the last decade of this radiant twentieth century facing an immediate future of immense challenges and dazzling prospects. The swiftness of events during the past year is indicative of the acceleration, as the hundredth anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's Ascension approaches, of the spiritual forces released with the advent of His revolutionizing mission. It is an acceleration which, in its suddenness and wide transformational impact on social thought and on political entities, has aroused feelings of delight as to its immediate effects and of bewilderment as to its real meaning and destined outcome, prompting the astonished editors of an outstanding newspaper, finding themselves bereft of explanations, to attribute it to the workings of an "Invisible Hand."

For the followers of Bahá'u'lláh throughout the world there can be no doubt as to the Divine Source and clear intention of these extraordinary happenings. let us rejoice, therefore, in the wondrous signs of the beneficence of God's abounding grace. 31.6

PART VII

The Fourth Proof: Interpretation of the Holy Books

Even within one religion, the followers interpret the passages of their Holy Book in different ways. This is demonstrated by the fact that every religion is divided into innumerable sects and denominations.

Every Holy Book contains prophecies and allusions that refer to the coming of the next Manifestation of God. Like the other passages, however, these prophecies are interpreted in a variety of ways. Thus, the interpretation of the prophecies and allusions foretelling future events cannot be a sufficient proof of the claim of the next Manifestation of God. In fact, the failure to understand the prophecies of the Holy Books often led people to reject the new Manifestation when He appears.

Nevertheless, the new Manifestation does, Himself, hold the key to understanding these prophecies. In every age the Manifestation of God unravels the mysteries of the Holy Books and explains the true proofs. The explanations are available for consideration by the seeker of truth.

Bahá'u'lláh states that all of the religions of the past have awaited the “Day of God,” when God’s will would be done on earth and the people of the world united as one family. Bahá'u'lláh claims that He is the One promised in all the Holy Books who will establish this new age for humanity. He has unsealed the meaning of the Holy Books and explained the secrets of their prophecies as they apply to His appearance and mission.

While the interpretation of the Holy Books may not be a sufficient proof of the mission of a Manifestation, this proof should be considered in the context of the other proofs presented in this Book. We can then see that the Holy Books make certain predictions, that Bahá'u'lláh explains how these predictions have been fulfilled, and that He supports His claim through His actions, His writings, and the community He has raised up that is applying His teachings to the problems of humanity.

32

Understanding the Meaning of the Holy Books

The third method of understanding is by tradition that is, through the text of the Holy Scriptures—for people say, “In the Old and New Testaments, God spoke thus.” This method equally is not perfect, because the traditions are understood by the reason. As the reason itself is liable to

err, how can it be said that in interpreting the meaning of the traditions it will not err, for it is possible for it to make mistakes, and certainty cannot be attained. This is the method of the religious leaders; whatever they understand and comprehend from the text of the books is that which their reason understands from the text, and not necessarily the real truth; for the reason is like a balance, and the meanings contained in the text of the Holy Books are like the thing which is weighed. If the balance is untrue, how can the weight be ascertained? 32.1

The prophecies deal with dates and symbols which proclaim the end of each dispensation. In former books the conditions are explained concerning subsequent manifestors of the divine plan. But those who do not follow closely these things will not be convinced by proofs such as these. This then is not a final proof. 32.2

In the Bible there are prophecies of the coming of Christ. The Jews still await the coming of the Messiah, and pray to God day and night to hasten His advent.

When Christ came they denounced and slew Him, saying: "This is not the One for whom we wait. Behold when the Messiah shall come, signs and wonders shall testify that He is in truth the Christ. We know the signs and conditions, and they have not appeared. The Messiah will arise out of an unknown city. He shall sit upon the throne of David, and behold, He shall come with a sword of steel, and with a scepter of iron shall He rule! He shall fulfill the law of the Prophets, He shall conquer the East and the West, and shall glorify His chosen people the Jews. He shall bring

with Him a reign of peace, during which even the animals shall cease to be at enmity with man. For behold the Wolf and the lamb shall drink from the same spring, and the lion and the doe shall lie down in the same pasture, the serpent and the mouse shall share the same nest, and all God's creatures shall be at rest."

According to the Jews, Jesus the Christ fulfilled none of these conditions, for their eyes were holden and they could not see.

He came from Nazareth, no unknown place. He carried no sword in His hand, nor even a stick. He did not sit upon the Throne of David, He was a poor man. He reformed the Law of Moses, and broke the Sabbath Day. He did not conquer the East and the West, but was Himself subject to the Roman Law. He did not exalt the Jews, but taught equality and brotherhood, and rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees. He brought in no reign of peace, for during His lifetime injustice and cruelty reached such a height that even He Himself fell a victim to it, and died a shameful death upon the cross.

Thus the Jews thought and spoke, for they did not understand the Scriptures nor the glorious truths that were contained in them. The letter they knew by heart, but of the life-giving spirit they understood not a word. 32.3

Afterwards, the companions and disciples of Jesus asked Him concerning those signs that must needs signalize the return of His manifestation. When, they asked, shall these things be? ...

These are the melodies, sung by Jesus, Son of Mary, in accents of majestic power in the Ridván of the Gospel, revealing those signs that must needs herald the advent of the Manifestation after Him. In the first Gospel according to Matthew it is recorded: And when they asked Jesus concerning the signs of His coming, He said unto them: "Immediately after the oppression of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the earth shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet." ...

Inasmuch as the Christian divines have failed to apprehend the meaning of these words, and did not recognize their object and purpose, and have clung to the literal interpretation of the words of Jesus, they therefore became deprived of the streaming grace of the Muḥammadan Revelation and its showering bounties. The ignorant among the Christian community, following the example of the leaders of their faith, were likewise prevented from beholding the beauty of the King of glory, inasmuch as those signs which were to accompany the dawn of the sun of the Muḥammadan Dispensation did not actually come to pass. Thus, ages have passed and centuries rolled away, and that most pure Spirit hath repaired unto the retreats of its ancient sovereignty. Once more hath the eternal Spirit breathed into the mystic trumpet, and caused the dead to speed out of their sepulchres of heedlessness and error unto the realm of guidance and grace. And yet, that expectant

community still crieth out: When shall these things be? When shall the promised One, the object of our expectation, be made manifest, that we may arise for the triumph of His Cause, that we may sacrifice our substance for His sake, that we may offer up our lives in His path? In like manner, have such false imaginings caused other communities to stray from the Kawthar of the infinite mercy of Providence, and to be busied with their own idle thoughts.

... Had they sought with a humble mind from the Manifestations of God in every Dispensation the true meaning of these words revealed in the sacred books — words the misapprehension of which hath caused men to be deprived of the recognition of the Sadratu'l-Muntahá,^[1] the ultimate Purpose—they surely would have been guided to the light of the Sun of Truth, and would have discovered the mysteries of divine knowledge and wisdom. 32.4

The second coming of Christ also will be in like manner: the signs and conditions which have been spoken of all have meanings, and are not to be taken literally. Among other things it is said that the stars will fall upon the earth. The stars are endless and innumerable, and modern mathematicians have established and proved scientifically that the globe of the sun is estimated to be about one million and a half times greater than the earth, and each of the fixed stars to be a thousand times larger than the sun. If these stars were to fall upon the surface of the earth, how could they find place there? It would be as though a thousand million of Himalaya mountains were to fall upon a grain

1 The Sadratu'l-Muntahá, the Divine Lote Tree, the Tree beyond which there is no passing, is a symbol for the Manifestation of God.

of mustard seed. According to reason and science this thing is quite impossible. ...

It is clear and evident that these signs have symbolic signification, and that they are not literal. 32.5

It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion. Such are the unveiled traditions and the evident verses already mentioned. The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sádiq, son of Muḥammad, spoken: "God verily will test them and sift them." This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favor with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended. Thus it is recorded: "Every knowledge hath seventy meanings, of which one only is known amongst the people. And when the Qá'im shall arise, He shall reveal unto men all that which remaineth." He also saith: "We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings; each one of these meanings we can explain."

These things We mention only that the people may not be dismayed because of certain traditions and utterances, which have not yet been literally fulfilled, that they may rather attribute their perplexity to their own lack of understanding, and not to the non-fulfillment of the promises in the traditions, inasmuch as the meaning intended by the Imams of the Faith is not known by this people, as evidenced by the traditions themselves. The people, therefore, must not allow such utterances to deprive them of the divine bounties, but should rather seek enlightenment from them who are the recognized Expounders thereof, so that the hidden mysteries may be unravelled, and be made manifest unto them.

We perceive none, however, amongst the people of the earth who, sincerely yearning for the Truth, seeketh the guidance of the divine Manifestations concerning the abstruse matters of his Faith. 32.6

The mysteries of the Holy Books have become explained in the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh. Before He appeared, these mysteries were not understood. Bahá'u'lláh opened and unsealed these mysteries. 32.7

33

The Meaning of "Return"

Question: Will you explain the subject of Return?

Answer: ... We will begin to elucidate it from the Gospel, for there it is plainly said that when John, the son of Zacharias, appeared and gave to men the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God, they asked him, "Who are thou? Art thou the promised Messiah?" He replied, "I am not the Messiah." Then they asked him, "Art thou Elijah?" He said, "I am not." [John 1:19-21] These words prove and show that John, the son of Zacharias, was not the promised Elias. But on the day of the transfiguration on Mount Tabor Christ said plainly that John, the son of Zacharias, was the promised Elias.

In chapter 9, verses 11-13, of the Gospel of Mark, it is said: "And they asked Him, saying, Why say the scribes that Elias must first come? And He answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written that the Son of man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at nought. But I say unto you, that Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed, as it is written of him."

In chapter 17, verse 13, of Matthew, it is said: "Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist."

They asked John the Baptist, "Are you Elias?" He answered, "No, I am not," although it is said in the Gospel that John was the promised Elias, and Christ also said so

clearly. Then if John was Elias, why did he say, "I am not"? And if he was not Elias, why did Christ say that he was?

The explanation is this: not the personality, but the reality of the perfections, is meant—that is to say, the same perfections that were in Elias existed in John the Baptist and were exactly realized in him. Therefore, John the Baptist was the promised Elias. In this case not the essence, but the qualities, are regarded. For example, there was a flower last year, and this year there is also a flower; I say the flower of last year has returned. Now, I do not mean that same flower in its exact individuality has come back; but as this flower has the same qualities as that of last year—as it has the same perfume, delicacy, color and form—I say the flower of last year has returned, and this flower is the former flower. When spring comes, we say last year's spring has come back because all that was found in last year's spring exists in this spring. That is why Christ said, "You will see all that happened in the days of the former Prophets." ...

In the same way, if we regard the return of the individual, it is another individual; but if we regard the qualities and perfections, the same have returned. Therefore, when Christ said, "This is Elias," He meant: this person is a manifestation of the bounty, the perfections, the character, the qualities and the virtues of Elias. John the Baptist said, "I am not Elias." Christ considered the qualities, the perfections, the character and the virtues of both, and John regarded his substance and individuality. It is like this lamp: it was here last night, and tonight it is also lighted, and tomorrow night it will also shine. We say that the lamp of this night is the same light as that of last night, and that

it has returned. It refers to the light, and not to the oil, the wick or the holder. 33.1

In the first Gospel according to Matthew it is recorded: And when they asked Jesus concerning the signs of His coming, He said unto them: "Immediately after the oppression of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the earth shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet." ...

This servant will now share with thee a dewdrop out of the fathomless ocean of the truths treasured in these holy words, that haply discerning hearts may comprehend all the allusions and the implications of the utterances of the Manifestations of Holiness, so that the overpowering majesty of the Word of God may not prevent them from attaining unto the ocean of His names and attributes, nor deprive them of recognizing the Lamp of God which is the seat of the revelation of His glorified Essence. ...

And now, concerning His words — "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give light, and the stars shall fall from heaven." By the terms "sun" and "moon," mentioned in the writings of the Prophets of God, is not meant solely the sun and moon of the visible universe. Nay rather, manifold are the meanings they have intended for these terms. ...

The term “suns” hath many a time been applied in the writings of the “immaculate Souls” unto the Prophets of God, those luminous Emblems of Detachment. ... Thus, it hath become evident that the terms “sun,” “moon,” and “stars” primarily signify the Prophets of God, the saints, and their companions, those Luminaries, the light of Whose knowledge hath shed illumination upon the worlds of the visible and the invisible.

In another sense, by these terms is intended the divines of the former Dispensation, who live in the days of the subsequent Revelations, and who hold the reins of religion in their grasp. If these divines be illumined by the light of the latter Revelation they will be acceptable unto God, and will shine with a light everlasting. Otherwise, they will be declared as darkened, even though to outward seeming they be leaders of men. ...

In another sense, by the terms “sun,” “moon,” and “stars” are meant such laws and teachings as have been established and proclaimed in every Dispensation, such as the laws of prayer and fasting. These have, according to the law of the Qur’an, been regarded, when the beauty of the Prophet Muhammad had passed beyond the veil, as the most fundamental and binding laws of His dispensation. ...

This is the purpose underlying the symbolic words of the Manifestations of God. Consequently, the application of the terms “sun” and “moon” to the things already mentioned hath been demonstrated and justified by the text of the sacred verses and the recorded traditions. Hence, it is clear and manifest that by the words “the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall

from heaven" is intended the waywardness of the divines, and the annulment of laws firmly established by divine Revelation, all of which, in symbolic language, have been foreshadowed by the Manifestation of God. ...

It is unquestionable that in every succeeding Revelation the "sun" and "moon" of the teachings, laws, commandments, and prohibitions which have been established in the preceding Dispensation, and which have overshadowed the people of that age, become darkened, that is, are exhausted, and cease to exert their influence. Consider now, had the people of the Gospel recognized the meaning of the symbolic terms "sun" and "moon," had they sought, unlike the froward and perverse, enlightenment from Him Who is the Revealer of divine knowledge, they would have surely comprehended the purpose of these terms, and would not have become afflicted and oppressed by the darkness of their selfish desires. Yea, but since they have failed to acquire true knowledge from its very Source, they have perished in the perilous vale of waywardness and misbelief. They still have not awakened to perceive that all the signs foretold have been made manifest, that the promised Sun hath risen above the horizon of divine Revelation, and that the "sun" and "moon" of the teachings, the laws, and learning of a former Dispensation have darkened and set.

33.2

To them that are endowed with understanding, it is clear and manifest that when the fire of the love of Jesus consumed the veils of Jewish limitations, and His authority was made apparent and partially enforced, He the Revealer of the unseen Beauty, addressing one day His disciples,

referred unto His passing, and, kindling in their hearts the fire of bereavement, said unto them: "I go away and come again unto you." And in another place He said: "I go and another will come Who will tell you all that I have not told you, and will fulfill all that I have said." Both these sayings have but one meaning, were you to ponder upon the Manifestations of the Unity of God with divine insight.

Every discerning observer will recognize that in the Dispensation of the Qur'an both the Book and the Cause of Jesus were confirmed. As to the matter of names, Muḥammad, Himself, declared: "I am Jesus." He recognized the truth of the signs, prophecies, and words of Jesus, and testified that they were all of God. In this sense, neither the person of Jesus nor His writings hath differed from that of Muḥammad and of His holy Book, inasmuch as both have championed the Cause of God, uttered His praise, and revealed His commandments. Thus it is that Jesus, Himself, declared: "I go away and come again unto you." Consider the sun. Were it to say now, "I am the sun of yesterday," it would speak the truth. And should it, bearing the sequence of time in mind, claim to be other than that sun, it still would speak the truth. In like manner, if it be said that all the days are but one and the same, it is correct and true. And if it be said, with respect to their particular names and designations, that they differ, that again is true. For though they are the same, yet one doth recognize in each a separate designation, a specific attribute, a particular character. Conceive accordingly the distinction, variation, and unity characteristic of the various Manifestations of holiness, that thou mayest comprehend the allusions made by the creator of all names and attributes to the mysteries

of distinction and unity, and discover the answer to thy question as to why that everlasting Beauty should have, at sundry times, called Himself by different names and titles. 33.3

... Muḥammad, in another verse, uttereth His protest against the people of that age. He saith: "Although they had before prayed for victory over those who believed not, yet when there came unto them, He of Whom they had knowledge, they disbelieved in Him. The curse of God on the infidels!" Reflect how this verse also implieth that the people living in the days of Muḥammad were the same people who in the days of the Prophets of old contended and fought in order to promote the Faith, and teach the Cause, of God. And yet, how could the generations living at the time of Jesus and Moses, and those who lived in the days of Muḥammad, be regarded as being actually one and the same people? Moreover, those whom they had formerly known were Moses, the Revealer of the Pentateuch, and Jesus, the Author of the Gospel. Notwithstanding, why did Muḥammad say: "When He of Whom they had knowledge came unto them"—that is Jesus or Moses—"they disbelieved in Him?" Was not Muhammad to outward seeming called by a different name? Did He not come forth out of a different city? Did He not speak a different language, and reveal a different Law? How then can the truth of this verse be established, and its meaning be made clear?

Strive therefore to comprehend the meaning of "return" which hath been so explicitly revealed in the Qur'an itself, and which none hath as yet understood. What sayest thou? If thou sayest that Muḥammad was the "return"

of the Prophets of old, as is witnessed by this verse, His Companions must likewise be the “return” of the bygone Companions, even as the “return” of the former people is clearly attested by the text of the abovementioned verses. And if thou deniest this, thou hast surely repudiated the truth of the Qur’an, the surest testimony of God unto men.

...

It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. Such is the unity of those Essences of being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendor. Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: “I am the return of all the Prophets,” He verily speaketh the truth. In like manner, in every subsequent Revelation, the return of the former Revelation is a fact, the truth of which is firmly established. Inasmuch as the return of the Prophets of God, as attested by verses and traditions, hath been conclusively demonstrated, the return of their chosen ones also is therefore definitely proven. This return is too manifest in itself to require any evidence or proof. ...

Purge thy sight, therefore, from all earthly limitations, that thou mayest behold them all as the bearers of one Name, the exponents of one Cause, the manifestations of one Self, and the revealers of one Truth, and that thou mayest apprehend the mystic “return” of the Words of God as unfolded by these utterances.

33.4

34

The Promise of the Day of God

In the divine Holy Books there are unmistakable prophecies giving the glad tidings of a certain Day in which the Promised One of all the Books would appear, a radiant dispensation be established, the banner of the Most Great Peace and conciliation be hoisted and the oneness of the world of humanity proclaimed. Among the various nations and peoples of the world no enmity or hatred should remain. All hearts were to be connected one with another. These things are recorded in the Torah, or Old Testament, in the Gospel, the Qur'an, the Zend-Avesta, the books of Buddha and the book of Confucius. In brief, all the Holy Books contain these glad tidings. They announce that after the world is surrounded by darkness, radiance shall appear. For just as the night, when it becomes excessively dark, precedes the dawn of a new day, so likewise when the darkness of religious apathy and heedlessness overtakes the world, when human souls become negligent of God, when materialistic ideas overshadow spirituality, when nations become submerged in the world of matter and forget God—at such a time as this shall the divine Sun shine forth and the radiant morn appear. 34.1

Hearken unto the melodies of the Gospel with the ear of fairness. He saith—glorified be His utterance—prophesying the things that are to come: “But of that Day and Hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father.” By Father in this connection is meant

God—exalted be His glory. He, verily, is the True Educator, and the Spiritual Teacher.

Joel saith: “For the Day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?” Firstly, in the sublime utterance set forth in the Gospel He saith that none is aware of the time of the Revelation, that none knoweth it except God, the All-Knowing, Who is cognizant of all. Secondly, He setteth forth the greatness of the Revelation. Likewise, in the Qur’an He saith: “Of what ask they of one another? Of the Great Announcement.” This is the Announcement, the greatness of which hath been mentioned in most of the Books of old and of more recent times. This is the Announcement that hath caused the limbs of mankind to quake, except such as God, the Protector, the Helper, the Succorer, hath willed to exempt. Men have indeed with their own eyes witnessed how all men and all things have been thrown into confusion and been sore perplexed, save those whom God hath chosen to exempt.

O Shaykh! Great is the Cause, and great the Announcement! Patiently and calmly ponder thou upon the resplendent signs and the sublime words, and all that hath been revealed in these days, that haply thou mayest fathom the mysteries that are hid in the Books, and mayest strive to guide His servants. Hearken with thine inner ear unto the Voice of Jeremiah, Who saith: “Oh, for great is that Day, and it hath no equal.” Wert thou to observe with the eye of fairness, thou wouldst perceive the greatness of the Day. Incline thine ear unto the Voice of this All-Knowing Counsellor, and suffer not thyself to be deprived of the mercy that hath surpassed all created things, visible and

invisible. Lend an ear unto the song of David. He saith: "Who will bring me into the Strong City?" The Strong City is 'Akka, which hath been named the Most Great Prison, and which possesseth a fortress and mighty ramparts.

O Shaykh! Peruse that which Isaiah hath spoken in His Book. He saith: "Get thee up into the high mountain, O Zion, that bringest good tidings; lift up Thy Voice with strength, O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings. Lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah: 'Behold your God! Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him.'" This Day all the signs have appeared. A Great City hath descended from heaven, and Zion trembleth and exulteth with joy at the Revelation of God, for it hath heard the Voice of God on every side. This Day Jerusalem hath attained unto a new Evangel, for in the stead of the sycamore standeth the cedar. Jerusalem is the place of pilgrimage for all the peoples of the world, and hath been named the Holy City. Together with Zion and Palestine, they are all included within these regions. Wherefore, hath it been said: "Blessed is the man that hath migrated to 'Akka." Amos saith: "The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter His Voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither." Carmel, in the Book of God, hath been designated as the Hill of God, and His Vineyard. It is here that, by the grace of the Lord of Revelation, the Tabernacle of Glory hath been raised. Happy are they that attain thereunto; happy they that set their faces towards it. And likewise He saith: "Our God will come, and He will not be silent."

O Shaykh! Reflect upon these words addressed by Him Who is the Desire of the world to Amos. He saith: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, for, lo, He that formeth the mountains and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of Hosts, is His name." He saith that He maketh the morning darkness. By this is meant that if, at the time of the Manifestation of Him Who conversed on Sinai anyone were to regard himself as the true morn, he will, through the might and power of God, be turned into darkness. He truly is the false dawn, though believing himself to be the true one. Woe unto him, and woe unto such as follow him without a clear token from God, the Lord of the worlds.

Isaiah saith: "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day." Concerning the greatness of the Revelation He saith: "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty." And in another connection He saith: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the splendor of our God."

These passages stand in need of no commentary. They are shining and manifest as the sun, and glowing and luminous as light itself. Every fair-minded person is led, by the fragrance of these words, unto the garden of understanding, and attaineth unto that from which most men are veiled and debarred.

34.2

Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness. The soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted for this wondrous Day. All the divers kindreds of the earth have, likewise, yearned to attain it. 34.3

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. 34.4

35

Bahá'u'lláh Fulfills the Promises of the Holy Books

The time foreordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, have all been fulfilled. Out of Zion hath gone forth the Law of God, and Jerusalem, and the hills and land thereof, are filled with the glory of His Revelation. Happy is the man that pondereth in his heart that which

hath been revealed in the Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Meditate upon this, O ye beloved of God, and let your ears be attentive unto His Word, so that ye may, by His grace and mercy, drink your fill from the crystal waters of constancy, and become as steadfast and immovable as the mountain in His Cause.

In the Book of Isaiah it is written: “Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty.” No man that meditateth upon this verse can fail to recognize the greatness of this Cause, or doubt the exalted character of this Day—the Day of God Himself. This same verse is followed by these words: “And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day.” This is the Day which the Pen of the Most High hath glorified in all the holy Scriptures. There is no verse in them that doth not declare the glory of His holy Name, and no Book that doth not testify unto the loftiness of this most exalted theme. Were We to make mention of all that hath been revealed in these heavenly Books and holy Scriptures concerning this Revelation, this Tablet would assume impossible dimensions. 35.1

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 Shi’ah Islam the return of the Imam Husayn; to Sunni Islam the descent of the “Spirit of God” (Jesus Christ); to the Zoroastrians the promised Sháh-Bahram; to the Hindus the reincarnation of Krishna; to the Buddhists the fifth Buddha. ...

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 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-Bahram, 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,” and “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 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 Muḥammad, 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.” ... 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. ...”

35.2

... The Promised One of all the world's peoples hath now been made manifest. For each and every people, and every religion, await a Promised One, and Bahá'u'lláh is that One Who is awaited by all; and therefore the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh will bring about the oneness of mankind, and

the tabernacle of unity will be upraised on the heights of the world, and the banners of the universality of all humankind will be unfurled on the peaks of the earth. 35.3

36

The Establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth

Bahá'u'lláh, the Revealer of God's Word in this Day, the Source of Authority, the Fountainhead of Justice, the Creator of a new World Order, the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization, the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Unifier and Redeemer of all mankind, has proclaimed the advent of God's Kingdom on earth, has formulated its laws and ordinances, enunciated its principles, and ordained its institutions. 36.1

I pray that you may grow in Divine fervor, and that the power of unity in the Spirit will augment, so that the prophecies may be fulfilled, and that in this great century of the Light of God all the glad tidings written in the Sacred Books may come to pass. This is the glorious time of which the Lord Jesus Christ spoke when He told us to pray "Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven." I hope that this is also your expectation and great desire. 36.2

Who, contemplating the helplessness, the fears and miseries of humanity in this day, can any longer question the necessity for a fresh revelation of the quickening power of God's redemptive love and guidance? Who, witnessing on one hand the stupendous advance achieved in the realm of human knowledge, of power, of skill and inventiveness, and viewing on the other the unprecedented character of the sufferings that afflict, and the dangers that beset, present-day society, can be so blind as to doubt that the hour has at last struck for the advent of a new Revelation, for a re-statement of the Divine Purpose, and for the consequent revival of those spiritual forces that have, at fixed intervals, rehabilitated the fortunes of human society? Does not the very operation of the world-unifying forces that are at work in this age necessitate that He Who is the Bearer of the Message of God in this day should not only reaffirm that self-same exalted standard of individual conduct inculcated by the Prophets gone before Him, but embody in His appeal, to all governments and peoples, the essentials of that social code, that Divine Economy, which must guide humanity's concerted efforts in establishing that all-embracing federation which is to signalize the advent of the Kingdom of God on this earth?

May we not, therefore, recognizing as we do the necessity for such a revelation of God's redeeming power, meditate upon the supreme grandeur of the System unfolded by the hand of Bahá'u'lláh in this day? 36.3

The world is, in truth, moving on towards its destiny. The interdependence of the peoples and nations of the earth, whatever the leaders of the divisive forces of the world may

say or do, is already an accomplished fact. Its unity in the economic sphere is now understood and recognized. The welfare of the part means the welfare of the whole, and the distress of the part brings distress to the whole. The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh has, in His own words, "lent a fresh impulse and set a new direction" to this vast process now operating in the world. The fires lit by this great ordeal are the consequences of men's failure to recognize it. They are, moreover, hastening its consummation. Adversity, prolonged, worldwide, afflictive, allied to chaos and universal destruction, must needs convulse the nations, stir the conscience of the world, disillusion the masses, precipitate a radical change in the very conception of society, and coalesce ultimately the disjointed, the bleeding limbs of mankind into one body, single, organically united, and indivisible.

To the general character, the implications and features of this world commonwealth, destined to emerge, sooner or later, out of the carnage, agony, and havoc of this great world convulsion, I have already referred in my previous communications. Suffice it to say that this consummation will, by its very nature, be a gradual process, and must, as Bahá'u'lláh has Himself anticipated, lead at first to the establishment of that Lesser Peace which the nations of the earth, as yet unconscious of His Revelation and yet unwittingly enforcing the general principles which He has enunciated, will themselves establish. This momentous and historic step, involving the reconstruction of mankind, as the result of the universal recognition of its oneness and wholeness, will bring in its wake the spiritualization of the masses, consequent to the recognition of the character,

and the acknowledgment of the claims, of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh—the essential condition to that ultimate fusion of all races, creeds, classes, and nations which must signalize the emergence of His New World Order.

Then will the coming of age of the entire human race be proclaimed and celebrated by all the peoples and nations of the earth. Then will the banner of the Most Great Peace be hoisted. Then will the worldwide sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh—the Establisher of the Kingdom of the Father foretold by the Son, and anticipated by the Prophets of God before Him and after Him—be recognized, acclaimed, and firmly established. Then will a world civilization be born, flourish, and perpetuate itself, a civilization with a fullness of life such as the world has never seen nor can as yet conceive. Then will the Everlasting Covenant be fulfilled in its completeness. Then will the promise enshrined in all the Books of God be redeemed, and all the prophecies uttered by the Prophets of old come to pass, and the vision of seers and poets be realized. Then will the planet, galvanized through the universal belief of its dwellers in one God, and their allegiance to one common Revelation, mirror, within the limitations imposed upon it, the effulgent glories of the sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh, shining in the plenitude of its splendor in the Abhá Paradise, and be made the footstool of His Throne on high, and acclaimed as the earthly heaven, capable of fulfilling that ineffable destiny fixed for it, from time immemorial, by the love and wisdom of its Creator.

36.4

“One of the great events,” affirms ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “which is to occur in the Day of the manifestation of that incomparable

Branch is the hoisting of the Standard of God among all nations. By this is meant that all nations and kindreds will be gathered together under the shadow of this Divine Banner, which is no other than the Lordly Branch itself, and will become a single nation. Religious and sectarian antagonism, the hostility of races and peoples, and differences among nations, will be eliminated. All men will adhere to one religion, will have one common faith, will be blended into one race and become a single people. All will dwell in one common fatherland, which is the planet itself.” “Now, in the world of being,” He has moreover explained, “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 spring-tide, and how heavenly was that gift.”

No Jess enthralling is the vision of Isaiah, the greatest of the Hebrew Prophets, predicting, as far back as twenty five hundred years ago, the destiny which mankind must, at its stage of maturity, achieve:” And He (the Lord) shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ... And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. ... And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the

girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The Wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together.

... And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The writer of the Apocalypse, prefiguring the millennial glory which a redeemed, a jubilant humanity must witness, has similarly testified: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'" ...

What more fitting conclusion to this theme than these words of Bahá'u'lláh, written in anticipation of the golden age of His Faith—the age in which the face of the earth, from pole to pole, will mirror the ineffable splendors of the Abhá Paradise? "This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendors of the Light that shineth from the face of thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful.

Verily, We have caused every soul to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty. We have then called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men. I am, verily, the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days.”

36.5

PART VIII

The Divine Summons

Bahá'u'lláh has called upon all the people of the earth to recognize Him and to apply His Teachings which are the healing remedy for the ills afflicting society. He, Himself, has carefully explained the nature of the proofs by which we can know Him.

Ultimately, the recognition of the Manifestation of God by each human being is more than a rational act of the analysis of proofs. It is the attraction of the heart to one's beloved. God, in love for us, calls us to reunion with Him through His new Messenger. If we love the light, we are attracted to it from whatever lamp it comes. In our love for God, we will turn to the source of knowledge He provides, eager to learn the lessons He teaches—lessons on which depend the very fate of humanity.

And if we are still not sure of the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's mission? Bahá'u'lláh assures us that we may, in our communion with God, seek divine guidance. "It behooveth us, therefore, to make the utmost endeavor, that, by God's invisible assistance, these dark veils, these clouds of Heaven-sent trials, may not hinder us from beholding the beauty of His shining Countenance, and that we may recognize Him only by His own Self. And should we ask for a testimony of His truth, we should content ourselves with one, and only one;

that thereby we may attain unto Him Who is the Fountain-head of infinite grace, and in Whose presence all the world's abundance fadeth into nothingness, that we may cease to cavil at Him every day and to cleave unto our own idle fancy."

"Whensoever he hath fulfilled the conditions implied in the verse: 'Whoso maketh efforts for Us,' he shall enjoy the blessing conferred by the words: 'In Our ways shall We assuredly guide him.'"

37

The Proofs Have Been Made Manifest

Well nigh a hundred years have elapsed since the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh dawned upon the world—a Revelation, the nature of which, as affirmed by Himself, "none among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended." For a whole century God has respited mankind, that it might acknowledge the Founder of such a Revelation, espouse His Cause, proclaim His greatness, and establish His Order. In a hundred volumes, the repositories of priceless precepts, mighty laws, unique principles, impassioned exhortations, reiterated warnings, amazing prophecies, sublime invocations, and weighty commentaries, the Bearer of such a Message has proclaimed, as no Prophet before Him has done, the Mission with which God had

entrusted Him. To emperors, kings, princes and potentates, to rulers, governments, clergy and peoples, whether of the East or of the West, whether Christian, Jew, Muslim, or Zoroastrian, He addressed, for well-nigh fifty years, and in the most tragic circumstances, these priceless pearls of knowledge and wisdom that lay hid within the ocean of His matchless utterance. Forsaking fame and fortune, accepting imprisonment and exile, careless of ostracism and obloquy, submitting to physical indignities and cruel deprivations, He, the Vicegerent of God on earth, suffered Himself to be banished from place to place and from country to country. ... "We verily," He Himself has testified, "have not fallen short of Our duty to exhort men, and to deliver that whereunto I was bidden by God, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Had they hearkened unto Me, they would have beheld the earth another earth." And again: "Is there any excuse left for anyone in this Revelation? No, by God, the Lord of the Mighty Throne! My signs have encompassed the earth, and My power enveloped all mankind, and yet the people are wrapped in a strange sleep!" 37.1

Glorified art Thou, O my God! Thou knowest that my sole aim in revealing Thy Cause hath been to reveal Thee and not my self, and to manifest Thy glory rather than my glory. In Thy path, and to attain Thy pleasure, I have scorned rest, joy, delight. At all times and under all conditions my gaze hath been fixed on Thy precepts, and mine eyes bent upon the things Thou hast bidden me observe in Thy Tablets. I have wakened every morning to the light of Thy praise and Thy remembrance, and reached every evening inhaling the fragrances of Thy mercy.

And when the entire creation was stirred up, and the whole earth was convulsed, and the sweet saviors of Thy name, the All-Praised, had almost ceased to breathe over Thy realms, and the winds of Thy mercy had well-nigh been stilled throughout Thy dominions, Thou didst, through the power of Thy might, raise me up among Thy servants, and bid me to show forth Thy sovereignty amidst Thy people. Thereupon I arose before all Thy creatures, strengthened by Thy help and Thy power, and summoned all the multitudes unto Thee, and announced unto all Thy servants Thy favors and Thy gifts, and invited them to turn towards this Ocean.

...

Though the fierce winds of the hatred of the wicked doers blew and beat on this Lamp, He was, at no time, in His love for Thy beauty, hindered from shedding the fragrance of His light. As the transgressions committed against Thee waxed greater and greater, my eagerness to reveal Thy Cause correspondingly increased, and as the tribulations deepened—and to this Thy glory beareth me witness—a fuller measure of Thy sovereignty and of Thy power was vouchsafed by me unto Thy creatures.

And finally, I was cast by the transgressors into the prison-city of 'Akka, and my kindred were made captives in Baghdád. The power of Thy might beareth me witness, O my God! Every trouble that hath touched me in Thy path hath added to my joy and increased my gladness. I swear by Thee, O Thou Who art the King of Kings! None of the kings of the earth hath power to hinder me from remembering Thee or from extolling Thy virtues. Were they to be leagued—as they have been leagued—against me, and to brandish their sharpest swords and most afflictive spears against me, I

would not hesitate to magnify Thy name before all them that are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth. ...

Though—as Thou beholdest me, O my God—I be dwelling in a place within whose walls no voice can be heard except the sound of the echo, though all the gates of ease and comfort be shut against us, and thick darkness appear to have compassed us on every side, yet my soul hath been so inflamed by its love for Thee, that nothing whatsoever can either quench the fire of its love or abate the consuming flame of its desire. Lifting up its voice, it crieth aloud amidst Thy servants, and calleth them, at all times and under all conditions, unto Thee. I beseech Thee, by Thy Most Great Name, to open the eyes of Thy servants, that they may behold Thee shining above the horizon of Thy majesty and glory. ... Gather them, then, together around this Divine Law, the covenant of which Thou hast established with all Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, and Whose ordinances

Thou hast written down in Thy Tablets and Thy Scriptures. Raise them up, moreover, to such heights as will enable them to perceive Thy Call.

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the Inaccessible, the All-Glorious. 37.2

The mystic and wondrous Bride, hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God and His divine favor, been made manifest even as the resplendent light shed by the beauty of the Beloved. I bear witness, O friends! that the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established. Let it now be seen what your endeavors in the path of detachment will reveal. 37.3

38

Reunion With God

O Son of Man! Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty. 38.1

O Son of Man! I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life. 38.2

O Son of Being! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant. 38.3

O Son of Being! Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home, reunion with Me. Enter therein and tarry not. This is that which hath been destined for thee in Our kingdom above and Our exalted Dominion. 38.4

O Son of Man! If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee. 38.5

O Son of Spirit! Ask not of Me that which We desire not for thee, then be content with what We have ordained for thy sake, for this is that which profiteth thee, if therewith thou dost content thyself. 38.6

O Ye That Are Lying as Dead on the Couch of Heedlessness! Ages have passed and your precious lives are well-nigh ended, yet not a single breath of purity hath reached Our court of holiness from you. Though immersed in the ocean of misbelief, yet with your lips ye profess the one true faith of God. Him whom I abhor ye have loved, and of My foe ye have made a friend. Notwithstanding, ye walk on My earth complacent and self-satisfied, heedless that My earth is weary of you and everything within it shunneth you. 38.7

O Moving Form of Dust! I desire communion with thee, but thou wouldst put no trust in Me. The sword of thy rebellion hath felled the tree of thy hope. At all times I am near unto thee, but thou art ever far from Me. Imperishable glory I have chosen for thee, yet boundless shame thou hast chosen for thyself. While there is yet time, return, and lose not thy chance. 38.8

O Son of Desire! The learned and the wise have for long years striven and failed to attain the presence of the All-Glorious; they have spent their lives in search of Him, yet did not behold the beauty of His countenance. Thou without the least effort didst attain thy goal, and without search hast obtained the object of thy quest. Yet, notwithstanding, thou didst remain so wrapt in the veil of self, that thine eyes beheld not the beauty of the Beloved, nor did thy hand touch the hem of His robe. Ye that have eyes, behold and wonder. 38.9

O Son of Earth! Wouldst thou have Me, seek none other than Me; and wouldst thou gaze upon My beauty, close thine eyes to the world and all that is therein; for My will

and the will of another than Me, even as fire and water,
cannot dwell together in one heart. 38.10

O Son of Spirit! The spirit of holiness beareth unto thee
the joyful tidings of reunion; wherefore dost thou grieve?
The spirit of power confirmeth thee in His cause; why dost
thou veil thyself? The light of His countenance doth lead
thee; how canst thou go astray? 38.11

O Son of Justice! Whither can a lover go but to the land
of his beloved? and what seeker findeth rest away from
his heart's desire? To the true lover reunion is life, and
separation is death. His breast is void of patience and his
heart hath no peace. A myriad lives he would forsake to
hasten to the abode of his beloved. 38.12

O Son of Love! Thou art but one step away from the
glorious heights above and from the celestial tree of love.
Take thou one pace and with the next advance into the
immortal realm and enter the pavilion of eternity. Give ear
then to that which hath been revealed by the pen of glory.
38.13

O Ye Dwellers in the Highest Paradise! Proclaim unto
the children of assurance that within the realms of holi-
ness, nigh unto the celestial paradise, a new garden hath
appeared, round which circle the denizens of the realm
on high and the immortal dwellers of the exalted paradise.
Strive, then, that ye may attain that station, that ye may
unravel the mysteries of love from its windflowers and
learn the secret of divine and consummate wisdom from
its eternal fruits. Solaced are the eyes of them that enter and
abide therein! 38.14

39

Bahá'u'lláh's Call to Humanity

Release yourselves, O nightingales of God, from the thorns and brambles of wretchedness and misery, and wing your flight to the rose-garden of unfading splendor. O My friends that dwell upon the dust! Haste forth unto your celestial habitation. Announce unto yourselves the joyful tidings: "He Who is the Best-Beloved is come! He hath crowned Himself with the glory of God's Revelation, and hath unlocked to the face of men the doors of His ancient Paradise." let all eyes rejoice, and let every ear be gladdened, for now is the time to gaze on His beauty, now is the fit time to hearken to His voice. Proclaim unto every longing lover: "Behold, your Well-Beloved hath come among men!" and to the messengers of the Monarch of love impart the tidings: "lo, the Adored One hath appeared arrayed in the fullness of His glory!" O lovers of His beauty! Turn the anguish of your separation from Him into the joy of an everlasting reunion, and let the sweetness of His presence dissolve the bitterness of your remoteness from His court.

Behold how the manifold grace of God, which is being showered from the clouds of Divine glory, hath, in this day, encompassed the world. For whereas in days past every lover besought and searched after his Beloved, it is the Beloved Himself Who now is calling His lovers and is inviting them to attain His presence. Take heed lest ye forfeit so precious a favor; beware lest ye belittle so remarkable a token of His grace. Abandon not the incorruptible benefits, and be

not content with that which perisheth. Lift up the veil that obscureth your vision, and dispel the darkness with which it is enveloped, that ye may gaze on the naked beauty of the Beloved's face, may behold that which no eye hath beheld, and hear that which no ear hath heard.

Hear Me, ye mortal birds! In the Rose Garden of changeless splendor a Flower hath begun to bloom, compared to which every other flower is but a thorn, and before the brightness of Whose glory the very essence of beauty must pale and wither. Arise, therefore, and, with the whole enthusiasm of your hearts, with all the eagerness of your souls, the full fervor of your will, and the concentrated efforts of your entire being, strive to attain the paradise of His presence, and endeavor to inhale the fragrance of the incorruptible Flower, to breathe the sweet savors of holiness, and to obtain a portion of this perfume of celestial glory. Whoso followeth this counsel will break his chains asunder, will taste the abandonment of enraptured love, will attain unto his heart's desire, and will surrender his soul into the hands of his Beloved. Bursting through his cage, he will, even as the bird of the spirit, wing his flight to his holy and everlasting nest.

Night hath succeeded day, and day hath succeeded night, and the hours and moments of your lives have come and gone, and yet none of you hath, for one instant, consented to detach himself from that which perisheth. Bestir yourselves, that the brief moments that are still yours may not be dissipated and lost. Even as the swiftness of lightning your days shall pass, and your bodies shall be laid to rest

beneath a canopy of dust. What can ye then achieve? How can ye atone for your past failure?

The everlasting Candle shineth in its naked glory. Behold how it hath consumed every mortal veil. O ye moth-like lovers of His light! Brave every danger, and consecrate your souls to its consuming flame. O ye that thirst after Him! Strip yourselves of every earthly affection, and hasten to embrace your Beloved. With a zest that none can equal make haste to attain unto Him. The Flower, thus far hidden from the sight of men, is unveiled to your eyes. In the open radiance of His glory He standeth before you. His voice summoneth all the holy and sanctified beings to come and be united with Him. Happy is he that turneth thereunto; well is it with him that hath attained, and gazed on the light of so wondrous a countenance.

39.1

O My servants! My holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing luster. It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been pre-ordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets. If no one be willing to direct his steps towards its shores, if every one should fail to arise and find Him, can such a failure be said to have robbed this ocean of its power or to have lessened, to any degree, its treasures? How vain, how contemptible, are the imaginations which your hearts have devised, and are still devising! O My servants! The one true God is My witness! This most great, this fathomless and

surging Ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you. Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein! Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favor, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty.

O My servants! Could ye apprehend with what wonders of My munificence and bounty I have willed to entrust your souls, ye would, of a truth, rid yourselves of attachment to all created things, and would gain a true knowledge of your own selves—a knowledge which is the same as the comprehension of Mine own Being. Ye would find yourselves independent of all else but Me, and would perceive, with your inner and outer eye, and as manifest as the revelation of My effulgent Name, the seas of My loving-kindness and bounty moving within you. Suffer not your idle fancies, your evil passions, your insincerity and blindness of heart to dim the luster, or stain the sanctity, of so lofty a station. Ye are even as the bird which soareth, with the full force of its mighty wings and with complete and joyous confidence, through the immensity of the heavens, until, impelled to satisfy its hunger, it turneth longingly to the water and clay of the earth below it, and, having been entrapped in the mesh of its desire, findeth itself impotent to resume its flight to the realms whence it came. Powerless to shake off the burden weighing on its sullied wings, that bird, hitherto an inmate of the heavens, is now forced to seek a dwelling-place upon the dust. Wherefore, O My servants, defile not your wings with the clay of waywardness and vain desires, and suffer them not to be stained with the dust of envy and hate, that ye may not be hindered from soaring in the heavens of My divine knowledge.

O My servants! Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean. I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine—words of consummate power and wisdom. I have, moreover, with the hand of divine power, unsealed the choice wine of My Revelation, and have wafted its holy, its hidden, and musk-laden fragrance upon all created things. Who else but yourselves is to be blamed if ye choose to remain unendowed with so great an outpouring of God's transcendent and all-encompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy? 39.2

If thou seekest another than Me, yea, if thou searchest the universe for evermore, thy quest will be in vain. 39.3

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- 25.2 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, 44
- 25.3 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 340-41
- 25.4 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 367-68
- 25.5 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 366
- 25.6 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 61-62

Bahá'u'lláh is the Divine Educator for this Age

- 26.1 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 80-81
- 26.2 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 93-94, 95-96
- 26.3 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 248-50
- 26.4 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 213

His Teachings are Suited to the Needs of this Age

- 27.1 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 431
- 27.2 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 433-35
- 27.3 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 298, 303, 304-07
- 27.4 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 31-32

His Teachings Provide the Basis for Individual Transformation

- 28.1 Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, 17-19
- 28.2 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 401-02
- 28.3 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 331-32

His Teachings Provide the Basis for a New Civilization

- 29.1 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 140-41
- 29.2 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 161-66
- 29.3 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 206

The Consequences of Rejecting Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings

- 30.1 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 39-40
- 30.2 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 399
- 30.3 Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come*, 3-5
- 30.4 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 201-02
- 30.5 The Universal House of Justice, *The Holy Year* 35-37

Signs of the Fulfillment of Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings

- 31.1 on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Individual and Teaching*, 28
- 31.2 The Universal House of Justice, *A Wider Horizon*, 85-86
- 31.3 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, 54-56
- 31.4 The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, 13-14, 16

- 31.5 The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace*, 34-36
 31.6 The Universal House of Justice, *A Wider Horizon*, 73

Part VII. The Fourth Proof: Interpretation of the Holy Books

Understanding the Meaning of the Holy Books

- 32.1 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 298
 32.2 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, 43
 32.3 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 54-55
 32.4 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, 22, 24-28
 32.5 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 111-12
 32.6 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, 254-56
 32.7 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 197

The Meaning of “Return”

- 33.1 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 132-34
 33.2 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, 24-25, 33, 35, 36, 41-42
 33.3 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, 20-22
 33.4 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, 150-51, 153-54, 159

The Promise of the Day of God

- 34.1 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, 220-21
 34.2 Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, 143-46
 34.3 Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings*, 11
 34.4 Bahá’u’lláh, quoted in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, 106

Bahá’u’lláh Fulfills the Promises of the Holy Books

- 35.1 Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings*, 12-13
 35.2 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 94-96
 35.3 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, 101

The Establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth

- 36.1 The Universal House of Justice, *The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice*, 3-4

- 36.2 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, 88
- 36.3 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, 60-61
- 36.4 Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come*, 122-24
- 36.5 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, 204-06

Part VIII. The Divine Summons

The Proofs Have Been Made Manifest

- 37.1 Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come*, 6
- 37.2 Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, 103-06
- 37.3 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 51-52

Reunion with God

- 38.1 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 4
- 38.2 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 4
- 38.3 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 4
- 38.4 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 5
- 38.5 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 5
- 38.6 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 8
- 38.7 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 28-29
- 38.8 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 29
- 38.9 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 29
- 38.10 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 33
- 38.11 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 11-12
- 38.12 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 23
- 38.13 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 24
- 38.14 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 27

Bahá’u’lláh’s Call to Humanity

- 39.1 Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings*, 319-22
- 39.2 Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings*, 326-28
- 39.3 Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, 7

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