

*By My Fruits
You Shall
Know Me*



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Volume VI

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Other Volumes:

Volume I: I Shall Come Again (in print)

Volume II: Lord of Lords (in print)

Volume III: King of Kings (in print)



The Promise

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give everyone according to what he has done...Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

Revelation 2:12-14 NIV*

Arise, Jerusalem, rise clothed in light; your light has come and the glory of the Lord shines over you. For, though darkness covers the earth and dark night the nations, the Lord shall shine upon you...

Isaiah 60:1-2 NEB*

* To enhance clarity, two modern translations of the Old and New Testaments are used: *The New English Bible (NEB)* and *New International Version (NIV)*. The wording in different editions of *New International Version* varies slightly. For passages from *The King James Version (KJV)*, identifying abbreviations are not used. To clarify or emphasize special meanings, in a few instances *The Amplified Bible (AB)*, *The New American Bible (NAB)*, and *New World Translation (NWT)* have also been used.

The Fulfillment

O My servants! It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favors which, in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime, are being showered upon you. The Day Star of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty, nor failed to recognize the beauty of his Best-Beloved in this, His new attire.¹

Bahá'u'lláh

These are the glorious days on the like of which the sun hath never risen in the past. These are the days which the people in bygone times eagerly expected. What hath then befallen you that ye are fast asleep? These are the days wherein God hath caused the Day-Star of Truth to shine resplendent. What hath then caused you to keep your silence? These are the appointed days which ye have been yearningly awaiting in the past—the days of the advent of divine justice. Render ye thanks unto God, O ye concourse of believers.²

The Báb

O ye that judge with fairness! If this Cause is to be denied then what other cause in this world can be vindicated or deemed worthy of acceptance?³

Bahá'u'lláh

Part I

Preparing for the Journey of the search for Truth

I

Seek and Ye Shall Find

Matthew 7:7

For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8

The Necessity of Independent Search for Truth

Should religion be acknowledged merely on faith? Is religion simply an outpouring of human emotions and detached from reason? There are many who believe so, but such a belief is merely a supposition, solely an assumption. For the divine Educators teach otherwise; they ask us to search and to test every claim in the crucible of reason.

We are admonished to “prove all things” (I Thess. 5:21), to “Test everything” (I Thess. 5:19 NIV), and to reason: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord” (Isa. 1:18). We are guided again and again to inquire, to look, to listen, and to “hear the Voice.”

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

I Thessalonians 5:6

It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes.

Luke 12:37 NIV

We are reminded again and again of those who close their minds and distort their visions—who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but do not hear, who have minds but do not understand

(Mark 8:18). We are told that the gate of divine Guidance shall be opened only to those who knock, who seek to know with an open mind and a free spirit, and who strive to remain rational, objective, and persistent in their search for Truth:

I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Proverbs 8:17

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:33

And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Psalms 9:10

The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. Lamentations: 3:25

Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. Psalms 119:2

Faith and reason are the two wings of the human spirit. Growth can be attained when both wings work in harmony to sustain each other. Neither faith nor reason alone can lift the human spirit, can give rise to the advancement of knowledge, to the unfoldment of truth. The scientist must guide his reason through faith; the religionist must sustain his faith through reason.

If we could only follow this divine Commandment, if we could only seek the truth with a free spirit, and with an open, unbiased, and pure mind, every conceivable problem the world has ever faced, or is facing, would surely and swiftly be resolved. If we could only rise above our petty concerns, our irrational attachments, if we could only judge with justice and be guided by reason, the world would turn into a place of peace, an abode of attainment, a perpetual paradise. If we could only choose to recognize and acknowledge the Redeemer of the age before darkness surrounds the horizons of humanity, before tribulations rock the human race, there would rise and spread, like the rays of the morning sun, the glimmerings of a Golden Society—a Kingdom divine and enchanting, a Utopia beyond the fairest of our dreams.

Mankind Faced with a New Choice

We are once again confronted with a new choice—a choice between apathy and search. Our Creator never forsakes us; in the midst of gloom and darkness He sends forth the light, and in the hour of sadness He bestows hope.

The responsibility of making the choice falls upon everyone. And this is the message of this book: to invite every seeker of truth to the path of search, that he may heed the voice of reason and hearken to the call of hope, that he may reach out for God's greatest and most glorious Gift to mankind: the Redeemer of the new age, the Prince of Peace, the King of Glory, the supreme Savior of the human race.

Is it possible that in the hour of darkness we are left without guidance? Is it possible that God has refrained from honoring His promise of sending His Savior to the seekers of His Kingdom? This seems far from the divine Justice. Would a loving Father ever abandon His children?

Is it also possible that God *has* sent His Savior, that the divine Redeemer has once again come and left the world as quietly and unexpectedly as He did in His first advent? Is it possible that the Prince of Peace has been sent, contrary to the expectations of the masses, and once again has suffered at their hands? Is it possible that millions and millions could have failed to recognize and acknowledge an event as dramatic as the coming of the Lord and as momentous as the advent of the supreme Savior of the world?

The Scriptures show clearly that it is not only possible but inevitable. For it is foretold in the clearest and most graphic terms that “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night,” quietly and unexpectedly (II Peter 3:10), and that the Son of Man must first suffer and be rejected even “as it was in the days of Noe” (Luke 17:25-26).

The Scriptures testify that the masses of humanity at first fail to see the light of divine Guidance—they awaken at eventide, when the Sun has set.

The forebears persecute, and perhaps crucify, the Saviors, and then their unborn sons and daughters rise to build up and to embellish the unknown tombs of those same Saviors and to raise magnificent shrines and monuments to their memories (Matt. 23:29-32; Luke 11:48).

Most of those who hear about the advent of the new Savior reason or respond in this way: “I seek the truth, and am not irrationally attached to my beliefs. I understand the spirit of the Scriptures and am open-minded, sincere, and impartial in my judgment. Yet I cannot honestly conceive how millions and millions of people could miss, and fail to recognize, something as visible and dramatic as the coming of the Lord. It seems hard to believe that the world Savior, the Redeemer of humanity, has already returned and left the world. An event as dramatic as the coming of the Lord cannot occur without being noticed, recognized, and acknowledged by the great majority of people.”

Such has been the supposition of the masses of humanity at the time of the coming of every divine Messenger. They all *assumed* that when the time came they would know the truth. But when the time did come, with the exception of a few, they all failed to know and to recognize the Truth.

Every Savior Rejected

Whenever the morn of divine Guidance dawned, the seekers of truth who had ardently sought the advent of their Savior rose against Him, rejected Him, ridiculed Him, condemned Him, and crucified Him. “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?” (Acts 7:52).

Was not Noah rejected, reviled, and ridiculed? Why?

Was not Abraham scoffed and expelled from His land? Why?

Was not Moses denounced, denied, and humiliated? Why?

Was not Jesus mocked, condemned, and crucified? Why?

Was it not because the people depended on their own interpretations and misjudged the underlying purpose behind the prophecies?

Was it not because they followed the masses and conformed to the prevailing tides of the time?

Was it not because they relied on the religious leaders of the day, assuming that they would be the first to recognize and acknowledge the truth?

Was it not because they expected dramatic and spectacular events to accompany the advent of their Savior?

Was it not because they were sure they would be the first to recognize and acknowledge the truth, for the truth was to be made evident and plain through dazzling miracles and miraculous dramas?

Is not history the mirror of the future, and should we not learn from our past mistakes and misjudgments?

If the sons and daughters of every age recognize *the reasons why* their forebears have always rejected their Savior, they cannot but idolize and adore the truth and be guided to the path of certitude and knowledge. If they could only acknowledge that they are the sons and daughters of those same generations who have again and again failed to recognize the spirit of the Scriptures and the spirit of truth, they would rise beyond the dark and misty clouds of misconceptions, misjudgments, and false expectations. But recognizing, acknowledging, and comprehending the reasons behind the “why?” constitute the greatest challenge to every generation.

The Standards by which a Savior Should be Judged

Every seeker of truth needs to know why he believes in his own Faith, his own Savior. Once this is accomplished, the task of seeking and finding the truth becomes quite simple. All that the

seeker needs to do is to apply the conditions or requirements that hold true in relation to his own Faith and Savior to the new Faith and the new Savior. If they apply, he accepts; if not, he rejects. It is all as simple as this.

The key question here is that the seeker be able to find *the right* reasons or requirements, reasons that the Savior Himself has specified, not what people have supposed or been taught by tradition. For instance, a jeweler may call a piece of diamond, diamond, for the wrong reasons. And so if someone offers him another piece of the jewel, he fails to recognize it. His failure to recognize the new piece indicates that even though he has a part of the precious jewel, his knowledge is based only on blind faith. What the jeweler needs is not “I suppose,” “I think,” or “I have been told,” but a touchstone that sets apart the precious stone from pebbles.

A basic change in the religious belief of the masses is a gradual shift from the rational to the emotional. As time goes on, believers forget “the whys and reasons” behind their beliefs, replacing them instead with conformity and blind faith. Rarely do they examine the original reasons by which their own Messenger substantiated His claim. Thus through passing of the ages, reason is reduced to conformity, conformity relegated to blind faith, and blind faith cherished and sustained by the glamor of the miraculous and supernatural. This is one more reason why people reject their Messiah. They set aside the divine Touchstone and depend on their own illusions.

This is why a judgment or recognition that according to God’s own testimony is easy becomes so complicated, a burden that is light becomes for many so unbearable. This is why Annas and Ciaphas, the most distinguished and honored religious leaders of the Jews during the time of Jesus, instead of sacrificing their own lives for their Savior (Jesus), made *Him* a sacrifice. Instead of adoring their Redeemer, they sought His execution. Had those two honored “bishops” of their day tested Jesus by divine standards as specified in their own Scriptures, they could not have failed to recognize the Object of their search, the long-awaited Messiah of their time.

What, then, are the standards that God Himself has established as the Touchstone of Truth? What criteria are we given by which to judge or test a Savior? As mentioned, this is exactly what this book offers. Briefly, we are admonished to judge a Savior by His supreme Wisdom, the uniqueness, the creative power and the unmatched excellence of His Words, the distinction of His deeds, His dedication to His ideals, His willingness to encounter—even welcome—adversity, His pervasive power and splendor despite His seeming lowliness, His knowledge of the things to come, His fulfillment of prophecies, His supreme gift in “unsealing” and reconciling the words of the previous Scriptures, His confirmation of past Revelations, His unmatched influence in the hearts of the pure, His immeasurable knowledge of all things, the gradual but ultimate triumph of His cause in spite of severe opposition, and His absolute and unconditional trust in His Creator and unqualified submission to His all-encompassing Power.

In *The Book of Certitude* Bahá'u'lláh encourages the seeker again and again to base his judgment of the divine Savior on what God Himself has established as the standard of truth:

With unswerving vision, with pure heart, and sanctified spirit, consider attentively what God hath established as the testimony of guidance for His people in His Book, which is recognized as authentic by both the high and lowly. To this testimony we both, as well as all the peoples of the world, must cling, that through its light we may know and distinguish between truth and falsehood, guidance and error.⁴

In the following passage, the Báb conveys a similar message:

...it is incumbent upon a lowly servant to acquiesce to whatever proof God hath appointed, and not to follow his own idle fancy. If the wishes of the people were to be gratified not a single disbeliever would remain on earth. For once the Apostle of God had fulfilled the wishes of the people they would unhesitatingly have embraced His Faith. May God save thee, shouldst thou seek any evidence according to thy selfish desire; rather it behooveth thee to uphold the unfailing proof which God hath appointed. The object of thy belief in God is but to secure His good-pleasure. How then dost thou seek as

a proof of thy faith a thing which hath been and is contrary to His good-pleasure?⁵

As is mentioned repeatedly throughout this book, the ultimate, the most reliable—in fact, the only—course of action accessible to the seeker of truth is to learn to distinguish or recognize the Robe of Revelation—a Robe befitting only a divine Manifestation and readily distinguishable from the most exquisite of man-made apparels. If the pieces all fit to make a Robe bearing all the marks of divine Revelation, then it seems unreasonable to reject it because some of its features do not conform to traditional expectations based on accumulated misjudgments of many generations.

Any of the proofs presented in this book constitutes one chief segment of the divine Robe and is, in its own right, a distinct and an unmistakable mark of a Savior. In combination, they constitute a perfect and magnificent Robe befitting only a divine Manifestation.

Once we recognize a Savior through the dictates of reason, then we should have no difficulty trusting His interpretation. Our first task is to decide whether the Captain is indeed guided by divine Directions. After examining His credentials and finding them valid, then we can humbly trust in His Wisdom and walk in His Ways. The credentials are the proofs of divine Revelation, for they stand not on illusions, assumptions, or suppositions (precepts that are subject to varying interpretations), but on established and undeniable *facts*. The seeker need not be an “authority” on the Scriptures to recognize the validity of such proofs; he simply needs to be his true self. Reason or logic—undistorted, unconditioned, but sustained and inspired by a pure heart—is the only reliable measure by which the divine Excellence can be demonstrated to the human mind.

Miracles Unreliable

Many believers base their faith on miracles. The reason is quite simple: “There must be a basic difference between a Savior and a deceiver. The most obvious difference is that the Savior can do

extraordinary things, namely perform miracles. Miracle is a sign everyone can see and verify.”

The preceding is the misconception that has led to many a problem. It is the “straw” that has broken many a cord of truth, the illusion that has obscured the mind of many a seeker.

The divine Messengers have designated several signs or standards by which to separate the truth from falsehood. Miracle is the only sign they have not specified, the only standard they have always rejected.

No wonder people have failed again and again to judge fairly, to welcome the Savior they longingly expected. No wonder for three centuries Christianity remained an “obscure sect.” Even then it spread by the power of a king who was inspired by a dream. Had the king (Constantine) not stood to the defense of Christianity, it is hard to tell how many more centuries the masses would have persisted in their denial of Jesus.

The intention is not to say that the divine Messengers are unable to perform miracles, but that they refuse to use them as evidence of their claim. To say that God’s Messengers are unable to perform wonders far beyond the potential of the ablest and most gifted among human beings is to deny their divine nature, their transcendent and supreme Powers.

When someone makes a claim, it is only reasonable to test him in relation to his claim. For instance, if someone claims to be a builder, we try to see how he builds, and not how he paints or writes poetry. Can our reasoning powers lead us to any other test that would be more relevant or reasonable? Then, why not follow the same rule in relation to the claim of a Savior? Why not test His *Revelation* or His *Message*, instead of testing His magical powers? Why not observe His divine Glory instead of His earthly grandeur?

Let us assume someone calls himself a Messenger and he says: my proof is that I can walk in the air and talk to the animals, I can change stone into bread and pebble into pearl. But then after observing him perform such wonders, we find him afflicted with egotism or selfishness. We find his wisdom defective and his

teachings unjust or impractical. With such knowledge of his character and his wisdom, can we trust in his words or submit to his claim? Can we be inspired by his charm? The fallacy of using miracles as a basis for belief is quite evident. Yet many continue to support their faith with the supposed miracles their Savior may have performed and then try to extend this expectation to future Saviors as well. This is contrary to the teachings of all great religions. When people have asked for evidence of validity or proof, the divine Messengers have never said: “you should believe in me because I have divided the moon, descended from heaven, or revived the dead.” They have always referred to something spiritual, not material.

In examining the claim of a Messenger, we may certainly end our search with miracles, but never start it. That is, once a claim satisfies the proofs that God has designated, we can then try to look for such evidence that our own egos may demand. These usually have to do with the unusual, the dramatic.

The Aim of the Book

This book intends to show you that the drama of the coming of a supreme Savior and His encounter with the rejecting masses is once again being played in our time. It will demonstrate the proofs of the most dramatic event the world has ever seen: the coming of the Lord, and the advent of a supreme Savior and a world Redeemer whose coming the world has anticipated for no less than six thousand years.

It will show you how quietly and unexpectedly He appeared with the greatest glory and majesty over the gloomiest clouds of misconception and misjudgment, and how He was once again rejected and treated with manifest cruelty, contempt, and injustice.

The book will further indicate how, in every age, people have cherished misconceptions and false expectations concerning the advent of their Savior, how they have firmly clung to their own interpretation of the signs and prophecies, how they have always failed to listen with an open mind to the divine Interpreter, how

they have followed the masses of people, assuming that the masses cannot be wrong in their judgment and in their recognition of an event as dramatic and momentous as the coming of the Savior.

The book will likewise demonstrate that the only way to recognize the truth is to study, with an open and unbiased mind, the signs of the time and the proofs of the validity of the expected Redeemer—the Prince of Peace—revealed repeatedly throughout the Scriptures in the most certain, most emphatic and definitive terms. It will also indicate that we should never insist on our own interpretation of divine Words, no matter how obvious or self-evident the interpretation might appear to us. Such an insistence stifles the spirit of understanding and limits the range of human perception and vision.

For instance, nothing to the Jews seemed more evident than the establishment of David’s Kingdom by their expected Messiah. Yet Jesus interpreted the prophecies by saying: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). The Bible abounds with examples of such misinterpretations and misconceptions. (See Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4.)

The Message presented here should prove of interest to everyone, for it can transform the darkness and the gloom of life into light and joy, the like of which the world has seldom seen. We should all face our own conscience, and with the deepest sincerity and devotion, ask ourselves: “Is this Faith from God? And is Bahá’u’lláh the expected Savior of the world?” We are all accountable to God and to ourselves to determine whether such “a most incredible claim” advanced by Bahá’u’lláh is true or false. If it is false, we should know and no harm will come from knowing. If it is true, we should also know. For, then, because of knowing and believing, we will have gained access to, and partaken of, the greatest glory that God may ever bestow upon His children.

Say: O peoples of the earth! By the righteousness of God!
Whatever ye have been promised in the Books of your Lord
the Ruler of the Day of Return, hath appeared and been made
manifest. Beware lest the changes and chances of the world

hold you back from Him Who is the Sovereign Truth. Ere long will everything visible perish and only that which hath been revealed by God, the Lord of Lords, shall endure.

Abandon the things current amongst men and hold fast unto that which God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting, hath enjoined upon you. The day is fast approaching when all the treasures of the earth shall be of no profit to you. Unto this beareth witness the Lord of Names, He Who proclaimeth: Verily, no God is there besides Him, the Sovereign Truth, the Knower of things unseen.⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

- Why were the previous Messengers (Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus...) rejected?

Answering these questions should prove helpful to almost all seekers of truth. What they seek to accomplish is this:

- If we recognize the reasons why God's previous Messengers were rejected, then we may learn to be more cautious in rejecting the new Messenger; we may be able to overcome the obstacles that stood in the way of our ancestors; we may succeed in preventing history from repeating itself once again in our time.

At the beginning of *The Book of Certitude*, Bahá'u'lláh asks the reader the same question:

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, 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.⁷

- If we truly recognize the reasons why we believe in our own Faith, we may be able to be more fair in our expectations of the new Faith; we may learn not to idealize or dramatize our expectations as our forebears did repeatedly at the time of the advent of every Savior God has ever sent.

After you have completed the book, you may wish to return to these questions and compare your responses with what you found in the book. Knowing what you thought before reading the evidence presented here will help you be more objective in your judgment

Part II

Proofs

2

Ye Shall Know Them By Their Fruits

Matthew 7:16

(Section I)

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Matthew 7:16

This is the True Law of Life: From Good must come Good,
and from Evil must come Evil.

Buddha

This chapter presents the first piece of evidence on Bahá'u'lláh and His Revelation. It covers the following themes:

- The most relevant and reliable means of testing religion: the quality of its “fruits.”
- The supporting evidence from the Scriptures on “fruits.”
- Application of “the test of fruit” to Jesus.
- Application of “the test of fruit” to Bahá'u'lláh.

The Most Relevant and Reliable Test of Religion

To test a religion, first we need to establish standards or criteria by which to judge; and to establish standards, we must first determine what is religion for, what it seeks to accomplish, its

goals and objectives. Once this is determined, the testing should be quite easy: all we need to do is to see if the religion stands up to the standards, measures up to the expectations.

Religion has two basic goals: first, to aid the individual unfold his potential; second, to harmonize and unify the society. These are the first and the chief standards by which every religion should be tested, the surest and most vital and reliable evidence of validity.

Thus when we begin to test a Faith, the first and the most fundamental and relevant questions we can raise are these: does the religion claiming validity result in the improvement of human life? Does it bring humans nearer to their ultimate ends—the uncovering of human potential, and the advancement of civilization? Does it make those accepting it more selfless and tolerant; More joyous, serene, and content? Does it also contribute to the solution of social and economic problems? If a religion satisfies all these requirements, then we should delve deeper into its claims for further proofs; otherwise, we should totally reject it, for if a Faith bears no good fruits, it is unworthy of any consideration.

Such is the standard by which we test every other agency or institution in society. We adopt or advocate the economic, industrial, or educational system that brings the best results. We apply this same testing method virtually to every realm of our life, to every domain of knowledge from agriculture to medicine, from preserving the ancient relics to protecting and extending the human life. Why, then, not apply it to religion? What else can religion be expected to accomplish other than meeting the economic, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of humankind?

The Supporting Evidence from the Scriptures

The purely logical and practical test of judging a Faith by its fruits is confirmed repeatedly in the Works of the great Messengers. Perhaps the simplest and most memorable and conclusive guide ever given in the Scriptures to portray the significance of the

practical consequences of the Messengers' lives and teachings is that of "judging a tree by its fruits." What does the "fruits" signify? What does it consist of? It consists of all the things that result from a Messenger:

- His words or teachings
- His deeds, that is, the example He sets to demonstrate His ideals
- The changes or consequences that result from His life and teachings.

Here are the words of Jesus expressing perhaps the most lucid and definitive sign of validity revealed in the Scriptures. These words contain both a warning and a guide—a warning against credulity and guide to the recognition of sincerity:

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruits you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came

down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. Matthew 7:15-27 NIV

The words of Jesus are indeed prophetic, for they describe with precision the plight of the religious leaders in our time. These are the main points of His message:

- He begins by warning us of false prophets, and then goes on to identify them by their hypocrisy, namely the wide gap between what they preach and practice, between their smooth glowing faces and their harsh, unfeeling hearts. Examples of such false prophets abound in our time. Some of them claim that God Himself speaks to them. Many simple-minded people put their trust—and resources—in their hands. These pretenders are so polished, so perfect on the outside as to deceive anyone who stands off guard, “even the elect, if this is possible.”
- After giving His warnings and introducing the signs of falsehood, Jesus goes on to identify the touchstone by which truth can be distinguished from deception. The touchstone He designates is the “fruits.” Anyone can say “I am a good tree.” The only way we can be sure is to taste the fruit.
- After this, Jesus goes back again to false prophets by exposing them still further. He singles out those who use His name (our Lord Jesus) to win favors, to prove their sincerity and faith, or as a panacea to all problems. Verbalizing the name, He says, does not entitle a believer to the kingdom of heaven. What can grant him such an honor is obedience to divine commandments (among them knowing a tree by its fruit, refusing to submit to blind faith). He also identifies as prophets of falsehood those who preoccupy themselves with demons, miracles, and the making of predictions. These, too, He intimates, will be unable to enter the heavenly kingdom.
- Finally, Jesus assures those who use the divine standards (namely knowing a tree by its fruits) of a secure destiny, comparing them to a man who builds his house on rocks.

Such believers stand secure, for they trusted God's standards of truth. As to those who disregarded the divine counsels, their future is uncertain, for they built their house on sand, they depended on that which is undependable—their own desires.

Let us now identify some of the prevailing religious practices that fulfill Jesus' prophetic words on false prophets. Let us see what most religious leaders have done and are doing to religion:

- Their teachings revolve around dogmas and traditions. They find a few Scriptural passages, interpret them in a special way, and then claim to have the only version of truth. Such a practice has led to the creation of thousands of denominations in Christianity. Instead of using religion to unify, they have used it to divide.
- Their life is full of hypocrisy. They tell the people what they like to hear.
- The fruit of their endeavors is the spread of fanaticism, blind faith and conformity, the dependence on the miraculous, the abdication of reason, the rejection of the fundamental facts of science, the adoption of cultish practices, the raising of the Demon to the rank of a power-sharer with God, the calling of Satan (or Devil) the chief mischief maker—a man-made pawn who must carry much of the blame for the evils of humanity, the misfortunes of mankind.
- As Jesus states, they also engage in prophesying. They derive from the Scriptures any prediction that suits their fantasies. They make successive forecasts about wars, conquests, economic disasters, emergence of new nations, all on the basis of obscure and far-fetched Scriptural references.
- They claim to know the meaning of symbolic words, even though they are unable to comprehend the literal, even though they have been forbidden to make such assertions (I Cor. 4:5; II Peter 1:20-21). They know in their heart their own weaknesses and fallibility, yet to others they portray

infallibility and supremacy. Seldom do they say “I can’t understand this passage or this prophecy.”

- At the end of His instructions, Jesus refers also to those who hear His words but do not put them to practice, who read that they should test these leaders by their fruits, yet they ignore the instructions. We find abundant evidence in our time pointing to the fulfillment of Jesus’ words. Today, we find many leaders whose primary interest is in witnessing miracles. Instead of teaching their followers to test the fruits of the new Messenger, they teach them to ask: why did He not come from the sky? Why did we not hear His shout? Why didn’t the stars fall? Why didn’t the dead rise? Where is the new Jerusalem that must descend from the sky? What about the trumpet the Savior must sound? Where are the new earth and new heaven? Why aren’t the wicked destroyed? Why hasn’t the world come to an end?

The following are the signs of false prophets—leaders who shape religion to suit their own fantasies, who use the people’s trust for the conquest of their own selfish ends, who determine in advance by their own standards what the truth is and then reject what fails to fit the preconceived pattern.

To conclude, “good fruits” can never be used as a means of deception. For it is impossible for a false prophet to produce good fruits, even as it is impossible for a bad tree to produce good fruits. What the false prophets can use as a means of deception is “performing great signs and miracles,” for that *is* possible:

For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.

Matthew 24:24 NIV

Therefore those who look for “great signs and miracles” can be deceived, those who look for fruits can never be deceived.

Concern for signs or miracles is contrary to the clear instructions of Jesus. Those who seek miracles instead of good fruits, as Jesus indicates, are building the future house of their destiny on sand, namely their own fantasies, and so they can in no way

recognize the truth. In the day of judgment, they will hear these words spoken to them:

Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’
Matthew 7:23 NEB

If we refuse Bahá’u’lláh after testing His fruits, at least we have complied with the instructions otherwise, our accountability shall be enormous.

When Jesus specified “fruits” as the standards by which truth should be judged, He had full knowledge that His instructions would not be heeded. Therefore He prefaced His instructions with these words:

Enter by the narrow gate. The gate is wide that leads to perdition, there is plenty of room on the road, and many go that way; but the gate that leads to life is small and the road is narrow, and those who find it are few. Matthew 7:13-14 NEB

The masses of people find security in numbers: “A billion believers cannot be wrong.” Yet Jesus teaches just the opposite: from those who confess faith only a few will find the gate to spiritual life.

To complete His instructions, Jesus prefaced the preceding words with still other instructions:

Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.
Matthew 7:7-8 NEB
See also verses 9-11

In the preceding words Jesus encourages His followers to search for truth. If we fail to search, how can we find the “fruit?” And if we fail to taste the fruit, how can we know it is good or bad? The Bahá’í Revelation has by now spread to over 200 countries and territories of the globe. Many have heard about the new Revelation. Yet few have heeded Jesus’ counsels to test it.

How Did Jesus Prove the Validity of His Own Mission?

The following words spoken by Jesus in response to the Jews who asked for dependable credentials, for reliable proofs, are indeed conclusive:

The Jews gathered round him and asked: ‘How long must you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah say so plainly.’ ‘I have told you,’ said Jesus, ‘but you do not believe. My deeds done in my Father’s name are my credentials, but because you are not sheep of my flock you do not believe. My own sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me.

John 10:24-27 NEB

After hearing the preceding words, the Jews were not satisfied. Good deeds could not satiate their hunger for the miraculous. What they wanted was something unearthly, a king who could save them from servitude. How, then, did they respond to Jesus’ appeal to reason?

Once again the Jews picked up stones to stone him. At this Jesus said to them, ‘I have before you good deeds, done by my Father’s power; for which of these would you stone me?’ The Jews replied, ‘We are not going to stone you for any good deeds, but for your blasphemy.’

John 10:31-33 NEB

After responding to their accusation of blasphemy, Jesus asked them again to judge Him by the evidence of His deeds:

If I am not acting as my Father would, do not believe me. But if I am, accept the evidence of my deeds...

John 10:37-38 NEB

See also John 5:36; 14:11

To prove Himself, Jesus never depended on His miraculous powers. He constantly appealed to the voice of reason, to the gift of understanding—a voice given to every human, a gift granted to every seeker of truth:

A good man produces good from the store of good within himself; and an evil man produces evil.

Matthew 12:35 NEB

See also Luke 6:45; Matt. 12:33

We see the same truth expressed earlier through Buddha:

This is the True Law of Life: from Good must come Good; and from Evil must come Evil.⁸ Buddha

The same kind of reasoning is used repeatedly by Jesus:

Then prove your repentance by the fruits it bears...

Matthew 3:8 NEB

To summarize: Jesus constantly reasoned with those who looked for Him, but did not and could not know Him. He tried to teach them that what mattered were His words, for they were the well-spring of life:

The spirit alone gives life; the flesh is of no avail; the words which I have spoken to you are both spirit and life.

John 6:63 NEB

He tried to teach that the claim and the evidence must be related. The claim of a Savior is spiritual not material, His Mission is to enlighten, His purpose to purify the hearts, His ultimate end to bring life and hope and happiness:

...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly.

John 10:10

Therefore the way to test the claim is to see what it leads to. For:

God's wisdom is proved right by its result. Matthew 11:19 NEB

What matters most is to see whether he who makes a claim manifests divine Wisdom. And then to test the divine Wisdom by its results.

Let us now apply the test of wisdom or fruits to both Jesus and Bahá'u'lláh.

Application of the "Test of Fruits" to Jesus

Did Jesus—who Himself gave His followers this unmistakable proof of validity as a guide to the distinction of truth from falsehood—bear fruits worthy of the station of a divine Savior?

The study of the life and teachings of Jesus indicates that not only did He teach pure and perfect love, absolute detachment and devotion, He was also the first to exemplify such noble and divine Attributes. Even the hate and haughtiness of His adversaries could in no way tempt Him to alter His exalted ideals or obscure His radiant and noble vision. He told His disciples to love their enemies and prayed for His own adversaries, asking that they be forgiven. He refused either to waver in teaching His high ideals or to compromise in practicing them. His life emanated only compassion, mercy, humility, and love.

And His influence did not terminate with His own time. Centuries later, as a result of His noble thoughts and deeds, a new civilization came into being. His kingdom eventually spread to every segment of the globe, dominating the conscience of millions for centuries.

Here are Bahá'u'lláh's words extolling the pervasive power and influence of Jesus:

Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things. Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, are now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His all-pervasive, and resplendent Spirit.

We testify that when He came into the world, He shed the splendor of His glory upon all created things. Through Him the leper recovered from the leprosy of perversity and ignorance. Through Him, the unchaste and wayward were healed. Through His power, born of Almighty God, the eyes of the blind were opened, and the soul of the sinner sanctified.⁹

A study of the lives of all the other divine Manifestations reveals that they, too, followed the path of good words and good deeds;

they, too, taught love, spoke of justice, compassion, charity, purity, detachment, and devotion. Not only did they teach such noble ideals, they were also the first to follow them. And as a result of their efforts, great civilizations came into being.

Application of the “Test of Fruits” to Bahá’u’lláh

Let us not apply this first and most crucial test of validity of Bahá’u’lláh—the fruits which He brought forth over the span of four decades, enriching and sustaining the lives of unnumbered followers, from every creed or culture, during and beyond a whole century.

Bahá’u’lláh was born and raised in Persia at a time when that country was under the domination of a cruel monarch and a band of fanatic religious leaders. In the long history of the human race, seldom has a culture declined to the depth reached by the Persians during the time of Bahá’u’lláh. Corruption, cruelty, hatred, fanaticism, ignorance, and injustice dominated the minds of the masses and the leaders alike. The cruel act of a monarch who, out of revenge, blinded, indiscriminately, thousands of innocent people, stands as a clear testimony to the mood of the time. It was in this environment and under such conditions that Bahá’u’lláh was born and raised.

Bahá’u’lláh’s life, like that of the other great Messengers, revealed to the discerning eyes, from its very beginning, distinction and greatness. From early childhood He had a Vision of the dawning of a new day—a Vision of the dawn of justice and peace, “the day of one fold and one shepherd.” Bahá’u’lláh’s early life appeared to those around Him quite a mystery. He baffled them by His piety, His knowledge, His wisdom, and His detachment from earthly desires. So it came that God had accorded Him a universal Mission to fulfill: that He was chosen a Savior to mankind, a Bearer of God’s Message to the human race.

His Advent, He said, constituted the fulfillment and consummation of all the prophecies and promises of past Revelations. He

was destined, He declared, to bring justice and peace, to break the barriers of prejudice, and to establish the expected and promised Kingdom. He condemned the prevailing cruelties and injustices everywhere, particularly in His homeland, Persia.

Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, as one might expect, were viewed, by the masses and the leaders alike, as a threat to the time-honored dogmas and superstitions as well as the institutions that honored those unfounded beliefs. So Bahá'u'lláh was looked upon as a heretic intent on destroying the foundation of the established Faith.

But severe opposition or oppression could in no way stifle the spread of Bahá'u'lláh's Message. On the contrary, opposition and oppression simply fanned the flame of the new Faith, which spread swiftly from country to country, from continent to continent, until the historic year of 1963, when it had encompassed the globe itself.

Ever since its inception, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has proved to be both dynamic and practical. Within the past century His teachings have been put to practice in virtually every segment of the globe—among both the primitive peoples and sophisticated societies, with every possible combination of religious, racial, and cultural backgrounds. And the result has always been positive.

The Bahá'í Faith seems to have the effect of a melting pot in which the impurities of prejudice, apathy, despondency and doubt, are separated and cast aside. It endows each individual with a new and universal sense of identity. A Bahá'í is first a member of the human race, and *then* a New Yorker, a German, an Indian, or an Australian aborigine. This new sense of identity—brotherhood of man the dedication to unity and universal ideals—serves as a global magnet, bringing the diverse and opposing elements of society together. The Persian Jews and the Persian Muslims, who for generations had shunned one another, have learned to live in harmony. The Indian Brahman and the Indian Sudra, who had stayed apart for centuries, have come to consider one another members of one family. The American Bahá'ís of all races have learned to regard the diversity of colors as a bounty rather than as a barrier to the unfolding of human potential. The changes brought about in the lives of hundreds of thousands, throughout

the globe, as a direct result of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings are so vast and often so dramatic as to require a separate volume.

Gordon Allport, the eminent psychologist from Harvard, has considered the untangling of prejudice a far more difficult task than the cracking of the atom; a view shared and voiced by Einstein in quite similar terms: "It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil nature of man." Not so with the divine Educators. Their Words have a potential and a power that can penetrate the inmost depths of the human heart.

What Allport and Einstein learned through scientific research had indeed been revealed by Bahá'u'lláh decades earlier:

The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it? Is it within human power, O Hakim, to effect in the constituent elements of any of the minute and indivisible particles of matter so complete a transformation as to transmute it into purest gold? Perplexing and difficult as this may appear, the still greater task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We have been empowered to accomplish. The Force capable of such a transformation transcendeth the potency of the Elixir itself. The Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change.¹⁰

The awesome and almost impossible task of transmuting the particles of prejudice, selfishness, despondency, and doubt into a spiritual force, a dynamic energy, capable of penetrating the human heart and uplifting it to the heights of hope, certitude, and enlightenment is well demonstrated in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, and probably constitutes the most convincing and manifest evidence of His validity. His Wisdom and Vision, to all those who have come to know Him as God's latest Messenger to humankind.

Although the Bahá'í teachings have been accepted and welcomed on a wide scale throughout the world, humanity as a whole has not been willing to abandon its provincial outlook. Nationalism is still being prized above internationalism; the world institutions suggested by Bahá'u'lláh are not yet adopted by the world leaders, except perhaps the United Nations, which simply represents a prototype or a symbolic version of the World Tribunal suggested in the Bahá'í teachings. It gives us merely a glimpse of what it would be like if political leaders tried to solve their differences through the power of just words, instead of war or the threat of war.

Fortunately, time has not yet run out. If world leaders awaken to the call of Bahá'u'lláh for the restructuring of human society, and if they adopt His universal plan for peace, they can still avert the terrible disasters awaiting the human race.

Although mankind may hasten to delay the realization of Bahá'u'lláh's plan for world peace and world unity, the realization of the plan itself, we are assured, is inevitable:

The whole earth 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.¹¹

Bahá'u'lláh

The element of fruits is so vital and far-reaching as to require further study. Bahá'u'lláh's own words presented later in this book (Chapter 22), the examination of His Writings (Chapters 7 and 21), and the record of His life included in other chapters will provide further evidence by which to judge the fruits of the new Revelation.

The presentation of the Bahá'í history and teachings in this volume is minimal. It seems more logical to begin your search with an introductory book, and *then* proceed to proofs. For proofs of a Faith are most relevant when one already knows what the Faith stands for. The Message is the goal, and proofs the means for reaching the goal. A journey always begins with a goal.

I have sympathy with the spirit of the Bahá'í Teachings, we are all Bahá'ís universally. Sir S. Radhakrishnan

Slowly the veil lifts from the future. Along whatever road thoughtful men look out they see before them some guiding truth, some leading principle, which Bahá'u'lláh gave long ago and which men rejected. George Townshend

Ex Canon of St. Patrick's Cathedral

Bahá'u'lláh was not only the supreme genius of the Bahá'í Movement; he was without question one of the supreme spiritual geniuses of history. There have been few in any age to compare with him in point of insight, vision, lofty thought and noble speech. Dr. John Haynes Holmes, Minister

...The Bahá'í Teaching is one of the spiritual forces now absolutely necessary to put the spirit first in this battle against material forces...The Bahá'í Teaching is one of the great instruments for the final victory of the spirit and of humanity. Eduard Benes, President of Czechoslovakia

The Bahá'í Movement for the oneness of mankind is, in my estimation, the greatest movement today working for universal peace and brotherhood. Dr. Auguste Forel Eminent Swiss scientist

Conclusion

To guide us to the recognition of truth, Jesus offered the following instructions:

- Search for truth and trust that God will guide you.
- Don't use the majority as a cushion for security. Only a few will find the truth.
- Beware of false prophets: those who show hypocrisy, who verbalize my name (our Lord Jesus) to prove their faith, who preoccupy themselves with the cultish and the miraculous.

- Use reason to separate the truth from falsehood: test a claim by its fruits.

The discussion of the return of Jesus is usually hampered—and sometimes stopped—either by theological questions (Can a person be saved by any name other than Jesus? Will Jesus assume a new name on His return...?), or by questions dealing with miracles, namely unusual display of power by the expected Savior (His ability to descend from heaven unaided, or to transform the world in an instant).

Yet Jesus never said that such questions should be used as a means of judging the truth. In fact, He said that the miraculous is undependable, for it is an instrument of deception that can—and will—be used by false prophets:

For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible.

Matthew 24:24 NIV

Contrary to miracles, good fruits can in no way be used as an instrument of deception. For instance, we never find Jesus saying, “False Christs and false prophets will appear and produce good fruits to deceive the elect—if that were possible.” For the bringing of good fruit by a false Christ is an absolute impossibility.

Only “the elect,” Jesus intimates, are in position to be saved from the deceivers. They can be saved because they obey the divine Decree: they use the right standard (the fruits) for judging a Messenger. We know from many biblical references that those to whom Jesus refers as “the elect” are very few in number.

Conforming to the other seemingly innocent alternative, namely, basing one’s decision of truth on theological questions, is also equally undependable. In fact, it is perilous. For historians tell us that more Christians died fighting over theological issues than facing hungry lions in Roman Coliseum. No wonder Jesus did not in any way refer the task of recognizing Him on His return to theologians.

If we wish to be loyal to Jesus, we must obey His words. If we use either theological issues or miraculous events as a means of judging Bahá'u'lláh, we have violated the divine Words, we have disobeyed Jesus' clear instructions.

It is well to remember that Jesus in His first advent too was rejected for these same two reasons: all the objections raised by the Jews against Him dealt either with theological questions (Why do you heal on Sabbath? Why do you change the dietary laws?), or questions based on excessive desire for miracles, namely unusual display of power (Where is your kingdom? Why don't you save us from the Romans?). Instead of judging their Messiah by His fruits, they judged Him by these two undependable standards, and they failed.

When a Man brings good teachings, lives a perfect life, and establishes a noble civilization, He has provided us with a clear-cut standard with which we can—and should—judge Him.

The three elements of “fruits,” namely words, deeds, and the consequences of words and deeds, blend together well. They fulfill, and stand in harmony with, the chief Purpose or Mission for which the Messengers are sent, namely the elevation of human spirit, and the advancement of civilization. The Messengers' words give us the knowledge of our self and destiny, and their deeds of devotion a model to emulate, an example to follow, an ideal to live by, an undying source of courage and inspiration:

I have set you an example: you are to do as I have done for you.

John 13:15 NEB

The knowledge and the inspiration give birth to “a new race of man,” an enlightened and ever-advancing civilization. The divine Tree gradually brings forth its destined fruits, it bears a society in which justice prevails, righteousness reigns, and joy and peace and harmony dominate the lives of the people. Can anyone ever accomplish greater works than these?

Does Bahá'u'lláh stand up to such high standards? Are His teachings in harmony with the spirit of the age? Do they contribute to the ennoblement of individual and the advancement of society? Does He present us with a Model worthy of emulation? Has He

given birth to a new society committed to justice, equality, unity, and universality? Does He fulfill Christ's prophetic testimony that "ye shall know them by their fruits"?

So far only a limited amount of the available evidence has been presented. As further facts unfold in succeeding chapters, the quality of Bahá'u'lláh's fruits will become progressively more evident.

It should be noted again that each piece of evidence (such as "the fruits") stands as a part of a whole Profile and should be viewed as such. The final judgment ought to be postponed until all the evidence has been examined.

Our ultimate goal is to see whether we can build a heavenly Mansion, patterned by divine Hands, far beyond the reach of human wisdom. As we move forward, our purpose at every step is to examine each piece of evidence individually, and then later try to see if the accumulated pieces fit together and hold together.

3

The Good Shepherd Giveth His Life for the Sheep

John 10:11

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. John 10:11

This chapter sets out to examine the second test by which a Messenger should be judged: the test of suffering. Specifically, it covers the following themes:

- Suffering is the destiny of every Savior
- Why should the Messenger suffer?
- Possible motives for enduring adversity.
- Prophecies predict suffering for the Savior of our age.
- Why are the Messengers always robed in humility and lowliness?
- The great power and glory behind the Messengers' apparent lowliness
- The test of suffering and sacrifice applied to the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

Suffering the Destiny of Every Savior

Facing the atrocious and avenging people, and being given a choice between the pangs of pain and death, and pleasure and

comforts of the flesh, that is a trial from which no Messenger has ever been spared:

Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?

Acts 7:52

No Messenger cometh unto them but they laugh Him to scorn.

Qur'án 36:30

See also 40:5

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.¹²

Bahá'u'lláh

Jesus was not the only divine Manifestation to suffer. It seems that the burden of suffering has increased progressively for each succeeding Messenger. For Muhammad said:

No prophet of God hath suffered such harms as I have suffered.¹³

Bahá'u'lláh speaks frequently about His sufferings, which far exceeded those endured by any precious Messenger:

By the righteousness of God! Every morning I arose from My bed, I discovered the hosts of countless afflictions massed behind My door; and every night when I lay down, lo! My heart was torn with agony at what it had suffered from the fiendish cruelty of its foes. With every piece of bread the Ancient Beauty breaketh is coupled the assault of a fresh affliction, and with every drop He drinketh is mixed the bitterness of the most woeful of trials. He is preceded in every step He taketh by an army of unforeseen calamities, while in His rear follow legions of agonizing sorrows.¹⁴

Both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh state that if they had a choice, they would not have consented to distinguish themselves as divine Messengers amongst mankind:

...Had it been in my power, I would have, under no circumstances, consented to distinguish myself amongst men...¹⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

By My life! But for the obligation to acknowledge the Cause of Him Who is the Testimony of God...I would not have announced this unto thee...¹⁶

the Báb

Why Should the Messengers Suffer?

It is a mark of sincerity not only to live up to one's beliefs, but to be willing to give one's all for the sake of those beliefs. A Savior—the One seeking to educate humankind—must demonstrate His dedication to His ideals by accepting and welcoming the most severe tests of affliction and of suffering.

He must manifest absolute loyalty to His Cause, so that people may trust in His sincerity and confide in His devotion and dedication. He must show by the example of His deeds that He seeks no material comforts, but spiritual joys, that He wishes to give and not to gain. Otherwise how could He distinguish Himself from the worldly-minded and the impure—those devoted to their own selfish ends and interests? In the words of Bahá'u'lláh:

Glory to Thee, O my God! But for the tribulations which are sustained in Thy path, how could Thy true lovers be recognized; and were it not for the trials which are borne for love of Thee, how could the station of such as yearn for Thee be revealed?¹⁷

Further, in what way could a divine Messenger demonstrate His trust in His Creator and His resignation to His Will? Adversity is the crucible of testing.

Jesus used suffering and sacrifice as an evidence of the validity of His own Mission when He said:

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hireling, when he sees the wolf coming, abandons the sheep and runs away, because he is no shepherd and the sheep are not his. Then the wolf harries the flock and

scatters the sheep. The man runs away because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep.

John 10:11-13 NEB

See also John 10:15

Jesus also said:

Anyone whose teaching is merely his own, aims at honor for himself. But if a man aims at the honor of him who sent him he is sincere, and there is nothing false in him. John 7:18 NEB

I do not care about my own glory... John 8:50

We find similar words expressed by Muhammad and Bahá'u'lláh:

We feed you for the sake of God: we seek from you neither recompense nor thanks. Qur'án 76:9

Incline your ears to the counsels which this Servant giveth you for the sake of God. He, verily, asketh no recompense from you and is resigned to what God hath ordained for Him, and is entirely submissive to God's Will.¹⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

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.¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Possible Motives for Enduring Adversity

The one claiming to be a Savior can be prompted by two chief motives. Either he aspires for fame, fortune, and power or otherwise he arises to obey the divine Call. If he intends to seek selfish

ends or interests, his first and foremost concern must be self-protection, escape from pressures and trials of the world.

How can the one bound by selfish desires or aspirations exchange the joys and comforts of the flesh for torture and death? How can he barter “the ease of a passing day” for toil and trouble? How can he willingly refuse to escape the scourge of oppressors? Total devotion to a Cause and unswerving patience and constancy in the face of adversity signify sincerity and prove incompatible with impurity of motives.

If a man is just, noble, and righteous, he does not, and cannot, claim to be divine. For no deviation or violation can surpass the false claim that one’s words are indeed God’s words, and that one speaks not from his own fancies but from the Will and the Wisdom of the All-Knowing. Conversely, if a man is insincere he does not, and cannot, consent to suffering, ridicule, humiliation, torture, and death.

Beyond the alternatives stated, we should also examine the likelihood of a third one: that the one claiming to be God’s Messenger is afflicted with self-deception or delusion, and consequently he is willing to suffer for a cause he erroneously considers divine. This question can be resolved only in the context of the Messengers’ lives and teachings.

The study of the lives and teachings of great Messengers indicates that they stand far above such afflictions. Self-deception or delusion proves utterly incompatible with everything known about them—their pious and pure deeds as well as the profound Wisdom of their words and teachings. A man afflicted with self-deception or delusion stands out of touch with reality. He is even unable to guide his own life, much less the lives of many millions for centuries.

The divine Messengers have exerted by far the deepest influence on the fortunes of humankind. Great civilizations have always emerged in the wake of their mighty Words and teachings. Therefore, expressing “radiant acquiescence,” contentment, and even joy, in the face of cruelty and adversity; exemplifying the noblest virtues and the most pious deeds; bestowing the profoundest

knowledge and wisdom; and manifesting transcendent Powers that are never used for selfish ends or interests stand incompatible with either impure motives or self-deception and delusion.

The absurdity of such an accusation becomes even more evident in the context of Bahá'u'lláh's life and teachings. For we have far more detailed account of Him and His Words than we have about any previous Messenger.

First He Must Suffer

The Messengers' spiritual sovereignty eventually leads to temporal glory. But this happens after their departure from the earthly realms. The Scriptures, the examples of history, and reason, all point to such conclusion. Yet people cannot reconcile themselves to reality.

We see once again history repeating itself in our time. For today people are expecting the same sovereignty from their expected Savior as their forebears did at the time of Jesus' first advent. The following question posed by the Jews demonstrates the point:

But we [the Jews] had been hoping that he [the Messiah] was the man to liberate Israel. Luke 24:21 NEB

How did Jesus respond to the question? Simply by asking another question:

Was the Messiah not bound to suffer thus before entering upon his glory? Luke 24:26 NEB

Many believers assume that a clearest evidence of Jesus' return is the great glory and power that will accompany Him. When the time comes, they say, everyone will know. A close examination of prophecies indicates clearly that Jesus never promised to **begin** His reign with earthly sovereignty. On the contrary, He prophesied just the opposite. Here is a passage that points to the sequence of events:

For like the lightning-flash that lights up the earth from end to end, will the Son of Man be when his day comes. But first he must endure much suffering and be repudiated by this

generation. As things were in Noah's days, so will they be in the days of the Son of Man. Luke 17:24-26 NEB

Let us first decode the intended meaning of the word "generation" and then interpret the prophecy. Bible Lexicons offer two basic meanings for the word: (1) the whole multitude of people living at the same time (Cremer). (2) the whole multitude of people living in a given period of time (Abbott-Smith). It is obvious that in the above context Jesus is using "generation" in the second sense. Here it carries the same meaning as dispensation, or "age" used frequently to signal the ending of a given period of time and the beginning of another. If we reject this meaning and support the other, Jesus' promises stand utterly unfulfilled. For none of those living at the time of Jesus witnessed their fulfillment. Therefore, what Jesus is conveying is that when the Savior's day of victory dawns, the lightning-flash of His Glory will light up the whole earth. But until then, He will endure much suffering, and will be rejected by the Christians who live in the Christian dispensation. To make sure no one misunderstands the prophecy, Jesus offers Noah's example as a guide to the sequence of events.

If we reverse the sequence, the prophecy loses its logical sense. For if the Savior *began* His advent with glory, then how could He suffer? If He established His sovereignty, how could anyone dare deny Him, torture Him, or imprison Him?

The message conveyed in the preceding biblical prophecy is also confirmed in the Bahá'í Scriptures.

The East hath, verily, been illumined with the light of the Kingdom. Erelong will this same light shed a still greater illumination upon the West.²⁰

The effulgence of God's splendorous mercy... hath enveloped the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and the whole world is bathed in its shining glory... The day will soon come when the light of Divine unity will have so permeated the East and the West that no man dare any longer ignore it.²¹

Grieve thou not at men's failure to apprehend the Truth. Erelong thou shalt find them turning towards God, the Lord of all mankind. We have indeed, through the potency of the Most

Sublime Word, encompassed the whole world, and the time is approaching when God will have subdued the hearts of all that dwell on earth. He is in truth the Omnipotent, the All-Powerful.²²

Jesus' comparison of His second advent with those of Noah and Lot are indeed the most conclusive. It is a comparison based on historical facts, which no fair-minded person can deny or misinterpret. Noah came "like a thief in the night," exactly as Jesus predicted His own coming would be like. He appeared in the darkness of misconceptions, apathy, and unbelief. He left without being detected by the masses of people.

Jesus also spoke of His own return as "the Spirit of Truth" or as "another Counselor" who will stand rejected and undetected:

The world cannot accept this Counselor, because it neither sees him nor knows him. John 14:17 NIV

(For further references or discussion on rejection, please see volumes I, II, and III.)

Lowliness a Measure of Divine Distinction

It is an expression of divine Wisdom that no Messenger should ever encounter acclamation or acceptance, should ever arise with power and splendor, with earthly honor and glory:

He who comes from heaven bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one accepts his witness. John 3:32 NEB

The masses of humanity find their distinction in earthly riches; they pride themselves in fame and power, not meekness and suffering:

...for what sets itself up to be admired by men is detestable in the sight of God. Luke 16:15 NEB

Jesus displeased and disappointed the Jews, for He represented what they despised the most. They received a Savior who instead of rising to the Kingdom rose to the cross, a Redeemer born in a

stable and in infamy, for to them His birth seemed suspicious. He was neither a scholar, nor a priest, neither a promising politician nor a pompous prince. No one could stand farther than Jesus from the kingly image the Jews had cherished of their Messiah. They found not only His lineage distasteful but His taste as well, for they found Him associating with the poor, the sick, and the sinners:

...‘This fellow’ [Jesus], they said, ‘welcomes sinners and eats with them.’
Luke 15:2 NEB

We find the same practice pursued by Bahá’u’lláh. We read again and again that He would refuse to visit the dignitaries, those were seemingly in control of His life and destiny. People were astonished by His indifference to the powerful and the privileged.

Reasons for the Messengers’ Lowliness

The Messenger’s distinction must lie not in worldly honors and treasures but in the riches of the Spirit, so that He may be welcomed and adored solely by the pure in the spirit—those deserving of His spiritual Kingdom and desirous of His divine Distinction, who love Him for His own sake and seek Him presence only to gain of the treasures of His Wisdom and not to share in His earthly goals or aspirations. In fact, justice demands that His Cause require tests and trials and sacrifices, so that the pure may be separated from the impure, the unselfish from the selfish, “the wheat from the chaff.”

...and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.
Matthew 25:32

Further, if a Messenger came with earthly might and grandeur, the divine Will would then be *imposed* upon us; we would be so overwhelmed and overpowered by His incomparable pomp and splendor as to turn into frightened servants before His transcendent Might and Majesty, deprived of our freedom, a most distinct mark of our humanity.

If earthly power were to prevail, there would be many reluctant souls who would be forced to profess faith without any desire to do so. Such forced servitude would demean both God and man. It is our Creator's Will that we should enjoy freedom of conscience. He wishes us to find the Truth through our own endeavors, our own sincerity and purity and dedication. If given a choice, what sort of companion would we select? Those who love us because of our virtues, or those who want us because of our wealth? Those who respect us for what we stand for, or those who bow down before us for fear of our wrath?

It is strange indeed that believers often understand the fact and the wisdom of their own Savior's lowliness and sufferings, and yet they cannot adapt to the lowliness and sufferings of the next Savior, the One whom they are expecting. The Jews could give many reasons why their past Redeemer, Moses, had served as a shepherd. But they could not, or would not, understand why God would send a young carpenter (Jesus) to be their *new* Redeemer. Many Christians in our time know why Jesus was sent robed in worldly weakness instead of glory and power. The following passage written by a Christian, points to the fact:

God's hiddenness allows us the chance we need to grow and develop. It's His way of saying, "I'm here, but I'm going to let you work it out." Too much divine intrusion would leave us without any occupations or purpose. So out of respect for us, out of consideration for our need to exercise and grow, God steps back and restrains His power.

Even when God decided to reveal Himself by sending His Son, He followed His strategy of hiddenness. Who looks for God in a stable or hanging on a criminal's cross? People were expecting a king robed in glory, and the majority missed Him when He came hidden in humanity.

The people wanted to see a God of incredible power, but He revealed His magnificence in the only way human beings could possibly understand or handle—by becoming a man. Even then, most people missed the point.²³

Even though many sympathize with the preceding words (which apply to the past), they cannot sympathize if those same words

were to be applied to the present. They would argue that this time it is going to be different.

But God's Way and Wisdom never change:

Thou shalt not find any change in the way of God...

Qur'án 35:41

God's wisdom ordains that nothing should be accomplished without effort, without pain and sacrifice. Just before His crucifixion, Jesus used the following analogy to explain the wisdom of making Himself a sacrifice:

...But though you will be plunged in grief, your grief will be turned to joy. A woman in labor is in pain because her time has come; but when the child is born she forgets the anguish in her joy that a man has been born into the world.

John 16:20-22 NEB

In other words the giving of the gift of a new life to the world required the sacrifice of an infinitely precious and noble life, as could be offered by Jesus.

Jesus used still another analogy before His death to reveal the mystery of sacrifice:

...The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. In truth, in very truth I tell you, a grain of wheat remains a solitary grain unless it falls into the ground and dies; but if it dies, it bears a rich harvest.

John 12:23-24 NEB

Many have wondered: why would the loving Father allow His dear Son to endure such a painful death? The preceding two analogies provide a clear response to the mystery. Understanding the wisdom of effort, pain, and sacrifice is essential to the understanding of not only religion but life itself. Only those who strive are entitled to the reward—whether it is the recognition of God's Messengers or acquisition of knowledge and wisdom.

Yes, Jesus endured a few hours of pain, but what a splendid life He acquired for Himself and what an abundant life He gave to the world. The seed of His sacrifice flowered into a great civilization that flourished for centuries, that gave rise to a bounteous harvest of virtues, enriching the world beyond measure. Jesus' noble

sacrifice not only transformed the world, but crowned Him with glory and honor and perfection:

It was clearly fitting that God for whom and through whom all things exist should, in bringing many sons to glory, make the leader who delivers them perfect through sufferings.

Hebrews 2:10 NEB

There are still other reasons why God's Messengers accept suffering and pain. The Messengers are sent as Models to humankind.

I have set you an example: you are to do as I have done for you.

John 13:15 NEB

From their great sacrifice we learn that the worldly life with all its glamors, compared to the spiritual, carries no glories. We learn that if these Gems of Discernment with all their wisdom and distinction so willingly sacrifice material pleasures for the spiritual, we, too, can gain by doing the same. Otherwise if we found them living a princely life of ease and luxury, how could we receive the inspiration to pursue a life of unselfishness, service, and dedication?

Ascendancy Behind the Apparent Lowliness

What distinguishes the Messengers' suffering from the adversities endured by others is not the suffering in itself, but its quality. It is this: that they accept weakness in spite of their all-pervasive powers, that they submit to their enemies in spite of their infinite might and majesty, that they live in poverty in spite of having access to all the riches of the world.

In their earthly life, they show us only glimpses of their divine distinction. For their goal is not to win the hearts by force or riches, but by the hosts of patience, love, faith, and peace. They wish us to know that they have the power, and yet they refuse to use it to any but the slightest extent.

We know the contempt with which Jesus was treated. We know His suffering at the hands of the cruel people and His abject poverty:

...Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. Luke 9:58 NIV

What we fail to discern is the power and glory that stood behind the weakness:

...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Matthew 28:18

The Father loves the Son and has entrusted him with all authority. John 3:35 NEB

We find the disciples confirm again and again the glory bestowed on their Master:

But we see Jesus...crowned with glory and honor...Hebrews 2:9

For He [God] hath put all things under his [Jesus'] feet. I Corinthians 15:27

We find the same qualities of majesty and meekness apparent in both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. During a long period of imprisonment, the Báb was kept in darkness and isolation on a remote mountain, often treated with contempt and cruelty. Yet in spite of His seeming helplessness, He was endowed with infinite power. Here are His Words:

By the righteousness of the One true God, He is none other than the sovereign Truth Who hath been made manifest through the power of Truth... Verily He is the One Who holdeth, by Our leave, the kingdoms of earth and heaven in His grasp...²⁴

And again:

I have fashioned all created things for Thy [the Báb's] sake, and I have, by virtue of My Will, set Thee sovereign Ruler over all mankind.²⁵

Bahá'u'lláh confirms the Báb's Words:

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.²⁶

Similarly Bahá'u'lláh spent the period of His ministry in prison and exile, yet He declared:

I have come in the shadows of the clouds of glory, and am invested by God with invincible sovereignty.²⁷

As Jesus' disciples confirmed the glory of their Master, Bahá'u'lláh's disciples did the same. Even unbelievers were compelled to acknowledge the greatness and the glory they witnessed. Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University, the only westerner ever to visit Him wrote of Him:

The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before One who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain.²⁸

Dr. T.K. Cheyne, a famed clergyman wrote:

There was living quite lately a human being of such consummate excellence that many think it is both permissible and inevitable even to identify him mystically with the invisible Godhead...His combination of mildness and power is so rare that we have to place him in a line with supernormal men... We learn that, at great points in his career...such radiance of might and majesty streamed from his countenance that none could bear to look upon the effulgence of his glory and beauty. Nor was it an uncommon occurrence for unbelievers involuntarily to bow down in lowly obeisance on beholding His Holiness.²⁹

To put one's self at the mercy of ignorant, selfish, and cruel crowds in spite of supremacy over all mankind is an act beyond our conception. In His Epistle to the Czar of Russia, Bahá'u'lláh refers to both His patience and power in the face of persecutions:

Hearken unto My Voice that calleth from My prison that it may acquaint thee with the things that have befallen My

Beauty, at the hands of them that are the manifestations of My glory, and that thou mayest perceive how great hath been My patience, notwithstanding My might, and how immense My forbearance, notwithstanding My power.³⁰

Yes, the great Saviors are the supreme Sovereign over all the peoples of the world; theirs are the power and glory beyond all human estimation—but not in the passing dominion. They bestow temporal sovereignty and supremacy upon the kings and the emperors, the Caesars and the Czars, but set apart the realm of the heart and the spirit solely for their own:

O SON OF DUST!

All that is in heaven and earth I have ordained for thee, except the human heart, which I have made the habitation of My beauty and glory...³¹

The Messengers' bodies may fall captive to the hands of the oppressors, but the citadels of their souls never fall. In the depths of lowliness they soar to such heights of ecstasy and splendor as to transcend the bounds of human vision.

The Test of Suffering and Sacrifice Applied to Bahá'u'lláh

Did Bahá'u'lláh satisfy the requirement of suffering and sacrifice? Could He share with Jesus the claim that: "I am a good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11)? Let us see.

Bahá'u'lláh was born to a family of fame and fortune, His father being an influential figure in the court of the king. As a child He manifested remarkable distinctions; His intelligence and wisdom puzzled His learned parents as well as their associates. "How could a little child show such signs of sublimity and grandeur?" they often wondered. "Why does He behave so maturely for His age?" they often asked. The consensus among both the family and friends was that He would grow up to be a man of great distinction, perhaps a political figure in the wake of His father, exerting much influence on the fate and fortune of His countrymen.

As Bahá'u'lláh grew up, His fame also grew, and He eventually became known to the people of great distinction in the court of the king, who became infatuated with His wisdom, with His sense of justice, with His humility, and with His humanitarian aspirations. And they soon learned to take their problems and disputes to Him, for He had proved to be capable of offering just and practical solutions. “Obviously a man of such distinction would be an excellent candidate for a political position in the court, and if encouraged would accept one,” they often thought to themselves. But they soon learned that they were wrong in their conjectures. Every attempt made to convince Bahá'u'lláh of the bright future in store for Him in the court failed.

Bahá'u'lláh had other Visions—a vision of a world in which justice would reign, a world in which love would last and peace prevail. Fame and fortune had no attraction for Him; His greatest wish at the time was to help the poor. Like Jesus (Luke 5:32) He wanted to be the Father of the downcast, of the deprived, and of the lowly; He sought distinction only amongst *them*. Such was Bahá'u'lláh's life before rising to His Mission.

The life of Bahá'u'lláh following this period was in many ways in direct contrast to His previous life. Up to then He had known no hardships, His father having protected Him under the wings of his loving kindness. He had lived like a prince. From then until His last days—a span of some forty years—He accepted and lived the life of a prisoner and an exile. He was spared no humiliation or affliction; seldom has anyone lived in such contrasting conditions—a life of ease followed by severe hardships.

As He was being taken to a prison called the Black Pit, writes Nabíl about one of Bahá'u'lláh's early encounters with afflictions, He

...was several times stripped of His garments, and was overwhelmed with abuse and ridicule...All along the route, He was pelted and vilified by the crowds...As He was approaching that dungeon, an old and decrepit woman was seen to emerge from the midst of the crowd, with a stone in her hand, eager to cast it at the face of Bahá'u'lláh. Her eyes glowed with a determination and fanaticism of which few women of her

age were capable. Her whole frame shook with rage as she stepped forward and raised her hand to hurl her missile at Him.³²

She then pleaded with the guards saying:

...“give me a chance to fling my stone in his face!” “Suffer not this woman to be disappointed,” were Bahá’u’lláh’s words to His guards, as He saw her hastening behind Him. “Deny her not what she regards as a meritorious act in the sight of God.”

The Síyáh-Chál [the Black Pit], into which Bahá’u’lláh was thrown, originally a reservoir of water for one of the public baths of Tihrán, was a subterranean dungeon in which criminals of the worst type were wont to be confined. The darkness, the filth, and the character of the prisoners, combined to make of that pestilential dungeon the most abominable place to which human beings could be condemned. His feet were placed in stocks, and around His neck were fastened the Qará-Guhar chains, infamous throughout Persia for their galling weight. For three days and three nights, no manner of food or drink was given to Bahá’u’lláh. Rest and sleep were both impossible to Him. The place was infested with vermin, and the stench of that gloomy abode was enough to crush the very spirits of those who were condemned to suffer its horrors. Such were the conditions under which He was held down that even one of the executioners who were watching over Him was moved with pity. Several times this man attempted to induce Him to take some tea which he had managed to introduce into the dungeon under the cover of his garments. Bahá’u’lláh, however, would refuse to drink it.³³

In the following passage Bahá’u’lláh alluded briefly to the poverty in which He and His companions lived:

Many a time hath the court of the All-Merciful been to outward seeming so denuded of the riches of this world that they who lived in close association with Him suffered from dire want. Despite their sufferings, the Pen of the Most High hath, at no time, been willing to refer, nor even to make the slightest allusion, to the things that pertain to this world and its treasures.³⁴

The Test of Suffering and Sacrifice Applied to the Báb

The Báb's sacrifices and sufferings were similar to those encountered by Bahá'u'lláh. From the time He declared His Message until His martyrdom, He endured every possible humiliation and hardship. These He welcomed with open arms, and wished, furthermore, to sacrifice His life for the next Manifestation, Bahá'u'lláh, whom, He foretold, God would soon make manifest:

I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake, and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days.³⁵

To the Sháh who imprisoned and exiled Him, He wrote:

If thou hast decided to shed My blood, wherefore dost thou delay? Thou art now endowed with power and authority. For Me it will prove an infinite bounty conferred by God, while for thee and for them that would commit such an act it will amount to a chastisement meted out by Him.

How great the blessedness that would await Me, wert thou to pass a verdict such as this; and what immense joy would be Mine, shouldst thou agree to do this! This is a bounty which God hath reserved for them that enjoy near access to His court. Give then thy leave and wait no longer. In truth, mighty is thy Lord, the Avenger.³⁶

As stated, what distinguishes the Messengers' suffering from the adversities endured by others is not the suffering in itself, but its quality. Other than having complete power to prevent their suffering and yet not using the power, the Messengers go on even to express joy in being able to suffer for the sake of God. Their vision is set on Providence and their hope on Heaven. In sorrow they find joy, in death they see life, and in prison the glimmerings of paradise:

In this mountain I have remained alone, and have come to such a pass that none of those gone before Me have suffered what I have suffered, nor any transgressor endured what I have endured! I render praise unto God and yet again praise Him. I find Myself free from sorrow, inasmuch as I abide within the good-pleasure of My Lord and Master. Methinks I am in the all-highest Paradise, rejoicing at My communion with God, the Most Great. Verily this is a bounty which God hath conferred upon Me; and He is the Lord of unbounded blessings.³⁷

The Báb

Know thou that though My body be beneath the swords of My foes, and My limbs be beset with incalculable afflictions, yet My spirit is filled with a gladness with which all the joys of the earth can never compare.³⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

The Báb's courage and constancy astounded the people. No threat or humiliation, no persuasion or pity could turn Him away from the Cause He was inspired to serve. For Him, death did not constitute a punishment; it was the fulfillment of His highest hope—a hope that soon was to be realized.

Bahá'u'lláh in His *Book of Certitude* refers to the Báb's steadfastness, constancy, and supreme courage in the face of suffering and pain, regarding such acts as a manifest sign of sincerity:

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 [25], 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? Or do they maintain that His motive was none other than leadership and the acquisition of earthly riches?³⁹

Again as with Jesus, the Báb's meekness, modesty, and apparent helplessness were crowned with "ascendancy, might, sovereignty and power." He yielded to the "inevitable mystery" of sacrifice. He says it was as if:

I heard a Voice calling in my inmost being: 'Do thou sacrifice the thing which Thou lovest most in the path of God...'⁴⁰

But His response to the Call was voluntary. He had the power to resist all His enemies:

...by Him, Who hath my being between His hands even if all the kings of the earth were to be leagued together they would be powerless to take from me a single letter, how much less can these servants who are worthy of no attention...⁴¹

Then He goes on to explain the reason for not using the power He was endowed with:

That all may know the degree of My patience, My resignation, and self-sacrifice in the path of God.⁴²

The Báb's words on the mystery of suffering and His willingness to endure adversity are indeed identical with those of Jesus:

I lay down my life, to receive it back again. No one has robbed me of it; I am laying it down of my own free will.

John 10:17-18 NEB

And again:

Now my soul is in turmoil, and what am I to say? Father, save me from this hour. No, it was for this that I came to this hour.

John 12:27 NEB

To Conclude

As we have observed, the life of a Redeemer is not an easy one. It is certainly not easy for the One endowed with the loftiest station and the most sublime Wisdom to stand at the mercy of an ignorant, closed-minded, and cruel crowd. It is like enfolding light within infinite layers of darkness, or seeking to deprive it of its very essence. Humans, because of their limited perception, can never properly perceive the intensity of suffering borne by the Saviors. No wonder Moses was at first reluctant to serve as the divine Mouthpiece (Exodus 4:10-17) and Jesus at the height of His suffering prayed saying:

My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt. Matthew 26:39 NEB

But since the divine Manifestations have always preferred God's will to their own, and since their motive for devotion and sacrifice has always transcended any other motive, they have patiently endured the adversities inflicted upon them. Not only have they *endured* suffering, they have even sometimes sought it and prayed for it.

As mentioned, both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh declined to make any compromises in their beliefs in order to lessen the burden of their sufferings. They refused to consider the opportunities offered them for escape from chain, imprisonment, and exile. In fact, instead of dampening their spirit, hardship and suffering fanned the flame of their faith. Forty years of imprisonment and exile could in no way affect Bahá'u'lláh's willingness to endure adversity. To the king who has massacred His followers and imprisoned and exiled Him, He wrote:

By God! Mine head yearneth for the spear out of love for its Lord. I never passed a tree, but Mine heart addressed it saying: 'O would that thou wert cut down in My name, and My body crucified upon thee, in the path of My Lord!'...By God! Though weariness lay Me low, and hunger consume Me, and the bare rock be My bed, and My fellows the beasts of the field, I will not complain, but will endure patiently as those endued with constancy and firmness have endured patiently, through the

power of God, the Eternal King and Creator of the nations, and will render thanks unto God under all conditions.⁴³

Why do the great Saviors subject themselves to such a wide spectrum of suffering—imprisonment, exile, humiliation, harassment, torture, and even death? They accept imprisonment to set people free from the prison of self, and they accede to bondage to unchain the human soul from the fetters of earthly attachments. Their ultimate end is human happiness; an accomplishment that may be attained only by releasing and educating man's infinite potentials. For true happiness is unobtainable unless and until human potential is released and educated. Bahá'u'lláh writes:

The Ancient Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] 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!⁴⁴

And again:

I sorrow not for the burden of My imprisonment. Neither do I grieve over My abasement, or the tribulation I suffer at the hands of Mine enemies. By My life! They are My glory, a glory wherewith God hath adorned His own Self. Would that ye know it!

The shame I was made to bear hath uncovered the glory with which the whole of creation had been invested, and through the cruelties I have endured, the Day Star of Justice hath manifested itself, and shed its splendor upon men.⁴⁵

The test of suffering for the One claiming to be a Savior should indeed be regarded as a reliable measure of sincerity. A false prophet surrounded with the sparks of suffering, immediately begins to flicker and flutter, and if engulfed by raging flames, he eventually burns into the ashes. A true Prophet, touched with the sparks of suffering, begins to glow and glitter, even like a piece of iron cast into the burning furnace. The heat of the fire of suffering fills Him with light and life.

Did the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh fulfill the essential requirement of enduring adversity? Could each of them reiterate Christ's Words saying: "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep?" It is up to each of us to decide for ourselves. But as the story unfolds, and as we see more and more pieces fitting into the full Profile, we will be able to come to a more definite conclusion.

We should judge each proof by the standards of both reason and the clear testimony of the Scriptures. If the evidence does not satisfy both of these standards, we should reject it, otherwise consider it as a part of a progressively emerging Profile, which we will continue to discover in the succeeding chapters.

4

Every Tree that Does Not Bear Good Fruit Is Cut Down

Matthew 7:19

Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted,
shall be rooted up. Matthew 15:13

This chapter examines the third test by which a Messenger must be judged: His enduring influence. The contents of the chapter include:

- The reasons behind the Messengers' enduring influence.
- Scriptural references pointing to the Messengers' influence as an evidence of validity.
- A specific example demonstrating the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh's influence on a distinguished disciple.
- A forecast of the future influence and spread of the Bahá'í Faith.

The Test of Endurance

In the Scriptures of God's eternal Faith, the analogy of a plant is also used to portray another test of the validity of the claim and the sincerity of a Savior: a good tree not only bears pure and fragrant fruit, it also endures. It has the capacity to germinate and flourish, growing deep into the soil and providing itself with all the nourishment and support it may need.

Likewise, a religion in harmony with man's nature has the potential and the power to expand and spread, to permeate the human

heart and endure. A Faith devoid of such capacity fails to satisfy the complex and seemingly paradoxical combination of human needs and is soon rooted up. Thus the success of a Manifestation—in spite of severe opposition and suppression from the masses—in ruling over the hearts and minds of millions for centuries is in itself clear evidence of His ascendancy, His supreme and superior Knowledge and Wisdom.

The sole reason for the success of a Savior—as the divine Manifestations have testified—rests on His ability to draw Wisdom and Knowledge freely from a Source inaccessible to others. Because of the innate Wisdom conferred upon Him, and because of His close connection with the very Source and essence of Being, the Savior discovers and discerns Truths that stand forever beyond the reach of the wisest and the most learned of people. A divine Educator has a perfect knowledge of all human needs—of all the things that lead to fulfillment or failure, to progress or stagnation, to loftiness or abasement. He knows the inherent capacities or potentials of man, the things that harmonize with his inner self, foster or enhance his happiness, and uplifts him to the heights of hope, lasting peace and tranquility.

And as a result of such knowledge, He brings forth teachings and laws that can best satisfy the needs of the people during His prophetic cycle—the cycle during which His Faith must reign. He can foresee the future changes and account for them. Such knowledge and wisdom stand far beyond the vision of the wisest and the most learned of people. A false prophet is powerless to know even his own wants much less the wants of humankind either at the present or in the future. A true Savior speaks from the knowledge revealed to Him by the All-Knowing; a false savior speaks from his own fancies, dreams, or desires.

Raising a new spiritual civilization may be likened to the building of a new house. A house planned or raised by an incompetent builder cannot be expected to last. Similarly, a faith founded on human fancies and confined to human vision cannot endure. Such a faith carries with it all the faults or failures that inhere in every aspect of human thought or deed.

The extreme complexity of the task of the Savior makes the requirement of competency even more essential: whereas the architect builds on land—a solid, stable, and often reliable foundation—the Savior must build on the human heart, a foundation best described as unstable, unpredictable, and often impenetrable. Building a new spiritual civilization is no simple task; it is far beyond the capacity or vision of the most learned of people, even the combined wisdom of the ages cannot bring it about. So often we find it beyond our reach to bring lasting harmony and lasting peace even into our own families, much less the family of the human race.

Thus from a purely logical perspective, the ability of the great Saviors in raising civilizations that last for centuries is in itself clear evidence of their superior Powers and supreme Wisdom. Such an achievement certainly makes them deserving of the title of “the foremost Educators of humankind.”

The Testimony of the Scriptures

Like the previous tests, the test of endurance enjoys not only logical support, but also the support of the divine Manifestations, who have testified that the success of a false savior and the failure of a true One are both against the divine Will. In almost all the Scriptures we find both a prophecy and a promise that true Faiths shall endure and false ones shall perish. To Moses God spoke saying:

But the prophet who presumes to utter in my name what I have not commanded him or who speaks in the name of other gods—that prophet shall die. Deuteronomy 18:20 NEB

Later Ezekiel confirmed the same promise:

I will demolish the building which you have daubed with whitewash and level it to the ground, so that its foundations are laid bare. It shall fall, and you shall be destroyed within it... Ezekiel 13:14 NEB
See also Jeremiah 14:15

The same promise is also given to us in the Gospel:

Already the axe is laid to the roots of the trees; and every tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire.

Luke 3:9 NEB

Also see Matthew 3:10; 7:19

As falsehood is debased and destroyed, so is truth nourished and elevated to triumph:

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts: and as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return until they have watered the earth, making it blossom and bear fruit, and give seed for sowing and bread to eat, so shall the word which comes from my mouth prevail; it shall not return to me fruitless without accomplishing my purpose or succeeding in the task I gave it.

Isaiah 55:9-11 NEB

The following words spoken by a fair-minded Pharisee at the trial of Christians is indeed to the point:

...they wanted to put them [the Christians] to death. But a member of the Council rose to his feet, a Pharisee called Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in high regard by all the people. He moved that the men be put outside for a while. Then he said, ‘Men of Israel, be cautious in deciding what to do with these men. Some time ago Theudas came forward, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. But he was killed and his whole following was broken up and disappeared. After him came Judas the Calilean at the time of the census; he induced some people to revolt under his leadership, but he too perished and his whole following was scattered. And so now: keep clear of these men, I tell you; leave them alone. For if this idea of theirs or its execution is of human origin, it will collapse; but if it is from God, you will never be able to put them down, and you risk finding yourselves at war with God. Acts 5:33-39 NEB

People of insight, discernment, and courage have always spoken, and in similar terms. We read in the Qur’án about “a man of the family of Pharaoh” who had risen to defend the Truth of Judaism

in almost the same words in which the fair-minded Pharisee spoke some 1500 years later:

A man of the family of Pharaoh who was a believer and concealed his faith said: ‘Will ye slay a man because he saith my Lord is God, when He hath already come to you with signs from your Lord? If he be a liar, on him will be his lie, but if he be a man of truth, part of what he threateneth will fall upon you.’
Qur’án 40:28

The similarity between various Scriptures is phenomenal. Here further references to the triumph of truth and extinction of falsehood, from the Qur’án as well as the Báb’s and Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings:

Hast thou not seen how God has struck a similitude? A good word is as a good tree—its roots are firm, and its branches are in heaven; it gives its produce every season by the leave of its Lord. So God strikes similitudes for men; haply they will remember. And the likeness of a corrupt words is as a corrupt tree—uprooted from the earth, having not establishment.

Qur’án 14:29-31

See also Qur’án 37:173; 9:33

Who is the man amongst you who can challenge the exalted Thrones of Reality in every Dispensation, while all existence is wholly dependent upon Them? Indeed, God hath wiped out all those who have opposed Them from the beginning that hath no beginning until the present day and hath conclusively demonstrated the Truth through the power of Truth. Verily, He is the Almighty, the Omnipotent, the All-Powerful.⁴⁶

The Báb

Know thou, moreover, that He it is Who hath, by His own behest, created all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth. How can, then, the thing that hath been created at His bidding prevail against Him? High is God exalted above what ye imagine about Him, ye people of malice! 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.⁴⁷

Bahá’u’lláh

See also *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 214.

Patience and triumph are close partners. Quick victory does not stand in harmony with divine Wisdom. Otherwise the All-Powerful “through the power of a single word” could win total victory:

Say: If it be Our pleasure We shall render the Cause victorious through the power of a single word from Our presence. He is in truth the Omnipotent, the All-Compelling.⁴⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'ís confirm the truth of all the great religions. That the followers have altered the original teachings, that they have substituted their own gods for the One True God, can by no means point to the falsehood of the original Founders. Every religion has been misinterpreted, misrepresented, and divided into competing sects. Yet all these sects have drawn their power from one Source, and should therefore be regarded fundamentally as the fragments of one basic truth.

Many evidences point to the divine Source of all great religions. The fact that they have endured for centuries in the name of God is in itself one evidence of their validity. For according to the many references cited, God does not allow a false religion to prosper.

Even though false *sects* (not religions) have flourished in the past, this is not to be from now on. For the prophecies indicate that this will be the day of unity, of God's Kingdom upon the earth. Sects cannot, and shall not, divide the new Revelation.

The Test of Endurance Applied to the Bahá'í Faith

All the past great religions—Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam—have obviously fulfilled this requirement. They all had a Mission and lasted long enough to fulfill it. It may be too soon to judge the eventual triumph of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, but a cursory glance at the growth and expansion of His Faith during the past century might give us a clue to its future fate.

The Bahá'í Faith expanded first from behind prison walls. Both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh spent almost their entire ministry in imprisonment or exile; yet they succeeded in spreading their Message to diverse sectors of the globe. The continuous attempts made by four absolute and despotic monarchs and a host of powerful and tyrant political and religious leaders to extinguish the light of their Faith were met with utter failure. The imprisonment, banishment, and martyrdom of the Báb, the imprisonment and banishment of Bahá'u'lláh, and the torture and execution of more than 20,000 of the believers had no effect in curbing the growth of the new Faith or dampening the fervent spirit of its devoted followers.

To uproot the new Faith, Násiri'd-Dín Sháh (the absolute and cruel monarch of Persia) executed the Báb, hunted out and massacred thousands of His followers, including those who could be even remotely associated with the new Faith. Yet he spared the life of the most influential and the most prominent (Bahá'u'lláh) among the Báb's followers, and then sent Him to a haven of safety, and eventually to 'Akká (Acre), in the Holy Land, an ancient and a holy place—thereby fulfilling all the biblical and Islamic prophecies designating 'Akká as “the door of hope,” and as the seat of God's Revelation in the last days.

Even more astonishing is the treatment accorded to Bahá'u'lláh and His Son by the Ottoman emperors. On the surface it seems that three of the most cruel kings the world has ever known (Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, 'Abdu'l-'Azíz, 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd II) “conspired” to act with justice toward an imprisoned Father and Son (Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá), doing everything within their power to save the lives of the two distinguished Prisoners under their care for as long as half a century. This was especially true with the two kings of the Ottoman Empire who, after Bahá'u'lláh's exile to their land, had every reason to remain suspicious and envious of His Charm as well as the large gathering of His devoted Persian disciples.

These sovereigns were so distrustful of others and so fearful of the loss of their temporal power that even the slightest suspicion on their part toward someone would culminate in a swift and

often torturous execution. (Among the three monarchs ‘Abdu’l-Ḥamíd alone massacred, by some estimates, as many as 200,000 to 300,000 innocent Armenians, including women and children.)

For fifty years the adversaries of the new Revelation did everything within their power to activate the suspicion and instigate the wrath of these sovereigns toward Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. And for fifty years they encountered repeated failures, although several times they came so close to their objective and became so certain of their success that they celebrated their expected achievement with grand jubilation. At last there came a time when almost everyone thought that the end was near and that it would be just a matter of a few days or perhaps a few hours before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would be hanged or sent to Africa to face virtual death. Then at such a critical juncture, suddenly and unexpectedly the divine Drama came into play: ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd was overthrown, imprisoned, and then exiled for the rest of his days. The whole history of the Bahá’í Faith, which occupies many volumes, consists of no less than an accumulation of such unusual and miraculous events.

Equally astounding is the freedom Bahá’u’lláh enjoyed, through His own choosing, during His imprisonment in the fortified city of ‘Akká, near Nazareth. It must have been a complete mystery to the adversaries of the new Revelation as well as the impartial observers, to see a seemingly helpless and defenseless Prisoner entrusted to the “Most Great Prison” under the absolute domination of an atrocious sovereign, enjoy not only liberty but such glory and majesty that was the envy of the emperors. To see a famed Exile under the watchful eye of the most exacting guards roam the land with the utmost authority and grandeur is a wonder unattainable save by the aid of a supreme power.

In the Bahá’í history we read:

The loving reverence of friends, the consideration and respect that were shown by all officials and notables, the inflow of pilgrims and seekers after truth, the spirit of devotion and service that was manifest all around, the majestic and kingly countenance of the Blessed Perfection [Bahá’u’lláh], the effectiveness of His command, the number of His zealous

devotees—all bore witness to the fact that Bahá'u'lláh was in reality no prisoner, but a King of Kings. Two despotic sovereigns were against Him, two powerful autocratic rulers, yet, even when confined in their own prisons, He addressed them in very austere terms, like a king addressing his subjects. Afterwards, in spite of the severe firmans, he lived at Bahjí like a prince. Often he would say: 'Verily, verily, the most wretched prison has been converted into a Paradise of Eden.' Surely, such a thing has not been witnessed since the creation of the world.⁴⁹

What seems even more astonishing is that from among the multitudes and multitudes of Bahá'u'lláh's aggressive and determined adversaries, no one succeeded in taking His life. Not that attempts were not made. Attempts were many; it was only the results that failed—such a glaring failure for Bahá'u'lláh's relentless enemies in spite of the fact that at no time during His periodic freedom did He enjoy, or would allow, protection of any kind for His own safety. He walked among His envious and atrocious adversaries without fear, with the utmost glory and grandeur. What a grand Mystery!

The Devotion and Sacrifice of the Believers

The realization of spiritual powers requires instruments. The divine Message always spreads as a result of the efforts of devoted believers who withstand, and even welcome, the most severe tests of trials and adversities. In the Book of Certitude, Bahá'u'lláh refers to the transforming influence of the Báb over His disciples:

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...⁵⁰

During the early days of the new Revelation, some four hundred of the most learned scholars embraced the divine Message with a heroism and devotion unmatched and unequalled in the annals of history—many of them virtually singing and dancing to their agonizing death with the utmost joy and rapture.

True, people have always given their lives in vain. But what distinguishes such sacrifices, and sets them apart, from others is the underlying motives, the stability, and the status of the individuals involved. These scholars, as well as multitudes of other devoted and distinguished disciples, were not ordinary people seeking excitement, fame or worldly gains or honors; neither were they unloved, ill-fated, or obscure wanderers wishing to escape the burden or the boredom of a wear life, or attempting to avoid the turmoils and trepidations of gazing upon the unsettled and gloomy horizons of a dark destiny. They were among the most rational, educated, secure, respected, recognized, and well-established members of their society, always aspiring to live their lives to their fullest; individuals who otherwise would not have risked even their most trivial or trifling possessions, pleasures, or comforts without being first certain of reasonable returns or rewards. The offering of worldly possessions and pleasures and even life itself on the part of such an elite and established segment of society through any means save the transforming and supreme power of a divine Manifestation is quite improbable, and perhaps impossible.

The Example of a Distinguished Disciple

Let us review as an example the transformation of a most noble and distinguished scholar at the hands of the Báb—a Youth of 25, untaught and unschooled at any time in His life except for a

brief period during His childhood. The distinguished scholar is Vahíd, selected from among multitudes of other learned men of his day by the Sháh to investigate the Cause of the Báb and inform him of his findings.

Soon following the inception of the new Revelation, the Báb's fame and tales of His transcendent powers spread swiftly across the land. "Indeed, a wave of passionate inquiry had swept the whole country, and unnumbered congregations were listening with wonder to the testimonies eloquently and fearlessly related by the Báb's itinerant messengers."⁵¹ "The dignitaries of State and Church either attended in person or delegated their ablest representatives to enquire into the truth and character of this remarkable Movement."⁵²

The Sháh himself was moved to carry out his own independent search, and therefore he delegated to Vahíd the responsibility of an objective inquiry.

Who was Vahíd? A nobleman described as "one of the most erudite, eloquent and influential of the King's subjects." He possessed a combination of distinct and distinguished qualities equaled only by few of his contemporaries. (The name Vahíd is the surname given him, meaning peerless or matchless.) Not only was he rare in knowledge and wisdom but also in honesty and integrity, in courage and devotion to truth.

The Sháh had implicit confidence in his impartiality, in his competence and profound spiritual insight. He occupied a position of such pre-eminence among the leading figures in Persia that at whatever meeting he happened to be present, no matter how great the number of the ecclesiastical leaders who attended it, he was invariably its chief speaker. None would dare to assert his views in his presence. They all reverently observed silence before him; all testified to his sagacity, his unsurpassed knowledge and mature wisdom.⁵³

The important mission accorded Vahíd by the Sháh should suffice in itself to point to his distinction, maturity, and superb wisdom.

Soon after receiving the king's summons, Vahíd set out for Shíráz, where the Báb resided. During his long journey, he had ample time to contemplate upon the questions by which he would challenge the Báb and test His claim. Upon his arrival at Shíráz, he met with an intimate friend surnamed 'Azím (the great), who had previously attained the presence of the Báb. Vahíd wished to know whether his friend was satisfied with his encounter with, and his inquiry into the claim of, the new Messenger.

“You should meet Him,” ‘Azím replied, “and seek independently to acquaint yourself with His Mission. As a friend, I would advise you to exercise the utmost consideration in your conversations with Him, lest you, too, in the end should be obliged to deplore any act of discourtesy towards Him.”⁵⁴

An interview was finally arranged and the king's messenger succeeded in completing the first of the three sessions he would have with the Báb. During this first session, lasting two hours, he tried to put the Báb to the test by asking the most difficult and puzzling questions he had prepared for Him. To every one of these questions, as he later testified, the honored Host offered “a brief but persuasive reply.” The conciseness and clarity of the Báb's answers stirred Vahíd sense of wonder and admiration.

...He was overpowered by a sense of humiliation at his own presumptuousness and pride. His sense of superiority completely vanished. As he arose to depart, he addressed the Báb in these words: “Please God, I shall, in the course of my next audience with You, submit the rest of my questions and with them shall conclude my enquiry.” As soon as he retired, he joined ‘Azím [his friend], to whom he related the account of his interview. “I have in His presence,” he told him, “expatiated unduly upon my own learning. He was able in a few words to answer my questions and to resolve my perplexities. I felt so abased before Him that I hurriedly begged leave to retire.” ‘Azím reminded him of his counsel, and begged him not to forget this time the advice he had given him.

In the course of his second interview, Vaḥíd, to his amazement, discovered that all the questions which he had intended to submit to the Báb had vanished from his memory. He contented himself with matters that seemed irrelevant to the object of his enquiry. He soon found, to his still greater surprise, that the Báb was answering, with the same lucidity and conciseness that had characterized his previous replies, those same questions which he had momentarily forgotten.⁵⁵

But Vaḥíd was not fully convinced. The Báb's eloquent and novel words and His ability to respond to questions "the questioner" himself could not recall had reawakened Vaḥíd's inquiring spirit, yet "a voice kept whispering in his ear: 'Might not this, after all, have been an accidental coincidence?'" Vaḥíd was too excited in this session to "collect his thoughts" and come to a reasoned conclusion, and so he asked for permission to leave, still unsure and undecided. Again the skeptic but excited inquirer sought the company of his trusted friend 'Aẓím, sharing with him the substance of his second dialogue. 'Aẓím, deeply perplexed and puzzled by his friend's unresponsiveness to the Báb's exalted position, finally broke his peace, exclaiming:

Would that schools had been utterly abolished, and that neither of us had entered one! Through our little-mindedness and conceit, we are withholding from ourselves the redeeming grace of God, and are causing pain to Him who is the Fountain thereof. Will you not this time beseech God to grant that you may be enabled to attain His presence with becoming humility and detachment, that perchance He may graciously relieve you from the oppression of uncertainty and doubt?⁵⁶

Let us hear the rest of the story from Vaḥíd himself:

I resolved that in my third interview with the Báb I would in my inmost heart request Him to reveal for me a commentary on the Súrih of Kawthar [one of the most difficult chapters in the Qur'án]. I determined not to breathe that request in His presence. Should he, unasked by me, reveal this commentary in a manner that would immediately distinguish it in my eyes from the prevailing standards current among the commentators on the Qur'án, I then would be convinced of the Divine

character of His Mission, and would readily embrace His Cause. If not, I would refuse to acknowledge Him. As soon as I was ushered into His presence, a sense of fear, for which I could not account, suddenly seized me. My limbs quivered as I beheld His face. I, who on repeated occasions had been introduced into the presence of the Sháh and had never discovered the slightest trace of timidity in myself, was now so awed and shaken that I could not remain standing on my feet. The Báb, beholding my plight, arose from His seat, advance towards me, and, taking hold of my hand, seated me beside Him. ‘Seek from Me,’ He said ‘whatever is your heart’s desire. I will readily reveal it to you.’ I was speechless with wonder. Like a babe that can neither understand nor speak, I felt powerless to respond. He smiled as He gazed at me and said: ‘Were I to reveal for you the commentary on the Súrih of Kawthar, would you acknowledge that My words are born of the Spirit of God? Would you recognize that My utterance can in no wise be associated with sorcery or magic?’ Tears flowed from my eyes as I heard Him speak these words. All I was able to utter was this verse of the Qur’án: ‘O our Lord, with ourselves have we dealt unjustly: if Thou forgive us not and have not pity on us, we shall surely be of those who perish.’⁵⁷

Vahíd has fortunately left a vivid description (one of the few of its kind) of the way the Báb revealed and recorded His majestic Words. Here is again Vahíd’s own description of the event:

How am I to describe this scene of inexpressible majesty? Verses streamed from His pen with a rapidity that was truly astounding. The incredible swiftness of His Writing, the soft and gently murmur of His voice, and the stupendous force of His style, amazed and bewildered me. He continued until the entire commentary of the Súrih was completed. He then laid down His pen and asked for tea. Soon after, He began to read it aloud in my presence. My heart leaped madly as I heard Him pour out, in accents of unutterable sweetness, those treasures enshrined in that sublime commentary. I was so entranced by its beauty that three times over I was on the verge of fainting. He sought to revive my failing strength with a few drops of

rosewater which He caused to be sprinkled on my face. This restored my vigor and enabled me to follow His reading to the end.⁵⁸

When the recital had come to a close, the Báb arose to depart, leaving His guest to the care of His uncle. In accordance with the instructions of the Báb, Vahíd was to remain as a guest until he completed, with the help of one of the Báb's disciples, the copy of the newly revealed commentary. Thus the two of them undertook the project, devoting "three days and three nights to complete it." They verified all the references "and found them to be entirely accurate."

Thus took place the spiritual transformation of one of the most learned men of all times at the hand of a humble Youth who had never been exposed to the knowledge current among His contemporaries. Vahíd at last had attained, both as a result of his own sincere efforts as well as the divine Confirmations, a state of absolute certitude and unswerving faith to which he later referred: "Such was the state of certitude to which I had attained that if all the powers of the earth were to be leagued against me they would be powerless to shake my confidence in the greatness of His cause."⁵⁹

He who had resolved to refute the arguments of an obscure Youth, "to induce Him to abandon His ideas, and to conduct Him to Tihrán as an evidence of the ascendancy he had achieved over Him, was made to feel, as he himself later acknowledged, as 'lowly as the dust beneath His feet.'⁶⁰ The dramatic story of Vahíd's remaining years is beyond the scope of this book. Briefly, he preferred not to return to the Sháh, "contenting himself with a mere written report to the Court." Following this he arose to serve the new Cause—a Cause to which he finally offered his very life with the utmost courage and devotion. Vahíd's heroic example is only one of hundreds from the ranks of the learned bartering the gift of their lives for truth, yet it should suffice in itself to attest to the transforming and transcendent power of a divine Manifestation over the hearts and minds of the people. We are not living at the time of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh to witness their majestic Charm, the influence

of their all-encompassing Will, the regenerating power of their creative and pervasive Words. Yet we can see the evidence of their dominion over a century later on the hearts and minds of millions.

What Does the Future Hold?

When a seed is adapted to its surroundings, it germinates and flourishes. Likewise, when a Revelation remains in touch with time, it inevitably expands and spreads. Within the last century the world has steadily moved in the direction foreseen by Bahá'u'lláh. And as the world has drastically changed, the need for a universal Revelation such as the Bahá'í Faith has continued to grow more intense. The prevailing mood of our time indeed points to an ever-increasing need for a new religion based on supranational ideals and objectives, and adapted to the needs of an ever-changing world; a Universal Faith that rises above national, racial, or class barriers; a System of Beliefs based on oneness of God, oneness of religion, and oneness of man; a Supreme Cause for whose sake people may sacrifice their lesser loyalties for the good of all; a divine Voice that speaks with authority; a Unifying and Dynamic Force that can liberate human race from bondage to dogmatism and materialism and set them free from selfishness, isolation, alienation, doubt, and despair. As a keen observer has testified, "The need for a Faith based on Bahá'í ideals is so great that even if Bahá'u'lláh had not come to bring it, man would out of necessity be forced to create one."

In terms of growth or ultimate victory, the chief determinant is the relevance of the Message, and not the number of the followers or supporters involved. If a seed is healthy, it sprouts and spreads, otherwise it decays and perishes. In the beginning, Jesus had only eleven devoted disciples and at His crucifixion, by some estimates, no more than one hundred and twenty. In the next three centuries, Christianity made no major advances, continuing to be regarded as "an obscure Oriental sect." And then when the time ripened, it began to expand and spread swiftly and decisively, eventually

encompassing the globe and dominating the hearts and minds of millions.

For us who have only witnessed the triumph and splendor of Christendom, it seems difficult to conceive a time when the handful of the Christians did not even dare to divulge or profess their Faith. Every Revelation begins with a first believer, and then gradually grows and spreads, eventually establishing its roots in the hearts and minds of millions. It rises to the stage of maturity or full fruition, and then descends to decay and decline, following a course similar to the life cycle of the seed. In fact cycles dominate and pervade all creation; nothing from the humblest and smallest atoms to the mightiest and most luminous stars can escape their pervasive and all-encompassing dominion.

Now it is just the beginning of a new Day. The Dawn has broken, the Morning is near. Only those with keen sight and broad vision can see and find the way.

This is the plan prepared for the whole earth, this is the hand stretched out over all the nations. For the Lord of Hosts has prepared his plan: who shall frustrate? His is the hand stretched out, and who shall turn it back?

Isaiah 14:26-27 NEB

Does the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh meet the requirement of endurance? Is His Plant a heavenly Plant capable of growing deep into the hearts and withstanding the test of time? The evidence accumulated over a century seems to indicate that no opposing force or oppressive power has been able to slow down, however slightly, the accelerating growth and expansion of His Faith. His Cause has faced and passed every conceivable test of endurance.

Endurance is only one of the major signs of divine Revelation. In conjunction with the other proofs, it constitutes an undeniable clue to the unseen and superior powers of a supreme Savior manifesting God to humans and guiding humans to their eventual Destiny.

5

He Will Show You Things to Come

John 16:13

I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. John 13:19 NIV

The Test of the Knowledge of Future

Among the distinct gift bestowed upon the great Saviors is the capacity to break through the barrier of time and glance upon the future. The dimension of time stands as a dark veil between man and his destiny. The great Saviors can break through the veil and foresee the panorama of events unrolling thousands of years distant.

Having knowledge of the “things to come” is apparent in every aspect of the Saviors’ lives; their entire teachings as well as their whole mode of living indicate capacities that defy time. That they succeed in establishing new civilizations lasting for centuries is in itself distinct evidence of their foreview of the things to come. Without such knowledge they could not foresee and meet the changing needs of the future generations.

Their willingness to welcome adversities is further evidence of their ability to foresee the glorious future in store for them. They can gaze beyond the gloom and afflictions of earthly life and see the magnificent Mansions rising with infinite glory and grandeur throughout all the worlds of God. “In my Father’s house are many mansions,” was Christ’s confirmation that God’s creation extends

beyond that experienced by humans for a few fleeting moments on this earthly plane. Bahá'u'lláh writes:

Consider, therefore, how the generality of mankind, whatever their beliefs or theories, have recognized the excellence, and admitted the superiority, of these Prophets of God. These Gems of Detachment are acclaimed by some as the embodiments of wisdom, while others believe them to be the mouthpiece of God Himself. How could such Souls have consented to surrender themselves unto their enemies if they believed all the worlds of God to have been reduced to this earthly life? Would they have willingly suffered such afflictions and torments as no man hath ever experienced or witnessed?⁶¹

But the great Messengers never make indiscriminate use of such God-given gifts bestowed upon them. If they wished for a moment to make the entire human race perfectly dedicated and devoted believers, it would certainly be within their powers to do so. But such an act would deviate from divine Wisdom; humans, the most noble of all beings, must partake of the freedom bestowed upon them. The great Saviors unveil glimpses of the future simply to guide the humankind toward their glorious and exalted destiny. This is done as a sign of mercy and love from God to humans.

Thus from a purely logical perspective, the ascendancy of the divine Manifestations over time is in itself clear evidence of their superiority over others. What a difference between he who knows not what the world has in store for him, and He who knows what it is in store for the world!

Evidence from the Scriptures

As it was true with the other tests or measures of validity, the test of the ascendancy of the divine Manifestations over time not only enjoys logical support but the support of the sacred scriptures as well. In answer to the questions, “How shall we recognize a word that the Lord has not uttered?” Moses replied:

When the word spoken by the prophet in the name of the Lord is not fulfilled and does not come true, it is not a word spoken by the Lord. The prophet has spoken presumptuously; do not hold him in awe. Deuteronomy 18:22 NEB

The Book of Isaiah testifies further to this same test of validity, the same sign of supremacy and grandeur:

Come, open your plea, says the Lord, present your case, says Jacob's King; let them come forward, these idols, let them foretell the future. Let them declare the meaning of past events that we may give our minds to it; let them predict things that are to be that we may know their outcome. Declare what will happen hereafter; then we shall know you are gods.

Isaiah 41:21-23 NEB

It was in relation to this same measure or mark of distinction (known to the Jews) that Jesus assured the people saying:

I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. John 13:19 NIV

As you may have noted, the words of Isaiah and Jesus are very similar. Here they are once again:

Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know you are gods. Isaiah 41:23 NIV

I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. John 13:19 NIV

The ability to predict "the things that are coming" is specified by Jesus as a sign of His own validity on His return as the Spirit of Truth:

There is still much that I could say to you, but the burden would be too great for you now. However, when he comes who is the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all truth...he will make known to you the things that are coming. John 16:12-14 NEB

Application of the Test of “the Knowledge of Future” to Bahá’u’lláh

Did the previous Messengers prove to have knowledge of the things to come? A great deal of evidence indicates that indeed they did. Volumes I and II of this work contain some of the most remarkable prophecies made by great Messengers concerning the advent of Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá’u’lláh.

What about Bahá’u’lláh? Did He speak of the things to come? Did He unveil glimpses of the future, and did His predictions come to pass? Probably the most dramatic evidence of Bahá’u’lláh’s foreview of the future appears in His Tablets (letters) to the ruling monarchs and the religious leaders of His day. These Tablets contain not only undeniable proof of Bahá’u’lláh’s knowledge of the future, but also His most emphatic words on His Mission as the supreme Savior and Redeemer of the world. Sent from behind the prison walls by a Prisoner to the kings, these Tablets likewise contain counsels, pleas, and warnings. The monarchs are asked to heed the cause of justice and to investigate the claims of the new Manifestation. They are further warned of the consequences of their denial of the divine Call. Here is a passage containing Bahá’u’lláh’s warning to the kings in general:

If ye pay no heed unto the counsels which, in peerless and unequivocal language, We have revealed in this Tablet, Divine chastisement shall assail you from every direction, and the sentence of His justice shall be pronounced against you. On that day ye shall have no power to resist Him, and shall recognize your own impotence. Have mercy on yourselves and on those beneath you, and judge ye between them according to the precepts prescribed by God in His most holy and exalted Tablet...⁶²

Let us now review briefly the names and narratives of some of those addressed by Bahá’u’lláh.

Násiri'd-Dín Sháh

Among those receiving Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets was Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, the absolute and despotic sovereign of Persia, who had imprisoned and executed the Báb, imprisoned and exiled Bahá'u'lláh, and massacred many thousands of their followers. In His Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh addresses the king in the most cordial language, admonishing him to adorn his crown with justice and to restore the rights of the oppressed and the poor. He is guided again and again to seek an enduring sovereignty in the exalted and glorious Kingdom of Heaven, and not to set his heart upon the fleeting pomp and pride of a perishable and declining dominion. Bahá'u'lláh further urges him to institute an assemblage attended by the religious leaders or scholars as well as the Sháh himself in which His Cause may be assayed or examined and the proofs of His Claim put to the test. In the following passage Bahá'u'lláh refers to such a proposal and its outcome:

O thou who speakest in My Name! Consider the people and the things they have wrought in My days. We revealed unto one of the rulers that which overpowereth all the dwellers of the earth, and requested him to bring Us face to face with the learned men of this age, that We might set forth for him the testimony of God, His proofs, His glory and His majesty; and naught did We intend thereby but the highest good. However, he committed that which hath caused the inmates of the cities of justice and equity to lament. Thus hath judgement been given between Me and him. Verily thy Lord is the Ordainer, the All-Informed.⁶³

Instead of investigating the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh or responding to His pleas and counsels, Násiri'd-Dín Sháh persisted in his perversity, continuing his persecution of the believers. A seventeen-year-old youth named Badí, who had walked alone for months to carry the Tablet to the king, was subjected to intense interrogation and torture, that he might reveal the names or whereabouts of his companions. The youth responded merely by acquiescent silence. The atrocious executioners eventually embarked on marking his frail body with burning bars of fire, hoping that he might at last break the barrier of sustained silence.

To their astonishment, the youth did not even sigh or bemoan; he kept his calm, remaining detached from the ongoing and agonizing ordeal. An unusual and rare picture shows him in complete serenity and “radiant acquiescence” in the face of the ferocious and astonished executioners and the burning bowl of fire. Such an endurance was bestowed on Badí by Bahá’u’lláh when He selected him from amongst many volunteers seeking the honor and privilege of embarking upon an exceedingly perilous mission—delivering the divine Tablet to a most cruel king.

Because of Náṣiri’-d-Dín Sháh’s refusal to respond to the divine Counsels, the sentence of justice pronounced against him at last was executed. The despotic monarch of might and majesty succumbed to the bullet of an assassin “on the eve of a jubilee” celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of his reign—“which, as ushering in a new era, was to have been celebrated with the most elaborate magnificence, and was to go down in history as the greatest day in the annals of the Persian nation.”⁶⁴

Sultán ‘Abdu’l-‘Azíz

Among the sovereigns addressed by Bahá’u’lláh was Sultán ‘Abdu’l-‘Azíz, the despotic ruler of the Ottoman Empire, under whose dominion Bahá’u’lláh remained a prisoner and an exile, enduring such adversities and afflictions as to be indescribable. Bahá’u’lláh writes:

By the righteousness of God! The tribulations We have sustained are such that any pen that recounteth them cannot but be overwhelmed with anguish. No one of them that truly believe and uphold the unity of God can bear the burden of their recital. So great have been Our sufferings that even the eyes of Our enemies have wept over Us, and beyond them those of every discerning person.⁶⁵

Here are a few passages from Bahá’u’lláh’s Tablet addressed to ‘Abdu’l-‘Azíz:

Return, then, and cleave wholly unto God, and cleanse thine heart from the world and all its vanities, and suffer not the love of any stranger to enter and dwell therein. Not until thou

dost purify thine heart from every trace of such love can the brightness of the light of God shed its radiance upon it, for to none hath God given more than one heart. This, verily, hath been decreed and written down in His ancient Book. And as the human heart, as fashioned by God, is one and undivided, it behoveth thee to take heed that its affections be, also, one and undivided. Cleave thou, therefore, with the whole affection of thine heart, unto His love, and withdraw it from the love of any one besides Him, that He may aid thee to immerse thyself in the ocean of His unity, and enable thee to become a true upholder of His oneness. God is My witness. My sole purpose in revealing to thee these words is to sanctify thee from the transitory things of the earth, and aid thee to enter the realm of everlasting glory, that thou mayest, by the leave of God, be of them that abide and rule therein.⁶⁶

Bahá'u'lláh's words had no impact on the Sultan's negligence of the cause of justice. Like Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, instead of investigating the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, he preferred to persecute Him. His downfall occurred in 1867 when he was deposed and later assassinated.

Napoleon III

Napoleon III, "the foremost monarch of his day," was another recipient of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets. Here are a few passages from the Tablet addressed to him:

Know of a truth that your subjects are God's trust amongst you. Watch ye, therefore, over them as ye watch over your own selves. Beware that ye allow not wolves to become the shepherds of the fold, or pride and conceit to deter you from turning unto the poor and the desolate. Arise thou, in My name, above the horizon of renunciation, and set, then, thy face towards the Kingdom, at the bidding of thy Lord, the Lord of strength and of might.

Adorn the body of Thy kingdom with the raiment of My name, and arise, then, to teach My Cause. Better is this for thee than that which thou possessest. God will, thereby, exalt thy name among all the kings. Potent is He over all things. Walk thou

amongst men in the name of God, and by the power of His might, that thou mayest show forth His signs amidst the peoples of the earth....

...Exultest thou over the treasures thou dost possess, knowing they shall perish? Rejoicest thou in that thou rulest a span of earth, when the whole world, in the estimation of the people of Bahá, is worth as much as the black in the eye of a dead ant? Abandon it unto such as have set their affections upon it, and turn thou unto Him Who is the Desire of the world. Whither are gone the proud and their palaces? Gaze thou into their tombs, that thou mayest profit by this example, inasmuch as We made it a lesson unto every beholder. Were the breezes of Revelation to seize thee, thou wouldst flee the world, and turn unto the Kingdom, and wouldst expend all thou possessest, that thou mayest draw nigh unto this sublime Vision.⁶⁷

Like other despotic sovereigns, Napoleon preferred to ignore the divine Call. He is “reported to have contemptuously flung down the Tablet sent to him.” Because of such a disdainful pride, the sentence of justice pronounced against him as swift and severe. For Bahá’u’lláh sent him a second Tablet, predicting his downfall in these dire and portentous Words:

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. Then wilt thou know how thou hast plainly erred. Commotions shall seize all the people in that land, unless thou arisest to help this Cause, and followest Him Who is the Spirit of God (Jesus Christ) in this, the Straight Path. Hath thy pomp made thee proud? By My Life! It shall not endure; nay, it shall soon pass away, unless thou holdest fast by this firm Cord. We see abasement hastening after thee, whilst thou art of the heedless. It behoveth thee when thou hearest His Voice calling from the seat of glory to cast away all that thou possessest, and cry out: ‘Here am I, O Lord of all that is in heaven and all that is on earth!’⁶⁸

Napoleon’s reign soon came to an abrupt end when, contrary to the expectations, he was defeated by William I of Germany in the battle of Sedan, stripped of his power, and exiled for the rest

of his days. Napoleon's defeat is regarded as one of the most astonishing encounters in the whole history of warfare.

William I

Because of his victory over Napoleon "the foremost monarch" of the time, William I of Germany grew arrogant, submitting his self to overwhelming pride and conceit. Bahá'u'lláh summoned him to the divine Kingdom, admonishing and urging him not to allow his earthly sovereignty and splendor to deprive him of everlasting and lofty Dominion.

Here are some of Bahá'u'lláh's Words addressed to him:

O King of Berlin! Give ear unto the Voice calling from this manifest Temple: Verily, there is none other God but Me, the Everlasting, the Peerless, the Ancient of Days. Take heed lest pride debar thee from recognizing the Dayspring of Divine Revelation, lest earthly desires shut thee out, as by a veil, from the Lord of the Throne above and of the earth below. Thus counselleth thee the Pen of the Most High. He, verily, is the Most Gracious, the All-Bountiful. Do thou remember the one whose power transcended thy power (Napoleon III), and whose station excelled thy station. Where is he? Whither are gone the things he possessed? Take warning, and be not of them that are fast asleep. He it was who cast the Tablet of God behind him, when We made known unto him what the hosts of tyranny had caused Us to suffer. Wherefore, disgrace assailed him from all sides, and he went down to dust in great loss. Think deeply, O King, concerning him, and concerning them who, like unto thee, have conquered cities and ruled over men. The All-Merciful brought them down from their palaces to their graves. Be warned, be of them who reflect... O banks of the Rhine! We have seen you covered with gore, inasmuch as the swords of retribution were drawn against you; and you shall have another turn. And We hear the lamentations of Berlin, though she be today in conspicuous glory.⁶⁹

Again, as in other cases, heedlessness to the divine Call culminated in the downfall of a conspicuous glory and the disintegration of a glorious empire. In a subsequent war between Germany and

France, in spite of overwhelming odds against France, Germany encountered a decisive defeat. “William I’s grandson was defeated and abdicated. A republic was established whose government had no option but to acquiesce in a Peace Treaty of oppressive severity. A dictatorship, whose doctrines ran counter to all that is best in man, replaced it, leading inevitably to a second war and a second defeat.”⁷⁰

Francis Joseph

Francis Joseph, emperor of Austria and king of Hungary, was similarly addressed by Bahá’u’lláh. Like other monarchs, he preferred to ignore the divine Call. He was reproved “for having neglected his manifest duty to inquire about Bahá’u’lláh during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land.”⁷¹

O Emperor of Austria! He who is the Dayspring of God’s Light dwelt in the prison of ‘Akká, at the time when thou didst set forth to visit the Aqsa Mosque (Jerusalem). Thou passed Him by, and inquired not about Him, by Whom every house is exalted, and every lofty gate unlocked. We, verily, made it (Jerusalem) a place whereunto the world should turn, that they might remember Me, and yet thou hast rejected Him Who is the Object of this remembrance, when He appeared with the Kingdom of God, thy Lord and the Lord of the worlds. We have been with thee at all times, and found thee clinging unto the Branch and heedless of the Root. Thy Lord, verily, is a witness unto what I say. We grieved to see thee circle round Our Name, whilst unaware of Us, though We were before thy face. Open thine eyes, that thou mayest behold this glorious Vision, and recognize Him Whom thou invokest in the daytime and in the night-season, and gaze on the Light that shineth above this luminous Horizon.⁷²

From the time Bahá’u’lláh’s words were revealed, afflictions assailed the emperor from every direction. He was eventually engulfed by so many misfortunes and tragedies that:

His reign came to be regarded as one unsurpassed by any other reign in the calamities it inflicted upon the nation. His brother, Maximilian, was put to death in Mexico; the Crown

Prince Rudolph perished in ignominious circumstances; the Empress was assassinated; Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife were murdered in Serajevo; the “ramshackle empire” itself disintegrated, was carved up, and a shrunken republic was set up on the ruins of a vanished Holy Roman Empire—a republic which, after a brief and precarious existence, was blotted out from the political map of Europe.⁷³

Alexander II

Alexander II, “the all-powerful Czar of Russia,” was cautioned by Bahá’u’lláh not to allow his sovereignty to prevent him from recognizing “the Supreme Sovereign.”⁷⁴ Here are some of Bahá’u’lláh’s words addressed to him:

He, verily, is come with His Kingdom, and all the atoms cry aloud: ‘Lo! The Lord is come in His great majesty!’ He Who is the Father is come, and the Son (Jesus), in the holy vale, crieth out: ‘Here am I, here am I, O Lord, My God!’ whilst Sinai circleth round the House, and the Burning Bush calleth aloud: ‘The All-Bounteous is come mounted upon the clouds! Blessed is he that draweth nigh unto Him, and woe betide them that are far away.’

Arise thou amongst men in the name of this all-compelling Cause, and summon, then, the nations unto God, the Exalted, the Great. Be thou not of them who called upon God by one of His names, but who, when He Who is the Object of all names appeared, denied Him and turned aside from Him, and, in the end, pronounced sentence against Him with manifest injustice.⁷⁵

And again:

By My Life! Couldst thou but know the things sent down by My Pen, and discover the treasures of My Cause, and the pearls of My mysteries which lie hid in the seas of My names and in the goblets of My words, thou wouldst, in thy love for My name, and in thy longing for My glorious and sublime Kingdom, lay down thy life in My path. Know thou that though My body be beneath the swords of My foes, and My limbs be beset with incalculable afflictions, yet My spirit is

filled with a gladness with which all the joys of the earth can never compare.⁷⁶

The Czar likewise chose to follow the example of other sovereigns, remaining oblivious to the divine Summons and preoccupied with his earthly dominion. His reign eventually came to an end at the hand of an assassin.

Pope Pius IX

Pope Pius IX was addressed by Bahá'u'lláh in these words:

O Pope! Rend the veils asunder. He Who is the Lord of Lords is come overshadowed with clouds, and the decree hath been fulfilled by God, the Almighty, the Unrestrained... He, verily, hath again come down from Heaven even as He came down from it the first time. Beware that thou dispute not with Him even as the Pharisees disputed with Him (Jesus) without a clear token or proof. On His right hand flow the living waters of grace, and on His left the choice Wine of justice, whilst before Him march the angels of Paradise, bearing the banners of His signs. Beware lest any name debar thee from God, the Creator of earth and heaven. Leave thou the world behind thee, and turn towards thy Lord, through Whom the whole earth hath been illumined.⁷⁷

Like many other religious leaders, the Pope preferred to ignore the summons of Bahá'u'lláh. And because of this he had to face and endure exceedingly humiliating encounters and events. For after King Victor Emmanuel's seizure of Rome, he was:

...deprived by from of virtually the whole of that temporal power which Bahá'u'lláh had advised him to renounce voluntarily. His formal acknowledgment of the Kingdom of the Italy by the recent Lateran Treaty sealed this resignation of sovereignty.⁷⁸

Queen Victoria

Among the monarchs addressed by Bahá'u'lláh was Queen Victoria, the renowned sovereign of the British Empire, who, unlike her contemporaries, received praise for some of the humanitarian and democratic measures she had adopted. She

was hailed for abolishing slavery and for entrusting “the reins of counsel into the hands of the representatives of the people.” Because of these two highly meritorious acts, she became the recipient of divine favors. In relation to her endeavors to abolish slavery, Bahá’u’lláh wrote:

This, verily, is what God hath enjoined in this wondrous Revelation. God hath, truly, destined a reward for thee, because of this.⁷⁹

In praise of her constitutional government, Bahá’u’lláh states:

Thou, indeed, hast done well, for thereby the foundations of the edifice of thine affairs will be strengthened, and the hearts of all that are beneath thy shadow, whether high or low, will be tranquillized.⁸⁰

It is said that on reading Bahá’u’lláh’s Tablet, she remarked: “If this is of God, it will endure; if not, it can do no harm.”

Queen Victoria’s concern for the people and her sincerity in responding to Bahá’u’lláh’s Call guarded her from the impending afflictions awaiting other sovereigns of her day. “The reward that God had destined for her” during her earthly reign was realized and bestowed upon her by saving both her sovereignty and dynasty. For among all the sovereigns addressed by Bahá’u’lláh, she was the only one to escape divine chastisement and her dynasty the only one to endure and continue to this day.

The reward destined for her, and the seed of sincerity she had sown, came to full fruition when her granddaughter, Queen Marie of Rumania, became the first sovereign to respond to Bahá’u’lláh’s Call and to embrace His Cause with the greatest devotion, fervor, and courage.

In addition to the specific predictions cited, Bahá’u’lláh also spoke of the general decline of the power assumed by both the kings and the religious leaders:

From two ranks amongst men power hath been seized: kings and ecclesiastics.⁸¹

Ever since these prophetic and portentous Words were uttered the loss of power on the part of both the sovereigns and the

religious leaders of the world has been accelerating on an unprecedented scale.

The punishment imposed on the preceding leaders was a direct result of their refusal to respond to Bahá'u'lláh's call to unity and to the restructuring of human society. Their acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh's counsels could have completely altered the course of history.

That the kings and “the host of heaven” would refuse to heed the Lord of Hosts, and that they would consequently receive the divine chastisement, are themselves prophecies foretold by the Prophets of the past:

On that day the Lord will punish the host of heaven in heaven,
and on earth the kings of the earth. Isaiah 24:21 NEB

“The host of heaven” refers to the religious leaders. “Heaven” symbolizes religion, and its “hosts” or “stars” are the religious leaders. This is in harmony with Jesus' prediction that at His coming the stars shall fall. The symbolism of the sun, the stars, and the moon were explained in detail in the third volume.

Conclusion

Did Bahá'u'lláh “speak in the name of the Lord?” And did He “show us what shall happen,” so that when they have come to pass, we “may believe that he is He?” Bahá'u'lláh's predictions of the downfall of the monarchs ought to be regarded as one of the most dramatic events in the religious annals of the world. These predictions were made at a time when these rulers stood at the height of their power and glory. No one would have even dreamed that so many contemporary sovereigns—so powerful, so proud—would wither and fall like the leaves in the fall, one after the other. It is even more dramatic that all the dynasties under which the despotic rulers reigned soon disintegrated. As stated, the Queen of England was the only sovereign to guard her cherished sovereignty and dynasty from the impending and ravaging waves of affliction by refusing to ride the towering and treacherous tides of the time.

The predictions made by Bahá'u'lláh appeared, at the time, so impossible and so incredible that they puzzled, on the one hand, His devoted disciples, and pleased on the other, His adversaries, who felt that after many years of waiting and searching they had at last found an effective weapon against Him, not knowing that their weapon would in due season be turned against them. Thus before giving Time a little chance to bring Bahá'u'lláh's Vision of the future into fruition, they hurried to publish some of His Tablets. The propagation of these predictions by Bahá'u'lláh's adversaries (prior to their fulfillment) proved to be a great asset to the new Revelation.

Further evidence of Bahá'u'lláh's knowledge of the future could be given, but the examples cited should suffice to indicate that He indeed was able to "show us what shall happen," and to "declare us things to come."

As with the other evidences presented, knowledge of the future is only part of the whole Prophetic Profile. In conjunction with the other proofs it provides us with one more clue to the supreme powers of the divine Manifestations.

6

I AM Has Sent Me Unto You^{*}

Exodus 3:14

I am not myself the source of the words I speak to you: It is the Father who dwells in me doing his own work.

John 14:10 NEB

This is how we may recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit which acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit which does not thus acknowledge Jesus is not from God.

I John 4:2-3 NEB

This chapter portrays the links that bind the Messengers to God and to each other. Specifically it examines:

- The necessity of making the Claim to divine Revelation.
- The dependence of the Messengers on their Creator and their utter humility before Him.
- The Messengers' acknowledgment and glorification of other Messengers, whether of the past or future.
- Glorification of Jesus by Muhammad.
- Glorification of Jesus by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.
- God adored as the source of all glory.

* In the above passage "I AM" is synonymous with God.

The Necessity of Making the Claim to Divine Revelation

The first thing a Savior does is to proclaim the new Mission accorded to Him. He states clearly and emphatically that He has been made the channel of divine Inspiration, the Manifestation of God's Knowledge, a spiritual Educator to humanity. And He repeats His claim again and again, without ever making the slightest compromise, even in the face of torture and death:

By God! Troubles have failed to unnerve Me, and the repudiation of the divines hath been powerless to weaken Me. I have spoken, and still speak forth before the face of men: "The door of grace hath been unlocked and He Who is the Dayspring of Justice is come with perspicuous signs and evident testimonies, from God, the Lord of strength and of might!"⁸² Bahá'u'lláh

The courage to make the claim and the persistence in holding on to it even unto death is an essential requirement of being a divine Messenger.

Here is how Jesus proclaimed His Mission:

...I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14:6

The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh declared their Mission hundreds of times and in the most emphatic terms. Here is a brief passage from Bahá'u'lláh:

Followers of the Gospel... behold the gates of heaven are flung open. He that had ascended unto it is now come. Give ear to His voice calling aloud over land and sea, announcing to all mankind the advent of this Revelation—a Revelation through the agency of which the Tongue of Grandeur is now proclaiming: "Lo, the sacred Pledge hath been fulfilled, for He, the Promised One, is come!" The voice of the Son of Man is calling aloud from the sacred vale: "Here am I, here am I, O God my God!"... whilst from the Burning Bush breaketh forth the cry: "Lo, the Desire of the world is made manifest in His

transcendent glory!” The Father hath come. That which ye were promised in the Kingdom of God is fulfilled. This is the Word which the Son veiled when He said to those around Him that at that time they could not bear it...Verily the Spirit of Truth is come to guide you unto all truth...He is the One Who glorified the Son and exalted His Cause...The Comforter Whose advent all the scriptures have promised is now come that He may reveal unto you all knowledge and wisdom. Seek Him over the entire surface of the earth, haply ye may find Him⁸³

And here is an excerpt from the Báb’s words:

Verily this is none other than the sovereign Truth; it is the Path which God hath laid out for all that are in heaven and on earth. Let him then who will, take for himself the right path unto his Lord. Verily this is the true Faith of God, and sufficient witness are God and such as are endowed with the knowledge of the Book. This is indeed the eternal Truth which God, the Ancient of Days, hath revealed unto His omnipotent Word—He Who hath been raised up from the midst of the Burning Bush. This is the Mystery which hath been hidden from all that are in heaven and on earth, and in this wondrous Revelation it hath, in very truth, been set forth in the Mother Book by the hand of God, the Exalted.⁸⁴

Dependence on the Divine

Among the distinct features of the claim of a Savior is His insistence that His Message comes not from Himself but from the Ruler and Sustainer of the universe, that He speaks not from His own fancies but from the Wisdom of the All-Knowing, that He moves not by His own wish but by the Will of the Lord, “even as the stirring of a leaf by a breeze.”

The Saviors’ dependence on the Creator as their Guide and Sustainer is clearly indicated in their distinct and superior thoughts and deeds. Whereas it is man’s way to compromise, to accommodate, and to resort to any accessible or workable (even

if unjustified) means or methods—the forces of fame and fortune, favoritism, false commitments—to attain the desired ends or objectives; it is the Saviors' way to utterly refrain from any means, no matter how effective, if it fails to stand up to their standards.

The divine Manifestations pride themselves on poverty, not wealth or power; they seek the companionship of the poor and the lowly, not the pomp and glory of the rich and the exalted. Their support and sustenance are the divine Favors and their riches absolute and unconditional trust in their Lord and Creator, the ultimate and the exalted Source of their Being. They fear not the scourge and the might of the oppressors, for they depend on the All-Powerful and rely on the All-Glorious. They might seem lowly and humble, and to the insensitive eyes, destitute and helpless, but theirs are the power and glory beyond all human estimation.

Another evidence further attesting to their oneness of origin and their dependence on the divine is the essential harmony found in their teachings. The divine Manifestations appear centuries and ages apart and in diverse and sometimes conflicting cultures, yet their Words and their Wisdom unfold and manifest the same identical but evolving Truths. Indeed the Scriptures of the world seem like chapters of an ever-evolving Book recorded progressively and periodically by the same sovereign Author.

Such an identity of purpose revealed again and again and over centuries and ages by Messengers representing diverse cultural, religious, racial, and family backgrounds indicates, to the discerning eyes, their absolute oneness and the common Source from which they draw their profound Wisdom and Knowledge. Even their language testifies to their common origin as well as their uniqueness and distinction.

The divine Messengers may indeed be regarded as Realities attached to one Reality, shining Mirrors reflecting the same luminous Light, Receivers dependent upon the same Sovereign and Bounteous Lord.

Evidence from the Past Scriptures

In the Old Testament we find God asking Moses to “say unto the children of Israel,” that:

The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever...
Exodus 3:15

We find the same message in the words of Jesus:

I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself commanded me what to say and how to speak. I know that his commands are eternal life. What the Father has said to me, therefore—that is what I speak.

John 12:49-50 NEB

And again:

...I do nothing on my own authority, but in all that I say, I have been taught by my Father.
John 8:28 NEB

We find the same message revealed also in the Qur’án:

Only what is revealed to me do I follow.
Qur’án 53:4

The Koran is no other than a revelation revealed to him...
Qur’án 53:4

In the following prophecy Jesus predicts that “speaking not of one’s own authority” will continue to be practiced by the Spirit of Truth, a designation used by Him to refer to Himself, on His return:

There is still much that I could say to you, but the burden would be too great for you now. However, when he comes who is the Spirit of truth, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but will tell only what he hears...
John 16:12-13 NEB

Evidence from the Bahá'í Scriptures

Jesus' prophetic words were indeed realized by the many references Bahá'u'lláh made to God, His Sustainer and Creator. Here is a passage from Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to the king of Persia:

O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing... 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. Can any one speak forth of his own accord that for which all men, both high and low, will protest against him? Nay, by Him Who taught the Pen the eternal mysteries, save him whom the grace of the Almighty, the All-Powerful, hath strengthened.⁸⁵

This is another passage with a similar theme:

God is My witness, O people! I was asleep on My couch, when lo, the Breeze of God wafting over Me roused Me from My slumber. His quickening Spirit revived Me, and My tongue was unloosed to voice His Call. Accuse Me not of having transgressed against God. Behold Me, not with your eyes but with Mine. Thus admonisheth you He Who is the Gracious, the All-Knowing. Think ye, O people, that I hold within My grasp the control of God's ultimate Will and Purpose? Far be it from Me to advance such claim. To this I testify before God, the Almighty, the Exalted, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Had the ultimate destiny of God's

Faith been in Mine hands, I would have never consented, even though for one moment, to manifest Myself unto you, nor would I have allowed one word to fall from My lips. Of this God Himself is, verily, a witness.⁸⁶

And this is still another passage testifying to Bahá'u'lláh's dependence on the divine:

Had it been in my power, I would have, under no circumstances, consented to distinguish myself amongst men, for the Name I bear utterly disdaineth to associate itself with this generation whose tongues are sullied and whose hearts are false. And whenever I chose to hold my peace and be still, lo, the voice of the Holy Ghost, standing on my right hand, aroused me, and the Supreme Spirit appeared before my face, and Gabriel overshadowed me, and the Spirit of Glory stirred within my bosom, bidding me arise and break my silence. If your hearing be purged and your ears be attentive, ye will assuredly perceive that every limb of my body, nay all the atoms of my being, proclaim and bear witness to this call: "God, besides Whom is none other God, and He, Whose beauty is now manifest, is the reflection of His glory unto all that are in heaven and on earth."⁸⁷

God Adored as the Source of all Glory

The Words of divine Manifestations reflect unreservedly and unconditionally their pure and enduring love for and their absolute and unswerving loyalty to their Lord and Creator, for they utterly humble themselves before Him, seeking His Guidance and Inspiration and wishing to follow *His* command, never *their own* will or desire. Here are the words of Jesus:

...God is the source of my being, and from him I come.

John 8:42 NEB

The Messenger's dependence on God and His selflessness and utter humility before Him is a sign of His sincerity. For he who

is not sincere aims at honoring himself. The following words of Jesus are indeed illuminating:

When the festival was already half over, Jesus went up to the temple and began to teach. The Jews were astonished: ‘How is it,’ they said, ‘that this untrained man has such learning?’ Jesus replies, ‘The teaching that I give is not my own; it is the teaching of him who sent me. Whoever has the will to do the will of God shall know whether my teaching comes from him or is merely my own. Anyone whose teaching is merely his own, aims at honor for himself. But if a man aims at the honor of him who sent him he is sincere, and there is nothing false in him.

John 7:14-18 NEB

Let us apply the preceding test to Bahá’u’lláh, let us see if He aimed at honoring Himself or honoring Him who sent Him.

In unnumbered prayers Bahá’u’lláh glorifies God and expresses His utter humility before Him. These are two examples:

Lauded and glorified art Thou, O Lord, my God! How can I make mention of Thee, assured as I am that no tongue, however deep its wisdom, can befittingly magnify Thy name, nor can the bird of the human heart, however great its longing, ever hope to ascend into the heaven of Thy majesty and knowledge...

Exalted, immeasurably exalted, art Thou above the strivings of mortal man to unravel Thy mystery, to describe Thy glory, or even to hint at the nature of Thine Essence. For whatever such strivings may accomplish, they never can hope to transcend the limitations imposed upon Thy creatures, inasmuch as these efforts are actuated by Thy decree, and are begotten of Thine invention. The loftiest sentiments which the holiest of saints can express in praise of Thee, and the deepest wisdom which the most learned of men can utter in their attempts to comprehend Thy nature, all revolve around that Center which is wholly subjected to Thy sovereignty, Which adoreth Thy Beauty, and is propelled through the movement of Thy Pen.⁸⁸

Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God! Thou seest and knowest that I have called upon Thy servants to turn nowhere except

in the direction of Thy bestowals, and have bidden them observe naught save the things Thou didst prescribe in Thy Perspicuous Book, the Book which hath been sent down according to Thine inscrutable decree and irrevocable purpose.

I can utter no word, O my God, unless I be permitted by Thee, and can move in no direction until I obtain Thy sanction. It is Thou, O my God, Who hast called me into being through the power of Thy might, and hast endued me with Thy grace to manifest Thy Cause. Wherefore I have been subjected to such adversities that my tongue hath been hindered from extolling Thee and from magnifying Thy glory.

All praise be to Thee, O my God, for the things Thou didst ordain for me through Thy decree and by the power of Thy sovereignty. I beseech Thee that Thou wilt fortify both myself and them that love me in our love for Thee, and wilt keep us firm in Thy Cause. I swear by Thy might! O my God! Thy servant's shame is to be shut out as by a veil from Thee, and his glory is to know Thee. Armed with the power of Thy name nothing can ever hurt me, and with Thy love in my heart all the world's afflictions can in no wise alarm me...

Thou art, verily, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful.⁸⁹

Here are still other passages demonstrating Bahá'u'lláh's absolute dependence on the divine:

Say: My army is My reliance on God; My people, the force of My confidence in Him. My love is My standard, and My companion the remembrance of God, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Most Powerful, the All-Glorious, the Unconditioned.⁹⁰

Know ye that I am afraid of none except God. In none but Him have I placed My trust; to none will I cleave but Him, and wish for naught except the thing He hath wished for Me. This, indeed, is My heart's desire, did ye but know it. I have offered up My soul and My body as a sacrifice for God, the Lord of all worlds. Whoso hath known God shall know none but Him, and he that feareth God shall be afraid of no one except Him, though the powers of the whole earth rise up and be arrayed against him. I speak naught except at His

bidding, and follow not, through the power of God and His might, except His truth. He, verily, shall recompense the truthful.⁹¹

We find the Báb standing with the same selflessness and words of praise before the Creator and Sustainer of the universe:

Out of utter nothingness, O great and omnipotent Master, Thou hast, through the celestial potency of Thy might, brought me forth and raised me up to proclaim this Revelation. I have made none other but Thee my trust; I have clung to no will but Thy Will. Thou art, in truth, the All-Sufficing and behind Thee standeth the true God, He Who overshadoweth all things. Indeed sufficient unto Me is God, the Exalted, the Powerful, the Sustainer.⁹²

And again:

O concourse of light! By the righteousness of God, We speak not according to selfish desire, nor hath a single letter of this Book been revealed save by the leave of God, the Sovereign Truth.⁹³

Saviors Glorifying Other Saviors

The Saviors' unity or oneness of origin is expressed not only in their relationship to God but in their attitude toward their Peers as well. As they glorify and praise God as their supreme Lord and Sustainer, so do they honor and exalt their "witnesses" (Rev. 1:5), who testify to the truth of other Messengers. They communicate with each other in spirit without ever coming face to face.[✧] They appear ages apart, with no apparent connection, yet they speak as closely knit and utterly loyal and devoted Friends, working in complete harmony for one unifying and ennobling Purpose, without ever indicating the slightest displeasure, disrespect, competition, or envy toward one another.

[✧] In one instance, the Báb refers to a conversation held between Him and Jesus. See *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 63-64.

In the following passage Bahá'u'lláh confirms all the Messengers since the Dawn of Adam, the Inaugurator of the Adamic cycle:

Contemplate with thine inward eye the chain of successive Revelations that hath linked the Manifestation of Adam with that of the Bab. I testify before God that each one of these Manifestations hath been sent down through the operation of the Divine Will and Purpose, that each hath been the bearer of a specific Message, that each hath been entrusted with a divinely-revealed Book and been commissioned to unravel the mysteries of a mighty Tablet. The measure of the Revelation with which every one of them hath been identified had been definitely fore-ordained. This, verily, is a token of Our favor unto them, if ye be of those that comprehend this truth.⁹⁴

All the Manifestations are Mouthpieces of God, Spokesmen for the same Authority—who speak with one Voice. If we know “the Voice”—its distinct vibrations and intonations—we can never fail to recognize it, for it is unmistakably loud and clear. But if we just know the “echoes” and judge the Voice through its reverberations, we cannot but fail in our efforts. It is man’s way to compete, to criticize, to find fault, to envy, to belittle; it is the Savior’s way to glorify, to exalt, to affirm, to acclaim.

Not only do they affirm and honor the previous Manifestations, but the future ones as well. The covenant on the coming of “a prophet like unto Moses” is firmly made in the Old Testament (Deut. 18:18) and later confirmed in the Gospel (Acts 3:22). Here in the following passage Jesus refers to this well-established and confirmed covenant and rebukes the rejecting Jews for their failure to know or recognize their own Savior and Redeemer (Moses), who had uttered the promise:

If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say? John 5:46-47

The words of Jesus clearly indicate that if one truly knows the divine Call, he can recognize it no matter where, or from whom, it might originate. For the Voice is the same supreme Voice and the Call the same celestial Call, readily distinguishable from any other.

Glorification of Jesus by Muhammad

Islam is a link between Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith. We cannot reach a true understanding of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh without adequately understanding the Faith of the Arabian Messenger. Indeed a chain is as strong as its weakest link. Let us, therefore, see how Muhammad viewed Jesus.

As Jesus extolled Moses and attested to His truth, so did He foretell the coming of other Saviors who would in turn extol *Him* and attest to *His* truth (John 15:26; 16:13-14).

Acknowledging the previous Manifestations is so significant that the Gospel regarded it as one of the tests by which a true Messenger should be distinguished from a false one:

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

I John 4:1-3 NIV

This vital requirement was fulfilled by Muhammad—the first Manifestation following Jesus—who paid the highest homage to Christ as well as the other Saviors of the past.

In spite of the advancement of knowledge in the west during the last century, still much misunderstanding concerning the Messenger of Arabia prevails. The close connection between Christianity and Islam in particular has seldom been appraised or appreciated. As Geoffrey Parrinder of the University of London observes: “Islam has been a closed world to Christians till modern times, and the teaching of the Qur’án about Jesus is widely ignored.”⁹⁵

Many Christians still view Islam as a rival or even an adversary to their own Faith. This is an unfounded assumption, for Islam as revealed by its Messenger constitutes one more link in the

Chain of divine Revelation, further confirming the covenant that humanity would never be left without Guidance. Instead of denying or debasing, Islam glorifies and exalts its predecessor (Christianity), upon whose majestic foundation it rises. This is clearly evidenced by the Words of Muhammad concerning Jesus as well as the Hebrew Prophets.

It is commonly not recognized that much of the Qur'án is devoted to the Mission, the tale, and the exaltation of the Prophets of the Old Testament, as well as Christ, Mary, and John the Baptist.

According to Professor G. Parrinder, a scholar on comparative religion, "The Qur'án gives a greater number of honorable titles to Jesus than to any other figure of the past.;" and we should add: including its own Author, Muhammad. Here is a list of six great Messengers receiving special titles in the Islamic Scriptures:

Adam:* The Chosen One of God

Noah: The Prophet of God

Abraham: The Friend of God

Moses: The Converser with God

Jesus: The Spirit of God

Muhammad: The Messenger of God

So incredible the exalted title "the Spirit of God" appeared to some of the Muslim commentators or scholars that they tried to explain it away; it simply could not fit into their confined vision.

Is it chance or divine Decree that the same descriptive word (the Spirit of God) used in the Gospel to establish a test of a divine Messenger (This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God...I John 4:2 NIV) should have been bestowed by Muhammad upon the chief Author of the same Boo, Jesus Himself?

* Islám regards Adam as a Messenger.

Let us now review a few references from the Qur’án and the sayings of Muhammad regarding Jesus and His Works:

I bear witness that Jesus Son of Mary is the spirit of God and His words, which He cast to Mary the virgin.⁹⁶

And in the footsteps of the prophets caused we Jesus, the son of Mary, to follow, confirming the law which was before him: and we gave him the Evangel [Gospel] with its guidance and light, confirmatory of the preceding Law; a guidance and a warning to those who fear God...
Qur’án 5:50

Remember when the angel said, “O Mary! Verily God announceth to thee the Word from Him: His name shall be Messiah Jesus the son of Mary, illustrious in this world, and in the next, and one of those who have near access to God...
Qur’án 3:40

...and to Jesus, son of Mary gave we clear proofs of his mission, and strengthened him by the Holy Spirit.
Qur’án 2:81

...there is not God but He, the Living, the Merciful! In truth hath He sent down to thee [Muhammad] “the Book” which confirmeth those [Scriptures] which precede it: For He had sent down the Law [the Torah], and the Evangel aforetime, as man’s Guidance...
Qur’án 3:1-2

Even more astonishing is the honor Muhammad bestowed on Mary. For He chose her and exalted her “above the women of the worlds.” According to the Islamic beliefs, Muhammad’s beloved daughter (Fátimah)—much honored and adored by the Muslims—stands not above or even equal to Mary, but next to her in rank. Here are a few references from the Qur’án regarding Mary* and her exalted station.

...who kept her maidenhood, and into whom we [God] breathed of our spirit, and made her and her son a sign to all creatures.
Qur’án 21:91

And remember when the angels said, “O Mary! verily hath God chosen thee, and purified thee, and chosen thee above the women of the worlds.”
Qur’án 3:37

* “Mary” is a popular name among the Muslims.

Similar honors are bestowed on Noah, Abraham, as well as other great Messengers and Teachers of the past.

In the following passage Bahá'u'lláh refers to the unity between Muhammad and Jesus:

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, Muhammad, 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 Muhammad 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."⁹⁷

Glorification of Jesus by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh

Christ's clear and unmistakable sign of divine Revelation (that a true Spirit will acknowledge) attains further fulfillment through the twin Messengers of our age with equal emphasis and assurance. For both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh acknowledged repeatedly and emphatically Christ's Advent into the world as a supreme Savior and Redeemer, expressing their deepest love and devotion towards Him and according Him the loftiest station in all the realms of creation.

In the prophecy quoted earlier, Jesus prophesied that when the Spirit of Truth comes, He will offer the world new Truths not revealed by Jesus Himself, because of lack of receptivity of the people. And then toward the end of the prophecy He declared still another sign of the Spirit of Truth, saying that He (the Spirit of Truth) will glorify me (Jesus).

* See also *Paris Talks*, pp. 47-49.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes...He will bring glory to me...
John 16:13-14 NIV

And again:

...he [the Spirit of Truth] will testify about me. John 15:26 NIV

Let us now see if Bahá'u'lláh, who claims to be the Spirit of Truth, indeed fulfilled Jesus' prophetic words. Here in the following passage Bahá'u'lláh attests, in a moving language, to the loftiness and grandeur of Jesus, the Spirit of God:

Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things. Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, are now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His all-pervasive, and resplendent Spirit.

We testify that when He came into the world, He shed the splendor of His glory upon all created things. Through Him the leper recovered from the leprosy of perversity and ignorance. Through Him, the unchaste and wayward were healed. Through His power, born of Almighty God, the eyes of the blind were opened, and the soul of the sinner sanctified.

...He it is Who purified the world. Blessed is the man who, with a face beaming with light, hath turned towards Him.⁹⁸

In the following passage, Shoghi Effendi further clarifies the relationship of the Bahá'í Faith to the previous Faiths:

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 of their colossal achievements. . . 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.⁹⁹

Conclusion

In the history of God's perennial Faith, we can find two links: one relating the Saviors to God, and another relating the Saviors to one another. In the Scriptures of the world, God always appears as the Master Designer, the Supreme Creator, the Infinite Source of all Beings, and His Manifestations or Messengers as Teachers or Saviors coming to renew, reaffirm, and supplement the Works of those sent before them.

There is never an indication of the slightest competition, dislike, or displeasure, or envy among the divine Messengers. They always accord the highest respect and honor to one another, never denying or disparaging any of the Saviors of the past or of the future. And this in itself is evidence of the oneness of the Source from which they draw their Wisdom, as well as an indication of their inter-relationship to one another.

This chapter provided several closely interrelated signs of divine Revelation:

- The Savior shows the courage to make the claim and to stand steadfast without ever wavering or faltering.
- He stands humble before His Creator, uttering His praise instead of honoring Himself:

Anyone whose teaching is merely his own, aims at honor for himself. But if a man aims at the honor of him who sent him he is sincere, and there is nothing false in him. John 7:18 NEE

- The Savior acknowledges the advent and the truth of those who have come before Him:

This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God...
I John 4:2 NIV

- He depends on God and does not ask human beings to help Him:

I have through the grace of God and His might besought the help of no one in the past...He it is Who aided Me, through the power of truth...¹⁰⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

Evidence was presented to show that the three Messengers who have succeeded Jesus—namely Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh—have fulfilled all these requirements.

Among the signs or proofs of divine Revelation, the Messengers' steadfastness, their expression of servitude before God, and their affirmation of previous Manifestations constitute one more link further distinguishing and sustaining the unbreakable chain of divine Guidance, the unfailing and uninterrupted expression of divine Love for His most noble creation, humanity.

7

Never Spake Man Thus

John 7:46

There was a general stir of admiration; they were surprised that words of such grace should fall from his lips.

Luke 4:22 NEB

The Evidence of Creative Words

If the divine Messengers reveal the exalted Will and Wisdom of the All-Knowing, and not their own whims or wishes, then the model which shapes the divine Will and the exalted Wisdom must also be indicative and worthy of such a lofty and unexcelled distinction. The fruits borne by the divine Tree (“by their fruits ye shall know them”) must emanate not only the utmost purity and richness, and manifest ravishing savor and fragrance, but boundless beauty and charm.

Although it is possible to view the essence, the substance, or the meaning apart from the mold in which it is shaped, such a view is necessarily partial or incomplete. For the mold and the meaning are inseparable, intertwined, and interlaced.

The mold or the style of the speech should be regarded as a means and not as an end in itself, and never independently of the meanings. Bahá'u'lláh likens the meanings to the Bride and the Words or Utterance to the veil or the vesture:

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.¹⁰¹

Thus the purpose of this chapter is to view the divine Vesture—its distinctness, grandeur, and grace—as it harmonizes with and clotheth the Bride.

The Criteria to Be Studied

This chapter will examine the following specific themes:

- The exquisite beauty of divine Words.
- The spontaneity and speed with which the words are revealed.
- The volume of writings.
- The unchanging purpose of creative words.
- The novelty of style.
- The authority with which the words are spoken.
- The Messenger’s supreme power of concentration.

Finding evidence on “Creative Word” from the Bahá’í Scriptures is simpler than any previous Scriptures. First, the Bahá’í Scriptures are voluminous. Bahá’u’lláh alone wrote a hundred volumes. Second, we have many references from observers who witnessed the revelation of divine Words. Third, we have evidence referring not to Bahá’u’lláh alone but to His Forerunner (the Báb) and His Successor (‘Abdu’l-Bahá) as well. Therefore, the accumulated evidence on the new Revelation by far exceeds any other Revelation. In this chapter references will be made to all three Central Figures of the Bahá’í Faith.

The Distinction of Previous Scriptures

The Scripture best known in the West is the Bible—a book that has served as a source of inspiration for millions throughout the

world. Seldom has the world literature owed so much to one book. Even today after centuries the Bible continues to preserve its supreme status. Those listening to Jesus with discernment and wisdom were quite aware of the exquisite charm and beauty of His Words and were moved to exclaim, ‘Never spake man thus!’ Again and again they expressed awe and wonder at the uniqueness, distinction, and beauty of His utterance:

‘No man,’ they answered, ‘ever spoke as this man speaks.’

John 7:46 NEB

There was a general stir of admiration; they were surprised that words of such grace should fall from his lips.

Luke 4:22 NEB

What astounded the Jews was that words of such incomparable grace should fall from the lips of an “untrained man” (John 7:15). For aside from His divine Station, Jesus was an unlearned man, who worked and lived with simple people, without ever receiving any training in academic knowledge. This has been true of all the divine Manifestations.

The Sermon on the Mount is invested with such a charm and beauty as to be indescribable. It will continue to be read and revered and adored, throughout the countless ages to come.

The “Creative Word” is endowed not only with grace and beauty but authority as well. Again and again people were astounded by the authority with which Jesus spoke:

The people were astounded at his teaching, for, unlike the doctors of the law [of Moses], he taught with a note of authority.

Mark 1:22 NEB

They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.

Luke 4:32 NIV

See also Mark 1:27

Let us review an instance where Jesus speaks with power and authority. The following words spoken to those deprived of discernment are direct, swift, and sharp as arrows:

He also said to the people, “When you see cloud banking up in the west, you say at once, ‘It is going to rain,’ and rain it does. And when the wind is from the south, you say, ‘There will be a heatwave,’ and there is. What hypocrites you are!

You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky;
how is it you cannot interpret this fateful hour?"

Luke 12:54-56 NEB

A Scripture occupying a position similar to that of the Bible and equally known and appreciated in the East is the Qur'án—a book that has served as a source of inspiration among millions of Muslims for centuries.* Again the language of the Qur'án is distinct and superb. No collective effort has yet been made to do justice to its translation into English; but for those familiar with Arabic, the Qur'án stands as the most distinct and distinguished work in the rich literature of the Arabic language.

Again as with Jesus, Muhammad came from the ranks of the unlearned. A book of such beauty and grace by a man from the deserts of Arabia is indeed a miracle unmatched by anyone save those enriched and stirred by divine inspiration.

The literary distinction of the Qur'án is acknowledged not only by Muslim scholars, but also by distinguished orientalist having no religious attachment to Islam.

“Arabic when expertly used,” writes J.A. Williams, “is a remarkably terse, rich and forceful language, and the Arabic of the Qur'án is by turns striking, soaring, vivid, terrible, tender and breathtaking. As Professor Gibb has put it, ‘No man in fifteen hundred years has ever played on that deep-toned instrument with such power, such boldness and such range of emotional effect.’ It is meaningless to apply adjectives such as ‘beautiful’ or ‘persuasive’ to the Qur'án; its flashing images and inexorable measures go directly to the brain and intoxicate it.”¹⁰²

The Distinction of the Báb's Writings

The Báb, while still a youth of tender age, wrote and spoke in a language showing all the distinct marks of the words of a divine

* Qur'án is known to be the first Scripture containing the exact words of a Manifestation.

Manifestation. Many were the scholars recognizing Him by reading merely a few passages of His words or a brief letter addressed to a devoted disciple. Numerous were the learned men of His day who, because of their infatuation with His Words, ardently and humbly offered Him their lives.

Although the Báb spent almost the entire span of His Ministry—slightly over six years—in imprisonment or exile; although He had to face, during this brief period of time, intense and unceasing interrogation, humiliation, and harassment; although He had no access to the accumulated sources of knowledge, he completed numerous and weighty volumes, many of which remaining to this day, many others having been lost or stolen or otherwise destroyed by His adversaries. Even more astounding is that He accomplished these wondrous works between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-one, and for the most part in a language other than His own.

The Báb refers again and again to the abundant outpouring of His Words as a proof of His Mission:

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.¹⁰³

The Báb would write, as testified by Himself and others “a thousand verses of prayer in the course of five hours without pause of the pen.”¹⁰⁴ He would reveal a Book equal to the Qur’án (about 500 pages, or 6300 verses) within the span of two days and two nights.¹⁰⁵ At one point during His brief ministry, the Báb had revealed no less than five hundred thousand verses.¹⁰⁶ This is more than ten times the entire Bible, a Book written over 1400 years by many writers.

A man twenty-five years of age unschooled and uneducated, writing on the profoundest subjects, in a most exquisite language with lightning speed, and in a language other than His own. What greater miracle can anyone expect? Even if all the other proofs were set aside, the Writings of the Báb in themselves would suffice

to attest, beyond any doubt, to His ascendancy, uniqueness, distinction, and divine Origin.

On the eve of His ministry—at the age of 25—He revealed an entire book in response to a question entertained by Bábu'l-Báb,✧ a most distinguished scholar of the time, and the first to believe in Him.

Here is Bábu'l-Báb's description of the Báb's response to his unexpressed question dealing with the symbolism contained in one of the chapters of the Qur'án—the Súrih of Joseph:

He [the Báb] then proceeded to say: “Now is the time to reveal the commentary on the Súrih of Joseph.” He took up His pen and with incredible rapidity revealed the entire Surih of Mulk, the first chapter of His commentary on the Súrih of Joseph. The overpowering effect of the manner in which He wrote was heightened by the gentle intonation of His voice which accompanied His writing. Not for one moment did He interrupt the flow of the verses which streamed from His pen. Not once did He pause till the Súrih of Mulk was finished. I sat enraptured by the magic of His voice and the sweeping force of His revelation.¹⁰⁷

No wonder when people asked for proofs or miracles, the Messengers often referred them to their wondrous Words—the most lasting, the most relevant and reliable evidence of their ascendancy, glory, and greatness.

The distinction of the Words of divine Manifestations proves even greater when one considers their limited and sometimes their complete lack of educational training. It all seems incredible that the Qur'án—a most distinguished Masterpiece among the literary works of the world—could have been revealed by an

✧ Bábu'l-Báb had entertained the question for a long time and had hoped to test whoever lays claim to divine Revelation by asking Him for the interpretation of this very difficult Súrih which had baffled the scholars for many centuries. To his amazement he received the answer even before presenting the question.

unschooled merchant. To Násiri'd-Dín-Sháh, the king who had imprisoned and exiled Him, Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

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.¹⁰⁸

The Báb, while still a child, (probably no more than four or five) would puzzle and mystify His teacher by asking profound and perplexing questions. His teacher narrates a story demonstrating the Báb's supreme knowledge at the prime years of His life.

One day the teacher asked Him to recite the opening words of the Qur'án: "In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful." "He hesitated, pleading that unless He were told what these words signified, He would in no wise attempt to pronounce them."¹⁰⁹ The teacher, confronted by such an unusual encounter, decided to pretend not know their meanings. Thereupon he heard his pupil saying: "I know what these words signify, by your leave, I will explain them."¹¹⁰ He then proceeded to explain the meaning of the two key words "compassionate" and "merciful" in such novel terms as the teacher had never encountered.

Being so touched and overwhelmed by the depth and sweetness of his pupil's utterance, the teacher felt unworthy of serving so remarkable a child and therefore decided "to deliver to the Báb's guardian (His uncle) the Trust he had committed to his care."¹¹¹ After meeting with the Báb's uncle, here is what he said about the prodigious pupil:

He is not to be treated as a mere child, for in Him I can already discern evidences of that mysterious power which the Revelation of the Šáhibu'z-Zamán [the Lord of the Age] alone can reveal. It is incumbent upon you to surround Him with your most loving care. Keep Him in your house, for He, verily, stands in no need of teachers such as I.¹¹²

Then the uncle rebuked the Báb saying:

"Have You forgotten my instructions?...Have I not already admonished You to follow the example of Your fellow-pupils, to observe silence, and to listen attentively to every word spoken by Your teacher?" Having obtained His promise to

abide faithfully by his instructions, he bade the Báb return to His school. The soul of that child could not, however, be restrained by the stern admonitions of His uncle. No discipline could repress the flow of His intuitive knowledge. Day after day He continued to manifest such remarkable evidences of superhuman wisdom as I am powerless to recount.¹¹³

Eventually His uncle was prompted to take Him out of school and make Him a partner in his own occupation. “There, too, He revealed signs of a power and greatness that few could approach and none could rival.”¹¹⁴

The Distinction of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings

Do Bahá'u'lláh's Words manifest the distinction of the previous Scriptures? An eminent scholar and writer, who himself was transformed by the beauty of Bahá'u'lláh's Words, writes:

Bahá'u'lláh's Writings are profound, and peerless in eloquence. They are lavishly sprinkled with symbolic expressions and vibrate with a spiritual potency that no pure-hearted seeker can fail to discern. They are revealed in Persian and Arabic in a style and language which are unique and unrivaled in every sense. Unbiased scholars of the Persian and Arabic tongues readily recognize Bahá'u'lláh's Writings as a novel creation, quite distinct in wording and expression from the conventional literary styles used until then by any known writer. Indeed a casual study of these Writings would suffice to convince the unprejudiced reader that the Author must have been divinely inspired and that His knowledge and wisdom were innate and not scholastic. Needless to say, many seekers after truth who had a literary bent of mind readily embraced the Cause soon after perusing some passages from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.¹¹⁵

Another distinguished writer, Kahlil Gibran, best known from his book *The Prophet* attest to the exquisite Arabic used by Bahá'u'lláh, a language He never studied:

He [Gibran] said it was the most stupendous literature that ever was written, and that He even coined words. That there was no Arabic that even touched the Arabic of Bahá'u'lláh.¹¹⁶

Among distinct marks of the Writings of the Manifestations of divine Mysteries testifying to their transcendental Knowledge is the spontaneity with which they utter their thoughts—the stream of words flowing from their lips even as a mighty torrent descending from a majestic mountain. Those present at the time of revelation are baffled, stunned, and spellbound.

The speed with which Bahá'u'lláh revealed His Writings astounded many an observer. We can hardly imagine the feelings of those having had the bounty of observing Him at times of revelation. For the outpouring of divine Words by Bahá'u'lláh was even more abundant than that of the Báb. Whereas the Báb would reveal a thousand verses in five hours, Bahá'u'lláh would reveal equal number of verses in one hour. At the rate of a thousand verses per hour, Bahá'u'lláh would reveal a Book equal to the entire Bible (written over 1400 years) in the course of about 75 hours. Few could even *read* the Bible *aloud* with such a speed. “Day and night,” writes an eye-witness, “the Divine verses were raining down in such number that it was impossible to record them.”¹¹⁷ Bahá'u'lláh Himself testifies to the inability of secretaries to record His Words:

...secretaries are incapable of transcribing. It has, therefore, remained for the most part untranscribed.¹¹⁸

Sometime during His ministry Bahá'u'lláh had revealed Writings equal to all the Scriptures of the past:

I swear by God!... In those days the equivalent of all that hath been sent down aforetime unto the Prophets hath been revealed.¹¹⁹

Some of those who witnessed the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh's words have left detailed accounts of the way they were recorded. Here is an example:

I recall that as Mírzá Áqá Ján [a secretary] was recording the words of Bahá'u'lláh at the time of revelation, the shrill sound

of his pen could be heard from a distance of about twenty paces...

Such was the speed with which he used to write the revealed Word that the ink of the first word was scarcely yet dry when the whole page was finished. It seemed as if some one had dipped a lock of hair in the ink and applied it over the whole page. None of the words was written clearly and they were illegible to all except Mírzá Áqá Ján. There were occasions when even he could not decipher the words and had to seek the help of Bahá'u'lláh.¹²⁰

Bahá'u'lláh Himself refers in the following passage to the abundant outpourings of divine Bounties in this dispensation.

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 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 Bayán would be sent down from the heaven of Divine holiness.¹²¹

As an example, Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Book of Certitude—a book matchless in its richness of meaning and style—within the span of forty-eight hours. This is like saying that Shakespeare, Homer, or Dante completed one of their works over the brief period of a few days.

It is instructive to note that at times of revelation, the Mirror reflecting the Eternal Light gains a special radiance and glory. This is well described in *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*:

The onrushing force of the Holy Spirit produced, at the time of revelation, awe-inspiring physical effects on Bahá'u'lláh. An ordinary human being becomes overwhelmed when he receives news of exceptional import: how much more, then, would the human temple of the Manifestation of God be affected when it becomes the channel through which the Holy Spirit of God flows to mankind.

No one except His amanuensis was allowed to be present at the time of revelation, but occasionally some of the believers

were permitted to remain for a short time. Those who received this privilege witnessed a special glory and radiance which emanated from Him. So dazzling was His transfiguration that many found themselves unable to gaze on His face.¹²²

Those who had the bounty of observing Bahá'u'lláh at times of revelation, would be overwhelmed by a sense of awe and wonder indescribable. Here are two eye-witness accounts by two different writers:

When permission was granted and the curtain was withdrawn, I entered the room where the King of kings and the Ruler of this world and the next, nay rather the Ruler of all the worlds of God, was with great authority seated on His couch. The verses of God were being revealed and the words streamed forth as in a copious rain. Methought the door, the wall, the carpet, the ceiling, the floor and the air were all perfumed and illumined. They all had been transformed, each and every one, into ears and were filled with a spirit of joy and ecstasy. Each object had become refreshed and was pulsating with life...To which worlds I was transported and in what state I was, no one who has not experienced such as this can never know.¹²³

And again:

I had the great privilege of being present on two occasions when Tablets were being revealed...The holy words were flowing from His lips as He paced up and down the room, and His amanuensis was recording them...It is not easy to describe the manner in which revelation came to Bahá'u'lláh.¹²⁴

As mentioned, a distinct feature of divine Words is the power, authority, and certainty with which they are spoken. When we apply this criterion to Bahá'u'lláh's works we can face nothing but astonishment. It can be safely stated that among the previous Messengers, none can match Bahá'u'lláh in power and authority. Hundreds of examples could be given to prove the point. Here is one passage proclaiming Bahá'u'lláh's Station and Mission.

Proclaim then unto all mankind the glad-tidings of this mighty, this glorious Revelation. Verily, He Who is the Spirit of Truth is come to guide you unto all truth. He speaketh not as prompted by His own self, but as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise...

O concourse of priests! Leave the bells, and come forth, then, from your churches. It behoveth you, in this day, to proclaim aloud the Most Great Name among the nations. Prefer ye to be silent, whilst every stone and every tree shouteth aloud: 'The Lord is come in His great glory!?' Well is it with the man who hasteneth unto Him. Verily, he is numbered among them whose names will be eternally recorded and who will be mentioned by the Concourse on High. Thus hath it been decreed by the Spirit in this wondrous Tablet. He that summoneth men in My name is, verily, of Me, and he will show forth that which is beyond the power of all that are on earth. Follow ye the Way of the Lord and walk not in the footsteps of them that are sunk in heedlessness. Well is it with the slumberer who is stirred by the Breeze of God and ariseth from amongst the dead, directing his steps towards the Way of the Lord. Verily, such a man is regarded, in the sight of God, the True One, as a jewel amongst men and is reckoned with the blissful¹²⁵

The *Book of Revelation* describes Bahá'u'lláh's divine Power in these words:

When he [Bahá'u'lláh] shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke. Revelation 10:3 NIV

Novelty is still one more feature of the Creative Word. Whereas we learn from the example of others, the divine Manifestations learn from the revelations of the All-Knowing. In fact, whenever these luminous Lights of divine Guidance manifest their Mission, they generate, and set in motion, new creative powers. By the example of their Words they originate a new style in the literary world and by releasing the hidden potentials they further facilitate and intensify the unfolding of creative powers.

The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá introduced totally new styles of writing in Persian and Arabic. In the rich literature of

these languages no precedence can be found for their distinctly Creative Word:

Although Bahá'u'lláh did not attend any of the schools for the divines or learned classes, yet men of letters have testified that His Writings both in Arabic and Persian, viewed solely from the literary point of view, are unsurpassed in their beauty, richness and eloquence. Although familiar with the Arabic language, its vast vocabulary and the complexities of its grammar, which normally took the divines a lifetime to master, Bahá'u'lláh has so enriched Arabic literature with His Writings that He has created as Muhammad did in His day, a style which has inspired Bahá'í scholars and writers ever since. The same is true of His Writings in Persian.

Not only will the reader be enchanted and uplifted by the beauty of His style, the eloquence of His words, the flow and lucidity of His composition and the profundity of His utterances, but he will also find that Bahá'u'lláh has originated a new terminology which contributes, in large measure, to a fuller and deeper understanding of the verities of the world of the spirit.¹²⁶

Still another distinct mark of the Words of divine Manifestation is that, unlike others, their Writings do not mature with time. It is impossible, for instance, to differentiate, or make any distinction, between Bahá'u'lláh's Words uttered at the beginning of His Mission and those revealed at the end of His days—some forty years later. They are all invested with the same grace and grandeur, the same magnificence and majesty. If His teachings as well as the words that expressed them were His own, why then did they stand utterly unchanged over four decades?

A careful examination of the works of any writer who writes over and extended or sometimes even brief periods of time reveals a curve of growth, a trend of thought, from one point to another. It seems impossible for anyone expressing his thoughts on a wide range of issues and over long periods of time to stand utterly unchanged in his position. The writers modify not only their views but also the mold which contains or shapes the views.

It may seem unreasonable to apply such a test to the words of Jesus, or even to those of the Báb, for their ministry was too brief to allow for any alteration or evolution of views. But Bahá'u'lláh's Words and Thoughts provide an ideal opportunity for such a test.

The Distinction of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Writings

'Abdu'l-Bahá (Bahá'u'lláh's eldest Son and Interpreter of His teachings) was endowed with gifts and powers similar to those possessed by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. During Bahá'u'lláh's stay in Baghdád, one of the dignitaries asked Him for the interpretation of a sacred passage dealing with a complex philosophical question—the purpose of man's creation. Bahá'u'lláh referred the responsibility of interpretation to His Son 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who in compliance with His Father's wishes, wrote a Tablet explaining and expounding the complexities in the most profound way. This Tablet stands today as a most exquisite piece of literature in the Persian language. It seems particularly astounding that He wrote this commentary while still an adolescent. It may be said that perhaps even 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself did not break, during the subsequent years of His prolific writing, the early record He had set in this exquisite and sublime creation.

A distinct gift granted to the Manifestations of divine Knowledge is a supreme power of concentration. We can find clear evidence of this power in 'Abdu'l-Bahá. For at times, we are told, He would tackle several tasks that required mental concentration, at the same time. One thought would not distract Him from another. The following account written by one of His secretaries clarifies the point:

I remember several occasions when the Master ['Abdu'l-Bahá] dictated five different Tablets—often in different languages: Turkish, Arabic, Persian, and Old Persian—answering five different letters from as many parts of the world: Persia, India, the United States, Europe. He would dictate one paragraph to me, one to the first son-in-law, one to the second son-in-law,

one to Mírzá Ḥabīb, then back to me. To each, without the slightest hesitation. He would follow up the sentence last dictated, as if He were reading it all from a book. One afternoon in Haifa He was receiving the great Muslim Judge of ‘Akká. An urgent letter had to be answered, in Arabic. Courteously explaining to the Judge that He had to finish the letter, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá kept on dictating. I was a very rapid writer; the Judge was surprised to see how rapid. He asked the Master if I could read what I had written. ‘Certainly,’ replied the Master. He then asked the Master to bid me read it back; and so I did, at top speed. Often, as He was on His way to Mt. Carmel He would stop and dictate, and I had to be ready. I learned to write with the paper on my lap or the palm of my hand.

Once when I dropped from weariness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá referred me to the story of the cruel blacksmith and his apprentice. It was the child’s task to blow the bellows hour after hour. The exhausted boy would cry out, ‘I die! I die!’ and the blacksmith would answer: ‘Die and blow! Die and blow!’¹²⁷

A similar account is written by another observer (known as Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl*), a great Bahá’í writer and scholar. In one of his visits he spent ten months in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. During this period he had ample time to observe ‘Abdu’l-Bahá function under many conditions. He observed many a time when people of distinction (judges, scientists, politicians, military leaders) representing diverse religions, nations, and languages would visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Such visits would happen when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was engaged in responding to the many letters sent to Him from across the globe. At such times, he testifies, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would speak to His distinguished visitors, while at the same time responding to the letters in His own handwriting “without meditation, or pause of the pen, or preliminary rough copy...”¹²⁸ Writing under such conditions and producing marvels of beauty and charm and profoundest thoughts! What greater miracle can anyone expect?

* Meaning father of virtues or distinctions.

Once the writer had the privilege of meeting ‘Alí-Kulí Khán, who had served for several years as secretary to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. During the conversation I asked how fast the Tablets (letters) were dictated to him. He paused for a moment, then raised his hand and said; “You see how my hand is shaking? The shaking of my hand is the result of the pressure I tried to put on it so it would move faster.”

Conclusion

A study of the sacred Scriptures, particularly those remaining intact, indicates that they stand distinct and distinguished among all the literary works of the world. They show distinction and difference not only in sense or meaning, but in tone and style as well. Such a distinction further attests to the Savior’s superior powers, their distinct and divine Mission.

The distinction of the divine Words gains even greater significance when we recognize that they are uttered with complete spontaneity and by Writers unfamiliar with the literary works of the world.

The Words of God stand far above the words of people. They unfold a new creation and unravel a charm unexcelled and unrivaled. They reflect not only innate and infinite Knowledge and Discernment, but splendor and grace, and a certainty and authority untouched and undefiled by all the alterations, hesitations, doubts, and puzzlements that characterize the works of others.

The great Saviors speak with authority and assurance, with glory and grandeur. Their language rises above man’s mundane dreams and desires. They seem to walk in the paths of people, while staying above their petty concerns. Their words contain no elaborate examination of minute and nonessential details; they are spoken with certainty, consistency, and clarity. Their sayings seem more like spontaneous emanations of an overflowing, all encompassing, and boundless Love than amplification of an elaborate or intricate treatise.

Did the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh speak in a language deserving of a divine Manifestation? Beyond the brief evidence presented here, there will be another chapter providing examples of their Works.

The divine Words are the fruits of a Messenger. The best way of testing Him is to taste the fruits He offers, to see if they are comparable to those offered by previous Messengers. If the Speaker is the same, the words must be the same, reflecting the Revealer's many distinctions: the exquisite beauty of His words, the speed and spontaneity with which He utters them, the volume of His writings, the unchanging purpose of His Words, His novel and creative style, the authority with which He speaks, and His supreme powers of concentration.

8

Ye Shall Know Them By Their Fruits

Matthew 7:16

(Section II)

Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths.¹²⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh's "fruits" have already been examined in two of the preceding chapters: Chapter 2, which emphasized His life and influence, and Chapter 7, which examined the conditions surrounding the revelation of divine Words.

This chapter is a further step in the study of "the fruits" of the divine Messengers as an evidence of their validity. Specifically it seeks to examine the following themes:

- Divine words as the source of man's spiritual sustenance.
- The advantage of using the creative words as evidence.
- References from the sacred Scriptures on the significance of words.
- The Messengers' supreme knowledge despite their lack of education.
- Bahá'u'lláh's supreme knowledge and influence.
- The greatness of the new age and the abundance of the Scriptures revealed.

Divine Words the Source of Our Spiritual Sustenance

The words of the divine Manifestations unfold a new creation—one tempered with awe and majesty, grace and grandeur. They manifest wonders beyond description, evoke feelings beyond words. In souls pure and sensitive, they stir a new life and a new spirit, transforming trials and afflictions into joy and enchantment. They are the water of life flowing to the hearts of the pure, the rivers of light dispelling despair and darkness. They elevate the human spirit to ecstasy, far beyond the bounds of the vanishing joys and pleasures, worldly delights and desires.

The words of a Manifestation constitute the most distinct and reliable evidence of His Revelation, the sole basis on which the divine Edifice can stand. Here lies the domain of the soul, where it is ennobled, enraptured, and uplifted to the crest of honor and ecstasy, with the mind laboring and trailing in its wake. A soul burdened by the world, bound by its gaiety and glamour, cannot soar heavenward, becoming attached not to the Infinite and Everlasting but to the finite and the fleeting.

The earth nourishes our bodies, the heaven our spirit. Our spiritual food is divine knowledge embodied in Words. Jesus was called the Word of God, for He revealed the divine Knowledge. Without the Creative Word, our souls stand stifled, deprived of the everlasting life.

This is the food that conferreth everlasting life upon the pure in heart and the illumined in spirit...it descendeth at all seasons from the heavens of justice and mercy.¹³⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

The same nourishment or “Bread” was also provided by Jesus:

I am the living bread which came down from heaven...he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. John 6:51, 58

The Advantage of Using Words as Evidence

The chief advantage of using Words as evidence lies in their intimate and inseparable relation to the Speaker or the Savior Himself. They represent, more closely and genuinely than anything else, the reality, the character, and the very essence of the Revealer. They exemplify the greatness of the Self from which they radiate. In the words of Bahá'u'lláh:

Say: The first and foremost testimony establishing His truth is His own Self. Next to this testimony is His Revelation.¹³¹

A Messenger is the Repository of divine distinction:

...Thou [the Báb] art the Repository of all Our proofs in this
Day.¹³² The Báb

When a Messenger's Mission is performed, He moves on to the Kingdoms beyond. But He leaves behind Gems of Knowledge and Wisdom, Signs of His majestic Self, accessible to everyone at any time. Miracles fade away, but the Words last forever. As a poet once wrote:

When the rose is ravaged and the garden gone,
From whence can we find the fragrance?
From the rose-water.

In the words of Bahá'u'lláh:

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.¹³³

Nothing can stand between us and the reflections of the Savior's supreme and celestial Wisdom. We can always reach Him and touch Him through His Thoughts. "As a Savior thinketh and speaketh, so is He."

We must first fall in love with the teachings of a Faith and be enraptured by the spirit of its ideals and aspirations; other proofs merely serve to sustain our confidence; they are secondary, not primary.

Evidence from the Sacred Scriptures

We can find reference sin many sacred Scriptures to the unexcelled and exalted station of words. As discussed earlier, Jesus designated the fruits of a Messenger as the Touchstone of Truth:

You will recognize them by the fruits they bear. Can grapes be picked from briars, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a good tree always yields good fruit, and a poor tree bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, or a poor tree good fruit.

Matthew 7:16-18 NEB

The Qur'án repeatedly affirms the Creative Word as the evidence of divine distinction:

Is it not enough for them that We have sent down unto Thee the Book to be recited to them? In this verily is a mercy and a warning to those who believe.

Qur'án 29:50

And if ye be in doubt as to that which We [God] have sent down to Our Servant [Muhammad], then produce a Súrih [chapter] like it, and summon your witnesses, beside God, if ye are men of truth.

Qur'án 2:23

See also 17:90; 25:133

The Qur'án warns those who disregard God's own standard of Truth:

Woe to every lying sinner, who heareth the verses of God recited to him, and then as though he heard them not, persisteth in proud disdain! Apprise him of a painful punishment.

Qur'án 45:6

As we noted earlier, Jesus gave a similar warning to those who refuse to consider the fruits of a Messenger as the evidence of His Mission. In the day of Judgment, He says, the violators will be told:

...I never knew you; out of my sight, you and your wicked ways!

Matthew 7:23 NEB

No proof can suffice in itself except the Words, the most accessible and verifiable fruits of divine Messengers. The Báb writes:

Concerning the sufficiency of the Book as a proof, God hath revealed: `Is it not enough for them that We have sent down unto Thee the Book to be recited to them? In this verily is a mercy and a warning to those who believe.'(1) When God hath testified that the Book is a sufficient testimony, as is affirmed in the text, how can one dispute this truth by saying that the Book in itself is not a conclusive proof?¹³⁴

And again:

The Bayán [one of the Báb's chief works] is in truth Our conclusive proof for all created things, and all the peoples of the world are powerless before the revelation of its verses. It enshrineth the sum total of all the Scriptures, whether of the past or of the future...¹³⁵

Bahá'u'lláh in His *Book of Certitude* once again confirms the words of all those sent before Him:

For compared with all other proofs and tokens, the divinely-revealed verses shine as the sun, whilst all others are as stars. To the peoples of the world they are the abiding testimony, the incontrovertible proof, the shining light of the ideal King. Their excellence is unrivalled, their virtue nothing can surpass. They are the treasury of the divine pearls and the depository of the divine mysteries... Through them floweth the river of divine knowledge, and gloweth the fire of His ancient and consummate wisdom.¹³⁶

And again:

We ask, is it fair for this people to view with doubt and misgiving this most weighty Testimony, the divine origin of which God hath proclaimed, and pronounced it to be the embodiment of truth? Is it fair for them to turn away from the thing which He hath appointed as the supreme Instrument

of guidance for attainment unto the loftiest summits of knowledge, and to seek aught else but that Book?*

¹³⁷

Knowledge Despite Lack of Education

The Knowledge and Wisdom of the Messengers gain special significance when we realize that they rise from the ranks of the unlearned. Otherwise, people would consider their Knowledge and Wisdom acquired, not innate or inspired. Then, they would have even more reason to deny them. When Jesus spoke, people marveled at His knowledge:

...‘How is it,’ they said, ‘that this untrained man has such learning?’

John 7:15-16 NEB

We cleave to no knowledge but His Knowledge, and set our hearts on naught save the effulgent glories of His light.¹³⁸

Bahá’u’lláh

Both the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh received even less than an elementary education. From early childhood they astonished their guardians for their powers of attraction, wisdom and learning. Here is a brief reference to Bahá’u’lláh’s early years:

From childhood He was extremely kind and generous...He had an extraordinary power of attraction, which was felt by all. People always crowded around Him. Ministers and people of the Court would surround Him, and the children also were devoted to Him. When He was only thirteen or fourteen years old He became renowned for His learning. He would converse on any subject and solve any problem presented to Him. In large gatherings He would discuss matters with the ‘Ulamá [leading religious leaders] and would explain intricate religious questions. All of them used to listen to Him with the greatest interest.¹³⁹

* For further references, see *The Book of Certitude*, pp. 91-92, 23, 206, 219-221, and *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, pp. 31, 35, 43, and 159.

We already noted the astonishment of the Báb's teacher at his prodigious pupil. We noted his view expressed to the Báb's uncle, that the little child shows "evidence of that mysterious power which the Lord of the Age alone can reveal," and that he was not in a position to teach Him.

As evidence of their Mission, both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh cite their lack of education. The Báb refers to Himself as "this untutored One,"¹⁴⁰ and Bahá'u'lláh as "this unlettered One,"¹⁴¹ or "this unlearned and humble Servant."¹⁴² Here are two passages from Bahá'u'lláh:

We have not entered any school, nor read any of your dissertations.¹⁴³

The Will of the Almighty hath decreed that out of a house wholly devoid of all that the divines, the doctors, the sages, and scholars commonly possess His Cause should proceed and be made manifest.¹⁴⁴

It would be pointed out that the Knowledge bestowed by divine Manifestations is always measured to *our* capacity, not *theirs*. In the following passage Bahá'u'lláh refers to the wisdom of progressive expression of divine Knowledge:

Oh, would that the world could believe Me! Were all the things that lie enshrined within the heart of Bahá, and which the Lord, His God, the Lord of all names, hath taught Him, to be unveiled to mankind, every man on earth would be dumbfounded.

How great the multitude of truths which the garment of words can never contain! How vast the number of such verities as no expression can adequately describe, whose significance can never be unfolded, and to which not even the remotest allusions can be made! How manifold are the truths which must remain unuttered until the appointed time is come! Even as it hath been said: "Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it."¹⁴⁵

Bahá'u'lláh's Knowledge and Influence

The divine Messengers stand at the height of glory and honor, far beyond our reach. Bahá'u'lláh glorifies them in these words:

Immeasurably high are the Prophets of God exalted above the comprehension of men, who can never know them except by their own Selves. Far be it from His glory that His chosen Ones should be magnified by any other than their own persons. Glorified are they above the praise of men; exalted are they above human understanding!¹⁴⁶

A most evident sign of the Messengers' distinction is their immeasurable Knowledge and Wisdom, which reach out far beyond the vision of others—not only those of their time but future times as well. Those listening to Jesus often marveled at His Wisdom, and they said:

What wisdom is this that has been given him [Jesus]?

Mark 6:2-3 NEB

...and all who heard him were amazed at his intelligence and the answers he gave.

Luke 2:47 NEB

We are certain now that you know everything... John 16:30

The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were endowed with the same distinctions. Here is an eye-witness account of the ecstatic experience of being in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, and observing His revelation of divine Knowledge.

The spiritual transformation experienced by those who have attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh is so far above limited human experience that it cannot be described. It is that Paradise which is said never to have been seen by mortal eyes, nor experienced by earthly senses. The experience is like a tempestuous ocean, each wave of which brings forth pearls of beauty. Yet the waters of this ocean are so blissful that one does not even want to swim, but only wishes to be drowned in its ecstasy. This unbelievable joy often comes and passes like lightning. It is only granted to a few though a

special bounty of the Lord, and then it will be manifested only as strongly as their spiritual capacity will allow.

Once I requested to be in Bahá'u'lláh's room when He was revealing Tablets. This request met with His approval. As I entered His room, I heard streams of words sweeping along in a torrential flow from His lips. It seemed that the atmosphere, the floor, the walls, and every atom in the room was filled with perfume. Only those who have had this indescribable experience can ever imagine what I mean. The flow of revelation continued for about five minutes. Then Bahá'u'lláh said to me, "You have on several occasions been here when the revelation of Tablets has taken place. Should the people of the whole world wish to be present and bear the words of revelation, We would permit them. But since We have approved courtesy and ordained it upon man, We are reluctant to display this power publicly."¹⁴⁷

During Bahá'u'lláh's stay in Baghdád, the learned from every domain of knowledge sought His presence, seeking to resolve their most baffling questions. Christian and Muslim scholars, linguists, mathematicians, orators, historians, philosophers, and people of fame and distinction from all walks of life flocked to His presence, seeking enlightenment, marveling at His "mighty words," and baffled by the emanations of His lofty and far-reaching vision.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote on many themes and in many styles. Among the major themes He dealt with are social teachings for the oneness of mankind, ethical principles, interpretation of past Scriptures (symbols, prophecies), explanation of scientific and philosophical issues, proclamation of His Mission, writings addressed to political and religious leaders, laws and ordinances, prayers, prediction of future events, and knowledge of the life beyond.

Dr. J.E. Esslemont in his book *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* writes:

The writings of Bahá'u'lláh are most comprehensive in their range, dealing with every phase of human life, individual and

social, with things material and things spiritual, with the interpretation of ancient and modern scriptures, and with prophetic anticipations of both the near and distant future.

The range of accuracy of His knowledge was amazing. He could quote and expound the Scriptures of the various religions with which His correspondents or questioners were familiar, in convincing and authoritative manner, although apparently He had never had the ordinary means of access to many of the books referred to. He declares, in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, that He had never had time or opportunity even to read the writings of the Báb, although in His own writings He shows the most perfect knowledge and understanding of the Báb's Revelation...The well-known circumstances of His long imprisonment render it impossible to doubt that the wealth of knowledge shown in His writings must have been acquired from some spiritual source, quite independent of the usual means of study or instruction and the help of books or teachers.¹⁴⁸

Bahá'u'lláh wrote many volumes, and His Son 'Abdu'l-Bahá interpreted those in still more volumes, offering a vast store of Knowledge, which will continue to enrich humankind for centuries to come. Questions baffling people for thousands of years have been resolved, in the most lucid and lofty language.

Let us take as an example Bahá'u'lláh's interpretation of past Scriptures. Both the Old Testament and the New have stood as sealed Books for centuries. We see the greatest Bible scholars disagreeing even on some of the most basic facts of the Bible. Among the myriads of great minds that have tried to resolve the mysteries of the Scriptures since the dawn of Moses and Jesus, no one has succeeded. We often see the same theologians changing or revising their interpretation as they mature in knowledge. These are the scholars who often have devoted a lifetime to the study of the Bible, who have benefited from countless interpretations offered by others.

In the last century and half (since the dawn of Bahá'u'lláh) we have been witnessing a dramatic spurt in knowledge. Yet despite all these advances, we see the theologians as confused and

divided as ever. They cannot even agree on the return of Jesus, much less the mysteries and complexities of the Bible.

One learned man was once seen crying. When asked for the reason, he said: “I have believed something to be the truth for a lifetime. I have just discovered the truth to be false. Now I fear that everything else that I have regarded and accepted as the truth may also face a similar fate.”

We see theology serving for centuries as a battleground for doubt, confusion, and unbelief. We see the learned disagreeing, despairing, even abandoning their faith because of uncertainties. After centuries of doubt and confusion among the learned, we suddenly see a Man dawning from a dark horizon, with the following qualifications: uneducated, raised in a non-Christian culture, exiled or imprisoned most of his life, harassed by both religious and political leaders, faced with adversities and agonies beyond description. A Man of this kind, alone and unaided, arises and succeeds in resolving with His marvelous Words the complexities and contradictions with remarkable ease and consistency, and He accomplishes such wonders with lightning speed, without ever changing His Mind. Where can a Man seemingly as “unqualified” as Bahá’u’lláh acquire such a Knowledge except from a Source higher than Himself? If we judge Bahá’u’lláh’s Claim by His Knowledge of the Scriptures alone, we cannot but recognize His divine Station.*

We find in Bahá’u’lláh the same outpouring of Knowledge in relation to Muslim Scriptures. In the last 1300 years Muslim scholars have striven to resolve the mysteries of the Qur’án with no more success than the Christian scholars. Again we see Bahá’u’lláh reconciling the inconsistencies and complexities with an ease and confidence not witnessed except in the works of the great Saviors.

Such an achievement is predicted in both the Bible and the Qur’án. They both indicate that the mysteries will remain sealed until

* The previous volume is devoted entirely to Bahá’u’lláh’s interpretation of the Scriptures.

the advent of the Lord of Hosts, a station specifically claimed by Bahá'u'lláh.

Even more astounding is that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh (who, as far as is known, never met) treated the mysteries and complexities with absolute agreement and harmony. If they had not received their Knowledge from the same Source, how could they agree on so many complicated and involved issues? What should add to our astonishment even more is that the Báb began His ministry at the prime of His life (age 25), with worldly qualifications no better than those of Bahá'u'lláh. Are not such achievements miracles worthy of our search, our highest endeavors?

Let us move from the realm of interpretation to the realm of teachings. How could a Man raised in the darkest and most decadent country reveal such sublime and enlightened teachings?

We see Bahá'u'lláh with a world vision, a Plan for the establishment and maintenance of universal and permanent peace. We see Him introducing social and ethical principles needed by humankind at least for a thousand years. And we see in the wake of His works the emergence of a world society; a society representing every creed or culture; a community rising above national, racial, and religious barriers; “a new race of man” working and growing in a spirit of oneness and a conscience dedicated to universal ideals and aspirations.

Such a new and dynamic creation—namely the transformation of Bahá'í ideals into a world society working with absolute accord and harmony—constitutes perhaps the most complete and convincing test of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings as the supreme Remedy for the ills and afflictions of humankind and of His Mission as the divine Educator and Savior of the human race. No anthropologist or sociologist or psychologist could ever fully explain the workings and wonders of such a marvelous and enchanting creation. For marvels of divine Wisdom shall always remain a mystery to the minds of men.

Even more astounding is that Bahá'u'lláh implemented His teachings from behind bars, removed from His followers, immersed in afflictions, and opposed by the most powerful and cruel

forces—the combined influence of the religious and political leaders who wielded absolute control over the lives of the people.

The Greatness of the New Age and New Revelation

As mentioned, all the great Saviors have been gifted with supreme Knowledge, and a Wisdom unreachable by others. But none have been so bountiful in their outpouring of divine Knowledge as the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Such unmatched Revelation of Knowledge has occurred because of the uniqueness of the New Age and the unfolding of a potential unapproached in all history. The phrases “will guide you into all truth,” and “will teach you all things” in the following prophecies, spoken by Jesus, point to the almost unlimited potential of our time:

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. John 16:12-13 NIV

All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. John 14:25-26 NIV

The harmony between the various Scriptures is astounding. For Muslim Scriptures confirm the Christian. The following prophecy demonstrates the point:

Knowledge is twenty and seven letters. All that the Prophets have revealed are two letters thereof. No man thus far hath known more than these two letters. But when the Qá'im [❖] [the Promised One] shall arise, He will cause the remaining twenty and five letters to be made manifest. ¹⁴⁹

* Jesus characterized His return by many titles or names, among them “the Spirit of truth,” “the Counselor,” and “the Holy Spirit.” For further details see the third volume.

❖ Qá'im refers to Muslims' first expected Savior, namely the Báb.

In the following passage Bahá'u'lláh refers to the Báb's bounteous expression of divine Knowledge, comparing His Revelation with those of the great Saviors of the past, called "the Prophets endowed with constancy:"

...no eye hath beheld so great an outpouring of bounty, nor hath any ear heard of such a revelation of lovingkindness. Such bounty and revelation have been made manifest, that the revealed verses seemed as vernal showers raining from the clouds of the mercy of the All-Bountiful. The Prophets "endowed with constancy," whose loftiness and glory shine as the sun, were each honored with a Book which all have seen, and the verses of which have been duly ascertained. Whereas the verses which have rained from this Cloud of divine mercy have been so abundant that none hath yet been able to estimate their number. A score of volumes are now available. How many still remain beyond our reach! How many have been plundered and have fallen into the hands of the enemy, the fate of which none knoweth.¹⁵⁰

Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation compared to that of the Báb was even more bounteous. For He wrote over a hundred of volumes. It is impossible to estimate with any precision the number of volumes that have been lost. Added to the loss is the destruction of the Writings by Bahá'u'lláh Himself. We are told "that by the express order of Bahá'u'lláh, hundreds of thousands of verses, mostly written by His own hand, were obliterated and cast into the river."¹⁵¹ Finding His secretary reluctant to destroy the sacred Words, Bahá'u'lláh would reassure him saying: "None is to be found at this time worthy to hear these melodies..."¹⁵²

Conclusion

A most glorious gift God has bestowed upon us is His Words. Nothing can connect us to the Cosmic Mind as securely as the cord of divine Knowledge revealed by the great Messengers. The Creative Word is the expression of the Infinite made reachable to the finite. No mind, however astute or exalted, can generate thoughts that could match or rival the emanations of

divine Mind. Words provide the most secure basis on which to judge the truth of the Messengers.

In testing or judging a claim we should use the divine standard, clearly specified in the Scriptures: the fruits it bears, the consequences it leads to. For as fruits reveal the essence of the tree, so does speech the essence of the Speaker. We are asked to direct our gaze at the Revelation of celestial Knowledge, not the expression of miraculous powers.

We all have the potential to recognize the Creative Word. Otherwise, how could God in His Justice expect a task beyond our ability? The pure potential, however, fails if it is allowed to become distorted or entangled with the veils of concealment—conformity, worldliness, fear, egotism, or pride. From behind the veils the distinctions fade away. Only if we choose to do God’s Will—not our own—only if we use as Touchstone of Truth what God has asked us to use (namely the revealed Words) are we capable of distinguishing the divine from the deceptive:

The Jews were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having studied?” Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If any one chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

John 7:15-17 NIV

To those who would not discern the divine Voice, Jesus said: “You are not the sheep of my flock” (John 24:26 NEB). The sheep of the Celestial Shepherd can tell the heavenly Voice from the earthly, can distinguish the words of God from the words of man. So when they hear the Voice of the Eternal from a new Speaker, they listen:

My own sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me.

John 10:27 NEB

In the early days of the Bahá’í Faith, the Bahá’ís would sometimes add the words of the Báb to the verses of the Qur’án to see if the Muslim theologians (who rightfully believed in the Qur’án’s uniqueness and distinction in every sense) could detect the added words. The theologians’ failure to distinguish the verses of the Qur’án from the words of the Báb was the delight of those

Bahá'ís.* Here is a brief account of one such attempt made by a daring Bahá'í scholar at a time when being detected as a Bahá'í often meant certain death. The Bahá'í scholar was the son of a fanatic religious leader who had no knowledge of his son's devotion to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

Every morning it was their custom to recite verses from the Qur'án after prayers. It was my honor to recite these verses, and everyone was always pleased to hear those beautiful words. To open the way for our discussion, I began to include verses of the Báb with those from the Qur'án. No one criticized—or even detected that verses other than those from the Qur'án were being chanted. This gave me an opportunity to present my argument to the people in the room, particularly my father...

I went to the hall where my father and the governor and several other people were seated. I sat next to my father and said to him, "Suppose I had been born blind and could not know you by sight. Could I not certainly recognize you by your voice?"

"What is your aim in asking this question?" he responded.

"Let me finish the premise; then you will comprehend the purpose of my question," I replied. "Suppose, again, that you were to go on an extensive trip and return home only after a long time. I shall still know you by your voice and shall naturally run to you. When I receive kindness, compassion, and love, I shall know for certain that the newcomer is my father."

All present agreed, "This is true. It is obvious and understandable."

* If the Qur'án was the ultimate proof of Muhammad's divine Mission, then the words of the Báb would be even a greater proof of *His* Mission. For Muhammad revealed the Qur'án in His native language, beginning at the ripe age of forty, whereas the Báb revealed His works in a foreign language, beginning in the prime of His youth, at age 25. Besides, the Báb revealed in a period of slightly over six years many times more than Muhammad wrote over 23 years.

“Now, here is my question,” I continued. “When I chanted the verses of the Qur’án for you, I often included in the texts verses revealed by the Báb. I am sure you recognize the verses of the Prophet Muhammad by His words, tone, and style. Then, why did no one protest? Surely, only because the words revealed by the Báb have the same tone, vigor, and style, and come from the same Source.”

This concluded the discussion. I left the hall quickly and made for my uncle’s house. I stayed in his house for a month until all efforts to find me were exhausted. Then I secretly left Ná’ín and traveled to Işfahán.

My father and others came to Isfahán looking for me, and there they made efforts to have me killed or imprisoned...¹⁵³

The divine Words have always separated the sons from the fathers, the open-minded from the closed-minded. Out of His respect for our freedom, our Creator never forces us into compliance or obedience. He simply makes His words different enough from the words of His own creatures, so that they will stand distinguished—but only to the sensitive. His verses, clear and conclusive, are the swords of separation; they set apart the receptive from the non-receptive:

These verses, clear and conclusive, are a token of the mercy of thy Lord and a source of guidance for all mankind. They are a light unto those who believe in them and a fire of afflictive torment for those who turn away and reject them.¹⁵⁴

The Báb

From all the evidence presented it follows that in appraising Bahá’u’lláh, the reading of His Words stands as a most vital requirement, a most essential prerequisite. And this must be our next immediate step in our search for Truth.

We should test with the most rigorous objectivity the fruits of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation—touching them and tasting them “with the whole heart.” If we find them pure and fragrant, we should accept and adore them, otherwise disregard or deny them. For if the fruits of a Savior are unsavory or impure, no proof can serve as a substitute, nothing else can suffice.

Thus a fair approach to the testing of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission would be to compare His Scriptures with other Scriptures, to see if His Voice is indeed the Voice of the same Shepherd. A Christian might wish to select segments from the Old Testament, New Testament, and the Writings of the new Revelation, carefully comparing them. If the segments from the Bahá'í Scriptures prove to lack any of the essential ingredients found in the other two Scriptures, then they should be disregarded and denied, otherwise accepted and acclaimed as the divine Fruits.

A fuller examination of Bahá'u'lláh's fruits requires the reading of several volumes, with *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* offering the most comprehensive and diverse choices. Social and philosophical teachings of the new Revelation are best expounded in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, not included in this book. Those interested may wish to consult some of the sources already listed.

Let us conclude this chapter with a passage from a Tablet (letter) by Bahá'u'lláh addressed to a disciple:

Consider this wronged One [a title of Bahá'u'lláh]. 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.¹⁵⁵

9

Ye Shall Know Them By Their Fruits

Matthew 7:16

(Section III)

Selections from the Bahá'í Scriptures

This chapter sets out to examine and to offer a small basketful of fruits from the vast vineyard to Bahá'u'lláh's Works, revealed in a hundred volumes. So far only a small portion from the boundless sources of Bahá'í sacred Scriptures has been translated into English. The difficulties involved in overcoming the obstacles of language are immense. Shoghi Effendi, a master translator, regards the translation of the Bahá'í Scriptures as "the unattainable goal."¹⁵⁶ The greater the beauty of language or style, the more difficult the task of translation. As mentioned earlier, aside from the meaning, the Bahá'í Scriptures are written in a poetic style crowned with unmatched beauty. Communicating or conveying the grace and grandeur, the might and majesty of the Bahá'í Scriptures into other languages constitutes a most trying challenge to future generations.

The gleanings offered here do not constitute a cross section of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings; they should best be regarded as mere tokens drawn from the limited but judicious selection of His Words available in English. They represent the following major sources:

The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh

Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh
The Book of Certitude
Epistle to the Son of the Wolf
The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys
Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh
The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh

The Hidden Words

No other of Bahá'u'lláh's works so succinctly offers the reader as complete and as representative a sample of the ethical fruits of the new Revelation as *The Hidden Words*. It is a small Book filled with Gems, a treasure-house of Celestial Wisdom, a divine Guide to the unfoldment and ennoblement of the human spirit.

All the requirements for attaining purity and self-fulfillment are states in the most exquisite and lofty language. Everything that the soul must seek or surrender, everything that man must know or must do to direct the course of his spiritual destiny is concisely and clearly revealed and set forth by the Pen of the Manifestation—the Revealer of Hidden Wisdom and divine Mysteries.



Selections

O SON OF SPIRIT!

My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.¹⁵⁷

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.¹⁵⁸

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.¹⁵⁹

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.¹⁶⁰

O SON OF SPIRIT!

There is no peace for thee save by renouncing thyself and turning unto Me; for it behooveth thee to glory in My name, not in thine own; to put thy trust in Me and not in thyself, since I desire to be loved alone and above all that is.¹⁶¹

O SON OF BEING!

My love is My stronghold; he that entereth therein is safe and secure, and he that turneth away shall surely stray and perish.¹⁶²

O SON OF SPIRIT!

I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.¹⁶³

O SON OF UTTERANCE!

Turn thy face unto Mine and renounce all save Me; for My sovereignty endureth and My dominion perisheth not. If thou seekest another than Me, yea, if thou searchest the universe for evermore, thy quest will be in vain.¹⁶⁴

O SON OF THE WONDROUS VISION!

I have breathed within thee a breath of My own Spirit, that thou mayest be My lover. Why hast thou forsaken Me and sought a beloved other than Me?¹⁶⁵

O SON OF THE SUPREME!

To the eternal I call thee, yet thou dost seek that which

perisheth. What hath made thee turn away from Our desire
and seek thine own?¹⁶⁶

O SON OF BEING!

Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have
ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not. This
is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.

O SON OF BEING!

Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a
reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and
thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.¹⁶⁷

O SON OF THE SUPREME!

I have made death a messenger of joy to thee. Wherefore dost
thou grieve? I made the light to shed on thee its splendor. Why
dost thou veil thyself therefrom?¹⁶⁸

O SON OF BEING!

Make mention of Me on My earth, that in My heaven I may
remember thee, thus shall Mine eyes and thine be solaced.¹⁶⁹

O SON OF MAN!

For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude
under My decree and patience under My trials.¹⁷⁰

O SON OF MAN!

Should prosperity befall thee, rejoice not, and should abase-
ment come upon thee, grieve not, for both shall pass away
and be no more.¹⁷¹

O SON OF BEING!

Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the
gold, and with gold We test Our servants.¹⁷²

O SON OF MAN!

Bestow My wealth upon My poor, that in heaven thou mayest
draw from stores of unfading splendor and treasures of
imperishable glory. But by My life! To offer up thy soul is a
more glorious thing couldst thou but see with Mine eye.¹⁷³

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.¹⁷⁴

Prayers and Meditations

Bahá'u'lláh has left a rich repository of prayers relating to every human hope or aspiration, dream or desire. Thus in this dispensation, the seekers of serenity, guidance, and inspiration can select and recite prayers and meditations revealed and blessed by the Pen of the Savior of the Age, the revealer of divine purpose.

Bahá'u'lláh has also left many prayers expressing His own supplication and servitude before God. Such prayers offer an intimate knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's own self—His indomitable Spirit, His unswerving Love for the Creator and for humankind, His steadfastness in His Claim, His determination before the onrush of adversities, His absolute Trust in God, and His Loving Counsel to all those athirst for Truth.



Selections

Prayers for the Enrichment of the Spirit^{*}

Create in me a pure heart, O my God, and renew a tranquil conscience within me, O my Hope! Through the spirit of power confirm Thou me in Thy Cause, O my Best-Beloved, and by the light of Thy glory reveal unto me Thy path, O Thou the Goal of my desire! Through the power of Thy transcendent might lift me up unto the heaven of Thy holiness, O Source of my being, and by the breezes of Thine eternity gladden me, O Thou Who art my God! Let Thine everlasting melodies breathe tranquility on me, O my Companion, and let the riches of Thine ancient countenance deliver me from all

^{*} Subsequent headings added by the author.

except Thee, O my Master, and let the tidings of the revelation of Thine incorruptible Essence bring me joy, O Thou Who art the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden!¹⁷⁵

Communion with God

O my Lord! Make Thy beauty to be my food, and Thy presence my drink, and Thy pleasure my hope, and praise of Thee my action, and remembrance of Thee my companion, and the power of Thy sovereignty my succorer, and Thy habitation my home, and my dwelling-place the seat Thou hast sanctified from the limitations imposed upon them who are shut out as by a veil from Thee.

Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.¹⁷⁶

Morning Prayer

I have wakened in Thy shelter, O my God, and it becometh him that seeketh that shelter to abide within the Sanctuary of Thy protection and the Stronghold of Thy defense. Illumine my inner being, O my Lord, with the splendors of the Day-Spring of Thy Revelation, even as Thou didst illumine my outer being with the morning light of Thy favor.¹⁷⁷

Prayer for Healing

Thy name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee is my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succor in both this world and the world to come. Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.¹⁷⁸

Prayers for Protection

I have risen this morning by Thy grace, O my God, and left my home trusting wholly in Thee, and committing myself to Thy care. Send down, then, upon me, out of the heaven of Thy mercy, a blessing from Thy side, and enable me to return home in safety even as Thou didst enable me to set out

under Thy protection with my thoughts fixed steadfastly upon Thee.

There is none other God but Thee, the One, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.¹⁷⁹

Asking for Divine Bounties

O Thou Whose face is the object of my adoration, Whose beauty is my sanctuary, Whose habitation is my goal, Whose praise is my hope, Whose providence is my companion, Whose love is the cause of my being, Whose mention is my solace, Whose nearness is my desire, Whose presence is my dearest wish and highest aspiration, I entreat Thee not to withhold from me the things Thou didst ordain for the chosen ones among Thy servants. Supply me, then, with the good of this world and of the next.

Thou, truly, art the King of all men. There is no God but Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.¹⁸⁰

Bahá'u'lláh's Own Supplication to God

Glory to Thee, O my God! But for the tribulations which are sustained in Thy path, how could Thy true lovers be recognized; and were it not for the trials which are borne for love of Thee, how could the station of such as yearn for Thee be revealed? Thy might beareth me witness! The companions of all who adore Thee are the tears they shed, and the comforters of such as seek Thee are the groans they utter, and the food of them who haste to meet Thee is the fragments of their broken hearts.

How sweet to my taste is the bitterness of death suffered in Thy path, and how precious in my estimation are the shafts of Thine enemies when encountered for the sake of the exaltation of Thy word! Let me quaff in Thy Cause, O my God, whatsoever Thou didst desire, and send down upon me in Thy love all Thou didst ordain. By Thy glory! I wish only what Thou wishest, and cherish what Thou cherishest. In Thee have I, at all times, placed my whole trust and confidence.

Raise up, I implore Thee, O my God, as helpers to this Revelation such as shall be counted worthy of Thy name and of Thy sovereignty, that they may remember me among Thy creatures, and hoist the ensigns of Thy victory in Thy land.

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. No God is there but Thee, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.¹⁸¹

Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God! I implore Thee by Thy Name that hath caused to surge within every drop the oceans of Thy loving-kindness and mercy, and to shine within every atom the luminaries of Thy bountiful blessings and favors,— I implore Thee to adorn every soul with the ornament of Thy love, that none may remain on Thine earth who hath not turned towards Thee, or hath failed to detach himself from all except Thy Self.

Thou hast, verily, O my God, suffered Him Who is the Manifestation of Thine own Self to be afflicted with all manner of adversity in order that Thy servants may ascend unto the pinnacle of Thy gracious favor, and attain unto that which Thou hast, through Thy providence and tender mercies, ordained for them in the Tablets of Thine irrevocable decree. The glory of Thy might beareth me witness! Were they, every moment of their lives, to offer up themselves as a sacrifice in Thy path, they would still have done but little in comparison with the manifold bestowals vouchsafed unto them by Thee.

Grant, therefore, I beseech Thee, that their hearts may be inclined towards Thee, and that their faces may be turned in the direction of Thy good-pleasure. Powerful art Thou to do what Thou willest. No God is there but Thee, the Inaccessible, the All-Glorious, the Ever-Forgiving.

Deign, then, to accept, O my God, from Thy servant the things which he hath shown forth in his love for Thee. Fortify him, then, that he may cling to Thy most exalted Word, and to unloose his tongue to celebrate Thy praise, and cause him to be gathered unto such of Thy people as are nigh unto Thee. Thou art He within Whose grasp is the empire of all things. There is no God but Thee, the Almighty, the Help in Peril, the All-Glorious, the Unconstrained.¹⁸²

Glory to Thee, O Thou Who art the Lord of all worlds, and the Beloved of all such as have recognized Thee! Thou seest me sitting under a sword hanging on a thread, and art well aware that in such a state I have not fallen short of my duty towards Thy Cause, nor failed to shed abroad Thy praise, and declare Thy virtues, and deliver all Thou hadst prescribed unto me in Thy Tablets. Though the sword be ready to fall on my head, I call Thy loved ones with such a calling that the hearts are carried away towards the horizon of Thy majesty and grandeur.

Purge out thoroughly their ears, O my Lord, that they may hearken unto the sweet melodies that have ascended from the right hand of the throne of Thy glory. I swear by Thy might! Were any one to attune his ears to their harmony he would soar up to the kingdom of Thy revelation, wherein every created thing proclaimeth that Thou art God, and that there is none other God save Thee, the Omnipotent, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Cleanse Thou, O my God, the eyes of Thy servants, and so transport them by the sweetness of Thine utterances that calamities will be powerless to hinder them from turning unto Thee, and from directing their eyes towards the horizon of Thy Revelation.

Darkness hath encompassed every land, O my God, and caused most of Thy servants to tremble. I beseech Thee, by Thy Most Great Name, to raise in every city a new creation that shall turn towards Thee, and shall remember Thee amidst Thy servants, and shall unfurl by virtue of their utterances and wisdom the ensigns of Thy victory, and shall detach themselves from all created things.

Potent art Thou to do Thy pleasure. No God is there but Thee, the Most Powerful, He Whose help is implored by all men.¹⁸³

The Book of Certitude

(also known as *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*)

This book is revealed in response to questions raised by a seeker of truth. It unseals “the sealed Wine of mysteries,” and unveils the symbolism and the essence of all the Scriptures of the past.

The Kitáb-i-Íqán indicates how the seeker of truth can rise above the prevailing perplexity and confusion, how he can move from doubt to certitude, and from unbelief to belief.

It offers proofs of divine Revelation, portrays in a moving language man's refusal to accept and acknowledge, in ever age, the Gift of divine Guidance, and conveys in a unique tone and style the dramatic story of the unfoldment of the perennial Faith of God, the unveiling of the eternal Truth.

Bahá'u'lláh introduces *The Book of Certitude* in these words:

...all the Scriptures and the mysteries thereof are condensed into this brief account. So much so, that were a person to ponder it a while in his heart, he would discover from all that hath been said the mysteries of the Words of God, and would apprehend the meaning of whatever hath been manifested by that ideal King.¹⁸⁴



Selections

Spiritual Requirements for Recognizing the Manifestation of God

In the name of our Lord, the Exalted, the Most High. 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.¹⁸⁵

Why Have People Always Rejected the Divine Messengers?

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.¹⁸⁶

Reflect, what could have been the motive for such deeds? What could have prompted such behavior towards the Revealers of the beauty of the All-Glorious? 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.¹⁸⁷

The Attributes of a True Seeker

But, O my brother, when a true seeker determineth 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, shepherdless, 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 smoldering 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 quenbeth 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 every day 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. They have already been mentioned in connection with the requirements of the wayfarers that tread the Path of Positive Knowledge. When the detached wayfarer and sincere seeker hath fulfilled these essential conditions, then and only then can he be called a true seeker. Whosoever 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.¹⁸⁸

Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

This work is addressed to a cruel and cunning Muslim priest who, along with his father, had inflicted death, distress, and torment on some of Bahá'u'lláh's most beloved and most distinguished disciples. Though addressed to a symbol of denial, it is a Call to humankind as a whole. This weighty volume covers and clarifies a divergent, illuminating, and inspiring array of precepts.



Selections

A Warning and Admonition to the Despotic Muslim Priest

O heedless one! Rely not on thy glory, and thy power. Thou art even as the last trace of sunlight upon the mountain-top. Soon will it fade away as decreed by God, the All-Possessing, the Most High. Thy glory and the glory of such as are like thee have been taken away, and this verily is what hath been ordained by the One with Whom is the Mother Tablet. Where is he to be found who contended with God, and whither is gone he that gainsaid His signs, and turned aside from His sovereignty? Where are they who have slain His chosen ones and spilt the blood of His holy ones? Reflect, that haply thou mayest perceive the breaths of thine acts, O foolish doubter!¹⁸⁹

Suffering Cannot Obscure the Radiance of the Divine Spirit

Know thou that though My body be beneath the swords of My foes, and My limbs be beset with incalculable afflictions, yet My spirit is filled with a gladness with which all the joys of the earth can never compare.¹⁹⁰

By God! This Wronged One would not barter this place of exile for the Most Sublime Habitation. In the estimation of men of insight whatsoever befallerth in the path of God is manifest glory and a supreme attainment.¹⁹¹

Thankfulness in Spite of Afflictions

The one true God well knoweth, and all the company of His trusted ones testify, that this Wronged One hath, at all times, been faced with dire peril. But for the tribulations that have touched Me in the path of God, life would have held no sweetness for Me, and My existence would have profited Me nothing. For them who are endued with discernment, and whose eyes are fixed upon the Sublime Vision, it is no secret that I have been, most of the days of My life, even as a slave, sitting under a sword hanging on a thread, knowing not whether it would fall soon or late upon him. And yet, notwithstanding all this We render thanks unto God, the Lord of the worlds. Mine inner tongue reciteth, in the day-time and in the night-season...¹⁹²

The Sovereign Remedy for the Ills of the World

That which God hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of 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.¹⁹³

The Exalted Station of Trustworthiness

We will now mention unto thee Trustworthiness and the station thereof in the estimation of God, thy Lord, the Lord of the Mighty Throne. One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island. Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst. Turning Our face to the right, We beheld what the pen is powerless to describe; nor can it set forth that which the eye of the Lord of Mankind witnessed in that most sanctified, that most sublime, that blest, and most exalted Spot. Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: ‘O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense

whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings.’ Thus have We sent down for thee that which will draw men nigh unto the Lord of creation.¹⁹⁴

The Way to Touch the Hearts

O people of Bahá! Subdue the citadels of men’s hearts with the swords of wisdom and of utterance. They that dispute, as prompted by their desires, are indeed wrapped in a palpable veil.¹⁹⁵

Profile of a Pure and Radiant Spirit

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer to the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.¹⁹⁶

The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys

This is perhaps the most mystic and inscrutable of Bahá'u'lláh's Works available in English. It unfolds and enumerates the stages of man's journey towards God; reveals, in a language at once poetic and perplex, man's potential for attaining perfection and nobility, and his sublime and celestial destiny, if he but turns to the light instead of darkness, seeks the Gems of Divine Wisdom instead of the perishable joys of flesh, and undertakes to tread the long but wondrous and enchanting path of purification and illumination.



Selections

The Valley of Search

The steed of this Valley is patience; without patience the wayfarer on this journey will reach nowhere and attain no goal. Nor should he ever be downhearted; if he strive for a hundred thousand years and yet fail to behold the beauty of the Friend, he should not falter...

It is incumbent on these servants that they cleanse the heart—which is the wellspring of divine treasures—from every marking, and that they turn away from imitation, which is following the traces of their forefathers and sires, and shut the door of friendliness and enmity upon all the people of the earth.

In this journey the seeker reacheth a stage wherein he seeth all created things wandering distracted in search of the Friend. How many a Jacob will he see, hunting after his Joseph; he will behold many a lover, hasting to seek the Beloved, he will witness a world of desiring ones searching after the One Desired. At every moment he findeth a weighty matter, in every hour he becometh aware of a mystery; for he hath taken

his heart away from both worlds, and set out for the Ka'bih* of the Beloved. At every step, aid from the Invisible Realm will attend him and the heat of his search will grow.¹⁹⁷

***Each Soul Reflects the Light of Truth
According to His Own Capacity***

It is clear to thine Eminence that all the variations which the wayfarer in the stages of his journey beholdeth in the realms of being, proceed from his own vision. We shall give an example of this, that its meaning may become fully clear: Consider the visible sun; although it shineth with one radiance upon all things, and at the behest of the King of Manifestation bestoweth light on all creation, yet in each place it becometh manifest and sheddeth its bounty according to the potentialities of that place. For instance, in a mirror it reflecteth its own disk and shape, and this is due to the sensitivity of the mirror; in a crystal it maketh fire to appear, and in other things it showeth only the effect of its shining, but not its full disk. And yet, through that effect, by the command of the Creator, it traineth each thing according to the quality of that thing, as thou observest.¹⁹⁸

The Beginning and the End

“Verily we are from God, and to Him shall we return.”
(Quoted from the Qur’án.)¹⁹⁹

***The Supreme Love of the
Manifestation for Humankind***

And were it not contrary to the Law of the Book, I would verily bequeath a part of My possessions to the one who would put Me to death, and I would name him My heir; yea, I would bestow upon him a portion, would render him thanks, would seek to refresh Mine eyes with the touch of his hand.²⁰⁰

* The holy Sanctuary at Mecca. Here the word means “goal.”

***The Station of Man
if He but Turns to God***

O My Servant! Obey Me and I shall make thee like unto Myself. I say “Be,” and it is, and thou shalt say “Be,” and it shall be.²⁰¹

***Gleanings from the
Writings of Bahá’u’lláh***

This is the most complete and comprehensive reference on Bahá’u’lláh’s Works available in English. It covers a wide spectrum of precepts ranging from the purpose of man’s creation, his duty and destiny, to the manifold mysteries of Divine Wisdom.



Selections

***Every Revelator Reveals a
Preordained Measure of Truth***

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

radiance of its light. Dismayed and overpowered, they would cease to exist.²⁰²

***The Loftiness of the Life Beyond
and the Station of a Pure and Sanctified Soul***

And now concerning thy question regarding the soul of man and its survival after death. Know thou of a truth that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress until it attaineth the presence of God, in a state and condition which neither the revolution of ages and centuries, nor the changes and chances of this world, can alter. It will endure as long as the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His dominion and power will endure. It will manifest the signs of God and His attributes, and will reveal His loving-kindness and bounty. The movement of My Pen is stilled when it attempteth to befittingly describe the loftiness and glory of so exalted a station. The honor with which the Hand of Mercy will invest the soul is such as no tongue can adequately reveal, nor any other earthly agency describe. Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world. Such a soul liveth and moveth in accordance with the Will of its Creator, and entereth the all-highest Paradise. The Maids of Heaven, inmates of the loftiest mansions, will circle around it, and the Prophets of God and His chosen ones will seek its companionship. With them that soul will freely converse, and will recount unto them that which it hath been made to endure in the path of God, the Lord of all worlds. If any man be told that which hath been ordained for such a soul in the worlds of God, the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, his whole being will instantly blaze out in his great longing to attain that most exalted, that sanctified and resplendent station....The nature of the soul after death can never be described, nor is it meet and permissible to reveal its whole character to the eyes of men. The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying Their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend,

in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High. The light which these souls radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples. They are like unto leaven which leaveneth the world of being, and constitute the animating force through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Through them the clouds rain their bounty upon men, and the earth bringeth forth its fruits. All things must needs have a cause, a motive power, an animating principle. These souls and symbols of detachment have provided, and will continue to provide, the supreme moving impulse in the world of being. The world beyond is as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while still in the womb of its mother. When the soul attaineth the Presence of God, it will assume the form that best befitteth its immortality and is worthy of its celestial habitation. Such an existence is a contingent and not an absolute existence, inasmuch as the former is preceded by a cause, whilst the latter is independent thereof. Absolute existence is strictly confined to God, exalted be His glory. Well is it with them that apprehend this truth.²⁰³

Human Suffering in This World and the Joys and Glories of the Life Beyond

O My servants! Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. You are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain.²⁰⁴

A Call to the Followers of All Religions

O Jews! If ye be intent on crucifying once again Jesus, the Spirit of God, put Me to death, for He hath once more, in My person, been made manifest unto you. Deal with Me as ye

wish, for I have vowed to lay down My life in the path of God. I will fear no one, though the powers of earth and heaven be leagued against Me. Followers of the Gospel! If ye cherish the desire to slay Muhammad, the Apostle of God, seize Me and put an end to My life, for I am He, and My Self is His Self. Do unto Me as ye like, for the deepest longing of Mine heart is to attain the presence of My Best-Beloved in His Kingdom of Glory. Such is the Divine decree, if ye know it. Followers of Muhammad! If it be your wish to riddle with your shafts the breast of Him Who hath caused His Book the Bayán to be sent down unto you, lay hands on Me and persecute Me, for I am His Well-Beloved, the revelation of His own Self, though My name be not His name. I have come in the shadows of the clouds of glory, and am invested by God with invincible sovereignty. He, verily, is the Truth, the Knower of things unseen. I, verily, anticipate from you the treatment ye have accorded unto Him that came before Me. To this all things, verily, witness, if ye be of those who hearken. O people of the Bayán! If ye have resolved to shed the blood of Him Whose coming the Báb hath proclaimed, Whose advent Muhammad hath prophesied, and Whose Revelation Jesus Christ Himself hath announced, behold Me standing, ready and defenseless, before you. Deal with Me after your own desires.²⁰⁵

The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh

This book contains some of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets addressed "to the kings and rulers of the world, to its religious leaders, and to humankind in general." These Tablets comprise Bahá'u'lláh's most emphatic words on His Claim and on His station as the supreme savior of the world, the King of the Kingdom of God, the Glory of the Lord and the Glory of the Kingdom, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of the Vineyard, Christ returned in the Glory of the Father, the Inaugurator of the Cycle of Fulfillment, and the Promised One of all ages and religions.



Selections

The Christians are Called

O concourse of Christians! We have, on a previous occasion, revealed Ourselves unto you, and ye recognized Me not. This is yet another occasion vouchsafed unto you. This is the Day of God; turn ye unto Him...The Beloved One loveth not that ye be consumed with the fire of your desires. Were ye to be shut out as by a veil from Him, this would be for no other reason than your own waywardness and ignorance. Ye make mention of Me, and know Me not. Ye call upon Me, and are heedless of My Revelation....O people of the Gospel! They who were not in the Kingdom have now entered it, whilst We behold you, in this day, tarrying at the gate. Rend the veils asunder by the power of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Bounteous, and enter, then, in My name My Kingdom. Thus biddeth you He Who desireth for you everlasting life...We behold you, O children of the Kingdom, in darkness. This, verily, beseemeth you not. Are ye, in the face of the Light, fearful because of your deeds? Direct yourselves towards Him...Verily, He (Jesus) said: 'Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.' In this day, however, We say: 'Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become quickeners of mankind.'²⁰⁶

A Call to the Pope

Dwellest thou in palaces whilst He Who is the King of Revelation liveth in the most desolate of abodes? Leave them unto such as desire them, and set thy face with joy and delight towards the Kingdom...Arise in the name of thy Lord, the God of Mercy, amidst the peoples of the earth, and seize thou the Cup of Life with the hands of confidence, and first drink thou therefrom, and proffer it then to such as turn towards it amongst the peoples of all faiths...

Call thou to remembrance Him Who was the Spirit (Jesus), Who when He came, the most learned of His age pronounced

judgment against Him in His own country, whilst he who was only a fisherman believed in Him. Take heed, then, ye men of understanding heart! Thou, in truth, art one of the suns of the heaven of His names. Guard thyself, lest darkness spread its veils over thee, and fold thee away from His light...Consider those who opposed the Son (Jesus), when He came unto them with sovereignty and power. How many the Pharisees who were waiting to behold Him, and were lamenting over their separation from Him! And yet, when the fragrance of His coming was wafted over them, and His beauty was unveiled, they turned aside from Him and disputed with Him...None save a very few, who were destitute of any power amongst men, turned towards His face. And yet, today, every man endowed with power and invested with sovereignty prideth himself on His Name!....

The Word which the Son concealed is made manifest. It hath been sent down in the form of the human temple in this day. Blessed be the Lord Who is the Father! He, verily, is come unto the nations in His most great majesty. Turn your faces towards Him, O concourse of the righteous...This is the day whereon the Rock (Peter) crieth out and shouteth, and celebrateth the praise of its Lord, the All-Possessing, the Most High, saying: “Lo! The Father is come, and that which ye were promised in the Kingdom is fulfilled!...” My body longeth for the cross, and Mine head waiteth the thrust of the spear, in the path of the All-Merciful, that the world may be purged from its transgressions.²⁰⁷

Other Bahá’í Scriptures Available in English

By Bahá’u’lláh:

- *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*

By the Báb:

- *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*

By ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

- *Some Answered Questions*
- *Foundations of World Unity*
- *The Secret of Divine Civilization*
- *Paris Talks*
- *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*
- *Promulgation of Universal Peace*
- *A Traveler’s Narrative*

Part III

A Final Appeal

Is not the Lord in Zion?

Jeremiah 8:19

Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? When I called was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver?

Isaiah 50:2

10

Is Not the Lord in Zion?

Jeremiah 8:19

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.

Isaiah 1:18

...do not despise prophetic utterances, but bring them all to the test.

I Thessalonians 5:19-20

- This chapter covers the following themes:
- Our search for truth should never end.
- Reason is our most dependable guide to truth
- To search for truth or fail to search for truth—that is the most vital decision we can ever make.
- The consequences of accepting or rejecting the Redeemer of the age are everlasting.
- We should not take our responsibilities lightly.

Search for Truth Should Never End

The story of the coming of the Prince of Peace and the proofs of His Mission have been briefly and objectively presented here. The decision to accept or reject the evidence is yours to make. God never imposes His will upon His children: each person is

given the freedom of choice and is accountable to Him for his own acts.

Say, verily God hath caused all created things to enter beneath the shade of the tree of affirmation, except those who are endowed with the faculty of understanding. Theirs is the choice either to believe in God their Lord, and put their whole trust in Him, or to shut themselves out from Him and refuse to believe with certitude in His signs. These two groups sail upon two seas: the sea of affirmation and the sea of negation.²⁰⁸

The Báb

As intended, the chief segments of the Prophetic Profile were drawn together and put to the test. Many other supporting segments could be added, but for the sake of brevity they were left out. If you still have some unresolved questions, you will do well not to give up hope or lose patience; for the search for truth never ends, and man can never contain in his finite mind the infinite boundaries of reality. Indeed, it is impossible to find anyone who could reasonably claim to have full access to the intricate and vast spectrum of *any* reality in the universe, whether physical or spiritual.

And this in itself is indicative of Divine Wisdom. For if no mysteries remained, then the challenge and the joy of search and discovery would be lost and forgotten. A life devoid of growing endeavors and encounters—reaching out to new or unknown horizons, raising and expanding one’s vision—would be dull indeed.

It is one of our deepest and profoundest joys to search for truth not only during our brief passing through this mortal realm, but during our unending journey throughout all the infinite and exalted worlds to come.

Thus no follower of Bahá’u’lláh, however astute or learned, can claim to have complete or unlimited knowledge of divine Words. For he knows that mysteries will for ever constitute an integral part of human destiny. A seeker of Truth who acknowledges Bahá’u’lláh bases his decision not on a few details he may not know, but on an overwhelming array of evidence he *does*

know—signs pointing clearly and unmistakably to Bahá'u'lláh's Divine Mission.

Such a seeker begins with an open mind—accumulating facts, examining the evidence, expanding his vision—to see whether he can discern a distinct Pattern, a grand Design, a Profile characterized by an underlying order, purpose, and harmony, one unattainable by chance. If he *does* find such a Pattern, he has no choice but to regard it as planned and purposeful. Those who accept Bahá'u'lláh do so out of the firm conviction that a Pattern *is* discernible.

Reason, Our Surest Guide to Truth

A great gift God has granted us is the gift of reason, to be used in all of our endeavors. Human mind is not directed or governed by two standards or systems of thinking or judging, one to be used in religion, the other in remaining realms of life; one to be applied to spiritual entities, the other to temporal. There has been and there will always be a single standard. Religion must be appreciated and understood through the same mental powers that unravel the mysteries of science. Such distinct gifts or guides as reflection or thoughtful inquiry have been adored and exalted by all the great religions. We are commanded by the Creator Himself to rely on reasoning:

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord...

Isaiah 1:18

Paul said:

Prove all things...

I Thessalonians 5:21

Test everything...

I Thessalonians 5:21 NIV

What test? The test of reason. HOW can we prove anything without reasoning? What substitutes can we find for “the gift of understanding?” Should we prove our beliefs through blind faith? HOW, then, can we arrive at a conclusion? Are superstition, conformity, and dogmatism acceptable substitutes for reason? As Jesus predicted (see Chapter 2), false prophets have

silenced the Voice of Reason, and buried the Spirit of inquiry and independent search for truth beneath dogmatism, conformity, and blind faith. It is the duty of every seeker of truth to revive this Spirit and depend on it as the chief guide in his search for truth. If reason is discarded, demeaned, or disqualified, what other power can we command with which to judge? Without the aid of reason, are we more justified in supporting our beliefs than idolaters or occultists.

In our search for religious realities, we will do well to walk in the wake of the scientist, seeking to learn from his ways or means of search for truth. The scientist, in his attempt to prove or disprove a theory or hypothesis, begins by asking broad and inclusive questions. Questions such as: “Do the known data indicate any interrelationship?” “Do the main facts meet at one point, and do they point to a definite direction?” At the earlier stages of his search he does not and cannot expect to know *all* the details. His chief concern is to know whether the main pieces of evidence fit and whether chance could be ruled out as an explanation of the observed relationships.

After weighing or assessing the accumulated evidence, if he finds that the basic facts fit and chance cannot account for the harmonious relationships, he accepts the theory even though some details are still lacking; otherwise, he rejects it as untrue or unfounded. This is the common and acceptable method of research in all scientific endeavors.

Now if in our search for spiritual realities we decide to be as rigorous and exacting as a true scientist, we should expect as much as he does, no more, no less. For instance, concerning the claim of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, we should raise questions such as: Do the known facts about them show some kind of interrelationship? Do the proofs of divine Revelation recorded in all the Scriptures of the past find their full realization in their lives? Do the major pieces—the seven criteria presented in this book—fit, and does the sequence of events in their lives give us a glimpse of the grandeur and glory of the Prophetic Profile? Can we in any way regard their fruits as unacceptable or below the standard set by other Manifestations? Could we expect a greater sacrifice

from a Savior than that shown by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh? Could we doubt their knowledge “of the things to come”? Could we consider the fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies in their lives the product of chance? Could we expect Words loftier, nobler, more creative and spontaneous? Could we expect greater wisdom in their sayings and greater consistency in their claim?

If a Man unschooled and untaught, single and alone, from behind prison walls, and under the overwhelming forces of oppression and opposition succeeds in the mightiest and most formidable task of conquering the citadels of the human heart and educating the hidden treasures of human potential, and if He further accomplishes the awesome and equally essential Mission of molding the diverse and antagonistic elements of society into a cohesive entity, then, what else should we expect from Him? If God endows a false savior with such an astounding array of evidence, then how could He justly blame or punish those who accept Him and believe in Him? If the proofs of the Mission of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are insufficient then how could one ever prove the validity of the claim of the great Saviors of the past? Has any Divine Messenger ever appeared with such a vast spectrum of clear and compelling proofs?

In your final judgment of the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, pray, ponder, and meditate in your heart, asking yourself: “If someone asked me: ‘Why should I believe in your Faith? Why should I believe in Jesus or Moses or Abraham...?’, how would *I* respond? What proofs would *I* present him?” Please ponder upon this question as long as necessary, and see if you can find even as much as a small fraction of the proofs presented in this work. If you can come up with proofs that exceed to the slightest degree the proofs of this work, you have every reason to deny the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, otherwise you have an awesome responsibility to submit to the Will of the All-Knowing and to the Call of His supreme Savior and Redeemer Of the world.*

* If you responded to the questions presented at the beginning of this book (pp. 19-20), you may wish to go back and compare your original response with the facts you found later in this book as proofs of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

In the first volume the laws of probability were, applied to specific prophecies, which yielded this number: 4×10^{97} . We can do the same here: set probability ratios for every qualification, which according to this volume, Bahá'u'lláh has fulfilled. We can say what is the probability that by chance an individual:

- Is endowed with flawless character.
- Possesses supreme wisdom and knowledge, clarifies and reconciles the complexities of sacred Scriptures.
- Speaks with divine authority.
- Reveals teachings that give life to the world, that are praised by some of the greatest minds of the century.
- Shows knowledge of the things to come.
- Exposes himself to his vicious enemies without fear.
- Makes the most stupendous and awesome claim: to be the Lord.
- Shows superhuman powers, yet refrains from using them as evidence
- Gives up earthly gains, powers, and pleasures.
- Endures the most severe adversities and praises God for his sufferings.
- Attracts millions of followers.
- Establishes a unified world community that extends to the farthest reaches of the earth.
- Loves his enemies and prays for them.
- Keeps his teachings unchanged.
- Remains steadfast in his claim under extreme pressure and pain.
- Reveals knowledge spontaneously without prior education or research.
- Creates a new and beautiful style in two languages (Persian and Arabic).

- Writes and speaks beautifully in a language (Arabic) he has not studied.
- Accomplishes his goals from behind prison walls in spite of millions of watchful enemies, among them several powerful and cruel kings as well as thousands of extremely influential and fanatical religious leaders.
- Gives his life for his beliefs.
- Never asks anyone to help him.
- Raises a son endowed with superhuman wisdom and knowledge.
- Educates a son who models his teachings with perfection.
- Educates a daughter who models his teachings with perfection.

All the preceding, (except the last three) apply not only to Bahá'u'lláh but to the Báb as well. Thus we have a total of $23+20=43$ distinctions and achievements. To arrive at a probability figure we need to ask: what is the probability by chance that a prisoner and exile can establish a unified world community with several million followers? We should ask the same question about all the other distinctions listed. Some of the distinctions and accomplishments are extremely rare. For instance, not even one in a billion can by chance or good fortune, establish a unified world community from behind prison walls. No one in eighty billion (the estimated population of the earth since Biblical times) has been able to clarify the complexities and apparent contradictions of the Bible. Other distinctions or accomplishments may not be so unusual. To be cautious in our assessment let us adopt an average probability ratio of one in a thousand for each of the above distinctions and achievements. In that case our total probability figure will be: 1000^{43} or 10^{45} .

What is the probability that out of the total population of the earth since Biblical times anyone could have appeared with all these distinctions and accomplishments by good luck? Scholars have estimated the population of the earth since that time at eighty billion. To be safe we will increase this number to a hundred

billion. To arrive at the intended figure we must divide our total probability figure which yields us 10^{35} . How large is 10^{35} ?

If we add the preceding figure to what we discovered for Biblical prophecies (Volume I, Chapter 25), we arrive at this figure:

$$4 \times 10^{97} \times 10^{35} = 4 \times 10^{132}$$

If we include all prophecies covered in Volumes I and II from various religions, we arrive at this figure.

$$4 \times 10^{157} \times 4 \times 10^{35} = 16 \times 10^{192}, \text{ or } 1.6 \times 10^{193}$$

In rounded figures the above number equals about 10^{112} times the number of elementary particles (protons, neutrons, electrons) in the known universe!

$$10^{192} / 10^{80} = 10^{112}$$

In other words, as it is unlikely that a person could pick a given particles in a universe 10^{112} times bigger than it appears to us, it is equally unlikely that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh could have achieved their distinctions and accomplishment by sheer chance or good luck.

Some scholars believe that a probability ratio above 10^{50} cannot happen by chance. The odds against it are so large as to be equal to impossible. Our figure is 10^{192} or 10^{142} times above this level. We are facing a question that is impossible 10^{142} times.

The Most Vital Decision You Will Ever Make

To accept or reject Bahá'u'lláh is by far the most vital and consequential decision you will ever make, for upon it depends the whole destiny of humankind and your own destiny, not in this world alone, but in *all* the worlds to come. We are told:

A man reaps what he sows.

Galatians 6:7 NIV

In the material world we can clearly discern the operations of this universal law; in the spiritual world the results are usually not so obvious, yet they are as definite.

All the divine Teachers have taught that man cannot attain contentment unless he recognizes his true self and harmonizes his life accordingly—a goal attainable only through the recognition and acceptance of divine teachings, revealed by the Redeemer of the Age. If one shuts his mind and obscures his vision, he simply stifles his own fulfillment, denying himself all the spiritual joys and pleasures ordained for him. The recognition of the Divine Manifestation fills man with such a confidence and courage as to enable him to face life and accept, even welcome, all its strains and adversities. The faith and the hope gained through such a recognition, ennobles and enchants the human spirit and sustains and strengthens it against all the traumas and trials of the earthly life with all its disappointments, deceits, uncertainties, and vacillations.

The Lord is my light and my salvation...The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Psalms 27:1

Without recognizing the Divine Purpose, life can offer no sustained meaning, no lasting hope, no bright stars upon the horizon. Life without a purpose stands as a continuing drama with failures, frustrations, and traumas following it as a dark shadow at every step 9 even unto the very end. What a lonely, meaningless, and desperate world would it be without the Divine Light. The words of a famed but despairing philosopher echo incessantly through the vast emptiness of such a dark-ridden drama: “The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, towards a goal that few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long.”

The divine Manifestations are “the light of the world:”

For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light. Psalms 36:9

Without them the human spirit sinks in despair and descends to the depths of darkness, becoming a bondman to the flesh, seeking to satiate its unceasing thirst through fleeting passions and desires—a state most deserving of the beasts of the fields. Is it worthy of man—God’s noblest and most exalted creation—to

vie with the animals, in a race he may never hope to win? For seeking earthly comforts and pleasures constitutes the animals' ultimate end or desire, one they can fully attain, without all the frustrations and failures that characterize the works of humans.

A distinguished and famed scholar, seeking purpose in his past and hope for his future, came to a despairing conclusion: he could find none. He wondered why in spite of all his marvelous achievements, he had failed to find the sense of serenity and contentment he had sought for. He had attained his fairest dreams and desires, yet could find no ultimate goal, no bright stars upon the horizon toward which he could direct the course of his destiny, no compass which could point the way, no sense of deep satisfaction which could uplift and enchant his spirit. At last in the depths of despair he wrote: "O that I could free myself from the fetters of this world and partake of the infinite bounties of the earth. O that I could soar like the birds of heaven—sit upon the branches and rest upon the blooms..."²⁰⁹

If man could muster the courage to pull himself out of the slough of materialism and indifference towards the Divine Call, he would find a freedom beyond his fondest dreams—a freedom far beyond that experienced by the birds of heaven and the fowls of the field. He would find himself in an utterly different but infinitely superior domain, with such joys and ecstasies that once fully realized, he would in no wise exchange for all the attainments, the powers, the pleasures, and the wealth of the world. What is so saddening is that such spiritual joys lie within the reach of all seekers of serenity, and yet so many fail to recognize them, searching in vain for the unreachable: peace and contentment through worldly gains or desires. Alas, they see Happiness in its full glory, yet they fail to recognize it.

O SON OF SPIRIT!

There is no peace for thee save by renouncing thyself and turning unto Me...²¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF UTTERANCE!

Turn thy face unto Mine and renounce all save Me; for My sovereignty endureth and My dominion perisheth not. If thou

seekest another than Me, yea, if thou searchest the universe
for evermore, thy quest will be in vain.²¹¹ Bahá'u'lláh

And whoso turneth away from My remembrance, truly his
shall be a life of misery. Qur'án 20:124

...I am come that they might have life, and that they might
have it abundantly. John 10:10

...in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are
pleasures for evermore. Psalms 16:11

Reward and Punishment in the Life to Come

Ye shall, ere long, discover the consequences of that which ye
shall have done in this vain life, and shall be repaid for them.
This, verily, is the truth, the undoubted truth.

...Ye shall, of a truth, be asked of your doings, shall be called
to account for your failure in duty with regard to the Cause
of God...²¹² Bahá'u'lláh

The rewards of faithfulness to God's covenant—namely, the
recognition of His latest Manifestation—do not terminate in this
world. The harvest does not ripen during the earthly season. Ours
is the stage of germination, the first phase on a voyage to an
unending and ever-unfolding Destiny. If the Voyage ended here,
reaching its consummation in this realm of existence, perhaps
life's burden with all its stress and strain could be carried on and
even tolerated. For what is seventy or eighty or even a hundred
years compared to eternity? Yes, life is not destined to end here:

For we are...sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on
the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.

I Chronicles 29:15

O CHILDREN OF NEGLIGENCE!

Set not your affections on mortal sovereignty and rejoice not
therein. Ye are even as the unwary bird that with full confi-
dence warbleth upon the bough; till of a sudden the fowler
Death throws it upon the dust, and the melody, the form and

the color are gone, leaving not a trace. Wherefore take heed,
O bondslaves of desire!²¹³ Bahá'u'lláh

...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into
the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for
them that love him. I Corinthians 2:9

The Drama continues, for the divine Wisdom demands that we should *never* escape from our own selves. We are destined to “carry” our inner beings, our selves, incessantly through an unending journey toward our Creator, the object and desire of every seeking soul. At no time can we escape the whispering voice of our own conscience.

What we carry with us is determined by the decisions we make in this life. If the decisions are in conformity with Divine Will they will be crowned with everlasting reward; if they run contrary to Divine Will they will be followed by lasting punishment. Without question, the most important decision we can ever make concerns the accepting or rejecting of God’s latest Manifestation. Bahá'u'lláh writes:

For the highest and most excelling grace bestowed upon men is the grace of “attaining unto the Presence of God” and of His recognition, which has been promised unto all people. This is the utmost degree of grace vouchsafed unto man by the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days, and the fullness of His absolute bounty upon His creatures.²¹⁴

We are told that the denial of the Divine Manifestation—once He has established His sovereignty and His proofs—culminates in the greatest deprivation from God’s Bounties, the consequences of which endure eternally throughout all the worlds to come. Such warnings and admonitions constitute perhaps a most emphatic theme of the Scriptures, as if the Divine Wisdom ordains that no one should remain ignorant of a Truth upon which will depend his whole destiny in all eternity.

Our ultimate purpose in this world is to be born from the darkness of unbelief to the luminous realms of faith and knowledge, to be resurrected from spiritual death, so that our names may be written

in the Book of Life. Both Daniel and John the Revelator reveal the state of those who rise or fail to rise to the new life:

At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then, But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered, Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awaken: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Daniel 12:1-3 NIV

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it...And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books...If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11, 12, 15 NIV

The Báb confirms the words of both Daniel and John the Revelator:

Likewise better is guidance for him who is guided than all the things that exist on earth, for by reason of this guidance he will, after his death, gain admittance into Paradise, whereas by reason of the things of the world below, he will, after his death, receive his deserts. Hence God desireth that all men should be guided aright through the potency of the Words of Him Whom God shall make manifest. However, such as are conceited will not suffer themselves to be guided. They will be debarred from the Truth, some by reason of their learning, others on account of their glory and power, and still others due to reasons of their own, none of which shall be of any avail at the hour of death.²¹⁵

In several parables Jesus reveals the destiny of those who, for various reasons, deny the Redeemer of the new age. The parables all point to deprivation from the Divine Kingdom, remoteness from God, or inability to enter through the Gates of Heaven:

‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’ But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ Matthew 25:11-12 NIV

Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’ Luke 13:25 NIV

Compare the two preceding passages with the following words of the Báb:

Verily, on the First Day We flung open the gates of Paradise unto all the peoples of the world, and exclaimed: ‘O all ye created things! Strive to gain admittance into Paradise, since ye have, during all your lives, held fast unto virtuous deeds in order to attain unto it.’ Surely all men yearn to enter therein, but alas, they are unable to do so by reason of that which their hands have wrought.²¹⁶

I tell you, not one of those men who were invited [but refused to respond] will get a taste of my banquet.

Luke 14:24 NIV

Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Matthew 7:23 NIV

He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 24:51 NIV

We are also told in plain language:

But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Matthew 10:33

...if we deny him, he also will deny us. II Timothy 2:12

The Qur’án presents us with the same message:

As for those who believe not in the signs [the proofs, the revealed Words] of God, or that they shall ever meet Him

[the Lord],* these of my mercy shall despair, and for them doth a grievous chastisement await. Qur'án 29:23

Verily, they who have charged our signs [proofs, Words] with falsehood and have turned away from them in their pride, Heaven's gates shall not be opened to them, nor shall they enter Paradise, until the camel passeth through the eye of the needle. Qur'án 7:38

We find the same message also in the Writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh:

This mortal life is sure to perish; its pleasures are bound to fade away and ere long ye shall return unto God, distressed with pangs of remorse, for presently ye shall be roused from your slumber, and ye shall soon find yourselves in the presence of God and will be asked of your doings.

Say, how dare ye flagrantly deny the verses sent down from the heaven of justice, yet ye read the Books of God revealed in the past? How do ye repudiate the meeting with your Lord which was appointed with you aforesaid, and fail in this Day to heed His warning? Indeed, by adhering to forms and by following the promptings of your selfish desires, ye have deprived yourselves of the good-pleasure of your Lord, except those whom their Lord hath endowed with knowledge and who in this Day render thanks unto Him for the bounty of being identified with the true Faith of God. Therefore announce ye the Message unto those who manifest virtue and teach them the ways of the One True God, that haply they may comprehend...

These verses, clear and conclusive, are a token of the mercy of thy Lord and a source of guidance for all mankind. They are a light unto those who believe in them and a fire of afflictive torment for those who turn away and reject them.²¹⁷

The Báb

* "Meeting the Lord" refers to the advent of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, See the many references already cited.

He ordereth all things. He maketh His signs clear, that ye may have firm faith in attaining the presence of your Lord.

Qur'án 13:2

Let His love be a storehouse of treasure for your souls, on the Day when naught else but Him shall profit you, the Day when every pillar shall tremble, when the very skins of men shall creep, when all eyes shall stare up with terror. Say: O people! Fear ye God, and turn not away disdainfully from His Revelation. Fall prostrate on your faces before God, and celebrate His praise in the daytime and in the night season.²¹⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Say: Is there any doubt concerning God? Behold how He hath come down from the heaven of His grace, girded with power and invested with sovereignty. Is there any doubt concerning His signs? Open ye your eyes, and consider His clear evidence. Paradise is on your right hand, and hath been brought nigh unto you, while Hell hath been made to blaze. Witness its devouring flame. Haste ye to enter into Paradise, as a token of Our mercy unto you, and drink ye from the hands of the All-Merciful the Wine that is life indeed.²¹⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

As we are warned of the consequences of closed-mindedness, negligence, and denial, so are we informed repeatedly of the rewards of open-mindedness and sensitivity to the Divine Call, rewards so enchanting and abundant that if unveiled, even to the slightest degree, our earthly lives would become totally unsettled and unbearable:

By the sorrows which afflict the beauty of the All-Glorious! Such is the station ordained for the true believer that if to an extent smaller than a needle's eye the glory of that station were to be unveiled to mankind, every beholder would be consumed away in his longing to attain it. For this reason it hath been decreed that in this earthly life the full measure of the glory of his own station should remain concealed from the eyes of such a believer... If the veil be lifted, and the full glory of the station of those who have turned wholly towards God, and in their love for Him renounced the world, be made manifest, the entire creation would be dumbfounded.²²⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

When the Son of man shall come...he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Matthew 25:31, 33, 34

And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

I Peter 5:4 NIV

...announce unto them the joyful tidings that following this mighty Covenant there shall be everlasting reunion with God in the Paradise of His good-pleasure, nigh unto the Seat of Holiness. Verily God, the Lord of creation, is potent over all things.²²¹

The Báb

It is our privilege as well as responsibility, while on the earthly plane, to be aware of the ultimate fruits of both the faith and the denial. We must be intensely aware of the consequences of our choice before it is too late, before the gift of life is irreversibly withdrawn. Such a responsibility is not to be taken lightly, for upon it depends the destiny of humankind and our own destiny not for a few short years or decades, nor even for hundreds or thousands or millions of years, but eternally.

In our endeavors to search for truth, what should inspire or motivate our spirits and awaken our conscience is this: Our choices here extend over an infinite range of infinite possibilities from unimaginable depths of pain and despair to immeasurable heights of joy and peace and perfection. We lay the foundation for our future by the choices we make here in this realm of existence, for here is the domain of freedom where every soul is put to the test, manifesting its will and unfolding its potentials—its purity, openness, justice, courage, and devotion to truth. Such a privilege and opportunity will never again be granted to us on such an infinite scale.

To Summarize

Our acceptance of the Divine Call bears three basic consequences:

- Through our devotion to Divine Teachings, we can play a leading part in restructuring the human society, purifying it from the evils and afflictions that have surrounded and overwhelmed it since the dawn of history, and thus partake of the bounty of laying the foundation of the Heavenly Kingdom upon the earth, foretold by all the great Saviors of the past.
- We can partake of a sense of hope, joy, and contentment we have never known before.
- We can partake of all the Bounties in store for us in the coming domains and kingdoms, throughout all eternity. Otherwise our indifference toward, or our denial of, the Divine Call will bear eternal deprivations. For: “A man reaps what he sows.”

Let us implore the Lord of Bounties and cling to the cord of His Compassion, that He may guide his deserving children to the Path of devotion and to the majestic Court of His Might and Glory, that they may recognize the Gate of His Kingdom and enter, in multitudes and multitudes, His Celestial City of Certainty and Tranquility, before the impending disasters, afflictions, and the “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21) will have rocked and uprooted the human race.

We have a fixed time for you, O peoples. If ye fail, at the appointed hour, to turn towards God, He, verily, will lay violent hold on you, and will cause grievous afflictions to assail you from every direction. How severe, indeed, is the chastisement with which your Lord will then chastise you!²²²

Bahá'u'lláh

Make haste, O my brother, that while there is yet time our lips may taste of the immortal draught, for the breeze of life, now blowing from the city of the Well-Beloved, cannot last, and the streaming river of holy utterance must needs be stilled, and the portals of the Ridván [Paradise] cannot for ever remain open. The day will surely come when the Nightingale of Paradise will have winged its flight away from its earthly abode unto its heavenly nest. Then will its melody be heard

no more, and the beauty of the rose cease to shine. Seize the time, therefore, ere the glory of the divine springtime hath spent itself, and the Bird of Eternity ceased to warble its melody, that thy inner hearing may not be deprived of hearkening unto its call. This is My counsel unto thee and unto the beloved of God. Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away. God, verily, is independent of him and of that which he may see and witness.²²³ Bahá'u'lláh

This is the Voice of God, if ye do but hearken. This is the Day Spring of the Revelation of God, did ye but know it. This is the Dawning-Place of the Cause of God, were ye to recognize it. This is the Source of the commandment of God, did ye but judge it fairly. This is the manifest and hidden Secret; would that ye might perceive it. O peoples of the world! Cast away, in My name that transcendeth all other names, the things ye possess, and immerse yourselves in this Ocean in whose depths lay hidden the pearls of wisdom and of utterance, an ocean that surgeth in My name, the All-Merciful. Thus instructeth you He with Whom is the Mother Book.

The Best-Beloved is come. In His right hand is the sealed Wine of His name. Happy is the man that turneth unto Him, and drinketh his fill, and exclaimeth: "Praise be to Thee, O Revealer of the signs of God!" By the righteousness of the Almighty! Every hidden thing hath been manifested through the power of truth. All the favors of God have been sent down, as a token of His grace. The waters of everlasting life have, in their fullness, been proffered unto men. Every single cup hath been borne round by the hand of the Well-Beloved. Draw near, and tarry not, though it be for one short moment.²²⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

Know ye that the world and its vanities and its embellishments shall pass away. Nothing will endure except God's Kingdom which pertaineth to none but Him, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Help in Peril, the All-Glorious, the Almighty. The days of your life shall roll away, and all the things with which ye are occupied and of which ye boast yourselves shall perish, and ye shall, most certainly, be summoned by a company of His angels to appear at the spot where the limbs of the entire

creation shall be made to tremble, and the flesh of every oppressor to creep. Ye shall be asked of the things your hands have wrought in this, your vain life, and shall be repaid for your doings. This is the day that shall inevitably come upon you, the hour that none can put back. To this the Tongue of Him that speaketh the truth and is the Knower of all things hath testified.²²⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

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. In this wise hath the divine favor been fully vouchsafed unto you and unto them that are in heaven and on earth. All praise to God, the Lord of all Worlds.²²⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Is Not the Lord in Zion?

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. ***Is not the Lord in Zion?*** Jeremiah 8:20, 19

Part IV

Appendices

- Appendix I. Requirements for Recognizing the Truth
- Appendix II. The First Shall Be Last
- Appendix III. Passages Demonstrating the Use of Symbolism
in the Scriptures
- Appendix IV. Glossary of Biblical Terms

Appendix I

Requirements for Recognizing the Truth*

That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. Luke 12:47 NIV

This appendix is provided:

- To indicate that recognition of the Divine Message requires spiritual preparation.
- And to present nine virtues or attributes that are essential in recognizing a new Revelation.

Spiritual Preparation Essential

Success in any endeavor (professional, artistic, athletic) requires preparation. Nowhere is the necessity of preparation more essential than in the realm of religion, where roots run deep and emotions run high. That greater efforts and more persistent preparation are required for discerning or discovering the religious Truth (versus any other truth) is clearly indicated from man's previous performance: his consistent failure to recognize the Divine Message

* Because of its relevance and significance, this subject was also discussed in *Bahá'í Faith, God's Greatest Gift to Humankind*. In that book, the references were drawn primarily from the Bahá'í Scriptures; here they are drawn from the Biblical Scriptures.

during its infancy, when open-mindedness, not heredity, determines one's Faith; when courage, not conformity, directs the course of one's spiritual destiny.

The records of six thousand years of human history stand as the most compelling and conclusive evidence testifying to the repeated and consistent failure of the masses to recognize the divine Truth, a failure so glaring and dramatic as to seem utterly incredible to future generations. History reveals that at the dawn of every dispensation, at the onset of every religious cycle, the seekers of Truth failed to know the Truth, even when confronted with its very Source. They stood face to face with the Object of their search without ever seeing or knowing it. They behaved like seekers of gold who cherish the hope of finding a piece of the precious metal. Striking a rich vein, they continue their search—unawares, in agony, and in vain—without ever testing a piece from the mine with the touchstone. To us, such a response seems odd, irrational, yet to future generations our response will seem even more perplexing, for although we are faced with similar conditions, and are responding in similar ways, we have had more examples to learn from.

Let us now look at some of the examples. Noah was one of the first to proclaim the Truth, to declare the divine Mission. What response did He stir in His seekers? How did the expecting masses treat Him? Did they welcome Him, acclaim Him, adore Him? What about the people to whom Abraham was sent? Were they receptive, rational, open-minded? What of Moses? What of Jesus, His Herald, and Apostles? The list can go on and on. "Which of the prophets have not the people persecuted?" (Acts 7:52).

Is this not a sufficient evidence? Does not such a perfect record of failure prove that the people lacked receptivity; that they failed to prepare themselves? Is this not sufficient to indicate that we too may lack the same magical powers of perception and discernment? Of course, the people to whom the previous Messengers were sent always considered themselves sufficiently ready and receptive. The same holds true today. Yet if we are sincere in our motives, we must seek to learn from the examples of history, to

efface from our conscience every sign of self-righteousness, every trace of ego. “Anyone who wishes to be my follower,” Jesus instructs, “must leave self behind” (Mark 8:34 NEB). We must begin with an awareness of our weaknesses and inadequacies in recognizing the Truth. We must look back to find out what caused the countless generations before us to fail. We must treat our spiritual test the same way we treat a school test, one that is repeated again and again: we need to find the difficult items, the ones that cause almost all of those taking the test early (during the first few decades or centuries after the inception of a new religion) to fail.

Jesus was well aware of the failure of the masses to stand ready for His return. And He repeatedly warned against apathy and complacency:

Keep awake, then; for you do not know on what day your Lord is to come. Remember, if the householder had known at what time of night the burglar was coming, he would have kept awake and not have let his house be broken into. Hold yourselves ready, therefore, because the Son of Man will come at the time you least expect him.

Who is the trusty servant, the sensible man charged by his master to manage his household staff and issue their rations at the proper time? Happy that servant who is found at his task when his master comes! I tell you this: he will be put in charge of all his master’s property. But if he is a bad servant and says to himself, “The master is a long time coming,” and begins to bully the other servants and to eat and drink with his drunken friends, then the master will arrive on a day that servant does not expect, at a time he does not know, and will cut him in pieces. Thus he will find his place among the hypocrites, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth.

Matthew 24:42-52 NEB

To emphasize His point (the necessity of being prepared), Jesus resorted to parables. Through parables He touched the hearts of His listeners, He portrayed His Message with a power and directness as to stir and inspire the depths of imagination. Here

is the parable of the Bridegroom* He used to emphasize the necessity of being prepared:

When that day comes, the kingdom of Heaven will be like this. There were ten girls, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five prudent; when the foolish ones took their lamps, they took no oil with them, but the others took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was late in coming they all dozed off to sleep. But at midnight a cry was heard: "Here is the bridegroom! Come out and meet him." With that the girls got up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the prudent, "Our lamps are going out; give us some of your oil." "No," they said; "there will never be enough for all of us. You had better go to the shop and buy some for yourselves." While they were away the bridegroom arrived; those who were ready went in with him to the wedding and the door was shut. And then the other five came back. "Sir, sir," they cried, "open the door for us." But he answered, "I declare, I do not know you." Keep awake then for you never know the day or the hour.

Matthew 25:1-13 NEB

To complete His Message, Jesus used still another parable to point to the necessity of obedience to His Commandment. It concerns a master who, before going on a trip, gave bags of gold (knowledge) to his servants to work with, to use as capital. "A long time afterwards their master returned and proceeded to settle accounts with them." Here is how he settled the servant's accounts: To those who had used the gold (knowledge of spiritual riches), who had enriched, purified, or prepared themselves, he said:

You have proved trustworthy in a small way; I will now put you in charge of something big. Come and share your master's delight.

Matthew 25:21 NEB

But to the servant who had failed to put to use the God-given knowledge, to invest his potential, who had made no efforts to

* Jesus sometimes referred to Himself as Bridegroom (Matt. 9:15; Luke 5:33-35).

enrich or purify himself, the master's response was that of utter displeasure. To punish him, the master not only refused to give him any rewards, he even took away the little gold he already had—a little faith, but too little to help him in time of need (Matt. 25:14-30).

When a believer fails to accept a new Savior, he in effect loses not only the new Savior but the One he had already accepted, not only the new Knowledge, but the gift of faith he had already treasured, or assumed he had. For every Savior returns and reflects that same Divine Spirit revealed before Him by others. When one fails to recognize the new Savior, his denial proves that he had not really recognized the previous Ones, either. No wonder Jesus addressed the Jews saying:

If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. John 5:46 NIV

If those who believed in Moses really knew why Moses was divine, if they had believed not because of conformity but because of the qualities God had bestowed upon Moses, they would have had no problem knowing Jesus. For they could test Jesus with those same standards by which they had recognized Moses. If one knows why a gem is a gem, he can recognize it wherever, and whenever, he may find it. But if one knows a gem by the words of others or by its shape, its place, or its name, he cannot but fail in his judgment when he sees that same gem with a new name, in a new place, and a new form.

To emphasize the necessity of preparation, Jesus used still another parable, that of a king who prepares a wedding for his son. In the first part, the parable points to the people's unresponsiveness to the Divine Call, and in the latter, to their unpreparedness to sit with the Savior in Heavenly Feast. Here is the latter part:

When the king came in to see the company at table, he observed one man who was not dressed for a wedding. "My friend," said the king, "how do you come to be here without your wedding clothes?" He had nothing to say. The king then said to his attendants, "Bind him hand and foot; turn him out into the dark, the place of wailing and grinding of teeth." For though many are invited, few are chosen. Matthew 22:11-14 NEB

Lack of spiritual preparation has led to many devastating consequences. It is because of unpreparedness that the people have refused, throughout the ages, to submit to the call of reason, have waged wars, rejected their saviors, and turned toward darkness instead of the Light. It is because of such forces that they have allowed their likes and dislikes, their preferences and prejudices, to overcome their rational powers. The spiritual history of humankind clearly indicates the overwhelming power of such tendencies in the masses of the people. Based on historical evidence, one might say that man is not primarily a rational being, but a being quite capable of rationalizing.

In expounding the teachings of Jesus and the proofs of His Message, Paul had to become “...all things to all men...” (I Cor. 9:19-22). Why? Because the listeners would not listen to the Message, or to the proofs of the Message, but to the *giver* of the Message. If they liked Paul and identified themselves with him, they accepted his words and acknowledged the Truth; otherwise, they rejected him and his Message.

Since such weaknesses can overcome the purest and the most sincere among the seekers of Truth, it seems fitting that we recognize them and prevail upon them, that we identify the qualities that are essential to the understanding or recognizing of Truth.

Qualities Essential to the Recognition of Truth

Let us now see what is meant by spiritual preparation and what it requires or involves.

The journey of the search for truth begins with a search into the self that seeks to make the search. Before setting out to examine the sincerity of the new Messenger, we should examine the sincerity of our own motives—our desire to seek and to know the truth. We should begin by assessing our own openness, objectivity, and receptivity, our own weaknesses and strengths, our own spiritual resources—the qualities that make us deserving of the

rewards of recognition. Our sincerity, courage, and persistence in pondering upon these questions and in pursuing these noble ends will determine our degree of success or failure in discovering and discerning the Profile of the Prince of Peace.

As Jesus told His disciples, only the seeds that fall on good soil can grow and receive nourishment:

But the seed in good soil represents those who bring a good and honest heart to the hearing of the word, hold it fast, and by their perseverance yield a harvest. Luke 8:15

Let us now see what “good soil” consists of, let us examine the qualities that enrich the soul, help it yield an abundance of spiritual harvest.

1. The first and foremost quality is impartiality or justice: you should neither wish to accept nor acknowledge, nor hope to deny or disregard the evidence. Here are two questions demonstrating your impartiality and your fairness. As you read the book you should constantly ask yourself:
 - “If I were to prove the validity of my own Faith, could I be more convincing? Could I present more evidence than presented here?”
 - “Would I consider the objections I raise to this Faith reasonable if they were raised by others in relation to my own Faith and my own beliefs?”

If you do not believe in any Faith, you should ask yourself: “Could all these wonders happen without the aid of a supreme Power? Can any one accomplish all these marvels on his own?”

1. Detach yourself from the views and admonitions of others: gaze upon the Truth with your own vision, and evaluate the evidence with your own mind and your own conscience. For the faith of no one should be dependent upon the faith of any other. Each soul is responsible toward God and accountable for his own acts:

So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God. Romans 14:12

2. Postpone judgment. If you do not favor an interpretation, ***no matter how sure you might be of your own view, do not prejudge***. Here are a few reasons why:

- Scriptural reason: the Scriptures clearly warn the seekers of Truth against making any prejudgments, asking that they wait for the Lord to unravel and unseal the hidden things:

So pass no premature judgment; wait until the Lord comes. For he will bring to light what darkness hides...

I Corinthians 4:5 NEB

Those expecting the first advent of Jesus took all the prophecies literally, yet most of them proved to be symbolic.

- Logical reason: Man is always fallible, even in relation to the most obvious:

For all have sinned and, come short of the glory of God...

Romans 3:23

- Historical reason: History reveals that by far the greatest majority of people have, throughout the ages, resigned themselves to blind faith and submitted the course of their spiritual Destiny to the pervasive power of conformity. Few have had the courage and the devotion to be different. At no time has a Divine Messenger been accepted by the masses of humanity. Yet those who have rejected the Saviors, for whatever reasons (conformity, fear of losing their faith, apathy, lack of sincerity, etc.), have, on the surface and to their own satisfaction, thought out some “good reasons” for rejecting and denying. For instance, they have found some prophecies, interpreted them in their own way, and accused the Divine Interpreter of falsehood, ***refusing to look at His manifold proofs of validity***: “How can the son of a poor carpenter be the expected Savior of the Jews and the establisher of David’s sovereignty? Besides, He is a deviant; He has broken God’s commandment, our sacred Sabbath. He is evidently a false prophet. Why should we waste time listening to His words or pondering His proofs?”

Such misconceptions and misjudgments have, like deep and dark clouds, descended upon and surrounded the seekers of Truth in every age and at every Dawn of Divine Guidance.

...the Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.
I Kings 8:12

He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet.
II Samuel 22:10

The great day of the Lord...is a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. Zephaniah 1:14-16

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness...
Joel 2:1-2

It is because of such obstacles that we are urged again and again to remain detached and free from the cares of the world, to watch with pure hearts, and to pray that we may not be deprived of the gift of Guidance:

Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.

Luke 21:34-36 NIV

3. Trust in God that He will guide you, and ask Him for assistance. If you are sincere and your motives pure, you can be certain that Truth will be made as clear to your vision as the luminous lights of heaven.

Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Matthew 7:9-11

Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust.

Psalms 40:4

4. After putting your whole trust in God, seek to hear the inner voice of your own conscience and have trust in your own ability to recognize the Truth.

Do not then throw away your confidence, for it carries a great reward.

Hebrews 10:35 NEB

It seems most unrealistic and unfair that God would expect from any soul a task beyond its potential. God makes the Truth so plain and evident that anyone endowed with a pure and receptive heart (“good soil”) can instantly recognize it. The difference between the words of God and the words of man is like the difference between the Light and darkness.

My yoke is easy and my burden light.

Matthew 11:30

5. Detach yourself from worldly concerns: “How are my beliefs going to affect my business?” you might ask yourself. “What about my parents? My friends? My neighbors?” Nothing should stand between you and your devotion to Truth.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.

Matthew 19:29 NIV

In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:33 NIV

6. Ask yourself: “Do I really want to know the Truth? Do I really sense a spiritual hunger? Am I unafraid to know the Truth?”

I will give unto him that is athirst of the water of life freely.

Revelation 21:6

Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.

Luke 6:21

7. Ask yourself: “Am I deserving of Truth?” “Am I worthy of gazing upon the Glory of the Lord?” “Is my heart pure from that which obscures the Light of Truth: selfishness, insincerity, envy...?”

Who may go up the mountain of the Lord? And who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not set his mind on falsehood, and has not committed perjury. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and justice from God his savior. Psalms 24:3-5 NEB

If a man chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. John 7:17 NIV

Again, ask yourself: "Am I bound by preconceived notions or desires?" "Have I already passed judgment on the new Messenger before even knowing the proofs of His Mission?" "Am I afflicted in any way with egotism or self-righteousness, believing consciously or unconsciously that I can't be wrong. Or am I humble enough, like a little child, to follow the truth wherever it may take me, even to the most unexpected conclusions?"

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18-1-4 NIV

Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein. Luke 18:17

Divine Guidance reaches only those who empty themselves of every trace of egotism or self-righteousness, who bring themselves low, standing with absolute humility and self-effacement before the Court of Divine Bounties:

For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke 14:11

So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen. Matthew 20:16

8. Nourish your desire for search with patience and persistence:

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. Hebrews 10:36

If you think in your heart: “The path of search is too long and I am too busy,” you may well be right. But also remember this: the path may be long, but your Destiny is *much* longer. For your whole future depends on recognizing and acknowledging the Divine Spirit, the Savior and Redeemer of the world, sent once again to guide you and lead you to an ever-advancing and ever-unfolding Destiny—not for a few years or decades in this world, *but for all eternity in all the worlds to come*. If you think the immeasurable rewards of recognizing the Divine Glory as well as the awesome responsibility in failing to seek the Truth do not justify the efforts *to find the required time*, then you may be right in your judgment; otherwise bear in mind that your failure may deprive you of the greatest gift that God may ever bestow upon His children.

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? Luke 9:24-25

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. Matthew 24:13

When you seek to learn a skill (riding a bicycle or playing the piano), and when you decide to master a discipline (physics or philosophy), you make considerable investment of your precious or scarce resources. How do you, then, expect to resolve the most vital, the most essential and far-reaching question, which you may ever have to face by investing merely token time and effort?

Is not a Faith that has spread to over three hundred countries and territories of the world and claims a few million followers, including some of the most distinguished scholars from every domain of knowledge (philosophers, historians, economists, mathematicians...) and some of the most learned and devoted seekers of truth representing every great religion of the world, worthy of your time and effort? Would a true scientist ever

ignore the new evidence even though it may stand contrary to his beliefs? Similarly, would a devoted seeker of Truth ever refuse to examine, to see, to hear, and to search? Do not the Scriptures say: “Seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”?

The true seeker seeks the truth with the zeal and devotion of him who has lost a prized jewel. He leaves no stone unturned, no clue unexplored, no path unexamined.

Discovering and recognizing the Truth is like climbing a mountain. As you pursue your journey of the search for Truth, you gain, progressively, a broader perspective of what stands behind and a keener vision of what lies ahead. Until you reach the very summit of your Destiny, you cannot truly see the total spectacle. You must rise above your petty concerns, misconceptions, or prejudgments, and walk with a free and detached spirit—with patience, determination, and persistence as your divine Nourishment—along the path of the search for Truth, examining, with absolute sincerity, the seven proofs of the Advent of the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer and supreme Savior of the New Age. Not until you reach the very summit should you attempt to make any judgments.

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Luke 13:24

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in retreat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Matthew 7:13-14

Entering through a narrow gate always requires more efforts, but the rewards more than justify the efforts:

...the measure you give is the measure you receive, with something more... Mark 4:24

Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Luke 18:29-30

Your labor in the Lord is not in vain. I Corinthians 15:58

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive
a crown of glory that fadeth not away. I Peter 5:4

Appendix II

The First Shall Be Last

Matthew 20:16

This appendix shows:

- That conforming to the judgment of religious leaders is unsafe and unreasonable, for they have always discouraged the people from recognizing God’s Saviors.
- That instead of being the first to acknowledge the truth, they have been the last.
- That theology serves as a barrier to the recognition of truth.
- That according to Jesus’ prediction, the religious leaders (who served as the guiding stars in Christendom) would at the time of the advent lose their light, moving from the first position to the last.

Conformity A Common Practice

For men hang upon the words of the priest and seek knowledge and instruction from him.

Malachi 2:7 NEB

We find many who refuse to consider the claim of the new Manifestation because they prefer to submit the reign of their spiritual destiny to custodians of faith—the religious leaders or theologians. To them, the burden of the freedom of choice seems too heavy to bear. Such seekers curb their thirst for truth by imitating and conforming.

After all, it comes so natural to most of us to think that we should let the leaders lead, and “to reason” in this way: “There

are so many theologians, so many learned men of fame whose knowledge of the Scriptures transcends mine. If there is any truth to the new Revelation, why haven't *they* recognized it? There *must* be a reason."

The Masses of Religious Leaders Non-receptive

As Bahá'u'lláh states repeatedly throughout *The Book of Certitude*, the religious leaders have always been in the forefront of the rejecting masses, the first to deny the divine Manifestations and to encourage their followers to follow likewise their example of denial.

We read in the Scriptures again and again about "the chief priests" who with the help of other leaders constantly tried to trick Jesus, mock Him, accuse Him, insult Him, put Him to death, do anything to stop His growing influence in the hearts of the pure:

The chief priests and the teachers of the law [of Moses] heard this and began looking for a way to kill him [Jesus], for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

Mark 11:18 NIV

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd...to have Jesus executed.

Matthew 27:20 NIV

"Woe to you experts in the law [of Moses], because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering."

When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.

Luke 11:52-54 NIV

Jesus Himself knew that the chief priests and the like would prove to be His chief adversaries:

The Son of Man has to undergo great sufferings, and to be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and doctors of the law...

Luke 9:22 NEB

The obstacles posed by the religious leaders of our time and the ultimate victory of divine Will are both predicted in the Old Testament:

...Men wander about like sheep in distress for lack of a shepherd. My anger is turned against the shepherds, and I will visit with punishment the leaders of the flock.

Zechariah 10:2-3 NEB

And again:

I am against the shepherds and will demand my sheep from them...I will rescue my sheep from their jaws, and they shall feed on them no more...I will bring them out from every nation, gather them in from other lands, and lead them home to their own soil. I will graze them on the mountains of Israel, by her streams and in all her green fields.

Ezekiel 34:10, 13 NEB

Bahá'u'lláh's words harmonize well with the words of the Scriptures:

O YE THAT ARE FOOLISH, YET HAVE A NAME TO BE WISE!
Wherefore do ye wear the guise of shepherds, when inwardly ye have become wolves, intent upon My flock? Ye are even as the star, which riseth ere the dawn, and which, though it seem radiant and luminous, leadeth the wayfarers of My city astray into the paths of perdition.²²⁷

Lack of receptivity on the part of religious leaders constitutes a most common theme in the Scriptures, yet strangely it escapes us. Here are further references: John 11:47-48; Matt. 27:12, 41; 15:14; 5:20; 23:27-36; Luke 7:30; 19:47-48; 20:19, 45-47; 15:2-3; 10:21, 25; Acts 3:6-7; Jer. 25:34-38; 26:11; 2:8; Hos. 4:4-10; Mal. 1:6-7, 10-12; 2:1-4; Qur'án 67:33.

Historical Evidence

Let us now examine the records of history. Who were the Apostles of Jesus? Who were the first to recognize Him and

believe in Him? The religious leaders, the so called “chief priests and elders” with their many preconceived notions of the Scriptures? Or the simple but open-minded seekers guided by reason and a conscience sensitive and thirsting for truth? Did the early disciples—“the simple fisher folk of Galilee”—recognize Jesus because His interpretation of the symbols harmonized with theirs? Or did they recognize Him because of His mighty Words, His supreme detachment from the world, and His absolute devotion to His teachings? Did the early disciples recognize Jesus *because* of their religious leaders or in spite of them?

Annas and Caiaphas were the foremost religious leaders of their day. They had attained the highest rank among the Jews in the days of Jesus. How did they respond to their Messiah whose advent they had anticipated, and the signs of whose coming they had studied extensively and preached repeatedly in their synagogues? “Caiaphas declared that it would be better for Jesus to die than the nation be destroyed.”²²⁸

Bahá'u'lláh writes:

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.²²⁹

Why Are the Religious Leaders Non-receptive?

Why are the religious leaders more likely to reject than accept the new Revelations? Many reasons are involved. Here are a few. First, they are too sure of their discernment, seeing themselves in the forefront of knowledge, the first in the ranks of the faithful, and the first to adore the truth. Yet this very attitude, as prophesied in the Scriptures, stands in their way of knowing the truth, becomes their stumbling block. This is why the Voice of Prophecy predicts that the first shall be the last (Matt. 20:1-16;

Mark 10:31). Further, we are told that no one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless he becomes like little children—humble, pure, inquisitive.

Second, the religious leaders are handicapped in still another way. Since their livelihood depends on their position, and their position on being faithful to the established beliefs, the acceptance of the new Revelation brings them face to face with sacrifices they are unprepared to make:

They feed on the sin of my people and batten on their iniquity.

Hosea 4:8 NEB

Third, because they are so deeply engrossed in traditional dogmas and doctrines (markedly reinforced during their schooling), they lose gradually and unwittingly the freedom of their soul to seek new vistas of truth, to gaze at the unfamiliar with wonder and curiosity, with openness and detachment from preconceived notions.

Fourth, they are too busy with their work to be able to leave their secure surroundings, to pass beyond traditional bounds of knowledge. Experience indicates that their knowledge of other Faiths is exceedingly meager, with much of what they know consisting of misconceptions, acquired from unreliable or biased sources.

Fifth, to begin with, they rate high on conservatism; otherwise they could not fit into the established pattern.

Human Knowledge an Obstacle

Knowledge is of two kinds; one arises from a superficial accumulation of specific facts, the other springs from the understanding of fundamental principles; one nourishes on fanaticism, egotism, dogmatism, imitation, and blind faith; the other thrives on openness, objectivity, reason, flexibility, and humility; one reflects the letter of the law, the other the spirit of the law. All the Manifestations condemn the first, but exalt the latter. Here is how the Scriptures describe the dogmatic knowledge:

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

II Timothy 3:7

A new translation of the same verse:

...always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. NIV

And again:

But it is not for any man to bring a charge, it is not for him to prove a case; the quarrel with you, false priest, is mine...My people are ruined for lack of knowledge; your own countrymen are brought to ruin. You have rejected knowledge, and I will reject you from serving me as priest. You have forgotten the teaching of God...

Hosea 4:4,6 NEB

Diametrically opposed to dogmatic knowledge is divine Knowledge, a discernment bestowed upon the pure:

At that time Jesus spoke these words: 'I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and wise, and revealing them to the simple. Yes, Father, such was thy choice.'

Matthew 11:25-26 NEB

Also Luke 10:21

In the following passage, Bahá'u'lláh clearly describes and distinguishes between the divine Knowledge and the Satanic knowledge:

Know verily that Knowledge is of two kinds: Divine and Satanic. The one welletth out from the fountain of divine inspiration; the other is but a reflection of vain and obscure thoughts. The source of the former is God Himself; the motive-force of the latter the whisperings of selfish desire. The one is guided by the principle: "Fear ye God; God will teach you;" the other is but a confirmation of the truth: "Knowledge is the most grievous veil between man and his Creator." The former bringeth forth the fruit of patience, of longing desire, of true understanding, and love; whilst the latter can yield naught but arrogance, vainglory and conceit.²³⁰

Whenever the Bible refers to the rejecting crowds, it mentions their hearts, their eyes, and their ears (John 12: 39-40); never

their brains. In recognizing a new Savior, lack of scholarship does not pose a problem; it is always lack of spiritual discernment or purity that veils the Truth. The following prophecy has been revealed specifically for our age, for it refers not only to the requirements of recognition but also to the Object of recognition—“the King of Glory,” “the Lord of Hosts,” titles, assigned to the Promised One of our age, and assumed by Bahá’u’lláh.

Who may go up the mountain of the Lord? * And who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not set his mind on falsehood, and has not committed perjury. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and justice from God his savior. Such is the fortune of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

...Lift up your heads, you gates, lift them up, you everlasting doors, that the king of glory may come in. Who then is the king of glory? The king of glory is the Lord of Hosts.

Psalms 23:3-6, 9-10 NEB

Nowhere in the Bible do we find any reference to rank, position, or proficiency in theology as a requirement for recognizing the Truth; nowhere are we told to follow the example of scholars, the verdict of theologians.

In the following passage Jesus clearly states that knowing the truth is a matter of heart, that if the seeker wishes to succeed in his search for Truth, he must simply harmonize his will with the divine Will. He makes no mention of learning or theology:

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

John 7:16-17

Theology is for the most part man-made. It is full of complexities and contradictions. Divine Knowledge is simple, rational, and consistent, in fact, so simple as to be understood even by children:

* Mount Carmel is known as the mountain of the Lord. Bahá’u’lláh sometimes pitched His tent on the slopes of Mount Carmel.

...O Father...thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Matthew 11:25

In *The Book of Certitude* Bahá'u'lláh quotes these passages from the Islamic Scriptures:

Knowledge is one point, which the foolish have multiplied.²³¹

Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth.²³²

The fact is that the theologians have always disagreed, and will always disagree, in interpreting even the most fundamental facts of the Scriptures. (This is why no religion has remained immune to the divisions and schisms caused by religious leaders.) Then, which school of theology, and which group of the interpreters should we choose to follow, and what constitutes the minimum criterion or requirement for being recognized a theologian? Is the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek both essential? What about degrees and publications?

What is the ultimate purpose of knowledge? To guide us to the Object of Knowledge, namely the divine Manifestations. Bahá'u'lláh writes:

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 Day Spring 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.²³³

Following the Masses, an Unsafe Guide

If it is unreasonable to place our spiritual destiny in the hands of theologians or religious leaders, what about the masses of people? Can millions and millions fail to recognize the truth, misjudge

the divine Savior? First, they can fail because the prophecies predict that they will. As mentioned before, the Scriptures indicate that the Savior will once again be rejected (Luke 17:25-30; John 16:11). This can happen only if the *masses* reject Him, for the majority prevails. Otherwise if the majority recognized Him, how could He be rejected?

Second, we are told that those who succeed in finding the Gate of the Kingdom are few in number (Luke 13:24; Matt. 7:13-14). Again such prophecies suggest that not only the masses *can* be wrong in their judgment of the divine Truth, but that they *will* be wrong. Consequently immediate acceptance or recognition of the new Revelation would only serve to disprove its validity, The fallacy of following the masses is quite evident. We follow the elusive majority, yet we are part of the majority who in turn follow us!

According to the divine Plan, everyone stands accountable to God for his acts or the choices he makes, and consequently in his testing of the divine Manifestation, he should refrain from relying on any one—his friends, pastor, priest, or parents—save his own pure conscience, a conscience dedicated to truth and fully dependent on divine Guidance. For the Scriptures warn:

So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God.
Romans 14:12

I will call you to account for your doings. Ezekiel 6:3 NEB

Therefore, if someone tries to excuse himself before the court of divine Judgment by saying: “I failed to search because I trusted the judgment of the majority, or I denied because of my friends, parents, or pastor, or I did not take the Claim seriously because I followed the example of the leaders.” Such an excuse will be utterly unacceptable. Bahá’u’lláh writes:

If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, whilst standing in the presence of God, be asked: “Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self,” and if such a man should reply and say: “Inasmuch as all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I,

too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the Beauty of the Eternal,” such a plea will, assuredly, be rejected. For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.²³⁴

The First Shall be Last

After examining the record of history and the words of the Scriptures, the fallacy of placing one’s faith and future destiny in the hands of others becomes distinctly clear.

Yet in spite of all the warnings, many continue to pursue—though unknowingly—such a perilous path. They do so because it seems deceptively logical, yet history, logic, and the Scriptures all stand against it, all point to the contrary.

Certainly the intent of the Scriptures is not to discredit *all* religious leaders, neither is the intent of the new revelation. The primary message given to us is that the religious leaders occupy a position of highest honor, provided their acts and attitudes conform to their confession. If they fail to seek the truth with open mind, if “their religion is but a precept of men, learnt by rote... (Isa. 29:13),” they will become fallen stars, moving from the first position to the last, even as they did at the time of the first advent (Mark 10:31). They are the bright stars of knowledge, provided they acknowledge the Source of their sustenance. If they fail, they will lose their radiance and luster:

...the wisdom of their wise men shall vanish and the discernment of the discerning shall be lost. Isaiah 29:14 NEB

The True Leaders Will Shine as the Stars of Heaven

What has been said about the religious leaders should in no way detract from the exalted position of learning or the learned. Both the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh raise knowledge to the crest of honor:

...man’s glory lieth in his knowledge.²³⁵ The Báb

Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent.²³⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Similarly, the Bahá'í Scriptures bestow much honor upon the learned and the leaders, provided they refuse to allow their learning or their position of power veil their vision of truth. If they turn to the new Light "they will shine like the stars of heaven," otherwise they will remain veiled in the dark:

The wise leaders shall shine like the bright vault of heaven, and those who have guided the people in the true path shall be like the stars for ever and ever.

Daniel 12:3 NEB

Bahá'u'lláh writes:

O concourse of bishops! Ye are the stars of the heaven of My knowledge. My mercy desireth not that ye should fall upon the earth. My justice, however, declareth: "This is that which the Son (Jesus) hath decreed." And whatsoever hath proceeded out of His blameless, His truth-speaking, trustworthy mouth, can never be altered.²³⁷

In the preceding passage Bahá'u'lláh refers to the words of Jesus (Son) that at His coming the stars shall fall. Thus the fallen stars are those leaders who refuse to acknowledge the new Messenger. When the Sun rises the stars become invisible. (For Biblical references on the symbolism of "the sun" and "the stars," see the third volume.)

Let us conclude this discussion with the words of Bahá'u'lláh:

Great is the blessedness of that divine that hath not allowed knowledge to become a veil between him and the One Who is the Object of all knowledge, and who, when the Self-Subsisting appeared, hath turned with a beaming face towards Him. He, in truth, is numbered with the learned. The inmates of Paradise seek the blessing of his breath, and his lamp sheddeth its radiance over all who are in heaven and on earth. He, verily, is numbered with the inheritors of the Prophets. He that beholdeth him hath, verily, beheld the True One, and he that turneth towards him hath, verily, turned towards God, the Almighty, the All-Wise.²³⁸

Appendix III

Passages Demonstrating the Use of Symbolism in the Scriptures

As stated, the Bible and all the other sacred Scriptures have made extensive use of symbolism. Many believers read the symbolic passages without attaching a literal interpretation to them, because such an interpretation would seem illogical or far-fetched. But when these same believers encounter passages concerning the return of the Promised Savior, they begin to apply a new system and a new standard of interpretation: all the prophecies and the signs are taken literally, word for word, no matter how impossible or far-fetched they may appear. The few examples given in this section should suffice to demonstrate the variety and the intricacy of symbolic words, as well as the dangers involved in a literal approach to such Writings.

If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, even his own life, he cannot be a disciple of mine. Luke 14:26 NEB

Another man, one of his disciples, said to him, ‘Lord, let me go and bury my father.’ Jesus replied, ‘Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their dead.’ Matthew 8:21-22 NEB

Jesus answered, ‘In truth, in very truth I tell you, unless a man has been born over again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ John 3:3 NEB

...and the Lord replied, “If you had faith no bigger even than a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be rooted up and replanted in the sea’; and it would at once obey you.” Luke 17:6 NEB

...whoever believes in me, let him drink. As Scripture says, 'Streams of living water shall flow out from within him.'

John 7:38 NEB

...you shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall give him the name Jesus. He will be great; he will bear the title "Son of the Most High;" the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he will be king over Israel for ever; his reign shall never end.

Luke 1:31-33 NEB

Jesus replied, "My kingdom does not belong to this world."

John 18:36 NEB

So repent! If you do not, I shall come to you soon and make war upon them with the sword that comes out of my mouth.

Revelation 2:16 NEB

They said, "What sign can you give us to see, so that we may believe you? What is the work you do? Our ancestors had manna to eat in the desert; as Scripture says, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus answered, "I tell you this: the truth is, not that Moses gave you the bread from heaven, but that my Father gives you the real bread from heaven. The bread that God gives comes down from heaven and brings life to the world." They said to his, "Sir, give us this bread now and always." Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall never be hungry and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty."

John 6:30-35 NEB

"I am that living bread which has come down from heaven; if anyone eats this bread he shall live for ever. Moreover, the bread which I will give is my own flesh; I give it for the life of the world." This led to a fierce dispute among the Jews, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they said. Jesus replied, "In truth, in very truth I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you can have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood possesses eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

John 6:51-54 NEB

You must work, not for this perishable food, but for the food that lasts, the food of eternal life. This food the Son of Man

will give you, for he it is upon whom God the Father has set the seal of his authority. John 6:27 NEB

Among the myriads of biblical interpretations offered, one might ask: Which is the correct one? For no two interpreters can fairly claim to understand the Bible in exactly the same way. Nor can any one claim to be infallible in his interpretation. So who knows the right interpretation? He who meets the requirements of Saviorhood, spelled out clearly in God's revealed Words. Once the divine Interpreter meets the basic requirements, it seems quite unjust and unreasonable to object to His interpretation.

This is the most common and tragic judgment people have always made: they have relied on their own understanding, and have "made premature judgment." And they have always said:

If we had been alive in our fathers' time, we should never have taken part with them in the murder of the prophets. Matthew 23:30 NEB

So pass no premature judgment: wait until the Lord comes. For he will bring to light what darkness hides, and disclose men's inward motives; then will be the time for each to receive from God such praise as he deserves. I Corinthians 4:5 NEB

Now the Lord has come, and He has brought to light what has been, and is, and will always be, hidden to the eyes of people, blessed are they who manifest the purest and the most deserving motives. They are the few chosen, among the many who are called.

How blest are those whose hearts are pure; they shall see God. Matthew 5:8 NEB

"O Bethlehem!...Tell Me then: Do the sons recognize the Father, and acknowledge Him, or do they deny Him, even as the people aforetime denied Him (Jesus)?"²³⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Appendix IV

Glossary of Biblical Terms

This appendix is prepared as a guide to some of the concepts introduced in this book. You will find a more comprehensive discussion of some of these concepts in *Some Answered Questions* and *The Book of Certitude*.

Bride, Bridegroom (Wife, Husband)

The word “bride” (or adorned bride) is used symbolically to refer to the Law of God or the divine Teachings. Likewise the word “bridegroom” is used to refer to the Manifestations of God. Jesus said:

...but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them...

Matthew 9:15

See also Rev. 22:17

Similarly, the birth of religion is often likened to the birth of a new babe:

A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

John 16:21-22

Bahá'u'lláh writes:

The whole earth...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.²⁴⁰

Calendar

Both the Egyptians and the Babylonians used calendars based on 12 months, each consisting of 30 days. Hugh Schonfield writes:

In ancient Egypt the year consisted of 12 months, each of 30 days, making 360 days, To bring this into line with the solar year of 365 days, five year-end days were added associated with the birthdays of the divinities.²⁴¹

Here is another reference from *Dictionary of the Bible* by James Hastings: “A year of 360 days is implied in the history of the Flood.”²⁴²

Whether it is because of convention or consistency, in prophetic language, a month equals a fixed interval, consisting of thirty days. William Miller explains “the prophetic day” in these terms:

That God has used days as a figure of years, none will or can deny, With Moses, Num. xiv 34: “After the number of days in which ye searched the land, even forty days (each day for a year) shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years: and ye shall know my breach of promise.” With Ezek. iv. 4-6: “Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.” Also the seventy weeks in Dan. ix. 24-27. These are samples. But you will inquire, How shall we know when days are used for years? I answer,

you will know by the subject matter to be performed in the given time. For instance, the seven of the seventy weeks, “the streets and walls of the city should be built again, in troublous times.” Every man must know this could not be performed in 49 days, or even in 70 weeks, 490 common days. So we are to look for another meaning to days; and we find it as above, to mean years...

...May we all apply our hearts unto that wisdom which compares scripture with scripture, and understand “times and seasons,” which God has put within our power, by his revelation unto us.

For the time is at hand “when the wise shall understand; but the wicked shall not understand.” Amen.²⁴³

Cloud

Cloud is symbolically used to refer to the things that serve as a barrier between the Light Bringers and the Light receivers. Such dark clouds consist of superstition, prejudice, or any other transgression against, or deviation from, the true spirit of religion:

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me: for I have redeemed thee. Isaiah 44:22

Here is a prophecy containing the word “cloud” which itself has served to becloud the recognition of the divine Manifestation:

Behold, he cometh with clouds [clouds of misconception, superstition, and misunderstanding]; and every eye [inner eye] shall see him... Revelation 1:7

If taken symbolically, the prophecy finds support from other verses, for example:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. II Peter 3:10

“Darkness” and “Clouds” both imply obscurity and secrecy.

“Cloud” also refers to the physical existence of the divine Saviors, The body serves as a barrier to the greatness of the Spirit. How

can a man who looks like any other man be a Savior? Here are a few references:

And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the peoples may hear when I speak with thee and believe thee for ever. Exodus 19:9

The body of the Messenger serves as an instrument through which people can hear the Voice of the Spirit.

Then spake Solomon, the Lord said that he would dwell in the thick darkness, [Misconceptions and misinterpretations of all kinds.] I Kings 8:12
See also II Chron. 6:1

And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle. Deuteronomy 31:15

Here is a reference from Bahá'u'lláh's Writings confirming the fulfillment of the prophecy:

He Who is the Lord of Lords is come overshadowed with clouds, and the decree hath been fulfilled by God, the Almighty, the Unrestrained...He, verily, hath again come down from Heaven even as He came down from it the first time.*²⁴⁴

Descent of Jerusalem

The renewal of heaven and earth[‡] and the descent of the Holy City, Jerusalem, refer to the renewal of religion and the descent of divine Laws. The following passages from the Bible should clarify the intended meanings:

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple[⊙] [the spiritual center of religion] of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God

* See John 6:38, 42.

‡ See *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 44-49.

⊙ Compare with Revelation 21:7.

[Bahá, meaning glory, is one of the names of God, and Bahá'í means the one associated with or related to glory], and the name of the city of my God [the City of God is symbolic of the Teachings of God; a follower of Bahá'u'lláh comes under the new laws and teachings sent by God], which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven [the word "heaven" is symbolic of divine Revelation] from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. Revelation 3:12

Again in Chapter 21 of Revelation, reference is made to a new Jerusalem and a new heaven and earth:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth [new laws and new civilization]: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away... Revelation 21:1

In *The New English Bible*, the last part of this verse reads "...for the old order has passed away." This translation sheds further light on the symbolic meaning of the verse, and is in perfect harmony with Bahá'u'lláh's statement that "Soon will the present day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead."²⁴⁵

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem [the new laws and teachings], coming down from God out of heaven [out of the new religion] prepared as a bride [the new teachings appear like a bride who is beginning a new cycle in her life: see the word "bride" in this appendix] adorned for her husband. [The Manifestation Who wears the Robe of divine Revelation.] Revelation 21:2

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains the meaning of this verse in these words:

It is evident that the New Jerusalem which descends from heaven is not a city of stone, mortar, bricks, earth and wood. It is the Law of God which descends from heaven and is called new, for it is clear that the Jerusalem which is of stone and earth does not descend from heaven, and that it is not renewed; but that which is renewed is the Law of God.²⁴⁶

A description very similar to the one given in Revelation about the City of God is provided by Isaiah:

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

Isaiah 65:17-19

Here is a reference from Bahá'u'lláh's Writings on the descent of the City of God:

Call out to Zion, O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendor is revealed. Beware lest thou hesitate or halt. Hasten forth and circumambulate the City of God that hath descended from heaven, the celestial Ka'bih round which have circled in adoration the favored of God, the pure in heart, and the company of the most exalted angels.²⁴⁷

Judgment Day

Judgment day is the day of the divine Manifestation, when the Scale of divine Guidance is set up so that the people may have a chance to prove, to measure, or to judge the degree of their faith and sincerity. Jesus said:

Now is the Judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

John 12:31

See also John 9:39

Life and Death

Life and death are often used to refer to the conditions of the soul. Thus a man enjoying physical life may be totally deprived of the life of the spirit. Here is a typical example from the Bible:

If a man keep my saying he shall never see death, Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

John 8:51-52

See also the word “resurrection.”

Light Bringer

The great Messengers are spiritual lights emanating from God. They are the sources of light, the receivers of light, and the givers of light. They are: Light Bringers, Light Givers, Suns of Reality, Bright Stars, and Lights of God (Bahá'u'lláh). Here are a few references from the Gospel:

I am...the bright and morning star. Revelation 22:16

I am the light of the world. John 9:5

I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. John 8:12

Lord, Father

The Promised One of our age is often referred to as the Lord or the Father:

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. I Corinthians 4:5

For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. Matthew 23:39

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Matthew 16:27

Here is a reference from the Qur'án referring, exactly like the Bible, to the coming of God and His angels:

What can such [the believers] expect but that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds and the angels also? Qur'án 2:206

Here are a few excerpts from Bahá'u'lláh's Writings confirming the fulfillment of the prophecies:

O Kings of the earth! He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is come. The Kingdom is God's, the omnipotent Protector, the Self-Subsisting.²⁴⁸

O concourse of priests! Leave the bells, and come forth, then, from your churches. It behoveth you, in this day, to proclaim aloud the Most Great Name among the nations. Prefer ye to be silent, whilst every stone and every tree shouteth aloud: "The Lord is come in His great glory!"²⁴⁹

This is the Day whereon the unseen world crieth out: "Great is thy blessedness, O earth, for thou hast been made the footstool of thy God, and been chosen as the seat of His mighty throne."²⁵⁰

Tell Me then: Do the sons recognize the Father, and acknowledge Him, or do they deny Him, even as the people aforesaid denied Him (Jesus)?²⁵¹

...the heavens are cleft asunder, and God hath come down, invested with radiant sovereignty.²⁵²

Resurrection

Resurrection—a common term used in many of the major Scriptures of the world—refers to the rise of the human spirit. The purpose of the Saviors is to vivify the soul; that is, to make it radiant. They do not appear to prevent physical death or to recompose the scattered and reused atoms of the billions of dead bodies.

That dead bodies should at the time of the Advent of the Promised One rise is a misconception based on misinterpretation of the words of the Messengers and of their ultimate objectives. Jesus said:

I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?

John 11:25-26

These are a few other references:

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption [body decays]; it is raised in incorruption [the soul is eternal]... It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body...The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit...The first man is of the earth, earthly: the second man is the Lord from heaven...Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption [body] inherit incorruption [eternal existence].

I Corinthians 15:42, 44, 45, 47, 50

Sanctuary—Jerusalem

Two key words often used figuratively in the Scriptures are “Jerusalem” and “sanctuary.” The unsealing of the inner sense of these two sacred words constitutes a key to the comprehension of time-prophecies. For as mentioned, many Biblical predictions are associated with the rise and fall of Jerusalem and its center, the sanctuary (also referred to as the temple, the tabernacle, the inner court, and the holy of holies).

Jerusalem has occupied a unique and exalted position in the spiritual destiny of the world. It is a city sacred to many religions, enshrining holy places revered by the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims. Many consider it the most sacred site on earth. According to a Bible dictionary:

It was the royal city, the capital of the only kingdom God has (thus far) established among men; here the temple was erected, and here alone, during the kingdom age, were sacrifices legitimately offered. This was the city of the prophets, as well as the kings of David’s line...Rightly did the Chronicler refer to Jerusalem as the “city which Jehovah had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there” (I Kings 14: 21).²⁵³

In the center of the holiest city stood the sanctuary—the holy of holies—containing a most sacred Gift bestowed upon humans: the arc of covenant.

To repent, to purify themselves of sin, and to enter into fellowship with God, the worshipers made animal sacrifices in the sanctuary. The sacrifice symbolically transferred the sin from the sinner to the innocent lamb. “The worshiper normally laid his hand on the head of the sin offering, symbolically designating it as his substitute in the sacrificial ritual.”²⁵⁴ The priest then sprinkled part of the blood of the slain animal upon the sanctuary, thus symbolically transferring the sin from the sinner to the temple.

Then each year on a special day—the Day of Atonement—the high priest entered the inner court, where stood a most sacred gift—the arc of covenant—and sprinkled the blood of a slain goat on the “mercy seat.” He then took a live goat into the sanctuary, “...and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel...” The goat was then set free in the wilderness “to bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited” (Levi. 16:21-22). Thus the shedding of blood symbolized purity or the cleansing of sin from the human temple.

Perhaps the best description of the sanctuary and its symbolic significance can be found in chapters nine and ten of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Epistle distinguishes between the priests whose primary function consisted of the performing of rituals (e.g. the offering of gifts or sacrifices), and the High Priest (Christ) whose primary Mission was the offering of eternal salvation. The ritual performed by the priests, reveals the Epistle:

...cannot give the worshiper inward perfection. It is a matter of food and drink and various rites of cleansing—outward ordinances in force until the time of reformation.*

Hebrews 9:9-10 NEB

But unlike the priests, the High Priest offers inner perfection and peace, for He breathes a new Spirit into the world, refreshing and purifying the “temples” of the human heart.

The following passages from the same sacred Epistle (Hebrews) further elucidate and unseal the symbolic sense of the sanctuary.

* “The time of reformation” signifies the time of the Advent of a new Savior, for He re-forms the temporary laws to adapt them to the needs of the age.

They signify that the first Advent of Jesus also signaled or effected the cleansing of the sanctuary. Following the termination of the first appointed period (69 weeks), Jesus cleansed the sanctuary (Holy of Holies) first by the new Spirit He breathed into the world and then (in the 70th week) by offering His own blood and sacrificing His own Self. Here are the words of the Gospel:

But now Christ has come, high priest of good things already in being. The tent[✧] of his priesthood is a greater and more perfect one, not made by men's hands, that is, not belonging to this created world; the blood of his sacrifice is his own blood, not the blood of goats and calves; and thus he has entered the sanctuary once and for all and secured an eternal deliverance [for those who believed]. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkled ashes of a heifer have power to hallow those who have been defiled and restore their external purity, how much greater is the power of the blood of Christ; he offered himself without blemish to God, a spiritual and eternal sacrifice; and his blood will cleanse our conscience from the deadness of our former ways and fit us for the service of the living God. And therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant...

Hebrews 9:11-15 NEB

The same divine Drama came into play nearly 19 centuries later when once again the Báb cleansed the sanctuary first by breathing a new Spirit into the world at the termination of the exact appointed period, and then by offering His blood within the next prophetic week.

Lest any one doubt or deny God's firm and eternal covenant of salvation—namely the continuation of His Guidance and the renewal of His exalted Revelation—Soon after the passage just quoted (Heb. 9:11-15), the Gospel once again reminds every seeker of Truth that Christ “will appear a second time, sin done away, to bring salvation to those who are watching for him,” (verse 28 NEB); even, we might add, as He brought salvation to those who watched for Him and believed in Him during His

✧ The sanctuary contained tents.

first Advent. In both instances, only those who watched, found the Object of their search.

Here are a few other references to sanctuary: Ps. 68:24-25; Acts 7:44; 15:16-17; Rev. 15:5-8; 21:2-3; 11:19; Mark 15:38; Heb, 6:19-20; 8:1,2,5; 9:1-28; 10:19, II Cor. 30:8.

The City of God-symbolic of the Law of God—consists of two sectors: (1) the center of the city which contains the temple or the sanctuary (the focal point and the spiritual center of the city); and (2) the outer perimeters that contain the temporal and social institutions.

Likewise, the Law of God consists of two parts: (1) spiritual or eternal laws, which constitute the very essence of religion and which are renewed again and again by all the divine Manifestations; and (2) social or temporary laws, which are revealed according to the changing conditions of the world.

Now in the terminology of the Bible, the center of the city, which is the temple, or the sanctuary, represents the essence of religion (eternal spiritual verities); and the outer perimeters of the city represent the social and temporal teachings of religion (temporary laws).

Therefore, the cleansing of the sanctuary is the same as the cleansing of the spiritual centers of religion, or the renewal of the essence of the perennial Faith of God. (See the Descent of Jerusalem.)

There are many references throughout the Bible concerning the coming of the Lord, the Glory of the Lord, or Glory, to the sanctuary or temple (also referred to as the Tabernacle or the Inner Court).

Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God
as our God? Psalms 77:13

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among
them. Exodus 25:8

O God...I come before thee in the sanctuary to look upon thy
power and glory [Bahá']. Psalms 63:2

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:1

In the Scriptures, sometimes a given word is used to convey several meanings. Sometimes “temple” and “sanctuary” refer not to the divine Law but to the divine Messengers, God made visible to man:

...and he [the Lord Almighty] will be a sanctuary...

Isaiah 8:14 NIV

I saw no temple in the city; for its temple was the sovereign Lord God and the Lamb.

Revelation 21:22 NEB

As mentioned before, the Messenger of our age is referred to repeatedly, throughout the Scriptures, as the Lord.

Sometimes the body of the divine Messenger is referred to symbolically as the curtain of the sanctuary:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body...

Hebrews 10:19-20 NIV

When Jesus was crucified, the curtain was also torn:

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last. The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Mark 15:37-38 NIV

Here are a few references from the Bahá'í Scriptures to the word *temple*, *sanctuary*, or their synonyms:

...all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God.²⁵⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

Then do not withdraw from the sanctuary of His presence, for, by the righteousness of the One true God, He is none other than the sovereign Truth from God...²⁵⁶

(See also *God Passes By*, p. 147, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 313, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 9-70, 1964 edition.)

Therefore when Daniel prayed saying:

O Lord, make thy face shine upon thy desolate sanctuary. Lend thy ear, O God, and hear, open thine eyes and look upon our desolation and upon the city that bears thy name.

Daniel 9:17-18 NEB

He was asking God to reveal His Glory and Power through the Mirrors of His divine Presence, namely His Messengers or Manifestations. For through them God renews the Essence of Religion, restores the desolation of doubt and denial, and illuminates the temples of faith.

Spiritual Sight

The primary task of the Messengers is to bring spiritual—not physical—sight to the seekers of Light.

Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see [those who are narrow-minded and see merely their own point of view] will become blind.”

John 9:39 NIV

Therefore those expecting to see the Messiah over the clouds (see the word “cloud” in this appendix), need not look up into the visible heaven; they simply need to open their inner sight to the Sun of Reality.

The word of the Lord also came to me, saying, Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.

Ezekiel 12:1-2

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205. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 101-102.
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Chapter 10

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 234. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 143.
 235. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 118.
 236. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 51.
 237. *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 93.
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Appendix III

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