

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
AND THE DIVINE PLAN

A series of eight talks by Douglas Martin

COMPILATION
of
SELECTED
MATERIALS
for further
study

Compilation of Selected Materials for Further Study

following from a series of brief talks given by

DOUGLAS MARTIN

Toronto, Canada

July 2010

Sacred Writings provided by
© Bahá'í International Community
reference.bahai.org

© Formatting and
Digital Production
www.bahaiebooks.org

 Bahá'í
eBooks
Publications

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bahá'u'lláh

1. The Kitáb-i-Íqán, pages 1-3
2. The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, paragraph 81
3. Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, page 66–67

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

4. Secret of Divine Civilization, pages 92–94
5. Secret of Divine Civilization, pages 98-99
6. Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, page 3
7. Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, page 20
8. Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, page 34

Shoghi Effendi

9. The Advent of Divine Justice, pages 77–78
10. God Passes By, pages 364–368
11. God Passes By, pages 357–360
12. Messages to the Bahá'í World: 1950–1957, pages 153–156
13. The Promised Day Is Come, page 99
14. The Promised Day Is Come, pages 123–124
15. The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 123–128
16. The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 131–134

17. The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, page 163

18. The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 196–201

19. The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, page 205–206

Commissioned by the Universal House of Justice

20. One Common Faith, pages 28–29

21. One Common Faith, pages 32–33

22. One Common Faith, page 54

Materials for the Study of the Bábí Religion, page xix

23. Introduction xix

1. THE KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN, PAGES 1-3

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 and enter thus the tabernacle which, according to the dispensations of Providence, hath been raised in the firmament of the Bayán.

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 favour, 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.

81 O Living Temple! We, verily, have made Thee a mirror unto the kingdom of names, that Thou mayest be, amidst all mankind, a sign of My sovereignty, a herald unto My presence, a summoner unto My beauty, and a guide unto My straight and perspicuous Path. We have exalted Thy Name among Our servants as a bounty from Our presence. I, verily, am the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days. We have, moreover, adorned Thee with the ornament of Our own Self, and have imparted unto Thee Our Word, that Thou mayest ordain in this contingent world whatsoever Thou willest and accomplish whatsoever Thou pleasest. We have destined for Thee all the good of the heavens and of the earth, and decreed that none may attain unto a portion thereof unless he entereth beneath Thy shadow, as bidden by Thy Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. We have conferred upon Thee the Staff of authority and the Writ of judgement, that Thou mayest test the wisdom of every command. We have caused the oceans of inner meaning and explanation to surge from Thy heart in remembrance of Thy Lord, the God of mercy, that Thou mayest render thanks and praise unto Him and be of those who are truly thankful. We have singled Thee out from amongst all Our creatures, and have appointed Thee as the Manifestation of Our own Self unto all who are in the heavens and on the earth.

The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the

fifth leaf

of the Most Exalted Paradise is this: Above all else, the greatest gift and the most wondrous blessing hath ever been and will continue to be Wisdom. It is man's unfailing Protector. It aideth him and strengtheneth him. Wisdom is God's Emissary and the Revealer of His Name the Omniscient. Through it the loftiness of man's station is made manifest and evident. It is all-knowing and the foremost Teacher in the school of existence. It is the Guide and is invested with high distinction. Thanks to its educating influence earthly beings have become imbued with a gem-like spirit which outshineth the heavens. In the city of justice it is the unrivalled Speaker Who, in the year nine, illumined the world with the joyful tidings of this Revelation. And it was this peerless Source of wisdom that at the beginning of the foundation of the world ascended the stair of inner meaning and when enthroned upon the pulpit of utterance, through the operation of the divine Will, proclaimed two words. The first heralded the promise of reward, while the second voiced the ominous warning of punishment. The promise gave rise to hope and the warning begat fear. Thus the basis of world order hath been firmly established upon these twin principles. Exalted is the Lord of Wisdom, the Possessor of Great Bounty.

The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the

sixth leaf

of the Most Exalted Paradise is the following: The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The

purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significance. Were mankind to be adorned with this raiment, they would behold the day-star of the utterance, ‘On that day God will satisfy everyone out of His abundance,’ ^[1] shining resplendent above the horizon of the world. Appreciate ye the value of this utterance; it is a noble fruit that the Tree of the Pen of Glory hath yielded. Happy is the man that giveth ear unto it and observeth its precepts. Verily I say, whatever is sent down from the heaven of the Will of God is the means for the establishment of order in the world and the instrument for promoting unity and fellowship among its peoples. Thus hath the Tongue of this Wronged One spoken from His Most Great Prison.

The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the

seventh leaf

of the Most Exalted Paradise is this: O ye men of wisdom among nations! Shut your eyes to estrangement, then fix your gaze upon unity. Cleave tenaciously unto that which will lead to the well-being and tranquillity of all mankind. This span of earth is but one homeland and one habitation. It behoveth you to abandon vainglory which causeth alienation and to set your hearts on whatever will ensure harmony. In the estimation of the people of Bahá man’s glory lieth in his knowledge, his upright conduct, his praiseworthy character, his wisdom, and not in his nationality or rank. O people of the earth! Appreciate the value of this heavenly word. Indeed it may be likened unto a ship for the ocean of knowledge and a shining luminary for the realm of perception.

4. SECRET OF DIVINE CIVILIZATION, PAGES 92–94

How does it seem, when your neighbors are at work by day and night with their whole hearts, providing for their advancement, their honor and prosperity, that you, in your ignorant fanaticism, are busy only with your quarrels and antipathies, your indulgences and appetites and empty dreams? Is it commendable that you should waste and fritter away in apathy the brilliance that is your birthright, your native competence, your inborn understanding? Again, We have digressed from Our theme.

Those European intellectuals who are well-informed as to the facts of Europe’s past, and are characterized by truthfulness and a sense of justice, unanimously acknowledge that in every particular the basic elements of their civilization are derived from Islám. For example Draper, the well-known French authority, a writer whose accuracy, ability and learning are attested by all European scholars, in one of his best-known works, *The Intellectual Development of Europe*, has written a detailed account in this connection, that is, with reference to the derivation by the peoples of Europe of the fundamentals of civilization and the bases of progress and well-being from Islám. His account is exhaustive, and a translation here would unduly lengthen out the present work and would indeed be irrelevant to Our purpose. If further details are desired the reader may refer to that text.

In essence, the author shows how the totality of Europe’s civilization—its

laws, principles, institutions, its sciences, philosophies, varied learning, its civilized manners and customs, its literature, art and industry, its organization, its discipline, its behavior, its commendable character traits, and even many of the words current in the French language, derives from the Arabs. One by one, he investigates each of these elements in detail, even giving the period when each was brought over from Islám. He describes as well the arrival of the Arabs in the West, in what is now Spain, and how in a short time they established a well-developed civilization there, and to what a high degree of excellence their administrative system and scholarship attained, and how solidly founded and well regulated were their schools and colleges, where sciences and philosophy, arts and crafts, were taught; what a high level of leadership they achieved in the arts of civilization and how many were the children of Europe's leading families who were sent to attend the schools of Cordova and Granada, Seville and Toledo to acquire the sciences and arts of civilized life. He even records that a European named Gerbert came to the West and enrolled at the University of Cordova in Arab territory, studied arts and sciences there, and after his return to Europe achieved such prominence that ultimately he was elevated to the leadership of the Catholic Church and became the Pope.

The purpose of these references is to establish the fact that the religions of God are the true source of the spiritual and material perfections of man, and the fountainhead for all mankind of enlightenment and beneficial knowledge.

It is therefore clear that the emergence of this natural sense of human

dignity and honor is the result of education. Secondly, even if we grant for the sake of the argument that instinctive intelligence and an innate moral quality would prevent wrongdoing, it is obvious that individuals so characterized are as rare as the philosopher's stone. An assumption of this sort cannot be validated by mere words, it must be supported by the facts. Let us see what power in creation impels the masses toward righteous aims and deeds!

Aside from this, if that rare individual who does exemplify such a faculty should also become an embodiment of the fear of God, it is certain that his strivings toward righteousness would be strongly reinforced.

Universal benefits derive from the grace of the Divine religions, for they lead their true followers to sincerity of intent, to high purpose, to purity and spotless honor, to surpassing kindness and compassion, to the keeping of their covenants when they have covenanted, to concern for the rights of others, to liberality, to justice in every aspect of life, to humanity and philanthropy, to valor and to unflagging efforts in the service of mankind. It is religion, to sum up, which produces all human virtues, and it is these virtues which are the bright candles of civilization. If a man is not characterized by these excellent qualities, it is certain that he has never attained to so much as a drop out of the fathomless river of the waters of life that flows through the teachings of the Holy Books, nor caught the faintest breath of the fragrant breezes that blow from the gardens of God; for nothing on earth can be demonstrated by words alone, and every level of existence is known by its signs and symbols, and every degree in man's development has its identifying mark.

The purpose of these statements is to make it abundantly clear that the

Divine religions, the holy precepts, the heavenly teachings, are the unassailable basis of human happiness, and that the peoples of the world can hope for no real relief or deliverance without this one great remedy. This panacea must, however, be administered by a wise and skilled physician, for in the hands of an incompetent all the cures that the Lord of men has ever created to heal men's ills could produce no health, and would on the contrary only destroy the helpless and burden the hearts of the already afflicted.

That Source of Divine wisdom, that Manifestation of Universal Prophethood (Muḥammad), encouraging mankind to acquire sciences and arts and similar advantages has commanded them to seek these even in the furthest reaches of China; yet the incompetent and caviling doctors forbid this, offering as their justification the saying, "He who imitates a people is one of them." They have not even grasped what is meant by the "imitation" referred to, nor do they know that the Divine religions enjoin upon and encourage all the faithful to adopt such principles as will conduce to continuous improvements, and to acquire from other peoples sciences and arts. Whoever expresses himself to the contrary has never drunk of the nectar of knowledge and is astray in his own ignorance, groping after the mirage of his desires.

The Faith of the Blessed Beauty is summoning mankind to safety and love, to amity and peace; it hath raised up its tabernacle on the heights of the earth, and directeth its call to all nations. Wherefore, O ye who are God's lovers, know ye the value of this precious Faith, obey its teachings, walk in this road that is drawn straight, and show ye this way to the people. Lift up

your voices and sing out the song of the Kingdom. Spread far and wide the precepts and counsels of the loving Lord, so that this world will change into another world, and this darksome earth will be flooded with light, and the dead body of mankind will arise and live; so that every soul will ask for immortality, through the holy breaths of God.

Soon will your swiftly-passing days be over, and the fame and riches, the comforts, the joys provided by this rubbish-heap, the world, will be gone without a trace. Summon ye, then, the people to God, and invite humanity to follow the example of the Company on high. Be ye loving fathers to the orphan, and a refuge to the helpless, and a treasury for the poor, and a cure for the ailing. Be ye the helpers of every victim of oppression, the patrons of the disadvantaged. Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race. Pay ye no heed to aversion and rejection, to disdain, hostility, injustice: act ye in the opposite way. Be ye sincerely kind, not in appearance only. Let each one of God's loved ones centre his attention on this: to be the Lord's mercy to man; to be the Lord's grace. Let him do some good to every person whose path he crosseth, and be of some benefit to him. Let him improve the character of each and all, and reorient the minds of men. In this way, the light of divine guidance will shine forth, and the blessings of God will cradle all mankind: for love is light, no matter in what abode it dwelleth; and hate is darkness, no matter where it may make its nest. O friends of God! That the hidden Mystery may stand revealed, and the secret essence of all things may be disclosed, strive ye to banish that darkness for ever and ever.

Then will all humankind, because of this fresh and dazzling bounty, be

gathered in a single homeland. Then will conflict and dissension vanish from the face of the earth, then will mankind be cradled in love for the beauty of the All-Glorious. Discord will change to accord, dissension to unison. The roots of malevolence will be torn out, the basis of aggression destroyed. The bright rays of union will obliterate the darkness of limitations, and the splendours of heaven will make the human heart to be even as a mine veined richly with the love of God.

O ye loved ones of the Lord! This is the hour when ye must associate with all the earth's peoples in extreme kindliness and love, and be to them the signs and tokens of God's great mercy. Ye must become the very soul of the world, the living spirit in the body of the children of men. In this wondrous Age, at this time when the Ancient Beauty, the Most Great Name, bearing unnumbered gifts, hath risen above the horizon of the world, the Word of God hath infused such awesome power into the inmost essence of humankind that He hath stripped men's human qualities of all effect, and hath, with His all-conquering might, unified the peoples in a vast sea of oneness.

Now is the time for the lovers of God to raise high the banners of unity, to intone, in the assemblages of the world, the verses of friendship and love and to demonstrate to all that the grace of God is one. Thus will the tabernacles of holiness be upraised on the summits of the earth, gathering all peoples into the protective shadow of the Word of Oneness. This great bounty will dawn over the world at the time when the lovers of God shall arise to carry out His Teachings, and to scatter far and wide the fresh, sweet scents of universal love.

Wherefore, O ye beloved of God, offer up thanks that ye have, in the day of the dawning, turned your faces unto the Light of the World and beheld its splendours. Ye have received a share of the light of truth, ye have enjoyed a portion of those blessings that endure forever; and therefore, as a returning of thanks for this bounty, rest ye not for a moment, sit ye not silent, carry to men's ears the glad tidings of the Kingdom, spread far and wide the Word of God.

Act in accordance with the counsels of the Lord: that is, rise up in such wise, and with such qualities, as to endow the body of this world with a living soul, and to bring this young child, humanity, to the stage of adulthood. So far as ye are able, ignite a candle of love in every meeting, and with tenderness rejoice and cheer ye every heart. Care for the stranger as for one of your own; show to alien souls the same loving kindness ye bestow upon your faithful friends. Should any come to blows with you, seek to be friends with him; should any stab you to the heart, be ye a healing salve unto his sores; should any taunt and mock at you, meet him with love. Should any heap his blame upon you, praise ye him; should he offer you a deadly poison, give him the choicest honey in exchange; and should he threaten your life, grant him a remedy that will heal him evermore. Should he be pain itself, be ye his medicine; should he be thorns, be ye his roses and sweet herbs. Perchance such ways and words from you will make this darksome world turn bright at last; will make this dusty earth turn heavenly, this devilish prison place become a royal palace of the Lord—so that war and strife will pass and be no more, and love and trust will pitch their tents on the summits of the world. Such is the essence of God's admonitions; such in sum are the teachings for the Dispensation of Bahá.

9. THE ADVENT OF DIVINE JUSTICE, PAGES 77–78

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.”

“Verily I say! No one hath apprehended the root of this Cause. It is incumbent upon everyone, in this day, to perceive with the eye of God, and to hearken with His ear. Whoso beholdeth Me with an eye besides Mine own will never be able to know Me. None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.” “I testify before God to the greatness, the inconceivable greatness of this Revelation. Again and again have We, in most of Our Tablets, borne witness to this truth, that mankind may be roused from its heedlessness.” “How great is the Cause, how staggering the weight of its Message!” “In this most mighty Revelation all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation.” “That which hath been made manifest in this preeminent, this most exalted Revelation, stands unparalleled in the annals of the past, nor will future ages witness its like.” “The purpose underlying all creation is the revelation of this most sublime, this most holy Day, the Day known as the Day of God, in His Books and Scriptures—the Day which all the

Prophets, and the Chosen Ones, and the holy ones, have wished to witness.” “The highest essence and most perfect expression of whatsoever the peoples of old have either said or written hath, through this most potent Revelation, been sent down from the heaven of the Will of the All-Possessing, the Ever-Abiding God.” “This is the Day in which God’s most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things.” “This is the Day whereon the Ocean of God’s mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Daystar of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favor have overshadowed the whole of mankind.” “By the righteousness of Mine own Self! Great, immeasurably great is this Cause! Mighty, inconceivably mighty is this Day!” “Every Prophet hath announced the coming of this Day, and every Messenger hath groaned in His yearning for this Revelation—a revelation which, no sooner had it been revealed than all created things cried out saying, ‘The earth is God’s, the Most Exalted, the Most Great!’” “The Day of the Promise is come, and He Who is the Promised One loudly proclaimeth before all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, ‘Verily there is none other God but He, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting!’ I swear by God! That which had been enshrined from eternity in the knowledge of God, the Knower of the seen and unseen, is revealed. Happy is the eye that seeth, and the face that turneth towards, the Countenance of God, the Lord of all being.” “Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness. The soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted for this wondrous Day. All the divers kindreds of the earth have, likewise, yearned to attain it.” “This Day a door is open wider than both heaven and earth. The eye of the mercy of Him Who is the Desire of the worlds is turned towards all men. An act, however infinitesimal, is, when viewed in the mirror of the knowledge of God, mightier than a mountain. Every drop proffered in His path is as the sea in that mirror. For this is the Day which the one true God, glorified be He,

hath announced in all His Books, unto His Prophets and His Messengers.” “This is a Revelation, under which, if a man shed for its sake one drop of blood, myriads of oceans will be his recompense.” “A fleeting moment, in this Day, excelleth centuries of a bygone age.... Neither sun nor moon hath witnessed a day such as this Day.” “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.’” “The world of being shineth, in this Day, with the resplendency of this Divine Revelation. All created things extol its saving grace, and sing its praises. The universe is wrapt in an ecstasy of joy and gladness. The Scriptures of past Dispensations celebrate the great Jubilee that must needs greet this most great Day of God. Well is it with him that hath lived to see this Day, and hath recognized its station.” “This Day a different Sun hath arisen, and a different Heaven hath been adorned with its stars and its planets. The world is another world, and the Cause another Cause.”

Chapter XXIV: Emancipation and Recognition of the Faith and Its Institutions

While the initial steps aiming at the erection of the framework of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh were being simultaneously undertaken by His followers in the East and in the West, a fierce attack was launched in an obscure village in Egypt on a handful of believers, who were trying to establish there one of the primary institutions of that Order—an attack which, viewed in the perspective of history, will be acclaimed by future generations as a landmark not only in the

Formative Period of the Faith but in the history of the first Bahá'í century. Indeed, the sequel to this assault may be said to have opened a new chapter in the evolution of the Faith itself, an evolution which, carrying it through the successive stages of repression, of emancipation, of recognition as an independent Revelation, and as a state religion, must lead to the establishment of the Bahá'í state and culminate in the emergence of the Bahá'í World Commonwealth.

Originating in a country which can rightly boast of being the acknowledged center of both the Arab and Muslim worlds; precipitated by the action, taken on their own initiative, by the ecclesiastical representatives of the largest communion in Islám; the direct outcome of a series of disturbances instigated by some of the members of that communion designed to suppress the activities of certain followers of the Faith who had held a clerical rank among them, this momentous development in the fortunes of a struggling community has directly contributed, to a considerable degree, to the consolidation and the enhancement of the prestige of the Administrative Order which that community had begun to erect. It will, moreover, as its repercussions are more widely spread to other Islamic countries, and its vast significance is more clearly apprehended by the adherents of both Christianity and Islám, hasten the termination of the period of transition through which the Faith, now in the formative stage of its growth, is passing.

It was in the village of Kawmu'ş-Şa'áyidih, in the district of Beba, of the province of Beni Suef in Upper Egypt, that, as a result of the religious fanaticism which the formation of a Bahá'í assembly had kindled in the breast of the headman of that village, and of the grave accusations made by him to both the District Police Officer and the Governor of the province—accusations which aroused the Muḥammadans to such a pitch of

excitement as to cause them to perpetrate shameful acts against their victims—that action was initiated by the notary of the village, in his capacity as a religious plaintiff authorized by the Ministry of Justice, against three Bahá'í residents of that village, demanding that their Muslim wives be divorced from them on the grounds that their husbands had abandoned Islám after their legal marriage as Muslims

The Opinion and Judgment of the Appellate religious court of Beba, delivered on May 10, 1925, subsequently sanctioned by the highest ecclesiastical authorities in Cairo and upheld by them as final, printed and circulated by the Muslim authorities themselves, annulled the marriages contracted by the three Bahá'í defendants and condemned the mass heretics for having violated the laws and ordinances of Islám. It even went so far as to make the positive, the startling and indeed the historic assertion that the Faith embraced by these heretics is to be regarded as a distinct religion, wholly independent of the religious systems that have preceded it—an assertion which hitherto the enemies of the Faith, whether in the East or in the West, had either disputed or deliberately ignored.

Having expounded the fundamental tenets and ordinances of Islám, and given a detailed exposition of the Bahá'í teachings, supported by various quotations from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, from the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, with special reference to certain Bahá'í laws, and demonstrated that the defendants had, in the light of these statements, actually abjured the Faith of Muḥammad, his formal verdict declares in the most unequivocal terms: “The Bahá'í Faith is a new religion, entirely independent, with beliefs, principles and laws of its own, which differ from, and are utterly in conflict with, the beliefs, principles and laws of Islám. No Bahá'í, therefore, can be regarded a Muslim or vice-versa, even as no Buddhist, Brahmin, or Christian can be regarded a Muslim or vice-

versa.” Ordering the dissolution of the contracts of marriage of the parties on trial, and the “separation” of the husbands from their wives, this official and memorable pronouncement concludes with the following words: “If any one of them (husbands) repents, believes in, and acknowledges whatsoever ... Muḥammad, the Apostle of God ... has brought from God ... and returns to the august Faith of Islām ... and testifies that ... Muḥammad ... is the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers, that no religion will succeed His religion, that no law will abrogate His law, that the Qur’án is the last of the Books of God and His last Revelation to His Prophets and His Messengers ... he shall be accepted and shall be entitled to renew his marriage contract...”

This declaration of portentous significance, which was supported by incontrovertible proofs adduced by the avowed enemies of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh themselves, which was made in a country that aspires to the headship of Islām through the restoration of the Caliphate, and which has received the sanction of the highest ecclesiastical authorities in that country, this official testimony which the leaders of Shí’ah Islām, in both Persia and ‘Irāq, have, through a century, sedulously avoided voicing, and which, once and for all, silences those detractors, including Christian ecclesiastics in the West, who have in the past stigmatized that Faith as a cult, as a Bábí sect and as an offshoot of Islām or represented it as a synthesis of religions—such a declaration was acclaimed by all Bahá’í communities in the East and in the West as the first Charter of the emancipation of the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh from the fetters of Islamic orthodoxy, the first historic step taken, not by its adherents as might have been expected, but by its adversaries on the road leading to its ultimate and world-wide recognition.

Such a verdict, fraught with incalculable possibilities, was immediately

recognized as a powerful challenge which the builders of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh were not slow to face and accept. It imposed upon them a sacred obligation which they felt ready to discharge. Designed by its authors to deprive their adversaries of access to Muslim courts, and thereby place them in a perplexing and embarrassing situation, it became a lever which the Egyptian Bahá'í community, followed later by its sister-communities, readily utilized for the purpose of asserting the independence of its Faith and of seeking for it the recognition of its government. Translated into several languages, circulated among Bahá'í communities in East and West, it gradually paved the way for the initiation of negotiations between the elected representatives of these communities and the civil authorities in Egypt, in the Holy Land, in Persia and even in the United States of America, for the purpose of securing the official recognition by these authorities of the Faith as an independent religion.

In Egypt it was the signal for the adoption of a series of measures which have in their cumulative effect greatly facilitated the extension of such a recognition by a government which is still formally associated with the religion of Islám, and which suffers its laws and regulations to be shaped in a great measure by the views and pronouncements of its ecclesiastical leaders. The inflexible determination of the Egyptian believers not to deviate a hair's breadth from the tenets of their Faith, by avoiding all dealings with any Muslim ecclesiastical court in that country and by refusing any ecclesiastical post which might be offered them; the codification and publication of the fundamental laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas regarding matters of personal status, such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and burial, and the presentation of these laws to the Egyptian Cabinet; the issuance of marriage and divorce certificates by the Egyptian National Spiritual Assembly; the assumption by that Assembly of all the duties and responsibilities connected with the conduct of Bahá'í marriages and

divorces, as well as with the burial of the dead; the observance by all members of that community of the nine Holy Days on which work, as prescribed in the Bahá'í teachings, must be completely suspended; the presentation of a petition addressed by the national elected representatives of that community to the Egyptian Prime Minister, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Justice (supported by a similar communication addressed by the American National Spiritual Assembly to the Egyptian Government), enclosing a copy of the judgment of the Court, and of their national Bahá'í constitution and by-laws, requesting them to recognize their Assembly as a body qualified to exercise the functions of an independent court and empowered to apply, in all matters affecting their personal status, the laws and ordinances revealed by the Author of their Faith—these stand out as the initial consequences of a historic pronouncement that must eventually lead to the establishment of that Faith on a basis of absolute equality with its sister religions in that land.

A corollary to this epoch-making declaration, and a direct consequence of the intermittent disturbances instigated in Port Said and Ismá'íliyyih by a fanatical populace in connection with the burial of some of the members of the Bahá'í community, was the official and no less remarkable fatvá (judgment) issued, at the request of the Ministry of Justice, by the Grand Muftí of Egypt. This, soon after its pronouncement, was published in the Egyptian press and contributed to fortify further the independent status of the Faith. It followed upon the riots which broke out with exceptional fury in Ismá'íliyyih, when angry crowds surrounded the funeral cortège of Muḥammad Sulaymán, a prominent Bahá'í resident of that town, creating such an uproar that the police had to intervene, and having rescued the body and brought it back to the home of the deceased, they were forced to carry it without escort, at night, to the edge of the desert and inter it in the wilderness.

This judgment was passed as a result of the inquiry addressed in writing, on January 24, 1939, by the Egyptian Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Justice, enclosing a copy of the compilation of Bahá'í laws related to matters of personal status published by the Egyptian Bahá'í National Spiritual Assembly, and asking for a pronouncement by the Muftí regarding the petition addressed by that Assembly to the Egyptian Government for the allocation of four plots to serve as cemeteries for the Bahá'í communities of Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said and Ismá'íliyyih. “We are,” wrote the Muftí in his reply of March 11, 1939, to the communication addressed to him by the Ministry of Justice, “in receipt of your letter ... dated February 21, 1939, with its enclosures ... inquiring whether or not it would be lawful to bury the Bahá'í dead in Muslim cemeteries. We hereby declare that this Community is not to be regarded as Muslim, as shown by the beliefs which it professes. The perusal of what they term ‘The Bahá'í Laws affecting Matters of Personal Status,’ accompanying the papers, is deemed sufficient evidence. Whoever among its members had formerly been a Muslim has, by virtue of his belief in the pretensions of this community, renounced Islám, and is regarded as beyond its pale, and is subject to the laws governing apostasy as established in the right Faith of Islám. This community not being Muslim, it would be unlawful to bury its dead in Muslim cemeteries, be they originally Muslims or otherwise...”

It was in consequence of this final, this clearly-worded and authoritative sentence by the highest exponent of Islamic Law in Egypt, and after prolonged negotiations, resulting at first in the allocation to the Cairo Bahá'í community of a cemetery plot forming a part of that set aside for free thinkers, residing in that city, that the Egyptian government consented to grant to that community, as well as to the Bahá'ís of Ismá'íliyyih, two tracts of land to serve as burial grounds for their dead—an act of historic significance which was greatly welcomed by the members of sore-pressed and long-suffering communities, and which has served to demonstrate still

further the independent character of their Faith and enlarge the sphere of the jurisdiction of its representative institutions.

11. GOD PASSES BY, PAGES 357–360

Of a more serious nature, and productive of still greater repercussions, was the unlawful seizure by the Shí'ahs of 'Iráq, at about the same time that the keys of the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh were wrested by the Covenant-breakers from its keeper, of yet another Bahá'í Shrine, the House occupied by Bahá'u'lláh for well nigh the whole period of His exile in 'Iráq, which had been acquired by Him, and later had been ordained as a center of pilgrimage, and had continued in the unbroken and undisputed possession of His followers ever since His departure from Baghdád. This crisis, originating about a year prior to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension, and precipitated by the measures which, after the change of régime in 'Iráq, had, according to His instructions, been taken for the reconstruction of that House, acquired as it developed a steadily widening measure of publicity. It became the object of the consideration of successive tribunals, first of the local Shí'ah Ja'faríyyih court in Baghdád, second of the Peace court, then the court of First Instance, then of the court of Appeal in 'Iráq, and finally of the League of Nations, the greatest international body yet come into existence, and empowered to exercise supervision and control over all Mandated Territories. Though as yet unresolved through a combination of causes, religious as well as political, it has already remarkably fulfilled Bahá'u'lláh's own prediction, and will, in its own appointed time, as the means for its solution are providentially created, fulfill the high destiny ordained for it by Him in His Tablets. Long before its seizure by fanatical enemies, who had no conceivable claim to it whatever, He had prophesied that "it shall be so abased in the days to come as to cause tears to flow from every discerning eye."

The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Baghdád, deprived of the use of that sacred property through an adverse decision by a majority of the court of Appeal, which had reversed the verdict of the lower court and awarded the property to the Shí'ahs, and aroused by subsequent action of the Shí'ahs, soon after the execution of the judgment of that court, in converting the building into waqf property (pious foundation), designating it “Ḥusayníyyih,” with the purpose of consolidating their gain, realized the futility of the three years of negotiations they had been conducting with the civil authorities in Baghdád for the righting of the wrong inflicted upon them. In their capacity as the national representatives of the Bahá'ís of 'Iráq, they, therefore, on September 11, 1928, through the High Commissioner for 'Iráq and in conformity with the provisions of Art. 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, approached the League's Permanent Mandates Commission, charged with the supervision of the administration of all Mandated Territories, and presented a petition that was accepted and approved by that body in November, 1928. A memorandum submitted, in connection with that petition, to that same Commission, by the Mandatory Power unequivocally stated that the Shí'ahs had “no conceivable claim whatever” to the House, that the decision of the judge of the Ja'faríyyih court was “obviously wrong,” “unjust” and “undoubtedly actuated by religious prejudice,” that the subsequent ejectment of the Bahá'ís was “illegal,” that the action of the authorities had been “highly irregular,” and that the verdict of the Court of Appeal was suspected of not being “uninfluenced by political consideration.”

“The Commission,” states the Report submitted by it to the Council of the League, and published in the Minutes of the 14th session of the Permanent Mandates Commission, held in Geneva in the fall of 1928, and subsequently translated into Arabic and published in 'Iráq, “draws the

Council's attention to the considerations and conclusions suggested to it by an examination of the petition... It recommends that the Council should ask the British Government to make representations to the 'Iráq Government with a view to the immediate redress of the denial of justice from which the petitioners have suffered."

The British accredited representative present at the sessions of the Commission, furthermore, stated that "the Mandatory Power had recognized that the Bahá'ís had suffered an injustice," whilst allusion was made, in the course of that session, to the fact that the action of the Shí'ahs constituted a breach of the constitution and the Organic Law of 'Iráq. The Finnish representative, moreover, in his report to the Council, declared that this "injustice must be attributed solely to religious passion," and asked that "the petitioner's wrongs should be redressed."

The Council of the League, on its part, having considered this report as well as the joint observations and conclusions of the Commission, unanimously adopted, on March 4, 1929, a resolution, subsequently translated and published in the newspapers of Baghdád, directing the Mandatory Power "to make representations to the Government of 'Iráq with a view to the immediate redress of the injustice suffered by the Petitioners." It instructed, accordingly, the Secretary General to bring to the notice of the Mandatory Power, as well as to the petitioners concerned, the conclusions arrived at by the Commission, an instruction which was duly transmitted by the British Government through its High Commissioner to the 'Iráq Government.

A letter dated January 12, 1931, written on behalf of the British Foreign Minister, Mr. Arthur Henderson, addressed to the League Secretariat, stated that the conclusions reached by the Council had "received the most

careful consideration by the Government of ‘Iráq,” who had “finally decided to set up a special committee ... to consider the views expressed by the Bahá’í community in respect of certain houses in Baghdád, and to formulate recommendations for an equitable settlement of this question.” That letter, moreover, pointed out that the committee had submitted its report in August, 1930, that it had been accepted by the government, that the Bahá’í community had “accepted in principle” its recommendations, and that the authorities in Baghdád had directed that “detailed plans and estimates shall be prepared with a view to carrying these recommendations into effect during the coming financial year.”

No need to dwell on the subsequent history of this momentous case, on the long-drawn out negotiations, the delays and complications that ensued; on the consultations, “over a hundred” in number, in which the king, his ministers and advisers took part; on the expressions of “regret,” of “surprise” and of “anxiety” placed on record at successive sessions of the Mandates Commission held in Geneva in 1929, 1930, 1931, 1932 and 1933; on the condemnation by its members of the “spirit of intolerance” animating the Shí’ah community, of the “partiality” of the Iráqí courts, of the “weakness” of the civil authorities and of the “religious passion at the bottom of this injustice”; on their testimony to the “extremely conciliatory disposition” of the petitioners, on their “doubt” regarding the adequacy of the proposals, and on their recognition of the “serious” character of the situation that had been created, of the “flagrant denial of justice” which the Bahá’ís had suffered, and of the “moral debt” which the ‘Iráq Government had contracted, a debt which, whatever the changes in her status as a nation, it was her bounden duty to discharge.

Nor does it seem necessary to expatiate on the unfortunate consequences of the untimely death of both the British High Commissioner and the Iráqí

Prime Minister; on the admission of 'Iráq as a member of the League, and the consequent termination of the mandate held by Great Britain; on the tragic and unexpected death of the King himself; on the difficulties raised owing to the existence of a town planning scheme; on the written assurance conveyed to the High Commissioner by the acting Premier in his letter of January, 1932; on the pledge given by the King, prior to his death, in the presence of the foreign minister, in February, 1933, that the House would be expropriated, and the necessary sum would be appropriated in the spring of the ensuing year; on the categorical statement made by that same foreign minister that the Prime Minister had given the necessary assurances that the promise already made by the acting Premier would be redeemed; or on the positive statements made by that same Foreign Minister and his colleague, the Minister of Finance, when representing their country during the sessions of the League Assembly held in Geneva, that the promise given by their late King would be fully honored.

Suffice it to say that, despite these interminable delays, protests and evasions, and the manifest failure of the Authorities concerned to implement the recommendations made by both the Council of the League and the Permanent Mandates Commission, the publicity achieved for the Faith by this memorable litigation, and the defense of its cause—the cause of truth and justice—by the world's highest tribunal, have been such as to excite the wonder of its friends and to fill with consternation its enemies. Few episodes, if any, since the birth of the Formative Age of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, have given rise to repercussions in high places comparable to the effect produced on governments and chancelleries by this violent and unprovoked assault directed by its inveterate enemies against one of its holiest sanctuaries.

“Grieve not, O House of God,” Bahá'u'lláh Himself has significantly

written, “if the veil of thy sanctity be rent asunder by the infidels. God hath, in the world of creation, adorned thee with the jewel of His remembrance. Such an ornament no man can, at any time, profane. Towards thee the eyes of thy Lord shall, under all conditions, remain directed.” “In the fullness of time,” He, in another passage, referring to that same House, has prophesied, “the Lord shall, by the power of truth, exalt it in the eyes of all men. He shall cause it to become the Standard of His Kingdom, the Shrine round which will circle the concourse of the faithful.”

To the bold onslaught made by the breakers of the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh in their concerted efforts to secure the custodianship of His holy Tomb, to the arbitrary seizure of His holy House in Baghdád by the Shí’ah community of ‘Iráq, was to be added, a few years later, yet another grievous assault launched by a still more powerful adversary, directed against the very fabric of the Administrative Order as established by two long-flourishing Bahá’í communities of the East, culminating in the virtual disruption of these communities and the seizure of the first Mashriqu’l-Adhkár of the Bahá’í world and of the few accessory institutions already reared about it.

12. MESSAGES TO THE BAHÁ’Í WORLD: 1950–1957, PAGES 153–156

A PLANETARY SPIRITUAL CRUSADE

Let there be no mistake. The avowed, the primary aim of this Spiritual Crusade is none other than the conquest of the citadels of men’s hearts. The theater of its operations is the entire planet. Its duration a whole

decade. Its commencement synchronizes with the centenary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission. Its culmination will coincide with the centenary of the declaration of that same Mission. The agencies assisting in its conduct are the nascent administrative institutions of a steadily evolving divinely appointed order. Its driving force is the energizing influence generated by the Revelation heralded by the Báb and proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh. Its Marshal is none other than the Author of the Divine Plan. Its standard-bearers are the Hands of the Cause of God appointed in every continent of the globe. Its generals are the twelve national spiritual assemblies participating in the execution of its design. Its vanguard is the chief executors of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's master plan, their allies and associates. Its legions are the rank and file of believers standing behind these same twelve national assemblies and sharing in the global task embracing the American, the European, the African, the Asiatic and Australian fronts. The charter directing its course is the immortal Tablets that have flowed from the pen of the Center of the Covenant Himself. The armor with which its onrushing hosts have been invested is the glad tidings of God's own message in this day, the principles underlying the order proclaimed by His Messenger, and the laws and ordinances governing His Dispensation. The battle cry animating its heroes and heroines is the cry of Yá-Bahá'u'l-Abhá, Yá 'Alíyyu'l-A'lá.

So vast, so momentous and challenging a crusade that will, God willing, illuminate the annals of the second epoch of the Formative Age of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and immortalize the second decade of the second Bahá'í century, and the termination of which will mark the closing of the first epoch in the evolution of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Divine Plan, will, in itself, pave the way for, and constitute the prelude to, the initiation of the laborious and tremendously long process of establishing in the course of subsequent crusades in all the newly opened sovereign states, dependencies and islands of the planet, as well as in all the remaining

territories of the globe, the framework of the Administrative Order of the Faith, with all its attendant agencies, and of eventually erecting in these territories still more pillars to share in sustaining the weight and in broadening the foundation of the Universal House of Justice.

BEGIN NINTH PART OF MAJESTIC PROCESS

Then, and only then, will the vast, the majestic process, set in motion at the dawn of the Adamic cycle, attain its consummation—a process which commenced six thousand years ago, with the planting, in the soil of the divine will, of the tree of divine revelation, and which has already passed through certain stages and must needs pass through still others ere it attains its final consummation. The first part of this process was the slow and steady growth of this tree of divine revelation, successively putting forth its branches, shoots and offshoots, and revealing its leaves, buds and blossoms, as a direct consequence of the light and warmth imparted to it by a series of progressive dispensations associated with Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muḥammad and other Prophets, and of the vernal showers of blood shed by countless martyrs in their path. The second part of this process was the fruition of this tree, “that belongeth neither to the East nor to the West,” when the Báb appeared as the perfect fruit and declared His mission in the Year Sixty in the city of Shíráz. The third part was the grinding of this sacred seed, of infinite preciousness and potency, in the mill of adversity, causing it to yield its oil, six years later, in the city of Tabríz. The fourth part was the ignition of this oil by the hand of Providence in the depths and amidst the darkness of the Síyáh-Chál of Ṭihrán a hundred years ago. The fifth, was the clothing of that flickering light, which had scarcely penetrated the adjoining territory of ‘Iráq, in the lamp of revelation, after an eclipse lasting no less than ten years, in the city of Baghdád. The sixth, was the spread of the radiance of that light, shining

with added brilliancy in its crystal globe in Adrianople, and later on in the fortress town of ‘Akká, to thirteen countries in the Asiatic and African continents. The seventh was its projection, from the Most Great Prison, in the course of the ministry of the Center of the Covenant, across the seas and the shedding of its illumination upon twenty sovereign states and dependencies in the American, the European, and Australian continents. The eighth part of that process was the diffusion of that same light in the course of the first, and the opening years of the second, epoch of the Formative Age of the Faith, over ninety-four sovereign states, dependencies and islands of the planet, as a result of the prosecution of a series of national plans, initiated by eleven national spiritual assemblies throughout the Bahá’í world, utilizing the agencies of a newly emerged, divinely appointed Administrative Order, and which has now culminated in the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Bahá’u’lláh’s Mission. The ninth part of this process—the stage we are now entering—is the further diffusion of that same light over one hundred and thirty-one additional territories and islands in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, through the operation of a decade-long world spiritual crusade whose termination will, God willing, coincide with the Most Great Jubilee commemorating the centenary of the declaration of Bahá’u’lláh in Baghdád. And finally the tenth part of this mighty process must be the penetration of that light, in the course of numerous crusades and of successive epochs of both the Formative and Golden Ages of the Faith, into all the remaining territories of the globe through the erection of the entire machinery of Bahá’u’lláh’s Administrative Order in all territories, both East and West, the stage at which the light of God’s triumphant Faith shining in all its power and glory will have suffused and enveloped the entire planet.

This present Crusade, on the threshold of which we now stand, will, moreover, by virtue of the dynamic forces it will release and its wide

repercussions over the entire surface of the globe, contribute effectually to the acceleration of yet another process of tremendous significance which will carry the steadily evolving Faith of Bahá'u'lláh through its present stages of obscurity, of repression, of emancipation and of recognition—stages one or another of which Bahá'í national communities in various parts of the world now find themselves in—to the stage of establishment, the stage at which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh will be recognized by the civil authorities as the state religion, similar to that which Christianity entered in the years following the death of the Emperor Constantine, a stage which must later be followed by the emergence of the Bahá'í state itself, functioning, in all religious and civil matters, in strict accordance with the laws and ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy, the Mother-Book of the Bahá'í Revelation, a stage which, in the fullness of time, will culminate in the establishment of the World Bahá'í Commonwealth, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, and which will signalize the long-awaited advent of the Christ-promised Kingdom of God on earth—the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh—mirroring however faintly upon this humble handful of dust the glories of the Abhá Kingdom.

This final and crowning stage in the evolution of the plan wrought by God Himself for humanity will, in turn, prove to be the signal for the birth of a world civilization, incomparable in its range, its character and potency, in the history of mankind—a civilization which posterity will, with one voice, acclaim as the fairest fruit of the Golden Age of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, and whose rich harvest will be garnered during future dispensations destined to succeed one another in the course of the five thousand century Bahá'í Cycle.

[May 4, 1953]

Such was the fate of the self-styled Vicar of the Prophet of God, and of the favorite ministers of the still awaited Imám. “The people of the Qur’án,” Bahá’u’lláh testifies, “have risen against Us, and tormented Us with such a torment that the Holy Spirit lamented, and the thunder roared out, and the clouds wept over Us.... Muhammad, the Apostle of God, bewaileth, in the all-highest Paradise, their acts.” “A day shall be witnessed by My people,” their own traditions condemn them, “whereon there will have remained of Islám naught but a name, and of the Qur’án naught but a mere appearance. The doctors of that age shall be the most evil the world hath ever seen. Mischief hath proceeded from them, and on them it will recoil.” And again: “Most of His enemies will be the divines. His bidding they will not obey, but will protest saying: ‘This is contrary to that which hath been handed down unto us by the Imáms of the Faith.’” And still again: “At that hour His malediction shall descend upon you, and your curse shall afflict you, and your religion shall remain an empty word on your tongues. And when these signs appear amongst you, anticipate the day when the red-hot wind will have swept over you, or the day when ye will have been disfigured, or when stones will have rained upon you.”

A Warning Unto All Nations

This horde of degraded priests, stigmatized by Bahá’u’lláh as “doctors of doubt,” as the “abject manifestations of the Prince of Darkness,” as “wolves” and “pharaohs,” as “focal centers of hellish fire,” as “voracious

beasts preying upon the carrion of the souls of men,” and, as testified by their own traditions, as both the sources and victims of mischief, have joined the various swarms of sháh-zádihs, of emirs, and princelings of fallen dynasties—a witness and a warning unto all nations of what must, sooner or later, befall those wielders of earthly dominion, be it royal or ecclesiastic, who might dare to challenge or persecute the appointed Channels and Embodiments of Divine authority and power.

Islám, at once the progenitor and persecutor of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, is, if we read aright the signs of the times, only beginning to sustain the impact of this invincible and triumphant Faith. We need only recall the nineteen hundred years of abject misery and dispersion which they, who only for the short space of three years persecuted the Son of God, have had to endure, and are still enduring.

14. THE PROMISED DAY IS COME, PAGES 123–124

World Commonwealth

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

reconstruction of mankind, as the result of the universal recognition of its oneness and wholeness, will bring in its wake the spiritualization of the masses, consequent to the recognition of the character, and the acknowledgment of the claims, of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh—the essential condition to that ultimate fusion of all races, creeds, classes, and nations which must signalize the emergence of His New World Order.

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

Not ours, puny mortals that we are, to attempt, at so critical a stage in the long and checkered history of mankind, to arrive at a precise and satisfactory understanding of the steps which must successively lead a

bleeding humanity, wretchedly oblivious of its God, and careless of Bahá'u'lláh, from its calvary to its ultimate resurrection. Not ours, the living witnesses of the all-subduing potency of His Faith, to question, for a moment, and however dark the misery that enshrouds the world, the ability of Bahá'u'lláh to forge, with the hammer of His Will, and through the fire of tribulation, upon the anvil of this travailing age, and in the particular shape His mind has envisioned, these scattered and mutually destructive fragments into which a perverse world has fallen, into one single unit, solid and indivisible, able to execute His design for the children of men.

Ours rather the duty, however confused the scene, however dismal the present outlook, however circumscribed the resources we dispose of, to labor serenely, confidently, and unremittingly to lend our share of assistance, in whichever way circumstances may enable us, to the operation of the forces which, as marshaled and directed by Bahá'u'lláh, are leading humanity out of the valley of misery and shame to the loftiest summits of power and glory.

The Báb

Dearly-beloved friends! That the Báb, the inaugurator of the Bábí Dispensation, is fully entitled to rank as one of the self-sufficient Manifestations of God, that He has been invested with sovereign power and authority, and exercises all the rights and prerogatives of independent Prophethood, is yet another fundamental verity which the Message of Bahá'u'lláh insistently proclaims and which its followers must

uncompromisingly uphold. That He is not to be regarded merely as an inspired Precursor of the Bahá'í Revelation, that in His person, as He Himself bears witness in the Persian Bayán, the object of all the Prophets gone before Him has been fulfilled, is a truth which I feel it my duty to demonstrate and emphasize. We would assuredly be failing in our duty to the Faith we profess and would be violating one of its basic and sacred principles if in our words or by our conduct we hesitate to recognize the implications of this root principle of Bahá'í belief, or refuse to uphold unreservedly its integrity and demonstrate its truth. Indeed the chief motive actuating me to undertake the task of editing and translating Nabíl's immortal Narrative has been to enable every follower of the Faith in the West to better understand and more readily grasp the tremendous implications of His exalted station and to more ardently admire and love Him.

There can be no doubt that the claim to the twofold station ordained for the Báb by the Almighty, a claim which He Himself has so boldly advanced, which Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly affirmed, and to which the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has finally given the sanction of its testimony, constitutes the most distinctive feature of the Bahá'í Dispensation. It is a further evidence of its uniqueness, a tremendous accession to the strength, to the mysterious power and authority with which this holy cycle has been invested. Indeed the greatness of the Báb consists primarily, not in His being the divinely-appointed Forerunner of so transcendent a Revelation, but rather in His having been invested with the powers inherent in the inaugurator of a separate religious Dispensation, and in His wielding, to a degree unrivaled by the Messengers gone before Him, the scepter of independent Prophethood.

The short duration of His Dispensation, the restricted range within which

His laws and ordinances have been made to operate, supply no criterion whatever wherewith to judge its Divine origin and to evaluate the potency of its message. “That so brief a span,” Bahá’u’lláh Himself explains, “should have separated this most mighty and wondrous Revelation from Mine own previous Manifestation, is a secret that no man can unravel and a mystery such as no mind can fathom. Its duration had been foreordained, and no man shall ever discover its reason unless and until he be informed of the contents of My Hidden Book.” “Behold,” Bahá’u’lláh further explains in the Kitáb-i-Badí’, one of His works refuting the arguments of the people of the Bayán, “behold, how immediately upon the completion of the ninth year of this wondrous, this most holy and merciful Dispensation, the requisite number of pure, of wholly consecrated and sanctified souls had been most secretly consummated.”

The marvelous happenings that have heralded the advent of the Founder of the Bábí Dispensation, the dramatic circumstances of His own eventful life, the miraculous tragedy of His martyrdom, the magic of His influence exerted on the most eminent and powerful among His countrymen, to all of which every chapter of Nabíl’s stirring narrative testifies, should in themselves be regarded as sufficient evidence of the validity of His claim to so exalted a station among the Prophets.

However graphic the record which the eminent chronicler of His life has transmitted to posterity, so luminous a narrative must pale before the glowing tribute paid to the Báb by the pen of Bahá’u’lláh. This tribute the Báb Himself has, by the clear assertion of His claim, abundantly supported, while the written testimonies of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá have powerfully reinforced its character and elucidated its meaning.

Where else if not in the Kitáb-i-Íqán can the student of the Bábí Dispensation seek to find those affirmations that unmistakably attest the power and spirit which no man, except he be a Manifestation of God, can manifest? “Could such a thing,” exclaims Bahá’u’lláh, “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.” “No eye,” He in another passage affirms, “hath beheld so great an outpouring of bounty, nor hath any ear heard of such a Revelation of loving-kindness... 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... How can they belittle this Revelation? Hath any age witnessed such momentous happenings?”

Commenting on the character and influence of those heroes and martyrs whom the spirit of the Báb had so magically transformed Bahá’u’lláh reveals the following: “If these companions be not the true strivers after God, who else could be called by this name?... If these companions, with all their marvelous testimonies and wondrous works, be false, who then is worthy to claim for himself the truth?... Has the world since the days of Adam witnessed such tumult, such violent commotion?... Methinks, patience was revealed only by virtue of their fortitude, and faithfulness itself was begotten only by their deeds.”

Wishing to stress the sublimity of the Báb’s exalted station as compared

with that of the Prophets of the past, Bahá'u'lláh in that same epistle asserts: “No understanding can grasp the nature of His Revelation, nor can any knowledge comprehend the full measure of His Faith.” He then quotes, in confirmation of His argument, these prophetic words: “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 shall arise, He will cause the remaining twenty and five letters to be made manifest.” “Behold,” He adds, “how great and lofty is His station! His rank excelleth that of all the Prophets and His Revelation transcendeth the comprehension and understanding of all their chosen ones.” “Of His Revelation,” He further adds, “the Prophets of God, His saints and chosen ones, have either not been informed, or, in pursuance of God's inscrutable decree, they have not disclosed.”

Of all the tributes which Bahá'u'lláh's unerring pen has chosen to pay to the memory of the Báb, His “Best-Beloved,” the most memorable and touching is this brief, yet eloquent passage which so greatly enhances the value of the concluding passages of that same epistle. “Amidst them all,” He writes, referring to the afflictive trials and dangers besetting Him in the city of Baghdád, “We stand life in hand wholly resigned to His Will, that perchance through God's loving kindness and grace, this revealed and manifest Letter (Bahá'u'lláh) may lay down His life as a sacrifice in the path of the Primal Point, the most exalted Word (the Báb). By Him, at Whose bidding the Spirit hath spoken, but for this yearning of Our soul, We would not, for one moment, have tarried any longer in this city.”

Dearly-beloved friends! So resounding a praise, so bold an assertion issued by the pen of Bahá'u'lláh in so weighty a work, are fully re-echoed in the language in which the Source of the Bábí Revelation has chosen to clothe

the claims He Himself has advanced. “I am the Mystic Fane,” the Báb thus proclaims His station in the Qayyúmu’l-Asmá, “which the Hand of Omnipotence hath reared. I am the Lamp which the Finger of God hath lit within its niche and caused to shine with deathless splendor. I am the Flame of that supernal Light that glowed upon Sinai in the gladsome Spot, and lay concealed in the midst of the Burning Bush.” “O Qurratu’l-‘Ayn!” He, addressing Himself in that same commentary, exclaims, “I recognize in Thee none other except the ‘Great Announcement’—the Announcement voiced by the Concourse on high. By this name, I bear witness, they that circle the Throne of Glory have ever known Thee.” “With each and every Prophet, Whom We have sent down in the past,” He further adds, “We have established a separate Covenant concerning the ‘Remembrance of God’ and His Day. Manifest, in the realm of glory and through the power of truth, are the ‘Remembrance of God’ and His Day before the eyes of the angels that circle His mercy-seat.” “Should it be Our wish,” He again affirms, “it is in Our power to compel, through the agency of but one letter of Our Revelation, the world and all that is therein to recognize, in less than the twinkling of an eye, the truth of Our Cause.”

“I am the Primal Point,” the Báb thus addresses Muhammad Sháh from the prison-fortress of Máh-Kú, “from which have been generated all created things... I am the Countenance of God Whose splendor can never be obscured, the light of God whose radiance can never fade... All the keys of heaven God hath chosen to place on My right hand, and all the keys of hell on My left... I am one of the sustaining pillars of the Primal Word of God. Whosoever hath recognized Me, hath known all that is true and right, and hath attained all that is good and seemly... The substance wherewith God hath created Me is not the clay out of which others have been formed. He hath conferred upon Me that which the worldly-wise can never comprehend, nor the faithful discover.” “Should a tiny ant,” the Báb, wishing to stress the limitless potentialities latent in His Dispensation,

characteristically affirms, “desire in this day to be possessed of such power as to be able to unravel the abstrusest and most bewildering passages of the Qur’án, its wish will no doubt be fulfilled, inasmuch as the mystery of eternal might vibrates within the innermost being of all created things.” “If so helpless a creature,” is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s comment on so startling an affirmation, “can be endowed with so subtle a capacity, how much more efficacious must be the power released through the liberal effusions of the grace of Bahá’u’lláh!”

To these authoritative assertions and solemn declarations made by Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb must be added ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own incontrovertible testimony. He, the appointed interpreter of the utterances of both Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb, corroborates, not by implication but in clear and categorical language, both in His Tablets and in His Testament, the truth of the statements to which I have already referred.

In a Tablet addressed to a Bahá’í in Mázindarán, in which He unfolds the meaning of a misinterpreted statement attributed to Him regarding the rise of the Sun of Truth in this century, He sets forth, briefly but conclusively, what should remain for all time our true conception of the relationship between the two Manifestations associated with the Bahá’í Dispensation. “In making such a statement,” He explains, “I had in mind no one else except the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh, the character of whose Revelations it had been my purpose to elucidate. The Revelation of the Báb may be likened to the sun, its station corresponding to the first sign of the Zodiac—the sign Aries—which the sun enters at the Vernal Equinox. The station of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, on the other hand, is represented by the sign Leo, the sun’s mid-summer and highest station. By this is meant that this holy Dispensation is illumined with the light of the Sun of Truth shining from its most exalted station, and in the plenitude of its resplendency, its

heat and glory.”

“The Báb, the Exalted One,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá more specifically affirms in another Tablet, “is the Morn of Truth, the splendor of Whose light shineth throughout all regions. He is also the Harbinger of the Most Great Light, the Abhá Luminary. The Blessed Beauty is the One promised by the sacred books of the past, the revelation of the Source of light that shone upon Mount Sinai, Whose fire glowed in the midst of the Burning Bush. We are, one and all, servants of their threshold, and stand each as a lowly keeper at their door.” “Every proof and prophecy,” is His still more emphatic warning, “every manner of evidence, whether based on reason or on the text of the scriptures and traditions, are to be regarded as centered in the persons of Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb. In them is to be found their complete fulfillment.”

And finally, in His Will and Testament, the repository of His last wishes and parting instructions, He in the following passage, specifically designed to set forth the guiding principles of Bahá’í belief, sets the seal of His testimony on the Báb’s dual and exalted station: “The foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá (may my life be offered up for them) is this: His holiness the exalted One (the Báb) is the Manifestation of the unity and oneness of God and the Forerunner of the Ancient Beauty (Bahá’u’lláh). His holiness, the Abhá Beauty (Bahá’u’lláh) (may my life be offered up as a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the supreme Manifestation of God and the Day-Spring of His most divine Essence.” “All others,” He significantly adds, “are servants unto Him and do His bidding.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Dearly-beloved friends! I have in the foregoing pages ventured to attempt an exposition of such truths as I firmly believe are implicit in the claim of Him Who is the Fountain-Head of the Bahá'í Revelation. I have moreover endeavored to dissipate such misapprehensions as may naturally arise in the mind of any one contemplating so superhuman a manifestation of the glory of God. I have striven to explain the meaning of the divinity with which He Who is the vehicle of so mysterious an energy must needs be invested. That the Message which so great a Being has, in this age, been commissioned by God to deliver to mankind recognizes the divine origin and upholds the first principles of every Dispensation inaugurated by the prophets of the past, and stands inextricably interwoven with each one of them, I have also to the best of my ability undertaken to demonstrate. That the Author of such a Faith, Who repudiates the claim to finality which leaders of various denominations uphold has, despite the vastness of His Revelation, disclaimed it for Himself I have, likewise, felt it necessary to prove and emphasize. That the Báb, notwithstanding the duration of His Dispensation, should be regarded primarily, not as the chosen Precursor of the Bahá'í Faith, but as One invested with the undivided authority assumed by each of the independent Prophets of the past, seemed to me yet another basic principle the elucidation of which would be extremely desirable at the present stage of the evolution of our Cause.

An attempt I strongly feel should now be made to clarify our minds regarding the station occupied by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the significance of His position in this holy Dispensation. It would be indeed difficult for us, who stand so close to such a tremendous figure and are drawn by the

mysterious power of so magnetic a personality, to obtain a clear and exact understanding of the role and character of One Who, not only in the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh but in the entire field of religious history, fulfills a unique function. Though moving in a sphere of His own and holding a rank radically different from that of the Author and the Forerunner of the Bahá'í Revelation, He, by virtue of the station ordained for Him through the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, forms together with them what may be termed the Three Central Figures of a Faith that stands unapproached in the world's spiritual history. He towers, in conjunction with them, above the destinies of this infant Faith of God from a level to which no individual or body ministering to its needs after Him, and for no less a period than a full thousand years, can ever hope to rise. To degrade His lofty rank by identifying His station with or by regarding it as roughly equivalent to, the position of those on whom the mantle of His authority has fallen would be an act of impiety as grave as the no less heretical belief that inclines to exalt Him to a state of absolute equality with either the central Figure or Forerunner of our Faith. For wide as is the gulf that separates 'Abdu'l-Bahá from Him Who is the Source of an independent Revelation, it can never be regarded as commensurate with the greater distance that stands between Him Who is the Center of the Covenant and His ministers who are to carry on His work, whatever be their name, their rank, their functions or their future achievements. Let those who have known 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who through their contact with His magnetic personality have come to cherish for Him so fervent an admiration, reflect, in the light of this statement, on the greatness of One Who is so far above Him in station.

That 'Abdu'l-Bahá is not a Manifestation of God, that, though the successor of His Father, He does not occupy a cognate station, that no one else except the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh can ever lay claim to such a station before the expiration of a full thousand years—are verities which lie

embedded in the specific utterances of both the Founder of our Faith and the Interpreter of His teachings.

“Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God,” is the express warning uttered in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, “ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying imposter. We pray God that He may graciously assist him to retract and repudiate such claim. Should he repent, God will no doubt forgive him. If, however, he persists in his error, God will assuredly send down one who will deal mercilessly with him. Terrible indeed is God in punishing!” “Whosoever,” He adds as a further emphasis, “interpreteth this verse otherwise than its obvious meaning is deprived of the Spirit of God and of His mercy which encompasseth all created things.” “Should a man appear,” is yet another conclusive statement, “ere the lapse of a full thousand years—each year consisting of twelve months according to the Qur’án, and of nineteen months of nineteen days each, according to the Bayán—and if such a man reveal to your eyes all the signs of God, unhesitatingly reject him!”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own statements, in confirmation of this warning, are no less emphatic and binding: “This is,” He declares, “my firm, my unshakable conviction, the essence of my unconcealed and explicit belief—a conviction and belief which the denizens of the Abhá Kingdom fully share: The Blessed Beauty is the Sun of Truth, and His light the light of truth. The Báb is likewise the Sun of Truth, and His light the light of truth... My station is the station of servitude—a servitude which is complete, pure and real, firmly established, enduring, obvious, explicitly revealed and subject to no interpretation whatever... I am the Interpreter of the Word of God; such is my interpretation.”

Does not ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His own Will—in a tone and language that might well confound the most inveterate among the breakers of His Father’s Covenant—rob of their chief weapon those who so long and so persistently had striven to impute to Him the charge of having tacitly claimed a station equal, if not superior, to that of Bahá’u’lláh? “The foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá is this,” thus proclaims one of the weightiest passages of that last document left to voice in perpetuity the directions and wishes of a departed Master, “His Holiness the Exalted One (the Báb) is the Manifestation of the unity and oneness of God and the Forerunner of the Ancient Beauty. His Holiness the Abhá Beauty (Bahá’u’lláh) (may my life be a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the supreme Manifestation of God and the Day-Spring of His most divine Essence. All others are servants unto Him and do His bidding.”

From such clear and formally laid down statements, incompatible as they are with any assertion of a claim to Prophethood, we should not by any means infer that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is merely one of the servants of the Blessed Beauty, or at best one whose function is to be confined to that of an authorized interpreter of His Father’s teachings. Far be it from me to entertain such a notion or to wish to instill such sentiments. To regard Him in such a light is a manifest betrayal of the priceless heritage bequeathed by Bahá’u’lláh to mankind. Immeasurably exalted is the station conferred upon Him by the Supreme Pen above and beyond the implications of these, His own written statements. Whether in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the most weighty and sacred of all the works of Bahá’u’lláh, or in the Kitáb-i-‘Ahd, the Book of His Covenant, or in the Súriy-i-Ghusn (Tablet of the Branch), such references as have been recorded by the pen of Bahá’u’lláh—references which the Tablets of His Father addressed to Him mightily reinforce—invest ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with a power, and surround Him with a halo, which the present generation can never adequately appreciate.

He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Center and Pivot of Bahá'u'lláh's peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most exalted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring Interpreter of His Word, the embodiment of every Bahá'í ideal, the incarnation of every Bahá'í virtue, the Most Mighty Branch sprung from the Ancient Root, the Limb of the Law of God, the Being "round Whom all names revolve," the Mainspring of the Oneness of Humanity, the Ensign of the Most Great Peace, the Moon of the Central Orb of this most holy Dispensation—styles and titles that are implicit and find their truest, their highest and fairest expression in the magic name 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He is, above and beyond these appellations, the "Mystery of God"—an expression by which Bahá'u'lláh Himself has chosen to designate Him, and which, while it does not by any means justify us to assign to Him the station of Prophethood, indicates how in the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.

"When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended," proclaims the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, "turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root." And again, "When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock."

In the Kitáb-i-'Ahd, moreover, Bahá'u'lláh solemnly and explicitly declares: "It is incumbent upon the Aghsán, the Afnán and My kindred to

turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch. Consider that which We have revealed in Our Most Holy Book: ‘When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.’ The object of this sacred verse is none other except the Most Mighty Branch (‘Abdu’l-Bahá). Thus have We graciously revealed unto you our potent Will, and I am verily the Gracious, the All-Powerful.”

17. THE WORLD ORDER OF BAHÁ’U’LLÁH, PAGE 163

Humanity’s Coming of Age

The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, whose supreme mission is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations, should, if we be faithful to its implications, be regarded as signaling through its advent the coming of age of the entire human race. It should be viewed not merely as yet another spiritual revival in the ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelations, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man’s collective life on this planet. The emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture—all of which must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahá’í Era—should, by their very nature, be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society, though man, as an individual, will, nay must indeed as a result of such a consummation, continue indefinitely to progress and

develop.

A World Religion

Ceasing to designate to itself a movement, a fellowship and the like—designations that did grave injustice to its ever-unfolding system—dissociating itself from such appellations as Bábí sect, Asiatic cult, and offshoot of Shí'ih Islám, with which the ignorant and the malicious were wont to describe it, refusing to be labeled as a mere philosophy of life, or as an eclectic code of ethical conduct, or even as a new religion, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is now visibly succeeding in demonstrating its claim and title to be regarded as a World Religion, destined to attain, in the fullness of time, the status of a world-embracing Commonwealth, which would be at once the instrument and the guardian of the Most Great Peace announced by its Author. Far from wishing to add to the number of the religious systems, whose conflicting loyalties have for so many generations disturbed the peace of mankind, this Faith is instilling into each of its adherents a new love for, and a genuine appreciation of the unity underlying, the various religions represented within its pale.

“It is like a wide embrace,” such is the testimony of Royalty to its claim and position, “gathering together all those who have long searched for words of hope. It accepts all great Prophets gone before it, destroys no other creeds, and leaves all doors open.” “The Bahá'í teaching,” she has further written, “brings peace to the soul and hope to the heart. To those in search of assurance the words of the Father are as a fountain in the desert

after long wandering.” “Their writings,” she, in another statement referring to Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, has testified, “are a great cry toward peace, reaching beyond all limits of frontiers, above all dissension about rites and dogmas... It is a wondrous message that Bahá’u’lláh and His son ‘Abdu’l-Bahá have given us. They have not set it up aggressively knowing that the germ of eternal truth which lies at its core cannot but take root and spread.” “If ever the name of Bahá’u’lláh or ‘Abdu’l-Bahá,” is her concluding plea, “comes to your attention, do not put their writings from you. Search out their Books, and let their glorious, peace-bringing, love-creating words and lessons sink into your hearts as they have into mine.”

The Faith of Bahá’u’lláh has assimilated, by virtue of its creative, its regulative and ennobling energies, the varied races, nationalities, creeds and classes that have sought its shadow, and have pledged unswerving fealty to its cause. It has changed the hearts of its adherents, burned away their prejudices, stilled their passions, exalted their conceptions, ennobled their motives, co-ordinated their efforts, and transformed their outlook. While preserving their patriotism and safeguarding their lesser loyalties, it has made them lovers of mankind, and the determined upholders of its best and truest interests. While maintaining intact their belief in the Divine origin of their respective religions, it has enabled them to visualize the underlying purpose of these religions, to discover their merits, to recognize their sequence, their interdependence, their wholeness and unity, and to acknowledge the bond that vitally links them to itself. This universal, this transcending love which the followers of the Bahá’í Faith feel for their fellow-men, of whatever race, creed, class or nation, is neither mysterious nor can it be said to have been artificially stimulated. It is both spontaneous and genuine. They whose hearts are warmed by the energizing influence of God’s creative love cherish His creatures for His sake, and recognize in every human face a sign of His reflected glory.

Of such men and women it may be truly said that to them “every foreign land is a fatherland, and every fatherland a foreign land.” For their citizenship, it must be remembered, is in the Kingdom of Bahá’u’lláh. Though willing to share to the utmost the temporal benefits and the fleeting joys which this earthly life can confer, though eager to participate in whatever activity that conduces to the richness, the happiness and peace of that life, they can, at no time, forget that it constitutes no more than a transient, a very brief stage of their existence, that they who live it are but pilgrims and wayfarers whose goal is the Celestial City, and whose home the Country of never-failing joy and brightness.

Though loyal to their respective governments, though profoundly interested in anything that affects their security and welfare, though anxious to share in whatever promotes their best interests, the Faith with which the followers of Bahá’u’lláh stand identified is one which they firmly believe God has raised high above the storms, the divisions, and controversies of the political arena. Their Faith they conceive to be essentially non-political, supra-national in character, rigidly non-partisan, and entirely dissociated from nationalistic ambitions, pursuits, and purposes. Such a Faith knows no division of class or of party. It subordinates, without hesitation or equivocation, every particularistic interest, be it personal, regional, or national, to the paramount interests of humanity, firmly convinced that in a world of inter-dependent peoples and nations the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole, and that no abiding benefit can be conferred upon the component parts if the general interests of the entity itself are ignored or neglected.

Small wonder if by the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh these pregnant words, written in anticipation of the present state of mankind, should have been revealed: “It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.” And again, “That one indeed is a man who today dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race.” “Through the power released by these exalted words,” He explains, “He hath lent a fresh impulse, and set a new direction, to the birds of men’s hearts, and hath obliterated every trace of restriction and limitation from God’s Holy Book.”

Their Faith, Bahá'ís firmly believe, is moreover undenominational, non-sectarian, and wholly divorced from every ecclesiastical system, whatever its form, origin, or activities. No ecclesiastical organization, with its creeds, its traditions, its limitations, and exclusive outlook, can be said (as is the case with all existing political factions, parties, systems and programs) to conform, in all its aspects, to the cardinal tenets of Bahá'í belief. To some of the principles and ideals animating political and ecclesiastical institutions every conscientious follower of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh can, no doubt, readily subscribe. With none of these institutions, however, can he identify himself, nor can he unreservedly endorse the creeds, the principles and programs on which they are based.

How can a Faith, it should moreover be borne in mind, whose divinely-ordained institutions have been established within the jurisdiction of no less than forty different countries, the policies and interests of whose governments are continually clashing and growing more complex and confused every day—how can such a Faith, by allowing its adherents, whether individually or through its organized councils, to meddle in political activities, succeed in preserving the integrity of its teachings and

in safeguarding the unity of its followers? How can it insure the vigorous, the uninterrupted and peaceful development of its expanding institutions? How can a Faith, whose ramifications have brought it into contact with mutually incompatible religious systems, sects and confessions, be in a position, if it permits its adherents to subscribe to obsolescent observances and doctrines, to claim the unconditional allegiance of those whom it is striving to incorporate into its divinely-appointed system? How can it avoid the constant friction, the misunderstandings and controversies which formal affiliation, as distinct from association, must inevitably engender?

These directing and regulating principles of Bahá'í belief the upholders of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh feel bound, as their Administrative Order expands and consolidates itself, to assert and vigilantly apply. The exigencies of a slowly crystallizing Faith impose upon them a duty which they cannot shirk, a responsibility they cannot evade.

Nor are they unmindful of the imperative necessity of upholding and of executing the laws, as distinguished from the principles, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh, both of which constitute the warp and woof of the institutions upon which the structure of His World Order must ultimately rest. To demonstrate their usefulness and efficacy, to carry out and apply them, to safeguard their integrity, to grasp their implications, and to facilitate their propagation Bahá'í communities in the East, and recently in the West, are displaying the utmost effort and are willing, if necessary, to make whatever sacrifices may be demanded. The day may not be far distant when in certain countries of the East, in which religious communities exercise jurisdiction in matters of personal status, Bahá'í Assemblies may be called upon to assume the duties and responsibilities devolving upon officially constituted Bahá'í courts. They will be empowered, in such matters as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, to execute and apply, within

their respective jurisdictions, and with the sanction of civil authorities, such laws and ordinances as have been expressly provided in their Most Holy Book.

The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has, in addition to these tendencies and activities which its evolution is now revealing, demonstrated, in other spheres, and wherever the illumination of its light has penetrated, the force of its cohesive strength, of its integrating power, of its invincible spirit. In the erection and consecration of its House of Worship in the heart of the North American continent; in the construction and multiplication of its administrative headquarters in the land of its birth and in neighboring countries; in the fashioning of the legal instruments designed to safeguard and regulate the corporate life of its institutions; in the accumulation of adequate resources, material as well as cultural, in every continent of the globe; in the endowments which it has created for itself in the immediate surroundings of its Shrines at its world center; in the efforts that are being made for the collection, the verification, and the systematization of the writings of its Founders; in the measures that are being taken for the acquisition of such historical sites as are associated with the lives of its Forerunner and its Author, its heroes and martyrs; in the foundations that are being laid for the gradual formation and establishment of its educational, its cultural and humanitarian institutions; in the vigorous efforts that are being exerted to safeguard the character, stimulate the initiative and coordinate the world-wide activities of its youth; in the extraordinary vitality with which its valiant defenders, its elected representatives, its itinerant teachers and pioneer administrators are pleading its cause, extending its boundaries, enriching its literature, and strengthening the basis of its spiritual conquests and triumphs; in the recognition which civil authorities have, in certain instances, been induced to grant to the body of its local and national representatives, enabling them to incorporate their councils, establish their subsidiary institutions, and

safeguard their endowments; in the facilities which these same authorities have consented to accord to its shrines, its consecrated edifices, and educational institutions; in the enthusiasm and determination with which certain communities that had been severely tested and harassed are resuming their activities; in the spontaneous tributes paid by royalty, princes, statesmen and scholars to the sublimity of its cause and the station of its Founders—in these, as in many others, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is proving beyond doubt its virility and capacity to counteract the disintegrating influences to which religious systems, moral standards, and political and social institutions are being subjected.

From Iceland to Tasmania, from Vancouver to the China Sea spreads the radiance and extend the ramifications of this world-enfolding System, this many-hued and firmly-knit Fraternity, infusing into every man and woman it has won to its cause a faith, a hope, and a vigor that a wayward generation has long lost, and is powerless to recover. They who preside over the immediate destinies of this troubled world, they who are responsible for its chaotic state, its fears, its doubts, its miseries will do well, in their bewilderment, to fix their gaze and ponder in their hearts upon the evidences of this saving grace of the Almighty that lies within their reach—a grace that can ease their burden, resolve their perplexities, and illuminate their path.

“One of the great events,” affirms ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “which is to occur in the Day of the manifestation of that incomparable Branch is the hoisting of the Standard of God among all nations. By this is meant that all nations and kindreds will be gathered together under the shadow of this Divine Banner,

which is no other than the Lordly Branch itself, and will become a single nation. Religious and sectarian antagonism, the hostility of races and peoples, and differences among nations, will be eliminated. All men will adhere to one religion, will have one common faith, will be blended into one race and become a single people. All will dwell in one common fatherland, which is the planet itself.” “Now, in the world of being,” He has moreover explained, “the Hand of Divine power hath firmly laid the foundations of this all-highest bounty, and this wondrous gift. Whatsoever is latent in the innermost of this holy Cycle shall gradually appear and be made manifest, for now is but the beginning of its growth, and the dayspring of the revelation of its signs. Ere the close of this century and of this age, it shall be made clear and evident how wondrous was that spring-tide, and how heavenly was that gift.”

No less enthralling is the vision of Isaiah, the greatest of the Hebrew Prophets, predicting, as far back as twenty five hundred years ago, the destiny which mankind must, at its stage of maturity, achieve: “And He (the Lord) shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more ... And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots... And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together... And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

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

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

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

to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty. We have then called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men. I am, verily, the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days. This is the Day whereon the unseen world crieth out: ‘Great is thy blessedness, O earth, for thou hast been made the foot-stool of thy God, and been chosen as the seat of His mighty throne!’ The realm of glory exclaimeth: ‘Would that my life could be sacrificed for thee, for He Who is the Beloved of the All-Merciful hath established His sovereignty upon thee, through the power of His name that hath been promised unto all things, whether of the past or of the future.’”

Shoghi.

Haifa, Palestine,

March 11, 1936.

20. ONE COMMON FAITH, PAGES 28–29

However diverse the motives, the tragic effects have been to impede the current of inspiration, discourage independent intellectual activity, focus attention on the minutiae of rituals and too often engender hatred and prejudice towards those following a different sectarian path from that of self-appointed spiritual leaders. While nothing could prevent the creative power of Divine intervention from continuing its work of progressively raising consciousness, the scope of what could be achieved, in any age, became increasingly limited by such artificially contrived obstacles.

Over time, theology succeeded in constructing in the heart of each one of the great faiths an authority parallel with, and even inimical in spirit to, the revealed teachings on which the tradition was based. Jesus' familiar parable of the landowner who sowed seed in his field addresses both the issue and its implications for the present time: "But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."^[2]

When his servants proposed to uproot them, the landowner replied, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."^[3] Throughout its pages, the Qur'án reserves its severest condemnation for the spiritual harm caused by this competing hegemony: "Say: The things that my Lord hath indeed forbidden are: shameful deeds, whether open or secret; sins and trespasses against truth or reason; assigning of partners to God, for which he hath

given no authority; and saying things about God of which ye have no knowledge.”^[4] To the modern mind it is the greatest of ironies that generations of theologians, whose impositions on religion embody precisely the betrayal so strongly denounced in these texts, should seek to use the warning itself as a weapon in suppressing protest against their usurpation of Divine authority.

In effect, each new stage in the progressively unfolding revelation of spiritual truth was frozen in time and in an array of literalistic images and interpretations, many of them borrowed from cultures which were themselves morally exhausted. Whatever their value at earlier stages in the evolution of consciousness, conceptions of physical resurrection, a paradise of carnal delights, reincarnation, pantheistic prodigies, and the like, today raise walls of separation and conflict in an age when the earth has literally become one homeland and human beings must learn to see themselves as its citizens. In this context one can appreciate the reasons for the vehemence of Bahá'u'lláh's warnings about the barriers that dogmatic theology creates in the path of those seeking to understand the will of God: “O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men.”^[5] In His Tablet to Pope Pius IX, He advises the pontiff that God has in this day “stored away ... in the vessels of justice” whatever is enduring in religion and “cast into fire that which befitteth it”.^[6]

One of the most cherished of the Qur'án's surihs takes up the metaphor: "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.... Light upon Light! God doth guide whom He will to His Light."^[7] In the case of the Hebrew prophets, the Divine intermediary that was later to appear in Christianity in the person of the Son of Man and in Islám as the Book of God assumed the form of a binding Covenant established by the Creator with Abraham, Patriarch and Prophet: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."^[8]

The succession of revelations of the Divine also appears as an implicit—and usually explicit—feature of all the major faiths. One of its earliest and clearest expressions occurs in the Bhagavad-Gita: "I come, and go, and come. When Righteousness declines, O Bharata! When Wickedness is strong, I rise, from age to age, and take visible shape, and move a man with men, succouring the good, thrusting the evil back, and setting Virtue on her seat again."^[9] This ongoing drama constitutes the basic structure of the Bible, whose sequence of books recounts the missions not only of Abraham and of Moses—"whom the Lord knew face to face"^[10]—but of the line of lesser prophets who developed and consolidated the work that these primary Authors of the process had set in motion. Similarly, no amount of contentious and fantastical speculation about the precise nature of Jesus could succeed in separating His mission from the transformative influence exerted on the course of civilization by the work of Abraham and Moses. He Himself warns that it is not He Who will condemn those who reject the message He bears, but Moses "in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"^[11] With the

revelation of the Qur'án, the theme of the succession of the Messengers of God becomes central: “We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma‘il, Isaac, Jacob ... and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord....”^[12]

For a sympathetic and objective reader of such passages what emerges is a recognition of the essential oneness of religion. So it is that the term “Islám” (literally “submission” to God) designates not merely the particular dispensation of Providence inaugurated by Muhammad but, as the words of the Qur'án make unmistakably clear, religion itself. While it is true to speak of the unity of all religions, understanding of the context is vital. At the deepest level, as Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes, there is but one religion. Religion is religion, as science is science. The one discerns and articulates the values unfolding progressively through Divine revelation; the other is the instrumentality through which the human mind explores and is able to exert its influence ever more precisely over the phenomenal world. The one defines goals that serve the evolutionary process; the other assists in their attainment. Together, they constitute the dual knowledge system impelling the advance of civilization. Each is hailed by the Master as an “effulgence of the Sun of Truth”.^[13]

22. ONE COMMON FAITH, PAGE 54

In this respect, the texts speak with one voice: religion's goal is humanity's attainment of the age of “in-gathering”,^[14] of “one fold, and one shepherd”;^[15] the great age to come when “the Earth will shine with

the glory of its Lord”^[16] and the will of God is carried out “in earth, as it is in heaven”;^[17] “the promised Day”^[18] when the “holy city”^[19] will descend “out of heaven, from ... God”,^[20] when “the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it”,^[21] when God will demand to know “what mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor”;^[22] the Day when scriptures that have been “sealed till the time of the end”^[23] would be opened and union with God will find expression in “a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name”;^[24] an age utterly beyond anything humanity will have experienced, the mind conceived or language as yet encompassed: “even as We produced the first Creation, so shall We produce a new one: a promise We have undertaken: truly shall We fulfil it.”^[25]

The declared purpose of history’s series of prophetic revelations, therefore, has been not only to guide the individual seeker on the path of personal salvation, but to prepare the whole of the human family for the great eschatological Event lying ahead, through which the life of the world will itself be entirely transformed. The revelation of Bahá’u’lláh is neither preparatory nor prophetic. It *is* that Event. Through its influence, the stupendous enterprise of laying the foundations of the Kingdom of God has been set in motion, and the population of the earth has been endowed with the powers and capacities equal to the task. That Kingdom is a universal civilization shaped by principles of social justice and enriched by achievements of the human mind and spirit beyond anything the present age can conceive. “This is the Day”, Bahá’u’lláh declares, “in which God’s most excellent favours have been poured out upon men, the Day in

which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things....
Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in
its stead.” [\[26\]](#)

23. INTRODUCTION XIX

"Rúhi" of Kirmán, son-in-law to Subh-i-Azal, and his friend and fellow-townsmen Mírzá Aqá Khán, both of whom suffered death at Tabríz in 1896, were the fore-runners of Mírzá Jahángír Khán and the Maliku'l-Mutakallimín, who were victims of the reactionary *coup d'état* of June, 1908. Indeed, as one of the most prominent and cultivated Azalís admitted to me some six or seven years ago, the ideal of a democratic Persia developing on purely national lines seems to have inspired in the minds of no few leading Azalís the same fiery enthusiasm as did the idea of a reign of the saints on earth in the case of the early Bábís.

The political ideals of the Bahá'ís have undergone considerable evolution since their propaganda achieved such success in America, where they have come into more or less close connection with various international, pacifist and feminist movements. These tendencies were, however, implicit in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings at a much earlier date, as shown by the recommendation of a universal language and script in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the exaltation of humanitarianism over patriotism, the insistence on the brotherhood of all believers, irrespective of race or colour, and the ever-present idea of "the Most Great Peace" (*Sulh-i-Akbar*). In connection with the last it is interesting to note that Dr I. G. Khayru'lláh, "the second Columbus" and "Bahá's Peter" as he was entitled after his successes in America, definitely stated in his Book *Behá'u'lláh*, originally published at Chicago in 1899 (Vol.ii, pp.480—1), that "the Most Great Peace" would

come in the year 1335 of the *Hijra*, which began on October 28, 1916 and ended on October 17, 1917. This forecast, based on Daniel xii, 12, "*Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the end of the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days*," has, unfortunately, not been realized, but the paragraph in which Khayru'lláh speaks of the frightful war which must precede "the Most Great Peace" is so remarkable, when one remembers that it was written fifteen years before the outbreak of the Great War, that I cannot refrain from quoting it.

[1] cf. Qur'án 4:129.

[2] St. Matthew 13.25, Authorized King James Version.

[3] *ibid.*, 13.29–30.

[4] Qur'án, surih 7, verse 33, Abdullah Yusuf Ali translation, third edition, (n.p.: 1938).

[5] Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 99.

[6] *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002), paragraph 126.

[7] Qur'án, surih 24, verse 35.

[8] Genesis 17.7.

[9] Bhagavad-Gita, chapter IV, Sir Edwin Arnold translation.

[10] Deuteronomy 34.10.

[11] St. John 5.45–47.

[12] Qur'án, surih 2, verse 136.

- [13] *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, revised edition (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995), page 326.
- [14] *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, paragraph 126.
- [15] St. John 10.16.
- [16] Qur'án, surih 39, verse 69.
- [17] St. Matthew 6.10.
- [18] Qur'án, surih 85, verse 2.
- [19] Revelation 21.2.
- [20] *ibid.*, 3.12.
- [21] Isaiah 2.2
- [22] *ibid.*, 3.15.
- [23] Daniel 12.9.
- [24] Isaiah 62.2.
- [25] Qur'án, surih 21, verse 104.
- [26] *Gleanings*, section IV.