

The Bahá'í Proofs

(Ĥújaja'l-Bahíyyih)¹
and

*A short sketch of the
history and lives of the
leaders of this religion*

by Mírzá 'Abu'l-Faql

Translated from the Arabic by
'Alí-Qulí Khán (Ishti'ál ibn-i-Kalántar)

facsimile of the 1929 edition²



Bahá'í Publishing Trust
Wilmette, Illinois 60091

¹ Ĥújaja'l-Bahíya (Pers. Ĥújaja'l-Bahíyyih) "beautiful proofs".

² Transcription of words and names have been added where known. Incorrect word usage (e.g. Muḥammadism and Babhood) has been corrected.

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Foreword to facsimile edition

In the winter of His life, Bahá'u'lláh addressed an epistle to Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl in which He lauded the great Bahá'í scholar as one who gazes upon the horizons and promulgates the standard of His aid with wisdom and eloquence. Every phrase, every syllable of this divine encomium proved prophetic and heavily laden with significance. Bahá'u'lláh further attested to the desire of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl for reform under all conditions and to his constant counselling of God's servants to righteousness and salvation. Moreover, He enunciated a beatitude for the Mírzá, saying that he is blessed, as are all who love him for Bahá'u'lláh's sake and listen to his words concerning the Cause of God.

The year was 1892. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl had but recently arrived in Ishqábád, the "City of Love", where Iranian Bahá'ís emigrated in great numbers to escape persecution in Írán and seek refuge in the territory of the czars. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl had embraced the Bahá'í Cause in Ṭihrán in 1876 and had by this time already served it sixteen years. He suffered imprisonment almost immediately after his conversion, at the hands of a fanatical Qájár prince, but was released through the intervention of the reform-minded Mírzá Ḥusayn Khán. He was jailed in Ṭihrán again in the early 1880s because of his religion. Through years of persecution, he, a former cleric of Shi'ite Islám, never wavered in his newfound, universal Faith. His humility was so great that he did not think to put his extraordinary scholarly abilities to use in penning treatises as long as Bahá'u'lláh walked the earth. Such human endeavours, he felt, were superfluous while the Manifestation of God was addressing mankind directly. Only because he heard that the Blessed

Beauty Himself desired Bahá'í scholars to employ their literary talents in expounding the Bahá'í Faith did he dare begin writing his well-known letters of exhortation and treatises of scintillating brilliance. In the late 1880s he served as a travelling teacher for the Faith, for the most part in south-western Írán, and after a brief imprisonment in Hamadán he endeavoured to teach the Faith in the largely Muslim Central Asian dominions of Czarist Russia.

As he perused Bahá'u'lláh's loving missive in *Ishqábád*, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl could have had no inkling of the possible implications borne by the phrase "gazes upon the horizons". Up to that moment, his horizons were limited to Írán and Central Asia, which were culturally and geographically contiguous. Within two years, a train of events would be set in motion that would offer him far more distant and startlingly different horizons upon which to gaze. On 29 May 1892, Bahá'u'lláh ascended to the One Who had manifested Him. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl heard the news with shock and grief that overwhelmed him. Only the gentle, persistent solicitude of 'Abdu'l-Bahá coaxed him out of his profound bereavement for his Beloved. As he haunted the dusty book bazaars of once-golden Samarqand and Bukhárá, he could not know that his future lay, not in the ancient realms of Tamerlane,¹ but in the bustling cities of other continents—of North Africa, Europe and North America. There his concern with "reform", "righteousness" and "salvation" was to bear fruit.

In 1894 'Abdu'l-Bahá called Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl to Haifa, Ottoman Syria. He suggested that he take up residence in Egypt—the intellectual centre of the Arab world—to spread the news of Bahá'u'lláh's Faith. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's labours there in bringing the Bahá'í Faith to the attention of intellectuals, whether clergy or modern journalists

¹ Also Taymúy or Tímúr.—M.W.T.

and lawyers, are legend. In Cairo and Alexandria he penned his major works: *Fará'id* (Matchless Gems—1898) and *ad-Durar al-Bahíyyih* (Miracles and Metaphors—1900). He also helped consolidate the fledgling Bahá'í community that, in spite of intolerance, had finally been established in the shadow of the pyramids.

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's new setting in the geographical nexus of Beirut, Cairo and Alexandria proved significant in another way. For from these cities the first major movement of Middle Eastern migration to the United States began on the part of Levantine Christians. In the 1890s, quarters sprang up in Boston and New York wherein one could hear Maronite Catholics speaking Arabic. This very phenomenon gave Arabic and American literature the Exile movement in which Kahlil Gibran was to play so central a role. With this stream of migration the Bahá'í Faith arrived on the shores of North America, carried by Bahá'ís of Arab Christian background such as Ibráhím Khayru'lláh and Antún Ḥaddád. Yet, such Lebanese teachers, for all their enthusiasm, had too recently entered the Faith to comprehend fully its essentials or to understand its principles. Their virtue in the early years was their allegiance to Bahá'u'lláh and to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and their ability to read such of the Bahá'í writings as were available to them in Arabic. With their minuscule knowledge of the teachings, they mixed enormous doses not only of Maronite ideas but also of cultic, metaphysical, and New Thought concepts as were likely to appeal to Americans interested in Eastern religions at that time. The mixture proved enormously successful, but it often deviated from the text or spirit of the Bahá'í scriptures.

Khayru'lláh began to be corrupted by his success. He increasingly wished to see his teachings canonized for the West and was disturbed to find that 'Abdu'l-Bahá did

not fully agree with the doctrines he had elaborated while in the United States. Such knowledge did not chasten him; it drove him to rebel. Miraculously, most of his following in America refused to join his revolt. He had too successfully nurtured their love of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Still, that following needed new teachers, needed persons of character and brilliance who could expound to them the truths of the Bahá'í Faith in their pure form and clear away the obscuring cobwebs of syncretism, occultism, and metempsychosis woven by Khayru'lláh and some early American believers.

On the fourth of November 1900, Mírzá Asadu'lláh and Hájí Hasan Khurásání arrived in New York as teachers, with the half-Egyptian Ḥusayn Rúhí and Mírzá Buzurg as English interpreters. After meetings in New York, they travelled to Chicago, where they made their headquarters. In their wake Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl disembarked; 'Alí-Qulí Khán and Mírzá Amínu'lláh served as his translators. Thornton Chase, one of the first American Bahá'ís, later wrote: "With these teachers came the first opportunity for a correct and intimate knowledge of the true Bahá'í teachings." They and their translators were important carriers of genuine Bahá'í culture, and they engaged themselves in rendering into English "a wonderful treasury of wisdom and knowledge" from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Thornton Chase evaluated the impact of these teachers thusly: "The instructions given by Mírzá Asadu'lláh and Mírzá Abdul Fazl [*sic*] were thoroughly sane and practical, and so insisted on righteousness, right living—as the essential of religion, rather than psychic and occult experiments, that many persons, who had conceived views imbued with imaginations and superstitions, fell away from the Cause—but those who remained discovered such spiritual light, guidance, richness, and power

in the teachings, that they were deeply confirmed in their belief, and clung to it as the most valuable instruction for man to obtain. The classes and assemblies which had diminished in number, again began to grow. ...”

Cairo thus proved a stepping-stone for Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl to New York, Washington, DC, and Green Acre, Eliot, Maine. He lectured feverishly to the Americans on Bahá'í history. He often went to the Bible for prophecies and passages that would help the American Bahá'ís better appreciate and comprehend their religion. This role of cross-cultural communicator, incongruous as it might have seemed, was nothing new for him. In the late 1880s, he had written a book of proofs of the Faith for the Jews of Hamadán, which was later translated into Hebrew and circulated with great effect among the Iranian Jews. In the same period, he had addressed numerous letters to Zoroastrians in their own dialect of Persian, which he had gone to the trouble to learn. In Cairo, he authored articles for the new journals of the Arab intelligentsia, demonstrating the relevance of the Bahá'í Faith to their work of reform. The world-encompassing spirit of the Cause of God, like an irresistible deluge, picked up the young Muslim divine from Gulpáygán and carried him forever out of the narrow confines of his Shi'ite scholasticism. He not only ate and drank with persons he would once have considered ritually impure, but he communicated across huge barriers of culture, religion and geography the powerful new truths of universal love he had so courageously imbibed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá later said of him: “He did not think of worldly comfort and tranquillity. He never tried to protect his life. He was not at all attached to the ephemeral objects of this contingent world. ... All his books contain incontrovertible proofs and evidences concerning this impregnable, blessed Cause.” So impressed was the

Master with Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's acumen that He thought it essential for him to write a treatise expounding the Cause to the American believers. He directed that 'Alí-Qulí Khán translate it. However, the immense scope of such a work apparently daunted the humble scholar, who always remained distant from "I-ness" and "egoism". Marzieh Gail, the daughter of 'Alí-Qulí Khán, reports, "Father told me, 'I *pulled the Bahá'í Proofs* out of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl. It's all "introductions" because he never felt he got it started.'" In essence, the book can only be considered a prolegomenon to a much greater opus that was never completed. It might fairly be argued, however, that with such a dawn one need not long for the day. Even as an introduction, *The Bahá'í Proofs* remains an irreplaceable classic of Bahá'í literature. In the distant, brash new cities of America, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl once again gazed upon the horizons and promulgated the standard of His aid with wisdom and eloquence. Amidst a new-born Bahá'í community, confused by occult notions and wounded by the schism forced by their former mentor's overweening ambition, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl once again arose for reform under all conditions and counselled God's servants to righteousness and salvation.

Readers of Abu'l-Faḍl's previous classics, *Fará'id* and *Miracles and Metaphors*, will find many of the same themes restated in *The Bahá'í Proofs*. Yet, each of these works had a different purpose, a separate audience. *Fará'id*, written in Persian, addressed a Iranian, Shi'ite Muslim readership, while *Miracles and Metaphors* (in Arabic) found its context in the Arab modernism of turn-of-the-century Cairo. *The Bahá'í Proofs*, also composed in Arabic, directed itself to American Christians in the opening years of the twentieth century. In simple yet penetrating prose, the author elucidates the timeless truths of the Bahá'í Faith. He describes the coming of a

new age, signalled by the advent of a Universal Manifestation of God. He acclaim the end of mankind's spiritual dark ages, wherein such theories as transmigration of souls and spirit possession flourished (a message no doubt unwelcome to the American occultists in his audience). He affirms the unity of the great world religions and adds historicity to this Bahá'í doctrine by actually identifying the religions and briefly discussing their doctrines. To Americans at Green Acre, with their transcendentalist leanings, this particular message and its method of exposition no doubt possessed particular appeal. So too must have his characterization of God as pure and absolute Unity, beyond all attributes and material actions, and his depiction of the Manifestations of God as bearers of a peculiar knowledge and power.

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl brought his own rationalist bent to bear on the problems of religion. He emphasized his logical proof for the religions, which held that ability to endure and spread demonstrated their truth more effectively than did miracle stories. For him reason did not conflict with revelation. Reason was the framework within which revelation had to be understood. His final chapter on the doubts of the various nations and religions concerning the advent of new Messengers from God can be read both as analysis and as biting satire.

The translation, made by 'Alí-Qulí Khán with the help of Howard MacNutt, is remarkable for its fluency and erudition, considering the limitations under which it was produced. In 1902, the vast corpus of reference tools relating to Arabic and Islám that now exists was barely dreamt of. No tradition of translating Bahá'í literature into English, such as that created much later by Shoghi Effendi, had yet come into being. Certainly, a new translation is desirable. It may now be legitimately hoped that, building on 'Alí-Qulí Khán's work, an even more accurate

and flowing rendering could be produced. However, until this important task is undertaken, the republication in facsimile of the 1929 (third) edition of *The Bahá'í Proofs* (first published in 1902) is welcome. For too long Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl has been a revered memory rather than a living influence on our thought and spirituality. The facsimile edition is completely authentic, and even retains the unscientific transliteration of Arabic and Persian words and names.¹ No attempt has been made to correct the few errors in the text. (For example, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, in his effort to embrace a more universal range of religious phenomena, suffered from a lack of reliable sources in Arabic and Persian. One mistake into which this paucity of secondary literature led him was his identification of Zoroaster with Abraham.)

After three years of tireless labour in bestowing upon his American co-religionists the rare wisdom his unremitting studies of the Bahá'í writings had gained for him, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl prepared to depart for Egypt in November 1904. He was not a charismatic figure. He had nothing of the politician about him and was more fitted to the life of a reclusive scholar than to that of a public speaker addressing large audiences of inquisitive foreigners. Only his driving devotion to the Cause he had embraced, only his obedience to every slightest wish of 'Abdu'l-Bahá could have lifted him from his cloistered study into America's auditoriums. He spent his remaining ten years leading the quiet life he loved in Alexandria, the life of books and ideas. When some American ladies on pilgrimage to see the Master insisted on stopping off to visit him frequently—to the entire disruption of his research schedule—he dealt with their inconsiderateness mirthfully. "O, Abu'l-Faḍl!" they would call from the portico. "Abu'l-Faḍl is not here!" replied an elderly voice from within.

¹ Now added where known.—M.W.T.

When he suddenly passed away on 21 January 1914, the household of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was thrown into sorrow and confusion. The Master eulogized him as "peerless", "perfect" in every way, "erudite and learned", and "a standard-bearer of the oneness of the world of humanity". "There was not," He remarked, "a breath of self-desire in this person." Blessed, indeed, is he, as are all who love him for Bahá'u'lláh's sake and listen to his words concerning the Cause of God.

Juan Ricardo Cole

The Bahá'í Proofs

Ḥújaja'l Bahíyyih

Also

A short sketch
of the
history and lives of the leaders
of this religion

By Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl
of Gulpáygán, Persia

Translated by
'Alí-Qulí Khán (Ishti'ál ibn-i-Kalántar¹)

Bahá'í Publishing Committee
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¹ *Nom de plume.*

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The editor regrets exceedingly that this work was set up in type before the system of transliteration advocated by Shoghi Effendi for all Bahá'í texts had been adopted by American followers of the Cause.

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Translator's preface

In the name of our Lord the Bahá!

Praise be unto Thee, O Thou God of the world and Creator of nations! Exalted is Thy praise and sanctified is Thy name! O Lord! Enable us to accomplish our work through Thy mercy, and facilitate unto us our affairs!

Verily, Thou art the Bestower! There is no God but Thee, the First and the Last!

As many thoughtful people of the United States of America have expressed their desire to obtain information concerning the Bahá'í Religion, and since there is no book to be found in Europe or America, free from religious prejudice and fanaticism, furnishing full particulars upon this subject; I have therefore determined to translate two of the writings of the Honourable Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl of Gulpáygán, Persia, which contain the required information. By this means, I hope to be of service to humanity; for an exact statement of historical facts, free from religious and racial bias, is bound to be of great service to the world, inasmuch as it concerns the greatest religious Movement of the age.

Although the art of translation is one of the difficult branches of literature and composition, yet, trusting in Ale Divine Confirmation and strengthening of my weak efforts, I hope to bring the substance of these two works to the notice of the reader, in as close conformity with the original sense as my knowledge of English and the difficulty of the text permit.

The first work of the author [following the "Tributes and Eulogies"] is a translation of a short sketch in Persian, of the history and lives of the Leaders of this Religion. The second is a translation from the Arabic, of

an introductory work to a forthcoming book, which he is writing in compliance with the Command of The Centre of The Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás. The subject of this later work will be interpretation of the Holy Books of former religions, in order that the principal doctrines, proofs and arguments of the Bahá'ís may be known to the world.

These writings, I have translated in compliance with the especial Command of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. One night, about fourteen months ago, while I was in Haifa, and the author at Port Said, 'Abdu'l-Bahá inquired from Aḥmad-i-Yazdí (who had arrived from Port Said), concerning the welfare of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl; to which he replied that Mírzá was well and engaged in writing his book. A number of American and Paris visitors, who had also arrived from Port Said, were present. Then our beloved Master turned to me, saying: "You must translate this book into English. God will confirm you therein." I bowed to Him and said it would be the greatest honour for me to comply with His Command.

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl has especially asked me to translate the following from his own words, in which he expresses his gratitude for the assistance and help he has received from noble souls:

"Although this book has been written in compliance with the command of our Lord 'Abdu'l-Bahá who is the Centre of the Circle of Names, the Light shining from the Horizon of Glory and Grandeur, and whose Advent has been announced in the Books of Prophets and Chosen Ones—Upon Him is Glory, Might and Praise!—yet, were it not for the untiring efforts of the brilliant pearl, the verdant leaf, the revered Miss B.—May God increase her honour and excellence—not one of the pages of my compositions would have been written during this arduous journey. For it is an evident fact to the learned, and notably to those who are writers, that a man of advanced age, and weak constitution, who, in less than one year has travelled from Egypt to Syria, thence to Europe and America, hurrying from city to city, moving from place to place, addressing meetings two or three times a week continually speaking to people of different tastes, both ignorant and learned, prejudiced and unprejudiced, would not be able to produce over two thousand pages upon philosophical subjects—containing ex-

planations of the most intricate and abstruse points, proofs, arguments, and interpretations of Scriptural verses—were it not for the kind efforts and thoughtfulness of such an excellent soul. She has taken much trouble and labour for the writer, in order that his works may be published.

“Likewise I express my thanks and praise to the revered lady Miss R.—Upon her be Bahá'u'lláh! She also has exercised the utmost effort in helping the translation of this book and has rendered every possible help to the translator.”

Verily, God is Powerful in All Things!

The servant of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,

'Alí-Qulí Khán (Ishti'ál ibn-i-Kalántar)

April 1902

Brief account of the life of the author

[By 'Alí-Qulí Khán, see the *Star of the West*, IV:19, pp. 317–9.]

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl was born in 1844, in Gulpáygán, a small Persian town, founded by Humáy, the daughter of Darius I. The family to which his parents belonged was one of the most distinguished of that city, and, even to the present time, is well known for learning and knowledge. His father, Mírzá Riḍá, was one of the most noted Shi'ite doctors of religion in Persia; who died in 1871, at the age of seventy.

In the prime of youth, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl travelled to Işfahán and 'Iráq to perfect his studies. Even in his boyhood he was noted for intelligence, sound memory, and diligence in discovering subtle scientific points, to such an extent, that these qualities seemed to the people supernatural.¹

Before he was twenty-two years of age, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl had perfected himself in the branches of Arabic learning, such as grammar, rhetoric, etymology and composition; although Arabic is a foreign language to Persians. In accordance with the wishes of his father, he also acquired a perfect knowledge of Islamic theology and laws. At the same time, he studied mathematics, algebra, arithmetic, geometry and astronomy according to the Ptolemaic system. He also mastered the Aristotelian as well as the rational Islamic philosophy.

In October 1873, he left the town of Gulpáygán and went to Ṭihrán, the capital of Persia, where he took up his residence. A short time after his arrival, he was appointed the superintendent and professor of one of the

¹ In 1901, in Paris, one of the Persian students, named Naşru'lláh-Khán, spoke of Hájí Mullá Ḥasan, a great scientific lecturer of Işfahán, who had been one of the pupils of Mírzá Abu'l Faḍl. In the course of conversation, he said that when, in 1866, the first edition of the Arabic Dictionary, entitled *al-Qāmus al-Muḥīṭ* [by Muḥammad ibn Ya'qúb al-Fírúzábádí], one of the most authoritative and well-known works, was published in Tabríz, Persia, the students of the College of Sadr of Işfahán brought a copy of it to Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl for criticism. He, in one evening, examined the whole contents of the book, about 1,400 pages, and asserted that it contained but two words with wrong accentuation. After a long and careful examination by the learned scholars of Işfahán, it was found that this statement, made by the author after a few hours' investigation, was correct.

oldest first class Arabic Universities of Tīhrán, named the “School of Ḥakīm-Ḥāshim”. There, students of different sciences gathered around him and attended his lectures.

In 1875, he became acquainted with a merchant named Áqá ‘Abdu’l-Karím of Iṣfahán, an adherent of the Bahá'í Religion. As this merchant found Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl sagacious and free from prejudice, he invited him to investigate his religion. Although Áqá ‘Abdu’l-Karím had no schooling, yet he possessed a shrewd, acute mind, and an excellent character. He arranged interviews for Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl with learned Bahá'í teachers, such as his holiness the great Nabíl, entitled “The Learned One of Qá’im”, the late Ḥájí Muḥammad-Ismá’íl of Káshán, entitled Dḥabíh (“sacrifice”) Áqá Mírzá Ḥaydar-‘Alí of Ardistán, and others. They continued the controversy and religious and scientific debate during eight months. Finally, in September 1876, after this ample discussion and tedious argument, Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl, finding himself unable to refute and resist the proofs and demonstrations of the Bahá'ís, and esteeming the evidences¹ of this Movement stronger than the proofs

¹ Among the proofs and evidences which Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl frequently related, are the following from his own words:

“The oppression, deposition and murder of Sulṭán ‘Abdu’l-‘Azíz of Turkey, which happened approximately in May, 1876; as well as the full particulars and details of the Turko-Russian war, were explained to us in the early days of October, 1875, by Ḥájí Muḥammad Ismá’íl Dḥabíh, from the prophecies of Bahá'u'lláh. In that meeting, Áqá ‘Abdu’l-Karím of Iṣfahán, Áqá Muḥammad-Hádí, the bookbinder, of Iṣfahán, and Áqá Mírzá Aḥmad, the braider, of Iṣfahán, were present. Ḥájí Dḥabíh read to us some Tablets, including the *Tablet of Samandar* (the title of Áqá Shaykh Kázim, an old and prominent Bahá'í teacher of Qazvín, still living in that city), which contained a clear and explicit statement of these events. Then I said to Áqá ‘Abdu’l-Karím of Iṣfahán: “If the deposition of the Sulṭán and the Turko-Russian war take place and come to pass, this will be considered a great proof of the truth of Bahá'u'lláh, greater than the miracles performed by former prophets.”

Most of the students of Tīhrán heard the same subject spoken of by Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl. For, in those days, the spread of the Religion of Bahá'u'lláh had just begun, and the persecutions, bloodshed and pillage inflicted upon the Bahá'ís were so great and violent, that no one dared mention their names in Persia, much less to praise them. But, as Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl was considered a prominent man of learning, and had a great following of students, he spoke of these events in his lecture rooms with astonishment. Moreover, at this time, he had not yet become a Bahá'í nor could he or anyone imagine that the Bahá'ís would overcome him in controversy, and thus change his religion.

of other religions, acknowledged and embraced the truth of the Religion of Bahá'u'lláh and became a convert to it.

When Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl acknowledged the truth of this religion, and, because the straightforwardness for which he was noted, could not conceal his belief, he openly propounded proofs and arguments of the truth of Baha'ism, in his lectures to the students. Consequently, enemies who were jealous of him, always waiting to accomplish his downfall, availed themselves of this opportunity to speak of him in the presence of the clergy and prominent statesmen of Ṭihrán. The clergy denounced him, and, in December of the same year, he was arrested and put in chains by the command of Prince Kámrán Mírzá, entitled "Náyibu's-Saltānih" (Prince Regent), the third son of the late Náširi'd-Dín Sháh, who was then the governor of Ṭihrán, Gílán and Mázindarán. This imprisonment lasted about five months. This imprisonment resulted in his losing all the property, which he had inherited from his father. At the end of five months, he and other Bahá'ís imprisoned with him because of their faith, were released, owing to the efforts of the late Hájí Mírzá Ḥusayn Khán, entitled Muṣhíru'd-Dawliḥ, who was then Minister of War. Upon his release, the clergy of Ṭihrán tried their utmost to persuade him to verbally acknowledge Islám, and not to openly uphold the truth of the Bahá'í Religion. To this he would not agree, but patiently endured the most violent persecutions and afflictions rather than accede to the clergy and statesmen. Afterward he gained his living by means of his pen, and diligently laboured in spreading the Bahá'í Religion.

In AH 1300 (CE 1882) came a great historical calamity. Large numbers of Bahá'ís were arrested in various Persian cities, for now this religion had become very prevalent throughout Persia and the Caucasus. A considerable number of the nobility, comprising Muslims, Jews, Zoroastrians, Nusayris,¹ *et al.*, had embraced it with the utmost sincerity, and even did not recant when in danger of their lives. Consequently, the fire of envy and hatred flamed anew in the clergy and statesmen of Ṭihrán, who considered themselves defenders of the first-named religion. They agreed with the Prince Kámrán Mírzá to persecute the Bahá'ís. Therefore, they falsely accused and calumniated them before the Sháh. Also in Raṣhṭ, Iṣfahán and Mázindarán, most of the clergy and statesmen determined

¹ Nusayrî—Muslim sect of northern Syria. Nusayris [pl. Nuṣayrîya] are almost identical with the members of another sect, the 'Aliyu'llahis.—M.W.T.

to eradicate the Bahá'ís, and arrested a great number. Among these was Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl who was arrested in Ṭihrán, along with a multitude of the Bahá'ís of prominence, merchants, traders, *et al.* He was confined for about one month in the house of the Prince, and several controversial meetings and debates were held in the presence of the Prince, concerning this Religion.

The opponents of the Bahá'ís consisting principally of members of the royal family, religious doctors and statesmen, constantly accused them of sedition and plots. Great efforts were made to alienate the mind of the Sháh from them and to persuade him to decree their suppression and slaughter. However, as they could not be charged with any violation of the laws of the Government, the Sháh became convinced of their innocence, and would not consent to sentence them to death, but commanded them to be put in chains in the royal prison. Thus Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl and a number of the stanch Bahá'ís were imprisoned in chains and fetters for twenty-two months, subject to rigorous distress and hardship. During most of this time, nobody was allowed to see them. Twenty-four of them were, for fourteen days, chained to two long, heavy chains in a dark underground dungeon. Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl relates that for about six months they received daily news of the plots and intrigues of their enemies, and expected death at any moment, having entirely resigned themselves to the will of God. After the lapse of twenty-two months, the falseness of the accusations of the enemy was proven to the Sháh, and he commanded that the prisoners should be set free.

Released from this rigorous imprisonment, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl took up his residence in the village of Qulhak, one of the well-known and delightful summer resorts of Ṭihrán,¹ where he remained about seven months, engaged in lecturing and writing. Again, the Prince found [an] excuse for his arrest, a third time. He was imprisoned for six months in the royal building named Utáqih Nizám (the military department), whence he was released 6 February 1886.²

For about thirty years, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl travelled in remote countries. He journeyed northward through Persia,

¹ Now District 3, NE Ṭihrán.—M.W.T.

² The purpose of this brief account of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl's life and sufferings, is to inform the thoughtful people concerning the strength of the faith of the adherents of this religion. The full details and circumstances of his experiences are far beyond the limits of this short article. Some of the learned men of Syria and Egypt have written his biography.

Turkey, the Caucasus, Tartary and Russia, as far as Moscow; eastward as far as the confines of China and Káshghar; to Syria and Egypt; and in 1901–1902 made a trip through Western Europe and America. During his arduous travels, he everywhere secured a good name for himself and his countrymen, consorted with the men of learning of different religions, nationalities and schools and acquired a vast range of knowledge, which it would have been impossible to attain without undertaking extensive and toilsome journeys.

In AH 1303 (CE 1886), he received a Tablet written by Bahá'u'lláh in AH 1300, in which he was commanded to travel for the purpose of teaching the Word of God; and during his distant journeys, undertaken in compliance with this Command, many holy Tablets were revealed in praise of his strength and fidelity to the Cause.

While travelling, he has written numerous books, being considered a standard writer in ancient and modern Persian, as well as in Arabic.

In 1892, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl wrote, in Samarqand, the book entitled *Faṣlu'l K̄hiṭáb* (Conclusive Proof), in answer to questions asked by Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí of Tabríz, one of the learned men of Ádharbayján. He wrote this book in the style of the doctors of theology, and in the introduction is given an account of the controversy in Samarqand between himself and Dr Ásátúriyán Márcárd, a Protestant teacher, in a meeting held by men of learning.

In 1898, he wrote the book of *Fará'id* in Persian, in compliance with the command of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In this work, he answers the objections of Shaykh 'Abdu's-Salám, entitled Shaykh'l-Islám (a Muslim pontiff of Tiflís). The same year, he wrote the book of *ad-Durar al-Bahá'íyya* (The Brilliant Pearls), in Arabic, in answer to Dr Núri'd-Dín of India.

During the years 1901 and 1902, while sojourning in America, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl wrote the *Ḥújjaja'l-Bahíyyih* (The Bahá'í Proofs), which constitutes the major portion of this volume.

As late as December 1911, he wrote a scholarly answer to an opponent of the Bahá'í Cause, known as *Burhán-i-Lámi'* (The Brilliant Proof), which was published by The Centre of The Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, while in America.

His other epistles and pamphlets, which are scattered in all parts, are too numerous for mention in this article.

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl had a wonderful genius in explaining subtle philosophical points, which skill is his speciality. He himself thought that he received this gift as a fulfilment of the prayer, which the Blessed Perfection Bahá'u'lláh made for him in a Tablet written to Ḥájí Muḥammad-Kázim of Iṣfahán. It is as follows: *"I beg of God to enable Faḍl (Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl) to teach His Truth, and to unveil that which is hidden and treasured in His Knowledge, with wisdom and explanation. Verily He is the Mighty, the Bestower!"*

One of the theories originated by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, was the "Proof of Stability", in demonstrating the Essence of the Self-existent One. This is one of the greatest and clearest logical arguments for proving the Divine validity of the religions and demonstrating the Essence of the Almighty. By a single rational proof, it demonstrates both the existence of God and the truth of the true Prophets. He first propounded this argument in the book of *Faṣlu'l-Khiṭáb* [Conclusive Proof], in 1892, and for the second time, in the book of *Fará'id*, in 1897.

He was the first one of the Bahá'ís who demonstrated by rational and logical arguments, that miracles are not sufficient to prove the truth of the Manifestations of God. He was the first one who clearly explained the purpose of what was spoken by the Prophets, in the Holy Scriptures, as to the "words being sealed", to be opened in the "last days".¹ He was also the first to explain that the great religions of the world which have changed and governed the conditions of society, are seven in number; and that the "seven heavens" is a term by which the Prophets have symbolized the Divine religions. Before Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl propounded his theory, the point was not understood, for this number² was not spoken of in the Divine Books and Tablets, or in historical works.

He was the first one who demonstrated by rational

¹ Bahá'u'lláh declared: *"Verily, we have opened the seal of the 'sealed Wine'."*

² Historians had different views upon the subject. Dr C. Vandyke of America, professor in the University of Beirut, who has compiled well-known works, has stated in his Geography that the principal religions are four in number. Nufel George of Tripoli (Syria), who is one of the noted men of learning, has counted six in his historical work entitled *Soussane-Suleyman* (Sawsan Sulaymán, the Lily of Solomon). Likewise the European writers have each stated a certain number which is not sustained by any argument.

proofs, why the Pagan religions are considered as polytheism, although they owe their origin to the Almighty, and acknowledge one God. For if by worshipping images, people are to be considered as polytheists, the Greek Church and Roman Catholics must also be considered such, while they are in reality, the “people of the Book”, and believers in Divine Unity and true religion.

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl made the following statement about his writings:

“In the early years of my conversion, I refused to write books, supposing that in the days in which the Supreme Pen was moving, its sound would be heard in all regions. Therefore, I reasoned, it would be a great presumption for a man to attempt writing and composition. Finally in 1887, when in Ādharbayján, I was favoured with the privilege of meeting Varqá the Martyr,¹ and he encouraged me to write and compose. He said: ‘During the days when I was at the brilliant city of ‘Akká, and attained the honour of meeting the Blessed Perfection, the Blessed Tongue repeated the Command of the “First Point”, which was that the believers should each one write books demonstrating the truth of “He whom God shall manifest”.’ I inquired if He deemed it advisable to employ Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl in this service. Then He said, ‘As the “First Point” has commanded it, such persons should employ themselves in writing and propounding arguments.’

“When I heard this statement from his holiness Varqá the Martyr, I ventured to undertake writing. Other believers from all parts were urging me both verbally and by letters to write books of explanation and proofs. Therefore in 1888, when I went to the city of Hamadán, one of the great princes there asked me to work out the date of the Manifestation of the Command of God, from the Qur’án. As in those days, the Cause of God had penetrated among the Hebrews, and the Jewish Bahá’ís were widely renowned, one of the learned Jews of Tíhrán, by name Dr Mírzá Ayyúb, had asked many questions from the Jewish Bahá’ís of Hamadán, and they requested me to

¹ The account of the Martyrdom of Mírzá ‘Alí-Muḥammad the poet, one of the staunch Bahá’ís with Rúḥu’lláh his son, is given in the history of this Movement which follows. “Varqá” is the title of this martyr, meaning “nightingale” or “dove”.

write answers to them. Consequently I wrote a brief treatise in reply to the request of the prince and the Jewish Bahá'ís which book was entitled *Sharhí áyát-i-Múvarakh* (an account of the texts, giving dates). I furnished therein, an interpretation of those verses of the Heavenly Books, of the Old and New Testament, the Qur'án, the Zend Avesta of the Parsis, which contain indications of the date of the Appearance of the Cause of God. This treatise was written in Persian, and many unrevised copies of it are circulated in Hamadán and elsewhere. The learned Jews have translated into Hebrew that part of it which concerns the Jewish religion, and have spread it throughout Persia."

"A revolt was stirred up against me in Hamadán, through the instigation of the clergy. I was arrested, confined for five days, and then compelled to leave the city, which prevented me from revising the book. However, in the year 1890, when in Samarqand (Turkistán), I revised it, and manuscript copies were sent to different parts."

"In those years, Ustád Javán-Mard, the lecturer of the Zoroastrian College of Yazd, wrote a petition to the Holy Presence of Bahá'u'lláh asking various questions. Among other things, he asked concerning the genealogy of Bahá'u'lláh for the Parsis, according to the text of their Heavenly Book, expect the Greatest Manifestation, the Promised Lord, to appear from Persia and to be of Zoroastrian descent. In answer to this question, Bahá'u'lláh wrote in a Tablet to him, the following passage:

"Abu'l-Faḍl of Gulpáygán—upon him be My Bahá!—hath written upon this subject, from the Heavenly Scriptures, things which are effective in guiding capable, prepared souls."

"In 1892, this book was sent by Áqá Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Karím of Ardabíl, from 'Ishqábád to the Holy Presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in compliance with His own command, it was approved in the following Tablet written by His own Blessed Hand:

"The treatise containing proofs, written by the pen of that pure soul, was read and noted. We opened our mouth to give thanks for the Favours of the Threshold of Oneness, Who, through the Confirmation of the Abhá Kingdom, hath caused such souls to arise for the guidance of all the religions of the world, so that no one among the nations of the world can equal or resist their speech, utterance and the strength of their argument. We thank Him

that He hath caused thee to speak His praise, raised thee to explain His argument, demonstrate His proofs and evidences, and to declare His Cause in the Kingdom of His Creations! Were people to possess attentive ears, sound minds, tranquil souls, and pure hearts, this (thy) treatise would be sufficient for them. Verily, I beseech God to make thee a sign of Guidance, a standard of Righteousness, a lamp of Knowledge, a dawning-place of Assurance, a preparer of the Path, a guide to enable people to make straight the road throughout the concourse of existence, and a leader of the hosts of Life, in the Kingdom of the visible world. Verily, He is the conformer of whomsoever He willeth! Verily, He is powerful in all things! Upon thee be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!"

'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás

Brief account of the death of the author

[From the *Star of the West*, IV:19, p. 315.]

"Verily the eyes have shed tears and the hearts have burned because of this great affliction. Be ye possessed with the beauty of patience in this mighty calamity."

—Telegram from 'Abdu'l-Bahá referring to the death of Mírzá Abu'l-Faql.

A few days before 'Abdu'l-Bahá's departure from Egypt to the Holy Land, Mírzá Abu'l-Faql went to Cairo. During the month of January, which is the coldest in Cairo, his strength failed rapidly and when finally confined to his bed, he was transferred to the house of one of the friends, Áqá Muḥammad-Taquí of Işfahán, where he was attended by the best physicians and nurses procurable. However, he never rallied, and died on Wednesday, 21 January, at four o'clock in the afternoon. The attending nurse said that as he expired she heard him say, "*Khudá! Khudá!*" (God! God!) With these words of greeting he joined Him in whose service he had so long laboured.

The doctor pronounced death due to endocarditis—i.e., inflammation of the lining membrane of the heart.

Although he had passed the allotted years of three score and ten, it was hard for us to believe this busy life ended. As no one had ever met him without hearing him utter a few words of wisdom, it was difficult to realize that the spirit had indeed departed from the body that lay before us, silent and unresponsive, yet smiling and beautiful.

A telegram was sent to 'Abdu'l-Bahá notifying him of the death of Mírzá Abu'l-Faql, and the answer, quoted above, came immediately.

The body of our beloved teacher was carried on the shoulders of the Bahá'ís of Egypt, from the house of Áqá Muḥammad-Taquí to the cemetery on the hill and laid in the tomb owned by Mírzá Hájí Ḥasan Khurásání. The tomb is a large room, in the centre of which the remains were

laid, and fragrant narcissus blossoms were scattered on his resting place. The friends chanted Tablets and many eyes were wet with tears.

And thus, on 22 January, while the Egyptian people were celebrating the inauguration of the Legislative Council in one end of the city of Cairo, at the other end, on a hill, a group of old and young men, Persians and Egyptians, were mourning the departure of a soul well-loved throughout the East. ...

Hussein A. Afnán
Egypt, 2 February 1914

Tributes and eulogies by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

[Extracts from the *Diary of Mírzá Aḥmad Sohráb.*]

Haifa, Syria, 22 January 1914

This was a day of affliction and grief to the Bahá’í world, for our great and noble teacher, Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl departed from this earth, and the sweet singing nightingale of his pure spirit soared toward the Rose-Garden of the Kingdom of Abhá. The telegram arrived last night; it was delivered this morning, and the heart-breaking news conveyed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá just as he sat down to partake of his lunch. The news saddened and grieved him. He did not say a word, but arose from his seat without eating. He remained alone in his room until late in the afternoon. Then he went with Mírzá Hádí to the telegraph office to send a message of consolation to the friends in Cairo. The Pilgrims’ House was a house of mourning; many eyes were weeping and many hearts burdened with sorrow.

In the evening all the believers gathered in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s house. Under [their] breath everyone was discussing the death of our venerable teacher, when Mírzá Hádí brought us the word that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would receive us. We all ascended to the upper floor, and after a few minutes, he came in. At first, he was silent, and then while his eyes were shut he started to speak. He would speak a few phrases, then a flood of emotions sweeping over him; he would then stop a few seconds and continue. He said in part:

“Today a most painful news was received; its effect was agonizing and its anguish very harrowing. Truly, I say, Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl was a glorious personage. From every standpoint, he was peerless. It is a rare thing to find a person perfect from every direction, but he was such a person. His honour Áqá Mírzá Ḥaydar ‘Alí must write the biography of his (Mírzá Abu’l-Faḍl’s) life. Truly, I say he was in a state of the utmost severance, and adorned with the highest virtues of firmness and steadfastness. He was absolutely detached from everything.”

From the day that he became a believer up to the last moment of his life, he was occupied in the service of the Cause of God; either he conveyed the Message or wrote books proving the validity of this Cause. He had not the slightest attachment to this mortal world.

"How erudite and learned he was! He had a marvellous knowledge of the contents of books. He was well-informed as to the tenets of every religion and had mastered the intricate laws and complicated customs of every nation—modern and ancient. He knew in detail the doctrines of every sect or party, and was a standard-bearer of the oneness of the world of humanity. In the servitude of the Holy Threshold of Bahá'u'lláh he was my partner and associate. During the hours of grief he was the source of my consolation. From every standpoint I trusted him, and had in him the greatest amount of confidence. Whenever anyone wrote books and articles against this Cause, I referred them to him, for irrefutable answer.

"How humble and meek he was! We tried our best to persuade him to keep a servant, but he would always gently decline. He desired to serve the believers personally. Whenever the believers and the non-believers called on him, although he was sick, weak and in fever, yet he would get up and prepare tea and serve his callers with his own hand. All his anxieties revolved around this one supreme object—to make people satisfied and happy at any cost.

"During all the days of his life I never heard from him the use of the word 'I'—'I said so,' or 'I wrote so and so.' He would say: 'This servant requested them', or 'This servant begged the believers'. He never made a display of his knowledge, nor wished to impress upon the mind of any person that he knew such and such a subject, or had locked in his mind such and such information. He was evanescent and lived in the station of nothingness. He was self-sacrificing at the Holy Threshold. No one inhaled from him the odour of superiority.

"Now the consummate wisdom of God hath deemed it wise to take him away from amongst us. The only way left to us is patience. How often one man has been equal to one thousand. In short, you who are the believers of God, ascend the Mountain with contrite hearts, and gather together and chant in his behalf communes and prayers, so that God may exalt more than ever his station

in the spiritual world. I will likewise engage tonight in supplication at the Divine Threshold in his behalf."

Then he asked Furúghí to chant a prayer, which he did with great emotion. In the midst of great silence, 'Abdu'l-Bahá left the room.

23 January

Early next morning a meeting of prayer was held in the Tomb of the Báb in memory of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl and everyone offered supplication at the Threshold of the Almighty.

24 January

In the afternoon there was a very large meeting in the house of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The central hall, which is very large, was used for this purpose. While Mírzá Munír was chanting Tablets, suddenly a door was opened and 'Abdu'l-Bahá entered the hall. Every one arose. When he sat, he gave them permission to take their seats. After a few minutes of silence, he began to speak:

"The calamitous death of his holiness, Abu'l-Faḍl is of such vast proportion that no matter how I strive to console myself, I do not succeed. How good it is that man during his existence may conduct himself in such a manner, that when he passes away, the hearts of the believers will be attracted toward him so as to cherish his memory forever and ever. While I was living in Ramleh [ar-Raml], whenever I felt depressed or sad, I called on him, and soon afterward, I was in a happier frame of mind. He was most sincere, most straightforward. He had not the least hypocrisy or deceit in his nature. He has left behind wonderful literary traces, which are unequalled and peerless. All his works and writings go to prove the validity of this Blessed Cause. His tongue and his pen, his thought and ideals, were all engaged in establishing the authenticity of this glorious Movement. He had so arranged the programme of his daily work that from morning till noon he was occupied with his writing, and did not receive any person, but in the afternoons he welcomed anyone who cared to call on him.

"He was a serious, earnest man; he was cordial and affectionate. There was nothing trifling or trivial about him. He impressed everyone who came in contact with

him by his simple nobility and true kingship. His presence and words were invigorating. If he expressed publicly his love for some particular person, in his heart he loved him more; if he eulogized him, in his heart he praised him more; if he was attached to him, in his heart he was more deeply attached to him. He was fervent and zealous. If he was displeased with a person, he could not hold conversation with him."

8 February

To those who were going to Egypt, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: *"On my behalf you will go and visit the tomb of our beloved Mírzá Abu'l-Faql. All the days of his life were spent in the service of the Cause of God. His will and desire were devoted to the promotion of the Message of the Kingdom. He did not think of worldly comfort and tranquillity. He never tried to protect his life. He was not at all attached to the ephemeral objects of this contingent world. All his thoughts, ideals, conceptions and aims were centred on the service of the world of the Merciful. Praise be to God! that his intellectual and spiritual life was very fruitful. All his books contain incontrovertible proofs and evidences concerning this impregnable, blessed Cause. Sanctified and holy, divine and spiritual, he ascended from this mortal world to the realm of light.*

"The disinterested actions and free-hearted deeds of a person proclaim with the sound of a trumpet his loyalty and sincerity in the Cause. He is in no need of self-justification. He lives above and beyond the criticism of petty and dwarfed assailers of his integrity and purity of motives. Their censures do not touch him. The innate nobility of his soul is not tarnished, the glories of his work are not beclouded. The river of his spiritual ideality [sic], creative power and imaginative faculty is not dried up. The sea of his sympathy and increasing hopefulness and direct activity in the Cause is not calmed down. With a deep insight, holy vision, and fresh inspiration, he will cause the complete retreat of all his old enemies and with new zest, unflinching courage and undisturbed spirit he will apply himself to new victories, new channels of service, broader fields of labour, higher plans of triumphs and the solution of vaster and more intricate problems by the magic wand of his determination. Thus he changes every stumbling block placed in his path to dishearten him from

further progress into a stepping stone, advances with confident steps, ever rising higher and higher, never looking backward but always forward, setting aside imperturbably all the seeming difficulties and finally planting his feet on the summit of the mountain of success, beatitude and undiminished glory.

“Such a man was Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl. On such an unshakeable rock every person must lay the foundation of the palace of his life, so that the howling of the winds, the fury of the storms and the onslaught of the wild elements may not in the least shake it. The life of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl was God-controlled and God-propelled. Not for one second did he set his own will above the Will of God. He effaced self and lived eternally in God.”

13 February

A Memorial Service for our beloved teacher, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl at the Tomb of the Báb, was the order of the day. There were many present, but a profound quietness reigned. In the midst of the great silence, the gentle, mellow voice of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was raised, now in a low and anon in a higher tone, chanting the Visiting Tablet. Returning to the reception room, 'Abdu'l-Bahá then delivered the following address:

“Truly I say the departure of Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl is an irretrievable loss for the people of Bahá. In all the countries of the world, wherever the believers are found, they are deeply affected by the death of this glorious personage. For all of them loved him most cordially and admired him from the bottom of their hearts and souls. He attracted to himself the spirit of everyone. Truly he was a worthy man! Strange, passing strange, that there was not a breath of self-desire in this person. Wholly divested from all other thoughts and mentions, he had consecrated all his time to the service of the Holy Threshold. He lived in order to dig out of the rich mine of his heart and intellect nuggets of brilliant proofs, conclusive arguments and glorious expositions of the ideals of the Kingdom and establish the validity of the Cause of God. Were one to read all his writings and works, he does not find 'I-ness' and 'egoism' stalking between the lines, nor does he observe any pedantic expressions or circumlocution—in order to bear upon the mind of the reader the whole weight

of his learning and scholarship. From the moment that he was ushered under the shade of the Blessed Tree, he forewent every pleasure and cut his heart from every worldly station. He asked for no comfort, he sought no rest, he longed for no fame and he wished no notoriety or name. He lived afar off, above the thoughts of conflict and supremacy which are waging war on the battlefield of the minds and the hearts of many people. Until his very last breath, he served at the Holy Threshold.

“How learned was he! How wise was he! How well informed was he! His understanding was marvellous and his wisdom beyond comparison. He was acquainted with the master thoughts of the authors of every nation, he was equipped with the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures of all the religions. He knew the contents of the Zend-Avesta and the Zoroastrian literature. He had a most comprehensive knowledge of the Bible and the Gospel. He was apprised of their inner meanings. He had mastered the opinions and theories of the philosophers of the past and the ideals of the spiritual scholars were known to him. He was deeply versed in the universal history of mankind. All the learned men and scholars of the Islamic world, especially those who reside in Egypt, and had conversed with Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, have testified that he was a genius, a truly wise man. Notwithstanding this, his character was never tinged with any vanity or self-conceit.

“In the path of the Blessed Perfection he suffered persecutions, hardships and afflictions. While being pursued by the enemies, he was serene and composed. The sword of Damocles often hung over his head. Finally he was thrown into the prison at Ṭihrán. In those days Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh was borne on the crest of the raging waves of wrath against the Bahá'ís and Náyibu's-Saltānih was no less exasperated and indignant. Notwithstanding those two mighty forces of opposition, yet he withstood them with the utmost firmness, with infinite steadfastness and in his examination in the presence of the latter dignitary he proved conclusively the validity and truthfulness of this Revelation. With other teachers of the Cause, he spent two years in prison, till the Hand of Might and Majesty saved him from the claws of the wolves.

“I never heard him mention the details of his ordeals and trials in the Path of Abhá. One day we were discussing together certain matters relative to the Cause, and

one thing brought another and the stirring events of those early days were reviewed. In answer he said: 'The courageous and dauntless stand taken by Shaykh Riḍá Yazdí during our imprisonment was so unparalleled and heroic that in comparison with him none of us really served the Cause. What he said restored tranquillity and peace of mind to the authorities. When we were cross-examined, we not always answered in wisdom and did not explain the Teachings plainly. Náyibu's-Salṭanih realizing this, could not trust our statements. Then he sent for Shaykh Riḍá and inquired from him the tenets of this Movement. With an eloquent tongue and lucid explanation he went over all the teachings of the Blessed Perfection, and then got up from his seat and prayed before him and others to show him the form of our prayer. Then he said: "I have now told you all our doctrines and beliefs, the sources of which are the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. It is very easy to verify them by reading some of the epistles revealed by Him. What I told you corresponds with reality. There is, however, another Command of Bahá'u'lláh which is explicitly obeyed by all the Bahá'ís and it is—they must not at all interfere with the political affairs of the country in which they live." As none of us dared to speak so plainly, and as Shaykh Riḍá spoke without the least veil, Náyibu's-Salṭanih felt confident that we were harbouring no intrigues or revolution against the established order of government.' This was all that I heard from Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl about the time of his imprisonment. This was also of course in the praise of the courage of one of his fellow prisoners. He did not say: 'I said so and so; I suffered so and so.'

"In short, the hearts of all the believers of the world were attached to him. He was the brilliant lamp of the Cause, the shining light of guidance, the sparkling star of knowledge, the luminous orb of understanding and a sea, tumultuous with the waves of wisdom."

Tablet to the Washington, DC, Assembly

O ye believers of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful!

The letter of condolence and sympathy expressing grief and affliction at the death of his holiness Abu'l-Faḍl was perused. It conferred consolation upon the heart. Praise be to God! that the believers of Washington are informed

of the majesty of the station of that noble personage. With weeping eyes and burning hearts they moaned and lamented at the Memorial meetings commemorating his departure. This glorious personage was a brilliant orb, a luminous lamp, a blessed, fruitful tree, a waving sea of knowledge, a fountain of the Water of Life and was established in the Ark of Salvation. From the beginning of his childhood he had the utmost faith and was imbued with a religious spirit. All his life was either spent in the acquisition of knowledge, engaged in the worship of the True One, or occupied in the pursuit of sciences and philosophies;—until he heard the Call of God, hastened toward the Kingdom of God, listened to the Melody of the Supreme Concourse, turned his face toward the Beauty of Abhá¹ and became so attracted and enkindled that the believers and acquaintances became astonished, exclaiming: "What a dazzling light which is ignited in this transparent lamp! What a glorious bestowal which has become refulgent in this Cycle!"

In short, he severed his heart entirely from the ephemeral world and turned his gaze completely toward the Realm on High. He closed his eyes wholly to the rest, comfort and honour of this material earth, and attached himself to the spiritual glad-tidings, merciful fragrances and divine outpourings. Whosoever found himself in his presence and propounded to him the most abstruse questions of divine philosophy, listened to most rational and satisfactory answers. His blessed heart was the spring of realities and significances, allaying the thirst of every thirsty one. In the demonstration of the Cause of the Beauty of Abhá, he wrote books and innumerable pamphlets, a number of which are published and circulated. In the Path of God he forsook his native land and travelled in many parts of the world. In every city he summoned the inhabitants to the Kingdom of God and imparted to mankind the glad-tiding of the dawn of the Sun of Reality. In his lectures he brought forth the most irrefutable evidences and incontrovertible proofs—intellectual and scriptural. He was endowed with an eloquent tongue and a fluent utterance. He had a luminous heart and an extraordinary intelligence; a marvellous memory and a miraculous capacity. Having visited many countries and blessed with a last pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he domiciled in Alexandria. For a few months, day and night, he was

¹ Abhá Beauty is a title of Bahá'u'lláh.

associating with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and was busy writing his last work. Then for a change of air he went to Cairo from Alexandria. While living in the former city he ascended to the Supreme Concourse. Like unto the yearning nightingale, he winged his way to the rose-garden of the Luminary of the regions, and similar to a thirsty fish he hastened toward the fathomless sea. Although the hearts were scorched with the fire of separation, the souls of the Bahá'ís were burned like unto the candles, and from all the cities the cries of lamentations and moanings were heard, the eyes wept and the spirits were consumed—yet that leader of the lordly ones was released from the narrowness of this world and soared toward the infinite apex. The drop was joined to the ocean and the ray returned to the Sun. He was liberated from the wilderness of separation and ascended to the Court of the Transfiguration of the Lord of the Covenant. Now he is submerged in the Sea of Lights and enthroned in the Kingdom of Abhá!

Upon ye be Bahá'u'l-Abhá!
(Signed) 'Abdu'l-Bahá

**A short sketch
of the
history and lives of the
leaders of this
religion**

By Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl

Translated from the Persian
by 'Alí-Qulí Khán

Introduction

In the Name of our Lord, the Bahá'

It is known to men of learning, that down to the present year, this new Movement, the light of which has penetrated most of the eastern and western countries—this religious belief upon which depends the reformation of the world and the unification of nations—according to the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, has been founded and upheld by three holy persons. As those who have attempted to write of this Movement, particularly the writers of newspapers and magazines, have mixed up true and false statements, and have coloured historical facts with personal prejudices, it is therefore impossible for readers and students to rely upon and profit by their accounts. Even the very sources of their records and the obvious contrast between them, bear testimony of their unreliability. It has therefore been deemed necessary to depict in these pages, a true, substantial and succinct account concerning the birth, fountain-source and circumstances of these “Three Lights”, which cannot be disputed or doubted. With regard to misrepresentations made by prejudiced people concerning certain facts, we leave the exposure of these to the natural and inevitable laws of development and progression; for time and circumstances do not permit the writer to enter into details of proofs and arguments upon all these points. God the Exalted will enable us to accomplish our undertaking.

We preface the subject by saying that religions are distinguished and differentiated from each other by three points:

First, by the difference of founders and institutors. For instance, the religions of Zoroaster, Moses and Muḥammad are distinguished and named by three different names, because of their being founded by these three different personages.

Second, by the difference of the inspired Books of the religions. Thus, the Divine Book of the Zoroastrians is the Zend-Avesta, that of the Jews is the Old Testament, and that of the Muslims is the Qur'án.

Third, by the difference of laws, ordinances, rites and customs. For instance, as the laws and ordinances of the above religions are different from each other, therefore they are accounted as three religions. In other words, as the devotional acts, rites and beliefs of Christianity are different from those of the Confucianists; and as those of the latter are different from those of the Brahamans, therefore these are considered different religions and peoples; otherwise they would all be regarded as one religion and one people.

According to this theory, the writer, in his former works, has shown that the number of the principal religions of the world, which have effected the organization and origin of independent nations, and changed human society, are seven. He has likewise interpreted the "seven heavens" spoken of in Heavenly Books, to be these religions; even though they have all emanated from one Divine Source, all worship one God, and all seek the same attainment of eternal life and salvation.

This introductory statement will show men of learning and sagacity the difference between the Bahá'ís and Bábís, and will enable them to distinguish one from the other. For the founder of the Bábís was the Great Báb, the "First Point"; while the founder of the

Bahá'ís was the Blessed Perfection, the Greatest Name, Bahá'u'lláh. The book of the Báb is the *Bayán*, which was revealed by the Great Báb in the mountain of Máh-Kú; while the principal book of the Bahá'ís is the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and Tablets belonging to it, all of which were revealed by Bahá'u'lláh after declaring His Mission, in Adrianople and 'Akká. Likewise, some of the Ordinances of the Báb are rigid and rigorous, in contrast with the benign ordinances of Bahá'u'lláh, all of which are in conformity with the praiseworthy civilization of the present day, suitable for the preservation of human society, and adapted to the rights and interests of all the eastern and western nations of the world. But, as His Holiness the Great Báb announced in His Books and Epistles, the good tidings of the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh by the name "He-whom-God-shall-manifest"; as He revealed that the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh would be nine years after His own advent; as He fixed the date of Bahá's declaration and the removal of His own religion to be nineteen years subsequent to (the Báb's) Advent; as He made His own ordinances and laws dependent upon the will of Bahá'u'lláh—Who had the right to change or reform them; and as He used His best efforts and endeavours upon all occasions, to deliver the Message of Bahá'u'lláh; therefore we people of Bahá recognize that Brilliant Flame to be the true Precursor of the Blessed Perfection; know Him to be the Forerunner who prepared the road before the Divine Manifestation, and the first one to establish this Law of God.

After this introduction, we now begin to treat of the lives of each one of these three above-mentioned Lights, while begging God the Exalted for His Confirmation and Assistance.

His Holiness the Great Báb

The Báb's name was Mírzá 'Alí-Muḥammad. He was born from a distinguished family of the descendants of Muḥammad, on the first day, of the Arabic month Muḥarram AH 1235 (October CE 1819), in the city of Shíráz, the principal city of Fárs, situated in the south of Persia. His father's name was Siyyid Muḥammad-Riḍá, a merchant of woollen goods, in Fárs. He died before his son Mírzá 'Alí-Muḥammad was weaned. Therefore his only child was placed in care of a maternal uncle, Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid-'Alí of Shíráz, a man noted for his excellent sanctity, virtue and great piety, and who exercised utmost care in His development and training.

When the Báb reached the age of seven and eight, He was engaged in reading Persian books, under a tutor known as Shaykh-i-Mu'allim, a learned man. This instruction followed the ordinary routine of education that the Persian merchants receive. When He reached maturity, he went into trade, in partnership with his maternal uncle; and afterward, for business purposes, resided at Búshihr, situated upon the coast of the Persian Gulf, with another uncle, Ḥájí Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad.

From his earliest childhood, the Báb was characterized with piety and virtue. He was exceedingly handsome in appearance and of a grave and venerable deportment. Furthermore, it is the unanimous testimony of both friends and enemies, that He was unequalled in beauty, gravity and politeness, and that He never failed to observe the exact time of prayer, devotion and other religious requirements. He was, in

the excellence of His attributes and good qualities, a complete model of human perfection, a standard of refinement and elegance. To prove this fact, it is sufficient to observe that the Shi'ite historians, who, in fabricating falsehood and calumnies, especially when being supported by the Government and people, wrote the most shameless and scurrilous statements, were not able to find any flaw in the history of His life. Lacking other material for criticism and abuse, these historians have asserted that His extravagance and persistence in devotions and discipline finally led to the confusion of His mind, and ended in melancholy and hallucination.

When He reached the age of twenty-four, the Báb declared before some of the principal men of learning, who were distinguished for virtue, and devotion, that God the Exalted had elected Him to the station of *Bábíyat* (Gatehood). He claimed that He had been sent to warn people of the approach of the "time of the end" and of the coming of the Great Hour; to announce to them the descent of the Spirit of God (Christ), spoken of in the Heavenly Books. He read unto them a book which God had revealed from His mouth. Being cognizant of the fact that He had not had any further preparation than the study of the elementary books taught to children in preliminary schools, these men of learning were amazed to find such an extraordinary knowledge proceeding from Him, and the majority of them believed in the truth of His claim, on account of His great piety and integrity. These were His first believers and became known later as "the Letters of the Living". Each one of these "Letters of the Living", in compliance with the Báb's command, went to different parts of Persia and Turkey, spreading the news of His advent, without mentioning who He was or where He had appeared. In the mean-

time, the Báb set out for a journey to Mecca and Arabia. In Mecca, He put forward His claim to more than a hundred thousand Muslims assembled there at the time of the annual pilgrimage. Therefore the news of His appearance was universally announced, causing a great commotion and disturbance in Persia and in 'Irāq. By the title Báb, the Muslims understood Him to be a representative of their promised Mahdí, whose coming had been foretold by Muḥammad; because the Báb gave people to understand in His discourses and other epistles, that He was the precursor of another who would appear after Him. After performing the rites of pilgrimage, completing the visit to Mecca and Medina, and fulfilling religious acts of worship, He returned to His native land, and arrived at Búshih̄r.

As the news of the Báb's appearance became widely spread in Sh̄iráz, through the letters forwarded by the pilgrims of that city from Mecca and Medina, and as the number of His converts increased daily through the fervent endeavours of "the Letters of the Living", the Shi'ite doctors, who then exercised great influence, arose against Him, and persuaded Ḥusayn Khán, entitled Nizámu'd-Dawlih, the Governor of Fárs, a fanatical, tyrannical ruler, exceedingly loyal and obedient to them, to undertake the Báb's suppression and subjugation. He first sent ten horsemen to Búshih̄r to conduct the Báb to Sh̄iráz. They met Him midway between Búshih̄r and Sh̄iráz and escorted Him thither. When He arrived at Sh̄iráz, the Governor called a meeting, to which he invited the prominent clergy of the city, and also summoned the Báb to be present. "The Báb declared His mission openly before all the members of the assembly. He claimed that the LORD of the Universe had sent His Door (Báb), and had confirmed Him

by causing *verses* to be revealed from His pen and tongue; that by this manifest proof and weighty miracle, His truth might be proven to the people of the world, and they might be directed to their destination. No sooner had the Muslim clergy heard Him mention the word "verses", than they could hardly control their feelings; inasmuch as the founder of their religion had said in the Qur'án, that were all the men and genii to unite together, or all the people of the world cooperate, they would not be able to produce even one chapter like the Qur'án. Although the Báb had not studied the Arabic language and knew only Persian; and although He was neither a scholar nor scientist, yet He wrote passages in Arabic, similar to the Qur'án, in answer to their scientific and abstruse questions. He wrote most of them in their presence, without pause or reflection, not even writing a rough copy first, as is customary with men of learning and literature. Naturally, they were astonished at the appearance of such wonders and were unable to answer Him.

Finally, they were reduced to say that whosoever, after Muḥammad, lays claim to any revelation of verses, is an infidel. Consequently, the chief among the Shíráz clergy gave verdict that the Báb should be put to death, and the Governor of Fárs did not refrain from insulting and striking Him and persecuting His followers. Surety having been furnished by His maternal uncle, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid 'Alí, the Báb was sent to his house, under strict injunction to hold intercourse with no one. In obedience to this command of the Governor, the Báb secluded Himself and did not admit visitors for some time. Notwithstanding this, His followers continually increased in number, and the news of His virtue and dignity was disseminated throughout all parts of Persia. Meanwhile

some of the prominent clergy and men of dignity in Persia, acknowledged His truth, and endeavoured to promulgate His cause. Among these were Siyyid Yahyá of Dáráb, the eldest son of Siyyid Javád of Karbilá; and a great number in Tīhrán, including Bahá'u'lláh.

Consequently, the clergy of Shíráz again arose in uproar and hostility, accusing the followers of the Báb of having made political claims, and instigating the Governor of Shíráz to, murder Him. Then the Governor ordered 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd Khán, the High Constable, to surround the house of the Báb at midnight, with a number of men, and break into the place. The Constable discovered nothing indicating conspiracy in the Báb's house; in fact found nobody in it except the Báb and one of His followers named Siyyid Kázim of Zanján. However, he took the Báb to his own house and imprisoned Him there. But at this time, cholera was epidemic in Shíráz, which compelled the Governor and the majority of the chief citizens to flee from the city. Not having discovered anything to fear in the Báb, they released Him upon condition that He should leave Shíráz, lest His presence might stir up the clergy of Fárs to make further trouble.

Consequently, the Báb left the city for Işfahán, accompanied by His above-mentioned disciple. In Işfahán He resided in the house of the Imám-Jum'ih (a leading clergy), according to the order of Manúchih Khán of Georgia, a venerable Christian, who was then the Governor of Işfahán. Having arrived in the house of Imám-Jum'ih, He had remained there but thirty to forty days, when the whole city was in a clamour. Multitudes of the prominent students and traders, as well as the general public, visited Him every day, and most of them were, astonished at His

piety, gravity and excellence. They were led to confess the fullness of His knowledge and His spiritual power, by the prompt way in which He answered the questions importunately put to Him by men of learning. Therefore, the number of His adherents grew in, the city of Işfahán, which is the residence of the prominent clergy and the centre of learning in Persia.

One thing which greatly astonished the people, was that Manúchíhr Khán, the Christian Governor, who was one of the greatest statesmen of Persia and renowned for his discernment and intelligence, openly acknowledged the truth of the Báb's mission. Also Mírzá Siyyid Muḥammad the Imám-Jum'ih, entitled "Sulṭánu'l-'Ulamá" (the Sulṭán of the 'Ulamá), became devoted to Him. Therefore the other divines and doctors of Işfahán, who were the most distinguished in Persia on account of their power and influence, made a great uproar against the Báb. The Governor, with the object of exposing the weakness of the clergy and demonstrating the power and virtue of the Báb, gave orders that all should hold a debate and discussion with the Báb, in the presence of himself and the Imám-Jum'ih. He commanded that the discussion should be faithfully reported by secretaries and the report sent to the Sháh at Tíhrán, in order that the decision might be left in his hands. As two of their erudite sages, Áqá Muḥammad-Mahdí of Calbass,¹ and the eminent Platonist, Mírzá Ḥasan of Núr, had once conferred with the Báb, in the presence of the Governor, without being able to discomfit Him, the Divines refused this discussion and conference, giving as a pretext that it would bring the Islamic Law into contempt. At the same time, they unanimously determined to put Him to death. The Governor, seeing the unanimity of the clergy, and fearing that their influence and authority would cause

¹ Unidentified place.

the Báb's murder, concealed Him in his own quarters and gave currency to a report that He had been sent to Ṭīhrán in compliance with the Sháh's order; thus for a time, allaying the trouble stirred up by the clergy.

Meanwhile, Manúchíhr Khán died, and Gurgín Khán, his nephew, who was the Vice-Governor of Iṣfahán, forwarded a petition to Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí, the Prime Minister, informing him of the death of the Governor, and of the Báb's concealment in the quarters of the government; and asking for instructions regarding the latter. Muḥammad Sháh, who was personally of a mystic tendency and who entertained no real regard for the clergy, had also heard from unbiased people, the report of the Báb's fame, and of His purity and spiritual attraction, and was willing to see Him. But the Prime Minister, who had been a tutor and teacher of the Sháh in his childhood, and for whom the Sháh entertained a devoted respect, fearing lest the interview with the Báb might lessen the Sháh's respect and esteem for himself, issued a strict command to Gurgín Khán to disguise the Báb and send Him in charge of Nuṣayrí horsemen to Ṭīhrán.

Accordingly, Gurgín Khán sent the Báb to Ṭīhrán. As the city of Káshán is situated between Iṣfahán and Ṭīhrán, the Báb was detained three days there, during which many of the clergy and merchants of the city believed in Him.

When He arrived at the last halting-place before Ṭīhrán, the Prime Minister gave a fresh order that He should not be brought to Ṭīhrán, but held in the village of Kulayn, until the matter had been brought before the Sháh's notice. The Báb was detained there about twenty days, during which He forwarded a letter to the Sháh, asking for an interview. The Prime Minister prevented this, pointing out that the Sháh

was upon the eve of departure to Hirát, to wage war with the Afghans and that should the Báb arrive at Tīhrán, the clergy there would stir up a revolt in the same manner as the clergy of Iṣfahán had done. He reasoned that it therefore would be advisable to place Him in the fortress of Máh-Kú, at the borders of Ádharbayján, until the Sháh should return from the conquest of Hirát, and look into the matter at his leisure. As Muḥammad-Sháh was not informed of the real motive of the Prime Minister, he approved this view and wrote a respectful letter with his own hand, to the following effect: "Since we are at the point of setting off for a journey, you will now abide for a while in Máh-Kú. On our return, we will meet you and the matter will be decided."

In this letter, he also requested the Báb to pray in his behalf. The Báb was consequently sent to Ádharbayján, escorted by Muḥammad Big the courier, who was a Nuṣayrī. Some maintain that the reason why the Prime Minister always placed the Báb in the charge of Nuṣayrī mounted guards, was that the latter, not being Muslims, and knowing nothing of the Qur'án, the Traditions, or of the belief in the appearance of the Mahdí and his signs, would not become His converts. Notwithstanding all these precautions, before they had reached the town of Qazvín, which is about 85 kilometres from Tīhrán, Muḥammad Big had become one of the Báb's followers. At the same time, He (the Báb) made many converts in the cities of Qazvín, Abhar and Zanján, through which He passed on His way to Ádharbayján. Thus the fame of His appearance was spread in all the provinces of Persia, and every meeting was fired with argument and discussion upon this topic. When the Báb reached Ádharbayján, He stayed for forty days in the city of Tabríz, but not one of the clergy there con-

ferred with Him. He was then sent to Mách-Kú and put in the charge of 'Alí Khán, who was the Governor of those districts. 'Alí Khán showed Him respect on account of His being a descendant of the Prophet and because of the piety, devotion and gravity which were manifest in Him; but in compliance with the order of the Government, he rarely permitted people to converse with Him. Meanwhile the Báb's religion spread day by day through all parts of Persia, and in every city the numbers of His converts were augmented. Therefore, the clergy of Ádharbayján, like those of other cities, made a disturbance, and seriously requested the local Government to punish and restrain the Báb and His followers, and remove Him from Mách-Kú to a more remote place. The Government in compliance, ordered Him to be removed from Mách-Kú to Chihríq, which is one of the distant fortresses of Ádharbayján, where He was in charge of Yaḥyá Khán the Kurd, who exercised the greatest care in guarding Him.

The Crown Prince of Persia, who was afterwards entitled Nāṣiri'd-Dín Sháh, was, at that time, the Governor of Ádharbayján. In order to enquire into the matter and silence the clergy, he summoned the Báb back to Tabríz. When He reached Tabríz for the second time, the Crown Prince called some of the prominent clergy to meet the Báb in his presence. A compulsory and unjust discussion and dispute took place. This discussion is recorded by the historians of each side, in a different way; but from the account given by the Báb's opponents, although it is a very inaccurate record, it may be easily discovered that the purpose of the prominent clergy and learned religious doctors of Persia has not been to make a thorough inquiry, but only to dispute in a contemptuous manner, and to deride and threaten Him.

After much clamour and outcry, it was decided to beat and chastise Him. But the farrashes of the Government refused to carry out this sentence. Therefore Mírzá 'Alí-Aşghar the Shaykhu'l-Islám of Tabríz, who was one of the prominent Siyyids and doctors, determined to execute this sentence; so he brought Him into his own house, and applied the rods with his own hands. After this, they sent Him for the second time to the fortress of Chihríq; subjected Him to a rigorous incarceration and strictly prohibited people from converse with Him.

In those days, the appearance of the Báb was the chief topic discussed throughout Persia and 'Iráq. Consequently, commotion and clamour were continual, and fierce discussions would take place between the Muslims and the Báb's followers. For the Muslim clergy do not deal gently with one whom they consider to be alien to their own religion, no matter who he may be; nor do they converse with him in the spirit of courtesy, respect and humanity. Even in the course of controversy, their words very often are full of contempt and derision, and are reinforced by curses and execrations.

Finally, the Persian clergy unanimously decided to eradicate and suppress the Báb and His people. Some of the governors in Persia, being tyrants, ready to plunder and pillage the inhabitants, availed themselves of this decision, and in some parts of Persia, they began immediately to murder and rob the Bábís. They even did not refrain from murdering children and women. The local governors and even some of the ministers of the State assisted the enemies of the Bábís with regular soldiers, and the political heads joined with the civil chiefs in destroying and suppressing these people. When the late Muḥammad Sháh died in CE 1848, the Crown Prince Náşirí

'd-Dín Sháh ascended the Throne, 10 September of the same year. Mírzá Taqí Khán of Faráhán, entitled Atábak-i-A'zam (the greatest tutor), who was a blood-thirsty and selfish man, attained the position of Prime Minister; a function and title which embodied the greatest dignity of the Government.

Meanwhile, war broke out in three different districts of Persia, between the Muslims and Bábís. As the clergy had given the sentence to murder and eradicate the Bábís, and as some of the local governors were seeking to confiscate their lives and property, the Bábís decided to defend themselves, and waged a war of defence against their oppressors in Nayríz (a district in Fárs), Zanján (north west of Tīhrán), and in the Fortress Shaykh Ṭabarsí in the county of Mázindarán. Although the Bábí defenders were very few in number, yet the fighting¹ continued a long time, and the extraordinary valour of the Bábís caused their name to be a subject of great awe to the Muslims. Therefore, Mírzá Taqí Khán, owing to his lack of administrative capacity, concluded that this revolt would be stopped by murdering the Báb; so without seeking permission from Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh or taking counsel with ministers, he issued the order for His death, to Ḥamzih Mírzá, entitled Ḥishmatu'd-Dawlih, the Sháh's uncle, who was at that time the ruler of Ádharbayján. The latter, however, refused to execute the order, and excused himself by speaking of the great virtue and real devotion which he had witnessed in the Báb. He openly stated in a council meeting, that he would prefer to resign his post rather than take part in the Báb's murder. He also

¹ In those days, the Bábís fought in defending their lives, according to the Laws of Muḥammad, in which extremity, He has allowed religious war. At that time, Bahá'u'lláh had not declared Himself, and the *Book of Aqdas*, in which He has strictly prohibited warfare, conflict, strife, etc., was not revealed.

ironically said that he expected that the Persian Government would commission him to make war on one of the great empires, but he never expected to be commanded to execute one of the descendants of the Prophet, who had not departed from any of the legal obligatory ordinances of the religion.

After this refusal on the part of the Governor, the Prime Minister issued a second order to his own brother, Mírzá Ḥasan Khán, Commander-in-Chief of the army of Ádharbayján, directing him to execute the Báb. The Báb was again conducted to Tabríz, and on the 28th Sha'bán AH 1266 (July, CE 1850), they suspended Him with one of His youthful followers, Áqá Muḥammad-'Alí, who belonged to one of the noble families of Tabríz, against the wall of the old Barrack Square, which is now occupied by traders and artisans. At first, Sám Khán the Armenian and an Armenian regiment were in charge of this service. When they fired their volleys, the bullets severed the ropes, without injury to the Báb or to the youth. After the smoke cleared away, they saw the young man standing, and the Báb [was] talking with His amanuensis, Áqá Siyyid Ḥusayn, in a cell, close to the same wall. They again suspended the Báb and His companion from the same wall, and gave orders to fire. Sám Khán the Armenian, this time refused to fire, from fright. Another regiment of Ádharbayján undertook the execution, and made the Báb and Áqá Muḥammad 'Alí a target for their bullets. This time their bodies were riddled, and both of them died instantly. Then they removed their bodies from the square to the edge of the moat outside the city, and engaged a party of sentinels to watch them.

It is a custom of the oriental nations, especially in Persia, that when a person is executed by order of the Government, his body is exposed for a certain time

in sight of the public, so that the people may be intimidated by the sight, and may avoid wrong-doing.

On the second night, the Bábís carried away the Báb's body, through the help of the Kalántar (Mayor) of Tabríz. They bore it to a silk-tissue factory belonging to one of the people of Ádharbayján, where they packed it in a case like a bale of goods, and forwarded it to His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh in Ṭihrán.

Undoubtedly Mírzá Taqí Khán hoped that the disturbance would be put down, and that this community would be utterly extinguished through the execution of the Báb, whom he considered the source of the power of this religion. He had also quenched the fire of battle in a treacherous and disgraceful way. For instance, in Mázindarán, although the number of the Bábís did not exceed three or four hundred, this small number defended themselves over eleven months against twenty-five thousand trained soldiers who were furnished with artillery and perfect weapons. They even made sorties against their enemies, many times overturning their camps and defeating them. Finally, when the Persian Commander was unable to subdue the Bábís, he made a treaty with them, stipulating that if they would surrender and cease fighting, he would guarantee their protection and send each one of them to his respective city. For this little Bábí army had collected from all parts of the country; brought together by faith in the Báb. Accordingly, the Commander and the Governor took an oath to this effect, confirming it by vows plighted upon the Qur'án. When the starving Bábís yielded (none of them having eaten any food for several days), they were brought into a place where food was prepared. Suddenly, by order of the Governor and General, notwithstanding their oath, the army surrounded and slew all of them with bullets and swords. The affairs

of Zanján and Nayríz terminated in a similar manner, and so the flames of war were extinguished. But the Bábí cause did not die away, nor was the fire ignited by the penetration of the Báb's Word, quenched; and each day the number of the Báb's adherents increased. Mírzá Taqí Khán was unable to check the movement, and shortly afterward his tyrannical life came to an end. For the statesmen ceased to support him because he sought to entirely monopolize and dictate the affairs of the Government. The young King having become cognizant of his secret aims, and offended at the failure of his administrative policy, finally dismissed him from his state positions, and exiled him to the village of Fín, situated within 5 kilometres distance from the city of Káshán. About the third or fourth year of the Sháh's accession, he was put to death in the bath at Fín, by the royal order.

The Báb wrote many books after He had declared His mission, including a commentary upon the Súra of Joseph in the Qur'án. This book He entitled *Aḥsanu'l-Qiṣaṣ* (the best of the stories). At the request of the famous learned Áqá Siyyid Yaḥyá of Dáráb, He also wrote, with the most amazing rapidity, a commentary upon the Súrih of the Qur'án, called *Kawthar*. Likewise, without meditation, He wrote, in Iṣfahán, a commentary upon the Súra of wa'l-Aṣr, at the request of the Sulṭánu'l-'Ulamá; and in answer to the wish of Manúchíhr Khán, the Governor of Iṣfahán. He produced a book proving "The Especial Mission". In addition to these, He wrote a great many treatises, discourses, prayers, and answers to scientific problems, both in Arabic and Persian, which He named *The Five Styles* and *Divine Revelation*. He silenced and discomfited the Persian Divines by the swift manner in which He wrote

and spoke these words. They flowed from Him without any reflection, and He challenged His antagonists either to produce their like or to acknowledge their truth. The greatest book of the Báb is the Persian *Bayán*, written by Him in the mountain of Máh-Kú. In it, He recorded His new laws and ordinances. This book treats of the qualifications of a Promised One who should appear, of whom the Báb considered himself the Door, and whose name He has given as “He-whom-God-shall-manifest”, stating that He himself had arisen to announce His Appearance. Following the custom of the Prophets and Divine Messengers, the Báb alluded to the time of His Manifestation by allegories and symbols. In arranging the books revealed from His blessed pen, the Báb has stated in a special chapter concerning the subject: “Blessed is he who will gaze upon the arrangement of Bahá’u’lláh for, verily, He shall inevitably appear.”

In the *Bayán*, He has changed all the laws and rites, and instituted special ordinances for devotional acts, ceremonies and usages. He changed the lunar system formerly held by the Persians, into the solar reckoning of the year, which He divided into nineteen months of nineteen days, and has named each one of the days of the year after the names and attributes of God. He also gave new names to the days of the week. In writing the name of any of His prominent adherents, in His Epistles, He would make it conform with the numerical value of one of the names of God and would write it at the head of the letter. This he did without meditation and in an astonishing manner. For instance, the numerical equivalent of the name Rabb (Lord) is 202, which corresponds with ‘Alí-Muḥammad; the name Dayyán [دیان] (65) with Asad (اسد), the name of Mírzá Asadu’lláh of *Khuy*;

the name Wahíd,¹ with Yaḥyá (يحيى, Áqá Siyyid Yaḥyá of Dáráb), etc. Therefore He called each one of them Ismu'lláh (the Name of God), and even until the present day, this word has remained a title of the companions of the Báb.

¹ Wahíd (وحد , Persian vahíd) (“Peerless”) has a numerical value of 28, while wáḥid (Persian váḥid) (“Unity”), with a numerical value of 19 ($1+9 = 10 = 1+0 = 1$), symbolizes the unity of God. Yaḥyá is 29, unless the alif maqṣúra is ignored—M.W.T.

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh

The next Light is Bahá'u'lláh son of Mírzá Abbás, renowned as Mírzá Buzurg of Núr.

The Nuris¹ are one of the well-known families of Mázindarán. During the reigns of Qájár the present Persian Dynasty, the members of this family have usually occupied the highest positions in the state, such as Prime Minister, Minister, Secretary, and other civil and military dignities. Even in the present day, most of them are in the Government. Some have retired from their positions, but their names are enrolled upon the financial and military staff.

Bahá'u'lláh was born in Tìhrán, on the 2nd day of the month Muḥarram AH 1233 (November CE 1817). When He reached the age of eight and nine years, the marks of great distinction and sagacity were already manifest in Him. He was not instructed nor taught by anybody. Apparently, He had acquired the elements of Persian reading and writing from His father and other near kinsman. In his youth, His father, who was one of the ministers of the state, died, and the charge of His brothers and sisters, who were all younger than Himself, fell upon Him. He did not care to enter any of the Government services, but provided sustenance for the whole family through the management of His inherited lands and properties. When the Báb appeared in Shíráz, Bahá'u'lláh who was about twenty-seven years of age, publicly accepted His claim, and endeavoured to the utmost to promote the Word of the Báb both in Tìhrán and Mázindarán, especially among the principal clergy. He spent some time at Núr, the home of the Núrí family, furthering

¹ 'A'ilát Núrí, Nuri family.

the advance of the Religion, and while there, had remarkable discussions with the religious doctors, so that the renown of His knowledge and the power of His reasoning raised an excitement among the leading men of those districts. By this, many were led to embrace the Religion, while others were stirred to jealousy and insolence.

After He had resided and travelled in the different districts of Mázindarán, He returned to Tīhrán, where He continued to spread the principles of the Religion and spiritual teachings, supporting and encouraging the Bábís, until the attempt against the life of Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh happened. The substance of this event is as follows: A young man of Tabríz, Muḥammad Ṣádiq by name, who was a servant of one of the prominent Bábís, and devotedly attached to his master, became depressed and bereft of reason on account of the martyrdom of the latter. Having made up his mind to blood-revenge, he divulged this secret to one of his confidential friends whom he knew to be one of the staunch believers in the Báb. These two went to Tīhrán, concealing their intention from all their friends and even from the Bábís. As the Sháh was out of the city, sojourning among his country resorts at Shimírán, they directed their steps toward the village of Níyávarán. On Sunday, 15 August 1852 (AH 1268), they were in the vicinity of the village, near the Royal Palace, with the intention of carrying out their plot. When the Sháh went out to ride, Muḥammad Ṣádiq advanced, and fired a pistol at him. The shot missed its mark, as the horse bolted, and the Sháh being much agitated, fell off his horse and fainted. The attendants rushed forth, picked up the Sháh, and slew Muḥammad Ṣádiq on the spot. As he was killed instantly, he could not be questioned as to what led him to commit this abomin-

able act, and as to who had been his associate. But as he had been a servant of one of the prominent Bábís, that community was unjustly accused of the deed, and notwithstanding they knew nothing whatever of this plot, they were arrested and fell victims to the wrath of the revengeful Sháh. Eighty of them were seized in Ṭihrán, and given up separately to a different class of people to be executed. The administrators deemed it advisable to have each one of these victims murdered by one section of the citizens, and thus sow hatred and enmity between the different classes of Shi'ites and the Bábís. By this means, they sought to prevent the spread of the Báb's religion. Consequently they distributed the helpless Bábís to various parties of people; one to the bookkeepers, one to the soldiers, one to the learned doctors, one to the merchants, carpenters, blacksmiths, drapers; even the shoemakers, cobblers, rice merchants, et al. Each one of these classes slew its victim as they chose. Some were cut length-wise alive; some blown from mortars, and some chopped into pieces. The Qájár youths of Astrabad [Ástarádád],¹ in order to try the strength of their arms, cut their unfortunate captives into halves with their swords. Among them, one who died in an incredibly horrible manner was Sulaymán Khán the son of Yaḥyá Khán of Tabríz, who was a most devoted follower of the Báb. When the order was issued for his execution, they first stripped him, and made holes in his body with knives. In these holes they placed lighted wax-candles, put a halter through his nose and paraded him around the markets of Ṭihrán. When a candle burned down to his flesh and was consumed, they would put another one in its place. Bystanders were watching the scene and following in great crowds; while he was silent and patient, not evincing the least trace of agitation;

¹ Ástarádád—"City of Mules", now called Gúgán (Gugan) or Ástará (Astara). It is on the north-western Caspian Sea border of Írán.—M.W.T.

nor did he groan or plead for mercy, which is the natural tendency of man under such circumstances. Nay, he expressed great joy and cheerfulness, with a shining face, while singing and chanting verses of yearning, so that the hard hearts of the bystanders were affected with emotion, and all the inhabitants of Tīhrán, both old and young, were astonished.

Finally, after this torture, they cut him in half lengthways, and hung the two parts upon either side of the old city gate of 'Abdu'l-'Azīm. It is said that when the matter waxed so frightful, the Imám-Jum'ih (chief leader of prayer) of Tīhrán, conferred with the Sháh and blamed him for these outrages. Some state that one of the foreign Ambassadors warned the Sháh that should another Bábí victim show forth such steadfastness at the time of his execution, half of the people would embrace the Bábí Faith, after which, checking the matter would be extremely difficult. The Sháh therefore prohibited the taking of any action against the Bábís without investigation; but since that time, the justice awarded to these devoted people has been similar to that given by the Council of the Inquisition to the heretics in Rome. In fact, a man's acknowledgement of Babism,¹ before the Government, was considered as confessing the greatest crime, which should be punished with death, no matter how high a character or what qualifications of virtue and sanctity he possessed. Very often the finding of a Bábí book in a person's possession, his conversing or dealing with the Bábís, or pleading for one accused of Babism, would be considered as a crime by the clergy. Many a time, if they found in the pocket of an accused one a torn piece of paper bearing the words "Alláh-u-Abhá" (God is glorious), or the name Bahá or Báb, they needed no further witness to prove "his infidelity".

¹ Bábígarí.

One of the men arrested and imprisoned was the blessed person of Bahá'u'lláh. He was in the village Afchih one of the surrounding districts of Tíhrán. When the report of the attempt upon the Sháh's life came to Him, He, knowing that the prominent Bábís had no connection with the matter, rode forth with perfect composure to Niyávarán. Immediately after His arrival, He was arrested, imprisoned, and chained for about four months in the gaol of Tíhrán. After a strict examination and inquiry, it was finally proven that He had no connection whatever with the criminals, and that He knew nothing of the matter. The Sháh therefore ordered that He should depart to 'Iráq, and abide in the holy sanctuaries of the Shi'ite Imams¹ (Karbilá, Najaf and Baghdád), which are places of exile for the men of distinction of Persia. Accordingly, in the year AH 1269 (CE 1552), He departed to 'Iráq, escorted by some of the delegates of the Persian Government, and took up his residence at Baghdád.

The majority of the Bábís and some others believe, that when it was proven that Bahá'u'lláh did not know Muḥammad Şádiq, the Russian Ambassador interceded for Him and effected His release. They have even recorded that when Bahá'u'lláh set off for Baghdád, accompanied by the horsemen of the Government; the Russian Ambassador also sent one of his attendants, to guard Him, lest the Persian delegates might seek to take His life on the way. This does not seem to be a confirmed fact, for the Russian Ambassador had only testified to the purity of Bahá'u'lláh's character, and had never made intercession or interference in His behalf. But unquestionably, the testimony of the Russian Ambassador in praise of Bahá'u'lláh was used by Mírzá Áqá Khán, the Prime Minister, as a means to silence

¹ Imám, pl. A'imma.

the Sháh, and persuade him to issue the order for the release of Bahá'u'lláh. The real cause of His deliverance was that it was conclusively proven to the Sháh, that Bahá'u'lláh had no share in the plot against him.

In these days, the Bábís were in a very confused and depressed condition. On one hand, the persecutions inflicted by the clergy and statesmen, and, on the other hand, the calumnies invented by people against them, had made them so suspected and hated by the people, that most persons refused to have any communication with them; nay rather, their suppression was considered a religious duty. The deeds and actions of most of the Bábís were considered entirely contrary to the usual customs of the public; while the bad management of some of their ignorant chiefs caused many evil deeds to be attributed to them. If a censurable action was committed by one of the Bábís, it would be equally attributed to all of them, for they had no power to defend themselves against the calumny, owing to the violent persecutions of their enemies. Thus the good were not distinguished from the bad. Since the Báb had, in every book, announced the approach of the Great Manifestation, a number of the Bábís, among whom were Siyyid 'Alá in 'Iráq, Hájí Mírzá Músá (the chief custodian of the Holy Shrine) in Qum, Hájí Mullá Hášhim of Naráq in Káshán, and Mírzá Asadu'lláh, entitled Dayyán, in Ádharbayján, insolently put forward claims, and each gained the allegiance of a certain number of Bábís, thus subdividing the community into different sects. This division and difference of beliefs also gave rise to unseemly acts, and increased the accusations against the Bábís, causing people to hate them. The most prominent among these claimants, was Mírzá Yahyá, whom the Báb, in His Tablets,

addressed by the title “Ismu'lláhu'l-Azal” (the name of God, Azal¹). Although he claimed to be the representative of the Báb, yet in his writings, termed “epistles”, which were spread among his followers, he put forward the most exalted; claims of divinity, and considered his own words as Heavenly Revelation. Most of the Bábís believed in him and recognized him as their aim. He frequently travelled in disguise and concealment; sometimes in the garb of dervishes, sometimes in the costume of traders or Arabs. Some believe that the appointment of Mírzá Yahyá as a successor, had been decided between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh; because, in the beginning of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh's reign, the object of Mírzá Taqí Khán was to arrest the original source of this movement, and stop the water at the fountain-head. Therefore, after consulting together, they made Azal appear as the Báb's successor, through Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Karím of Qazvín, who was employed to manage and forward the Epistles of the Báb. In this manner they preserved the Centre of the Cause, Bahá'u'lláh, from the interference of Mírzá Taqí Khán.

However, according to the author's belief, it was the appearance of different claimants from various places which kept Him from being recognized as the Centre of this Community, and protected Him from the interference of the Prime Minister; and that thus the Source of this Movement was concealed.

To be brief, when Bahá'u'lláh arrived at Baghdád, the centre of the 'Irâq province, He found the Bábís in a confused condition. They were a small multitude, like sheep without a shepherd, dispirited, divergent in thoughts and ideas. They had no leader to bring them into unity of purpose, no record of good deeds by which they might attract the hearts of people, no security or assured safety that would enable

¹ Azal (“Eternity”).—M.W.T.

them to employ themselves in earning their living, no organization or numbers to silence their enemies, and no money or riches to enable them to travel. There was no brilliant leader among them, to light the way with a lamp of guidance, through their gloomy conditions. No rightly directed sympathizer had appeared to bring back to the path of peace those wanderers who were far from righteousness and salvation.

To sum up; they found in Bahá'u'lláh's face the Light of Guidance, and read the verses of Deliverance from the book of His character; so they severed themselves from all and joined Him. He determined to elevate their character, reform their deeds, and transform their weakness into strength and uprightness, through His beautiful speech and righteous example. In a short time, because of His admirable training, their weakness changed into power, their disharmony into unison, their evil habits into good deeds and their numbers also largely increased. At the same time, their evil repute changed into good report, while the hatred and unsociability of outsiders changed into friendship and affection toward them. The learned men of Baghdád opened their mouths in praising Bahá'u'lláh and the leaders of that land were persuaded to converse with the Bábís. However, these circumstances produced hostility among some of the Bábí chiefs, who put forward claims of leadership, until their jealousy far exceeded the enmity of the outsiders.

In order to quench this interior fire of dissension, Bahá'u'lláh decided to go into exile. Without having divulged His purpose to friends or relations, He departed toward Kurdistán. He remained for a short while in Sulaymáníyyih, but for the greater part of the time lived in the mountain of Sar-Galú, in that district. This exile and seclusion lasted nearly two

years. Finally, after great search, some of His principal companions ascertained the place of His retirement. Having reasoned that a continuance of His separation from them would result in dispersion and disintegration of their number and reduce their power to weakness, they hastened to Him and succeeded in gaining His consent to return with them. On His arrival at Baghdád, the hearts that were restless in His absence became tranquillized, and the power and penetration of His Word became manifest. From all parts of Persia and Arabia, people sought His Presence, and were benefited by the copious shower of His Utterances. Then, returning to their countries, they brought other souls to acknowledge Him, and greatly exerted themselves to promote His Cause.

In a short time, the number of His followers was greatly multiplied, and all hearts were filled with respect for them, until their fame became widely spoken by other nations, and the record of their lives and circumstances was considered important by writers and historians.

Now the jealousy and hostility of the clergy of 'Irâq began to be aroused. The cities of Karbilá, Najaf, Kázimíyyah, and Sámarrá, the most famous in 'Irâq, are the important centres of the Shi'ite sect. Here the tombs of most of the twelve Imams, who are the leaders and examples of the Shi'ites, are located. Each year, vast numbers wend in pilgrimages to these sanctuaries, from Persia, India, Yemen and other countries. Moreover, these cities are the headquarters of learning, centres whence the Persian divines secure their certificates of religious law. Therefore the prominent Shi'ite doctors reside at Karbilá and Najaf; men celebrated for their influence and prominence in public esteem among the Shi'ites

in general, and respected by them in all parts of the world.

When the doctors of 'Iráq realized, the effectiveness of the word of the Bábís, and especially the influence of Bahá'u'lláh they assembled under the leadership of Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn the Mujtahid, and determined to suppress them. But the most distinguished and respected divine, Shaykh Murtaḍáy-i-Anṣarí refused to ally himself with their plan and withdrew from their party.* Finally, they appointed one of the doctors, and sent him as an envoy to Bahá'u'lláh. When this envoy returned from Baghdád, a manifest emotion was visible in him, for his heart was filled with respect and reverence toward Bahá'u'lláh and His Cause.

Briefly, he reported to the doctors that the truth concerning Bahá'u'lláh and His community was exactly contrary to what they had imagined or believed; and that He was a veritable sea, boundless and overflowing with knowledge. He also stated that Bahá'u'lláh was ready to confer at any time with the divines and the public, in order to elucidate and demonstrate the truth of His teaching, furnishing them decisive proofs and solid arguments. If the erudite doctors were not satisfied with mere scientific controversy, seeking heavenly proofs and a Divine Sign, He was ready to furnish, on this appointed occasion, whatever the doctors should unanimously desire; and thus to end the matter.

The doctors fled from His challenge, and shunned this proof, for their purpose was not to discover the reality of the fact and distinguish truth from falsehood, but to threaten and abase the Bábís, and thus prevent the propagation of their religion. Through the report of this deputation, however, their aim was

* A fuller account of this meeting is given later in the book.

frustrated, and the majority among them were disappointed. Therefore, the reverend doctors occupied themselves in hatching a new plot and sought the help of administrative officials. So they opened communication and correspondence with the Ambassador residing at Constantinople and with the statesmen at Tīhrán, until finally, at the request of the Persian Government, an order was issued from the Turkish Government, summoning Bahá'u'lláh to Constantinople, and the Governor of Baghdád forwarded the order to Bahá'u'lláh

In compliance with this order, Bahá'u'lláh left Baghdád on the evening of a day in April, CE 1862 (2nd of the month Dhi'l-Qa'dih, AH 1279), and remained for twelve days at the garden of Najíb Páshá,¹ the former Governor of 'Iráq. This period of "twelve days" is regarded by the Bahá'ís as the "Most Great Feast", and considered as the days of the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh. It is said that during these days, Bahá'u'lláh declared His Mission before His notable followers, strictly commanding and exhorting them to be patient, self-restrained, steadfast, forbearing, striving to beautify their characters and reform their morals. He assured them that if they continued to practice these virtues, they would be assisted by the Divine Confirmation. After the lapse of the twelve days, He departed for Constantinople via Mosul, accompanied by some of His servants and followers. Azal, who had travelled in disguise with a band of Bedouin Arabs, joined Him at Mosul. From here, they went on to Constantinople via Sámún, and resided at the quarters appointed for them by the Turkish officials. After a few days they were moved to another abode, where they stayed four months. During His residence there, Bahá'u'lláh did not pay a visit to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

¹ Najíbíyyih, now known by Bahá'ís as the Garden of Riḍván ("Paradise").—M.W.T.

or the Prime Minister, and asked no assistance or protection from the civil and administrative chiefs. The Persian Ambassador utilized this to poison the minds of the Turkish statesmen against Him, and make false accusations. Shortly afterward, an order was issued by the Turkish Government, that Bahá'u'lláh and His followers should reside at Adrianople, one of the Turkish cities most remote from Persia. They remained in Adrianople about five years.

While in Adrianople, His mission obtained great celebrity and His Message was widely spread. The majority of the Bábís acknowledged Him and became known as Bahá'ís. Consequently, the fire of jealousy against Bahá'u'lláh flamed in the hearts of the Shi'ites and the remaining Bábís. The leading followers of Azal agreed with the chief Shi'ites to antagonize the Bahá'ís and prejudiced the high officials of Turkey against this community by all kinds of plots and intrigues. Finally, one day, the soldiers, acting under orders of the Porte, besieged the house of Bahá'u'lláh preventing everybody from entrance or exit. It was said that the Bahá'í household was without water for drinking and other requirements three days. Some supposed that an order had been issued from the Porte to destroy all of them. As the inhabitants of Adrianople, both Christians and Muslims, had witnessed for five years the excellence, greatness and compassion of Bahá'u'lláh crowds of them gathered around the house, weeping loudly. The Christians, in whom the fire of sympathy had been especially enkindled, wept more bitterly than the rest. One of the confirmed facts is that during this period, Bahá'u'lláh clearly foretold to Áqá 'Umar, one of those who were commanded to banish Him, the future events of the Ottoman Government, such as the

deposition of the late Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz, and the subsequent revolt. He has clearly named in numerous Tablets, the particulars of these events, such as the *Tablet of K. Z.*, addressed to Shaykh Kázim-i-Samandar of Qazvín.*

Then, in accordance with the command of Sulṭán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz, an order was issued by the Ottoman Prime Minister, banishing Bahá'u'lláh, His Household and some of His followers and servants, to the city of 'Akká in Syria; a city well-known in those days, for its evil climate, and a place of exile for the suspects of the Government.

Accordingly they left Adrianople on the 20th of Rabí'u'th-Thání AH 1285 (August CE 1868), and arrived at 'Akká on the twelfth Jamádiyu'l-Avval (September) of the same year. The Bahá'ís believe that this banishment fulfilled the Divine prophecies in connection with the Holy Land. The glad-tidings given by the Jewish prophets concerning the Manifestation of the Glorious Lord was thereby realized, and the time had come for the promised emancipation of the children of Abraham from their long degradation and violent shame.

When Bahá'u'lláh and His followers arrived at 'Akká, they first resided for about two years, at the military barracks, which is a fortress built of rocks. They afterward dwelt in houses situated within the city. The fortified city of 'Akká is so ancient, that the "Crusades", which lasted two hundred years, are but modern events in connection with its history. The stones scattered round about it are as the dust of woeful calamities, which the hand of time has strewed over the heads of unfortunate victims; its

* These Tablets were written in Adrianople in 1863, about eight years before the prophecies made in them were fulfilled.

turbid water like the blood of humanity poured by Fate into the cup of the affliction of its inhabitants.

In the year AH 1312 (CE 1894), when the author resided in that district, he was accustomed to walk for recreation in the plains of 'Akká, which, in the springtime, are filled with flowers and myrtles. Looking upon them, the past rose up in vivid retrospect. In the red anemones, he saw the rosy-checked legions who had carpeted the earth with their devoted bodies and drenched the soil with their life blood. In the yellow tulips, were faces of youthful warriors grown sallow and sickly in hardships and long marches over hot, burning sands; while the pure, beautiful white flowers were the lilies and jasmines of beloved and devoted souls who had brightened the earth for a short time by their evanescent beauty and purity. Meditating in this way, he noticed a cave close by the Tall-i-Fakhkhár (the potter's hill),¹ filled with mouldering bones of the slain which had been thrust into such holes and left there as a warning to posterity. As he looked at this grim object-lesson of the past, he said, in pensive retrospection: "O Abu'l-Faḍl! These relics, which have remained as a memorial of bygone peoples, are the best proof of the hardness of the hearts and the evil thoughts of former generations. Even those who do not believe in Divine Revelation and Laws, must testify to the superiority of Bahá'u'lláh, and to the advantage of following His Religion; inasmuch as He has not only forbidden warfare, but even prohibited His followers from conflict, dispute and assault. He has entirely abolished bloodshed from religion. He has called the world one native-land, and all the people thereof, leaves of one tree, so that the fanaticism of the ignorant

¹ Also known as Napoleon's Hill.—M.W.T.

may be blotted from memories, and the hostility resulting from difference of races may be removed from minds. Henceforth the people may not use the Divine Religions which the Prophets have instituted for unity and agreement, as a means for destruction and discord, and may not take the holy ordinances enacted for harmony and love, as pretexts for fighting and bloodshed.”

Absorbed in this reflection, he suddenly realized that the dust of jealousy has sown corrupt seeds of discord even in this Divine Garden; and has planted the tares of dissension and disunion in the field of the Bahá'í union and harmony. Therefore he became ashamed, disheartened and sorrowful; but soon the verdure of hope grew up from the field of desire; for he saw that the Most Great Spirit of God (Christ) has chanted this glorious Melody of the texts of the Gospels; that at the harvest of the world, the Divine reaper will gather the tares and will burn them in the inextinguishable fire of wrath, while the good grain he will gather into barns. In other words, the discords created by the “violators” (those who violated the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, by disobeying the Centre of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahá) will be removed through the power of the Firm Covenant of God, and the darkness of disunion will be dispelled by the rise of the lights of the Day-Spring of the Testament.

Thus the matter hath been decreed and decided! Although the calamities and afflictions suffered by the Blessed Perfection¹ during His stay in 'Akká, were beyond the endurance of man, yet, through the providence of God and His assistance, these torrents of disaster did not prevent Him from reforming the character of His followers, and the assault of hardships and grievances did not stop the spread of His

¹ Bahá'u'lláh.

Teachings. For the tribulations of Bahá'u'lláh were not confined to the contradictions of the tyrannical clergy only, or to the calumnies of fanatical Divines; nor were His sufferings caused only by the injustice of statesmen and the covetousness of rulers, who accounted oppression of strangers and showing hostility towards those outside their faith, as a religious duty. It was a greater task to beautify the character of His own people, than to defend Himself against exterior enemies. Guarding His followers from committing unseemly actions was more difficult than enduring the persecutions of the outsiders. For these people who had just embraced the Bahá'í religion were formerly Bábís, and during the time of "Fitrat"¹ they had frequently departed from the limit of moderation, owing to the evil training of different leaders. Thus they had grown to consider many censurable actions as allowable and justifiable, such as disposing of men's property and pillaging the defeated. This latitude and laxity of principle likewise extended to the conflict and bloodshed permitted by their former religion, Islám. The Bábís generally were ignorant of the ordinances of the Báb, and supposed them to be similar to the doctrines of the Shi'ites, which they considered the source of the Bábí religion. This ignorance was due to the fact that the Bábís were strictly prohibited by the Persian rulers from holding intercourse with or visiting the Báb, while the latter was in prison. Thus they had been deprived of the opportunity of seeing Him and receiving instruction in His laws and ordinances. Warfare and pillage were absolutely violations of the fundamental basis of the Religion of Bahá'u'lláh, which was established for the express purpose of

¹ Fitra(t) [Arabic] has several meanings: original Reality, creating and gap. Here it is used as the interval between two prophets, or the time between the martyrdom of the Báb and the rise of Bahá'u'lláh.

spreading universal brotherhood and humanity. It was a supernatural deed to reform the character and morals of a community, all the members of which were scattered in different cities and countries. For when the Báb appeared, the Muslims in general, particularly the Shi'ites of the "Church of the Twelve", were looking with all earnestness of soul for the appearance of the promised Mahdí, whom they supposed would be the promoter of their laws. Although the prominent and learned among the Shi'ite clergy of Persia joined the circle of the Báb's followers, yet His cause did not penetrate any other religion. Nor was it embraced by the people of any other country, except 'Iráq, which can scarcely be considered foreign, on account of the tomb of the Shi'ite Imams situated there, and of the considerable number of Shi'ites residing in it!

When Bahá'u'lláh appeared, however, it was but a short time before His followers became noted for their good deeds and just characters. As a result of His training, they soon became successful in promoting His Word, rendered spiritual assistance to His cause, and were grounded in admirable religious beliefs. Day by day, His followers increased in number and the power of His Word became more and more manifest, so that in a short space of time it was introduced into other countries and penetrated other religions besides Islám. Even the Jews, Zoroastrians, Nusseyrites¹ and other remote peoples who were considered as being absolutely extinct and lifeless, attained, by thousands, the honour of accepting His Cause. For this they fell victims to the tyranny and persecutions of the Muslims and their own former co-religionists; quaffing the cup of martyrdom with joy, steadfastness, triumph and forbearance. This was a matter of astonishment to sagacious men, for

¹ Nuşayrî, pl. Nuşayríya.

these people were many in number and belonged to the rich classes; numbers of them were merchants and traders, and thus could not be supposed to have embraced Baha'ism¹ to gain riches or fame. For the followers of Bahá'u'lláh did not possess any wealth, affluence or material power which might induce people to join them. Moreover, after embracing this religion, they showed such steadfastness, that no fear of losing their lives and property could shake their faith. Therefore, the Bahá'ís recognize this firmness, forbearance and endurance of calamities to be a proof of the truth of this religion, and as the most manifest evidence and witness of the power of the Word of Bahá'u'lláh.

After His arrival at 'Akká, Bahá'u'lláh avoided holding intercourse with the public, except persons who were especially desirous of visiting Him. This gave Him time for writing answers to myriad questionings of people and prevented the enemy from inventing calumnies and accusations against Him. He charged His eldest son, named after His grandfather Mírzá 'Abbás, and who is also entitled the "Greatest Branch of God", to hold intercourse with the people. For nine years after He moved from the fortress, He did not go out of the house where He resided; nor during this time did He go for recreation to the gardens outside the walls of 'Akká. Later on, He sometimes went to a garden belonging to Him, situated outside the city. Finally He left 'Akká and lived in a building situated near the village Bahjí, and belonging to one of the wealthy men of that city. A few years before His departure, He visited Haifa, Mt. Carmel and also a convent built by the monks of the Carmelite order, just above

¹ Arabic Bahá'íya.

Elijah's cave. In this convent, He rested for more than an hour, and while there one of His Holy Tablets was revealed from His blessed pen. From that time on, He stayed each year for a period at Haifa, where the Bahá'ís of different sects, religions and lands, visited Him. There they partook of the table of His generosity and became filled with the pure water of the sea of His knowledge.

Finally, Bahá'u'lláh departed to the Everlasting World and ascended to the Supreme Horizon, on the 2nd day of the Arabic month, Dhi'l-Qa'dih AH 1309 (28 May 1892). On the day of his Departure, the inhabitants of Haifa, 'Akká and neighbouring places, assembled together in the presence of His eldest son—the "Greatest Branch of God"—and interred His remains, with extraordinary respect, close to the Mansion of Bahjí, which is situated a short distance from 'Akká.

The Books, Tablets and Divine Revelations of Bahá'u'lláh contain Treatises, written generally in answer to questions asked by people, both Bahá'ís and others. For during His stay in 'Iráq, Adrianople and 'Akká, when His Name had become renowned in the world, and the penetration of His Work attracted the attention of intelligent minds; the seekers after Truth, who were earnest in the search for knowledge and wisdom, went to Him, asking intricate and abstruse questions. Those who were not able to visit Him because of the strict prohibition of rulers and other obstacles, asked Him difficult questions through correspondence. He answered them instantly without delay or hesitation, although subject to rigorous calamities and afflictions. These answers were forwarded after a copy of them had been reserved. Chief among the questioners were the Bábís, who

had believed in Him. They, as already explained, had been prevented from receiving instructions from the Báb, because of the strict prohibition of the Government, and were not informed of His laws.

He [Bahá'u'lláh] also wrote certain Tablets that he sent to the crowned heads and to the chief religious doctors and divines. Thus, in a short time, His Books and Epistles were scattered like rose-petals throughout different cities, and the teachings given therein were poured forth like raindrops over all regions. Therefore, the voice of His Manifestation reached the West and East like a flash of lightning and His Cause penetrated other countries and nations. Some of the Tablets He wrote in Modern Persian, while others written in answer to the learned and leading Zoroastrians, are in pure Old Persian. Some He has written in eloquent Arabic, and others in ordinary Arabic of today, so that they may be comprehended by the common people. All of them are in the most graceful and elegant style, and although written without premeditation or reflection, are nevertheless in the most excellent form of composition. Historians have stated the number of these Tablets to be over one thousand, but this computation and estimate is mere guesswork and approximation, for though numerous volumes of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh are already published, a still larger quota has not yet been collected and compiled. Not until all of them have been collected, will their number be accurately known. According to His own statements in the Tablets themselves, Bahá'u'lláh said that the Tablets revealed from His Pen, are equivalent to all the Heavenly Books of the extant religions of the world. This is one of the proofs and evidences of the Truth of His Mission.

The Epistles and Treatises of Bahá'u'lláh contain four different styles and classes of knowledge.

Upon the understanding of these depends, as is believed by the Bahá'ís, the knowledge of the Truth of all the Divine Religions. Without this understanding, man cannot be thoroughly informed of the benefits of religion, nor can ideal refinement and civilization be realized. Some of them contain laws and regulations whereby the rights and interests of all the nations of the world can be perpetuated, for these statutes are so enacted that they meet the necessities of every land and country and are acceptable to every man of intelligence. In this universality, they resemble the laws of Nature, which secure the progress and development of all peoples; and they will bring about universal union and harmony. The most important and best known among these is the *Book of Aqdas* (The Most Holy Book) and its supplementary Tablets, revealed in answer to questions asked concerning the texts of *Aqdas*; also the Tablets of *Ishráqát*, *Ṭarázát*, etc. To this class belong the Tablets written upon the conduct of the "ascetic" seekers and strivers after truth. Such is the Book of the *Seven Valleys*, written in answer to Shaykh 'Abdu'r-Rahmán of Karkúk, one of the prominent Súfí Shaykhs¹ of 'Iráq. Although Bahá'u'lláh has forbidden Súfí beliefs,² monkhood and inactivity, i.e., abandoning the practice of trade and profession, yet, in these Tablets, He has explained the manner of real devotion. Some others contain solutions of the intricate points of the Heavenly Books of former peoples, which, before His Manifestation, were "sealed" by the seal of the Prophets; God having decreed that their opening and interpretation should be effected at the day of the Lord's Appearance. As the learned attempted to interpret them before the appointed time, they fell into error in apprehension of their real purport, and thus misled people instead of enlightening them. The Bahá'ís,

¹ Shaykh, pl. Shuyúkh.

² For a clarification of this statement, refer to Adib Taherzadeh: *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. II, pp. 25-28.—M.W.T.

believe that this very point caused the Jews to falsely deny our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Zoroastrians to consider all the Jewish prophets as impostors. The Bahá'ís also believe that former interpretations of the Book are but false imaginations of man, and inversions of the Divine Word. To this class of His writings belong the well-known *Book of Íqán* and the Book entitled *Javáhiru'l-Asrár* (The Essence of Mysteries), revealed in Baghdád at the request of one of the nobility of Fárs; in which he has opened the seals of the former prophetic books. Some others contain prayers and divine eulogies, which instruct men in the mode of worship; supplications and communes, which are means of communion between the worshipper and the Adored One. The benefits imparted by such devotional acts are the illumination and purification of man's conscience, by which the faculty of Divine Apprehension is strengthened, the brutal qualities of man are refined and the worshipper attains true realization and certainty. Some others contain discourses and exordiums in which He has explained the real meaning of the Unity of the Divine Essence and has demonstrated and elucidated the original purpose of the mission of Prophets, as well as the stations of the separation and union of those Dawning-places of the Command of God.

In other words, in these Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh has solved intricate theological questions in the clearest way, whereby He not only has demonstrated the truth of the new Cause, but also the truth of the founders of former religions. In this connection, M. Gabriel de Sassy, one of the noble Christians of Cairo, made the following statement in a speech delivered by him before an assembly of learned men in Paris, during the Exposition of 1901:

“When the Bahá'ís, wish to make a convert to their

religion, they endeavour from the very first to confirm him in his own religion, thus enabling him to become cognizant of the principal proofs whereby the Divine religions are demonstrated and to distinguish a Prophet from an impostor. Consequently, the Old Testament of the Bahá'ís consists of all the Heavenly Books revealed through the former Prophets, while their New Testament comprises the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh which in fact reconcile these books and contain the interpretation and explanation of them."

The meaning of Mr de Sassy's statement is, that what makes a people deny the Manifestation is necessarily their ignorance of the real proofs and arguments. Because of this ignorance the Jews denied Jesus Christ; and the Zoroastrians and Hindus rejected Moses, Jesus Christ, and other prophets. To sum up: During the interval between the time of the Declaration of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh at Baghdád and His Departure at 'Akká, four rivers of knowledge flowed from His swift Pen, without which the religions of the world could not be developed and refreshed, and the Tree of Union and harmony would not have been planted in the Greatest Paradise. The writer believes that the four rivers spoken of in the former Heavenly Books as flowing out from the Divine Throne in the Garden of Eden, signify these four styles. For the spiritually-minded realize that the Spirit of God can only be manifested through the Holy Temple of Man, and therefore, to them, the rivers flowing from this great Throne to water all the regions of the world, are none other than rivers of spiritual knowledge.

During Bahá'u'lláh's residence at Baghdád, it was His custom to write the Tablets with His own hand; but in Adrianople they were usually written by the Pen of His Eldest Son, the "Greatest Branch

of God". During the exile at 'Akká they were dictated to different amanuenses, including Mírzá Áqá Ján of Káshán (the servant of Bahá'u'lláh), Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí, Mírzá Ḍiyá'u'lláh, Mírzá Badí'u'lláh (the children of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and Mírzá Majdu'd-Dín, his son-in-law. These amanuenses wrote them in His Presence from His dictation, and after collating, copies thereof would be forwarded to the questioners. As to the letters and supplications sent to Him through Mírzá Áqá Ján, the amanuensis of Bahá'u'lláh, to which He wrote the answers, these were also dictated by Bahá'u'lláh Himself. Even the texts written upon the envelopes were worded by Bahá'u'lláh for Mírzá Áqá Ján was a man of a very ordinary education, and uneducated people are naturally unable to explain intricate scientific subjects. The fact that all the Tablets forwarded in answer to the questions asked through Mírzá Áqá Ján were dictated to him by Bahá'u'lláh Himself became evident during the later days of Bahá'u'lláh for Mírzá Áqá Ján acknowledged this before an assembly of believers. Moreover, his writings after the Departure of the Blessed Perfection, obviously and indisputably proved that the former Tablets were not his wording and compositions. "Things are known by their opposites."

As to the devotional ordinances instituted by Bahá'u'lláh, these comprise prayer, fasting and the pilgrimage to the House of God, according to details explained in the Book. These duties are incumbent upon all, if circumstances permit their performance. There are also invocations and prayers that the Bahá'ís chant in their meetings as a blessing, or the pious recite in private, while communing with God. Most of these Tablets are already collected and compiled. His ethical ordinances comprise laws

commanding good qualities and excellent virtues, such as sincerity, faith, devotion, love, integrity, chastity, purity, trustworthiness and piety; and forbidding people from evil conduct and abominable deeds, such as lying, backbiting, slandering, murder, theft, fornication, disputing and striving, even with enemies, etc. He has, in numerous Tablets, commanded His followers in the most graceful and emphatic manner to possess those good characteristics, without which the world of humanity would be as a lifeless body; and has forbidden what is unbecoming to the honour of humanity. In the *Book of Aqdas*, which supersedes all former books, and is a touchstone of hearts and souls, He says: *“Adorn yourselves with the raiment of goodly deeds. He whose deeds attain unto God’s good pleasure is assuredly of the people of Bahá and is remembered before His throne. Assist ye the Lord of all creation with works of righteousness, and also through wisdom and utterance. Thus, indeed, have ye been commanded in most of the Tablets by Him Who is the All-Merciful. He, truly, is cognizant of what I say. Let none contend with another, and let no soul slay another; this, verily, is that which was forbidden you in a Book that hath lain concealed within the Tabernacle of glory. What! Would ye kill him whom God hath quickened, whom He hath endowed with spirit through a breath from Him? Grievous then would be your trespass before His throne.”*¹ He has expressed these ordinances in the most forcible manner possible. Not only has He forbidden murder, conflict, and strife, but also slavery, self-exaltation and all that may cause grief and offence to men; and He has commanded meekness and humility. It is revealed in the *Book of Aqdas* as follows: *“It is forbidden you to trade in slaves, be they men or women. It is not for him who is himself a servant to buy another of God’s servants, and this hath been prohibited in His Holy Tablet. Thus, by His mercy, hath the commandment been recorded*

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 73, pp. 45-46.

by the Pen of justice. Let no man exalt himself above another; all are but bondslaves before the Lord, and all exemplify the truth that there is none other God but Him. He, verily, is the All-Wise, Whose wisdom encompasseth all things."¹ In another place in the same Book He says: "Adorn your heads with the garlands of trustworthiness and fidelity, your hearts with the attire of the fear of God, your tongues with absolute truthfulness, your bodies with the vesture of courtesy. These are in truth seemly adornings unto the temple of man, if ye be of them that reflect."² He has commanded people to sincerely love every nation, without exception, as their own brothers; no matter to what religion and sect they may belong, and to consider it a most obligatory duty to purify their hearts and souls from former rancour. Therefore, He has commanded His friends to shun every word which might cause the slightest discord; to avoid cursing, execration and all that gives offence; to serve all people; to glory not in loving our country, but rather in loving all the world. In this connection, He has said in the *Book of Aqdas*: "Consort with all religions with amity and concord, that they may inhale from you the sweet fragrance of God. Beware lest amidst men the flame of foolish ignorance overpower you. All things proceed from God and unto Him they return. He is the source of all things and in Him all things are ended."³

In a Tablet revealed in AH 1299 (CE 1882), in favour of Mírzá Abu'l Faḍl, He says:

"In this Day, a Sun hath arisen from the horizon of Divine Providence, and this exalted Word is written upon its brow, 'Verily we have created you for love and faithfulness and not for hostility and rancour.'" In the same Tablet He says: "Verily, God,

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 72, p. 45.

² Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 120, p. 62.

³ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 144, p. 72.

His Prophets, Messengers, Chosen Ones, the Supreme Concourse, and the people of the Exalted Paradise and the Lofty Kingdom, bless those who arise to bring about affinity between the hearts of His servants and beloved. Verily, He is the Compassionate and the Benevolent!" In a Tablet written in answer to the questions of one of the prominent Zoroastrians, He says: "The Peerless Friend commands—Say! O friends! The Pavilion of Unity is erected; do not gaze at each other with the eyes of strangers. Ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch." In the *Book of Ahd*, which He wrote during His later days and in which He clearly appointed the "Centre of the Covenant", the Day Spring of the Lights of the Testament, and commanded all the branches, twigs, relatives and people of Bahá to obey the Powerful "Branch" extended from the Excellent and Ancient Root, He says:

"We exhort you to fear God, to perform praiseworthy deeds and to do that which is meet and seemly and serveth to exalt your station. Verily I say, fear of God is the greatest commander that can render the Cause of God victorious, and the hosts which best befit this commander have ever been and are an upright character and pure and goodly deeds.

"Say: O servants! Let not the means of order be made the cause of confusion and the instrument of union an occasion for discord. We fain would hope that the people of Bahá may be guided by the blessed words: 'Say: all things are of God.' This exalted utterance is like unto water for quenching the fire of hate and enmity which smouldereth within the hearts and breasts of men. By this single utterance contending peoples and kindreds will attain the light of true unity. Verily He speaketh the truth and leadeth the way. He is the All-Powerful, the Exalted, the Gracious."¹

To sum up: In His Tablets He has revealed wonderful words regarding the beautifying and perfecting of human characters and virtues which, as brilliant pearls, adorn and decorate the crown of the

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 222.

kings of the world, and from which people inhale the fragrance of roses. They have proved effective in training and reforming the character of the Bahá'ís, and in straightening the crookedness of the Bábís, so that, notwithstanding their greatly increased numbers, they have become universally celebrated for good conduct, noted everywhere for excellent morals; and nothing contrary to humanity or against the laws of government proceeds from them. In AH 1300 (CE 1882), without any justification, the Bahá'ís, were arrested and imprisoned in Ṭīhrán and other Persian cities and were pillaged and plundered by the clergy and rulers.

One evening in the month Rabí'u'th-Thání of the same year, the Prince Náyibu's-Salṭanih [Kámrán Mírzá] (then Governor of Ṭīhrán and Mázindarán and the Commandeer-in-Chief of the Persian Army) summoned the author into his presence. He discussed these matters for two hours with some of the Bahá'ís, Among other things he said: "If the Persian Government sometimes interferes with the Bábís it is in the right and not to be blamed; for the Sháh and his statesmen have not forgotten the former actions of this community, nor are the battles they fought in Mázindarán, Zanján, and Nayríz effaced from memories."

Then Mírzá Abu'l-Faql said: "Although some unseemly actions which proceeded from the Bábís at the outset of the Cause can by no means be denied, nor can they be excused in any way, yet to arrest the Bahá'ís, for the sins committed by the Bábís is, in fact, the greatest error and oppression upon the part of the Government. For punishing an innocent one in lieu of the sinner is far from equity and

justice. The unfortunate ones who are now subjected to the wrath and anger of the great Prince, have no connection with the Bábís, nor are they of the same religion and creed; nor have they ever seen any of those Bábís who fought against the Government. Should this fact be unknown to others, it is well known to your highness, the Governor of this province. You have very often arrested and imprisoned adherents of these two communities and know of the contrasts between their beliefs and doctrines and of the violent hatred and hostility that the Azalis¹ show toward the Bahá'ís. Therefore, you must realize that the division existing between the two communities is caused by their difference of opinions, conduct and beliefs. Had the Bahá'ís approved the conduct of the Bábís and behaved accordingly, they would not have become subject to their hostility and rancour. If you carefully read Tablets, books, and writings which have been taken from the Bahá'ís by force and pillage, you will observe that His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has, in all of them, commanded His people to bear allegiance to the Government, to show respect to princes and rulers and to reverence men of learning. He has even forbidden them from smuggling their effects through custom-houses and prohibited them from infringing upon the laws in any way. Have you ever seen similar ordinances among the Bábís or in their books? You also know that the people of Bahá regard His Commands as Divine and they are more assiduous in carrying them out than are other religions and communities in obeying their laws. You should appreciate these facts and be certain that nothing contrary to the Sháh and the Persian Government will ever proceed from the Bahá'ís. While you have the opportunity, you can do that which may greatly benefit your posterity, bring you to enjoy

¹ Azalí, pl. Azálál.

everlasting distinction, and cause our name to be well spoken of in the history of the world."

Then, in order to make him thoroughly cognizant of this point, Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl asked him: "O, Prince, how long have you been the Governor of Ṭihrán and neighboring localities?"

He replied: "From ten to twelve years."

Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl continued: "During this long period, while the Bahá'ís were more in number in Ṭihrán than in any other city, have you ever heard any one complain about them before the Government, for any other reason than because of their religion and doctrine? In other words, have you ever heard a Bahá'í accused of drinking wine, rioting, wounding anybody, murder, theft, gambling, refusing to pay taxes, smuggling or conspiracy?"

The Prince answered: "No."

"Then how can you have more obedient subjects than the Bahá'ís, and how is it you do not appreciate this benefit? If any other government possessed such subjects, every just and unprejudiced ruler would greatly appreciate them and would recognize the necessity of protecting them. Were the leading men of the Persian Government to justly reflect upon these points they would acknowledge the favour and providence of the Blessed Perfection, and open their mouth in His praise. Moreover, if those leaders and statesmen who still consider the Bábís and Bahá'ís as one community and blame the innocent for the sin of the guilty, were to use sound judgement, they will clearly see that the very errors which you assert were committed by the Bábís were due to the bad management of both the civil and religious leaders. For if different rulers in Persia had not; by the command of the ignorant clergy, prevented the Bábís

from intercourse with the Báb and had not so strictly repressed religious freedom, the Bábís would not have remained ignorant of the ordinances and brilliant character of the Báb, and fought in self-defence, as required by their former religion. How is it that the Bahá'ís, while their number is now greatly multiplied and they are far more persecuted by the Government than the former Bábís, instead of defending themselves, do not even complain of any injustice? Why is it that their endurance and self-restraint is a matter of amazement to strangers, and their good conduct universally approved by all nations? It is because they are commanded to obey the Government and to love the people of the world. Through Bahá'u'lláh's teachings the roses of grace and compassion have grown up in the grounds of their hearts, instead of the thorns of enmity and hatred, and by Him the breeze of obedience and peace has replaced whirlwinds of defence and resistance. So the Bahá'ís have increased and their tranquillity, dignity and constancy become renowned throughout all regions and climes, while obedience to government, love and brotherhood with all the different nations have become their obligatory belief."

To sum up; Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl submitted these points to him with all sincerity and truthfulness, so that, if he had not been embittered with fanaticism through the influence of the clergy, he would have been able to greatly benefit himself and the Persian Government, and would have made the royal family an object of real allegiance to the people of Bahá. But, alas, the hearts of some of the leading men of state were so filled and saturated with ignorant bigotry that no miracle could move them, much less the words of a man like Abu'l-Faḍl, who at that moment was a prisoner in their hands, and his life dependent upon their immediate verdict. However, the author has since learned,

through numerous evidences, that although at the time the Prince was prevented by prejudice from realizing the truth of his words, yet now, twenty years after that event, he is sure of the fact, that all this was said in sincerity, loyalty and allegiance, and were it not for fear of the extreme fanaticism of the clergy and the people, he would acknowledge this to be true. In the same year the author and twenty-four other Bahá'ís, were confined in the house of this Prince, and during most of the days and nights held two hours' intercourse with him. The only praiseworthy quality witnessed in this Prince was that he would converse with a prisoner with the utmost quietness and composure, without feeling offended or becoming irritated. In fact, he exhibited a great power of control, so that he could conceal hostility and rancour under the cover of outward cheerfulness and calmness; and disguise the most violent kind of hard-heartedness and asperity in the garb of compassion and mercy. It was due to these characteristics that the author and the other Bahá'ís, who were men of learning, had the opportunity of talking with him upon these subjects, and did not refrain from giving him admonition and advice, as is the duty of righteous souls.

The purpose of this digression and deviation from our general subject of the laws and ordinances is to make men of perception realize the result of the utterances of the Blessed Perfection, and understand how rapidly the Divine laws proved effective and penetrative in reforming the characteristics of the Bahá'ís. For it is not an easy matter that a community of recent organization, composed of different peoples, and assemblages, scattered in various lands, should be so trained and supported by their leader that during the forty years of His appearance among them nothing contrary to the laws of governments should proceed from them,

and that none should be accused of evil deeds or bad morals.

When a man of insight considers the heavenly laws and regulations of former Divine religions, he will find them divided into three classes in relationship with their objects:

The *first class* contains ordinances, which refer to the duty of a servant to thank, praise and supplicate his Creator, so that his heart may be purified and his soul and conscience sanctified. Thus, the truth of all things may be reflected in the pure and clear mirror of this servant, and he may be led to the true realization of a position of perfect obedience to the principles of religious doctrines. Such ordinances are communions, prayers, thanksgivings, praises and other devotional acts that are the pillars of every religion. For without these, the love of God and fear of Him, which are the solid foundation of humanity, cannot be realized, nor can a perfect faith, upon which is based the penetration of the Word, its prevalence, and the formation of morals, be secured. "Adore Thy Lord, so that real certainty may overtake Thee." In the line of such devotional acts, after enacting laws of prayer, fasts, pilgrimage and alms-giving, which He has explained in detail in His Tablets, the Blessed Perfection has revealed great numbers of invocations and communions. In all of these, He has commanded the worshippers to entreat God to beautify their character and endow them with excellent virtues.

In order to awaken the intelligent man, we will utilize the following illustration. In performing the ablution of the hands before prayer, He has commanded the people of Bahá to recite the following: *"Strengthen my hand, O my God, that it may take hold of Thy Book with such steadfastness that the hosts*

*of the world shall have no power over it. Guard it, then, from meddling with whatsoever doth not belong unto it. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.*¹ In washing the face, to repeat the following: *"I have turned my face unto Thee, O my Lord! Illumine it with the light of Thy countenance. Protect it, then, from turning to anyone but Thee."*² It must be evident to men of perception who ponder over this fact, that when the worshipper repeats these points several times a day and begs of God their realization in himself, he will become well-rooted in the high qualities of steadfastness, power and firmness in religion. Also that in abstaining from disposing of the property of others, and in perfect resignation unto God under all circumstances, these qualities which are accounted as the highest characteristics of man and effect the security of human society will become manifest in him.

The *second class* comprises ordinances that, besides the benefits they impart to society, refer to individuals. For they ordain the virtues of cleanliness, purity, dignity, calmness, chastity, etc. God the Almighty, in accordance with the noble and excellent form and image of man, the most comely in the world of creation, has commanded each soul to practice these virtues, in order that they may be engrafted and well rooted within him. These excellent qualities are necessary for man, whether he be alone or in society; whether other men appreciate them in him or not; whether they praise him for them or not; for, apart from the benefits they impart to society, they are the approved characteristics of true manhood. The forcible way in which Bahá'u'lláh has stated the necessity of these cleanly virtues to the people of Bahá, and the eloquent manner in which He has demonstrated their properties and benefits, has never before been equalled in the heavenly books of other religions. Notwith-

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, section CLXXII, p. 314.

² *ibid.*

standing man's difficulty in forsaking old habits and his natural slowness in spiritual advancement, the reformation of the character of the Bahá'ís was perfectly effected in a very short space of time, and their good qualities witnessed in the writings of outsiders.

Concerning cleanliness, notwithstanding the manifest advancement of some of the refined nations, it is evident that this praiseworthy quality is still imperfect among the masses. In the books of the Muslims, Jews, Zoroastrians and Hindus, although the laws of cleanliness and ordinances concerning clean and unclean things are minutely recorded, yet there are very few of these people who are really cleanly. But many who pretend and affect cleanliness and purity, shunning those outside their religion and abstaining from touching certain animals, appear in the most impure clothing and bodies. Oftentimes they have carried this artificial idea of cleanliness to the extremes of insanity and melancholy. Stories and romances illustrating this subject furnish extraordinary records of a kind of acquired insanity that is amazing to people of intelligence.

Although the American and European Christians, more particularly the inhabitants of Holland, France, England and Germany, are far more advanced than other nations in the cleanliness of their persons, clothing, residences, roads and streets, yet they do not deem it necessary to cleanse the soil of impurities, unless they cause visible dirt. For in the New Testament no command is definitely given to avoid that which is filthy and impure. Consequently, one who has a conception of real cleanliness would not hesitate to conclude that perfect cleanliness as a practice is in its infancy, even among the most refined nations of the world, awaiting the time when God the Exalted, shall bring it to the highest pitch of perfection.

Now, in order to show forth the abundant and perfect benefits of God in this great Dispensation, to protect people from the melancholic imaginations of former nations and deliver more than one-half the population of the earth from an acquired insanity, the Blessed Perfection has pronounced all things clean. At the same time He has emphatically commanded all to avoid everything filthy and to cleanse dresses, bodies and household furniture, etc., from every pollution. He has revealed these ordinances in the *Book of Aqdas* and numerous Tablets, so that real cleanliness and perfect purity, which are high attributes of heavenly souls, may shine forth throughout all regions, and reach the highest zenith of perfection among all nations. Thus it is revealed in the *Book of Aqdas*:

“Wash ye every soiled thing with water that hath undergone no alteration in any one of the three respects [colour, taste, or smell]; take heed not to use water that hath been altered through exposure to the air [stagnant] or to some other agent. Be ye the very essence of cleanliness amongst mankind. This, truly, is what your Lord, the Incomparable, the All-Wise, desireth for you.

“God hath, likewise, as a bounty from His presence, abolished the concept of “uncleanness”, whereby divers things and peoples have been held to be impure. He, of a certainty, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous. Verily, all created things were immersed in the sea of purification when, on that first day of Riḍván,* We shed upon the whole of creation the splendours of Our most excellent Names and Our most exalted Attributes. This, verily, is a token of My loving providence, which hath encompassed all the worlds. Consort ye then with the followers of all religions, and proclaim ye the Cause of your Lord, the Most Compassionate; this is the very crown of deeds, if ye be of them who understand.

“God hath enjoined upon you to observe the utmost cleanliness, to the extent

* On the first day of the Feast of Riḍván [21 April 1863], the Blessed Perfection pronounced all things pure.

of washing what is soiled with dust, let alone with hardened dirt and similar defilement. Fear Him, and be of those who are pure. Should the garb of anyone be visibly sullied, his prayers shall not ascend to God, and the celestial Concourse will turn away from him. Make use of rose-water, and of pure perfume; this, indeed, is that which God hath loved from the beginning that hath no beginning, in order that there may be diffused from you what your Lord, the Incomparable, the All-Wise, desireth.”¹

In another place of the same Book, He says: “Take heed lest through negligence ye fail to observe that which hath been prescribed unto you by Him Who is the Incomparable, the Gracious. Immerse yourselves in clean water; it is not permissible to bathe yourselves in water that hath already been used. See that ye approach not the public pools of Persian baths; whoso maketh his way toward such baths will smell their fetid odour ere he entereth therein. Shun them, O people, and be not of those who ignominiously accept such vileness. In truth, they are as sinks of foulness and contamination, if ye be of them that apprehend. Avoid ye likewise the malodorous pools in the courtyards of Persian homes, and be ye of the pure and sanctified. Truly, We desire to behold you as manifestations of paradise on earth, that there may be diffused from you such fragrance as shall rejoice the hearts of the favoured of God. If the bather, instead of entering the water, wash himself by pouring it upon his body, it shall be better for him and shall absolve him of the need for bodily immersion. The Lord, verily, hath willed, as a bounty from His presence, to make life easier for you that ye may be of those who are truly thankful.”²

It is necessary to explain these points, so that the inhabitants of America and Europe, who, owing to the universal spread of civilization during the last century, enjoy all the benefits of cleanliness, neatness, and protection from fatal epidemic diseases resulting from uncleanliness, may become cognizant of the disasters of the Orient, and be informed of the reason why such ordinances have been revealed. For except one is acquainted with the foulness of the waters of the pub-

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paras 74-76, pp. 46-47.

² Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 106, p. 58.

lic baths of Persia, the putrid tanks of their houses and mosques, the impurity of the drinking water of the inhabitants of Bukhárá and other vast countries of Tartary; and understands how cleanliness and neatness are neglected by these two great nations, it is impossible to realize the Bounty of God the Exalted, Who has revealed such ordinances, or to thoroughly understand the necessity of these laws. For it is customary with the Persian people to have but one public bath for every district that contains from one thousand to fifteen hundred houses, and their means of bathing and cleanliness is confined to this one bath. It consists of two houses, built of stone, brick and cement—one for disrobing, the other containing the hot bath, for bathing and cleansing their bodies. At one side of the latter, there is a reservoir of hot water, about three metres in length and breadth and one metre and a quarter in depth. All the inhabitants immerse and wash themselves in this hot reservoir, and there are usually from five to ten men in it, some of them sound in body, others afflicted with all sorts of fatal diseases. When leaving the reservoir, they seat themselves upon the floor, and by means of hand sacks and black porous stones, they cleanse their bodies. They are frequently shaved and have their hair dyed in the same place. Then washing themselves with soap, they take a final plunge into the same reservoir, the water of which is the foulest and most impure thing imaginable; and then leave the bath. Such are the baths used by fifty millions of Shi'ites who inhabit Persia, Turkistán and India. The reservoirs of Bukhárá and Tartary, which contain the drinking water of the inhabitants, are also used for bathing and cleansing, like the Persian baths. In these countries a pond is built at different places in every town and village and surrounded with mulberry trees, etc. In these ponds,

the inhabitants perform their ablutions and expectorate, while at the same time they wash their feet and handkerchiefs therein. The decaying leaves and fruits of the surrounding trees also fall into them. This same water is used by the inhabitants for drinking and cooking. Often the water in these tanks becomes green, and worms are found in it, yet the inhabitants believe it allowable to use, and it is called "pure water" by the law. Therefore, most of the inhabitants of Bukhára are afflicted with *filaria medinensis*, and the people of Khúkand with goitre.

When men of discernment ponder over the facts here briefly indicated, they will be able to realize the mercy of God in instituting such ordinances for the preservation of a community numbering over three hundred millions. For it is impossible to change by compulsion of kings or advice of wise men, certain rooted practices of a people who believe these practices to be commanded by their religion. These customs and habits can only be removed by new laws instituted by Manifestations of the Command of God. For instance, the traditional customs of the Jews, extracted from the Book of Mishnah, and which are not enacted in the original Bible, could not be changed through the power of any mighty king or sagacious philosopher. This is also the case with the corrupt practices of the Hindus and Magians. To sum up; a number of moral ordinances which secure the perfecting of human virtues have been revealed from the Supreme Pen, but to explain their benefits is beyond the limits of a short treatise.

The *third class* comprises laws and ordinances about matters that refer to general interests and the preservation of society. These ordain justice, equity, faithfulness, truthfulness, trustworthiness, chastity, etc., without which tranquillity cannot be obtained and

society cannot be preserved. This class of ordinances is vast in range, and the majority of the regulations belong to it. Included among them are laws concerning business transactions, administration of government enactments, the rights of rulers and subjects, laws of marriage, heritage, etc. For man has been created a social being and his life and permanence depend upon co-operation and society. Therefore, the institutors of divine laws have assigned the greater part of them to administrative affairs, and have considered the assistance, advancement and development of the people as the most important part of their mission. Moreover, the author believes that religion is none other than an institution that secures the preservation and advancement of society. As human minds are discordant, and as it is usually impossible for the possessors of even sound minds to agree upon that which will secure the protection and development of peoples, therefore God the Exalted, has assigned the enactment of such laws to the Manifestations of His Own Command. These Holy Souls, through their divine perception, enact rules and regulations by which the support and progress of society is accomplished and advanced for about one thousand years. Then, in accordance with the law of progression and decline, which is one of the essential decrees of the world of Nature, the same Divine Spirit will be manifested in another Manifestation Who renews these laws and regulations. From the above statement it is evident that religion includes the observation and preservation of these laws and rules, as well as attaining the knowledge of the Source and Fountain-head thereof.

Therefore, the life and sustained vitality of nations can only be assured by appreciating this great gift. Mere faith in religion, without observing its laws and ordinances, can by no means secure our sal-

vation and emancipation. Even love for God, without compliance with His laws and commandments, which form the cornerstone of all religious ordinances, will be considered as mere imagination and sheer pride. From this it is also understood that any nation which ignores and disobeys these holy laws, refusing to acknowledge the Dawning-place thereof, is a dead nation and will be finally extinguished and destroyed; even though it may have prevailed over the dominions of the east and west, and been honoured by brilliant learning, glorious influence and powerful armies. This is made clear by reflecting upon the rise and fall of the Pharaohs of Egypt, the Pagan Caesars of Rome, the Kiyániyán kings of Persia, the Yemen princes of ancient Arabia, and the kings and descendants of Chingíz-Khán [Gengiz Khan] the Mongol. However, whatever nation acknowledges a Holy Manifestation and obeys His Holy Law, will become a living nation, and enjoy victory, permanence, influence, and fame; even though it may seem, at the beginning, weak, oppressed, and few in number. This point was vividly illustrated in the Israelites at the Appearance of Moses; in the Christians at the Advent of Jesus Christ; and in the Arabs at the Rise of Muḥammad.

The author submits that the Beauty of Abhá—Exalted is His Glory!—has enacted laws and regulations concerning every point or subject referring to the preservation of society and the perfecting of human virtues; greater laws than which cannot be imagined by the possessors of intelligence. They concern manners and conditions of mutual intercourse, the founding of administrative organizations, the mutual rights of rulers and subjects, the spread of knowledge, respect due to philosophers and learned men, commands to refrain from rebellion against kings and princes, obedience and reverence to parents, the laws of marriage, and the mutual rights of the wife and

husband, laws of inheritance and other regulations. It is only through such laws that the union and harmony among nations of different religions and tongues can be effected; for, in enacting laws upon every subject, He has taken two points into consideration. First, that obeying and carrying them into practice may be possible for all peoples, notwithstanding the difference of their countries. Second, that they may not excite selfish prejudices and fanaticism. Through these laws, the breezes of ideal mercy and compassion will blow through hearts and souls, and the lights of real humanity will shine forth from all breasts. Thus, through the assistance of God, the spirit of disunion, discord and hostility that divides nations, will be removed, and all the earth will be considered as one Paradise and one home. For instance, as we have already stated, Bahá'u'lláh has not only forbidden all evil acts in detail (such as murder, backbiting, cursing, etc.), but He also has commanded that no one should open his mouth in self-glorification, or interfere with the affairs of others; because this would offend souls and grieve hearts, and finally end in disharmony and discord.

In order to cause the spread of learning and enlightenment, He has made it incumbent to educate children of both sexes, and to train them in lofty morals. Should any one disregard these commands, and neglect the training of his children, the Government shall educate and train them in the schools, and assess the expenses upon the father. Should the father be poor, the Government must furnish the funds out of the money given to God, according to the law instituted in the Book, so that excellent morals may be universally spread throughout the world, and praiseworthy qualities may be firmly implanted in the hearts of both sexes from their childhood. He has so empha-

sized this command to educate children, that no righteous man will fail to realize the necessity of complying with it. He has included the teachers of children in the list of heirs, so that their care and fatherhood may be ever appreciated by the world, and they may be encouraged to educate their pupils. The substance of what He has said in the *Book of Aqdas* upon this subject is as follows: "*He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My glory, My loving-kindness, My mercy, that have compassed the world.*"¹ When one reflects upon this point, he will find that as God has strictly commanded the spread of enlightenment and education, and as the power of the Word of God will assist it, this law of educating children will cause the removal of the darkness of ignorance and barbarity from all regions of the world, and the promise of God, "The earth shall be illumined with the light of its Lord,"² will be clearly realized.

In connection with occupations and professions, He has said that God the Almighty, during this great Manifestation, has made it obligatory for all to occupy themselves in professions which are praiseworthy, such as agriculture, trade, handicraft, etc. He has also stated that gaining ones living through means that benefit society is considered as worshipping God the Exalted. He has re-enforced this command by enjoining upon the people of Bahá, abstinence from monkhood, Şúfí beliefs and retirement, as well as from ascetic discipline. He has commanded them to marry and to be engaged in the spread of knowledge that leads to the prosperity and welfare of peoples, and the restoration of the world.

He has clearly demonstrated to intelligent men, that corruptions of Divine Religions, and the appear-

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 48, p. 37.

² Refer to Qur'án 39:69. Note that this is the only mention of the Light or Glory of the Lord (Bahá'u'lláh) in the Qur'án. The twin trumpet calls (announcements) are recorded in verse 39:68.—M.W.T.

ances of ruinous, discordant beliefs, divisions, sects and heresies, have been invented worships resulting from Şúffí beliefs and asceticism. For when, like a paralysis, such practices afflicted any religion or people, enthusiasm, fervour, high understanding and perception were destroyed, and lethargy, inactivity and seclusion established instead. This finally led to heretical worships and beliefs, and the corruption and destruction of the religion. Indeed, if we consider the manner of the rise of monkhood in Christianity and Şúffí beliefs in Islám, we readily understand that their origin was the Platonic philosophy. The dreadful wars, fictitious beliefs and practices that arose during the existence of Christianity and Islám, dividing these two religions into numerous sects and causing great national calamities, were clearly the results of monkhood and Şúffí beliefs. We must then realize the great favour that God has shown to the Bahá'ís, and appreciate the great benefits of this strict command for all the peoples of the world. For during the last centuries preceding the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, the flourishing nation of Greece was renowned for its abundance of knowledge and wisdom, and its extensive glory and empire. The Greek dominion prevailed in Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia and the coasts of the Red Sea, and a great number of the learned men of this nation inhabited these countries. This naturally caused the spread of Greek learning among their inhabitants. In those days, Greek philosophy was divided into two main branches, each of which contained great philosophers and men of learning. First was the Platonic philosophy, which was founded upon abstaining from physical luxuries and perfecting spiritual virtues. That is, a seeker of perfection and of the highest degree of advancement should forsake every material delight

and shun worldly occupations; he should dwell in retirement and seclusion; should practice meditation, reflection and mortification, such as vigils, abstinence and perseverance in prayer and recitations. By this his spirit may ascend to the Supreme Kingdom, and, before his natural death, he may dwell in Heaven by suffering this kind of voluntary death. According to the terms and teachings of this philosophy, he may thus be associated and in close communion with the Divine Essence, the Identity of God. Apparently, this kind of philosophy was transported to Greece, from the Brahman ascetics of India, and by them injected into Greek Sabeanism.¹ For during a long period the learned men of India have been renowned for this line of wisdom, and have been engaged in severe discipline, seclusion and retirement.

The second branch was the Aristotelian philosophy, which was based upon understanding the reality of things by proving and examining causes and reasons, and by resting upon rational arguments and logical syllogisms. This theory taught that men of learning, in order to become true philosophers, should trust in clear and conclusive arguments, follow the reasons and causes of beings and effects, and look into the origin of things with the utmost freedom, in order that they may attain the knowledge of real facts. According to the author's belief, this branch of learning was brought to the Greeks from the Persians. For it is an indisputable fact to the oriental historians, that when Alexander the Great of Macedonia subdued the Kiyán Dynasty and conquered the Persian countries he commanded their Zoroastrian religious books, which, according to his belief, were contradictory to the Pagan Sabean religion, to be burnt and destroyed; but their scientific books, which contained all sorts of learning, he ordered to be sent to Greece. Ibn

¹ Šábi', pl. Šubát (Sabians, "Sabeans") refers to a religion or pagans. Sabá' (or Saba'), pl. Saba'iyyún refers to Sheba and the Sabaeans, an ancient kingdom in what is now modern Yemen.

Khaldún of Maghrib, whom the European writers believe to be one of the most reliable historians of the 14th century, says in the 13th chapter of the 6th part of the first book of his well-known history, after speaking of the conquest of Sa'd ibn Abí-Waqqás, the Arab general, over Persia, the fall of the Sasanian Dynasty, and the burning of the Persian books according to the command of the Muslim Khalíf 'Umar, son of Khaṭṭáb, as follows: "Verily, this learning reached Greece from Persia, when Alexander slew Darius, subdued the Kiyán Dynasty, and disposed of an innumerable quantity of their books. When the land of Persia was conquered (in the days of 'Umar), and considerable numbers of books were found there, Sa'd ibn Abí-Waqqás wrote to 'Umar for instructions to carry them to the Muslims. 'Umar wrote him orders to throw them into the water; for, he said, 'if these books contain guidance, God hath guided us to a greater guidance (the Qur'án), and if they are misleading, God hath protected us therefrom.' Then these books were thrown into the water and fire, and thus the Persian learnings were destroyed and did not reach us."

When, according to historians, Jesus Christ appeared 330 years after Alexander, and His blessed Cause subdued great nations through the Heavenly Power, a considerable number of pure souls from Greece, Rome, and Syria embraced His Religion. In those days Greek Philosophy had a great renown in Egypt and Syria. The famous schools of Alexandria were the headquarters of students, and the fame of the Platonists, Stoics, Academics, and Eclectics was extended throughout east and west. Consequently, when, in the 2nd Century, some of these philosophers, including Athenagoras [of Athens], Pantaenus, Clemens and other great men, were converted, they became the most famous

Christian philosophers. Among them was Ammonius Saccas, the founder of the celebrated School of Alexandria, who remained a Christian up to his death; also Justin, who, owing to his abundant knowledge, purity of character and good deeds, finally suffered martyrdom for the sake of his Faith. As Platonism was believed by these great philosophers to be the nearest to the purity and chastity of Christianity, they thought it conformable to the manner of Christian worship, and introduced it into that Religion. They frequently encouraged their pupils to worship in private, to live in seclusion and in deserts, and instructed them as well as all the Christians, in the doctrines of Plato; demonstrating the Essence of God, the state of the soul after leaving the body, and in his teachings concerning angels, etc. Thus Platonic philosophy gradually became the accepted belief of Christian people. Asceticism and abstinence from worldly occupations was deemed the most excellent act of worship. As people do not usually practice moderation in anything, but carry every habit and custom to excess, either through prejudice, love of notoriety, or by inadvertence, this indulgence in asceticism and self-mortification finally waxed so great that a considerable number in Europe, Asia, and Africa, notably in Egypt and Syria, went into the wilderness, and wandered in plains and deserts like wild beasts, without any fixed dwelling-place. Most of them lived upon herbs, shrubs, roots and the bark of trees.

Finally, monkhood grew out of this [so-called] great spiritual wisdom—the Platonic philosophy—and numerous orders of monks and hermits were founded. In the 4th Century these monks were particularized by distinctive names. Such were the Cenobites, who lived and ate together in the same house

and worshipped in company; the Eremites, who led a solitary life, dwelling in hovels or cells; the Anchorites, called Vagrants, who roamed; about desert places with no kind of shelter and made their living without labour, by pretended miracles, theft and other impositions, not averse to any kind of corruption or sin. During the 5th Century, the chief among these orders laid down certain regulations for themselves, and became known by the name Augustinians and Basilians. Likewise, century after century, new names and branches of heretical beliefs were established, such as the Benedictines, etc. In the 6th Century, this order had such great renown that, according to the record of Mosheim, whole armies of monks were enrolled in it. The orders of Dominicans, Franciscans, Capuchins, Carmelites and Mystics were also established in the mediaeval centuries of Christianity. Their deeds and customs are clearly recorded in church histories. The Dominican monks led the horrible Council of Inquisition in burning and destroying hundreds of thousands of persons and in confiscating and pillaging the property of one million widows and orphans. These monks, in hard-heartedness and atrocity, far surpassed Genghiz and Tamerlane [Tímúr-i-Lang], who left such evil records in history. Later, the order of Jesuits, the records of whose lives are medleys of light and darkness, benefits and losses, was founded. The Jesuits were an object of awe to the government and people, whose thoughts were occupied in preserving themselves against this numerous and impertinent army of monks.

The introduction of Şúfí beliefs into Islám also resulted from the Platonic philosophy. In the first and second centuries of Muḥammad, His religion was promulgated in vast and extensive countries of Asia, Africa and some parts of Europe. The tyrannical,

usurping Arab Khalífat then gained its importance and prevalence. 'Abbásid Khalifs¹ in the east and the Umayyad Khalifs in the west, as well as their subordinate kings and princes, exerted themselves to the utmost in spreading learning and sciences and in the increase of culture and the arts. The object of this was both to satisfy the people's need of knowledge and to protect their dominion from decline and downfall. Especially al-Ma'mún ar-Ráshid, the most valiant, cultured and famous of the Khalifs, assembled a meeting of men of learning at Baghdád, and commanded them to translate into Arabic the scientific books of the philosophers of Greece, Persia and Chaldea. He indicated more especially the Greek textbooks upon nature, theology, medicine, ethical philosophy, astronomy, geometry, etc. Consequently, the Aristotelian and Platonic systems were introduced into Islám in like manner as into Christianity, and were taught by the Muslim doctors under the names of *illuminati* and *Peripatetic*. This divided the religion into numerous sects. From the scientific philosophy held by the followers of Aristotle, which is based upon argument and demonstration, appeared the different sects of Mu'tazilah, Kaysániyyah, and Ash'arí. From the ethical philosophy of Plato, which taught seclusion and abstinence from worldly affairs and luxuries, appeared the Sufis and *illuminati*. Also different sub-classes and branches appeared from Şúfí beliefs, such as Qadaríyyih, Sháh Zilíyyih, Naqshbandíyyih, Cheshteyeh [Chishtiyya], etc., among the Sunnites; and the Jalais, Ni'matullahis, Haydaris, Aveysis and others among the Shi'ites. On one hand, the appearance of these sects in Islám caused the fall and extinction of other useful sciences, such; as physics, astronomy, geometry and geography; and on the other hand, they entailed wars and administrative divisions. Thus were

¹ Khalífa, pl. khulafá', khalá'if.

created heretical beliefs and abominable practices. Men were led to seeking help from Şúfi Shaykhs and leaders, giving rise to spurious claims to Mahdihood [Mahdíya].

In short, Şúfí beliefs brought the same calamities and evils into Islám, which were caused by monkhood in Christianity. Although monkhood occasioned civil wars and religious disasters in Christianity, yet a great many of the learned monks left worthy memorials in the Christian world, and different branches of sciences and arts were indebted to their labours and writings. Conrad Malte-Brun, the Frenchman, writes in his Geography as follows: "The perfection of the science of Geography and, the removal of former mistakes, appeared from the habit of the monks." Thus this writer has acknowledged their labours. Those who study the general history of the world clearly realize the great pains and efforts put forth by learned monks in upholding and spreading Christianity, in eradicating fictitious Pagan beliefs, and in writing excellent scientific books. But from the 7th Century AH onward, nothing appeared from the dervishes and Sufis, except smoking hashish, inactivity, mendicancy, indolence, seclusion, public and private recitations, playing tambourines, ridiculous dances, etc., in lieu of acts of worship.

To set forth the life and circumstances of each one of the classes would need special volumes, so that their historical result might be clearly realized by men of discernment, and the minds of well-informed people be awakened.

The above-mentioned points show the effects that followed the appearance of monkhood and Şúfí beliefs in the Divine Religions, and enable us to realize the great Bounty of God the Exalted, who has forbidden these corruptions during this Manifestation. For if the prohibition of invented worships and asceticism

had been clearly revealed in the Heavenly Books of former nations, people would never have introduced such things into Divine Religion, nor would they have practised severe discipline or ascetic acts which were not commanded in the Divine Word.

One point that must not pass unnoticed by the men of learning is, that what has been mentioned concerning the abominable acts of the Christian monks and Muslim Sufis, does not refer to all of them. For there is no doubt that among them have appeared a few in every century who have been engaged in worship and devotion with all sincerity of intention and purity of mind; men who have occupied themselves in a God-like spirit to educate youth and to beautify both their own character and that of others. Therefore, the Lord Bahá'u'lláh has revealed passages in some of His Tablets, the essence of which is as follows:

“Those devout and disciplined ones who, sincerely, for the sake of God, have practised separation (from the world) and devotion; all their deeds and devotional acts have attained the acceptance of God the Exalted. But they must henceforth leave cells of retreat for the open (ordinary dwellings), and be occupied in that which will profit people. Nor must they refrain from marriage which causes procreation and multiplication of the servants (of God).”

To sum up: During this Holy Manifestation, clear laws and regulations have been instituted concerning the deeds and actions of men, so that the servants (of God) may act with clear perception under all circumstances, and that they may not be tempted nor deluded by the imaginations, superstitions and theological vagaries of the ignorant doctors and divines. Bahá'u'lláh has commanded the people of Bahá to refer to the Book for the rules of action, devotion and

conduct. However, there is a certain class of laws which must vary according to the differences of times and circumstances. These laws, He has commanded, shall be instituted by the Houses of Justice (established in every country, city and government), according to the necessities of the times. He has made obedience to these laws obligatory, so that Religion may not become a plaything of divines and of those who seek leadership. To fully set forth these points is far beyond the limits of this short account, but, God willing, they will be explained in full particulars at some future date.

No such effect as that produced by the Divine Verses of this Great Manifestation, in attracting the hearts and souls of men, has been witnessed in any former Manifestation and past religion. For the Word of God proved so effective in those who believed in it, that they endured all sorts of calamities, gave up their lives, and were bathed in their own blood, without recanting or lamenting. To reflect upon this will also make men realize how much greater is this Cause than that of former Manifestations. For during the Manifestations of Moses and Jesus Christ no one ever gave his life for the sake of the Lord, while the Sun of Truth was shining and the Manifestation of God lived among men. However, in this Manifestation people vied with each other in offering their lives, and displayed the utmost endurance and composure in the time of persecution. They sacrificed themselves with all cheerfulness and joy, in love for the "Beloved of the Creatures". For instance: In the earlier years after Bahá'u'lláh's declaration, they arrested a youth of Zanján, by name Mírzá Najaf-'Alí, who was a messenger of Bahá'u'lláh. He was on his way from Káshán to Tíhrán, accompanied by a dervish whom he supplied with food and travelling expenses. When they

reached Tīhrán the dervish, informed the Government that a Bahá'í messenger had arrived with mails. Accordingly, he was arrested, branded with red-hot irons for several days and afflicted with all kinds of torture. Finally, as he would neither deny his religion nor recant, they beheaded him and dragged his corpse along the ground to the place of the gallows. In each year similar cases occurred, which served but to attract the hearts of the people.

A very striking event that happened later was the martyrdom of Varqá and his little son Mírzá Rúḥu'lláh. It is a matter of amazement to men of perception, when they reflect upon the great self-restraint and endurance of these two holy souls and the hard-heartedness of the wicked. Varqá the Martyr was learned and a venerable man, expert in medical science and well versed in literature and composition. He wrote poetry in Persian with the utmost elegance and beauty. Varqá and his little son Mírzá Rúḥu'lláh were arrested while on their way to Tīhrán, in the year 1896, for no other reason than being Bahá'ís, and put in chains in the royal prison of Tīhrán. The child, although only eleven or twelve years old, had been educated and trained by his father and was very intelligent. During the month of May in the same year, 'Alí Khán, entitled "Ḥájibu'd-Dawlih", the chief of the prison, without the knowledge of the Government, went one day to the jail with several executioners, and commanded them to bring Varqá before him. In the presence of the little boy they forced the head of that great man into the hole of a torturing machine, constructed of blocks of wood and thick rods of iron; an apparatus in which they fasten the feet of criminals in Persia. Then they cut his body into pieces with a poniard. After having in this way executed Varqá,

'Alí Khán told the little son to repudiate his father's religion, promising that he would then appoint him to a high position with the sons of the Sháh; otherwise he would cause him to share the same fate which his father had met before his eyes. Mírzá Rúḥu'lláh, whose face shone with the light of joy and happiness, expressing the spirit of steadfastness and reverence, refused this proposal with the greatest fervency and promptness, saying he would by no means waver from the right path or reject the Divine Religion for the sake of the transient life of this world and its fleeting honours. Finally, they martyred the innocent child and concealed both mutilated corpses in a private place. Scarcely a year passes without similar dreadful events occurring in Persia, and the blood of these people is still shed for the sake of the Bahá'í religion. Even in 1901, three Bahá'ís, were martyred in a shocking manner in Ábargú [Ábarkúh], situated between Yazd and Iṣfahán.*

* The names of these three, the full particulars of their martyrdom and the Tablets revealed for them by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, were sent to me in February 1902, from 'Akká. By 'Abdu'l-Bahá's command they were translated and published in a separate pamphlet.—Translator.

His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

As to the birth and life of our Lord ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—Glorified is His Name!—He was born, in Ṭīhrán, on the 5th day of the month Jamádíyu’l-Avval, AH 1260 (23 May 1844), the same day in which the “First Point”—Exalted is His Supreme Name!—had declared Himself. He was reared in that city under the training of Bahá’u’lláh. The author has heard from His own blessed lips, as well as from many others, that He very often suffered persecution and execrations, while yet a child, from the fanatics of Ṭīhrán, during the disasters which followed the Appearance of the Báb. When Bahá’u’lláh was in chains in the Prison of Ṭīhrán, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá visited Him. During the time Bahá’u’lláh resided at Baghdád by command of the Persian Government, AH 1269 (1852–1853), His Holiness, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, was in His service and constantly in His Presence.

Although He had not studied in any school, yet, from His youth, fountains of knowledge flowed in His fluent explanations. The first trace that emanated from His Holy Being in the world of knowledge was the treatise He wrote in His early youth at Baghdád. This was a commentary upon the holy tradition: “I was an invisible Treasury; as I loved to be known, therefore I created men to know Me.” He wrote this commentary in answer to the request of one of the Pashas. The author was present at a meeting, when someone asked Ḥájí Siyyid Javád of Karbilá concerning the life of Bahá’u’lláh. The great Siyyid answered: “That Holy Being must be a Shining Light whose great Son hath written

such a treatise during his childhood." By this the learned Siyyid meant that while it is impossible even for a scholar to show forth such great knowledge, how much more impossible would it be for a person to write such a treatise in his childhood without having studied. Therefore, such knowledge is Heavenly and not earthly; it is Divine wisdom, not human, and it owes its origin to the Holy Spirit of God.

Thus, even in His childhood, the signs of grandeur and dignity were manifest from His brow and He showed forth phenomenal intelligence and wisdom. His wonderful speech in explaining abstruse points, astonished men of intelligence, and His marvellous eloquence everywhere attracted hearts and souls. His acute judgement was a brilliant lamp in elucidating intricate obscurities and His penetrative discernment in managing and deciding different affairs improved the condition of young and old. He was the companion of Bahá'u'lláh and the sharer of His afflictions during His successive banishments from Baghdád to Constantinople, thence to Adrianople, and finally to 'Akká. All the people of Bahá resorted to Him in their difficulties and obeyed His decision. More especially during the twenty-four years of Bahá'u'lláh's residence at 'Akká, the troubles of 'Abdu'l-Bahá were so great that no one but Himself could have endured such calamities. The very fact that 'Akká was a place of exile for Turkish suspects and prisoners, meriting the name "Great Prison", given to it by the Supreme Pen, is a sufficient testimony of the tribulations and vicissitudes which 'Abdu'l-Bahá has suffered. For, as we have formerly remarked, Bahá'u'lláh during His residence at 'Akká, would not, as a rule, converse with any save the Bahá'ís, unless someone especially asked permission to visit Him. His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá however, held intercourse with all the men of

different religions, aims, tastes, characters, and degrees, and each one would submit to Him his individual wishes. Consequently, different classes and nationalities of Muslims, Christians, Bahá'ís, Arabs and Turks, as well as Persians belonging to the governing and learned classes—likewise great merchants and people of the lower orders, visited Him from early morning until midnight. Some of them sought His presence for the benefit of His spiritual explanation; others for their personal affairs and requests. Anyone informed upon the manners of oriental governments, and thoroughly acquainted with the conditions of the inhabitants of those countries, will realize the great difficulties that surrounded that Holy Being. He, under all circumstances, would receive the people with a cheerful face, and endeavour as far as possible to grant their wishes and assist them. Even in the present day, His Holiness is the resort of the people of that land, and all refer their wishes and hopes to Him. He is a physician to every invalid, a shelter to every exile, a refuge to every seeker for help, and a dispeller of sorrow to every grieved soul. As God knows and witnesses, the author, during the ten months he stayed as [a] guest in His beneficent shelter, can testify that even those fettered in the jail and deprived of seeing the daylight, received His benefits and favours; and exiles forsaken in the cells of oblivion were visited by Him. These excellent characteristics were inborn in Him, and no one can show forth such virtues through imitation or pretence. Even the greatest men in the world could not manifest their like. There is an old proverb: "Nothing manufactured is like unto the natural."

'Abdu'l-Bahá was named Mírzá 'Abbás after His grandfather, but subsequent to their arrival at Baghdád, He was called "His Holiness the Master". After

the declaration of the Blessed Perfection Bahá'u'lláh He was given several lofty titles by Him, such as “Sirru'lláh” (Mystery of God), “Ghuṣnu'lláhu'l-A'zam” (Greatest Branch of God). By these titles He was addressed verbally and in writing by Bahá'u'lláh and all the believers.

In the earlier days of Bahá'u'lláh's declaration, the blessed *Book of Aqdas* was revealed. This is considered the greatest Book of the Bahá'ís, and contains all the Divine Laws and Ordinances. The following irrefutable command was revealed therein:

“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.”¹ Likewise, it is recorded in another part of the same Book:

“O people of the world! 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.”² Thus all the people of Bahá were informed of the One who would be the “Centre of the Cause of God” and their resource, after the disappearance of the Sun of Truth and the departure of the Beauty of Oneness. Thus they have hope in and rely upon this Providence shown forth by God the Exalted to them. They recognize in 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Expounder of the Divine Book and the Solver of the intricate points of the Heavenly Revelation; whose decision is conclusive; through whose explanation every discord and divergence is removed, and the seekers are brought to perfect realization, accord and affinity. They thank and praise God the Exalted, and manifest the utmost joy and happiness at His Appointing the Resort of the Cause of God.

To the people of Faith, the clear appointment of

¹ Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 121, p. 63.

² Bahá'u'lláh: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, para. 174, p. 82.

the Centre of the Cause, after the Departure of the Manifestation, is considered the most important point in religious matters, as it is the greatest channel which connects the servants of God with Holy and Divine Truth. For it is only through His explanation and decision that all discord is removed. Consequently the Bahá'ís, appreciate the determining of the "Appointed Centre" as the greatest of the Divine Providences, and account His blessed Being as an impregnable fortress which protects the Divine Religion from the doubts of the sceptic and fanciful imaginations of men. They were all sure and convinced that the purpose of God the Exalted, in these two blessed Verses, has been no other than His Holiness the Lord 'Abdu'l-Bahá for, apart from the Divine signs that were manifest in Him, Bahá'u'lláh clearly and implicitly, verbally and in writing, directed all of His Servants to the blessed Person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and, under all circumstances, clearly showed that He was far distinguished above others, in order that all the servants should look unto Him alone, and follow His Commands. But notwithstanding all this, as Bahá'u'lláh foresaw, that when His Beauty of Oneness was concealed under the veils of disappearance, the people of desire, through jealousy, would hold to groundless doubts and suspicions, and, disregarding the prohibition to interpret the Book, would divert the real meaning of the two verses above quoted, away from the "Appointed Centre". He, therefore, before His Departure, revealed the blessed *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* (Book of the Covenant, the Will of Bahá'u'lláh). This He wrote, and sealed it with His own blessed Hand and Seal, in order that the darkness of discord might not again obscure the brilliant Horizon of the Cause of God, and the calamities and disasters that afflicted other religions might not overtake this Move-

ment. In this Book (His Covenant) He clearly indicated that the purpose of the "Branch extended from the Ancient Root", revealed in the blessed Verse of *Aqdas*, was the Centre of the Circle of Names, the Exalted Branch of the Blessed Tree of Abhá, His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Then He, for the second time, enjoined, through an unchangeable and irrefutable command, all His "branches", "twigs", "relatives" and the people of Bahá without exception, to look unto that Dawning-place of Divine Light, and to know Him as the Source and Origin of the commands and prohibitions of the Heavenly Religion. He desired, by this clear elucidation, to counteract the imaginations of the ignorant, extinguish the world-consuming flame of the jealousy and hatred of people of error, and guard the Divine Religion from divisions and sects which are, according to the judgement of common-sense and the clear texts of the Holy Tablets of God, the most deplorable for religion and humanity. By this He sought to preserve the Divine Word from human doubts, suspicions and artifices.

But alas! All these clear texts of God, commanding people to turn to the Day-spring of the Light of the Covenant, did not check the evil thoughts of the people of discord; and His repeated exhortations and advices did not soften the hard hearts of the men of hostility, nor prevent them from ruinous discords and divisions. For when, in May, CE 1892 (2nd *Dhi'l-Qa'dih*, AH 1309), Bahá'u'lláh ascended to His Most Holy Station, and nine days after His Departure, the Book of the Covenant of God was chanted in the Holy Tomb in the assembly of believers, the gloom of animosity and disappointment became instantly manifest upon the faces of those who had groundless pride and desire for leadership, and who sought to raise discord and contradiction. On

the other hand, cheerfulness and joy were manifest in the shining faces of those who had no desire but that of seeking the Truth and telling the Truth. Some were seated upon the right hand of certainty, firmness and steadfastness in the solid Covenant of God, and some stood upon the left hand of unhappiness, in their impossible desire and erroneous thoughts. The former became distinguished for their firmness and inflexibility; noted for the effectiveness of their word; their good name and success in assisting the Cause, while the latter were distinguished by their instability, degradation and shame. From that day, the thorn of violating the Covenant of God grew in the Garden of the Bahá'í community and the signs of senseless hatred and hostility proceeded from a limited number of persons who are known as the náqidín¹ (violators of the Covenant). The one community of Bahá'u'lláh which was as the breeze of Paradise and the fragrance of the morn of Providence, free from the foul odours of animosity and discord, became divided through the evil intrigues of these few, and the Holy Word which He had strictly forbidden to be altered or transposed, became coloured with the dark doubts and false interpretations of those hostile men. They spread many false and insignificant pamphlets to create doubts and sedition, and put forth all sorts of untrue accusations and calumnies. They cursed and insulted the visitors to the Holy Tomb of the Blessed Perfection, and made the Holy Threshold—which is the Point of prayer and supplication, the Sacred House of commune and invocation—as a place for distressing and, confusing hearts. Finally, it was feared that some of the youthful believers would no longer be able to endure the evil tongues and cursing of the náqidín, and a disturbance might arise which would be contrary to the tran-

¹ Often written as “nakezeen” in the past.—M.W.T.

quill disposition of the Bahá'ís, and would desecrate the Holy Tomb. Consequently, His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá asked the local Government to supply a guard to accompany the believers upon the days of visiting the Holy Tomb, so that they might be protected from unseemly disturbance and be able to engage in prayer and devotion with composure. Although these people who violated the Covenant received, during the life of Bahá'u'lláh and after His Departure, every kindness and favour from His Holiness 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who considered their welfare and prosperity before His own and that of the faithful believers, yet, on account of jealousy and selfishness, they violated the Cause of God. Thus came to pass that which was prophesied by the Prophets—especially Jesus Christ—concerning the people of the right hand and the people of the left hand; and each will receive the reward of his deeds according to the justice of God. Two important points increased the flame of the fire of jealousy in the hearts of these náqidín, whose number does not exceed thirty. One was that the Bahá'ís, of all countries refused to accept the seditious books and pamphlets forwarded to them by the náqidín. According to the Command of Bahá'u'lláh, they unanimously determined not to pay any attention to these intrigues and temptations, but took shelter, with the utmost union and harmony, under the banner of the Centre of the Covenant. Another point was that during a short space of time the Cause of God became far more widely spread than before, through the fluent pen and brilliant explanations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; so the number of the Bahá'ís, became enormously multiplied since the departure of Bahá'u'lláh. The fame of the Dawning-place of the Light of the Covenant spread throughout all regions, and His Holy Tablets became scattered as rose-petals throughout all coun-

tries. His Great Name filled the world with awe and the renown of His glorious deeds reached all in the East and West. Therefore, the people of hostility and violation availed themselves of political machinations, and disturbed the minds and thoughts of fanatical men in those lands, until, finally, in 1901, the great imprisonment was renewed and the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá became subject to the same disasters which formerly befell Bahá'u'lláh. As this extraordinary happening (the violation by the náqidín) is one of the most astonishing events which human prejudice has ever created in the world, and the author has not now sufficient time to give it in detail, he confines himself to this short account, while begging God to enable him to write the full particulars at a future time, and to bring it to the notice of the righteous.

The Bahá'í Proofs

Ḥújaja'l Bahíyyih

The first introduction

The second introduction

The third introduction

The fourth introduction

The fifth introduction

By Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl

Translated from the Arabic
By 'Alí-Qulí Khán (Ishti'ál ibn-i-Kalántar)

Exordium

In the Name of God, The Clement, The Merciful!

O ye just ones! Verily, I praise for you our Lord the Bahá'u'l-Abhá, and offer the most excellent homage and exaltation to His Beauty, The Most Luminous, The Most Holy, The Exalted, The Supreme; and I salute and glorify the excellent Branch which is extended from the Exalted Tree, the blessed "Sadrat", planted in the centre of the "Paradise of perpetual abode"; the Lord of mankind and the Possessor of the hearts of the prudent. The hearts of the righteous are forever turned unto Him, and the heads of the holy ones are humbled before Him, so long as the sun is shining from heaven; to Him the Birds of Sanctity are warbling hymns of glorification, and praise.

An illustrious Command hath issued from the Holy Court, that I should compile for you a book for the solution of the allegories of the Heavenly Scriptures and interpretation of the intricacies in the texts of the Divine and Holy Writings. To discover their hidden facts, explain the meanings of their symbols, open their seals, reveal their purport, and unveil their treasures; so that the gems of their mysteries may sparkle forth, and their precious and peerless pearls may gleam; this, then, shall be the motive of my humble endeavour, the measure of my privilege and to witness of my obedience to the revered and authoritative Command emanating from the Court of Holiness.

By your life, O ye noble, just ones! This glorious Command hath indeed moved and rejoiced me. The receipt of this praiseworthy Mandate hath fortified and encouraged me to arise in compliance with the

blessed and honourable Command, and overcome the manifold difficulties which intervene to prevent the fulfilment of this important and serious work.

Verily, all the Heavenly Books, Writings and Texts are songs sung by the Birds of Holiness, in the praise of our Lord the Abhá Beauty; hymns warbled by the Doves of Harmony, proclaiming the signs of His Beloved Manifestation; verses and rhythms uttered by the Tongues of Prophets, declaring the tokens of the Hour of the greatest Resurrection; melodies chanted in the assemblies of the people of Sanctity, clearly indicating the Day-Spring of the Lights of His Covenant and Testament, The Most Mighty, The Supreme. How excellent, then, is the mentioning and explanation thereof! How delightful is the interpretation and solution thereof! How sweet is the recital and elucidation thereof!

For this Day is no other than the end of the ages; no other than the illumination of the horizons of earth, both East and West, with the Lights of the Forgiving Lord; no other than the changing of darkness into light, and of sorrow into joy and gladness; whereby hearts are cheered, souls are tranquillized, eyes are consoled and breasts are dilated.

This is the Day of God.

Consequently we take the pen and commence our treatise, relying, under all circumstances, upon God the Exalted. We beseech His Lofty Threshold to render easy unto us the accomplishment of this glorious work, and vouchsafe the ability to achieve it in perfect form, with speed.

Now we place before our beloved ones certain "Introductions" which may help them to apprehend the above-mentioned hidden and veiled meanings, and understand the symbolic aims which have been sealed, during generations, since olden times.

The first introduction

Explaining, briefly “The Day of God” and the realization of the “Mighty Hour” and the “Day of Judgement”

The first introduction

O ye people of Bahá and companions of the Red Ark! Know—May God the Exalted assist ye through a spirit sent from Him!—verily, when ye consider carefully the announcements in the Heavenly Books and perceive the glad-tidings in the Holy, Divine Writings, ye will find they agree in promising the coming of the “Day of God” and foreshadowing the arrival of the “Hour” wherein the Face of God will be manifested, the regions of heavens and earths will be illuminated by His coming, all former things will be changed by His rising, and every sorrow effaced. The essence of all that is recorded concerning these glad-tidings is this, that when oppression and tyranny prevail throughout the world; when distress and tribulations are intensified among the nations; when divergences of religions and creeds become grave and widespread, and the heaven of worship of the Merciful God is riven and overthrown; when the greed of souls grows fierce to violate men and property; when terrors and adversities prevail; at that time the Divine Herald will arise, the Holy Heavenly Spirit will descend, announcing the coming of the Manifestation of the Promised Lord and proclaiming the approach of the dawn of the Orb of His Glorious Beauty. Then will the Path be made plain, hearts brought nigh unto God, breasts healed, griefs dispelled and tears wiped away. Then will the Glorious Lord arise and utter a Call which shall shake the pillars of this lofty edifice. He will cry out in a voice which shall fill the expanse of the world and summon all the nations of the earth, both east and west, to God, The Mighty, The Glorious! Then will He institute

for them new laws, and trace out for them a plain, direct path.

And after the setting of the Sun of His Beauty, the breeze of His Presence being hushed, the Glorious Branch extended from the Tree of His Essence will arise; the dawning Moon will shine from the horizon of the Heaven of His Bounty, diffusing the lights of His Religion, establishing the Temple of His Worship, and sitting upon the Throne of His Glory. His holy Word will penetrate all regions until the saying be fulfilled, "The earth will be illuminated with the Light of its Lord, in the Day of Judgement."¹

With the rising of such Divine Souls and the shining forth of such Heavenly Lights, the clouds of fictitious beliefs will be dispersed and the pearls of the Realities of Knowledge will become manifest; religious divergences will be removed and nations will be united in worshipping the Merciful One. So the worship of Satan shall pass away. In that Day, God will "make all things new". Everywhere, affairs will change, until all parts of the earth shall rejoice. Enlightenment, learning, arts and trades will become universal among mankind. The remote ones of the world will be brought nigh; nations and peoples will be harmonized; the rancours and animosities hidden in breasts shall be removed, and love, affection, attraction and brotherhood become general throughout the world. Then souls will be cheered by the wafting of the fragrances of joy, and hearts will rejoice at the blowing of the Breezes of Gladness. The Lord will destroy all vestiges of tyranny, oppression and rebellion, through His Power, and will propagate evidences of Equity, Justice and Charity.

He will judge between nations, render justice between people, correct souls and unite hearts. Then the time of spoiling will pass away, and the days of

¹ Refer to Qur'án 39:69.

warring cease; the swords will be made into ploughshares, the spears into pruning-hooks; no nation will raise sword against another, and no "multitudes will wage wars together".

To resume; the Fragrances of Resurrection will stir and the Breezes of Life will blow; the dead will be quickened, the darkness of former things be dispelled, and the lights of ideal virtues will shine; the emblems of true humanity will be raised in all places, and the Lord of Heaven and Earth will illumine all regions, both East and West. These are some of the signs appointed as pertaining to the Day of God, and decreed for the Age of the Manifestation of God, which we have brought to your notice. Were ye to consider them with the eye of thoughtfulness and perception, ye would find them facts clearly recorded in all the Books and Scriptures; written by the Pen of God during the bygone centuries and ages.

Likewise, the clear judgement must consider the necessity for the fulfilment of these promises and the attainment of the world to its loftiest height. As this, our world is created spherical as to form and rotation, so likewise it is spherical in its physical revolutions, such as ascent and descent, advancement and recession, progress and decline, until God may allow its destruction and destine its extinction. This is what is interpreted by philosophers of Divinity to be the arc of ascent and descent of the circle of creation; and by the natural philosophers to be the laws of development and retrogression. As in this age our world is upon the ladder of ascent, which fact is indisputably acknowledged by the philosophers and scientists; therefore it must needs ascend to its loftiest degrees of perfection, and attain its point of equilibrium. Far be it from the Divine Wisdom and the Sublime Heavenly Power to permit the leaves of the

Book of the Universe to remain scattered, the Epistle of Creation mutilated, the ground of capacities fallow, and the trees of humanity fruitless. Mankind must of necessity reach the loftiest destination, the highest goal, the exalted grade and supreme station.

The Guardians of the Divine Revelation (Prophets) have interpreted this station to be "Regeneration".

Then, when ye, O people of Bahá, carefully consider the world, ye will perceive that all the nations of the ancient world have been totally encrusted by false worships of paganism and Sabeanism; the darkness of imaginations and fictitious ideas hath prevailed in every region, and entangling beliefs and evil customs accumulated in every clime. Inasmuch as the above-mentioned nations were ignorant of the meanings and original purposes of the texts revealed in the Heavenly Books, such as "ascent" and "descent", "return" and "restitution", "heaven" and "earth", "sun", "moon" and "stars", "resurrection", "death" and "life", and many similar words which were upon the lips of the prophets since the ancient days, and were uttered by the Tongue of God from the foundation of the world; and as they understood such words according to their literal sense; therefore these nations fell into the gulf of the fictitious beliefs of paganism. Among these pagan notions were transmigration of souls, transformation of embodiments, worship of stars, animals and trees, services of genii, controlling spirits and other ruinous practices and pernicious beliefs, which facts are evident to every informed historian, and to every student and archaeologist.

As the gloom of fictitious and superstitious beliefs prevailed in all parts of the world; as the clouds of

ruinous practices, the dusk of pernicious actions, densely enwrapped all regions, and veils of suspicion hung upon every side; and as the earth was entirely covered by darkness upon darkness, therefore the prophets—Peace be upon them!—have interpreted that long duration as the “gloomy night”, and the time of its disappearance as the “bright morning”, “the day when it shineth”.

The Great Lord Moses, the “Interlocutor”, was the first one who arose in that dark and gloomy period, and announced to the Jewish people the coming termination of that long night. He proclaimed the advent of the glorious “Day of God”. He taught them the Unity of God; made known to them the way of worshipping God; implanted in their hearts the expectation of the arrival of the “Day of God”, and explained to them the signs, symbols, tokens and wonders thereof. So also in the past days, Abraham, who was entitled “Zoroaster”, appeared in Persian regions and taught the Pársí nation the worship of the merciful God, abolishing idolatry from among them announcing the coming of the “Hour”, reminding them of the future Resurrection, explaining the signs and tokens thereof, and unveiling the appointed time. Moreover, he clearly stated to them that, verily, the Sun of the promised Beauty should dawn from the horizon of the East, and that the blessed Sadrat would spring forth from a well-rooted tree of Persia. But, as at that time the darkness was overcoming the light, and the hours of gloomy night were still far from the dawning-place of Manifestation, the false imaginary beliefs and pernicious worship of paganism again prevailed even among the Hebraic and Persian nations. Thus the worship of God was mingled with fire-worship, and the kings of Judea and Ephraim associated with nations rooted in paganism, such as the Egyp-

tians, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Greeks, because the latter had assumed dominion over the lands of Palestine and the inhabitants thereof. On this account the Hebrews were compelled to live under the laws of those governments, to obey their kings, adore their demons and worship their idols. Yet, among them, the Jewish prophets, such as David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Zechariah, and others—Peace be upon them!—during fifteen hundred years were reminding the people of the coming of the “Day of God”, and reviving hopes in their hearts of the “Manifestation of God”. So these prophets were, in their cycles, as beaming stars which shone forth from the uttermost horizon of heaven; as lamps enkindled and aflame in the gloomy and obscure night.

In that way many generations passed, until the glorious Saviour arose and the brilliant star dawned from the horizon of Galilee. Then the planet of the Son shone from among the posterity of Abraham, the melodies of the Gospels pealed forth and the descent of calamities upon the children of Israel drew nigh. Our Lord Jesus Christ—Upon Him is Glory and Grandeur!—arose and cried with loudest voice:

“Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!

“Awaken and be mindful! The Hour of the Coming of the Kingdom of God approacheth!

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God!”

Likewise, during His lifetime, He was continually reminding them of the approach of the “promised Day”, renewing and establishing the Signs of the Appearance of the Beauty of the Adored One, which had been prophesied by the prophets of Israel.

Jesus Christ declared that in “that Day” He will sit upon the right hand of His (the Father’s) Throne; will be authorized to make His commands effective; will be established upon the Seat of His Glory, and become the Shepherd of His sheep, through His Permission. He—Exalted is He!—heralded the approach of the Great Hour, the Mighty Day of Resurrection, until He ascended to the Supreme Friend. Then Apostles arose to spread His Cause and promote His Word, until all the European regions were illuminated by the lights of His Command, and became purified from the filth of paganism.

Six centuries lapsed after the departure of Jesus Christ, until the Beams of Dawn appeared from Arabian horizons and the shining of the Morning Light was transmitted from the direction of Ḥijáz.¹ The greatest signs of the Hour appeared and the mightiest Tokens of the “Day of Judgement” became manifest. Muḥammad arose, crying out with the loudest call: “The Sentence of God will surely come (to be executed); wherefore do not hasten it.” This voice was heard from heaven: “The time of their accounts hath drawn nigh unto the people, while they are turning away therefrom.” He clearly stated that the “gloomy night” had expired and the dawning of the Sun of Truth from the Supreme Horizon was at hand. Through the light of His Word and the power of His Prophethood He illumined great nations and multitudes, from the remotest parts of Africa to the distant east; peoples who knew nothing concerning Unity and had tasted no drop from the fountain of Oneness; those who had denied the Prophets and falsely accused the Chosen Ones. The Word of Muḥammad and His prophetic testimony drove them out of the darkness of paganism toward the Light of the Worship of God. Thus they were turned from denial of Prophets to

¹ Western Arabia.—M.W.T.

belief in the line of holy messengers from Adam to Jesus the Spirit of God.

Muḥammad announced to them the coming of the “Day of God”, and made with them a Covenant to expect the descent of the Spirit (Christ) from the Heaven of the command of God. But He also clearly stated that the Precursor, who shall arise before His descent, to prepare the way before that “coming”, will come forth from His (Muḥammad’s) posterity; that through the Spirit (Christ) God will fill the earth with equity after it had been filled with injustice, and illuminate all regions with justice after they had been darkened by tyranny. Then He established books of traditions and prophecies, and filled pages with signs and tokens.

The earth of enlightenment rolled around its axis for 1,260 years, until the Hour drew nigh and the appointed time arrived. Then the Star of Guidance dawned, the Planet of Purity shone forth, the Fountains of Knowledge gushed out in one of the best lands of the Orient, and the Tree of Grace was ignited in the city of Shíráz, the chief town of the province of Fárs. The Most Great Báb (Gate) arose, preaching to the multitudes and peoples, heralding again the expiration of the “gloomy night”, foreshadowing and clearly declaring the coming of the great and dreadful “Day of God”. He raised this call betwixt the Heaven and earth: “Rejoice! Rejoice! The Morn of Guidance hath indeed appeared, the ‘gloomy night’ hath cleared away and the Dawning of the Beauty of God, the Abhá¹ is at hand. The spring-time of the Return of the Realities of Regeneration hath come.” All regions trembled with this most sweet call and the Resurrection appeared through the Supreme Message. The storms of oppression blew and the whirlwinds of

¹ “Most Glorious”.

rancour stirred in the breasts of religious doctors. Then the brilliant Flame was extinguished, the spiritual Fragrance ceased and the Beauty of the Merciful One was martyred in the city of Tabríz, the chief town of Ádharbayján, under the sentence of a satanic and impious one. Calamities and afflictions appeared, animosity and malice showed forth and the dark clouds of discord became violent; until the appointed time came and the Signs of the arrival of the "Day of God" were manifest in all directions.

Then dawned the Sun of the Beauty of the Promised One; then rose and beamed the Orb of the Face of the Adored One. The Hour arrived, the Resurrection came, the Trumpet sounded and the Dawn of the Manifestation shone forth. Bahá'u'l-Abhá (The Glory of God the Most Glorious) arose; the Beauty of the Supreme God appeared and called out with a voice that filled all regions, causing the "seven strata of the earth" to tremble:

"Now the Promised God hath indeed come, the Beauty of the Adored One hath appeared, the appointed 'Day of God' hath dawned and His irrefutable and glorious Command hath arisen. The Lord hath descended in the shadow of clouds; the earth is shining with the Light of the Face of its Lord, the Bestower; the Bridge is extended, the Book is appointed, the curtain is lifted and the veil is removed. Showers of Verses have fallen, branches of Knowledge have put forth leaves and become flourishing in all directions. The 'dead have arisen and the lifeless are resurrected!'" The rivers of Knowledge and enlightenment have flowed from His Supreme Pen and He hath broken the seal of the "Sealed Wine" with His Generous Fingers. He hath explained in His Holy Tablets the realities of the Words of the Prophets, and hath disclosed in His precious

Writings the meanings of the symbols of the Elect, until all the seals of the Prophets have been opened and the aims of the Messengers become unveiled to the possessors of pure hearts. He instituted new laws which are destined to unite all nations and multitudes; issued a glorious Command which will bring together all religions and creeds, enjoined His Saints to love all nations and exhorted them to serve all the people of the world. He enacted for them devotional ordinances, such as fasting, prayer, pilgrimage, almsgiving and other rites and ceremonies. He forbade crimes and sins, such as murder, adultery, theft, backbiting, lying, calumny and other iniquities and offences. He commanded them to submit to the laws of governments, urged them to obey kings and princes and to respect those who are good among the learned men and doctors. He exhorted them to universally spread enlightenment, to educate their children of both sexes and absolutely prohibited them from that which may create oppression and hatred in the world. He forbade them from cursing, execration, insult, strife, conflict and all that is calculated to separate hearts or perturb souls. He even forbade them from carrying arms without the permission of rulers, and from everything that may cause confusion.

During His last days He wrote the *Kitáb-i-'Ahd* (The Book of the Covenant, Testament or Will) with His blessed Fingers, in which He clearly stated and appointed the "Centre of the Covenant", directing peoples to the Orb of the Universe. In this Book, He again exhorted His friends and followers to show forth good characteristics and noble attributes, so that there may appear pure and chaste souls among His believers; shining and beaming stars in the heaven of His Cause.

Likewise, the torrent of His Verses and the shower

of His Graces abundantly poured down, until the time of Disappearance drew nigh, and the Sun of Truth was concealed in the veil of Absence. The Lord ascended to the Supreme Court of His Might, and His blessed Identity was hidden in His Invisible, Furthestmost Essence. This calamitous event and lamentable disaster happened on the 2nd of the month Dhi'l-Qa'dih, AH 1309, which corresponds to the 28 May CE 1892.

When the Sun of Guidance was set and the rustle of the Sadrat-i-Muntahá¹ hushed, then the Orb of the Covenant dawned and the “Moon” of the Testament appeared with the utmost brilliancy and effulgence. The glorious “Branch extended from the Ancient Root” arose to promote the Word of the King of the Day of Judgement, and now He is crying and heralding throughout all regions: “The Judgement of God hath come; respond ye, respond ye unto the Call of God! Hearken ye, hearken ye to the Melodies of God! Inhale ye the Fragrances of God! Be illumined, be illumined with the lights of the Face of Bahá'u'lláh! The promises of the Prophets have already been fulfilled, the prophecies of the Messengers realized; the Day of Judgement hath come, and mankind hath stood before the Lord of the creatures!”

After the breezes of the Testament had blown and the Fragrances of the Covenant wafted, the pure writings rapidly circulated and were spread throughout all regions; just as the petals of roses are scattered in spring-time and light diffuses its effulgence; souls were revived and breasts dilated; “thousand thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand ministered unto Him”, and all in the graves arose. Then the signs of violation appeared in the faces of the people

¹ Sidr al-Muntahá (the furthestmost Tree) refers to a tree planted by the Arabs in ancient times at the end of a road, to serve as a guide. Here it refers to the Manifestation of God on earth.

of discord, and armies of retreat joined the ranks of the people of opposition. Souls were taken away and branches were cut down; those of the right hand were divided from those of the left hand; the dwellers in hell-fire were distinguished from the abiders in the Exalted Heaven, and the suspicious were separated from the people of Assurance. Blessed are those who attain! Glad-tidings unto those who are assured!

O people of Bahá, and faithful ones! Were ye to consider, for a third time, the utterances of the Prophets and the words of the Chosen Ones, ye will find that not one of those who appeared before the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh has ever claimed to be the Greatest Manifestation of God who should come and pacify the World—whose Day is the “Day of God” unanimously agreed upon by all nations and peoples.

The Prophets and messengers are all manifestations of One Reality. This will be explained in the treatise upon “Unity”.

The qualities that differentiate the prophets and Manifestations of God are their individual characteristics and peculiarities. These distinguish them in their outward station and function of manifestation, but do not affect their inner station of Reality and Oneness with the All-Source; and pertain to the illumination manifest in them, but not to the Essence whence that illumination proceeds and to which they all have the same relationship. Forasmuch as the Essence is hidden in its own Reality and incomprehensible in its own innermost Identity, therefore, in order to understand these matters, a seeker and striver after truth must needs consider that which every Prophet has explained in His Book concerning His station, and understand the names and titles which He has assigned to Himself.

As to Moses and the Jewish prophets—Peace be upon them!—one fact is evident in their books and prophecies. If we study the Old Testament we find that after laws, ordinances and some prophecies concerning Tyre, Sidon, Egypt, etc., the only thing recorded therein is but one solid and important message. It is this, that, verily the Hebrew Kingdom will be utterly destroyed in the Holy Land and the tribes will be scattered to all parts of the earth, where they will taste the bitterness of lowliness and abasement, and undergo great affliction and terrible calamities. The days of their tribulations will be prolonged, as a consequence of their sins and crimes, until the coming of the Lord, when He will arise to save them from such extreme degradation, free them from captivity, gather their scattered ones, restore to them their former abodes, and plant them in their original dwellings—an abiding which will not be followed by any dispersion or removal, and a growth which will not undergo any extirpation or distress.

The Book of every Prophet, without exception, contains clear warnings regarding the long degradation that will befall the Jews; announces to them the coming of the Day of the Glorious Lord, and their deliverance from violent torture. Naught is heard from the books of the Old Testament except the melodies of the Birds of Sanctity for the Manifestation of the Beneficent Lord; the cooings of the Doves of Peace concerning the signs of that Great Day, and the deliverance of the Children of Israel from the painful affliction. Therefore, it is not possible to consider the appearances of these Prophets to be the Manifestation of the Promised Lord, nor their days to be the Day of the Glorious Lord.

As to Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—He did not claim that His appearance was that of God; nay, rather, He

clearly stated Himself to be the Son of God. Neither did He claim His day to be the Day of God, but expressed Himself as a herald of its coming and approach, as is shown by His words: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." Nor did He announce to the Jews any honour and dominion, but rather warned them against the approach of their long abasement and violent desolation, as is clearly shown in Matthew 23:37-39: "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Whosoever studies and searches the texts of the Gospels and the Epistles of the Apostles, will find that they are all in perfect harmony with what is recorded in the books of the Jewish prophets, regarding the coming of the Day of God, its signs and events. Therefore, it is not possible to interpret Jesus Christ's appearance into the words of the Jewish prophets that announce the coming of the Glorious Day of God, the illumining of the earth with the lights of His Beautiful Face and emancipation of the Children of Abraham from their long degradation.

As to Muḥammad, His title, "the Seal of the Prophets", clearly demonstrates that His appearance was not the Manifestation of God, nor was His day the Day of God. He commanded the world of Islām to call out, five times a day, the formula, "I testify that, verily, Muḥammad is the Messenger of God!" Moreover, one-third of the Qur'án consists of prophecies concerning the approach of the Day of God's

coming, and signs foreshadowing the near arrival of the Cause of God.

As to the Most Great Báb, the glorious Precursor, the First Point, the Supreme Model—Glorified is His Most Mighty Exalted Name!—this is a sufficient fact, that He hath entitled Himself “the Báb”, which refers to His being the Gate of the Manifestation of God; and He hath foreshadowed the coming of the Promised One in the name of “He whom God shall manifest”. He hath alluded to, nay rather, clearly stated in the 3rd chapter of the sixth unit of the Book of *Bayán*, that verily His Holiness the Promised One will appear at the term of 19 years after His own glorious Rise. In the same Book, He says His advent was to make the way straight before the Manifestation of God, and to prepare the path for the coming of “He whom God shall manifest”.

Consequently, because of the facts that we have clearly explained, it is impossible to hold that the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures and the Divine Books are fulfilled in any other than Bahá'u'lláh, and in His Supreme and Most Holy Dawn. He—Exalted and Glorified is His Name!—hath alone claimed that, verily His Appearance is the promised Manifestation of God, His Face is the Face of God the Adored, and His Day is the appointed Day of God.

Prudent is he who considers this Supreme Truth and lofty Aim. Verily, unto God will be the end of all. He is the Lord of the Next World and the present one.

The second introduction

Treating of the meaning of Divine Unity, the disagreement of the nations as to the way of understanding It and the manner of Its demonstration.

The second introduction

O ye people of Bahá! May God illumine your insight with the Lights shining from the Bahá of His Face! Know, verily the nations have unanimously agreed in confessing the Oneness of the Essence of God the Exalted; but learned doctors have disagreed in understanding Its meaning and the explanation of Its import.

Verily, the Pagans acknowledge and believe in the Oneness of God and in His Singleness, even as the Jews, Christians and the people of Islám have confessed.

If ye should question any Buddhist, Brahamanist or Sabeian, concerning God the Exalted, he will, without consideration or hesitation, answer, that he believes in one God who is perfect in all His attributes and free from every imperfection; and that idols and images are no other than the visible representations of that Holy Essence; dawning-places of that One Reality; channels through which the Divine Bounties are gained; or intermediaries for worshipping that Invisible Identity.

These idols and images, as is known to the doctors of archaeology, are none other than images of men who arose in bygone days and instituted a belief or performed glorious deeds among the ancient nations. As a confirmatory evidence of this statement, see Mosheim *History of the Church*¹ (Book I., Cent. I., Part I, Para. 9): “The greater part of the gods of all nations were ancient heroes, famous for their achievements and their worthy deeds; such as kings, generals, and founders of cities; and likewise females

¹ Johann Lorenz Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern*, Vol. 1.

who were highly distinguished for their deeds and discoveries, whom a grateful posterity had deified.”

It is clear, therefore, that the doctor, philosophers, priests and jurists first placed these idols and images in their temples and homes as memorials of their ancestors and heroes, to continue their remembrance, show their gratitude and do honour to their persons, until finally, visiting and paying homage to these images became a part of their worship, and adoration of them became an essential part of their religions. With the lapse of time their superstitions brought astonishing events and great performances, such as signs and miracles, into their worship of these images, as is witnessed by the usage of the common people in every religion.

Briefly, the plurality of the gods of the idolaters does not contradict their acknowledgement of the Oneness of God, even as the doctrine of Trinity, held by Christians, is not contradictory to their belief in the Unity and Singleness of God the Most High. Verily, all the Christian peoples are of one accord in believing in the Oneness of the Essence of God, notwithstanding their belief in the plurality of the Trinity and the difference of names and meanings therein.

It is evident from the Holy Scriptures that the ancient Sabeans considered their spiritual men as “gods”. To explain it more clearly; just as the Christians regard their illuminated exponents as “saints”, and Muslims reverence their great spiritual men as “‘Ulíyyá” (holy ones), so likewise the Sabeans considered their heroes as “gods”. The purpose and meaning of the word “god” to idolaters is therefore the same as that intended by the word “saint” to the Christians, and as the title “holy ones of God” to Islám. This fact is proved by the verse of the Acts 28:3–6: “And when Paul (in the island

of Malta) had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand ...; but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god." By this they meant that he was one of the "holy ones" of God, or one of the "saints", because they witnessed in him such an evident wonder; even as would be the case among villagers and rustics of the present time. The same meaning is alluded to in Psalms 82:1, thus: "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods." This means that God the Exalted will stand, judge and rule in the congregation of the saints. This also corresponds perfectly with that which is revealed in many other places in the Holy Scriptures; such as in Jude 14: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints." It is also recorded in Psalms 82:6-7: "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the Most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes."

All these verses clearly indicate that by "gods" is meant "saints". The interpretation thereof is that, verily God the Exalted wished that His Chosen Ones should possess piety and sanctity; therefore, He elected them to be His holy ones; but they fell into tests, because, like other princes, they persisted in pernicious and ruinous ideas. By the two blessed verses is meant the chiefs of the *náqídín* (the violators of the Covenant) and the leaders of the companions of the "left hand", who are plunged into the depths of error. They claimed to be the sons of God, and that their Lord has chosen them for Himself; but they have fallen, in violation of the Cove-

nant of God. In the same Psalm, David—Peace be upon him—has recorded prophecies concerning the Manifestation of God and referred to the signs of the Day of God; as is proved by the last verse: “Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.”¹

It is, therefore, evident that among the bygone peoples the word “god” signified “saints” to the Christians, and “holy ones” to the Muslims. This form was introduced into the verses of the Holy Scriptures and used by the Jewish prophets in some passages to which we have alluded when quoting the verses of the Psalms; inasmuch as this was, in those days, one of the prevalent words or usual terms adapted from idolaters and Sabeans. The words of God have always been revealed in accordance with the language of people, so that the benefit thereof may become universal; which fact is evident to the discerning and to such as have the knowledge of the Book.

The Jewish people, early in their cycle and in the beginning of their rise, applied the word “prophet” to their religious chiefs; because in those times religious leaders were accustomed to interpret dreams, and people relied upon them as men who were inspired in visions. Those ancient days were, as we have recorded in the former introduction, as the dark and gloomy night, on account of the agglomeration of fictitious beliefs, the gloom of pagan tenets, and natural trend to barbarism; for Sabeanism and Paganism were then prevalent in all states and regions. It was as though darkness prevailed in all parts of the earth, except the Syrian countries, which were at that time the planting-ground for the tree of Prophethood, and the dawning-place of the light of Unity and Guidance. As darkness then dominated

¹ Psalms 82:8.

all parts of the earth, the prophets therefore considered those days as the dark night in the cycles of the world, and symbolized them by the words “gloomy night”, which term they applied to them in numerous places in their writings. It was in accord with such conditions that revelation and inspiration came to them in dreams, and so explanation of visions was considered important. They even applied the word “dreamer” to a prophet, as is clearly manifest in many passages in the Holy Scriptures; and thus the word “prophet” came into common use and was applied to all who had significant dreams among the Jewish nation. From them, this term found its way among the Arabs, and became of current usage in the religion of Islám.

From the above-mentioned statements, it is clearly evident that the term “god” to the idolaters, “prophet” to the Jews, “saint” to the Christians, and “holy one” to the Muslims, has been used and applied in the same sense of religious leaders, whom these creeds regarded as the nearest of men to God the Exalted, and the only ones who were considered as esteemed before Him.

Since the nations unanimously agree upon the Unity of God, and that the gods, prophets, saints or holy ones—according to the difference between languages, interpretations, and terminologies—are none other than the means of attainment to Spiritual Bounties from the One Reality of God; it proves that these leaders were only the Manifestations of power for the institution of Divine Laws among mankind. Now let it be known that verily different doctors in every creed have explained the essential Unity of the Almighty God in diverse ways, and have respectively demonstrated it by logical, scriptural or inspirational proofs. The philosophers and theorists of every na-

tion rely upon logical proofs and analytical reasoning, in demonstrating the existence of the Self-existent One, and in proving His Unity and Oneness. However, the theologians and divines rest upon authoritative proofs, which, they maintain, are derived from Heavenly Books. Thus, the Jewish doctors rely upon the texts of the Old Testament, the theologians of Christianity trust in the texts of the Gospels, and the Muslim doctors of theology hold to the words of the Qur'án. Such is the case with all the religions and creeds. All the extant religions clearly state in their Heavenly Books the Oneness of God the Exalted, His Singleness, and that He is far above being associated or classed with His creatures. All these logical or scriptural proofs which the doctors of every creed use in demonstrating the existence of God, His Unity and Singleness, provided we suppose them to have any efficacy in proving their purpose, and granted they can prove the truth of their assertion—cannot go beyond demonstrating the conception of an absolute and indefinite God.

In other words, these proofs and arguments do not impart the knowledge of God, but only impart the understanding of the existence of God. Knowledge of the existence of God is other than the knowledge of God—the Glorified, the Great. The difference between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the existence of God is evident to the intelligent, and the great divergence between the two custodians of these two knowledges is clear to the men of perception. A man who has the knowledge of the existence of God and not that of God, resembles a man who knows and believes in the existence of a precious stone called ruby, but who does not know the ruby itself, nor can he distinguish between it and other stones. Such a man is frequently cheated; and buys a base and worthless

stone or coloured glass instead of ruby. But a man who has the knowledge of God, is like one who knows the ruby with real knowledge of its qualities, and distinguishes between it and other stones with due discrimination. Such a man will not be deluded by the misrepresentations of the dishonest, nor deceived by the sellers and tradesmen.

Hence, many nations have been misled and many peoples deceived, mistaking devils for saints, worshipping idols and falsely denying the Prophets. They never worshipped the devil except in the name of God the Exalted. This is alluded to in Matthew (chapter 24), and clearly expressed in the Second Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians (Chapter 2).

As to the people of Bahá, the companions of the Red Ark, who have attained knowledge of the realities of Oneness, from the traces of the Supreme Pen; who have taken the lesson of Unity from the rustle of the Sadratu'l-Muntahá, and have studied the problems of Singleness in the Chambers of the Schools of Paradise; through the melodies of their Lord the Abhá Beauty; they believe that the Essence of God the Exalted is an impregnable, invisible One, a hidden treasury, absolutely single in its Identity and Reality. Therefore, it is not possible to qualify It with any qualifications of ingress or egress, ascent or descent, occupancy or possession, concealment or exposure, absence or presence, rest or motion, advance or withdrawal, or with other similar qualities and attributes, peculiarities or grades. These are the characteristics and attributes of matter, while the Essence of God is abstracted therefrom, and is in Its Identity contrary to and far above being qualified by Its qualities or specified by Its descriptions. Neither can It be defined by any definitions, referred to by any reference, nor determined by

the application of any pronoun; because names, attributes, peculiarities and praises befit only a thing which can be perceived through and apprehended by physical senses. It is beyond the power of mind to apprehend a general subject except by investigating particulars, studying the qualities of individuals, and deducing from them general forms and logical meanings. However, an abstract cannot be apprehended by any of the physical senses. Therefore, it is utterly impossible for the mind to assign to It any especial character, or to particularize It by any name or definite attribute. All that man may think of this state is but imagination and has no connection whatever with any definite truths or real conceptions.

Consequently it is recorded in the writings of certain Oriental saints, rebuking those who were discussing the Divine Essence, thus: "All that ye distinguish through your imagination, in its most subtle meanings, is a creation like yourselves, and returns to yourselves only."

As it is proved that the way to the comprehension of the Essence is closed, and that it is impossible for us to reach Its depth, therefore God the Exalted has created a glorious person among mankind for the manifestation of this holy Essence and sole Reality. He has selected a precious Gem among the pure gems of humanity, for the showing forth of Its light and traces, so that He may be as a throne for His Essence, a horizon for the rising of the lights of His Splendour, a manifester of His hidden Reality, an emanator of His invisible Identity, a recipient of His Names and Attributes, a tongue to reveal His Revelation and Inspiration, a channel for His Laws and Ordinances, an elucidator of His Signs and Evidences, and a deliverer of His Commands and Messages. By Him, God manifests, in the first grade and primary station,

His Knowledge, Wisdom, Power, Dominion, Grandeur, Unity, Will, Beauty, Glory, Grace, Perfection, Mercy and Beneficence. He (the Manifestation) is named by all the mighty Names revealed in the Divine Books, and is the subject of the prophetic melodies recorded in the Heavenly Scriptures. He is the "Spirit of God sent down", the prevailing "Word", the brilliant "Face of God", "His outstretched hand"; He is the eloquent "Tongue of God", "His discerning Eye"; He is the "Preserved Tablet", the "Supreme Pen", the "Manifest Horizon", the "Outlook of Abhá"; He is the "Great Throne", "the Lofty Seat", the "Everlasting Paradise", the "Sadratu'l-Muntahá". "By whatever title He may be called, His are the most comely names."

Such an excellent Person, glorious Man, preserved Gem, and Greatest Name must needs exist in every cycle, age and time—as is asserted by Prophets and Messengers, in order to be the Temple for the worship of God. He is the Channel of the Knowledge of God; so that the proofs of God, His evidences and signs may not be void, the Path of Unity and Oneness may not be concealed, the breeze of Devotion and Sanctity may not be hushed, the door of Faith and Assurance may not be closed, and that mankind may not be finally lost in barbarism.

A sound judgement also considers the truth of this fact: that interruption of effects from an abstract (the first Cause) is unreasonable, and that it is utterly impossible for any action to issue from an abstract, except through the instrumentality of bodies (matter). This is evident to such as are grounded in logical arguments, and are gifted with brilliant sight in Divine and natural enlightenments. The essential Oneness is not invalidated by the plurality of its manifestations, nor is the sun made manifold by the

number of its dawning-places. The spirit of anyone of mankind is not multiplied nor altered by the change of his body, that is, by the transformation of the substance of his organism, from his earliest childhood and youth until his decrepitude and decline. For the only thing to rely upon in the realization of Identity and the demonstration of Oneness is the unity of the Spirit, and not of the body. As already mentioned, bodies are but instruments for the Essence. Neither does the Essence of God the Exalted become plural by manifesting Itself in plural manifestations. Believing in Oneness is to recognize that Single Essence in numerous manifestations; and Faith in Unity is to seek light from the One Sun of Truth through Its manifold day-springs. Therefore, we find many passages in the Holy Scriptures, in which the Manifestations of God are considered as one person, in regard to the Oneness of the Essence and the Divine Spirit, although they are different and varying in names, forms, places and times. Their laws and religions are, therefore, considered as one law and one religion, in respect to the Oneness of the Institutor and the Founder of those laws, notwithstanding their difference in precepts, ordinances, rites and ceremonies. The Spirit (Christ)—Glory be upon Him!—has declared John, the son of Zacharias—Peace be upon him!—to be Elias the Prophet, saying: “And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Likewise, the same fact is recorded in Chapter 2 of Matthew, and in numerous other passages in the former Books. In reference to this point, the elect and favoured saint, Peter the Apostle, has said in his First Epistle (1:10–11): “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grape that should come unto you

searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

Consider—may God assist ye—how it is clearly stated that the Spirit speaking through the prophets, was the same Spirit in Jesus Christ¹—Glory and Bahá be upon Him! This is the clearest proof of the Unity of that excellent Reality, and of the fact that He will not become pluralized by the number of His Manifestations. This verse has no reference to the false and ridiculous idea of transmigration and reincarnation, into which pitfall the footsteps of a great number of simple people have slipped, and in which notion multitudes among the past and present nations persevere.

The Spirit of God is the One Abstract Identity in every respect. In this It is contrary to human spirits and human mental faculties, which are separate in individuality and identity. That which returns of beings is their generic form and the qualities and signs pertaining to it, not the individual form and that which is in connection with it of characteristics and personal particularities. By the return of the Holy Reality is meant the return of the Essence that is One in every respect, and the manifestation of the Identity which is single in essence. It is the Exalted Reality and the excellent Essence, the centre of the circle of Names, and the Spirit of God descended from heaven, through the knowledge of which the realities of things are unfolded, and the secrets of hearts disclosed in the world of Creation. The believers in Divine Unity are thereby distinguished from polytheists, the convinced from sceptical, the truthful from the false, and the firm from the vacillating. When such a holy Essence manifests Itself in a body, and

¹ The word “Christ” is a title that is given to Jesus. However, when used by itself, it refers to the common Spirit speaking through all the Manifestations of God.—M.W.T.

this Sun of Truth, shining forth from a dawning-place is denied, opposed, rejected, turned aside from or disputed by an ignorant and heedless one, such a person may not be truly named a believer in Unity, and his knowledge of the existence of the Essence will not benefit him. For his belief has not transcended the limit of imagination, and his knowledge of the existence of God is only an indefinite knowledge. By understanding this abstruse subject, it will become evident why the term, "believer in Unity", is not true of some nations and religions (e.g. Sabians), although they may believe in one God. Likewise, the difference between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the existence of God will become manifest, as we have already explained. Verily, the knowledge of each one of the aforesaid nations terminates either in what is created by their own superstitions about the Essence of God, even though they are philosophers and doctors, or in their knowledge of one of the former Day-springs and Dawning-places, even though they are blind and simple followers.

Therefore, according to our demonstration, it is proved that such a degree of knowledge of the state of Divine Unity is not sufficient, nor can one rely upon this knowledge as complete; nor can one trust in it against being snared in the toils of devil-worship. Likewise, the meaning of "Return" will be clearly understood, whereat the minds of nations are astonished and whereby people are tested. All former and present nations have been and are awaiting the return of some certain person or persons who have existed in bygone ages, expecting them to appear in the "latter days", as a fulfilment of their prophecies. The Jews believe in the return of Elias the Prophet. Among the Muslims, the Shí'ah sect trust in the return of Ḥusayn, the son of 'Alí (the 3rd Imám),

and Muḥammad, the son of Ḥasan al-'Askarí (12th Imám). The Christians as well as the Sunnite sect of Islám believe that Christ will "return" at the "end of the days"; which fact is known to such as are informed upon the doctrines of religions.

By "Return", is meant the return of the Manifestation of that Sacred Reality. "Resurrection" is the rise of Its Appearance and Dawning-place among mankind. By the "Hour" is intended the hour of Its dawn and rising, after Its disappearance. But the "Return" and "Resurrection", if they are taken according to the meaning which people believe and nations await, is an unintelligible matter, inasmuch as it is contrary to the natural laws, and against the Divine Sentences: "Thou shalt not find any change in the sentence of God", nor will there be any change in the laws whereupon God hath based His Creation.

Such glorious Manifestation and great Man is known and distinguished from the rest of mankind by the Attributes of God that proceed from Him, and by the qualities and characteristics of God that appear through Him. From Him shine Knowledge and Wisdom, Glory and Majesty, Power and Might, Sway and Dominion, and other attributes of excellence and qualities of Perfection, without His having acquired knowledge by study in scientific schools. Nor have His Power, Dominion, Grandeur and Sway been assisted by any material kingdom or ruler, or by financial wealth and affluence; or through any family connection and support. This is the case with His other qualifications, dispositions and conditions. Nay, rather, all these endowments and attributes are manifest in Him in His Identity, and are confirmed through His Words and Verses. He is, in every one of His attributes, a miracle to others. He puts to silence and discomfits such as may arise to resist and

oppose Him. The most particular and clear among His Attributes is the Mighty Power which proceeds from Him in instituting laws and religions, and in promoting and establishing them throughout the world. Through these, every possessor of authority and power who may oppose or antagonize Him is abased. This is an incomparable Power among nations, and is a glorious dominion and kingdom that can never be vanquished by any in the world. For though kings have long wrestled with it, they were beaten; and though doctors and prominent men withstood it, they were discomfited. Because, love for an old and familiar religion is firmly rooted in the hearts of all the people, and dying for its preservation, and suffering ruin in opposing its removal, is a well-known characteristic of all the nations.

When anyone appeared, claiming to be the Prophet of God, bringing a glorious Book and declaring it is the Book of God, two manifest powers and evident energies proceeded from Him and His Book. *First*, a knowledge, whereby all the sicknesses of nations were removed; because it changed their infidelity into belief in unity, their faithlessness into faith, their ignorance into wisdom, their discord into harmony, their hostility into love, and their treachery into trustworthiness. So also it transformed their other attributes, manners and qualifications. *Second*, a Power whereby the world was subdued, notwithstanding all the people, including the prophet's own relatives and family, resisted it; just as the Jews and others withstood the spread of Christianity.

Consequently, there is no ground for doubt as to the truth of His claim and the reality of His Word, nor as to the necessity of obeying Him. Verily, His power and might are connected with the Holy Omnipotence, are caused by the Invisible Power proceeding

from the Divine Essence, and have descended from the Exalted and Heavenly Reality. There is no doubt that a new religion is an outcome and result that must needs have a cause and reason. As all material causes, such as acquired sciences, outward dominion and power, financial riches and family influence have been lacking, therefore no thoughtful person, not even the philosophers who believe in reasons and effects, would doubt that these powers are caused by the Reason of reasons and the Cause of causes. That is, they have proceeded from the Divine Essence, the Heavenly Reality, and Supreme Identity, which is interpreted to be the "Self-Existent One"—Glorified is His Grandeur and Exalted is His Station!

This glorious Man, whom we have mentioned and described—while He is exalted and magnified above being praised by any praises—in His oneness expresses the Oneness of God; in His desire, the Desire of God; in His will, the Will of God; in all of His names and attributes, the Names and Attributes of God. Knowing Him, therefore, is knowing God, obeying Him is obeying God; rejecting and falsely denying Him is, therefore, identical with rejecting and falsely denying God.

This is the real theory of Unity, the ideal and confirmed knowledge of Oneness. All else is but polytheism of the infidel, imagination of the superstitious, gloomy thought of the so-called philosophers, and erroneous ideas of religious usurpers.

Praise be to Good, the Lord of the Creatures!

The third introduction

Treating of the Proof's and Arguments that prove the Truth of the Divine Manifestations.

The third introduction

O ye people of Bahá, firm ones in the Covenant of “Him around Whom all Names revolve”! May God quicken your hearts through the fountain of His Gifts that are pouring from His Glorious Reality! Know ye that one of the subjects upon which all nations have agreed, is the fact that there has ever been in the world the appearance of a truth and a falsehood, the rise of a guide and a misleader, the true claim and the false one, the call of the Lord and that of a Satan. In other words, many men have arisen in the past, and perhaps others will arise in the future, claiming to have appeared by the permission of God and arisen by the Command of God; men who were true in their claim and right in their words. On the other hand, many others have falsely and erroneously made the same claim.

There must be of necessity certain signs and tokens in a Divine claimant and in every Manifestation of Truth, which signs and tokens may confirm the truth of His claim. Likewise, there must be proofs, arguments and evidences to establish the validity of His words, so that Truth may be distinguished from falsehood, a guide from a misleader, and the right path from the wrong; so that the Lord may be differentiated from Satan, and proofs may be made perfect to all in the Universe.

Then know—May God assist ye!—we have stated and proved in the previous Introduction, that verily the Manifestations of the Cause of God are the Manifestations of One Reality and One Essence, and that all of them are considered as one man and one person. Their first is identical with their last; their former with their latter; they are only distinguished from

each other through the Attributes of God which appear from them, and the Essence of God which is manifest within them. From this it follows that the way of knowing them, the proof of their truth, the evidence of the validity of their claim, and the argument for the demonstration of their Word, should be also one. For these tokens, signs, proofs and arguments are no other than the signs of the Divine Attributes, which are manifest in them, and are similar to the rays and lights gleaming from the Sun of Truth. As the Sun is one, its light must be one, and the rays that shine from it must be alike and similar. But of these Manifestations, those who appear later or nearer to the end, that is; nearer to the Great "Resurrection" and Glorious "Hour", are of a greater brilliancy and splendour, and their proofs and arguments are clearer and stronger, because of the law of progression. This point may be clearly understood by investigating the proofs of the reality of religions that have appeared in former times. These proofs and arguments, although they cannot be confined within definite limits, as we have already said, are, in reality, the signs of the Divine Attributes which are manifest in the Manifestations of God, and are as lights which gleam from the Sun of the Truth of His Essence. Yet the proofs held by the adherents of religions and laws, and which are produced in case of demonstration as being the clearest and most evident, are four in number.

First, the Heavenly Revelation, that is, the Divine Book.

Second, the Logical Proof or Argument (called by Muslim theologians the "Proof of Stability").

Third, Signs and Miracles.

Fourth, Prophecies and Records (of previous Books).

In the following, we briefly treat of the reality of these proofs and the manner in which they demonstrate the Manifestation of the Command of God; while trusting in God, the aim of the pious and the Illuminator of Sight and Insight:

First proof: the heavenly revelation and divine utterance

This signifies the truths that are revealed to the heart of the Manifestation of the Command of God, through the mediation of the Holy Spirit of God manifest within Him; truths given forth from his tongue; knowledge cast in the mould of words, through His Utterance and Explanation. This definition proves that, verily, the Divine Words and scriptural Verses are the first Bounty that pours forth from the Merciful Reality, and are the highest and greatest Gift that is sent down and bestowed upon human beings. These Words and Verses are like unto the dew and the heavenly rains. They descend from the clouds of Holy Temples (prophets), and the old world is clad with the new garment of youth through their descent and fall. They are the rays of the Sun of Truth that dawn from Holy Day-Springs, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and superstition. They are the Breezes of the Spring-time of Manifestation, the Fragrances of the Morn of Resurrection, throughout time and ages. By them the sweet odour of Knowledge is diffused in the Universe, and the Spirit of Life is breathed into laws and religions. They are rivers flowing from the fountains of Divine Wisdom into that ever fresh and verdant spiritual Garden. By their pure, luring waters, the filth of barbarism and coarseness is abolished and the graces of civilization and enlightenment appear.

The Words of God have clear preference and manifest grandeur above all other proofs and arguments; inasmuch as they are everlasting signs, and can easily be reached by everyone. In this respect they differ from works and miracles, which are temporary and vanishing, and cannot be transferred to remote countries and distant lands. The Words are the greatest proof of the Prophets, inasmuch as nothing in the world is more highly esteemed and valued than knowledge. The depository of knowledge is the Book, as is evident to all men of understanding. It is through the Words of God that the benefits of training and education are realized, regulations are enacted and laws are instituted. These laws constitute the basis upon which the refinement of peoples, civilizations of nations, preservation of society, and culture of the world, are founded.

Let us take for granted that Moses—Peace be upon Him!—has, as is believed by the Jews, cloven the sea, brought forth water from the rock, changed his rod into a crawling serpent, and manifested other great signs. Let us concede that Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—has quickened the dead, restored those born blind, and cured lunatics. How can all these wonders be of any value when compared with the Gospels and the Bible? Verily, these, even though they might be literally true, were witnessed by a limited number of men, whereas the lights of the Heavenly Books are shining, their signs are radiating, their hymns and verses are sung, their psalms and prophecies chanted, throughout all lands and regions, during cycles and ages. Every reader reads them, every hearer hears them, every seeker finds them, and every man of capacity is profited by them. Through them insight is illumined, eyes are consoled, morals are reformed, souls are quickened, and hearts and breasts are dilated.

The Words of God are not distinguished and known from the words of man by their eloquence, fluency, composition, harmonious phrases, nor by the grace of their allegories, as is maintained by some people. Neither are they supported by the testimony of ancient monuments and relics, as is held by certain classes; nor by beliefs which people have inherited from their ancestors and great men, and to which beliefs they have submitted in blind imitation, considering them indisputable truth, as is the case in all religions. All such views would be ignored by the majority of the people, and could not be demonstrated to the world as being a perfect proof and a satisfactory argument; therefore, accepting them would be only through blind imitation and taking the words of others, without any proof upon which wise men could rely.

The people of Bahá, who cling to the Hem of “Him around Whom all names revolve”, distinguish the Words of God from the words of man, through their perfect efficacy in the guidance of souls, enlightenment of hearts, quickening of nations, reformation of character, reorganization of society, institution of wonderful, everlasting and refining laws, overthrow of such proud people as may resist them, and domination over whatever tyrant nations may prevent or antagonize them. The Bahá'ís name this quality the “creative and dominating power”, which differentiates the Divine Words from those invented by man.

For it is evident to every discerning and prudent man, that, verily, the mission of Prophets, the arising of Messengers, the institution of laws, and the enactment of regulations, are only for the guidance of souls and the removal of spiritual sicknesses, just as medical science is for the healing of physical sicknesses and the preservation of bodies. When a prophet appears

with a Divine Book, whereby souls are guided, hearts are quickened, infidelity changed into belief in Unity, uncertainty into faith, rebellion into obedience, ignorance into knowledge and wisdom, hatred into love and affinity, to such an extent that He founds a living, independent and everlasting community, and institutes a reforming and guiding law; then there can be no doubt that such a book is the Book of God; that the Revealer thereof is appointed by the Command of God, and is assisted and fortified by the Spirit of God. Because the guidance of men is a function which belongs to a Prophet and is a confirmatory proof of His Prophethood, even as the power of curing sickness and establishing health is a quality pertaining to medical science, and an evidence of the claim of the physician. To this point the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ have reference, in Matthew 12:33: "The tree is known by his fruit." For it is unreasonable to believe that peace and harmony should proceed from the source of falsehood and corruption, or that a tree of error and misleading should bring forth the fruits of happiness and guidance.

In Deuteronomy 18:21-22, God, referring to the appearance of Prophets and the rise of claimants, both false and true, has clearly indicated that the only rule by which to discriminate between them is the efficacy of their words and the penetrating power of their speech, in guiding souls and illuminating hearts; in uplifting nations and refining peoples: "And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him."

Now consider—May God the Exalted assist ye!—how He has appointed the correct standard for the distinction between false and true to be the inefficiency of the words of the false one. Likewise, note that He has not made eloquence, miracles or the testimony of antique monuments, distinguishing proofs. The above-mentioned verses do not exclusively refer to prophecies of future events, as some commentators say, because if they did, people might be excused for their lack of faith before the fulfilment of the prophecies, and thus the words of the Prophets would not establish a Religion, nor could they be demonstrated by any proofs or arguments. However, their effectiveness and power is the only distinction and single standard; the clear sign by which to distinguish the Words of the Glorious Lord from the words of man. Even the first one who has believed in a true Prophet and acknowledged a real claim, would not have believed in nor submitted to His Station had he not realized in himself the manifest guidance and evident power is that Prophet's Words.

Consider the condition of the Hebrew nation before the appearance of Moses—Peace be upon Him! Compare their state of baseness and humility, slavery and shame, to their condition after the appearance of Moses and the Bible's Revelation. Their circumstances and manners were vastly improved, and they produced kings, rulers and great prophets. Thus we are able to realize some of the signs of the revelation of Divine Words, and see how much they effected in bringing nations from darkness to light, from death to life, from barbarism to civilization and refinement. Likewise, the records of all nations and peoples East and West, who have embraced the Heavenly Religions, will show how the downpour of the Shower of Revelation from the Clouds of the Divine Providence has

taken effect in them. That which is revealed in Isaiah 55:8–11 has reference to this fact: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” This suffices the people of faith, and is enough to satisfy the people of Assurance. Time and circumstances do not permit further enlargement. Therefore, we trust in God the Lord, and rely upon Him, both in the origin and end.

Second or logical proof

That Mighty Divine Power and Heavenly Energy to which we have alluded, and which has been explained in a brief way in former passages, is a Power which institutes a new law and a new religion. This Power is not assisted by any material or phenomenal kingdom or authority, or by any glory, majesty, family influence, financial wealth or affluence. When we find such a resistless Power triumphing unassisted by any such instrumentality, we may conclude that undoubtedly it owes its origin to the Cause of causes and the Reason of reasons—that is to the Divine Will, the Supreme Pleasure, the Essential Invisible Power. Otherwise, things would be the outcome of a concatenation of causes, which theory is held as false and

unreasonable by great philosophers and by pillars of learning and wisdom.

The explanation of this argument in detail is that this great Power and manifest Potency, which proceeds from the Institutor of a new Religion, must, of necessity, have a rational cause and reason. Philosophers seek reasons and inquire about causes. Now a religion is necessarily an effect; and the idea of a new religion being outside causation is absurd, for every one would most decidedly refuse to embrace it. But this penetrative Power which founds a new religion resists the efforts of all the people of the world, and subdues and overcomes all nations; this action, therefore, must needs have a cause; this remarkable phenomenon and manifest Power must have an origin and motive.

If it were said that this Power that organizes new religions and preserves them for long periods, is reinforced by any family influence, we find that this motive is absent in such cases, and thus cannot be an origin and source for the appearance of this strong Power. The lack of this influence in Christianity is too evident a fact to leave any ground for doubt; inasmuch as the relatives of our Lord Jesus Christ—Peace be upon Him!—were of the Jews, who, after the lapse of so many centuries and generations, are still denying His religion, and are the strongest antagonists of His Name among the nations.

As to the Religion of Moses, the Bible testifies—in spite of the obscurity of the old histories and the discord of the historians as to the compiler of the five books of Moses—that the Jews were antagonistic to the mission of Moses, and disputed most of His actions, until finally they were about to stone Him for the manifold calamities and afflictions which they suffered through the oppressions of the Pharaohs and

the hostility of the Egyptians. In such a case it is impossible that this wonderful Power which causes the institution of a new religion should be assisted by family co-operation or produced by the help of kindred.

The cause of this manifest hatred and opposition, this evident enmity and hostility to a new religion, is clear to men of insight. Verily, the disease that pervades and attacks all religions is the idea held by their respective adherents that their laws are unalterable and everlasting.

The Jews, Christians and Muslims regard their respective law and religion as being everlasting and permanent, never allowing any of its ordinances to be changed. Great numbers among them have given up their lives and properties, and forsaken their families and children to preserve their ordinances and texts. This is also the case with the Sabeans and other Pagan peoples. Thus everybody hates and dislikes to relinquish his hereditary religion and embrace a new faith. This is the case with all people, no matter whether they are related to the Prophet or are strangers, enemies or friends, obscure or distinguished.

A man can rarely be found who is in himself awakened to the fact that the institutor of a new religion and the appearance of a Manifestation is appointed by the Command of God; that such a Manifestation declares Himself by the permission of God, and fulfils the Will of God; that He enacts laws and ordinances applicable to the occasion, circumstances, places and times, and not in conformity with the various opinions, wishes and ideas of peoples and nations, and the difference of their beliefs and understandings.

From the above statements, we can understand how false is the view Ibn Khaldún (a famous Oriental

historian) has sustained, that a religious claim can never stand firm nor be accomplished except by family influence. He supports his statement by the following obscure tradition: "God never raised a prophet except in the guardianship of his relatives."

This writer has imagined that the penetration of the Divine Word and the maintenance of a prophetic claim depend upon the influence of relatives, and not upon any Heavenly, Invisible Power. From this tradition, he has regarded the prophecies concerning the appearance of the Mahdí (the Precursor) as invalid, because of the dissolution of the Hashimite¹ lineage and the dispersion of the Alawite² race. This is contrary to the clear records of the Heavenly Books, and contradictory to the testimony of history.

It is sometimes said that this Power which institutes new laws has been aided by acquired learning and school sciences; that is, that the founders of Divine Religions have been instructed by prominent learned men, and have thus mastered the various branches of learning, such as philosophy, natural sciences, astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, geography, etc. On this account, the learned men are made humble before them, and, the minds of the philosophers are illumined through their enlightenment, and so the common and ignorant have followed and obeyed them. However, we find that even this has been wanting in connection with the prophets. If this statement cannot be realized in the case of Moses—Peace be upon Him!—on account of the obscurity of ancient history, which is beyond the reach of discovery and research, yet it is very clear and explicit in regard to the Manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was never educated in the contemporary schools of Greece and Egypt. He had not undertaken to study their sciences and philosophies, nor is there any book attributed to Him con-

¹ Hášhimí.

² 'Alawíya, pl. 'alawiyán (English Alawis or Alawites).

taining such learning. No record or history testifies that Jesus Christ was numbered among the learned of His Age, or accounted a philosopher or doctor. Moreover, there is no likeness between the knowledge that hath proceeded from the Holy Manifestations and the acquired human sciences; inasmuch as the former is spiritual, quickening spirits and souls, and healing the sicknesses of minds and hearts; while the latter is material, and its use is for definite objects and limited applications pertaining to matter. The uses of geometry, for instance, are applied to the knowledge of surfaces, those of arithmetic to numbers, those of medicine to the health of bodies; so also with other sciences and learnings, as is clear and evident.

It is certain that the Greek and Egyptian philosophers and the Persian and Chaldean doctors, who were, in those days, the sources of these sciences, could not deliver themselves, their neighbours and their colonists from the fetters of corrupt beliefs, nor purify them from the filth of shameful practices. History shows the prevalence of such customs as offering children in sacrifice before idols, worshipping animals, trees and rivers; violating chaste women in the cult of the goddess of Beauty, drinking oxen's urine and the ablution of the face therewith (the two latter are ceremonies called Bareshnum, held by the Zoroastrians); burying girls alive, burning the living with the dead, considering fire as sacred and forbidding the arts and crafts connected with it; avoiding strangers, prohibiting the touching of others with wet hands, forbidding to eat with others, even though they were of the same race, country and religion (Hindus), and many similar practices which we refrain from mentioning here.

Moreover, philosophers and doctors have been, in those days, defenders of such beliefs and shameful practices; eager, even at the risk of their lives, to

preserve them from any change, transformation, removal or abolishment.

Consider—May God the Exalted illumine your sight and insight!—the Arabian people and the difference in their condition before and after the appearance of Islám. By this comparison, you may perchance become cognizant of that which we have alluded to, concerning the clear difference between Divine Knowledge and philosophical sciences, in connection with quickening humanity and removing spiritual sicknesses. The Greek and Egyptian philosophers, near neighbours of the Arabs, notwithstanding their abundant learning, vast enlightenment, the copious means and instruments at their disposal and the assistance rendered by governments in their behalf, were unable to spread civilization among the Arabs, who were all adherents of the same Sabeian religion and followers of the same form of idolatry. Certainly, this was easier of accomplishment than the recovery from spiritual sicknesses and the removal of religious ailments. However, the rise of a single illiterate man removed from their necks the fetters of ignorance, untied the shackles of bondage from their feet, awakened them from the unconsciousness of sleep and breathed into them a new Spirit of Life. They were invigorated, developed, illuminated and enlightened, until they transmitted the lights of knowledge and civilization, and spread the virtues of refinement and humanity, not only in Arabian lands but also throughout the extensive countries of the East, abolishing those ruinous beliefs and habits among the Zoroastrians and Pagans.

O ye honourable men! After ye understand this clear point and evident fact, ye could equally comprehend that, verily, God the Exalted has assigned the institution of His Religion and the promotion of His Word to the illiterate, and not to philosophers or

scholars. This He has done in order that it may be more effective in removing all doubts, that it may be beyond the reach of accusation, and to demonstrate the fact that this Sacred Power has no connection with the studied sciences, nor origin from any acquired learning.

George Sale, of England, the erudite writer of the life of Muḥammad and Islám, has neglected this point and ignored this fact, as is evident from the 30th page of his "Preliminary Discourse",¹ preceding his translation of the Qur'án: "(Muḥammad's) followers instead of being ashamed of their Master's ignorance, glory in it, as an evident proof of his divine mission, and scruple not to call him, as he is indeed called in the Qur'án itself, 'an illiterate prophet'."

This learned man has imagined that the illiteracy of any of the prophets should be an object of shame and dishonour to his followers, whereas it is recorded in John 7:15–16 that Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—was also illiterate: "And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, 'My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me.'" This statement clearly shows that His learning was spiritual and inspired, therefore, not acquired and studied.

How can this erudite historian excuse himself upon this point, admitting, as he must, that Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—left the Keys of Heaven in the hands of an illiterate fisherman, and inspired the heart of a common Jewish tax-gatherer with the spirit of Apostleship and Guidance? Is not this a declaration of the Power of God the Exalted, proving to all the people that He discomfits the armies of tyrants and subdues the swords of Pharaohs through a shepherd's rod? Is it not clear that He makes of the fisher a

¹ George Sale, *The Koran: Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed*.

fisher of men and the overturner of the emperors' thrones; that He ordains an illiterate one, through His Supreme Kingdom, to instruct Persian philosophers and the sons of kings? Is not this a proof of God's Grandeur; making these ignorant ones the evidence of His Manifestation and of His Will and Desire? Is not their separation from acquired learning and sciences a clearer proof of the Divine Omnipotence? Is it not the most explicit argument of imminent heavenly power: the best means for suppressing the superstitions of the followers of fancy and refuting the doubt of the suspicious ones?

It is evident from the statements already made that all the power and energy which proceeded from the Apostle Paul, in promulgating the Divine Word throughout the Pagan world, during the early growth of Christianity, was imparted to and made manifest in him by the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ. His power came not from acquired sciences or from the amplitude of his scholastic learning, as is maintained by most of Christian people. The proof of this is that before his belief in Jesus Christ, his knowledge and learning were the same as the endowments of the other Jewish doctors, such as in reading, writing and recognition of the ordinances of the Hebraic laws. Paul was not accounted as a philosopher of that age, nor is he said to have been educated in any of the Athenian or Egyptian schools. We have no book written by him upon philosophy, natural science, astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, medicine nor any other branch of intelligence and learning. Moreover, he himself has repudiated the acquired philosophy and Greek learning in several passages of his epistles; as is recorded in Colossians 2:8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men,

after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

He has likewise recorded in I Corinthians 1:22–23: “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” The Jews were constantly demanding signs and miracles from the disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, while the Greeks were asking from them sciences and wisdom, thus testing them through learning and philosophy. But that upright saint and eloquent orator (St. Paul) silenced and resisted them through the power of Christ’s Kingdom; the lights of which Kingdom had risen, and its power appeared in the illiterate disciples, those persecuted companions and penniless friends of Jesus Christ. This may be the greatest proof of the Power of God. It is written: “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.”¹

Consequently, it is clearly proven that the disciples of Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—promoted His Word and confirmed His religion through the Divine Power which they had gained from Him, and not through the learning and sciences with which their enemies abounded, but of which they themselves had none; as is evident to those who study their lives and history.

If it were said that this Power, which founds a new law and a new Religion, has been assisted by any worldly kingdom or dominion, or by any financial wealth or riches, it is also evident that these were not possessed by the prophets and founders of laws and religions. This plain fact does not need any further

¹ I Corinthians 1:27.

argument, demonstration or prolix discussion to hearts free from fanaticism. How could the power and wealth of Moses—Peace be upon Him!—and the Jews be compared with the wealth and influence of the Pharaohs? Could the riches of the companions of our Lord Jesus Christ be compared with the wealth and pomp of the emperors, or could the dominion of any prophet be compared with the power of contemporary hostile kings and tyrants? It has been charged against Islám that it was promulgated and spread by the swords of the Arab generals, just as the Persians, Jews, Buddhists and Hindus say that Christianity was spread through the military power of emperors, and strengthened and established by the sword of tyrant kings. However, all this is a foolish surmise and a fictitious statement. The truth is that the Word of Islám was spread among the Arabs even before the flight of Muḥammad, just as Christianity penetrated and was promulgated before the conversion of Constantine the Great and the assistance of the Caesars. Moreover, all those armies, defenders and swords were founded, established and organized through the effect of the Word of God and the immense influence of the Will of God. Were it not for the Divine Books, these armies would have stood to assist infidelity and these destructive swords would have been drawn to promote idolatry, and not to further and spread Unity. This is evident to such as are endowed with a brilliant insight and innate understanding. However, God the Exalted, because of His boundless Mercy, abundant Grace, the appearance of His Power and the shining forth of His Argument, has desired to entirely remove such charge and doubt against this latter-day Glorious Manifestation and Most Splendid and Exalted Dawn. Therefore, He has strictly and absolutely prohibited not only conflict and warfare,

but even that which might be aggravating to souls and creative of hostility within hearts, such as reviling, execration, vainglory and pride; so that the Power of the Divine Word may become manifest, and that all doubts and suspicions may be allayed during coming centuries and generations.

O ye believers! Now that you have understood the reality of the “Proof of Stability” and the meaning of the “Logical Argument”, know—May God illumine your cheerful faces with the Bahá of His Luminous Countenance!—that the nations have neglected this evident proof and denied this manifest highway because of two things in which they have been instructed by their doctors and leaders since their childhood. These two ideas have become to them as real facts, and so well-rooted in their hearts as to be considered religious necessities.

The first thing is each nation’s denial of the other’s religion. The Jews deny the truth of Buddhism, the Buddhists that of the Jews; the Muslims deny the truth of Brahamanism, the Brahamans that of Islám; the Christians that of the Zoroastrians, and the latter that of Christianity.

The second thing is their denial of the appearance of new Manifestations and new Religions. The Jews denied the truth of the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him! The Christians denied the appearance of Muḥammad; and the Muslims denied that of the Manifestation of our Lord, Bahá’u’lláh—Glorified is His Grandeur! The Jews considered Christianity as indisputably false; their hearts hated it and their souls were offended with it. Likewise is the falsehood of Islám to the Christians, and the falsehood of Buddhism, Brahamanism, and Sabeanism to the Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Moreover,

their disgust and offence were increased because of the shameful calumnies and the abominable beliefs and deeds which their respective religious doctors attributed to each other. These slanders became well-rooted in their minds in bygone days, owing to the want of communication between different nations. The lack of information of the one concerning the real doctrine of the other resulted generally from their religious books not being translated, and from the difficulty in spreading scientific writings. This condition was aggravated by the fact that the art of printing had not as yet been invented, and because of the weakness of some nations and their fear of divulging their beliefs to their enemies. Therefore, slanders and calumnies spread far and wide, the circle of scandal increased, and lies and false accusations became universal among nations. In this way the Jewish doctors have slandered our Lord Jesus Christ, and such calumnies have prevented the Jews from believing in Him for over 1,800 years.

The Jews suffered great calamities, unbearable afflictions and painful disasters during long centuries; endured bitter hardships, violent misfortunes, and all kinds of sorrows and woes, rather than acknowledge His truth, believe in His Word, or ponder even one hour over the proofs and arguments of His Revelation. So, also, other religions, faiths, creeds and sects, did not refrain from fabricating every disgraceful calumny against whoever might contradict their religion, laws, creed and doctrine. It is evident what a great effect this had in the hearts of their followers and adherents.

A potent influence against unity of belief was the introduction of heretical and debased rites and ceremonies into the old religions, from which none are free. For instance, we see idol and image worship

introduced into Buddhism and Brahmanism; fire worship into Zoroastrianism; the celebration of the anniversary of saints' birthdays, devouring serpents, and dancing into the Sunnite sect; the dramatic representation of the life of Imams and martyrs, and wounding their heads with daggers, into the Shi'ah sects. All this caused the people to doubt and give credit to these detractions and accusations, for they considered these debased rites as proofs and evidences of the falsehood of other religions.

For instance, if it were said to a Christian or Muslim that Buddhism was originally inspired by God, and that its founder was sent from God, he would be astonished, bewildered, offended and filled with hatred at the claim and statement. He would say: "How could idolatry be a Divine Truth and how could the founder of such a religion be considered a true prophet?" At the same time, he would fail to understand the fact that the worship of idols and images was not a fundamental truth of Buddhism, Brahmanism or even Sabeanism. He would see that these false ceremonies were introduced into those religions just as the worship of the pictures of the saints, adoration of the relics of martyrs, and many other similar practices were introduced into Christianity; although not one of these ideas are revealed or alluded to in the Holy Gospels.

From what we have already mentioned in detail, two evident conditions are produced in all religions, which gave rise to two clear results:

The first result is the inability of people to prove the truth of their religion and the reality of their prophet by clear argument and evident demonstration, whereby their respective religions and prophets might be distinguished, each from the other.

If the followers of any religion cling to the mira-

cles which they attribute to their prophet, and which are recorded in their books, they will find the same is the case with other religions. The Jews have collected the miracles of Moses—Peace be upon Him!—in their historical works; the Christians have written of the miracles of Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—the Muslims have set forth the miracles of Muḥammad in their compilations; likewise the Buddhists, Brahamans, and Zoroastrians relate the miracles of their prophets in their books.

In the *Dabistán*, a work containing historical records of religions and creeds, we find stories and traditions concerning the Brahaman and Zoroastrian miracles, the like of which scarcely exist in other religions and sects.

Yet, miracles and wonders are not a fundamental testimony of the truth of the Manifestations of the Command of God; nay, rather, their testimony is of a secondary and auxiliary nature. They are simply confirmatory and non-essential proofs, which fact will be explained in its proper place, if it please God.

If the adherents of any religion maintain that they possess a book which they believe to be Divine, they will find the same statement and claim in other religions. Thus, the Jews believe in the Bible, the Christians in the Gospels, the Muslims in the Qur'án—each regarding them as Heavenly Books and inspired writings. Likewise, the Hindus have held to the Vedas, the Zoroastrians to Zend-Avesta, and the Confucians to the book of Confucius.

If they adhere to their precepts, ordinances, regulations and laws which appertain to spiritual devotions and development of man, they will find them equally existing in other religions and creeds. “Thou canst not find any difference in the creation of the Merciful One.”

If they hold to the prophecies in earlier books and ancient records—as the Muslims hold to the texts of the Gospels when proving the truth of Muḥammad, and as the Christians rest upon the utterances of the Jewish prophets in demonstrating the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ, it would then be necessary to prove the validity of the givers of the prophecies; inasmuch as an earnest seeker would not be satisfied without being led to a valid conclusion.

This will finally necessitate the acknowledgement of the Divine and Great Power, the heavenly and dominant Energy; the ultimate arrival at an inevitable conclusion, which we have termed the “Logical Proof” and decisive Argument. But the leaders of religions, as we have already stated, do not wish to admit this manifest proof or to walk in this clear highway. This would prevent their denial of the Manifestations of God, and entirely counteract their rejection of the Day-Springs of the Command of God. As this Divine Power is given to each one of the Dawning-places of the Lights of God, these religious leaders, should they acknowledge it, would be compelled necessarily to acknowledge all of them. As they were not able to prove the truth of their religion, and do not know how to demonstrate the validity of their prophet, they adhere to every falsehood and cling to every abomination, satisfying their followers with fictitious ideas, and deluding them with confused dreams. Should they adhere to the above-mentioned clear truth and manifest argument, they would avoid the need of such [a] deplorable action.

The Second Result is the appearance of great numbers who repudiate all the religions, and so encourage the spread of blasphemous beliefs, such as denying the prophets and contradicting Divine laws, notwithstanding their acknowledgement of the exist-

ence of God. This is the case with most of the material philosophers and belated wanderers in the deserts of natural phenomena. Such philosophers deny all the prophets and messengers and believe that the instituting of laws and religions is the product of human intellect, instead of being the outcome of the Divine, Invisible Will. They, however, believe in the existence of a god that is not beyond the limit of imagination. This has already been described under the subject of "Divine Unity", and demonstrated in explaining the meaning of Oneness.

Among them, some have gone so far as to deny even the existence of the Essence of God the Exalted, persevering in this opinion and contradicting everything supernatural. Some others have persisted so far in these false ideas and superstitions that they have been driven into the wilderness of obscure beliefs, others have become heedless of the victorious Power of God, deluded by the deceitful flashing sophistries of human learning, imagining their own weak souls capable of instituting laws, and their fickle and inefficient mind's as able to found religions. They have arisen and put forward false claims, assuming great and lofty positions, such as prophethood or Divinity itself, and instituting religious systems. This is demonstrated in history and evidenced by the present conditions.

Moreover, the evil deeds of the spiritual chiefs and doctors of laws, such as the Muslim divines, Christian bishops, Jewish priests, and other religious leaders among the Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Hindus, have greatly aided them in their pride and encouraged them in maintaining such evils as denying the Divine Essence, contradicting heavenly laws, or putting forward false and daring claims. The ignorance of these leaders as to the religious facts, their shameful deeds

and evil management in educating the people, and their adherence to religious tricks and intrigues in satisfying men with fictitious beliefs, have led numbers of people to doubt the origin of Divine Religion, and have rendered them apt to incline toward the beliefs of natural philosophers. Great congregations and parties have been multiplied and propagated, notably during the last century, who deny the prophets, scoff at all religions, ridicule every spiritual calling and reject all the devotional acts and religious ceremonies. Their evil end, great dismay and misfortune, are known to men of discernment, as is clearly spoken by Peter the Apostle in His prophecies and epistles.

From what we have already explained and set forth, it is evident that all these corruptions and evils have resulted from the denial and ignorance of such people concerning the Heavenly and Great Power which God has made to be an evident characteristic of His Prophets, a manifest sign of His Chosen Ones, a clear standing light for His Road and Pathway and an accurate standard for recognizing the proof and argument of His Truth. How often has God proven the weakness of human strength and the feebleness and impotence of the material and phenomenal against this heavenly Power! The people of the world have long resisted it, but were finally dismayed; nations both of the East and West have wrestled with it, but were overthrown. This Power was opposed, in the appearance of Moses, by the Pharaohs; in the Manifestation of Jesus Christ, by the Jews and emperors; and in the rise of Muḥammad by the Persian kings and Arabs. It has also been opposed by false prophets, who have attempted to found a religion without the permission of God; falsely and presumptuously laying claim to prophethood, as is testified and recorded

in history. The histories of Mazdak,¹ in the days of King Kobad; of the Jew, Sa'dí-Dawlah;² of Arghún-Khán,³ the Mongol, in Persia; 'Alá' ad-Dín-i-Khárasm [Khaledge],⁴ in India; and the French Philosophers during the Revolution of 1792, are all warnings and admonitions to the prudent and to the people of the Book. These philosophers, wise men, kings and, statesmen attempted, through their great ingenuity and the abundance of their science and learning, to institute a religion of simpler laws, regulations, doctrines and principles within the range of average capacities and minds, suitable to all tastes and conformable to the time and circumstances. Conditions proved favourable to their desires, and the civil and military leaders submitted to their opinions and plans. But God frustrated their ideas, disappointed their hopes, dispersed their congregations, and showed the folly of their imaginations, until their histories remain as warnings to the men of honour and as admonitions to the people of discernment and perception.

For what reason have the doctors of Darwinism taken the resemblance of some human bones to those of orang-utans as a decisive proof of the fact that mankind has descended from the apes? Why have they considered this evidence, notwithstanding its

¹ The story of Mazdak, in the days of King Kobad [Kavi Kavata, Kai Kobad or Kavadh], the father of the Great Anoshirwan [Anushirvan], is given in the history of *Shah-Nameh* of Firdawsí, and also in all the Persian histories.

² Sa'dí-Dawlah, the Jew, was the vizier of Arghún-Khán, the Mongol, in Persia.

³ Arghún, an Íl-Khán of Írán, was the son of Abáqá-Khán, the son of Húlágú-Khán, the son of Tuluy, the son of Genghiz Khan (*Chingíz Khán*), the Mongol. Arghún-Khán reigned in Persia from 683, to AH 690 (CE 1291). His life is recorded in the history written by Wassaf, the contemporary and historian of this Dynasty.

⁴ 'Alá' ad-Dín Muḥammad [Khaledge] was the King of India at Delhi, in AH 698. He was a great King of India during the latter part of the 13th Century, and belonged to the Dynasty of Khaledge. Full particulars concerning his attempt to found a new religion are given in the history of Farishté, one of the greatest historical works of India.

shallowness and invalidity, as being a final certificate that man has gained his growth, existence and heredity from the race of orang-utans? They have regarded apes as their ancestors, but have not considered the Power that alone has conquered the world and subdued nations as being a proof of the fact that the Manifestors and Dawning-places of this Power have been Divine men and heavenly personages. Could the habit of smoking, evidenced by a single orang-utan, and, its likeness in body to the form of some of the African savages, prove its homogeneity with mankind? The apes differ widely from savages in numerous things, such as intelligence, the comprehension of general subjects, the capacity of attaining perfection, etc. Shall all this be esteemed and admitted as proof, while the subjugation of Pharaohs, domination of kings and tyrants by the rise of a single individual, without assistance or encouragement by any ruler, authority or learning, is not considered evidence that such a man is assisted by an Invisible, Divine Power?

Indeed, this is a strange philosophy—an amazing wisdom and discernment! How true is the warning of the great Apostle Paul: “Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.”

From what we have described and explained, it follows that the “Logical Proof” is the greatest and clearest argument as to the truth of the Manifestations of the Command of God. It also follows that the stability of the Word and the continuance of a religion is the strongest proof and firmest evidence as to the truth of a mission and the founder of a Faith. For should we disregard this clear proof and evident argument, as is the case with every denier and opposer, the philosophically-minded among people would be compelled to accept unknown imaginations and absurd and

unintelligible theories, such as the chain and concatenation of causes, or the absence of cause and origin, as previously explained. The religious-minded among them would then be necessarily unable to prove the truth of their religion and the validity of their faith.

This proof is named the proof of continuance or stability, because the continuance of a religion and the stability of the Word is an establishment of its truth, made by God, and is a testimony of its reality. It is absurd to think God incapable of annulling falsehood and crushing the unreal. He has not forgotten His promises to suppress false claimants and destroy seducers. This is confirmed in books and writings, and preserved in the prophecies uttered by saints and prophets.

Third proof: the working of wonders and miracles

By these are meant deeds that are beyond the normal power of mankind to perform; wonders that proceed from the Manifestations of the Cause of God as a favour or performed in accordance with the demands of people. Among these are causing stones to speak, trees to move, quickening the dead, changing the rod into a serpent, and numerous other miracles which are said to have been performed by the prophets and saints. The ancient peoples regarded such events as *áyát* (signs). The word *áyah* (sign) means literally a token, and is derived from the Semitic language, out of which the Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac, Babylonian and some of the African languages have originated.

Whenever a messenger of God announced his mission, he would be asked to reveal the sign of his prophethood, that is, the token of the truth of his

statement and the genuineness of his claim. We find it recorded in Matthew 12:38–40: “Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Likewise, in the same Gospel (16:1–5): “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.”

The interpretation of these verses is, that a number of the Jewish doctors temptingly asked our Lord Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—to show them a heavenly miracle and a Divine wonder, as a sign of His Truth and a token of His Christhood; so that they might believe in Him and confess His Religion. He answered, that they, by their sagacity, had reached such a degree of intelligence that they could foretell fair weather and rain from the aspect of the sky; that the husbandmen and villagers, when they saw the sky red at sundown, would take it as a sign of fair weather, while a “lowering red” at sunrise presaged rain.

He silenced them by saying that they who could

discern the face of the sky and distinguish the times of the change of weather should be able to know the signs of the time of the coming of prophets, and of the renewal of laws and religions; inasmuch as they posed as doctors of religion, and were considered the heirs and guardians of the knowledge of prophets and messengers. Jesus Christ meant that the divergence of beliefs and sects, the variety of thoughts and opinions, the indifference of people toward Divine ordinances and regulations, and their indulgence in low desires and bodily luxuries—all of which are described by prophets as the “rending of the heavens”, the “shaking of the pillars of the firmament”—are the strongest proofs of the approach of the Manifestation of God, and the clearest signs of the coming of the time of the renewal of the religion of God. Thus He said: “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.” By this Jesus Christ has repeated the application of the term “Sign” to miracle and wonder, and has confirmed the truth that seeking after miracles and temptingly demanding signs from the Manifestations of the Command of God is a characteristic of the wicked and adulterous, the reason of which will be explained later on.

In the Qur’án, also, the word “Sign” is applied to [a] miracle or wonder, as is clearly shown in the verse speaking of the deniers: “Let him (Muḥammad) come unto us therefore with some sign, in like manner as the former prophets were sent.”¹ Also: “(The unbelievers) say, Unless he come unto us with a Sign from his Lord, (we will not believe on him). Hath not a plain declaration come unto them, of that which (is contained) in the former volumes” (of Scripture), (by the revelation of the Qur’án)?²

That is to say, the deniers of his prophethood ar-

¹ Qur’án 21:5.

² Qur’án 20:133.

gued: "If Muḥammad is a prophet sent by God, why then does he not show unto us a Divine miracle and a heavenly wonder, as a proof of the truth of his mission and word?" Then Muḥammad answered: "Have I not brought you the Qur'án, which is a clear explanation of the Bible, the Gospels, and the writings of the Jewish prophets?"

As we have demonstrated in the course of the first argument, the Book of God is the first sign that indicates the truth of a prophetic word. It is the greatest argument of a Divine mission, especially when this great sign and glorious miracle fortifies itself by explaining that which has been symbolically uttered in the old Divine volumes and closed and sealed up in the former heavenly Scriptures, such as prophecies of future events, mysteries of Resurrection and the renewal of Creation, determination of their appointed times, the record of their evidences and conditions, and even the announcement of the Dawning-Place from which these signs and mysteries will appear. Inasmuch as philosophers and wise men were not able to apprehend these points, solve these allegories or break their seals before their realization and occurrence, how could this be done by one who had never studied in a college nor read in any school? Whence the power and wisdom of one who had never been occupied in teaching or learning, nor considered a student? Is not this the clearest evidence that the Book was a heavenly sign, a spiritual gift, and the greatest proof and argument that the words and passages it contained had proceeded from the Holy Reality and descended from the pure Divine Essence?

During the middle ages of Islám the Muslim doctors applied the word "miracle" to wonders which human beings are unable to perform, and termed them supernatural. They divided supernatural things into

many kinds; for instance, when these wonders proceeded from a man and coincided with his claim of prophethood, they called them Mu'jizát¹ (miracles). When performed by a prophet before he claimed his mission, they were designated Irhását (miracles previous to the mission).² When these supernatural actions appeared from saints and holy ones, they were named Kirámát (liberality);³ but when such appeared from misleaders,³ and impious ones, they were called Siḥr (sorcery).⁴ These words and terms were circulated in the language of writers and doctors, until finally, becoming literary words and secondary facts, they were introduced into dictionaries. But all of these terms, except the word "miracle", which has a clear relation with the intended meaning, are weak terminologies and deficient deductions. They have proceeded from ignorance of scientific facts and theoretical analogies, as is known to those who have sound discernment in etymological points; especially the meanings of the words Kirámát (liberality) and Kháriq-i-Ádat.*

Liberality is the antonym of avarice, and thus it can be applied to the generosity and liberality shown forth by the saints of God; for this is the personal honour which they have gained through their nearness to the Divine Threshold, and has no relation to superstitions and inventions.

As to the term Kháriq-i-Ádat: this signifies the changing of the natural habits and customs of men by a prophet; such as the changing of the natural customs of the Hebrews in the rites of their religion and ceremonies of their laws. As one of the signs of the coming of the Manifestations of God is the changing

¹ Mu'jizá, pl. mu'jizát.

² Irhás, pl. irhását.

³ Karáma, pl. karámát.

⁴ Siḥr, ashár, suḥúr.

* This literally means "things that are contrary to, rend or change the habits of men"; but the Oriental doctors have misused this term and taken it to mean 'supernatural' or 'miracles'.

of the rites and ordinances of the former religion and laws, (as those of the Jews were changed with the advent of Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—and those of the Sabeans and Parsis¹ by Muḥammad), therefore, men of discernment have considered these changes as being one of the greatest signs and clearest proofs of the power of the Word of God and the appearance of the Prophets of God. See Hebrews 7:12: “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.” That is, when the prophethood is renewed, there will be of necessity a renewal of laws and a change of ordinances.

This is the real and reasonable meaning of the word Kháriq-i-’Ádat, instead of that which is imagined by the people of superstition and false ideas. That which is not customary to people cannot be regarded as natural and customary, in order to justify the application of the term “changing the custom” (Kháriq-i-’Ádat) to the performance of the opposite. It cannot be assumed that “not raising the dead” has been a natural habit of people, to show that “quickenings of the dead” might be regarded as supernatural. Nor can it be said that “not dividing the sea”, “nor drying the river”, or “not cleaving the moon” have been natural habits of people, so that the performance of such actions could be termed “supernatural”. However, observing the Sabbath day has been one of the natural habits of the Jews that was rent by our Lord Jesus Christ, and changed into the observance of Sunday. Divorce, sacrifice, polygamy and similar other rites, were also rent, changed and reformed by Jesus Christ. Likewise, burying female children alive, showing homage to images, praying before idols, fire-worshipping, and other similar practices were confirmed habits of the Arabs and Persians—all of which habits were de-

¹ Pársí, pl. Pársiyán.

stroyed by Muḥammad, and changed into Islamic laws. These are the supernatural things that the prudent consider as the deeds of the prophets and the characteristics of the heavenly messengers, and not what has been invented by the imaginations of the superstitious or forged by the thoughts of the ignorant.

As to *siḥr* (sorcery); its meaning, in ordinary acceptance, is but a remnant of the imaginations of former dark ages, the dense obscurity of which was dispersed by the lights of the dawn of the Sun of Truth, and its clouds cleared away by the blowing of the Breezes of Knowledge and Wisdom. The word “sorcery” spoken of in the holy books, means *Bāṭil* (falsehood); inasmuch as the antagonists of the prophets held to false things, and considered the deeds of the prophets to be the same. Therefore, the words “sorcery” and “sorcerers” were applied to falsehood and the adherents of vanities, in the words of the Elect. However, with the lapse of time and centuries they became wrapped up in the webs of superstition, and thus their real meanings became concealed, as is the case with all the words revealed in the writings of the Elect. This is a sufficient explanation to those who are endowed with perception and insight.

O ye people of Bahá! Now that you understand the meanings of such words, know ye—May God illumine your insight, increase the purity of your conscience, enlighten your hearts and minds through His Manifest Light!—that the proofs and arguments must needs be in connection with the subject which is to be proven and demonstrated; otherwise they cannot be accounted as proofs, even though they might be very wonderful and astonishing. For instance, if a certain person claims to be a physician and seeks to prove the validity of his claim by flying in the air,

the truth of his claim would not, of necessity, be proven, even if he did so. Flight in the air is not a characteristic endowment of a physician, and there is no connection between the medical profession and flight, even though soaring in the air is extremely amazing. However, healing sicknesses, removing diseases, physical diagnosis and treatment are characteristics of medical science and confirmatory evidences of the truth of a physician's claim. Again, if a man claims to be an engineer, his proof cannot be in quickening the dead. If he claims to be a writer, his evidence is not in the fact that he causes stones to speak; or if he claims to be an orator, his proof is not in cleaving the sea asunder, etc. Such performances cannot prove their respective statements, validate their claims, nor be considered as proofs and arguments. There is no connection whatever between these practices and claims; as is clearly and decisively evident to such as reflect upon the meaning of proof and argument.

It is said by the erudite Professor Cornelius VanDyk, of America, in the 8th part of his book, written in Arabic and entitled, "an-Naqsh Fí al-Ḥajar" (Engraving on Stone), on "Logic": "Man being subject to mistake as to logical matters, it is good for him to avail himself of applied logic, which may preserve him from mistake and direct him to the real fact, so that he may not consider as a cause, things which are not causes, nor as conclusions things which are not conclusions; and may not, build on a corrupt foundation, nor regard as arguments, things which are not arguments. It is said by Imám al-Ḥazálí, 'If a man say that the number four is more than ten, and that he demonstrates this by transforming a rod into a serpent, even though I be astonished at the trick of the performer, yet I will firmly stand by the fact that four is less than ten, etc.' This evinces that in such

a case, there would not be any relation between the argument and the matter which is to be proven; therefore it cannot be considered as an argument.”

Since we understand this introduction, we now can easily apprehend that there is neither connection nor relationship between having the faculty of producing miracles and wonders and the claim of prophethood. Verily, prophethood is no other than the mission of a man on the part of God the Exalted for the guidance of people, and this fact has no connection whatever with cleaving seas asunder, bringing water out of rocks, causing stones and trees to speak, etc. These actions have no connection with the meaning of prophethood, which signifies mediatorship between the creatures and their Creator, delivery of His ordinances and messages, instructing them in His laws and devotional acts. The prophet's mission is reformation of moral principles, development of spiritual graces, and beautifying characters. Verily, demanding miracles from the prophets and temptingly seeking signs from the Manifestations of the Command of God, is like asking governors and rulers to show forth deeds which are becoming to kings and absolute sovereigns, in order to prove the truth of their claims as rulers; so that the subjects may deem it their duty to obey them. In fact, their dignity can only be demonstrated by the farmans¹ of their kings, and corroborated by the charters of their governments. For example, a man may claim to be the ruler of Egypt on the part of the Sulṭán. A party of the inhabitants of the country deny him, and demand of him an evidence of the truth of his authority. Naturally, he proves his position by the charter of his Sulṭán and the farmán of his Government. Should they repudiate his farmán, deny his charter and demand that he show forth some of the actions pertaining to the characteristics of the

¹ Farmán, pl. farámán.

kings and sovereigns, such as fitting out armies, conquering countries, destroying fortresses, slaying and capturing men, dismissing ministers and appointing chiefs, he certainly will not fulfil their demand, nor grant their wishes, but will depend upon his farmán and prove his authority through the charter of his King, even though he may possess the power to perform the demands made upon him. There are certain reasons and times for executions, imprisonments, appointments, discharges, equipment of armies and the conquest of countries. Rulers do not perform these things except when expedient for the circumstances and demanded by the law. To this particular point the following verse revealed in the Heavenly Books refers: "And no apostle doth bring a sign, unless by the permission of God."¹ This proves that the mission of prophets and the sending of spiritual messengers is similar to the appointment of rulers and the sending of governors in the phenomenal world, as is evident to the men of perception and to such as are endowed with sight.

Since we now understand the lack of connection between the claim of prophethood and the power of doing things habitually impossible, and realize the contrast between them, we can comprehend the meaning of that which has been formerly mentioned, viz.; that miracles and wonders are auxiliary and confirmatory evidences and not essential and principal arguments. We see also that they are as secondary supports to the truth of the manifestations of the Command of God, and not primary indications. This is the reason why the prophets refused to produce such signs, rely upon them, and adduce them as proofs, as is outlined from the verses recorded in Matthew 12:39 and 16:4: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall

¹ Qur'án 40:78.

no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.”

Verily the Prophets, on account of their evident proofs, their great powers, the effectiveness of their words, and the prevalence of their ordinances, are in no need of producing proofs which show no indication of the truth of their claim and the validity of their mission. This of itself is a clear and principal indication—a manifest and evident proof.

Moreover, temptingly demanding signs and miracles from the Manifestations of God is identical with tempting the Lord Himself, which act is prohibited by God the Exalted, in the Holy Bible. He has warned us expressly against this: “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” As formerly explained and proved, tempting the Essence of God the Exalted is no other than tempting Its Manifestations and Dawning-places; and testing the prophets by seeking signs and miracles from them, is the meaning of “tempting the Lord”. This is identical with pride evinced towards God, contradicting the Desire of God, antagonizing His Will and thwarting His Wisdom; all of which lead to ruin and desolation, and entail destruction and perdition. It is also revealed in the Heavenly Books: “And we send not signs but for intimidation.”¹

Thus Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—silenced the Jewish tempter, who had set Him upon a pinnacle of the Temple of Solomon, and tempted Him to cast Himself down from that lofty edifice, by saying to Him: “If thou be the Son of God ... He shall give his angels charge concerning thee as it is written.” Jesus Christ answered him: “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” This signifies that testing Christ was identical with testing and tempting God, an act strictly prohibited in the Book

¹ Qur’án 17:59

of God. This answer, notwithstanding its brevity and conciseness, is full of grace and strength, for besides being an argument forbidding the demanding of miracles from the Manifestations of the Command of God, it also silenced by showing that in citing the texts of the Book against Christ the tempter had himself contradicted its commandments and ordinances.

It is characteristic of the enemies of God to hold to the literal form of the words of the Books of God, in denying the Manifestations of His Command and Behest, while they neglect those texts which clearly indicate the truth of their Manifestation, prove the reality of their Dawn, confirm their word, and eloquently pronounce the validity of their claim. Thus they fulfil this verse revealed in the Book: "Do you therefore believe in part of the Book and reject other part thereof? But whoso among you doth this, shall have no other reward than shame in this life, and on the day of Resurrection they shall be sent to a most grievous punishment."¹

The prophets' refusal to work miracles is not because of their being absurd and impracticable, or that they are impossible, as is imagined by some so-called philosophers; for possibility and impossibility are not of the essential qualities of things; nay, rather, they are relative and comparative. There are many facts that are accounted as possible for a certain species, while the same are impracticable for another. The actions that are peculiar to mankind are possible to man, yet impossible to other species of animals, supernatural to them and beyond their power. Likewise, the acts natural to animals are possible for them and impracticable to the vegetable. Therefore miracles seem impossible to mankind, yet are possible to the Manifestations of the Command of God, because of the perfection of the Holy Spirit manifest within

¹ Qur'án 2:85.

them, and the comprehensiveness of the Sacred Power which has descended upon them. In truth, a Man in whom the Supreme Power is manifest and from whom Divine Attributes proceed; who has singly subdued the world and dominated nations; who has prophesied future events in a particular as well as general sense, all of which prophecies are fulfilled and have come to pass, even after the lapse of ages and centuries—nothing is beyond the capacity of a Man who has done all these things through His perfect Spirit, pervading Power, lofty essence and vast strength, nor is He neglectful of any matter. Refusal to show wonders and signs demanded is not on account of His inability to perform them, or because they are impracticable; but it is because of the fact that miracles and wonders are not things which can prove the truth of His mission and the validity of His claim. Nor are they a complete and primary indication which could satisfy a diligent seeker and, earnest investigator, as has been, already described in detail. For it is clear to an intelligent enquirer that, should one confine himself to wonders and miracles in attempting to prove the truth of the prophets, it would end in a collision of proofs and a conflict between arguments. Because such wonders and miracles are not permanent and everlasting proofs, as are the verses of the Book. To these proofs every one may have access and recourse; may be directed to the conclusion, and may demonstrate the cause by the effect. Moreover, these wonders will necessarily be handed down to others through traditions and records, especially throughout future centuries and generations. If every nation gave credit to that which was handed down to it concerning its prophet, the founder of its faith, its religious leaders and saints, and the sepulchres of its holy men, there would be, in such case, a collision of proofs and a con-

flict of arguments. Thus the right path would be concealed, the finger-posts of guidance destroyed, the highway of religion darkened, and the lights of truth and assurance disappear. Are not the Roman Catholics resting upon the wonders and miracles that they narrate of their former bishops and monks? Does not the Greek Church rest upon those related of their monks and bishops; the Sunnites upon the wonderful acts and supernatural deeds attributed to their doctors and holy ones; and the Shi'ih upon those narrated of their Imams and leaders? Such is the case with other religions and creeds.

O thou excellent reader! Strip thyself from thine old garment of imitation, abstain from religious fanaticism and racial egotism; ascend through the power of perception to the summit of investigation, and place the adherents of all the religions, peoples, creeds and sects, before thy view. Then look with the gaze of a discerning man from that lofty and exalted station. Thou wilt see different peoples, various and contradictory nations, each denouncing the other; while each possesses books filled with wonders and miracles attributed to its own prophets and saints. These books contain the adulation of their chosen ones, and the wondrous conditions and lives of their leaders; a mass of reading which could not be completed in cycles; and numerous lives would pass away before they could be finished. So look upon them, consider them, and answer by thy truth. If all these contradictory miracles and various wonders be considered as a reliable proof and argument which could be rested upon, how then could the true among them be known from the false, the right from wrong, the guides from misleaders; and what could distinguish between guidance and error, the way of salvation and the way of perdition!

From what has been clearly explained in detail, it is manifest that miracles and wonders are not proofs of a primary nature which could independently indicate the truth of the claimant; nay, rather, they are only secondary proofs and auxiliary demonstration as to the truth of the Manifestations of the Command of God and the Dawning-places of the Religion of God. It is impossible to deny the ability of the Manifestations of God to perform miracles, in face of what has been explained concerning the inherence of their power; to which fact their disciples and the contents of their books and writings testify. Even granting this, however, it is impossible to believe all the miracles and wonders which are related of them.

One of the correct rules held by the divines and theologians, in connection with this subject, is that miracles traditionally related of a prophet or founder of a Religion, and not contradictory to his own words, are undoubtedly true. These can be taken as a proof of his truth and a confirmatory evidence of the validity of his claim. Such are the miracles that have been witnessed by former nations, and those that have been authenticated in the Manifestation of the Cause of God during this sacred and manifest Century. However, if there is any contrast or discrepancy between the alleged miracles and the Prophet's Words, then the miracles must be considered as allegorical narrations that need to be explained, so that they may harmonize with the usages of the Prophets of God and agree with the Utterances of the Manifestations of the Command of God.

But the general rule, which is regarded as authoritative by the learned and philosophers, is that if the wonders and miracles related of the Prophets are connected with the perfection of the Sacred Spirit manifested in them and with Its power and predominance,

then such can be considered as real, accurate facts, and secondary auxiliary proofs. Otherwise, they will be accounted mere fabricated traditions; falsities invented by pretended love when it deviates from the true path.

What has already been mentioned is sufficient for such as have a clear perception of the Divine methods and of the natural laws after which the world is made.

Fourth proof: prophecies

This relates to the prophecies revealed in the Heavenly Books, concerning the appearance of a subsequent Manifestation, whom God will send to guide nations, found laws of religion and renew them at the appointed time. Such are the prophecies given by Moses and the Jewish prophets concerning the Manifestation of Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—those given by Muḥammad and the Imams of his household regarding the Appearance of the Mahdī (Precursor); and the utterances of all the Prophets and founders of religions concerning the coming of the Day of God, and the Manifestation of the Spirit for promoting the Cause of God.

There is no extant religion whose founder has not reserved a part of his Book for prophecies concerning one whom God would manifest subsequent to Him; one who would renew religion and its glory. All religions, likewise, contain prophecies regarding the “Final Salvation” by the “Great Manifestation”, the Mighty “Resurrection”, and the “Most Great Hour”, which former books have also unanimously announced. This proof is one of the clear arguments, manifest and reliable evidences which demonstrate the truth of our Lord the Exalted, the Supreme. It has been proved in the previous Introductions that the

Appearance of the Manifestations of the Cause of God are really the Manifestations of the Holy and Divine Reality, Single in Essence, and that all the Prophets are respectively the Manifestations of that Single Reality and One Essence. So no difference exists among them, nor is there any variance in their truths. During the past centuries and former ages God the Exalted has entered into a Covenant with nations, through the tongues of His Prophets and Messengers, concerning His next Manifestation. This Covenant has been recorded in the Prophets' books and writings, so that mankind might await the coming of the Day of His Manifestation, be prepared for the illumination of His Light, lay hold of the handle of His religion, and be enlightened with the lamp of His laws and regulations. For it is inconceivable that the people of the world could ever be without need of the Divine Manifestations; that the order of human society could be founded upon anything but religious principles, or that human-made laws could suffice for the establishment of nations. That nations are in need of laws and regulations whereby their interests, properties, and lives may be preserved and their prosperity and permanence secured, is a clear fact, beyond need of any further explanation or production of argument. Religion is no other than a code of Divine regulations whereby society is supported and attainment to everlasting felicity is secured. To formulate such laws is far beyond the highest intellect of man, and the genius of the men of learning can never agree thereupon unless reinforced by Divine Sources. This fact is witnessed in the conditions of those former nations that had ascended the ladder of learning and civilization.

Have not the philosophers, doctors of divinity and chiefs among the great nations which ascended the

summit of glory and excellence, such as the Persians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Greeks, Turks and Indians, failed to produce such laws? Notwithstanding their abundant learning and great enlightenment, have laws been forthcoming upon which all their opinions would agree, and which would secure their happiness and permanence? The laws they have created, invariably failed to abolish savage and abominable customs, which their descendants and posterity ridicule, even in the present day.

Therefore, among these high nations, such practices have prevailed as offering children in sacrifice before idols, worshipping images, interring female children alive, violating chaste women in order to gain the favour of the goddess of Beauty, praying to fire, animals, rivers, trees; and numerous other ruinous practices and vile deeds. These were considered by them as standard customs, the most excellent laws and modes of adoration.

However, God the Exalted prevented and abolished these, through the appearance of Divine Religions, and illumined human minds by the light of the Words of the Holy Manifestations. Similar ruinous customs and fictitious beliefs are still being discovered among all the present religions and extant nations, the removal and abolition of which God the Almighty has ordained to be effected by the appearance of the Powerful Lord and the final great Salvation. This is evident to every one of discernment and perception.

All that has been said indicates that verily the appearance of Divine Religions has been the greatest gift of Heaven for the preservation of society and the most glorious Divine bestowal for the accomplishment of human virtues. The Prophet's words concerning the Appearance of the next Manifestation, prepare those endowed with sound judgement for the accept-

ance of it, and make ready the possessors of pure hearts for response to it after its Appearance. Therefore, prophecies concerning a Manifestation whom God would cause to appear later for the quickening of the spiritually dead and reformation of existing laws, are considered as one of the greatest proofs and arguments, and a powerful confirmatory evidence of the truth of the Manifestations of God, the Lord of the Creatures. However, understanding these prophecies and apprehending their minute points and realities, depends upon having sound minds, pure hearts, sanctified breasts, and chaste souls. This will become evident through the clear and manifest proofs that will be explained later.

Consequently, the prophecies are regarded as secondary proofs in comparison with the Divine Book and Logical Argument. They are but literal proofs. Literal proofs necessarily contain allegories and symbolism. As languages radically change in the course of centuries and generations, these prophecies can scarcely be understood without interpretation after the lapse of one thousand years. Therefore, it is impossible to rely upon their meanings without decisive analogies. So, literal proofs are accounted by the philosophers and rhetoricians as oral arguments, and not decisive ones. Moreover, the Divine prophecies recorded in the Holy Scriptures, as is clearly testified by their very texts, are no other than symbolical and sealed words, and the essential purpose thereof is closed up and unknown. However, the opening of these seals and the elucidation of these allegories have been apportioned to the coming of the time of the end, and to the advent of the great Hour. In face of this fact, the prophecies can only be regarded as auxiliary proofs, and not of the primary logical arguments. God willing, this subject will be considered in detail,

in the course of the future Introductions, and sufficient explanation will be given about it.

We will now consider some of the principal points upon which depend the understanding of the texts of the Holy Scriptures, the solution of the symbols and allegories, the breaking of their seals and the opening of their treasures. In this we rely upon God, the Revealer of Verses, the Manifester of proofs and evidences, the dispeller of the darkness of former things from heaven and earth:

First—Verily, the Prophets and Manifestations of God employed various metaphors in their writings, and embellished their graceful explanations by all sorts of allegories and similes. Just as they have been in spirit, the Manifestations of the Names and Attributes of God and the Dawning-places of His Identity and Essence, so also they have been in bodily form, the manifestations of humanity. Thus they were subject to all human needs, such as food, drink, sleep, speech, social intercourse, and liable to physical accidents and other conditions. Indeed, they were the perfect examples of these qualities, and every human attribute has been manifest in them in its highest condition and greatest glory. As grace of explanation and eloquence of discourse are considered highest human accomplishments, inasmuch as they are the outcome of genius, lofty taste and brilliant minds—so these qualities have been manifest in the Messengers and Prophets who were the most excellent of mankind and were endowed with genius and brilliant intellects. Their explanations have appeared in the form of verses, and their words were revealed in songs. They surpassed all the men of eloquence in grace of style, and in the form of their explanations. They used symbolical points and concealed subtle meanings

under the veils of allegories and allusions. Therefore the people of error have estimated these productions as fantastic trifles and mere poetry; the result of insanity and hallucination. Thus the ignorant have gone so far as to say: "Shall we abandon our gods for a distracted poet?"¹ All this is lack of knowledge of the Words of God, and inability of the spiritually dense to distinguish between the Heavenly Revelation and human thoughts. God is far exalted above what the unjust assert, and holy above the imagination of the ignorant!

Second—All that has been revealed in the Holy Books concerning the prophecies of the Day of God, Resurrection, the Manifestation of the Lord, the coming of the Hour, its signs, tokens, conditions and events, is in the form of symbols and allegories, as explained above. Such are the "darkening of the sun and moon", the "falling of stars", the "rending of the heavens", "their disappearance and changing", the "trembling of the pillars of the earth", the "renewal of the earth", the "descending of the Lord in the clouds", and similar other signs spoken of in the Books, and evident to men of perception.

These words must of necessity have reasonable meanings outside their literal sense, as is clearly stated in the Heavenly Scriptures, thus: "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed."²

God sealed the hearts of the Jews lest they under-

¹ Qur'án 37:36. This refers to the objections made by the Pagan Arabs to the writings of Muḥammad.

² Isaiah 6:9–10.

stand the real meanings thereof, and shut their eyes lest they see them. For God had ordained the overthrow of their dominion and their degradation. He decreed their dispersion and suppression, because of their injustice and evil deeds, and their great sin in falsely denying our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Manifestation they anxiously awaited. For the only source of the felicity or misery of every people and the origin of its honour or degradation, is the way it understands the words of its prophets during the Manifestation of the Promised One. This One alone is the nation's resource; and its honour and continuity depend upon its belief in Him. As the Jews did not understand the real meanings of the signs given in their Book concerning the Manifestation of the Promised One, but expected their literal fulfilment, which they did not see in the Manifestation of Christ, therefore they falsely denied and rejected Him. Thus they brought about their own utter ruin, became subject to humiliation and degradation, and have been scattered in all countries and lands, even unto the present day. Had they apprehended the inner truths of these signs, they would have believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, and would have thereby ascended the zenith of grandeur and glory. This is clearly stated in the Book and is evident to men of judgement.

Likewise, it is revealed in Daniel 12:4: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." Also, 12:9: "And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." These two verses clearly indicate that the purpose of the texts of the Book is not their literal, outward meaning that can be understood by every man and apprehended by every soul. Nay, rather, they have concealed meanings that would be necessarily

closed up until the coming of the “end” and the Appearance of the Sun of Truth.

Third—The previously mentioned great signs of the coming of the Day of God, the tokens of the appearance of the Manifestation of the Command of God and the emblems of the Hour and Resurrection, have all been revealed from the tongues of the prophets in every one of the Heavenly Books. They appear in the same style and in the same similes and allegories, although in different languages.

Muḥammad prophesied the coming of the Lord in the clouds, with His angels, in the following words in the Qur’án:

“Do they expect less than that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds, and the angels also? However, the thing is decreed, and to God shall all things return.”¹

“The day whereon the Spirit and the angels shall stand in order, they shall not speak, except he to whom the Merciful shall grant permission, and who shall say that which is right.”²

God, addressing Muḥammad, said: “And thy Lord shall come, and the angels rank by rank.”

Likewise, Muḥammad said: “On the day whereon the heaven shall appear in a visible smoke.”³

He also spoke of the sun and moon, the falling and scattering of stars, the cleaving of heaven, the trembling of the pillars of earth, thus: “When the sun shall be folded up; and when the stars shall fall; and when the mountains shall be made to pass away.”⁴ “When the heaven shall be cloven asunder, and when the stars shall be scattered.”⁵

“When the heaven shall be rent asunder, and shall obey its Lord, and shall be capable (thereof); and when the earth shall be stretched out.”⁶

¹ Qur’án 2:210.

² Qur’án 78:38.

³ Qur’án 89:22.

⁴ Qur’án 81:1–3.

⁵ Qur’án 82:1–2.

⁶ Qur’án 84:1–3.

“When the earth shall be shaken as by earthquake; and the earth shall cast forth her burdens.”¹

“O men, fear your Lord. Verily, the shock of the (last) Hour will be a terrible thing. On the day whereon you shall see it, every woman who giveth suck shall forget (the infant) which she suckleth, and every (female) that is with young shall cast her burden; and thou shalt see men (seemingly) drunk, yet they shall not be really drunk; but the punishment of God will be severe.”²

Speaking of the changing of heaven and earth, and their renewal, he said: “But they make not a due estimation of God; since the whole earth (shall be but) his handful, on the day of Resurrection; and the heavens shall be rolled together in his right hand. Praise be unto him! and far be he exalted above what they associate with him!”³

“The day (will come, when) the earth shall be changed into another earth, and the heavens (into other heavens); and men shall come forth before God, the One, the Mighty!”⁴

There are also many other verses that cannot be quoted for lack of space.

The same signs are spoken of in the Gospels, as revealed by God in Matthew 24:29: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven. ...” This passage contains all the signs spoken of in the Qur’án, concerning the descending of the Lord in the clouds with angels, the darkening of the sun, the shaking of the powers of heaven, and other fearful events. Likewise, clear points are recorded in the Second Epistle of Peter, chapter iii, concerning the passing away of the heavens and earth, the melting of the elements, and the coming of the new heaven

¹ Qur’án 99:1–2

² Qur’án 22:1–2

³ Qur’án 39:67.

⁴ Qur’án 12:48.

and earth with their light and effulgence. The 21st chapter of Revelation also contains prophecies concerning the new heaven and new earth, the passing away of former things, and other signs and tokens. Similar texts are revealed in the Old Testament, as follows:

Deuteronomy 28:23-24: "And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed." Also in Isaiah 65:17-19: "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." Likewise, 66:22: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain."

Concerning the clouds, gloom and desolation, it is prophesied in Zephaniah 1:14-15: "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness."

And in Joel 2:10: "The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." And in 2:31: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come."

Similar signs are also prophesied in the book of Haggai 2:6–7: “For thus saith the Lord of hosts; yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.”

It will clearly and manifestly appear to those who consider and reflect upon these passages, that by these verses all the prophets meant to explain the same fact, and that all of them used these words in an allegorical and symbolical manner to illustrate the same subject; although these prophets were of different languages and appeared in different countries and times. The essential cause of this fact is that the Revealer of all the Books, the Sender of all the Prophets, and the Appointer of all the Messengers, is the One God, as explained in the treatise upon “Divine Unity”. And as He has prophesied the coming of the One Great Day of Resurrection, the signs and tokens given thereof must be the same.

Fourth—Verily all the Holy Books contain texts and clear statements to the effect that the above-mentioned signs are closed up and sealed; that the door of understanding them is barred until the coming of the “end” and the Day of Resurrection; and that whosoever attempts to interpret them before the coming of that great day, will be in error. This fact is referred to in Isaiah 6:10–12: “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and converts and be healed. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate; and

the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.”

Likewise, Daniel 12:4: “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” Verses 12:9–10: “And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.”

All these verses clearly indicate and prove that the real sense of the signs given concerning the Day of God, the Appearance of the Lord, and the coming of the end, was closed up and sealed, so that no one could understand them until the coming of the “end” and the advent of the “Hour”. Even then, the wicked were not to understand them, but only the righteous and just ones should apprehend their real meanings.

In CE 1888 (AH 1306), when the writer travelled from Tīhrán to Iṣfahán, and stopped a few days in the city of Káshán, there was a meeting held in the house of a Jewish merchant called Lazarus, for the purpose of investigating and considering the arguments of the Manifestation and the signs of the coming of the day of Resurrection. For in those days the promulgation of the Word and the spreading of this faith among the Jews had just begun. The meeting was composed of prominent Jewish rabbis and men of learning. Three of their most celebrated doctors were present. The oldest among them was named Mordecai, a man over seventy years of age, of fair complexion, cheerful face, very learned in Hebrew and quick in scientific debate. When the proofs of the Cause of God were discussed in full detail, the weakness of Mordecai’s doubts were exposed and

no ground left for his objections and refutations. Nevertheless, he clung to the non-fulfilment of the outward and literal sense of the signs and tokens. He said: "That the appearance of the Promised One must necessarily be preceded by the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of stars, the dwelling together of the sheep and wolf, the calf and the lion, the infant playing with serpents and asps, and the scattering of the holy people in all directions; whereas not one of these signs had appeared, so that the truth of the prophets' promises in these texts had not been realized." Then we answered him, saying: "O honourable man! Do you alone understand outward meaning and literal sense from these verses, or do all the Jews likewise interpret them in the same way?" "Yes," he replied, "all the Jews, both the East and West, Asiatics as well as Europeans, understand these prophecies in the same manner, and interpret them as I do; therefore they do not give credit to the claims of Jesus and Muḥammad, nor do they regard them as being the true Prophets spoken of by Moses. For none of these clear signs were manifest in Jesus and Muḥammad, nor did the prophetic promises come to pass in their days." We answered: "We have read in the book of Isaiah, that God commanded him to seal the hearts of the Jews and shut their eyes, so that they may not understand the meaning of the Holy Book. He likewise commanded Daniel to seal the Book and shut up its meanings. Is this true or not?" He said: "Yes, this is an indisputable fact which cannot be doubted." We then said: "As one great prophet was commanded to seal your hearts and shut your eyes, so that you might not understand the Book; and as another great prophet was commanded to seal the Book, shut up its meanings and veil its purposes from all mankind,

—in such a case how can a discerning man rely upon your comprehension and interpretation of the Book, and put his trust in your explanations and elucidations? For if your interpretations of the Holy Books be regarded as reliable and your understanding of the texts as true, then the sealing of hearts and shutting up of the Book would not be fulfilled.” Mordecai was silenced and unable to answer, while the believers rejoiced.

The Holy Gospels also contain numerous verses and evidences of the sealing of the texts, the difficulty of understanding them, and the intricacy of their meanings. Even the disciples of Jesus Christ, who were the chosen of God and His saints, frequently did not understand the meanings of words, and asked Jesus Christ to solve their mysteries. For He mostly spoke to them in symbols and allegories, and taught them through parables, as is said in Matthew 13:34-35: “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.”

It is evident to intelligent mind's that the commands, exhortations, ordinances and regulations revealed in the Holy Books, are not concealed matters and have not sealed meanings; therefore Jesus Christ did not explain them in parables and symbols, or cover them under the veils of allegories and allusions. Verily, the prophets revealed commands and ordinances in a clear manner, without concealment and obscurity, so that the laws of devotion and conduct may thereby be secured among men, and human society sustained throughout all centuries and cycles. But by the “things that have been kept secret from

the foundation of the world”, is meant the mysteries of the “day of Judgement” and “Resurrection”, the “darkening of the sun and moon”, the “falling of stars”, the “coming of the Lord in the Clouds”, the “rising of the dead from the earth”, the illumination of the earth from the “east to the west” with the light of the Lord of Lords, and other great signs revealed in the Book; the purpose and meaning of which have been ever obscure and sealed to the students and seekers.

But our Lord Jesus Christ—Glory and Bahá be upon Him!—promised that these seals should be opened and these prophecies understood at the time of the Lord’s coming from Heaven, who would then explain their reality. John 16:12–13: “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” Likewise, John 6:27: “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for it* hath God the Father sealed.”

It is clear to everyone endowed with perception that the source of everlasting life is no other than the Words of God; as is said by Jesus Christ in answer to the tempter; Matthew 4:4: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

As God, the Almighty has sealed His Words, which are the source of salvation and the origin of life; it is therefore not possible for anyone to unseal them, except Himself. Thus revelation has been assigned

* This pronoun refers to the “meat” in the Arabic Bible, from which the author has quoted the verse. But the English version refers it to the “Son of Man” and gives a masculine pronoun (“him”) instead of “it”. The rendering here is according to the Arabic text quoted by the author.—Translator.

to Prophets, and the interpretation and unveiling of the Words given to the Exalted Lord at the time of His coming from Heaven to remove the covering from all things.

The verses of the Qur'án also clearly indicate that the interpretation of the Words of God will be effected at His coming and at its appointed and determined time; al-A'ráf: "And now we have brought unto them a book: we have explained it with knowledge; a direction and mercy unto people who shall believe. Do they wait for any other than the interpretation thereof? On the day whereon the interpretation thereof shall come, they who had forgotten the same before, shall say, 'Now the Messengers of our Lord came unto us with truth': shall we therefore have any intercessors, who will intercede for us? Or shall we be sent back, that we may do other works than what we did:? But now have they found themselves in loss: and that which they impiously imagined hath fled from them."¹ Likewise, He said: "But they have charged that with falsehood, the knowledge whereof they do not comprehend, neither hath the interpretation thereof come unto them."²

The prominent men among the tribe of Quraysh and the Arab chiefs disbelieved in the possibility of the fulfilment of such signs. They said "Muḥammad deludes his followers, infatuates his companions, and gives them promises and hopes of things which cannot be realized or even imagined to occur." Therefore the above-mentioned verse was revealed, clearly indicating that they had meanings and interpretations, which God will surely manifest in an appointed day, when the Manifestation of the Self-subsistent Lord will unveil their truth and open their seals. By interpretation is meant bringing to light the esoteric mean-

¹ Qur'án 7:52-53.

² Qur'án 10:39.

ings expressed in symbolical words; which meanings remained concealed and hidden during cycles and generations, and were not understood even by the loftiest minds, until the time when God permitted the removal of their veils and the opening of their seals. Then the doors of their paradise opened, the fragrances of their signs were diffused, and filled all the regions of the world with their sweet perfumes. Then the rose-petals of truth were scattered upon their breezes, and the nostrils of the righteous were perfumed with their sweet odour. Then the truths of the Holy Books became manifest to the possessors of quickened hearts and calm souls, which fact will appear from the interpretation which will be given to the men of brilliant insight and sound minds.

The fourth introduction

Treats of comparing the Four Proof's with the Manifestations of the Command of God

The fourth introduction

O ye righteous ones! Now that we have understood the reality of the four arguments, the quality of their evidence and indication of the truth of the Manifestations of the Command of God, know—May God illumine your beautiful faces with His manifest and clear Light, and strengthen your exalted words with the signs of prosperity and success—that, verily, these proofs and arguments confirm the truth of the Manifestation of God in this present time much more clearly and evidently than they demonstrated the truth of the Manifestations in bygone ages and past generations. As heretofore we have discussed the substance of these arguments, their limits, definition, and the validity of their evidence in a general way, we now speak of their specific relationship with each one of the Manifestations of God, so that it may be proven and become apparent that these arguments are weighty and complete in this Most Great Manifestation and glorious exalted Dawn. For these arguments demonstrate the Manifestation of our Lord the Bahá—Exalted is His Name!—more abundantly than they prove the mission of the prophets previous to Him. Therefore, whosoever denies this great Manifestation and rejects His clear proofs, cannot demonstrate the truth of any one of the former religions; as will be conclusively shown in the following demonstrations:

Moses

Consider—May God the Exalted assist you with His Spirit!—the mission of His Holiness Moses—Peace be upon Him!

In view of the four proofs already described and explained, let us ascertain by what argument the Israelites can demonstrate the truth of His religion

As to *The Book*, which we have regarded as being the most complete proof and the greatest argument: The only part of the Book which can be attributed to Moses is the Taurat¹ or Pentateuch of the Old Testament. To be more critically accurate, the only part of the Pentateuch which can be directly attributed to Moses—as, God willing, will be explained—is the Law of the Ten Commandments, revealed in the 5th chapter of Deuteronomy, and the Song and Blessings recorded in Deuteronomy chapters 32 and 33. The rest of the Pentateuch contains laws and ordinances written and enacted by Joshua, the son of Nún, the successor of Moses. This was added to the Taurat, as is evident in Joshua 24:25–26. As to the histories and legends: these were written and compiled by Ezra the priest, after the emigration from Babylon and the return of the tribes to Palestine, subsequent to the second restoration of Jerusalem under Artaxerxes of Persia; which fact is manifest after a careful investigation of ancient history.

As to *The Logical Proof*: That is the heavenly Power bestowed upon the Manifestations of the Command of God for the purpose of instituting laws and reforming the morals of humanity; its extent appears from the comparative effect which their words make in the guidance of peoples, while at the same time it is connected with the capacity of men to accept this guidance. It is an evident fact that the prophetic word, during the Manifestation of Moses, was effective only in guiding one nation, that is, the Jews, the former inhabitants of Palestine; for during 1,500 years

¹ Tawrat, pl. Tawrát.

the Word of Moses and the Jewish prophets influenced but this one nation. No result appeared from it among other peoples and countries.

As to *The Prophecies*: No book of the prophets Enoch, Noah, and Abraham, who lived previous to Moses, exists; nor is Moses' name spoken of or alluded to in the books of the founders of the other religions, such as the Buddhists, Brahamans, Zoroastrians, or Sabeans. Therefore, no prophecy exists which can prove the Mosaic Religion. There is but one passage from Enoch, the 7th from Adam, whom some of the prominent historians have supposed to be "Idrís", spoken of in the Arabic books. This passage is recorded in the Epistle of St. Jude. It refers to and clearly indicates the Manifestation of God, or that of the Lord with "ten thousand of His Saints". This prophecy has no connection with the Manifestation of Moses, or with any other prophetic Mission.

As to *The Miracles*: The only source from which it could be proven that miracles have proceeded from Moses, is the record of the Five Books, or the testimony given by those who came after him, such as our Lord Jesus Christ—Glory be upon Him!—and Muḥammad. As the Jews have denied the truth of these two Manifestations, there is nothing more difficult for them than to prove the Miracles of Moses to the Buddhists and Brahamans, as well as to the other great nations. The only authority for the miracles of Moses is the writings of one man, Ezra the priest, and this is a very weak authority; as is evident to the men of insight and discernment.

Jesus Christ

Now, consider—May God the Exalted assist you through the Power of His Kingdom!—the Cause of our Lord Christ—Glory be to Him!—the proofs and

arguments which demonstrate the truth of His Blessed Word and the validity of His Holy Mission:

As to *The Divine Book*: The Holy Gospels alone contain teachings which can be regarded as the true Words of God; and these teachings do not exceed the contents of a few pages. The rest of the Gospels consist of the traditions and records written and inscribed by His disciples or the disciples of His disciples, concerning His life and circumstances. Moreover, His teachings are not preserved in their original language, which was the dialect of the people who inhabited the Syrian countries at that time; nor were they written in His own days. But they were written and recorded after His Ascension to the Heaven of the Nearness of God, at periods variously estimated by the European historians as between forty and seventy years subsequent to His birth. They were translated into Latin and Greek later.

As to *The Miracles and Signs* that have proceeded from Him: The authority for these is the four Gospels. They have been narrated therein by four men; two were His apostles and the other two disciples of their disciples. Moreover, many of their texts contain certain allegories and symbolisms that very often bear other than literal meanings. Consider the 9th chapter of the Gospel of St. John, where it is recorded that Christ—Glory be upon Him!—restored the blind man, and on account of this there was a division among the Pharisees. It is also recorded in the John 9:39: “And Jesus said, For judgement I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.” This verse clearly shows that by blindness He has meant ignorance and error, and by sight, knowledge and guidance. This meaning is explicitly proven by the next verses, thus: “And

some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.”

Consequently, how can it be understood that the sight given to the blind man, as recorded in the first part of this chapter, was not of this kind? Especially is this true when we consider the customs of the Jewish writers in those olden times. They made use of enigmas and allegories in their books and writings, and concealed their meanings under subtle and intricate symbols. It is said by the learned historian, John Lawrence Mosheim, of the University of Göttingen, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, translated from the original Latin by James Murdoch, of the USA; also translated into Arabic by Henry H. Jessup, of USA, and published in CE 1875 in Beirut (the Lebanon), as follows:

Part II, Ch. 3, Cent. 1, Par. 2: “Those who expounded the Scriptures, studied simplicity and plainness. Yet it is not to be denied that even in this century the perverse Jewish custom of obscuring the plain language of Scripture, by forced and frigid allegories, and of diverting words from their natural and proper meaning in order to extort from them some recondite sense, found some admirers and imitators among Christians. Besides others, Barnabas, whose epistle is still extant, is proof of them.”¹

If one ponders over the detail of what we have said upon the question of miracles; studies our arguments to the effect that God the Exalted has refused to perform things in any other manner than in accordance with natural laws; and reflects upon what the distinguished and learned Mosheim has recorded as to the Jewish custom of using obscure and symbolic

¹ Johann Lorenz Mosheim, *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, Ancient and Modern*, Vol. 2.

allegories, there can be no doubt that the records of giving sight to the blind and quickening the dead, refer to mental insight and spiritual life. For the same meanings are applied to them in many places in the very texts of the Heavenly Books and Prophetic Words.

As to *The Logical Proof*: That is the power of the penetration of His Word and the sway of His Religion. This power in Jesus Christ so far surpassed the penetrative power of the Word of Moses, that there is no ground for a just investigator who does not indulge in false arguments to doubt that it was the Divine Word and of a Spiritual authority. That His Holy Word proved effective in numerous nations, and was conducive to the guidance of great peoples, is a fact that can, only be denied by an arrogant and ignorant person or by a disputing sophist. Yet centuries and generations passed before it proved effective through the assistance of the Roman Caesars. Then it poured forthwith a power the like of which had never before appeared in any of the other Divine Religions. Consequently, many of the prominent historians have even doubted the very existence of Jesus Christ—Glory be upon Him! There are always many who have the same tendency, for nothing about Him and His Religion is recorded in any of the histories written in the first and second centuries after Him, by the Romans, Jews, Persians, Indians or Chinese. This is a clear proof of the fact that His Cause had not played any important role in the first two centuries, nor had it been so widely spread as to be recorded by the historians.

Mosheim has written in his *History of the Church* (Part I., Ch. 2, Cent. 13, Paras 2 and 3), as follows:

“The Latin writers of those times (13th cent.) often complain of public enemies of the Christian

religion, and even of mockers of the Supreme Being. Nor are these complaints entirely vain and incredible. For men of discernment who critically inspected the religion which the Roman pontiffs and their servants and friends preached and inculcated as being the only true religion taught by Jesus Christ; and which they maintained by fire and the sword, might easily be led to believe, that Christianity was a fabrication invented and propagated by the priests for their own advantage; and especially was such a conclusion easy, as there was none to teach them better. Besides, the Aristotelian philosophy, which reigned in all the schools of Europe and was regarded as sound reason, led not a few to discard the doctrines commonly held and preached respecting "Divine Providence", the "Immortality of the Soul", the "Creation of the World", and other points, and thus to become the promoters of irreligion.

"At the head of all the enemies of Christianity, stood the emperor Frederic II, if credit is to be given to the sovereign pontiff Gregory IX, who in the year 1239, charged him before all the kings and princes of Europe, with saying that the whole world had been deceived by three barraters (impostors), Jesus Christ, Moses, and Muḥammad. This heavy charge the emperor deemed it necessary to refute, by a public profession of his religious faith. It rested on the testimony of some German princes, and particularly of Henry Raspo, landgrave of Thuringia, who said they had heard Frederic utter such language. Perhaps something like this did fall from the lips of Frederic, when in a violent passion, for he was not infrequently imprudent; and among the many learned men that attended him, there were some from the Aristotelian school who might have suggested to him such impious thoughts. Hence, a fabulous story was handed down

to posterity, respecting a detestable book on the three impostors, which was said to have been written either by the emperor himself, or by Peter de Vincis, a native of Capua and a man of great credit and influence, who was the emperor's prime minister."

These statements of this historian who, far from being accused of unorthodoxy, was firm and staunch in Christianity, clearly indicate that the antagonists of Christianity had not discovered any mentioning of Jesus Christ's name; otherwise they would not have denied Him, but would have refuted the teachings given by the Roman pontiffs. Indeed, many of the people of deception and falsehood among those who did not recognize the power of the Divine Word and its independence from human intrigues, have introduced His Name into the old historical works, so that they might thereby withstand the opposers, and defend the prophets and messengers. Yet this has been more harmful to Christianity than profitable, as they had intended it to be; for their intrigues and machinations were divulged, thus increasing the suspicions of the deniers. This is the case with the translation of the book of Josephus, the Jew, made from the European languages into Arabic. Into this translation, they have introduced the Name of Jesus Christ; at the same time suggesting to some of the writers of scientific newspapers published in Cairo, Egypt, to insert in them that the book Josephus is not possessed by Jews. Thus they intended to conceal their artifice and ruse. All this, notwithstanding the fact that many manuscript copies of Josephus are in possession of the Jews, and that we have investigated and discussed it in the city of Hamadán, Persia. Even in the original copies on file in public libraries in Europe, no reference is made to the name of Jesus Christ. Dr Keith, of England, has clearly explained this point,

in his work upon the testimonies given by the Jewish prophets, demonstrating the Mission of our Lord Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him! Therein he says that Josephus has done his utmost to make no mention of the name of Jesus Christ in his book. This book has been translated from the English into Persian by the Abbots of the Church, in the City of Urúmíyyih, Ádharbayján, Persia, and published in Edinburgh in 1846.

To resume. Those who are heedless of the power of the Word of God, have artfully interpolated the name of Jesus Christ into the old histories, supposing this to be profitable to pure Christianity. Yet by this, they have done Christianity a mischief which no one denies except the ignorant; for the exposure of their artifice caused numerous divisions and parties to appear among Christians, who were thus led not only to deny this Divine Religion, but the very existence of Jesus Christ—Peace be unto Him! The proof of the existence of Jesus Christ, is in no need of such intrigues, nor of the testimony of historians. His blessed existence is confirmed by two great evidences: First, that which the Manifestations of the Command of God give of His existence and truth, which testimony is no other than that of God, and is more effective than anything in the world. Consider the evidence given by Muḥammad as to Jesus Christ being the “Spirit of God”. Muḥammad’s word has to such an extent convinced the world and satisfied nations, that about three hundred millions of Muslims testify that Jesus is the “Spirit of God”, and that He is the “Word of God”. This witness, given by Muḥammad, they engrave in their hearts and preserve it from generation to generation; whereas, before the appearance of Muḥammad, they did not know Jesus Christ, nor did they acknowledge His truth.

Verily, all the people of the world will be humbled

before the Name of our Lord Christ, and will shortly testify that He is the exalted Word; inasmuch as our Lord the Abhá Beauty—Glorified is His Supreme Name!—has borne witness of Him. St. John has recorded in his Gospel, in reference to this point (8:18), thus: “I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.”

The witness borne by the Father is that which is borne by the Lord Bahá because the idea that testimony is given by the Essence in any way except through Its Manifestations, is unreasonable, as we have already explained and demonstrated in the subject of Divine Unity.

Now that the testimony of two Manifestations of God, relative to the existence of our Lord Christ, has convinced half the population of the earth as to the truth of His Word and the validity of His Claim, of what importance can be the testimony of a few historians, whether they acknowledge or deny Him?

The second evidence is that an effect can be adduced as the proof of a cause; and this is a rational and visible evidence. There is no doubt that the Christian religion, which has changed the conditions of the old world, is an effect, and every effect must, of necessity, have a cause and origin. No man or body of men has ever claimed to be the originator of this religion, nor has its institution ever been attributed to anyone except Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him! Consequently, it is obvious that He has been its only founder and sole upholder. When a wise man reflects upon the origin of this invincible Power which has surpassed the powers of the World; when he considers the supernatural ken and judgement which have reformed the defects of nations, healed the sicknesses of hearts, and reconciled tribes of peoples, it would be unreasonable for him to think that this

origin could be veiled and obscure, or wrapped up in the cobwebs of oblivion and negligence. If man permits himself to doubt such a clear matter, how much more would he be apt to dispute all subjects? Such scepticism would confuse the order of society, and would corroborate sophistical theories.

Having treated of these subjects that needed explanation, we will now return to the point which we were discussing, in connection with the proofs whereby the truth of the Mission of Jesus Christ can be demonstrated.

As to *The Prophecies* revealed in the Holy Books, contained in the Old Testament: when we observe the essential Oneness existing among the Manifestations of the Command of God, which we have demonstrated in speaking of the Divine Unity, there is no doubt that most of these prophecies, testified of and were fulfilled in the appearance of our Lord Christ; which fact was confirmed by those who appeared after Him. But when we consider the individual characteristics of these holy Manifestations; personal qualities which differentiate and distinguish each one of them from the other, there is no doubt that many prophecies were not fulfilled in Christ's first coming. This will be explained in the commentaries upon the texts of the Scriptures, with the assistance of God the Lord of Lords.

A fact which must not pass unnoticed by the possessors of insight, is that the commentators of the Holy Books have unanimously endeavoured to interpret all the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament and the writings of the Jewish prophets, into the Manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this endeavour they have mainly exerted themselves and spent their lives and property; strenuously attempting to demonstrate to the seekers, that the purpose of these prophecies

is none other than showing forth the events of the day of His Manifestation and Mission, and describing His sufferings and trials. Some have reinforced this point by artifice, some by violence. Others, finding themselves unable to convince people by argument, have tried to coerce them by the power of the sword and fire; a fact testified to by the histories of every country. Moreover, it has been customary with most of the theologians and commentators of the Holy Books, to satisfy the people and prove their religious tenets by a method of argument called “economical”; no matter whether it agreed with truth and fact or not. With them, the only purpose has been to overcome antagonists, relying upon their customary principle—“The end justifies the means.” Absolutism and the lack of freedom which then prevailed among nations, assisted them in fulfilling their aims and rendering their beliefs prevalent. So arose false, inverted, remote and insignificant interpretations of the Holy Books. To this point, Mosheim refers in his *History of the Church* (Part II, Cent. 3, Ch. 3, Paras 10, 11): “But it must by no means pass unnoticed, that the discussions instituted against the opposers of Christianity in this age (3rd cent.), departed far from the primitive simplicity, and the correct method of controversy. For the Christian doctors, who were in part educated in the schools of rhetoricians and sophists, inconsiderately transferred the arts of these teachers to the Cause of Christianity; and therefore considered it of no importance whether an antagonist were confounded by these artifices or by solid arguments. Thus that mode of disputing, which the ancients called “economical” [it signifies to do a thing artfully and dexterously, or with cunning and sagacity, as a shrewd manager of a household controls those under him—see footnote given by Mur-

dock], and which, had victory rather than truth for its object, was almost universally approved. And the Platonists contributed to the currency of the practice by asserting that it was no sin for a person to employ falsehood and fallacies for the support of truth when it was in danger of being borne down ...

“This vicious inclination to circumvent and confound an adversary rather than confute him with sound argument produced also a multitude of books falsely bearing on their front the names of certain distinguished men. For the greater part of mankind, being influenced more by the authority of names than by arguments and Scripture testimony, the writers conceived they must prefix names of the greatest weight to their books in order to oppose successfully their adversaries. Hence those canons which were falsely ascribed to the apostles. ...”

Of these canons Murdock speaks in the footnote thus: “(The apostolic canons are eighty-five ecclesiastical laws or rules, professedly enacted by the Apostles, and collected and preserved by Clemens Romanus. The matter of them is ancient, for they describe the customs and institutions of the Christians, particularly of the Greek and Oriental churches in the second and third centuries. But the phraseology indicates a compiler being in the third century. See W. Beveridge’s Notes on these Canons and his *Codex canonum Ecclesiae primitivae, vindicatus ac illustratus*, London, 1678, 4 to End.)”

Likewise, Mosheim has recorded in the events of the fourth century (Book II, Part I, Para. 23): “For it is manifest that the untiring zeal of the bishops and other holy men, the pure and devout lives which many of the Christians exhibited, the translations of the sacred Volume, and the excellence of the Christian religion, were as efficient motives with many

persons as the arguments from worldly advantage and disadvantage were with some others. As for miracles, I cheerfully unite with those who look with contempt on the wonders ascribed to Paul, Anthony and Martin. I also grant that many events were inconsiderably regarded as miracles which were according to the laws of nature, not to mention likewise pious frauds."

There are many similar statements in this book and in other credible historical works, all of which clearly indicate that the writers of the early centuries, who are considered more brilliant and pure than those of the later centuries and whose works became the foundation and groundwork upon which the beliefs and writings of recent centuries are based, cared more to triumph over and discomfit their antagonists than to rely upon truth and explain the real fact. They were more anxious to satisfy the Jews and compel them to accept their commentaries than to convince the Pagans, for the former were the root of the tree of Christianity, and the source through which the Holy Scriptures had been revealed. They did their utmost, and availed themselves of every possible strategy and means in order to persuade that intelligent and unfortunate people that the purpose of all the prophecies given in the Holy Scriptures concerning the coming of the "Lord" referred to the Manifestation of Jesus Christ, and that all prophecy predicted the events of His days and, foreshadowed His sufferings and afflictions. Yet their diligence in interpretation and fabrication, and their zealous attempts to demonstrate this fulfilment, far from bringing the Jews nearer to Jesus Christ, withheld them from believing in Him. For the Jews who read the Book every day with perfect attention, consulting and depending upon it in all their affairs, were cognizant

of the purport of the prophecies, and knew the falsity of such economical (forcible) argument. They were eyewitnesses to the fact that the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures, especially those which foreshadowed the end of their nation, did not conform nor correspond to the Manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—although the Christian commentators insisted upon their correspondence by availing themselves of this “economical” mode or argument to maintain it. Verily, the prophecies of these Holy Books—for the preservation of which the Jews shed their blood, sacrificed their property and children, and upon which alone they rested their hopes—proclaim with the clearest voice that after the decline of the dominion of the Jews; after their scattering and dispersion throughout all countries; their suffering every calamity; their being cursed and reviled by all nations; after their country being possessed by foreigners and trampled under the feet of barbarous tribes; their cities and towns deserted and ruined—then the Powerful Lord will appear, His shining Beauty will dawn forth from the East, and become manifest in the Holy Land. His Voice will be raised from the holy mountain; He will assemble the scattered Jews from the east, west, north and south; He will gather them from out all peoples. Then, according to these prophecies, they will proceed from darkness toward light; their sorrow will be changed into joy, their unbelief into real faith, their rebellion into obedience, their shame into honour, and their weakness into power. They will become blessed after having been execrated, victorious after having been subdued; the glory of the Holy Land will be restored, and distant nations will be blessed thereby. The mouth of the Promised Lord will change its name of the Holy Land, and the blessed and excellent

“Branch” will build His Temple. It will be named “Desire” after its having been rejected; it will be sought for after having been deserted. Its lost honour will be eternally established and its peoples will be firmly planted therein. All the prophesied events will happen at their appointed time, which is determined in the Book and known to men of discernment. Superstitions will not change them, nor will the alterations of the transposers and the doubts of the sceptical shake them. These predicted events were reversed at the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. At that time the Jews were established and tranquil in the Holy Land, but after the Appearance of Jesus Christ they were scattered by the conquest of Titus the Roman, who destroyed Jerusalem and slew over one million of the Jews, according to historical record. Afterward he sold the remnant of them to the nations as beasts of burden. Their humiliation and misery still increased when ‘Umar, the Muslim Khalif, vanquished the city of Aelia Capitolina (Jerusalem), and made a compact with Saphronius, Bishop of Jerusalem, forbidding the Jews to inhabit Palestine. With this decree and compact he destroyed their daily sacrifice; the Holy Land fell into the hands of foreigners and became the arena of murder and field of conflict between the Arabs, Romans, Turks, Crusaders and Mamelukes.¹ The Jewish cities were ruined, their buildings overthrown, their dwellings desolated, their societies scattered; and during these long generations this forlorn people became the plaything of storms of calamities, the subject of whirlpools of afflictions, until the nineteenth century. This was the century of the Dawn of the Light of lights, the time of the rending of veils, and the rise of the Sun of Knowledge in the brightness of day. Then these ruinous storms and fatal convulsions were partly hushed; the Holy

¹ Mamlúk, pl. Mamálík.

Land attained tranquillity and quietude, and is still advancing therein until that which was foreshadowed by the prophets in bygone centuries shall be fulfilled in it.

The Holy Land was flourishing and was inhabited by the Jews before Jesus Christ appeared, but after His Manifestation they became scattered, and none of the prophecies of which we have spoken were fulfilled at His Advent. Thus Jesus Christ cannot be accounted as the fulfilment of those prophecies.

The commentators have devised a way to close this breach and to bridge over this chasm, which cannot be effected by any artifice. They have interpreted the word "Israelite"; recorded in the Holy Scriptures, to mean the "Christian Church", in order to demonstrate that the prophecies were fulfilled with the appearance of Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—and were realized in His Advent. Although we agree with this interpretation in some passages, yet most of the prophecies of the Holy Scriptures clearly indicate that they refer to the children of Israel, and not to the believers who might join them through the Spirit of Faith. They announce that the Jews whom God had stricken with curse and degradation are to return to blessing and restoration, as is plainly spoken of by Paul the Apostle in Romans 11:25-27: "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentile be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my Covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins."

This text clearly shows that the Israelites will be

saved and their sins taken away after the Manifestation of Christ; at the end of the days, when the Manifestation of the Lord will appear in Zion. Therefore, how could the commentators interpret “children of Israel” as being the Christian Church?

In a similar way they interpret the term “New Testament” to be the “Holy Gospels”. The word “New Testament” (or Covenant) is recorded in Jeremiah 31:31–34, as follows: “Behold, the days come, said the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my Covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their Lord, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Have the prophecies given in these verses been fulfilled? Did the Lord forgive their iniquity and sins? Were they ever without need of a teacher or adviser to exhort and lead them to believe in their Lord, so that the Holy Gospels might become the “New Testament” (or Covenant)? Whosoever reads these verses with earnest attention will duly realize that the prophecies in this chapter refer to the Israelites [Jews] themselves, and not to those who have joined them by faith. For the Israelites, termed in Scripture

“the back-sliding daughters”, are the children of Ephraim, the capital of whose country was Samaria, and the children of Judah, the capital of whose country was Jerusalem.

It is also reported in Jeremiah 31:27–28: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord.” Does the sense of these prophecies refer to the Christian Church?

Moreover, the prophesied restoration of the Holy Land is an everlasting restoration that will never be overthrown; a permanent holiness which will never be effaced; for it is clearly stated at the end of the chapter that “It shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more forever.” After the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ—Glory be upon Him!—the Holy Land was destroyed twice, the first time by the command of Titus and Adrian. Afterward the Jewish people were scattered, and the desolation of the Holy Land and the dispersion of its people were completed by the conquest of Islám, at which time the daily sacrifice was taken away, as we have formerly explained.

As these facts were evident to the Jews, the explanations and interpretations made by the Christians did not satisfy them. Nay, rather, such methods kept them further from the truth. So they denied Jesus Christ and refused to investigate and enquire into His Cause. The delegates of the great pontiffs during every century attempted to compel the Jews to accept these interpretations and join the sacred

Church. As they could not satisfy them through the power of argument, they laboured to convince them by the power of the sword and rigid persecution.

Mosheim has recorded in his *History of the Church*, Part I, Cent. VI, Ch. I, Para. 3, thus: "But it should be added that far more were (the Jews) induced to make profession of Christianity by the rewards offered by the princes and by the fear of punishment than by the force of arguments. In Gaul during the reign of Childeric I, the Jews were compelled to receive baptism; and the same thing was done in Spain."

To resume. As on one hand the Jews saw these confusing interpretations, and on the other false arguments and rigid punishments, they doubted not that these oppressions were taught by Jesus Christ. So, bewildered and led astray in the desert of remoteness and error, they clung to their own ideas until finally the warnings and prophecies of the prophets became fulfilled in them. Although they deserved punishment for their denial of Jesus Christ and objection to the chastity of the Virgin Mary, by which their adversity and shame before God were increased, yet the greater part of their sin in remaining unbelievers is due to the aforementioned commentators, sophists and persecutors, who alienated the Jews from the truth and obscured the path unto them. Had the commentators interpreted the verses according to their true purpose and demonstrated the truth of the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ in the right manner, they would have made it easy for the Jews to embrace the Truth, and would have brought them nearer to the highway of obedience. For there are proofs and verses in the very texts of the Bible and in the prophetic Books that clearly explain the truth of our Lord Christ, and had the commentators held to them they would have been in no need of false argument and persecution. God will-

ing, we will explain this point in the course of our interpretations regarding the subject.

Muḥammad

Now consider, O ye beloved ones, the Islamic cause, and the proofs whereby its adherents endeavour to prove the truth of Muḥammad.

As to *The Heavenly Book and Divine Revelation*: This they hold to be the Qur'án. Its texts were written in the days of Muḥammad, and collected and arranged in the days of His khalifs by congregations composed of His chief followers and saints. The Muslims, notwithstanding their variance and difference of sects and creeds, have universally agreed upon one book, even without entertaining any disagreement or difference as to one word or letter in it. Yet it is but one volume, containing thirty sections, the texts of which, they maintain, were revealed gradually to Muḥammad at different times during twenty-three years. Muḥammad was of the tribe of Quraysh, a tribe noted for eloquence and speech among the Arabs. Even the majority of the Muslim doctors have regarded the eloquent language and elegant style of the Qur'án as a perfect proof and decisive miracle. But we have refuted this point in several books, and have explained the reason why heavenly Revelations are miraculous, showing the manner whereby they are distinguished from the words of man in a way that should convince every one of discernment and perception.

As to the penetration of His Word and the propagation of His religion: This was not fully witnessed, except among the Arabs, until the second century of the Hijrah, when it was introduced among the Persians, the inhabitants of the Caucasus, the Turks and Indians. The conquests of the Islám princes in the first century reached eastward to Fergana (eastern

Uzbekistan), and westward to Sicily and Spain. The Islamic princes, with a few exceptions, it is said, did not compel any nation to accept the religion, for they gave people the choice between paying taxes or embracing the faith.

The success of the Muslim conquerors was sufficient inducement for people to embrace a religion far more advanced than their ancient idolatry and fire worship, especially when we add to this the attractive simplicity of life of the Muslim devotees, who were numerous at that time. Notwithstanding this, the inhabitants of the Caspian countries and Transoxanian provinces did not accept Islám before the second and third century of Hijrah, as we have mentioned above.

As to *The Miracles and Wonders* which it is said were demanded from Muḥammad by his adversaries, and which the Muslim doctors are craftily attempting to prove in his behalf, these are disproved by the clear texts of the Qur'án. There are verses in this book which plainly indicate that God the Exalted did not wish to show forth any sign in the Islamic Manifestation except the Book, for signs are warnings concerning destruction and ruin. It is recorded in the Qur'án, ("The Night Journey", Sale's translation): "Nothing hindered us from sending (thee) with miracles, except that the former (nations) have charged them with imposture. We gave unto (the tribe of) Thamúd (at their demand), the she-camel visible (to their sight); yet they dealt unjustly with her, and we send not (a prophet) with miracles, but to strike terror."¹

That is, God the Exalted has refused to send any miracles in the Manifestation of Muḥammad, for the former nations, such as the Egyptian, 'Ad, and Thamúd, demanders miracles from the prophets, then

¹ Qur'án 17:59.

afterward charged them with imposture and denied them; therefore God destroyed them on account of their denial. God does not send signs or miracles, except as a warning of destruction and threatening of desolation. There are many other similar verses in the Book, which we have spoken of in detail in *Fará'id, ad-Durar al-Bahíyyih* and *Faşlu'l-Khiṭáb* [books by the author].

As to the miracles which are said to have proceeded from Muḥammad even before being demanded: These have no authority except the traditions and records, which are not reliable save to those who wish to believe. And if we add to this the weakness of miracles in proving the truth of a claimant to prophethood, as we have formerly explained, there would not remain anything worthy of reliance or production as an argument. But there are prophecies concerning future events recorded both in the Qur'án and in the authoritative traditions attributed to Him that cannot be disregarded and rejected by any except a bigoted disputant. In them Muḥammad has foretold the conditions of His religion, and all that would happen to it, including its advance and decline, prosperity and adversity, weakness and power, subdivision, desolation, etc.; everything in full details and particulars until the lapse and termination of its cycle.

Likewise, He foreshadowed the events that would happen at the end of His cycle, concerning the Manifestation of Mahdí (the Precursor), the descent of the Spirit of God (Christ), the rise of false prophets the appearance of impostors, the major Resurrection, the minor Resurrection, and their signs and tokens. These He has also prophesied in full detail, including their dates and places; things which no one can apprehend through human comprehension or foretell through political forecasts. The

like has never before been witnessed in the texts of any holy Manifestation previous to Him. Yet these traditions being collected during the second and third centuries of Hijrah, before which they had been preserved in memories and related by word of mouth, must needs contain some blunders and inconsistencies, due to human forgetfulness and mistakes. Moreover, the relating of prophetic traditions was regarded by the Muslims in those days as a high dignity and calling, and was used as a means for the attainment to worldly aims by ambitious men. The tyrant Khalifs who were constantly afraid of the pure lineage of 'Alí and the household of Muḥammad bought the adherence of some of their immediate companions and followers with gold. These faithless ones fabricated, for them traditions in praise of the enemies of the Imams of Muḥammad's household, and sought by this artifice to turn away the attention of people from the family of 'Alí, and secure their own usurped dominion and Khalífat. In this way, trading in traditions and markets for fabricating records were started, and thus truth and falsehood became intermingled. Books of such prophetic traditions were compiled, which the doctors of religion accepted through fear, greed and desire, which finally ended in misleading the people and casting them into the depths of degradation. Yet the possessors of clear insight were not prevented from recognizing the authentic traditions and distinguishing them from those which are not reliable. Verily, the words of the prophets and messengers, and the depositories of their wisdom and knowledge are endowed with certain virtues and qualities that are not concealed from those capable of understanding them. By authentic traditions, we do not mean in the sense understood by Muslim doctors, both Shi'ite and Sunnite. For the Sunnites regard as

authentic a tradition which agrees with their own creed and is related by one of their sect, disregarding every other tradition, even though it may be from a reliable and trustworthy source. Likewise, the Shi'ite doctors give no credit to the traditions that are not in accordance with their own doctrine. This does not satisfy any seeker of truth, nor can it be a means of distinguishing truth from falsehood or removing discord, for no community agrees with the opinion of another. But to the followers of Truth, by an authentic tradition is meant one which conforms with the Book of God ("which contains the explanation of all things"), or which agrees with a fact of real occurrence. Such are the traditions containing prophecies that have occurred and are fulfilled.

To resume. The traditions predicting future events were proofs whereby the Muslims could demonstrate the truth of the founder of their religion, but they themselves corrupted them and mixed with the truth they contained their own fabrications to gain the favour of the tyrannical Khalífat of the lineage of Abu-Sufyán, the "Angel of the bottomless pit", spoken of in the 9th and 12th chapters of Revelation, and the "cursed tree" alluded to in the Qur'án. These are interpreted to mean this Khalífat.

As to *The Prophecies* given in the Holy Bible and in the Books of the other Jewish prophets concerning Muḥammad; these are as pure and limpid drops of water falling from the fissures of the rocks of involved enigmas, as we will, God permitting, set forth in future statements.

The prophecies given in the New Testament concerning the appearance of Muḥammad are even clearer and more manifest, especially in the 11th and 12th chapters of Revelation. At the same time, they are all prefaces and signs of the Advent of the "Day of

God", the arrival of the "Great Hour", and the Manifestation of the "Beauty of God", the "Bahá'u'l-Abhá".

Bahá'u'lláh

O ye pious souls! Now that ye have understood the manner of the propagation of the former religions and in what measure these four proofs can be used by their adherents, know ye—May God pour upon you a light from His Kingdom the Abhá!—that the aforementioned proofs demonstrate this most Holy and Supreme Manifestation in a far clearer and more perfect way than is the case with other religions. Therefore, should any one of the followers of the former prophets deny this one, it would be absolutely impossible for him to prove the truth of his own religion, to which fact we have made reference in former demonstrations.

We must now speak of each one of the aforesaid proofs in connection with this Most Great Manifestation, just as we have spoken of them in connection with other religions—so that the superior significance of their application to Him, may be clearly realized by every man of faith:.

As to *The Divine Book*, namely, the Heavenly Revelation: Verily, our Lord the Abhá Beauty, notwithstanding that He was subject during the days of His Manifestation to all kinds of physical calamities, afflictions and great tribulations, which we will not now enlarge upon; although He was not a man of learning nor a student of any university; yet His Holy Tablets, both Persian and Arabic, are spread throughout all regions, and it is no exaggeration to say that they exceed in quantity the Heavenly Books and Divine Writings possessed by all the different nations of the earth.

They embody the solutions of the intricacies of the prophetic Books, interpretations of the Words of the Chosen Ones, and contain answers to the abstruse questions of the leading philosophers and doctors, which knowledge was sealed and closed up by the prophets of bygone cycles, so that the minds of the wisest men of every century were unable to comprehend it.

His Holy Tablets contain laws, ordinances, regulations and ethical teachings whereby the character of the most barbarous peoples are reformed, the rights of all nations can be preserved, and upon which all the world can agree.

They contain discourses upon the subtle meanings of Divine Unity, the mode of the Manifestation of Prophets, the station and mission of the Chosen Ones, and praises of the Glorious God. They contain prayers, invocations, supplications, communes, directions to be humble toward God and submissive in His Presence, all of which call forth compassion, soften the character, and create the fear of God—that solid foundation upon which Wisdom proceeding from the Spirit of Assurance and firm faith is based. To this God has made reference thus: “Adore thy Lord, that positive Realization may come to thee.”

During His blessed Days four “rivers” flowed forth from His Supreme Pen and sweet Utterances containing such Divine and Exalted Knowledge, such lofty, heavenly Wisdom, that hearts are quickened, souls rejoiced, the “dead” are raised, and breasts dilated. These are the same four rivers flowing from the Throne of God in the exalted Paradise; the fountains pouring out the Water of Life from the Supreme Concourse, spoken of by the Guardians of Revelation. Also it is said by God through the tongue of Moses: “My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall

distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.”

As to the excellent “Branch extended from the Ancient Root” [‘Abdu’l-Bahá], the Light risen from the Heaven of the Will of our Lord the Clement, the Merciful; the pen of a fluent writer fails to describe His Holy Tablets and Utterances or the nature of His marvellous character and qualities. There are thousands of His Tablets spread in all parts, as blossoms scattered from the trees in springtime. Like fragrance wafted by the breeze of dawn does His fluent Pen diffuse life in all cities. When in CE 1894 the author travelled to the Holy Land and, through the assistance of the Divine Favours, attained unto the visit of His Holy Threshold, he was amazed to behold in Him all virtues and perfections. These were witnessed during ten months residence in the shelter of His nearness. Many a time we were in His Holy Presence when multitudes of prominent people were there, such as judges, doctors, and great military and civil officials of different nationality, religion and language. While He was in their midst large packages of letters from all parts and countries of the world were brought to Him. Although encompassed with insurmountable difficulties, He—Glorified is His Name and Grandeur!—continued to answer questions and requests made by those present, while He wrote replies to each letter. These Tablets and replies were written without meditation, pause of pen, or preliminary rough-copy, and without the help of a scribe. All regions are filled with His Tablets and hearts are attracted through their spread. He has caused the Voice of His Lord the Abhá Beauty to reach the high heavens. Through the words of His widespread epistles, which exhale the purest fragrances of His Utterances, souls are uplifted; and from their

verses the fountains of knowledge and wisdom flow onward.

As to the “First Point”, [The Báb] the Supreme Model, the Precursor of the Beauty of our Lord, the Bahá’u’l-Abhá—Glorified is His Name! He was born of one of the noblest households and most holy families, and engaged in trade with His maternal uncle, who was an example of virtue and sanctity. When twenty-five years old, through the permission of His Lord the Abhá Beauty, He declared [publicly] His mission in Mecca, amidst a great congregation, at which announcement all quarters of the world trembled and the pillars of the earth quaked. Thence He returned to the city of Búshíhr, situated on the coast of the Persia Gulf, His face shining and gleaming as the moon in mid-heaven. On His arrival thither He remained in His uncle’s house; then, after a few days, He left for Shíráz. On the road He was overtaken and captured by a troop of cavalry sent by the Government. The days of His mission lasted for almost seven years, all of which He passed in banishment and imprisonment, either in His own house or in the quarters of the Government. Finally He was exiled to Ádharbayján, Persia; and in Tabríz, the principal city of that province, He suffered martyrdom and ascended to the shelter of God. During these long afflictions He revealed volumes of verses, discourses, communes and scientific treatises, both in Persia and Arabic, which astounded men of learning and silenced disputing doctors and philosophers. He wrote His Holy Tablets without premeditation. He challenged men of learning, openly demanding of them to produce even one similar verse. Most of them He wrote in the presence of the king, princes and prominent men of learning and literature. At the same time, His blessed life was at the mercy of His strongest antagonists, and subject to the word

of the most unjust, hard-hearted, ignorant religious doctors.

Yet they could not find any ground of objection to His verses, except that they contained things contrary to grammatical rules, which, they said, destroyed their eloquence and fluency. He silenced them by showing similar examples revealed in the Qur'án. We completely discussed this point in detail in our book *Kitábu'l-Fará'id*.

But all their argument served only to prove that His exalted Word became effective and prevalent solely through the Power of God and His Heavenly Will, and not through material and human means, such as scholastic learning and rhetorical eloquence. By the Life of God, nothing baffles or silences the sceptic except the fact that in spite of every difficulty, doubt and obstacle the Word of God prevails.

God the Almighty sent Muḥammad with the verses of the Qur'án containing every beauty of style; and it was said: "Verily, Muḥammad deludes people by the charm of his speech and by adorning the words of his Qur'án." Then He sent the "First Point" with the verses of *The Bayán* and simplicity of explanation; and it was said that the Báb's words were vernacular and ungrammatical. How can God the Almighty deal with these contradictory opinions and inconsistent objections, except to do "whatsoever He willeth and command whatsoever He desireth?" Thus He abandons these sceptics to bewilder themselves in their doubts and indulge in their objections. Concerning the Tablets of our Lord and Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Glory of all in the Kingdom of Names; notwithstanding their beauty of explanation and the grace of their style, which is acknowledged by every eloquent man and fluent writer, the most astonishing objection was made by the centre of Violation, the

leader of the náqidín, who said: “As his words contain no grammatical errors, they do not resemble Divine Words.” What was said by our Lord Jesus Christ, is fulfilled in them (Matthew 11:16–19): “But, whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.” Let us leave the deniers to wander in the abyss of imagination, and return to our subject.

As to *The Logical Argument*, that is the prevalence of His Word, and the promotion of His Cause, without the assistance of any human means, but only through the Divine Will and heavenly evidences; this point is too clear to need any further explanation and demonstration. Notwithstanding that the progress of His Holy Word was prevented by the power of tyranny with all manners of prohibition, yet in less than one quarter of a century, His Manifestation and Cause penetrated all religions and peoples, affecting most of the creeds and sects. By its power, numerous souls among Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, Nusayris¹ and Jews have come to believe in His teachings; their morals have been reformed, their tastes purified, their learning expanded, their manners beautified, and the Spirit of Faith and the Breath of Assurance have filled their hearts. In time of tribulation they have preferred to die rather than abandon their faith, surrendering their lives in the path of their Beloved with the utmost delight. During afflictions their faces

¹ Nuşayrî, pl. Nuşayrîya.

beamed with the joy of sacrifice, and while in the clutches of the enemy, they sang melodies of thanks and glorification. It is very rare to find one of the people of Bahá who is not willing in heart to suffer martyrdom for the sake of God; or one firm in the "Covenant of Him around whom all Names revolve", who is not rejoiced in Spirit to sacrifice himself for promoting the Word of God. This is a sign of the most complete realization and perfect faith. This is a confirmatory and real testimony of the Word of the Manifestation of the Cause of God, the Lord of the Creatures.

The attitude of the Hebrew and Zoroastrian peoples is most amazing; for as is known to the men of understanding, enmity toward Jesus Christ and Muḥammad was from time of old, inborn in their hearts, and their whole being was filled with hatred for these two manifest lights, to such an extent that none of the leaders of these two religions could convert even one Jew or Zoroastrian, except by force and compulsion. But the people of Bahá have converted thousands of them through clear arguments, whereby their souls are illumined, their eyes are opened, their morals reformed, their characters renewed, their hatred changed into love, their discord into harmony, their infidelity into faith, and their hostility into obedience and loyalty. These converts have even directed other peoples and religions, to the fountain of truth, and thus the words of God are fulfilled in them: "And we were minded to be gracious unto those who were weakened in the land, and to make them leaders of religion and to make them the heirs (of the Kingdom and the holy Land)."

Likewise, the words of Zechariah (8:23) were fulfilled: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts: In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even

shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying: We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.”

The words of Jesus Christ are also fulfilled in them (Revelation 7:4): “And I heard the number of them which were sealed: And there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousands of all the tribes of the Children of Israel.”

As to *Miracles and Wonders*: As the time of this Manifestation is recent, it is possible for every seeker to investigate the sources of these wonders and the character of their narrators. Thus the truthful may be recognized among them, and those whose words can be relied upon. Therefore, these acts and wonders are nearer to acceptance than the miracles of the former prophets, the sources of which cannot be investigated, nor their narrators examined. Almost all those who have been in the presence of our Lord the Abhá Beauty, and whose good character and deeds testify to their purity of heart; those whose words can be trusted, have witnessed His manifest miracles and clear signs. Even numbers of people who are outside of His Religion, have given testimony of His Miracles, which evidences we have written in our book *Fará'id*. This fact is one of the characteristics of this most luminous and glorious Manifestation, the power by which it transcends all former Manifestations. The author can testify, and God the Exalted bears witness to the truth of the circumstances in connection with the oppression of ‘Abdu’l-‘Azíz, Sulţán of Turkey, and the events which followed it. The late Dhabíh¹ (Hájí Muḥammad Ismá‘íl, who suffered martyrdom in Persia) informed the author of their full particulars, in AH 1293 (CE 1876), and read unto him, the *Tablet of Ra’ís* and the *Tablet of K. Z.* (abbreviation² of the name of Shaykh Kázim of Qazvín, entitled Samandár, an

¹ Dhabíh—“sacrifice”.

² The *Tablet-i-Fu’ád* starts with the letters Káf Zā’, an abbreviation for Kázim, and sometimes called the Tablet of K. Z.

old faithful Bahá'í merchant and prominent teacher still living in Qazvín, Persia). Thus we possessed information of them nearly seven months before their occurrence. At that time we were in our father's religion, and could not believe that the events spoken of in those Tablets would come to pass. Yet his honour Áqá 'Abdu'l-Karím, of Işfahán, our teacher of the Truth, guaranteed it, and finally they were completely fulfilled.

Still clearer are the prophecies he has made in His Tablets concerning future events, which prophecies he calls "evidences", of the fulfilment of which the world will be informed, and the sleepers will be cognizant thereof, after their appearance.

Some of the events which occurred in the days of our Lord the Abhá Beauty—Glorified is His Name!—deserve to be noticed by the men of perception. Very often meetings were held by the men of learning and by members of the Government, at which prominent people discussed how to resist the effectiveness of the Word of God, as revealed in our Lord, and demanded public miracles. Finally, they concluded to resort to violence and persecution, as is the established custom of tyrants.

One of these events occurred in CE 1882 (AH 1300), when a number of Bahá'ís were arrested without cause or reason, through the instigation of doctors of religion. This oppression was by the command of the prince Kámrán Mírzá, the third son of the late Náşiri'd-Dín Sháh, then entitled Náyibu's-Salţanih (Prince Regent), Governor of Tìhrán. Some of the Bahá'ís were arrested in the city of Rasht, the principal town of Gílán, Persia, and others were taken in Işfahán and Hamadán. This stirred all parts of Persia, and persecutions prevailed throughout all cities. The doctors of religion and the rulers availed

themselves of this opportunity to plunder the property of the people of faith. By this, they showed forth the hatred which they bore, as well as their inability to resist the people of Bahá with proofs and arguments. Among those arrested and imprisoned in Ṭihrán was Mírzá Muḥammad-Riḍá of Muḥammad-Ábád (well-known as Yazdí), a grey bearded man of seventy, lion-hearted and noted for steadfastness. He—May the Mercy of God be upon him!—was a symbol of piety, sanctity, truthfulness and, steadfastness in the Cause of God. Even the most violent of his enemies have confessed his virtues, and his brilliant character raised sympathy in the hardest hearts of his persecutors.

In those days meetings for discussion with the believers of God were held in the house of the above-mentioned prince. The purpose of these meetings was to silence and confute the Bahá'ís, and not for inquiry or investigation. They used the most evil kinds of execration, which constitutes the only armour of an ignorant man when discomfited, and supplies a sword to the debased and wicked. Their habit in controversy was to first uphold their own theological doctrines, which assert that the Mahdí who will arise in the Cause of God, shall not be permitted to contradict any of their beliefs, or to change any of their rites and customs. This implies that they, and not God, send the Forerunner of the Cause of Gods, and cause the "Spirit of God" to descend. Thus they have ordained fixed laws and regulations, and have traced a certain path for God's messenger before His appearance, without allowing that any change or departure could be made therefrom. And this is characteristic of each religious sect, notwithstanding the divergence and difference between their beliefs, customs and creeds. In such a case, how could the Mahdí satisfy the different

communities and peoples? Must he comply with the wishes of the Sunnites, who insist that He should conform to the law of Ḥanafí, or with the desires of the Shi'ites who require him to follow the theory of the Imamate? God is far exalted above what the unjust men say!

To be brief. While the believers put them to silence in this arena, by arguments, texts of the Qur'án and the traditions, they still clung to miracles; temptingly demanding signs. These insolent and ease-loving individuals did not even take the pains to present themselves before the Manifestation of God, as did the former nations; but, while remaining in their own home and country, each one demanded whatever happened to be dictated by his own imaginations, thoughts, views and desires.

The believers answered them, that verily, miracles are of no value in similar cases, nor do they give the benefit of assurance and conviction to the seeker; and that the only cause of the ruin of former nations was in demanding miracles from their prophets, and tempting their messengers through their groundless requests. They said, if you deem it necessary, agree together in demanding a certain sign upon an appointed day; announce to the people of Ṭíhrán what you have decided upon; then ask it from the Day-spring of the lights of God, the Bahá'u'l-Abhá. He will show forth unto you that great sign. For it is not reasonable that the Manifestations of the Command of God should grant all the individual wishes and whims of the seekers of wonders. Even people who are not seeking after religion or the understanding of truth, would continually demand miracles for their own amusement and delight; and thus the assemblies of the prophets and messengers, the abodes of wisdom and guidance, would be changed into gatherings for amuse-

ment and jugglery. Thus it was said by God: “If the truth had followed their desires, verily, the heavens and the earth had been corrupted”; that is, the peoples and religions would have been corrupted. Here the exalted Lord hath interpreted the word “heaven” to be the heaven of religion, and “earth” to be the hearts of the faithful. It is spoken of as the “earth of Knowledge and Assurance” in the *Book of Íqán*.

While the author was imprisoned in the house of the prince Náyibu’s-Salṭānih (the late Shin’s third son, then Governor of Ṭihrán), we were, one day, summoned into his presence. When seated before him, while a number of princes and generals stood by, he addressed us, saying:

“O Abu’l-Faḍl, verily, Mírzá Muḥammad-Riḍá says that we may demand by a telegram, any miracle that we may decide upon, from Bahá’u’lláh, and that He will undoubtedly manifest through His Divine Power, the miracle we seek for, in response to our request. He further says, that if Bahá’u’lláh did not show forth the miracle we ask—which, supposition is impossible—then he (Riḍá) would himself denounce Him in all the Muslim countries. By this statement he has shown his great belief and trust in the Founder of His Faith.” Then we answered: “Mírzá Muḥammad-Riḍá must needs, be very certain of the appearance of the miracle which he has so seriously promised you without doubt or hesitation. He is known by you to be very fearless, sincere and steadfast in this Cause.” Then the Governor questioned us saying: “What is your opinion as to whether we should demand the miracle or abandon the idea?” We answered: “What is the cause of your hesitation and the reason of your delay in demanding a miracle and concluding the matter? We have frequently heard

you saying, that if Bahá'u'lláh is the very Manifestation of the Lord, promised in the Qur'án, why does He not show us a miracle? Here are the people of Bahá, ready to answer your demand and enable you to attain your aim. Verily they have declared the proof unto you and propounded the evidence for you, while you are heedless of the evil result that might follow. Should you not look into this matter with the eye of a just investigator and not as a contentious oppressor? Then your name may be spoken of with respect during future times, and that which befell the former nations, may not happen unto you! Know, O prince, verily suppression, prohibition, imprisonment, murder, and similar persecutions will not prevent the propagation of this Cause. People will not submit to kings in matters of religion, nor will they, for the sake of their nobles and princes, turn away from the one whom they have followed as the means of their salvation. Nay, rather, were you to behold with a discerning eye, you would find that hindrance and restriction tend but to increase man's search after the Truth and his belief in it. The murder and imprisonment of believers but adds to the credit and respect of the Cause, in the sight of men of perception. By the Life of God, man does not despise that for which he has spent gold and property; then how can he abandon that for which souls and lives are sacrificed, and for the sake of which the severest calamities and afflictions are accounted a delight? Has not forty years' experience been sufficient to make known unto you these evident facts? Therefore, you should not forsake your own judgement at the instigation of ignorant doctors of religion, who are known to be the most violent enemies of your government, and the most bitter antagonists of your rule? You should consider these things if your purpose is to protect the people from be-

ing led astray in regard to religion, although 'you have not been sent as guardian unto them.' And if you intend to guard your government and preserve your dominion, by God, I do not see any ground for fearing this Movement. The great Lord, Bahá'u'lláh has commanded His followers to love all nations, to have respect for philosophers and learned men, to forsake strife with any sect and creed, to bear allegiance to kings and princes, to obey the laws of the Government, and not to interfere with political affairs. By a prohibition which cannot be doubted, changed or otherwise interpreted, He has strictly forbidden conflict, quarrel, and all that may create hatred and animosity in souls and hearts, such as contention for glory and honour; so that nothing contrary to humanity or to the preservation of society may arise.

"Consequently, you find the people of Bahá enduring every injustice and humiliation, every abasement and persecution, without sigh, complaint, or deviation from the highway of obedience and loyalty. But this is not from cowardice, fear or baseness, for you have witnessed their great fortitude, dumb endurance, and great patience under persecutions; you know well their firmness of heart under the attack of enemies. Nay, rather, all this complies with the Command of their Lord the Abhá Beauty, and for the purpose of attaining true human virtues, which are the only means for the reformation of the world.

"O great prince, it is not an ordinary thing for governments to find subjects who regard allegiance to the commands of their empire as religious duty; who practice obedience to the laws of government as a Divine Commandment. If you judge with fairness, you will acknowledge that this is the greatest Bounty of God which has yet appeared for the amelioration of the world; the highest heavenly Gift which has de-

scended for the removal of the rancour concealed in the hearts of peoples.”

To be brief. We discoursed concerning the demand for miracles and upon other subjects that deserved consideration, giving him every possible proof, and sincerely admonishing him. However, he was surrounded with hostile suggestions of the religious doctors and the plots of the ignorant, so that nothing affected his opinion. So they assembled together and consulted how to suppress and eradicate the people of Bahá, who, whether in joy or sorrow, only wished them good in return and who, in all circumstances, endeavoured to lead them to honour and felicity. But God frustrated their evil plans and exertions, dispersed their meetings, scattered their gatherings, until their histories and records remain in the books and writings, as warnings to men of discernment and perception.

More wonderful and important than that which has already been mentioned, is the event which occurred in 'Iráq, when the city of Baghhdád was illuminated by the lights of the “Orb of the Universe”. The pith of this event is that when the sun of the face of Bahá shone forth from the horizon of the “Abode of Peace” (Baghhdád), and His brilliant lights overcame the obscurity of the dense clouds which prevailed in the Cause of the “First Point”, dispelling the darkness; then the Cause of God scintillated with lights, the scattered believers of God were brought together, and the penetration and effectiveness of the Word of God increased. This provoked the hatred and animosity of the Shi'ite doctors, who have great influence and are regarded of high importance in 'Iráq, because the sanctuaries and tombs of the Imams are situated there. To these shrines the pilgrims of the Shi'ite “Church of the twelve” travel from all countries.

In those days, Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn of Ṭihrán, the

Mujtahid, resided at 'Iráq. As he was feared for his ingrained folly, pride, rashness and proneness to revolt, the Persian Government had removed him thither, under the pretence of giving him a special appointment at the holy Sanctuaries. This appointment secured for him among the doctors, a kind of leadership, and gave him an absolute power and influence over people in general. When this Shaykh saw the prevalence of the light of the Cause and Divine Word, he deliberately determined to resist the Word of God by force, eradicate the Bahá'ís, and to shed the blood of a considerable number of them by exciting a revolt. He called a meeting of prominent Shi'ites, who discussed plans among themselves, and agreed to summon in council in the city of Kázimíyah¹ (within 5 kilometres distance from Baghdád), a large number of the doctors of Karbilá and Najaf, and the leading Shi'ites who resided in these places. The Persian Consul, who then lived at Baghdád, was in accord with them. They also invited the great Divine Shaykh Murtaḍáy-i-Anṣarí, a lofty personage, who was universally accepted by all the Shi'ites both in the East and West for his knowledge and piety. He was the chief among the Persian doctors of religion—May God cause the clouds of mercy and forgiveness to shower upon him! But these plotters invited him nominally to a feast and concealed from him the real purpose of this council; for he was quite free from revolutionary plans, and entirely given to acts of devotion and to scientific lectures. He had rigorously abstained from listening to any complaint or evil word against the Bábí community, believing that this subject (the Bahá'í Faith) pertained to the fundamental facts of religion, in which God has not allowed His servants to follow the opinion of others, or to rest upon theological decisions. Nay, rather, he reasoned, Gods has rebuked and rejected

¹ Also Kázimayn.

those who follow the opinion of their fathers, leaders, kings and divines, and has given a perfect freedom to every individual to investigate these facts himself with his own eyes, apprehending them through his own effort and exertion. Thus God has promised them guidance as a fruit of this exertion, and has clearly stated that they shall attain the Truth. Far be it from Him to break His promise!

These doctors knew this to be his opinion in theology, but they imagined that when he entered their assembly and saw their number and unanimous agreement, he would also conform and be in one accord with them.

The appointed day came; the doctors and prominent men assembled together in the city of Kázimíyah, and people gathered around them from every quarter. Then arose the headstrong Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn who, in the course of an address, divulged the purpose of their assembly, and laid bare unto them his plan for suppressing the Bábís.

When the late Shaykh Murtaḍáy-i-Anṣarí heard his speech and understood this object, he instantly arose and went out from among them. No matter how they insisted upon his remaining, showed the necessity of his presence, and tried to persuade him to agree with them, he would not assent, but persisted in leaving them. He did not even stop in that city, but immediately departed to the city of Najaf, where the tomb of 'Alí is located, and which was his headquarters for religious lectures. When he left, the members of the assembly were confused, and their plans changed, yet because of their high rank and great number, they were not diverted from putting their plans into practice. By vote, they resolved to send a representative to the Holy Presence of Bahá'u'lláh, inquiring about His aim and the purpose of His Claim, as well as His Proofs

and Arguments. This mission was entrusted to one of the doctors named Mullá Ḥasan-i-'Amú, a prominent Persian divine, residing at 'Iráq, who was greatly trusted by Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn, and valued by him for his eloquence, judgement, constancy and firmness. When this delegate arrived in Baghdád, he attained the honour of entering into the Presence of the Most Holy Abhá Beauty, through the intercession of one of the Persian nobility who was there at that time. He delivered the message of the doctors. Then the Tongue of Grandeur engaged in discourse and explanation, and the reins of Utterance were loosened in the arena of proof and argument. Then was demonstrated the truth of the mission of the "First Point", through explanations which quicken souls and spirits, attract hearts and minds, unveil the essential evidences and irrefutable proofs, and entirely destroy and remove the suspicions of the sceptic. Finally, Mullá Ḥasan was requested to inform the doctors of what he had seen and heard concerning the signs of his Lord the Abhá Beauty, and to ask them to present themselves before Him, so that He might make the Truth as clear to them as the sun in mid-heaven, and thus conclude the matter satisfactorily. When the delegate found in the Power of His proofs and the fullness of His explanation, that which was beyond his expectation, he was so overwhelmed with the waves of the sea of Bahá'u'lláh's Knowledge and Utterance, that he could not avoid acknowledging His Grandeur and Might, and submitting to the shining lights of His Arguments. He bowed down in obedience, saying: "Truly, it is impossible to demonstrate the truth of any other of the heavenly religions and Divine Matters, with such clearness, elucidation, and measure of proof and argument. The straight Highway hath appeared clear as the sun, and the Morn of Truth hath risen as a bright

dawn which follows a dark night. Yet the condition of the doctors and the criticism of the divines must be evident to the Presence of the Abhá Beauty. If they are not contented with scientific proofs and decisive arguments, is there any way to show them Divine miracles and heavenly Signs?"

By this, he meant to ask the Lord's permission to promise the doctors the appearance of a great sign, which might silence the ignorant and cut the ropes of the superstitious. The Lord of mankind gave him a direct answer, saying: "Let the assembly of doctors agree together to demand a particular sign and a definite miracle from the holy presence of the Abhá Beauty, so that God the Exalted may manifest the required sign and miracle. Thus no ground will be left for doubt and denial; even as during former centuries, God hath dealt with the rebellious nations of the past."

When Mullá Ḥasan, the delegate, heard this clear promise from the Tongue of Grandeur, he returned to Kázimíyah with joy and gladness, supposing that he could thereby satisfy those exorbitant and unjust souls, and thus prevent the calamities that might result from that ominous and violent revolutionary meeting. When he met the doctors and informed them of the perfect proofs, clear arguments and the promise finally given by Bahá'u'lláh concerning the showing forth of a decisive miracle, the violence of the insolent Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn increased. He was frenzied with anger as he listened to the account of the promise of a sign. For the Shaykh, because of his excessive pride, vanity, arrogance, and violent hostility toward the "First Point" and His followers, could not bear the sight of any of the Bábís. How, then, could he be supposed to agree to a scientific debate and a demand for heavenly Signs? In truth, he was more afraid of being discomfited in the dis-

cussion and defeated in the field of controversy, than of the appearance of a great Sign at which heads would bow down, and whereby the light of the Sun of the Divine Word might become manifest throughout all regions. These are general characteristics inherent in the doctors of every religion, because their natures are cramped by the dryness of their theological faculty, and their thoughts confined to the narrow circle of scholastic learning. This inevitably results in melancholic excitement and desire for securing their religious leadership.

Finally, the opinions of that body of doctors differed; their plans were frustrated and their assembly scattered. When the Shaykh found his meeting and council abortive, and that the only result was ill-success and failure, the flame of his enmity increased, and the tempest of his hostility became violent. He resolved to resort to political machinations, in combination with these high Persian dignitaries and officials whose only occupation was the murder of the pious, pillage of the poor, and dispersion of the Persian subjects throughout all countries and regions. So the Shaykh, excited and embittered by his disappointment, began to correspond with these princes and communicate with such as he knew to be antagonistic to the people of Bahá. Thus arose wicked plans and cunning religious stratagems which were intended to spread dissension. But God the Exalted disclosed their schemings, ruined their efforts, defeated their hopes, quenched the fire of their revolts, and cut off their root. Naught remains but their histories which express the folly of their dreams, their lack of understanding, and the inefficiency of their deeds. These monuments of wickedness remain as a subject for meditation and a warning to such as are willing to be admonished.

A fact more evident and important than all the great events spoken of, and one which demonstrates the perfectness of the proofs of our Lord the Abhá Beauty, is the "Epistle to the King", revealed in the *Súriy-i-Haykal*, from the Pen of the Merciful, to the Sháh of Persia. This Tablet was sent to him in CE 1869 (AH 1286), when, he was in the neighbourhood of Tihrán. The bearer was a youth named Badí', who astonished the world by the power of his faith, his great devotion, constancy, and wonderful endurance in suffering the bitterest kind of death, with all joy, and steadfastness. The hard-hearted executioners, for three successive days, branded him all over the body with red-hot irons, until his flesh was severed from his bones, and every limb was out of joint. Yet he died not grieve or show the least evidence of flinching, nor during the continuance of this frightful ordeal did he display the slightest symptom of distress or plead for mercy. So he breathed his last; his marvellous life ended, and his strong, heroic soul ascended to the courts of the Exalted Friend; to the Outlook of the Abhá Beauty, where with brilliant and cheerful face, the lights of his glorification beam forth as the sun in midday.

In that excellent Epistle, Bahá'u'lláh gave full explanations, and expounded proofs concerning the truth of His Mission, as far as an epistle could contain; and these He expressed with the utmost grace of speech and elegance of style. He explained how the morals of the Bábís were changed, and how their deeds and disposition had been reformed through His appearance among them in Baghdád; how they were thus enabled to patiently endure the bitter afflictions and violent calamities which were unceasingly pouring upon them through the fanaticism of the clergy and the caprice of rulers; how during that long period

they had committed no act which might disturb the Government or trouble the thoughts of statesmen. In this explicit Tablet, He demonstrated to them, by clear arguments and decisive statements, that the purpose of the mission of a Manifestation of the Cause of God is not to seek after dominion or attain lofty temporal power. This is the favourite argument of accusation against the Bahá'ís, by the ignorant Shi'ites. He proved that political dominion has been conferred by God upon kings and rulers, and that no Bahá'í is allowed to infringe upon their regulations, contradict their opinions, interfere with their political management or stir up sedition in their empire. He also clearly explained that the appearance of the Manifestation of God was in connection with religious affairs and spiritual matters, for the purpose of reforming morals, sanctifying souls, beautifying actions and illuminating hearts. This was the mission for which they were promised in the Heavenly Books; and that function has no relation with political matters.

To resume. This Epistle contained things revealed by His Supreme Pen, whereby the Persian statesmen could attain everlasting glory, had they been endowed with sagacity and discernment. Soon will their posterity lament over their negligence!

At the end of the Epistle, the Lord, Bahá'u'lláh, asked the Sháh to arrange that the Persian doctors should meet Him in the Sháh's presence, in order to discuss the proofs of the truth of this Cause; that they might ask an explanation of all that lies hidden in their minds and hearts, so that the Truth might be distinguished from falsehood, and the pathway of Guidance from that of error. Then He placed the final decision in the Sháh's hands. By this, His purpose was not to seek help or assistance from the Sháh, but to publicly show forth the Truth, and make

clear its distinction from falsehood, as a proof and accomplishment of His Mission. For God the Almighty is alone sufficient to assist His Manifestation and help His Messenger. Verily, He is independent from world, and in His hands are the hosts of heaven and earth! Were the just to judge with fairness, they would acknowledge that in bygone ages no similar event has ever occurred in the Appearance of the Manifestations of God, nor has the like of it been witnessed in past centuries. For the sake of brevity, we will not treat of the events and results which followed the "Epistle to the King", all of which are matters of history. We now return to our discussion upon religious arguments, whereby the truth of the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh can be demonstrated.

As to *The Prophecies*, that is, the predictions revealed in the Holy Scriptures: Know ye—May God illumine your faces, brighten your hearts, strengthen your limbs, and dilate your breasts!—that it was ordained in the Knowledge of God and His Great Wisdom to accomplish the amelioration of the conditions of the world and the unification of nations. Know ye, likewise, that former conditions should be changed; the ages darkened by clouds of division and discord should be ended through the Manifestation of His Glorious Face and the Advent of His Great Day. Therefore, He prophesied to all countries and regions the Hour of His Coming, and made the Covenant of His Appearance with all creeds and communities, through the tongues of the prophets. For there is no founder or institutor of a religion who has not made the acceptance of the Faith inseparable from belief in the "latter day", and who has not strictly commanded his adherents to await the "final salvation" of that great and important time. No cycle

has passed without the appearance of a Heavenly Man, firmly proclaiming and loudly heralding the advent of the "Great Hour", the inevitable coming of the great day of Resurrection, the rising of the Supreme Lord and the Manifestation of the Beauty of God, the Bahá'u'l-Abhá. Thus the glad-tidings of that Manifestation have reached the high heavens, have spread throughout all regions, and filled all prophetic writings and books. Consequently, we find the adherents of every one of the seven extant religions of the earth awaiting the coming of the great "Hour", and believing firmly in the advent of the great "Resurrection". We find also that in the Book that they recognize to be a divine and heavenly Revelation, all the signs, tokens, events and occurrences of that Day are recorded in full particulars. These particulars specify the country and place where its lights shall rise, the time of its realization and the date of its appearance. This fact is clear to those who study these Books, look into their prophecies and consider the principal purposes of the references made therein. By the Life of God, were the possessors of mature minds to look into the pages of the Holy Scriptures, they would find nothing but a collection of songs uttered by the tongues of the prophets in glorification of their Lord the Abhá Beauty; melodies sung by the birds of Holiness announcing His coming and Appearance in the great Day of Resurrection. To this we have called attention in our former treatises, and will speak of them in our future interpretations, God willing.

The fifth introduction

Treating of the Causes which led people to deny the Manifestations of God in the Days of their Appearance.

The fifth introduction

O ye people of Bahá, who have taken hold of a “Strong Handle which shall not be broken”, as ye have been promised by our Lord the Abhá Beauty! Now that ye understand the proofs and arguments which demonstrate the truth of the Manifestations of the Command of God, in general, and especially are illumined by the perfect proof of this holy Cause, know ye—May God illumine your inward sight, cause you to devote your wishes and hopes to the service of all the world, and irradiate your hearts and minds with the light of pure love for humanity!—that although the Manifestations of God were endowed with clear evidences and arguments; although they manifested great power and were distinguished from ordinary people in their character and deeds, yet we find that people denied them in the days of their appearance, and even their own kindred and race contradicted them. These people sacrificed their property in order to antagonize the Manifestations; endured afflictions and calamities in contradicting them; fabricated lies and calumnies to injure them; strove to make the hearts of people hate them; and availed themselves of every artifice to raise the wrath of the ignorant against them. All this opposition, contradiction and obstinacy resulted from the doubts that had imbued their minds, obscured their insight, blinded their hearts and darkened their reason. Thus they supposed themselves right in this prejudice and opposition, without investigating or discussing the matter. It never occurred to them that they might be mistaken and led astray. Nay, rather, they were convinced that their views were sound, and so firmly did they trust in the correctness of their opinions when falsely denying the Messenger of God, that they

prayed God, saying: "O God, if this be the truth from Thee, rain down stones upon us from Heaven." For it is unreasonable to think that a sane man would endanger his safety and be hostile to himself by falsely denying a prophet, if he was convinced of the authenticity of that prophet's claim and the validity of His mission. This would be foolishly seeking his own destruction. How much more unreasonable, then, would it be to believe that a great people could have acted thus during long periods. All this was, therefore, a result of the doubts which possessed their minds and prevented their eyes from seeing.

The clearest proof of the effect of these doubts is that the Hebrew nation has continued for a period exceeding 1,800 years to preserve its own beliefs and falsely deny our Lord Jesus Christ. During this long period, the Jews have endured, both in the East and West, the most violent persecutions, such as death, execration, humiliation and degradation, without forsaking their false beliefs, or allying themselves with the Christian Church, except through force, compulsion or other base means. During this time not a day has passed without their stretching forth hands of supplication toward God the Exalted, begging Him with sighs and tears for the Manifestation of the Messiah, and beseeching the approach of the day of His advent. Is not this caused by their clinging to the doubts that were firmly imbedded in their hearts and minds? Unquestionably, this is the effect of these doubts upon their beliefs and tendencies.

Know, O ye just ones! These above-mentioned doubts, which have darkened the regions of the earth with their dust, and the gloomy darkness of which has obscured the sight of nations, are not the same in every individual. Verily, a shrewd mind finds every contradictor possessing his own peculiar doubt

or objection; an invention and fabrication of his imagination., whereby he rejects the Manifestation of the Command of God. Even great philosophers and writers of the present day have not refrained from opposing this Manifestation of God, on account of sins formerly committed by others against humanity; and by considering the wars and dissensions among different sects in former centuries, as decisive arguments against the Bahá'ís.* Such intelligent men may be likened to those who would propose to persecute and murder all children born in their days, simply because a great number of children who were formerly born became murderers, thieves and brigands when they grew up. Or like unto those who would sanction the closing of schools and barring the way of education because a great many students became heretics and innovators after they advanced in knowledge and study. "Truly, how evil and abortive is this philosophy in its theory and conclusion!

It may be said that doubts are as numerous as the deniers, for they cannot be confined to a regular order. Verily, every contradictor, when hearing the call of one who invites people unto God, endeavours to refute Him by clinging to a certain imaginary and individual suspicion or doubt, which has no connection with the real proof and argument. For the real proof and argument is the authoritative standard by which to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and to recognize a prophet. It is not that he should conform to the discordant desires and contradictory inclinations of individuals. Yet doubts may be, according to their nature, classified into four great

* An article appeared in the newspaper "The Caucasus" of Tiflís [Tbilisi] (Russia), 1893, in which its author gave a translation of the *Tablet of Ishráqát* revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and praised the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith; but warned people against it. Because, he said, every religious movement had ended in strife and bloodshed; then citing Lutheranism and other examples.

divisions, each of which may be regarded by a man of wisdom and perception as being a universal pestilence for the destruction of communities and peoples. Doubt is a prevalent sickness, attacking all religions and creeds.

The first division: "doubts"

The First Division comprises the doubts that come to a man because of his ignorance of the real proof and argument. For a real proof leads a seeker and investigator toward his aim, and is like unto a road by which a traveller reaches his destination. So a mistaken proof prevents a man apprehending the real fact, and is a wrong road which leads a traveller astray. Thus the science of logic and syllogism was founded, and rules for formulating correct conclusions were laid down, in order to protect men of perception as much as possible from falling into error in reasoning. By this they are prevented from building upon false foundations, and taking as proofs things which are not proofs, or as conclusions things which are not conclusions.

We have previously pointed out that the Egyptians and Syrians who denied Moses; that the Jews and Romans who refused to acknowledge the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—were not influenced by personal enmity or selfish prejudices. That is to say, they did not recognize the truth of Jesus Christ and Moses, and at the same time deny them. These nations were not so foolish and distracted as to deliberately deny these Manifestations, and thereby expose themselves and their families to the anger and wrath of God. Nay, they rejected and opposed Jesus Christ and Moses because of their conviction of the falsehood of their Mission and Word. This was a result of illogical reasoning, which prevented them from arriv-

ing at a sound conclusion., as we have mentioned above. For they took as proofs things which were not proofs, and accepted as arguments things that were not arguments. Thus they drew wrong conclusions. The door of mistaken proofs through which nations have entered into denial of the Day-springs of the Lights of God, is very wide. We find that every nation, nay, rather, every individual has invented a particular doubt, through which the Manifestations of God have been denied. For instance, one rejects Moses because of his war and pillage; another rejects Muḥammad because of His marriage and polygamy, and because, like Moses, He has taken part in warfare and battles. The Hindus and Brahamans reject Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad because they allowed people to eat meat, esteeming slaughtering and eating animals as one of the most pernicious habits and contrary to the principle and character of humanity. They believe that this habit hardens the heart, darkens the mind and conscience, leads men to commit abominable acts and become like the beasts themselves.

One reason the Jews gave for rejecting Jesus Christ was His being a native of Galilee and Samaria; another was His eating and drinking. Their denial also resulted from the fact that some regarded such things as abstinence from war, celibacy, vegetarianism, a prophet's birthplace, and his eating and drinking, as proofs for distinguishing between the truth and falsehood of a Manifestation. These things could not be an indication of the validity of a mission, inasmuch as there is no connection between the premises and conclusion.

What chiefly led nations into error was their persistence in demanding miracles and asking intricate philosophical questions in order to test the holy Manifestations and distinguish them from impostors. These

two points have, since the foundation of the world been stretched as a snare before the intelligent men of learning, and laid as a pitfall into which great philosophers and wise men have plunged. For they consider it a necessity that the Manifestations of God should be able to do and know all things. They have imagined the demanding of wonders, and solving of abstruse questions to be the best means of knowing false prophets from true ones. Those who have considered themselves wise deemed it proper to demand from one claiming a Divine Mission absurd and impracticable inventions of their individual thoughts and imaginations, such as soaring in the air, causing trees to speak, drying up seas, changing day into night, transforming a rod into a serpent, quickening the dead, causing rocks to sing, mountains to dance, and other absurdities contrary to the laws of Nature. Even the most learned among them believed it right to test the prophets by abstruse philosophical points which they thought concerned real facts. Such was the question they asked Jesus Christ concerning the meaning of resurrection (Matthew 22). Similarly, they questioned Muḥammad about the "two-horned", the "crescent", and the "Spirit" (see the Qur'án); and asked, the Báb concerning the rapidity or slowness of the revolution of the heavens. However, these tempters never reflected whether the solving of such questions could have any connection with or could be proof of the validity of their missions. Had they pondered over this point they would have been awakened to the fact that there is not the least connection between such questions and the mission of a Prophet, nor could these things be a proof or argument of the truth of His Claim. Had they done so they would not have fallen into the deep pit of tempting the Lord, which action is prohibited in the Bible: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

As to the miracles: We have already pointed out, when explaining the proofs and arguments, that these do not bear any primary indication of the truth of a prophetic claim. Likewise, we have shown by clear and decisive argument that there is no relation or connection between prophethood and the power of producing impossibilities. Therefore, miracles are to be considered as secondary and auxiliary proofs, and not primary and real proofs.

To ask scientific questions as a test for distinguishing between the truth and falsehood of a Manifestation of God is even more foolish than demanding miracles, for the purpose of philosophy and science is only to lead man toward the truth of things, and to the knowledge of causes, reasons and effects. It is an indisputable fact to the possessors of brilliant minds that the unknown is constantly more than the known, and the latter, in comparison to the former, is as a drop compared to a vast sea. As it is said: "Man is not accounted as learned except when he knows his own ignorance." Therefore, who can claim to know the realities and causes of all things that he should presume to be able to test the knowledge of the Manifestations of the All-Knowing God! Verily, the Prophets and the Manifestations of God are sent to make people of one accord, guide them to that which leads to their happiness and continuance, and cause them to relinquish that which may conduce to their ruin and destruction. These heavenly messengers are not sent as astronomers, mathematicians, philosophers, naturalists or historians. Should the prophets wish to dispute the philosophical views, historical opinions and scientific theories of people, this would be contrary to their real mission, which is the guidance and unification of mankind. By this the meetings for religion and guidance would be changed into gather-

ings for scientific debate. Have not the theories of the Greek philosophers, ancient Chaldeans, the Arabs and Modern Persians proven false upon certain points that they considered as indisputable facts? Such ideas as the limited dimensions of the Universe, the simplicity of the four elements, and similar ideas, which we do not treat of in this place, have been disproved and dismissed by modern science. Should the Prophets desire to dispute these points, which were thought to be undeniable truths, would it not end in strife and wrangling? Would not the people use this as an excuse to deny and contradict them? Would not this make their mission abortive and useless? Mosheim has stated in his *Church History* that in the 8th Century, Boniface, the delegate of the Germans, persecuted the priest Virgilius in Bavaria for maintaining that the earth was spherical, and that, consequently, the other side of it was inhabited by people and illuminated by the sun and moon. Boniface looked upon this as a gross heresy. So he accused the man before the Pope, who actually excommunicated him as a heretic. Likewise, the story of the imprisonment of Galileo, the Italian, by command of the Pope is known to all. When, in the 17th century, Galileo arose, affirmed the correctness of the Copernican theory, maintained that the sun is the centre of our system, and that the earth revolves around it, his opinion was rejected by everybody. He was immediately arrested under the terrible Inquisition, imprisoned, and in danger of being burnt alive. During almost eighteen centuries philosophers and scholars; as well as the public, had held the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. This theory, which prevailed from the time of Ptolemy, who lectured in the College of Alexandria about 130 years before Jesus Christ, and which continued down to the rise of Galileo, asserted that the

earth was the centre of the Universe, and that the sun and the other planets revolved around it.

The discussions* between Khusraw Parvíz (a Persian King contemporary with Muḥammad and the son of Anúshirván) and his favourite, Sapor, the philosopher—which discussion is contained in the “five books” of Nizámíy-i-Ganjaví, one of the great poets and philosophers of the 6th century of Islám—concerned the Copernican and Ptolemaic systems.

The people believed the Ptolemaic theory to be a proven fact confirmed by the evidence of sciences; and anyone who denied this would be contradicted and considered insane. Even the “First Point” has not deemed it advisable to write anything upon this subject beyond the following statement contained in the *Holy Bayán*:

“Verily, astronomical facts are not as the doctors of our time have supposed them to be.” For at the time of the revelation of *The Bayán* the Copernican system was unknown to the Persians, and the theories of European men of learning had not been introduced into Persia.

From this explanation, it is clearly shown that we are not justified in relying upon scientific questions for proving the Divine Manifestations. For it is an indisputable fact that the world is in a state of progression, and progression means the advancement of learning and inventions, the increase of discovery, and expansion of the circle of knowledge. Therefore, during the progress of the world, many mistakes and errors of human opinion have been laid bare. Just as the mistaken theories of the ancient philosophers are brought to light, so also the errors of present

* In this discussion, Khusraw held to the Copernican system, while the favourite upheld the Ptolemaic, thus refuting the King. Hence, even in those days, some existed who doubted the Ptolemaic and held to the Copernican system.

philosophers will appear in their due time, in order that the meaning of progress may be realized and the truth of origin and creation may become manifest. The vanity of the proofs demanded in former days from the Prophets will appear, and the meaning of the following saying of Muḥammad will be shown: "We Prophets were sent to talk to the people according to the measure of their minds."

Verily, the Prophets, as already mentioned, notwithstanding their all-pervading Spirit and their knowledge of that which was and will be, were sent and appointed for the spiritual guidance of people and to bring them into accord. So they did not consider the people's learning and acquired knowledge of importance, and left discoveries and inventions to their proper course of advancement in science and civilization.

It is now clearly proven that tempting the Manifestations of God by requiring signs and miracles of them, or asking them scientific questions, is the greatest pit into which nations have fallen. The fatal danger of their reliance upon false proofs and mistaken reasoning is, therefore, convincingly shown.

To this point Paul the Apostle refers in I Corinthians 1:22-23: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom (philosophy): but we preach Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greek foolishness." Also: Colossians 2:8: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit."

When the Cause of Jesus Christ, after His Ascension to the Supreme Concourse, was spread by His disciples, the Jews considered themselves the heirs of the Prophets and the custodians of their writings and well-known miracles. They supposed that the best

way by which to know the truth of Jesus Christ's Mission was to test His disciples by the texts of Moses, Joshua, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and other Jewish prophets. On the other hand, the Greeks regarded themselves as being the heirs of great philosophers, the possessors of knowledge and learning, the discoverers of inventions and sciences. They imagined that the best means for understanding the truth of Jesus Christ's Mission was to test the upholders thereof, by scientific questions and philosophical theories which had been laid down by their great philosophers and leaders, such as Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Hippocrates, Socrates, and others, in whom they gloried and the fame of whose knowledge and wisdom is spread forever throughout the world. But that elect Apostle Paul sounded a warning that what the Jews and Greeks demanded were as stumbling-blocks, foolishness and error. Paul taught that the greatest power and proof lay in the Divine Word received from the blessed Beauty of Jesus Christ, the truth of which was testified to by his steadfastness in enduring afflictions, and by the sacrifice of His pure Life for the salvation of the world.

Consider—May God assist you through the Spirit of intelligence!—how the Jews have suffered tribulations for nineteen centuries. They will never be awakened and restored to their glory and honour except by acknowledging the truth of Jesus Christ under the banner of the Covenant of our Lord, the Abhá Beauty, and turning unto the Day-Spring of the Lights of His Testament.

As to the Greek philosophers, the falsity of their systems and their errors in science and theology have been shown since the 17th century by the intellectual investigations of American and European men of learning. The nineteenth verse of the above-mentioned chapter refers to this fact: "I will destroy

the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent will I reject.”

If with shrewd intelligences we look into the history of religions, we find that the old Pagan philosophy of Greece was the chief thing that deteriorated both Christianity and Islám. The Platonic philosophy created monkhood in Christianity and resulted in the corrupt practices of Sufism in Islám. This philosophy gave rise to certain classes of monks who afflicted Europe with great disasters during many centuries. The Aristotelian philosophy resulted in agnostic beliefs, which, during every century, armed thousands of men in combat against the Divine Religions, and denial of every heavenly law.

There are also many other calamities which we have not mentioned, all of them proceeding from mistaking the way, and from wrong methods of reasoning.

Verily, God is the Protector of all things

The second division: “return”

The Second Division is that which refers to the subject of “Return”. The adherents of every one of the extant religions believe in and expect the return of a definite person or persons, for the spread of their religion and the continuance of their law. Thus the Christians are awaiting the return of our Lord Jesus Christ—Glory be to Him!—faithfully believing that He will, without doubt, descend from heaven. The Jews expect the appearance of Elias the Prophet before the Manifestation of the Promised Lord and His rise in the appointed day. Likewise, among the Muslim nations, the Sunnites believe in the descent of Jesus Christ subsequent to the appearance of the Mahdí (Precursor); and the Shi’ites, followers of “the Church of the twelve”, hold primarily the return of the Mahdí. This Mahdí they believe to be

Muḥammad, the son of Ḥasan al-ʿAskarí, who disappeared in the year AH 260, and who was the twelfth of the Imams of Muḥammad's household. Secondly, they believe that after the appearance of the Mahdí, the martyred Ḥusayn, son of ʿAlí, the third Imám, will return. This return they speak of as the "Husaynite Manifestation". As to the Zoroastrians, they await the return of the famous Persian King of the dynasty of Kiyán, erroneously interpreted by some of the European historians to be Cyrus. He, they believe, will return during the days of the promised Manifestation who they look for at the "end of the time", and who will come from Persia to raise the dead and unify religions. They also await the return of certain others, whose names and the manner of their coming we do not mention for lack of space. This expectation of a "Return" is found generally in all the other religions and creeds, as is known to every student of religious systems. This brief account shows that the "Return" of their Prophets is one of the important subjects in which the followers of religions are entangled, and by reason of which they have falsely denied and turned away from the Manifestations of the Command of Cod during all ages.

In the 8th century of Islám the well-known historian, ibn-Kaldún Maghribí arose and denied that the Mahdí would appear. This he set forth in his great work, and some of the possessors of weak minds and darkened consciences followed his opinion, so that through them there was fulfilled that which was prophesied by the Imams in the following tradition: "Verily, the Mahdí shall rise at the time of disappointment and despair." That is, when heedless souls have given up hope of his appearance, deny the prophecies in connection with his rise, and have despaired of the coming of the one who is to save

them from the day of calamities and afflictions, He will appear.

Similarly, a large number among the Christians denied the return of Jesus Christ in the flesh and transposed the clear prophecies given concerning His Coming and Manifestation. They interpreted them to mean the prevalence of His religion and of His followers; which interpretation by no means conforms to the said prophecies. Thus what was said by the elect Apostle Peter was fulfilled in them (II Peter 2:1-2): "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of", and so on until the end of the chapter. However, we ask the men of perception to reflect upon and look deeply into the contents of this chapter. Verily, that elect Apostle has foreshadowed with clearest explanation and most eloquent style all similar events which occurred in Christianity during the last few centuries. These prophecies he uttered in detail, and this very fact proves a pure and sacred spirit in him; comprehension and cognizance of future events in their full particulars.

When a people hold as an established fact that, in spite of spiritual prophecies, Christ shall not come from heaven; and when this idea becomes a general and approved belief, they will of necessity deny Him in His Manifestation, and speak evil of His way. Thus there will be fulfilled in them that which was said by the great Apostle: "Even denying the Lord that bought them ... by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of, " This was fully

realized in this most brilliant age of Bahá'u'lláh, and the truth of this prophecy is now perfectly evident.

Likewise, it is said in the same Epistle (II Peter 3:3-4): "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation"; so on till the end of the chapter. This passage is a proof of the above-mentioned fact, that a great number would deny the coming of our Lord Christ—Glory be to Him! Therefore, it is not surprising that many people deny His coming and misinterpret prophecies which clearly point to His Advent. This whole chapter also contains jewels of lofty and hidden meanings, which, God willing, we will clearly interpret in the proper place.

What is necessary to be noticed is that just as the false argument of those who deny the coming of Christ in the flesh caused doubts in beclouded hearts, on the other hand it created an equal amount of knowledge and faith in pure hearts and steadfastness in chaste souls. For there is no stronger and clearer argument to prove the authenticity of the source of these prophecies, and their essential purport—which is the descent of the Spirit of God (Christ) in the body of man—than their fulfilment after the lapse of centuries and cycles. The prophecies of that elect apostle were made at a time in which the Christians had not yet any congregation or society to render them worthy of description by the writers and historians. Yet as they concerned events which have occurred and are fulfilled after the lapse of nineteen centuries, we have absolute and strongest proof that they were heavenly prophesies and predictions inspired by Divine Power.

The third division: "signs and tokens"

The Third Division pertains to the signs and tokens revealed in the Heavenly Books. We have already mentioned that all the prophets or founders of religions have, without exception, assigned a part of their Books to explaining the coming of the Day of God, and announcing the appearance of the Face of God. Likewise, they have mentioned certain signs and tokens concerning this great Manifestation, and have described certain events and occurrences about the day of Its appearance. Some of their announcements have been couched in symbols and allegories, and some are explicitly stated, according to the language of every age and cycle. Such symbolical signs are the "darkening of the sun and moon", "rending of the heavens", "falling of stars", "renewal of heaven and earth", "rise of the dead", "the passing away of former things", and other similar events. These shall be set forth in detail, in the course of our treatises, in order that the students of the Holy Books will understand, and the adherents of laws and religions may discuss them. Such signs undoubtedly need to be accepted, but the doctors of every religion, in understanding and apprehending their meanings, have relied upon their own conceptions. Thus they have interpreted and described them in their books according to their esoteric literal sense. They have also taught them to the people in their lectures, and inculcated them in their schools and congregations until these literal meanings have seemed incontrovertible facts and indisputable points necessary to religious beliefs. These ideas have become still more firmly rooted in hearts and memories, because they have been handed down as a heritage for long periods. Whenever a Divine Sun dawned forth from the Heaven of

the Command of God, and the spirit of the Invisible World shone forth from any of the Holy Dawning-places, He was denied by nations and contradicted by peoples, because the aforesaid prophecies were not fulfilled according to the ideas of the people and the signs did not appear as they expected them. In other words, not one of the great prophets ever appeared, and not one of the holy souls ever arose to found a religion by the Command of God, except these very signs and tokens were the first things through which the nations denied Him. For instance, what first caused the Jews to deny Christ was that they held that there are certain signs and tokens, confirmed and clearly written in the Book concerning the coming of the Messiah, which were not then realized; and that the non-fulfilment thereof necessarily disproved the truth of Christ's claim. When Jesus appeared, they said: "Where is the darkness of the sun"? "Where is the changing of the moon into blood"? "Where is the falling of stars"? "When did the wolf dwell with the lamb, and the lion eat straw as an ox"? "When did the child put his hand in the adder's hole, as is clearly spoken of by Isaiah"? "Where is the changing of the heaven into brass, the earth into iron, and the rain into dust, as was prophesied by Moses"? "Where is the 'new Covenant that the Lord will make with all the Jewish tribes'; 'assembling of them together from the north, south, east and west, after their scattering and division'; 'honouring them after their degradation and fall'; 'planting them after their extirpation'?" "Where is the 'gathering which shall never be dispersed', the 'honour which shall never change', and the 'planting which shall never be uprooted'?" "Where did the Lord 'restore Zion', a restoration and building 'which shall never be destroyed', as was prophesied by Jeremiah"? "Did

all these events occur during the manifestation of Jesus, or has God deceived His servants by saying such things"? "Be this far from the blight of His Glory and the exaltation of His Beneficence and Bounty"! "Therefore all these prophecies must needs come to pass and these promises be fulfilled, even though many centuries and ages might first elapse"!

In like manner did the Christians repudiate the founder of Islám, the Muslims deny the "First Point", and the people of [the] *Bayán* contradict the Beauty of Abhá. The most astonishing fact to be noticed is that each one of the above-mentioned peoples followed the example of the other, and walked in the highway of the same error. Nor did any one of them reflect upon the purifying and cleansing tests, the hard trials and afflictions that befell the adherents of former religions. Had they done so they might have avoided the precipice, refrained from what destroyed other nations, and, been rightly directed toward their Lord. This explanation proves that the expectation of the fulfilment of these signs is one of the greatest tests that has prevented bygone nations from responding to the Divine Messenger during all centuries and cycles.

The fourth division: "ordinances"

The Fourth Division concerns the idea that ordinances are perpetual, and that religions cannot be changed. There are none of the adherents of any of the extant religions and sects who do not believe that all of their laws, regulations, customs and ceremonies are everlasting, and that it is not allowable to change any of their rules and ordinances. For instance, we find the believers in the Greek Church regard theirs to be the permanent religion and sole law announced by Jesus Christ to the people of the world. The Catholics

consider their own sect similarly permanent and unchangeable. So likewise, the Protestants and other smaller sects, such as Nestorians, *et al.*, maintain their own way to be the truth. Among the Muslims, the Sunnites and Hanafites believe that when Christ shall descend from heaven He will judge according to the laws of Hanafi. Yet the Shi'ites, Malikis and Hanbalis protest against this monopoly of the Hanafites, and each one of these sects claims that when Christ descends He will judge people according to their respective doctrines. The Shi'ites of the "Church of the twelve" go far beyond the followers of other sects and creeds in this claim. They regard themselves as the nearest to the Mahdí (Precursor) and to the Christ; consequently their expectation of the appearance is greater than that of others. The divines of this sect never allow any of their laws and customs to be changed. They persistently refuse to alter any of their regulations or ceremonies, such as representations of the lives of the martyrs, the wounding of their heads, and beating upon their breasts, which rites they perform in their gatherings and meeting places. They hold that the Mahdí, who will arise after the Command of God, and the Spirit of God (Christ), when He descends from Heaven, must both of necessity follow their opinions and regulations in regard to religion. This is the case with all other creeds and sects branched from the Buddhist, Brahman, Sabean and Zoroastrian religions; likewise many others which we do not mention in this brief account. Each one believes his own sect to be the way of salvation, the announcement and promulgation of which is incumbent upon the One who appears through the Command of God. As this is the case with sects and their doctrines and ordinances, notwithstanding their unimportance in comparison with the beliefs and laws

of religious systems, we need not be astonished to find that the Jews preserve their beliefs, or that Christians, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Brahamans and Sabeans hold to the principles of their religions, and consider their original laws obligatory and permanent necessities. When we find a people considering it a most important necessity to maintain and preserve its secondary and dogmatic tenets, we need not wonder to see it sacrificing everything pertaining to this life and the life to come, in order to sustain its principal religious beliefs. Therefore we can realize, from this point of view, the greatness of the Divine Power given to the Manifestations of the Command of God; who have changed former religions and separated nations from their beliefs. This we have previously explained. But those who are heedless of this manifest Power and erred from the right Path became bewildered in the gloomy darkness, were dispersed in the deserts of imaginations and underwent great calamities. The purpose of this was that they might perchance be directed to the Dawning-place of this Power and to the Day-Spring of its lights. God in His mercy intended that they might through suffering be blest by its inspiration, illumined by its radiance, and enkindled by its fire; that they might ultimately find guidance, spirituality and fragrance in the Garden of Delight, and return to the Shelter of the Mercy of their Lord, the Clement, the Merciful.

Consequently, it is proven that belief in the unchangeableness of laws and religions is one of the great calamities that has descended upon bygone nations, and the most disastrous influence which led to their ruin and destruction. Even if they found it easy to relinquish their belief regarding the subject of "Return", or other signs, yet they would never sanction changing their religious ordinances, or altering any of their laws.