

*Remember
My
Days*

*The Life-Story of
Bahá'u'lláh*

Lowell Johnson



THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE BAHÁ'ÍS OF SOUTH AND WEST AFRICA
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Foreword

The following pages attempt to bring together part of the widely scattered information and stories about the life of Bahá'u'lláh as already printed in English-language publications. A list of books from which the information was taken includes: *God Passes By* by Shoghi Effendi, *Guidance for Today and Tomorrow* by Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* by J. E. Esslemont, *The Chosen Highway* by Lady Blomfield, *All Things Made New* by John Ferraby, as well as various articles in several volumes of *The Bahá'í World*.

With deep humility and love, this booklet is dedicated to all those who thirst for a fuller knowledge of the life of Bahá'u'lláh and a deeper understanding of the sufferings endured by Him and His family.

LOWELL JOHNSON

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1 His Early Years

Bahá'u'lláh, the world's greatest Teacher, was born between dawn and sunrise on 12th November 1817. He was related to the royal family of Iran. His father was a descendant of Zoroaster, a Persian Prophet of God. His mother was a descendant of the Prophet Abraham through Abraham's wife, Katurah. He was also descended from Jesse, and through His father belonged to one of the oldest and most famous families in Persia.

As a child, Bahá'u'lláh was known as Ḥusayn 'Alí He later received the surname Bahá'u'lláh from the Pen of the Báb.

Bahá'u'lláh was an unusual child. He did not go to school. He would not let anyone teach Him. This is a well-known fact in Ṭíhrán. From His earliest childhood, He was different from His relatives and friends. They said: 'This child has a very great power.' He was advanced beyond His age in wisdom, intelligence and knowledge.

Although He never had a teacher, He was still able to solve the difficult problems of all who came to see Him. Like Jesus, He was considered an expert on any subject being discussed—anything from science to philosophy and religion.

Bahá'u'lláh's father realized that his child was very unusual. He paid very little attention to the rest of his children, but for Bahá'u'lláh he showed great interest and respect.

One day, when Bahá'u'lláh was still quite a little child, He happened to walk near His father and mother where they were sitting together. He heard His father remark: 'This son of ours is without equal. There is no one else like him. He cannot be compared with the rest of our children in any way.'

His mother said, 'I think he is a little bit too short.'

His father replied, 'What does that matter? If his height is not so great, that only makes his brain near to his heart. He is perfect in every way.'

From earliest childhood, He had an extraordinary power of attracting people to Him. It was felt by all. Everybody loved Him, and people liked Him so much that they always crowded around Him. Bahá'u'lláh was a very generous person, and a lover of the outdoor life. Most of His childhood was spent in the garden or in the fields. He was very happy when He was talking to people.

Once, when Bahá'u'lláh was only seven or eight years old, the Sháh (the king of Persia) demanded a large sum of money from Bahá'u'lláh's father. It was the custom in Persia at that time that the king could demand money from the rich ones in his country any time he wanted it, and the rich man had to pay.

Bahá'u'lláh's father was a very rich man, and so he paid what the Sháh had demanded. Later, the Sháh made a second demand, and again Bahá'u'lláh's father paid it. But, when the Sháh demanded money a third time, it was a much larger sum, and Bahá'u'lláh's father was not able to pay.

When Bahá'u'lláh's father did not pay the money, the Sháh sent collectors to Bahá'u'lláh's house, and they forced their way in. They were about to take all of the furniture and sell it, when Bahá'u'lláh said to Himself, 'I will see to this matter myself.'

Bahá'u'lláh knew that the Sháh was away from his palace in Tíhrán and living at a place about ten days' journey. But, Bahá'u'lláh decided He was going to go and visit the Sháh, anyway. His father did not want Him to go, as He was still only a small boy, and the weather was very cold from a recent fall of snow. But Bahá'u'lláh said, 'I will go.'

When Bahá'u'lláh got to the city where the Sháh was visiting, He first went to see the Prime Minister. He talked with the Prime Minister a while, who then took Him to see the Sháh. He then talked to the Sháh, and while He was talking to the Sháh, He sounded as though He were thirty or forty years old—so clear were His arguments and so keen His wisdom. Finally, the Sháh wrote out an order telling the collectors to leave Bahá'u'lláh's father alone. Bahá'u'lláh had made the Sháh understand that he was being unfair.

Although Bahá'u'lláh's father was a Minister of State close to the Sháh, Bahá'u'lláh never tried to obtain special favours or a political job. Many people were surprised at this, because it would have been so easy for Him to get an important position with the government and live a long and easy life.

When Bahá'u'lláh's father passed away, Bahá'u'lláh was twenty-two years old. The Government invited Him to step into His father's position, as was the custom. This He refused to do. When the Government asked why, the Prime Minister said, 'Leave him to himself. He will not lower himself to such a position. I cannot understand him: he has some greater purpose in life. He has other thoughts, leave him alone.'

Bahá'u'lláh's life was a life of service to mankind. He was very generous, especially to the poor. No one who came to Him for help was ever turned away. The doors of His house were open to all. He always had many guests.

When His friends saw how free He was with His money and His goods, they would tell Him that He must be careful, He would become as poor as the people He was helping. They asked of each other, 'Why is he not thinking of his own affairs?' But, there were a few people who were wise. They said, 'This person is connected with another world. He has something beautiful within him which cannot be seen very clearly now. The day is coming when his beauty will be manifested.'

In truth, Bahá'u'lláh was a protector of every weak one, a shelter for every fearing one, He was kind to every needy one, merciful and loving to every living thing.

As was the custom in those days, Bahá'u'lláh married when He was quite young. His bride was Ásíyih Khánum, the only daughter of an important Persian nobleman. Her father was also a very wealthy man. When the two families were joined in marriage, people said to each other, 'It is adding wealth to wealth.'

Ásíyih Khánúm's wedding treasures were very great. It took forty mules to carry all her possessions to her Husband's home. For six months before the marriage, a jeweller worked at her home preparing jewellery for the wedding. Even the buttons on her dresses were made of gold and set with precious stones. (These buttons were later exchanged for bread while they were making the terrible journey from Tíhrán to Baghdád.)

Ásíyih Khánúm was tall, slender, and graceful. Her eyes were dark blue. She was a pearl, a flower amongst women. Even when very young, her wisdom and her intelligence were remarkable. She was like a queen in her dignity and loveliness. She was always thinking of others, gentle, unselfish, pure-hearted and full of loving-kindness. Just to be with her made a person happy and full of love. She welcomed everyone with gentle courtesy.

As a young married couple, Bahá'u'lláh and His wife did not take much part in the entertainments and dinner parties of the government officials, or of the wealthy people who considered them as their friends. They found such pleasures and luxuries to be empty of very much meaning. They preferred to spend their time looking after the poor, and helping all those who were unhappy or in trouble. No one was ever turned away from their doors; hospitality was open for everyone who came.

The poor women of the neighbourhood always came to Ásíyih Khánúm and told her their stories of trouble and hardships. And they went away comforted and happier through her loving helpfulness.

Bahá'u'lláh became known around His neighbourhood as 'The Father of the Poor', and Ásíyih Khánúm as 'The Mother of Consolation'. Of course, no one ever saw Ásíyih Khánúm's face except the women and the children, because the time had not yet come to throw off the Muslim veil.

Bahá'u'lláh and His wife had two children before the birth of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Both of the first two children died. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was born on 23rd May 1844, Bahá'u'lláh was twenty-seven years old.

After 'Abdu'l-Bahá, another son was born, but he also died, and then came Bahíyyih Khánúm in 1846. Bahíyyih was later to be known as 'The Greatest Holy Leaf'.

In spite of sorrows, there were many joys for the family, and life flowed on in its peaceful way. Bahá'u'lláh had a house in town, and also a house in the country. He managed an entire village called Níyávarán; He took care of the villagers in every way.

'Abdu'l-Bahá and Bahíyyih used to go to the country house very often, especially when the weather was hot in town. In the country, they could play in the beautiful gardens where there were wonderful fruits and flowers and flowering trees. But these days of peace and happiness were not to last very long.

2 *The Bábí Era, 1844–1853*

Bahá'u'lláh became well-known for His great spiritual qualities long before the Báb appeared. When the Báb declared His mission in 1844, Bahá'u'lláh was twenty-seven years old. He immediately accepted the Báb's teachings as true, and started to teach the Báb's Faith. He soon became recognized as one of the Báb's most powerful and fearless disciples. When the Bábís were forced to protect themselves from their enemies, Bahá'u'lláh helped them by carrying food and money to their homes and their forts to keep them alive.

The fact that Bahá'u'lláh, a Man from such an important family in Persia, had accepted the Báb caused many other important people to become interested. As a result, many pure-hearted officials and well-known people became believers, such different kinds of people as members of His own family, clergymen, peasants and merchants. Through His efforts, He was able to guide and increase the Bábí community in a way that the Báb Himself could not, for the Báb spent most of His days as a Prophet in prison. He was also able to protect the Báb's for some time, because of His high position. Two of the Báb's earliest disciples—Quddús, the Báb's favourite, and Táhírih, the first woman believer—were helped in this way.

Naturally, the fact that Bahá'u'lláh had become such an active follower of the Báb reached the ears of the Báb's watchful enemies. Twice Bahá'u'lláh was put into prison for being a Bábí. The first time was when He was helping Táhírih; this lasted only a few days. The second time was when He was on His way to join those who were defending themselves at the Fort of Shaykh Tabarsí. This time He was put in prison, no doubt, by the Will of God, to protect Him from being killed when all the rest of them were killed in the cruel slaughter. On this occasion, He was insulted, stoned, and struck on the bottoms of His feet until His feet bled. In both cases He was released because He was a descendant of a royal family.

When the Báb announced that a greater Manifestation of God would take place after Him, He called that Promised One 'Him Whom God will make manifest'. The Báb promised that nine years after His own mission was announced, the real reason for His own appearance in the world would become clear.

The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh never met each other, but they wrote letters to each other privately. The final communication received by Bahá'u'lláh from the Báb was a packet delivered by the Báb's secretary which contained the Báb's pen, His ring, and some of His Writings. This was a symbol that the Báb had turned His Faith over to Bahá'u'lláh to carry on.

In His Persian Bayán, the Báb also wrote: 'Well is it with him who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord. For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán.'

During these difficult years before and after the Báb's martyrdom, Bahá'u'lláh had openly become a disciple of the Báb, and helped many Bábís to escape and protect themselves when they were being attacked. Through all this, He earned the hatred of the fanatical clergy. From then on, they hired spies to watch every move He made.

The Báb was martyred on 9th July 1850. Two years later in August 1852, an event took place which had a terrible effect upon the Bábís.

One of the followers of the Báb, a young man named Şádiq, had been so affected by seeing the martyrdom of his beloved Master, that he had gone half-crazy. When the Sháh was out riding on his horse, the crazy young man shot at the Sháh and tried to kill him. The fact that the gun was not properly loaded proved that the young man was not in his right mind, but the Sháh was slightly hurt, and ordered that all Bábís be punished. Şádiq was put to death on the spot and eighty others were killed in Ṭihrán. Many others were captured and put into prison.

At the same time when Şádiq tried to kill the Sháh, Bahá'u'lláh was at His country house in the village of Níyávarán. His wife, Ásíyih Khánum was at the town house with the children.

Suddenly and in a great hurry, a servant came rushing in to see Ásíyih Khánum.

'The Master, the Master!' he called. 'He is arrested—I have seen Him! He has walked many miles! Oh, they have beaten Him! They say He has suffered the torture of the bastinado!* His feet are bleeding! He has no shoes on! His turban has gone! His clothes are torn! There are chains upon His neck!'

Ever since Bahá'u'lláh had taken up the Cause of the Báb, Khánum had expected that such a time would come. But, now that it had happened, her face turned whiter and whiter. The children, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahíyyih and the youngest, Mírzá Mihdí, only two years old, were terribly frightened and wept bitterly.

Although Bahá'u'lláh's family had many relatives and friends living with them at the time, they all became frightened and ran away. Even the servants left them, all except one man, Isfandíyár, and a wonderful negro woman. Their big house in town and all their smaller houses were soon stripped of everything. The people broke in and stole all their possessions, their furniture and all their valuable things.

The only relative who helped them at this time was Bahá'u'lláh's brother, Mírzá Músá (also known as Áqáy-i-Kalím). Mírzá Músá also went into hiding to escape being killed but he first helped Khánum and the children find a place to hide themselves, so that they would not be killed. Khánum managed to save only a few of her marriage treasures. These things were gradually sold and the money given to Bahá'u'lláh's gaolers as a bribe, so they would take food to Him while He was in prison.

* Being struck on the soles of the feet.

Mírzá Yahyá, Bahá'u'lláh's half-brother, ran away into the mountains of Mázindarán, where he remained in hiding.

The prison into which Bahá'u'lláh was thrown was a terrible place. The prison was called the Síyáh-Chál. It was located in Tíhrán, the capital city. It was once used as a sewer for the dirty water from people's baths. To get to it, Bahá'u'lláh had to go down three flights of stairs with chains around His neck and on His hands and feet.

The prison was dark, and it held about one hundred and fifty murderers, robbers and thieves. There was no way out except the way He came in, and there were no windows. The smell of the place was too terrible to describe. Most of the men had neither clothes to wear nor a mat to lie on.

No reason was given for throwing Bahá'u'lláh into this black hole, loaded with heavy chains. Five other Bábís were chained to Him night and day. When one of the Bábís moved, the chains cut deeper into the flesh of not only the one next to him, but into Bahá'u'lláh and the others chained together, as well.

Sleep or rest of any kind were impossible. No food was provided by the prison officials, and it was very difficult for Khánum to get either food or drink into the prison to help them. Even when Khánum succeeded in getting food to her beloved Husband, the guards put poison into it hoping to get special favours from those in authority.

Although the poison did not kill Bahá'u'lláh, it left Him with poor health for many years of His life.

The house in which Khánum and the children were hiding was very near to the prison, but she was not able to visit even the guards of the prison except late at night or very early in the morning while no one was out in the streets.

If Khánum had been caught by any of the people on these trips to the prison, she would immediately have been put to death. Little 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then seven years old, used to go out of the house with His mother when she visited the prison. Bahíyyih would stay home shivering in a corner of their dark house holding onto two-year-old Mírzá Mihdí. Once in a while, Mírzá Músá, Bahá'u'lláh's faithful brother, would come to them and tell them the latest news.

For four months, this kind of life went on.

Meanwhile, the spirit of the Bábís in the prison remained high, and became higher. To be tortured to death became their dearest wish, the goal of their heart's desire.

They chanted prayers night and day. Every morning one or more of these brave friends would be taken out and tortured and killed. Before being turned over to the executioner, they would be given to different classes of people in the city. The butchers would use their knives on them, the bakers would put their feet or their heads in their ovens, the shoemakers and the blacksmiths would make them suffer with their tools. Finally, they would be put out of their misery by the executioner, if they had not already died on the way.

Those who were torturing the Bábís could not understand their courage and their strength. When they saw the Bábís chanting prayers, praising God, and

asking Him to forgive and bless their murderers, they became even more bloodthirsty. Mobs of people would gather around, yell curses and insults at them, and beat their drums to give themselves the courage to commit these awful deeds.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahíyyih, Mírzá Mihdí and their suffering mother heard all these sounds every day. Their hearts were crying out, and their fears became greater day by day—for they never knew but perhaps it was their own blessed Father who was being killed at that very moment. They would not know until late at night when Khánum went again to the prison guards to deliver the food and water, and hear the news.

While in the prison of Síyáh-Chál, Bahá’u’lláh thought about the condition of the Bábí community, how spiritually low it had sunk since the martyrdom of their beloved leader, the Báb.

During those days in the prison, He had very little sleep because of the terrible weight of the chains and the awful smell of the air, but when He did drop off into a light sleep, He began to have a strange experience. This is the way He, Himself; describes it: ‘I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast.’ He said it was like a rushing stream of water which falls down the side of a high mountain. Every part of His body would feel as if it were on fire.

On one of those nights, Bahá’u’lláh had a dream. He seemed to hear voices coming from every side. And these were the words He heard: ‘Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Ere long will God raise up the treasures of the earth—men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name ...’

At another time, He heard a wonderful, sweet voice calling above His head. He turned His face and saw a young woman floating in the air before Him. So happy was this young woman that her very soul appeared to Bahá’u’lláh as the face of God. Between heaven and earth she was calling to the hearts and the minds of all men. She was giving a Message which made everyone happy—both outwardly and in the deepest parts of their souls.

The young woman pointed a finger at Bahá’u’lláh’s head, and announced to all who are in heaven and all who are on earth: ‘By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend it not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His Glory ..., if ye be of them that perceive.’

That is the way in which Bahá’u’lláh came to know that He was the One chosen by God to carry on the work already started by the Báb. It was in this manner that Bahá’u’lláh was appointed the Manifestation of God for this day. The exact date is not known, but it happened sometime during the final months of 1852.

Although Bahá’u’lláh did not rest or sleep in the prison of Síyáh-Chál, this

did not mean that He was unhappy. On the contrary, He and His companions were in the greatest happiness. When the order came for one of them to die, he would dance for joy and kiss the hands of Bahá'u'lláh, throw his arms around the rest of his fellow-believers, and rush up the stairs to his martyrdom.

Bahá'u'lláh even gave His shirt to one of His companions, so that he would not have to go to his death without clothes. To another He gave His shoes.

One day, an uncle of Bahá'u'lláh who was a friend of the Russian Consul in Tíhrán, learned that Bahá'u'lláh was about to be put to death by the State executioner. Bahá'u'lláh's uncle went to the Russian Consul and told him what was about to happen. The Consul was already convinced of Bahá'u'lláh's innocence, so he went to the Court where the sentences of death were being passed. Completely without fear, the Russian Consul rose up in that Court and spoke these wonderful words:

'Listen to me,' he said, 'I have words of importance to say to you.'

The president and the officials were so surprised to hear this voice that they could not make a reply.

'Haven't you been cruel enough?' he asked. 'Have you not already murdered enough of these harmless people? You know very well that these people are innocent of any crime. Hasn't there been enough blood shed to satisfy you? How is it possible for you to pretend that this great prisoner planned that silly attempt to shoot the Sháh? You know that the stupid gun used by the poor youth could not have killed a bird. There must be an end to all this. I have decided to offer the protection of Russia to this innocent nobleman; therefore beware! If one hair of his head is hurt from this moment on, rivers of blood shall flow in your town as a punishment. You will do well to listen to my warning. my country is behind me in this matter.'

That night, Bahá'u'lláh's uncle came to see Khánum and the children, and told them what the Russian Consul had done. How they all wept for joy! Soon their beloved Father and Husband would be out of the terrible prison and with them once more!

Very soon after that, in December, the Governor of Tíhrán changed the expected order of death and ordered Him to leave the country for the rest of His life. The Governor was afraid to go against the warning of the Russian Consul. Bahá'u'lláh and His family must go to 'Iráq. They must start a new life in the land of Mesopotamia, in the city of Baghdád.

Bahá'u'lláh was very sick when He came out of the prison. In fact, no one thought that He could possibly live. He came to that small house which had only two rooms early in January, 1853. Only ten days were given to them to prepare for the journey. But, oh! how happy the family was to have Him with them!

Bahá'u'lláh (then known as Jamál-i-Mubárah, The Blessed Beauty') spoke very little about the terrible sufferings in prison. The family saw what had happened to Him and did not need to be told—the wounds where the chains had cut into His delicate skin, especially around His neck. Also the sores on

His poor feet, wounds which had not been cared for, which made it painful for Him to walk.

Instead of talking about His sufferings, Bahá'u'lláh told of the faith of the friends who had gone out to meet a martyr's death with such courage and joy. The glory which had been theirs was such a victory that the shame, and pain and sorrow were of no importance whatever.

The family saw that something else had happened to Bahá'u'lláh while He was in prison. They saw a new spirit which seemed to surround Him like a shining garment. They did not know what it meant at the time, although it is said that 'Abdu'l-Bahá understood its meaning at once. Bahá'u'lláh never told them of His dream, or about anything else which had happened.

Ásíyih Khánum did her best to nurse her beloved Husband, so that He might set out on His journey in ten days' time. It was a time of great difficulty. How could she prepare?

The poor, dear lady sold almost all that was left from her marriage treasures, jewels, clothes, and other belongings. From these she received about £125 (R250). With this money she tried to make preparations for the uncertain journey. She had no experience in such things. There was no one to help her. The children were small, her Husband was sick, none of the friends were brave enough to come and help, or even say goodbye. The two servants did everything they could.

Only one old lady came to see them. It was Ásíyih Khánum's grandmother. And since Mírzá Mihdí (later known as 'The Purest Branch') was only two years old and too young to take along on the trip, Khánum gave the boy to the grandmother to keep for her. The parting was very sad.

Finally, they were ready to go—Bahá'u'lláh, Khánum, Bahíyyih and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The weather had turned bitterly cold, for it was the middle of winter. There was snow on the ground.

3 Baghdád

It was on 12th January 1853 that Bahá'u'lláh, part of His family, and several friends started the three-month journey to Baghdád.

They travelled on foot across the snow-covered mountains with guards watching them every hour, day and night. They suffered terribly—especially the ladies, who were not used to such painful conditions.

On the way to Baghdád, they sometimes camped in wild places, sometimes in a caravanserai, rather like a rough hotel. Poor Khánum! How she suffered on that journey, riding a jerky mule. And she was only a short time away from having her next child.

But, did she complain? Not a word! She was always thinking of some kindness for somebody else, and giving her sympathy to all who were in difficulty on the trip. When they came to a city, she would take the clothes and wash them in the public bath. She would then carry the cold, wet clothes in her arms

—drying them as best she could. Her lovely hands, not being used to this kind of work, became painful and red.

When they stayed at a caravanserai, there was only one room for each family and then for only one night. No light was permitted at night, and there were no beds. When they could get food it was sometimes a little tea, or perhaps a few eggs, a little cheese, and some hard bread.

Bahá'u'lláh was so ill on the journey that He could not eat the rough food. This made Khánum very unhappy and she tried to think of ways to get some other food—but mostly He ate nothing and became weaker and weaker.

One day, Khánum was able to get hold of a little flour, and that night she made a sweet cake for Bahá'u'lláh. But, she had made a mistake! In the dark, she had used salt instead of sugar, and the cake was impossible to eat.

If a person thinks about the way in which Bahá'u'lláh was forced to leave His native land and move to another country, he is reminded of what happened to some other Prophets of God—how Muḥammad was forced to leave Mecca and move to Medina, how Mary and Joseph had to flee from Bethlehem into Egypt with Jesus, how Moses led His brother and His followers out of the land of Egypt, and above all, how Abraham was forced out of Ur to the Promised Land.

In some ways, the story of Abraham and the story of Bahá'u'lláh are very much alike. But, just as Abraham's life brought great benefit to many different peoples, faiths and nations after Him, so the sufferings of Bahá'u'lláh will bring great blessings to the entire human race in time to come.

On 8th April 1853, Bahá'u'lláh and His party of followers finally reached Baghdád. When they first arrived, they were put into a very small house with only two rooms—one for Bahá'u'lláh and one for Khánum and the children. Bahá'u'lláh was ill for a long time, but gradually He became better. Khánum's health was also very poor. Her strength had become less because of the hardships on the journey, but she continued to work beyond her strength so that the work would get done. Sometimes, Bahá'u'lláh would help her with the cooking, because it saddened His heart to see her doing the work that was too much for a delicate, refined, gentle lady.

Mírzá Músá, Bahá'u'lláh's faithful brother, came with the family on this journey to Baghdád. He was a very kind helper in everything. At time he did almost all the cooking, for which he had a talent; and he would also help with the washing. While in Baghdád, Mírzá Músá met and married a woman who had been taught the Faith by Ṭáhirih. They were always devoted to Bahá'u'lláh. (Their daughter, however, eventually married Muḥammad-'Alí, the faithless half-brother of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.)

As soon as Bahá'u'lláh's health became better, He began to teach and encourage the believers to improve their character and follow the laws of the Báb. Soon, there was peace and happiness amongst the Bábís of Baghdád. This peace and happiness did not last very long, however, because soon Bahá'u'lláh's half-brother, Mírzá Yaḥyá, arrived in the city to cause trouble.

Mírzá Yaḥyá had at one time been appointed by the Báb to carry on the leadership of the Faith until the next Manifestation of God should appear. The Báb had done this to protect Bahá'u'lláh from becoming known to the people too early. If it had been known that Bahá'u'lláh was the Promised One, He would have been killed immediately.

Before the Báb's passing, He gave His last Writings to His secretary to give to Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí. In these papers, the Báb referred again and again to Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí as 'Him Whom God will make Manifest', and gave Him the name 'Bahá'u'lláh'. The Báb also gave His papers, His pen case and His seal to His secretary, and told him to deliver all of these things to Bahá'u'lláh after His martyrdom.

The secretary obeyed all of the Báb's instructions, and these important papers were kept with Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád.

After the passing of the Báb, Mírzá Yaḥyá claimed to be the leader of the Bábís, which was true. But, when the Sháh ordered all the Bábís to either be shot or put into prison, the cowardly Mírzá Yaḥyá ran away into the mountains. Instead of helping the Bábís to remain in unity and protecting them, he found a safe hiding place, put on the clothes of an Arab, and wandered from town to town.

The Bábís, in general, did not concern themselves very much with the claims of this weak character, Mírzá Yaḥyá. The true disciples looked upon him as an ignorant, ambitious youth. But, his claims did have the desired effect on the rest of the people. They protected Bahá'u'lláh from being recognized as the Promised One until the proper time had arrived.

When Mírzá Yaḥyá arrived in Baghdád, he met a jealous, ambitious, black-hearted fellow by the name of Siyyid Muḥammad. Both Mírzá Yaḥyá and Siyyid Muḥammad saw what Bahá'u'lláh had done to make the Bábí community such an outstanding one, and they noticed how much love and affection was being showered upon Him, not only by the Bábís but also by the officials of the city. As a result, their jealousy grew, and between the two of them, they started a secret campaign of whisperings and lies directed against Bahá'u'lláh.

Soon, arguments arose amongst the members of the Bábí community, and it began to split into many parts in the same way that arguments had arisen amongst the disciples of Jesus and the descendants of Muḥammad. These differences were very painful to Bahá'u'lláh, Whose whole purpose in life was to bring unity to the people of the world.

During this time, Bahá'u'lláh was in such sadness that it made the hearts of the faithful tremble. When Bahá'u'lláh looked at the terrible things which Mírzá Yaḥyá and his partner were doing to the Bábís, He became so angry He could not hold His tongue.

One night, He suddenly left His house with His night cap still on His head, and as He walked through the streets, He cried out His anger.

'These creatures,' He was heard to say, 'are the same creatures who for three thousand years have worshipped idols, and bowed down before the Golden

Calf. Now, too, they are fit for nothing better. What relation can there be between this people and Him Who is the Countenance of Glory? What ties can bind them to the One Who is the supreme embodiment of all that is lovable?’

Finally, He cried out into the night this prayer of the Báb: ‘Bid them recite: “Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!” Tell them to repeat it five hundred times, nay, a thousand times, by day and by night, sleeping or waking.’

Several times during these days, Bahá’u’lláh was heard to remark: ‘We have, for a while, stayed amongst these people, but We fail to see the slightest response on their part.’

Suddenly, without warning, Bahá’u’lláh announced to His family that He was leaving Baghdád. He commanded the friends to treat Mírzá Yaḥyá with kindness, and invited Mírzá Yaḥyá to live with His family in His own home while He was gone. Mírzá Yaḥyá accepted the invitation and Bahá’u’lláh told Khánúm, Mírzá Músá and the children that they must take care of Mírzá Yaḥyá’s family and do everything they could to make him comfortable. Then. He was gone.

4 *Two Years in the Wilderness*

Bahá’u’lláh left Baghdád with only one companion and a change of clothing. He changed His name to Darvish Muḥammad and went to live in the mountains of Kurdistán. His plan was never to return. Bahá’u’lláh, the man, was not able to cope with the enemies of the Cause. He wanted nothing more than to maintain peace within the Bábí community. As He said in the *Book of Íqán*, His only thought was to remove Himself so that He would not be a cause of fighting amongst the faithful, or the cause of sorrow to any soul.

When Bahá’u’lláh left Baghdád, Mírzá Yaḥyá was overjoyed. Now, he felt, he had his chance to prove that he was the true leader of the Bábís. As time went on, however, the spiritual condition of the Bábís became worse instead of better. So low did it sink that no less than twenty-five Bábís declared themselves to be the Holy One promised by the Báb. Mírzá Yaḥyá was powerless to do anything about it. The Bábís only laughed at him and went their ways.

Seeing that he could not improve the spiritual life of the community, he and Siyyid Muḥammad set about trying to poison the minds of everyone against the person of Bahá’u’lláh. Since they were unable to lead the Bábís, they were going to make sure that no one else would, either. The community became more and more divided until, at last, it reached a hopeless condition. The light of faith had almost completely disappeared.

Meanwhile, Mírzá Yaḥyá was a guest in Bahá’u’lláh’s house. He gave the family much trouble, even complaining of the food. He did not appreciate the fact that all the best and most tasty dishes were always given to him.

At this time, he became very afraid that he would one day be arrested. He

hid himself in the house all the time, keeping the door of the house locked and storming at anyone who unlocked it.

As for the children, they led a very lonely life. They would have loved to make friends with other children—especially little Bahíyyih. But, Mírzá Yahyá would not permit any little friends to come to the house, nor would he let Bahíyyih go out.

Two little girls about Bahíyyih's own age lived in the next house. She used to peep at them through the door, but Mírzá Yahyá always shouted at her for opening the door, and hurried forward to lock it.

Always, he was afraid of being arrested, and he cared for nothing but his own safety. He would not even permit them to go to the public baths, and no one could come to the house to help with the work. For hours every day Bahíyyih had to stand by the well in the house and draw up the water. The ropes were hard and rough, and the bucket very heavy for a little girl. Mírzá Yahyá never helped.

During this time, Bahá'u'lláh's darling baby son, born after they arrived in Baghdád, became seriously ill. Mírzá Yahyá would not allow a doctor to be called, nor would he permit a neighbour to come and help. Bahá'u'lláh's wife was broken-hearted when the little one died. Mírzá Yahyá wouldn't even let anyone prepare the baby for burial. The sweet body of her beautiful baby was given to a man who took it away, and no one ever knew where it was buried. For many years they remembered the sorrow of those days so clearly.

A little while after this, Khánum and the family moved into a larger house. Fortunately, Mírzá Yahyá was too afraid to be seen if he came with them, so he stayed in a little house behind theirs. They still continued to send his food to him, and also provided for his family which had now increased. Mírzá Yahyá had married another wife, a girl from a neighbouring village. From then on, Khánum and the family were greatly relieved and lived a happier life.

All this time their greatest worry was, 'Where was Bahá'u'lláh?' Mírzá Músá and Khánum made every effort to find out anything they could. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was terribly upset by His Father's long absence. On several occasions, He prayed the whole night asking that their Father be returned to them.

While Bahá'u'lláh was in the mountains, He lived mostly in caves. At one time, He lived in a hut made of stone which was used by peasants to protect them from the weather during the harvest time. The birds of the air were His companions, and the animals His only friends. Many a night He had no food, and on many a day He had no rest.

But, in spite of all these trials and difficulties, Bahá'u'lláh was the happiest He had been in His life. In the quietness of the mountains, He was not aware of any other living thing. He knew nothing of human joys or sorrows, health or sickness. He gave no thought to the rest of the world. He was alone for the first time in His life, and He lived entirely with His own spirit.

Almost two years went by in this way. And, Bahá'u'lláh would have been contented to live this kind of simple life forever. But, God had decided otherwise,

and in the end Bahá'u'lláh surrendered His will to God's and returned to Baghdád.

This is how it happened: A certain Shaykh who owned property near where Bahá'u'lláh was living had an unusual dream. In his dream, the Prophet Muḥammad appeared, and told him to go to the mountain and find a man who was living there. The Shaykh obeyed Muḥammad's command, and found Bahá'u'lláh as Muḥammad had said.

After meeting Bahá'u'lláh, the Shaykh told the head of a mission about Him, and soon Bahá'u'lláh was invited to come to the mission to live. Bahá'u'lláh refused, but after many invitations, He finally agreed to live there. No one at the mission had any idea that Bahá'u'lláh had special learning or wisdom. However, one day one of the students happened to see some of Bahá'u'lláh's writing. From the shape and style of the letters, he could tell that Bahá'u'lláh must be a person of great spiritual power. From then on, Bahá'u'lláh was called upon by the priests and students to speak to them every day and to explain the most difficult passages of the Muslim sacred Writings.

In a short time, Kurdistán was flooded with His love, and everywhere He was loved in return. Soon, He became so famous that the news of this wonderful Teacher reached the ears of the people of Baghdád.

One night, after 'Abdu'l-Bahá had prayed the whole night, He and His uncle Mírzá Músá, overheard two people speaking about a marvellous Person living in the wild mountains of Sulaymáníyyih. They described Him as the 'Nameless One' who had filled the whole countryside with His love. 'Abdu'l-Bahá knew at once that this must be their Beloved.

Mírzá Músá and 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to see a faithful friend, Shaykh Sultán, and asked him to search for Bahá'u'lláh and urge Him to return. 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote a letter. The family wrote letters. Even Mírzá Yahyá wrote a letter begging Bahá'u'lláh to return.

Before Bahá'u'lláh received the letters, He realized that He must return to Baghdád to save the Faith from being destroyed. He said to His companion while making His way back that if it were not for the Báb, and the fact that 'all the sacred blood poured out in the path of God would have been shed in vain, I would in no wise have consented to return ...' But, He turned His feet towards Baghdád.

Bahá'u'lláh took several weeks to make the trip back to Baghdád. He knew that these days would be the last hours of peace He would ever know. Never again would He be alone to commune with His spirit. The rest of His life was destined to be one crisis after another, until He finally was to give up His life for the sake of a people who were not yet ready to receive Him.

5 *Return to Baghdád*

Bahá'u'lláh arrived in Baghdád on 19th March 1856, exactly two years from the day of His departure for Kurdistán.

As soon as Khánum knew that Bahá'u'lláh was returning, she made a coat for Him out of some pieces of red cloth which she had carefully saved. It was now ready for Him to put on. And it was well that she had prepared it, for when He arrived He appeared in the clothes of a beggar.

Here are the words of the Greatest Holy Leaf, Bahíyyih, as she describes the return of her Father:

‘Our joy cannot be described as we clung to him. I can see now my beloved mother, calm and gentle, and my brother holding his father’s hand fast, as though never again could he let him go out of his sight ... I could never forget this scene, so touching and so happy.

‘Many were the stories of those two years which he told us. We were never tired of listening. The food was easy to describe—coarse bread, a little cheese, was the usual diet; sometimes but very rarely a cup of milk; into this would be put some rice, and a tiny bit of sugar. When boiled together, this provided the great treat of a sort of rice pudding.’

Bahá'u'lláh's first duty was to bring the Bábís back into one community, so that they would be able to work together in peace once again. This He did in a short time through His love and divine power of attraction. All the Bábís had come to realize that Mírzá Yaḥyá and Siyyid Muḥammad were not able to help them or improve their spiritual lives, so they turned to Bahá'u'lláh as their guide. His next goal was to improve the characters of the Bábís who had sunk so low that some of them had even become robbers and murderers.

The basic teachings of the Báb had been forgotten while Bahá'u'lláh was away. So, Bahá'u'lláh restated them and gave them a fresh interest. He first forbade the Bábís to take part in any political activity or secret organizations. He then told them that they must not fight, they must strictly obey their government, and they must be kind, honest, truthful. They must not argue or backbite. They must return good for evil. They must learn the arts and sciences. They must sacrifice themselves, they must be patient and strong, and accept the Will of God.

It was at this time that Bahá'u'lláh revealed His little book *The Hidden Words*. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá tells that Bahá'u'lláh would often go for a walk along the banks of the Tigris River and He would come back looking very happy. He would then go into His room and write down the poetic words of wisdom which have since brought help and healing to millions of aching and troubled hearts.

Soon, Bahá'u'lláh's fame became very great in Baghdád. Visitors came from far and near to see Him and hear Him. The friends whom He had made in

Kurdistán came to Baghdád looking for ‘Darvish Muḥammad’, and were surprised to find Him living in a house with so many followers gathered around Him.

During the next seven years in Baghdád, Bahá’u’lláh was the centre of great attention. To visit Him came priests and religious leaders, poets, mystics, and notables, government officials, famous Persians living in ‘Iráq and Persia, princes of royal blood, Bábís who came all the way from Persia to see Him, the British Consul who offered Bahá’u’lláh British citizenship and a home in India, and finally the Governor of Baghdád himself. All were attracted by His fame, His Writings, and His wisdom.

Amongst those Bábís who were privileged to visit Him were four of the Báb’s cousins and His maternal uncle; a grand-daughter of the Sháh who was an admirer of Táhirih; Mullá Şádiq, who had been with Quddús in Shíráz; Mullá Báqir, one of the Letters of the Living; Mírzá Muḥammad, the father of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wife; and Nabil-i-A‘zam, the author of *The Dawn-Breakers*.

When Nabil visited the newly-awakened Bábí community, he wrote that the Bábís had become so affected by Bahá’u’lláh’s presence that in their eyes the palaces of kings had become less important than a spider’s web. He (Nabil), with two others, lived in a room which had no furniture. Many a night no less than ten persons had no other food than a pennyworth of dates. No one knew to whom actually belonged the shoes, the clothes, or the blankets that were to be found in their houses. Their own names they had forgotten, their hearts were empty of everything except love of their Beloved. Each Bábí had entered into an agreement with one of his fellow-disciples that if he were noticed doing anything against the high standards of character upheld by Bahá’u’lláh, that person would strike him on the soles of the feet. The worse the offence the more blows on the feet would he receive.

It was not only the Bábís who felt Bahá’u’lláh’s power. One royal prince came to see Bahá’u’lláh and said, ‘I know not how to explain it. Were all the sorrows of the world to be crowded into my heart, they would, I feel, all vanish when in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh. It is as if I had entered Paradise itself.’

Another prince who visited Bahá’u’lláh thought that the feeling he received in Bahá’u’lláh’s room came from the simple room itself. So, when he returned to his own home, he ordered that another room be added to his house exactly the same size and shape as Bahá’u’lláh’s.

When Bahá’u’lláh heard of the prince’s plan, He said that he may be able to build a low-ceilinged room like this one made of mud and straw, but what about his ability to open onto it the spiritual doors leading to the hidden worlds of God?

Such was the attraction of Bahá’u’lláh. And as a bounty to all Bahá’ís in future, Bahá’u’lláh has ordained this house in Baghdád to be a place of pilgrimage, the most important place outside the Holy Land itself.

Soon, most of the twenty-five Bábís who had declared themselves to be the Promised One came to Bahá’u’lláh and asked His forgiveness. Others who came

to live in His shadow were several Persians who were being badly treated for being Bábís. They came to Baghdád to be protected by Him.

A few government officials were so impressed by His power and influence that they asked Him to recommend their plans or ideas to the people, thinking that in this way they would gain favour with the public. This He always refused to do and condemned for its motive.

All during this time, it must be remembered, Bahá'u'lláh was only a disciple of the Báb. The people who were attracted to Him were attracted by His personality, His knowledge, wisdom, love, kindness, helpfulness and His power to give them new life and understanding. Thousands of people could be considered His friends and admirers; they could not praise Him enough nor could they find anyone else who was nearly as powerful as He.

And yet, when Bahá'u'lláh later declared Himself to the world as a Prophet of God, many of these same people turned against Him and refused to accept His greatest Message of all.

Bahá'u'lláh kept His secret of Prophethood until 1863. How sad it must have made Him to remain quiet for such a long time! How full of sorrow He was to see that the people were not yet ready to receive Him in His full glory! How patient He was in gradually opening their eyes and preparing their hearts!

It was at this time that Bahá'u'lláh revealed His first full-length book—*The Book of Íqán*. In it He explained what a Manifestation of God is, how the Manifestations have come to earth one after another, how all their Messages have been spiritually the same but restated to suit the age in which they were given, and how the next Manifestation would fulfil the prophecies and promises of all the Prophets gone before Him.

Bahá'u'lláh spent the nineteen years between the Báb's martyrdom and His own Announcement teaching and preparing the world to accept a much greater Message than any which had yet been given to men by a Prophet of God.

As Bahá'u'lláh's power over the hearts and minds of His followers became greater and greater, there were a few people who became jealous and afraid of His popularity. One of these was a Muslim priest who hated Bahá'u'lláh. This jealous priest tried to stir up the uneducated people and cause them to harm Bahá'u'lláh as He walked alone in the streets.

When Bahá'u'lláh met these people, He would fearlessly walk up to them, ask them what they wanted, and then joke with them until they forgot what they had planned to do to harm Him.

When the priest discovered that he was not able to get rid of Bahá'u'lláh in this way, he hired a man named Riḍá to shoot Him. Twice Riḍá tried to kill Bahá'u'lláh. The first time he followed Bahá'u'lláh into a public bath carrying a gun under his coat. But, when he tried to shoot, he found that he did not have the courage. Another time, he lay alongside the road where Bahá'u'lláh walked, and when he lifted his gun to shoot, he was so overcome with fear that the pistol dropped from his hand. On that occasion, Bahá'u'lláh's brother was

with Him, and when Bahá'u'lláh saw the gun drop, He told His brother to give Ridá back his gun and help him to find his way back home.

Another thing which the jealous priest did to cause trouble for Bahá'u'lláh was to call a meeting of all the high clergy of Baghdád and insist that Bahá'u'lláh prove His greatness by performing a miracle.

When Bahá'u'lláh received the request, He said, 'Although you have no right to ask this, for God should test His creatures and they should not test God, still I allow and accept this request.'

He then went on to tell them that He would perform any miracle they asked, if they would agree on one miracle only, and submit their request to Him in writing. Also, they must agree that if He performed that miracle, they would then accept the truth of His Cause and not obstruct His way in future.

Naturally, the priests were not able to agree on which miracle they wanted Bahá'u'lláh to perform, and so they chose to drop the matter entirely.

By this time, almost the entire Bábí community in both Persia and 'Iráq had recognized Bahá'u'lláh as their spiritual leader. He had proved Himself through His abilities.

But, His enemies increased their activities and tried to get Him moved out of Baghdád. They wrote letters to the Sháh in Persia telling lies and claiming that Bahá'u'lláh was getting ready to call upon thousands of fighters to attack the city and destroy the Holy Shrines of Islám.

After nine months of this kind of activity, the Sháh finally sent an order to have Bahá'u'lláh moved from Baghdád, and he requested the Sultán of Turkey to accept Him into Constantinople (today called Istanbul). This the Sultán agreed to do, and Bahá'u'lláh was given a large sum of money to take care of the expense of moving Himself and family so great a distance. At first He refused to accept the money, but when He was told that the government would be insulted if He refused, He did accept it, and on that same day gave it away to the poor.

That day, the day when His followers learned that He was being forced to leave Baghdád, was the most terrible which the Bábís had ever experienced. They were going to be separated from their Beloved, their Inspiration, their very Life. When the news reached them, they refused to accept either food or sleep the whole night. Not one person was calm or able to control himself. Many had already decided that if they were separated from Bahá'u'lláh, they would immediately kill themselves.

Little by little, however, Bahá'u'lláh calmed their hearts with His loving-kindness, His words, and with a different Tablet (Message) which He revealed for each person—each adult and each child in His company.

For those who were going to leave Baghdád with Bahá'u'lláh, there was the problem of what to take with them. They had not been told where they would be going, nor how long they would be travelling. Even Bahá'u'lláh's family did not know these things themselves. So many of the friends came to weep and

ask what they should do that the family found it impossible to make any preparations.

At this time, a certain Najib Páshá, who had become a friend of Bahá'u'lláh, invited Him to bring some of the Bábís to stay in his garden a short distance outside Baghdád. While Bahá'u'lláh and the friends went on to stay in the garden, the ladies stayed behind to pack their belongings. In this way more was accomplished, and everyone worked hard getting ready for their next journey.

It was on 21st April 1863 that Bahá'u'lláh and His companions left Baghdád. All the city came to see Him before He left—the friends, as well as others. There was a great crowd.

Weeping women came forward and laid their babes and young children at His feet. He carefully lifted each of these children one by one, blessed them, and gently and lovingly replaced them in their mothers' arms. To each mother He said she must bring up these dear flowers of humanity to serve God with a strong faith and truth.

What a soul-stirring day! Men threw themselves in His path; if only His blessed feet might touch them as He passed!

Bahá'u'lláh got into the boat to cross the Tigris River, the people pressing around Him, not wanting to lose one moment of their last chance to be in His Presence. Finally, the boat put off, and those behind watched it with bleeding hearts.

Those who were to be with Bahá'u'lláh went off to set up His tent, and five or six other tents for the friends. Some became cooks, others served in other ways. While Bahá'u'lláh was in the garden (later called the Garden of Ridván*), it was very windy for several days. His tent swayed in the wind. Because the friends thought His tent might be blown down, they took turns sitting on the ropes so that it might be held steady. Night and day they held the ropes, so glad in this way to be near their Glorious Lord.

They stayed in the Garden of Ridván for twelve days. Those twelve days are now called the Feast of Ridván, or the 'Feast of Paradise'. They are the most holy days in the Bahá'í year. It was during those twelve days that Bahá'u'lláh announced to His companions that He was the long-awaited Promised One, the Messiah promised by Moses, the Spirit of Truth promised by Jesus, the Great Announcement promised by Muḥammad, the One whom God would make manifest promised by all the Prophets and Holy Books of the past.

At last, God had fulfilled His promises to mankind and given the world its Greatest Teacher. The ages of prophecy had come to an end, and the Age of Fulfilment had begun. At last, the great World Brotherhood, the Kingdom of God on Earth, the Golden Age of Peace and Understanding was about to begin.

From that time on, the Bábís became known as Bahá'ís.

By the ninth day of Ridván, His family had completed their preparations for

* Pronounced *Rezvan*, the *a* as in father,

the journey and they joined Him in the Garden. On the twelfth day, in the afternoon, an escort of Turkish soldiers came to get them, and they set off on their journey. But, where they were going they did not know.

6 *Constantinople and Adrianople*

At noon, on 3rd May 1863, Bahá'u'lláh and His companions left the Garden of Riḍván.* His followers had purchased for Him the finest horse they could find—a red, roan stallion.

As Bahá'u'lláh rode away from Baghdád, thousands of people watched Him go. People on every side bowed to the dust at the feet of His horse and kissed its hooves. Others pressed around Him to give Him one last embrace. Others threw themselves in front of His horse to be killed rather than be separated from their Beloved.

The whole journey from Baghdád to Constantinople continued in this way. Besides Bahá'u'lláh, there were twelve members of His family, seventy-two disciples, and the Turkish soldiers who led the way.

Bahá'u'lláh's half-brother Mírzá Yaḥyá was not with them when they left Baghdád. He had run away from Baghdád about two weeks before, because he was afraid he was about to be arrested. He later heard about Bahá'u'lláh's departure and hurried to catch up with Him. He knew nothing about Bahá'u'lláh's declaration.

Through whatever city or village Bahá'u'lláh passed, the people greeted Him with the same love and reverent devotion. This was greatly helped by an announcement sent out by the friendly Governor of Baghdád.

Miles outside of every city, Bahá'u'lláh would be met and escorted all the way into and through the city. Men, women and children would crowd onto the -roofs of the houses and line the streets waiting for Him to arrive. Drums would go in front of Him through the entire city while the people showed their love and respect—and they would go with Him for miles on the other side of the city.

So great was the honour shown to Him on this journey that no king or government official had ever received anything like it. Bahá'u'lláh arrived in Constantinople on 16th August 1863. The journey had taken three and a half months.

Throughout this entire journey, Mírzá Yaḥyá followed behind Bahá'u'lláh's carriage on foot, at his own request. With Mírzá Yaḥyá was also Siyyid Muḥammad. When they arrived in Constantinople, Mírzá Yaḥyá said to Siyyid Muḥammad: 'If I had not chosen to hide myself, if I had announced who I really am, all these honours which were given to Bahá'u'lláh would also have been given to me.' It was clear that Mírzá Yaḥyá's jealousy was beginning to rise once again.

The arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in Constantinople may be said to be the beginning

* Pronounced *Rezvan*, the *a* as in father.

of the most important part of Bahá'u'lláh's mission. Exactly twenty years earlier, the Báb had announced Himself in darkest Persia, in the city of Shíráz. In spite of His many years in prison, His Teachings had been spread throughout the countries of Persia and 'Iráq. His followers had left the laws of Muḥammad behind and had begun to fashion their lives after the laws of the new age. The Báb had left this world and had placed the leadership of His Faith in the hands of Mírzá Yahyá until the new Manifestation revealed Himself.

The condition of the Bábí community had steadily become less and less pure until it was in a very low condition. Bahá'u'lláh had been put in prison and suffered greatly. The Maid of Heaven had appeared and appointed Bahá'u'lláh as the Great One promised by the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh had been forced to leave His home in Persia and settle in Baghdád. Mírzá Yahyá and Siyyid Muḥammad had succeeded in causing so much trouble that the Bábí community was split in two. Bahá'u'lláh had left Baghdád and spent two years in the wilderness and had returned only because God called Him to return. The Bábí community was again made spiritual and brought into unity through Bahá'u'lláh's loving wisdom and patient guidance. The enemies of the Faith had succeeded in forcing Bahá'u'lláh to leave the city of Baghdád. Bahá'u'lláh had finally announced to His companions that He was the One promised by the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh had travelled from Baghdád to Constantinople in such glory that no king before had been able to equal.

The main thing which still remained to be done by Bahá'u'lláh was to announce His Mission to the rest of the world. However, He was not able to do this in Constantinople.

When they arrived in Constantinople, they were crowded into a small hotel. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then known as 'the Master', asked the governor of the city to let Bahá'u'lláh and His family have a separate house. This house was given to them, but Bahá'u'lláh invited Mírzá Yahyá and his family to share the house with Him.

Amongst the Bábís were members of all classes—simple tradesmen, merchants, teachers and noblemen. The noblemen had given up everything, every position of wealth and honour, to come with Him. They pretended to be tailors, cooks, sweets makers, bakers or anything so that they might be permitted to be near Him and remain unknown.

The Persian Consul-General became a friend of Bahá'u'lláh in Constantinople. He suggested that Bahá'u'lláh should pay a few visits to the court officials. It might make His conditions of living easier.

Bahá'u'lláh answered: 'I have no wish to ask favour from them. I have come here at the Sultan's command. Whatsoever additional commands he may issue, I am ready to obey. My work is not of their world; it is of another realm, far removed from their province. Why, therefore, should I seek [favours from] these people?'

The Consul was so well-pleased with Bahá'u'lláh's answer that he repeated His words in Tíhrán, and added, 'I was very proud of him. Very often, I am

ashamed of my fellow countrymen for they almost always go to the officials and ask for special favours. The dignity of Bahá'u'lláh was a very refreshing experience.'

When the same Persian Consul met Bahá'u'lláh's brother, Mírzá Riḏá-Qulí, in Tíhrán he said to him: 'Mírzá Ḥusayn 'Alí is a wonderful and great man; you are his brother, I believe.'

To which Mírzá Riḏá-Qulí made reply: 'I? No indeed! Oh no, I am not his brother!'

Such was the attitude of Bahá'u'lláh's kindred, even some of His brothers. Of course, some were worse, like Mírzá Yaḥyá.

While in Constantinople, the fame and wisdom of Bahá'u'lláh had gone abroad, and many great and pure-hearted people were eager to come into His Presence. The visitors were so greatly impressed that they spoke to everyone of His majestic person and the holiness of His teachings. This made His enemies uneasy again, and they made a plan to get Him moved out of Constantinople.

Four months after Bahá'u'lláh arrived in Constantinople, He suddenly received an order, without warning, that He must leave and move on to Adrianople.

Adrianople was a town at the farthest north-west corner of the country of Turkey. The only people who ever went there were those who had been punished for doing something against the Sulṭán.

The journey to Adrianople, although it lasted only twelve days, was the most terrible they had yet experienced. Snow fell heavily most of the time, and they were not prepared with the proper amount of clothes. Some of His companions rode in open wagons, others rode on horses and donkeys. Turkish officers went along with them to see that they did not escape. The weather was so cold that animals died, and they had to burn fires beside the springs for two hours before the ice melted enough so they could get water to drink.

During their first winter in Adrianople, Bahá'u'lláh and His family, twelve persons in all, were required to live in a small house with only three rooms. The house was infested with rats. It was a very miserable time.

In order to understand what happened to the Bahá'í Faith in Adrianople, it is necessary to understand more about Mírzá Yaḥyá and Siyyid Muḥammad. Siyyid Muḥammad has been described by Shoghi Effendi as the Antichrist (the 'Judas') of the Bahá'í Revelation. It was Siyyid Muḥammad who thought of the many ways to bring suffering on Bahá'u'lláh and His companions. It was Siyyid Muḥammad who promised Mírzá Yaḥyá the leadership of the Faith, if he would follow his evil instructions. And it was Siyyid Muḥammad who later encouraged Mírzá Yaḥyá to kill Bahá'u'lláh in any way he chose.

Siyyid Muḥammad was the author of all these cruelties, but it was Mírzá Yaḥyá who carried them out. Between the two of them they committed a greater spiritual crime than Judas's betrayal of Christ, greater than the treatment of the sons of Jacob toward Joseph, even greater than the crime committed by Cain against his own brother, Abel.

It was Mírzá Yahyá who was so afraid of the responsibility of leadership temporarily given to him by the Báb that he ran away, pretended to be a Baghdád Jew and became a shoe merchant. It was Mírzá Yahyá who refused to spread the Writings of the Báb around Persia as Bahá'u'lláh had suggested he should do. It was Mírzá Yahyá who changed the Báb's Writings in such a way that it looked as if the Báb had appointed Mírzá Yahyá and his descendants the permanent leaders of the Bábí Faith, and even made it appear that the Báb recognized Mírzá Yahyá as God Himself. It was Mírzá Yahyá who condemned to death all the leading disciples (The Mirrors) of the Báb and caused the murder of a man named Dayyán, as well as one of the Báb's cousins.

All of these things and more were the crimes committed by Mírzá Yahyá in partnership with Siyyid Muḥammad. But, these crimes only show what kinds of characters these men had. Far worse crimes were soon to be committed in Adrianople.

About a year after Bahá'u'lláh arrived in Adrianople, these two criminals decided that Bahá'u'lláh was becoming much too powerful and that the time had come to take over the leadership before it was too late. The only way this could be done was to kill Bahá'u'lláh.

Therefore, Mírzá Yahyá made friends with Bahá'u'lláh's faithful brother, Mírzá Músá, who knew many things about medicine. Through Mírzá Músá, he learned as much as he could about the effects of certain herbs and poisons.

After deciding to use poison to kill Bahá'u'lláh, Mírzá Yahyá invited Bahá'u'lláh to visit him at his home. Bahá'u'lláh accepted his invitation, because He always hoped that Mírzá Yahyá would change his ways and work with Him peacefully for the advancement of the Cause.

However, Mírzá Yahyá smeared Bahá'u'lláh's teacup with some of the poison he had made, and Bahá'u'lláh became seriously ill, for no less than a month. Bahá'u'lláh was so ill, in fact, that the poison left Him with a shaking hand till the end of His life.

So serious was His condition that when a doctor was called to treat Him, the doctor took one look at Him, declared the condition hopeless and fell at Bahá'u'lláh's feet. The doctor then went home and prayed that God would take his own life and save Bahá'u'lláh's. A few days later the doctor took ill and died. Bahá'u'lláh later wrote that this doctor, Dr. Shíshmán, had sacrificed his life for Him.

When Mírzá Yahyá's first attempt at poisoning did not work completely, he tried another method. He put poison into the well which provided water for Bahá'u'lláh and His family. As a result, the entire family showed strange kinds of illnesses for a long time afterwards.

But, poison did not seem to be strong enough to kill Bahá'u'lláh, so Mírzá Yahyá next made friends with Bahá'u'lláh's hairdresser. One day while in the bath, Mírzá Yahyá offered a large reward to the hairdresser if he would cut Bahá'u'lláh's throat some day when he was cutting His hair. The hairdresser was so shocked at the suggestion that he would have killed Mírzá Yahyá on

the spot, if it had not been that he feared Bahá'u'lláh's punishment for committing murder.

When Bahá'u'lláh heard of Mírzá Yaḥyá's suggestion and the hairdresser's anger, He ordered the hairdresser never to say anything about it to anyone in the community. But, the hairdresser was not able to keep his secret. He told somebody, and the whole community was thrown into confusion. Mírzá Yaḥyá claimed that it was the hairdresser's own idea, and he had had nothing to do with it.

The time now came for Bahá'u'lláh to make it clear to Mírzá Yaḥyá how serious it was for him to continue disobeying the Manifestation of God. In order to give Mírzá Yaḥyá one last chance to become part of the faithful Bahá'ís, He revealed a Tablet especially for Mírzá Yaḥyá, explaining the supreme greatness of Bahá'u'lláh's station and God's Message for this age. He made it clear that Mírzá Yaḥyá must in future obey all His laws and commands, and that if he did not obey Bahá'u'lláh, he would be disobeying the Representative of God on earth.

When Mírzá Yaḥyá heard this Tablet read to him by Bahá'u'lláh's messenger he asked for one day to think it over. Permission was granted.

On the next day, Mírzá Yaḥyá sent his reply. In his letter, he did not accept Bahá'u'lláh as a Manifestation of God. Instead, he declared that he was also a Manifestation of God, that he had received an independent revelation, and that all the peoples of the earth in both the East and the West must bow down before him.

When Bahá'u'lláh heard this declaration by the false prophet, Mírzá Yaḥyá, He took immediate action. He gave Mírzá Yaḥyá over half of the family property, rented a different house in a different part of the city, moved there with only His own family, and refused to see any of His friends or companions.

For two months, He remained completely separated from them, and He gave everyone the chance to choose between Himself and His false-hearted brother.

The Bahá'í community was again thrown into confusion. It was like the Day of Judgement and the Day of Resurrection. Every man, woman and child was forced to make a decision. Almost all of the Bahá'ís chose to remain faithful to Bahá'u'lláh and only a few accepted Mírzá Yaḥyá's claim.

Mírzá Yaḥyá became so angry at his failure to become the leader that he and Siyyid Muḥammad wrote letters full of hate and lies to Persia and 'Iráq and to the Governor of Adrianople. Siyyid Muḥammad went to Constantinople personally and told the officials that Bahá'u'lláh had sent a man to Persia to kill the Sháh. Finally, Bahá'u'lláh was forced by circumstances to come out of His retirement in order to protect the reputation of the Bahá'í community.

After about a year of this kind of trouble, a certain Bábí of Shíráz named Mír Muḥammad succeeded in forcing Siyyid Muḥammad to agree to a plan. Mír Muḥammad's plan was this: that Mírzá Yaḥyá and Bahá'u'lláh should

meet in a public debate at a certain mosque. In this way, the entire community would be able to choose between the true and the false.

Siyyid Muḥammad presented the idea to Mírzá Yahyá, and Mírzá Yahyá accepted the invitation, thinking that Bahá'u'lláh would certainly never agree to such a public demonstration. However, when Bahá'u'lláh received the invitation, He set out immediately on foot in the noon-day sun for the appointed mosque. As He walked through the streets, He spoke such powerful words that all who heard Him were overcome with fear and surprise.

‘Were ... all the wise men, all the kings and rulers on earth to gather together,’ He called out, ‘I ... would confront them and would proclaim the verses of God, ... the Almighty, the All-Wise. I am He Who feareth no one, though all who are in heaven and all who are on earth rise up against Me.’

Before Bahá'u'lláh reached the mosque, a messenger arrived from Mírzá Yahyá explaining that he would not be able to meet Bahá'u'lláh as expected. He would meet him another day. That other day never arrived, however, because Mírzá Yahyá never fulfilled his promise.

In the eyes of the Bahá'í community, the position was now clear. Bahá'u'lláh's followers never doubted again, and although a few faithless ones continued to work with Mírzá Yahyá and Siyyid Muḥammad against the Cause, these few never had any further power over the faith of the Bahá'ís.

Even before this crisis was finished, Bahá'u'lláh began to reveal His most important Messages to the kings and rulers of the earth. Day and night, He dictated His holy Tablets. The words came so fast that His secretary, Mírzá Áqá Jan, could not write them all. Mírzá Áqá tried to write everything down in a type of shorthand. At the same time, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá spent all His time copying these holy Words in longhand. There was not a moment to spare. Several other secretaries were called in to help, but they were unable to keep up with the speed of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation. One of the secretaries copied no less than two thousand verses every day, and every month sent several volumes of Writings to Persia. This continued for six or seven months.

Bahá'u'lláh Himself said that God had poured out so many words through Him in so short a time in Adrianople that all the revelations of all the Prophets of the past had been revealed again. Most of it was revealed so fast, however, He said, that the secretaries were not able to copy it down.

However, many volumes of His revelation were recorded. The most important Writings during this time in Adrianople were His messages to the kings of the world—special ones to the Christian kings, to the Sulṭán of Turkey, to Napoleon III, to the Sháh of Persia, to the governments of Turkey, France and Persia, to the leaders of Sunni Islám, to the wise men and the people of Constantinople, to the philosophers of the world and finally to all the people of Persia.

In these Messages, Bahá'u'lláh called first upon the leaders of these countries to accept Him and tell their people about His Message, and when they did not respond, He later called to the people themselves to believe in Him and accept His laws for their own good and for the love of God.

During the same time, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh began to spread. Many of His followers wrote articles for newspapers, books and letters explaining and defending the Faith against the false claims of Mírzá Yahyá. Bahá'í communities were established in Russia, Egypt and Syria. Bahá'u'lláh honoured Nabíl, the Bahá'í historian, by sending him to Persia to teach and make the first pilgrimage to the Báb's house in Shíráz and the Most Great House of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád.

With the fame of the Cause being spread throughout the Near and Middle East, it naturally came to the attention of the Faith's enemies. The clergy of all the countries where there were Bahá'ís acted with the government officials and succeeded in putting into prison or putting to death thousands of the faithful believers. Thousands of others came to Adrianople to visit Bahá'u'lláh and pay their respects and show their love. So great did this stream of visitors become that Mírzá Yahyá took advantage of it and informed the government in Constantinople that Bahá'u'lláh was about to attack the city with His followers and force them all to become Bahá'ís.

Finally, the Turkish government lost patience with the entire situation. Not knowing who was guilty and who was innocent, and fearful of having the situation continue any longer, they decided to get rid of everybody. The order was issued that Bahá'u'lláh and His followers would be sent to prison in 'Akká, Palestine. Mírzá Yahyá would be sent to Famagusta, in the island of Cyprus. As an added touch of heartbreak, Siyyid Muḥammad was ordered to be imprisoned with Bahá'u'lláh, and four of Bahá'u'lláh's faithful ones were forced to go with Mírzá Yahyá to Cyprus.

When Bahá'u'lláh learned what order had been given, He said to the captain of the guard, 'Tell the king that this territory will pass out of his hands, and his affairs will be thrown into confusion. Not I speak these words, but God speaketh them.' History has proved His words to be true, for there is no longer a king of Turkey; the country experienced a revolution and became a republic.

Before permitting His family and seventy companions to leave Adrianople with Him, He told them that 'this journey will be unlike any of the previous journeys,' and that whoever did not feel himself 'man enough to face the future' had better pull himself away from Bahá'u'lláh's company and save himself from tests, because soon he would find himself unable to leave.

Not one person left Bahá'u'lláh's side. One man, who discovered that he was not on the list to go into prison with Bahá'u'lláh, cut his own throat with a razor, and would have died had it not been for Bahá'u'lláh's help. Of this, Bahá'u'lláh wrote that such an act is 'unheard of in bygone centuries', but 'God hath set [it] apart for this Revelation, as an evidence of the power of His might.'

Another man who was forced to go with Mírzá Yahyá to Cyprus jumped into the ocean and would have drowned himself, but for the government officials who rescued him. When the man was pulled out of the ocean Bahá'u'lláh said, 'Why did you jump into the sea? Did you wish to give a banquet to the fishes?'

Bahá'u'lláh's ocean trip took eleven days. Seventy-two people were crowded

together into a very small boat in unspeakable conditions. Ten soldiers and two officers guarded them all the way. The boat had a terrible smell, and most of the passengers became very sick. The only food provided was a few loaves of bread and a little cheese given to them by one of the friends. One man died on the way, and was buried by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when the boat stopped at Smyrna.

At Haifa they had to change boats. Lack of food had caused everyone to become so weak and in such a poor state of health that many had to be carried ashore in chairs.

The next boat was to take them from Haifa across the bay to ‘Akká. The boat given to them was only a small sailing boat. It was so small that although they were sick no one could even lie down to rest. The July sun was hot, and the wind had stopped blowing. The sails hardly moved. It took eight miserable hours to cross the bay. When they finally reached ‘Akita, the ladies were unable to walk and had to be carried to the shore.

7 The Prison of ‘Akká

It was 31st August 1868 when Bahá’u’lláh set foot on the shores of ‘Akká and entered the Most Great Prison. As Bahá’u’lláh arrived at ‘Akita, He said to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ‘Now, I concentrate on My work of writing commands and counsels for the world of the future. To thee I leave the province of talking with and ministering to the people. Servitude is the essence of worship. I have finished with the outer world, from now on I meet only the disciples.’

When they arrived at the prison, they discovered that news about them had already arrived. The Sultán had ordered that a long list of false statements about them be read in the mosques, so that the people would think of them as hardened criminals and enemies of the pure religion of God and of man. All the faithful Muslims were commanded to stay away from these ‘terrible’ Bahá’is. The people were told that anyone who did anything against the Bahá’is could congratulate himself that he had done a good service to God.

It was into these surroundings filled with hatred that the ‘Followers of the Light’ entered the prison fortress of ‘Akká ‘by way of the gate whose prospect is towards the East’—the valley of Achor (‘Akká), which God promised ‘as a door of hope’. In this way, although the world did not know it, the prophecies of God were being fulfilled. (See Ezekiel 43:4, Hosea 2:15.)

At that time, ‘Akká was a prison-city—the whole city being a prison—where the worst criminals were sent from all over the Empire of Turkey. On arriving there, the entire company including men, women and children, were put in prison in the army barracks. The place was filthy and dirty. There were no beds or comforts of any kind. The food was impossible to eat. After a time, the prisoners begged permission to buy their food for themselves. This was finally granted.

During the first few days, the children cried continually, and sleep was almost

impossible. Diseases such as malaria, dysentery and others soon broke out and everyone in the group fell sick, except two who became sick later. Three people died from the sickness and the others suffered terribly.

In order to bury two of those who had died, Bahá'u'lláh gave His own carpet to be sold for the expenses of the funeral. However, instead of using this money for that purpose, the soldiers kept it for themselves, and threw the bodies into a hole in the ground.

This kind of treatment lasted for two years. During this time the only Bahá'ís who were allowed outside the prison door were the four who went out every day to buy food. Even these were carefully guarded.

None of the prisoners were allowed to see visitors, although many Bahá'ís walked hundreds of miles from Persia to see their beloved Leader. They were not permitted to come closer than the city walls. All they could do was go to a high place outside the wall from which they could see Bahá'u'lláh's window. Bahá'u'lláh would then show Himself at His small prison window and wave to them. Although the visitor would not be able to see Bahá'u'lláh clearly, he would have to be satisfied with the wave of Bahá'u'lláh's hand as his blessing. The visitor would then turn around and start walking the long journey back to his home where he would sacrifice his life in the service of the Most Great Prisoner.

Two brothers from Persia were finally permitted to send cables to Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká. They were the 'King of Martyrs' and the 'Beloved of Martyrs', from Işfahán. They were successful in sending from time to time, both money and food. By this time, Bahá'u'lláh and His companions had run completely out of money. Most of their food and clothes were purchased from gifts sent to them by the faithful Bahá'ís.

A Bahá'í named Shaykh Salmán appointed himself as a messenger between Bahá'u'lláh and Persia. Many were the dangerous and difficult journeys he made, mostly on foot. One time, he was arrested at Aleppo while carrying a most important message from a friend in Persia to Bahá'u'lláh. Wondering how he could keep the enemy from finding it, and knowing what would happen if they did find it, he did the only thing he could do—he swallowed the message. It was this same devoted friend who was able to bring Munírih Khánum from Işfahán to 'Akká so that she could become the bride of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

During the lifetime of Bahá'u'lláh so far, His sufferings had been mainly of two types. His time in the prison of Síyáh-Chál of Tīhrán had been caused by enemies outside the Faith. The even greater troubles in Adrianople had been a purely internal affair caused by enemies within the Faith itself. But, the sufferings brought upon Bahá'u'lláh at 'Akká were to be the greatest of all—and they would be caused not only by enemies outside and inside the Faith, but by Bahá'ís themselves who did such terrible things through ignorance and stupidity that His heart and His pen shed tears of sorrow.

The two years of strict confinement in the 'Akká prison were caused by the enemies outside the Faith. The terrible conditions under which they tried to

live would have been bad enough. So crowded were they in the prison rooms that at one time thirteen people of both sexes were required to live in one room. This type of suffering the companions of Bahá'u'lláh were prepared to live through. But, after two years, the officials took pity on these poor, patient people, and gave them a house to live in inside the prison walls.

It was at this time, when the rules were slowly being relaxed that two of Bahá'u'lláh's followers behaved in such a manner that Bahá'u'lláh was forced to put them out of His company. Such an action was what Siyyid Muḥammad had been waiting for—some excuse to work against Bahá'u'lláh. This was his chance to cause trouble. Completely twisting the truth, Siyyid Muḥammad started a secret campaign of lies to awaken the anger of the people of 'Akká against Bahá'u'lláh. He was so successful in his effort, that suddenly Bahá'u'lláh's life was in great danger. Forces outside the Faith and inside the Faith were closing in on Him and making it seem as though He would be killed at any moment.

As if this were not enough, there suddenly happened what could never be forgiven either by Bahá'u'lláh or the prison authorities. Although Bahá'u'lláh had always taught His followers, in both His spoken and written Words, that they must never take any action against those who did them wrong, seven of His companions secretly gathered together and killed three of the trouble-makers, including the greatest troublemaker of all, Siyyid Muḥammad.

The 'Akká community was filled with fear, and Bahá'u'lláh was broken-hearted that any of His followers could do such a terrible thing. From His writings at that time, it becomes clear how angry and full of sorrow He was. On one occasion He wrote that being a prisoner could never harm Him, but that which could harm Him is the actions of those who love Him, who claim to be His disciples, and yet they do what causes His heart and His pen to groan.

In another Tablet, He wrote: 'My captivity can bring Me no shame. Nay, by My life, it conferreth on Me glory. That which can make Me ashamed is the conduct of such of My followers as profess to love Me, yet in fact follow the Evil One.'

Bahá'u'lláh was speaking about these things to His secretary when the Governor of 'Akká appeared outside His house with soldiers carrying swords in their hands. They completely surrounded the house. Crowds of people in 'Akká also gathered around the house, and filled the air with shouts and noise.

Bahá'u'lláh was taken from His house with one of His sons and brought to the Governor's office. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was put deep into prison and placed in chains for the night. The next day, He was allowed to join Bahá'u'lláh. Twenty-five of His companions were put into another prison with chains on them for six days. The seven guilty ones received a just punishment—they were put into prison for several years in chains.

When Bahá'u'lláh was brought before the Governor, the Governor asked Bahá'u'lláh: 'Is it proper that some of your followers should act in this manner?'

Bahá'u'lláh answered: If one of your soldiers were to commit a reprehensible act, would you be held responsible, and be punished in his place?

Bahá'u'lláh considered it unfair to be judged by the actions of His followers.

When the Governor asked Bahá'u'lláh what His name was, Bahá'u'lláh answered in a manner very similar to Jesus' answer to Pontius Pilate. With great power and majesty, He said, 'My name is Bahá'u'lláh [Light of God], and My country is Núr [Light]. Be ye apprised of it.'

Bahá'u'lláh then turned to the entire gathering and spoke to them such words of strength and power that no one dared to answer Him. After this speech, He stood up and walked out of the office, and no one stopped Him. The Governor sent a message to Him later, telling Him that He was free to return to His prison home and apologized for everything that had happened.

Although Bahá'u'lláh Himself was declared innocent and given an apology, it did not help the attitude of the people toward Him and His followers. They were accused of being murderers, criminals, and disbelievers in God. Wherever they went inside the prison city, they were in danger of their lives. Even the Bahá'í children would be chased, hit and struck with stones.

The cup of Bahá'u'lláh's sorrow was now filled to overflowing. And Bahá'u'lláh had to drink this cup for a long time.

Gradually, however, the fortunes of the Faith began to change. Over the years, the people began to realize that Bahá'u'lláh was innocent of any crime. Slowly, the true spirit of His teachings made itself felt to those who had the capacity to see it.

Then, God seemed to smile on the Prisoner of 'Akká and sent a kind and wise governor to replace the former one. Most of the other officials who had been so strict were also replaced. Life became a bit easier.

One of the things which had made it so difficult for the Bahá'ís was this: the Turkish government, entirely misunderstanding the Faith had forced Bahá'u'lláh to promise that none of the Bahá'ís would teach the Faith to anyone in 'Akká or the surrounding country while they were prisoners or exiles.

Since the orders against Bahá'u'lláh, His family and followers were never changed, the people of 'Akká and Haifa never had the benefit of hearing the true Message of Bahá'u'lláh. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also continued to respect this promise during His entire lifetime, because the order against Him was also never changed. It was only after Shoghi Effendi built the Gardens and Shrines on Mount Carmel that people began to learn the true principles of the Faith.

Therefore, for the most part, during the lifetimes of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the only teaching which 'Akká, Haifa and Israel received about Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation was the living example of its Founders and of its followers.

At the time of Bahá'u'lláh's imprisonment, it was 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then a young Man of great wisdom and personality, who slowly changed the hearts of the people of 'Akká through His living the Bahá'í life. He taught the people, not by words, but by His actions. And He protected the reputation of Bahá'u'lláh's

Faith by pointing to the effect which His teachings had in the lives of His followers.

Slowly, the warmth and light of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation changed the hearts, even without direct teaching.

It was during this time that there occurred an event which gave great sorrow to Bahá'u'lláh and His family, but untold spiritual benefit to mankind as a whole. It concerns the death of Mírzá Mihdí.

Mírzá Mihdí was the youngest brother of Bahíyyih and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who was left with his grandmother in Tíhrán in 1853. He was then only two years old and too young to make the difficult journey to Baghdád.

A few years later, he was permitted to join the family, after Bahá'u'lláh returned to Baghdád from His two years of wandering in the wilderness of Sulaymáníyyih. From then on, although he was a very delicate child, rather short and very slender, he shared the misfortunes and trials of the rest of the family. When he was old enough, he became one of Bahá'u'lláh's secretaries. Of all of Bahá'u'lláh's children, Mírzá Mihdí was the purest. Bahá'u'lláh had given him the title, 'The Purest Branch'.

One evening in 'Akká, when he was twenty-two years old, Mírzá Mihdí was walking back and forth on the flat roof of the prison, chanting his prayers as he usually did at that hour. He was so enrapt in his prayer that he did not notice a skylight window in the roof. By accident, he fell through the glass of this skylight and onto a wooden box standing on the floor underneath it. As he fell, some sharp pieces of the box cut through his ribs. It would have taken a miracle for his life to be saved.

But, his death was more of a miracle than if he had lived. Mírzá Mihdí, the 'Purest Branch', had long been sad because so many pilgrims had travelled so many miles to see Bahá'u'lláh, and had had to turn back at the prison walls. Bahá'u'lláh asked His dying son if he wanted to live, but he said that his only wish was that the gates of the prison could be open so that the believers would have the privilege of visiting their Lord. He asked Bahá'u'lláh to use him as a sacrifice so that the pilgrims would be able to come into the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. After twenty-two hours, he died.

No doubt it would have been within the power of Bahá'u'lláh to save His son's life, if He had willed it. Bahá'u'lláh chose to grant His son's wish, however, and He sacrificed His youngest, His purest son. As God had sacrificed His Son Jesus on the Cross, and as Abraham had offered to sacrifice Isaac, so Bahá'u'lláh gave His son, the Purest Branch, as a Sacrifice so that the people of the world would not be punished for their wrong-doings, but forgiven and awakened to Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.

As Bahá'u'lláh watched His son being washed and prepared for burial, He prayed: 'Thou seest ... My son blood-stained before Thy face ... I have, O My Lord, offered up that which Thou hast given Me, that Thy servants may be quickened and all that dwell on earth be united.'

In order to protect the remains of the Purest Branch from His enemies,

Bahá'u'lláh buried Mírzá Mihdí's body simply, quickly and in a secret place. His mother, Ásíyih Khánum, now known as 'Navváb', who had suffered so much already that her heart could hardly take any more gave up her soul to tears. She wept and wept, and the tears refused to stop.

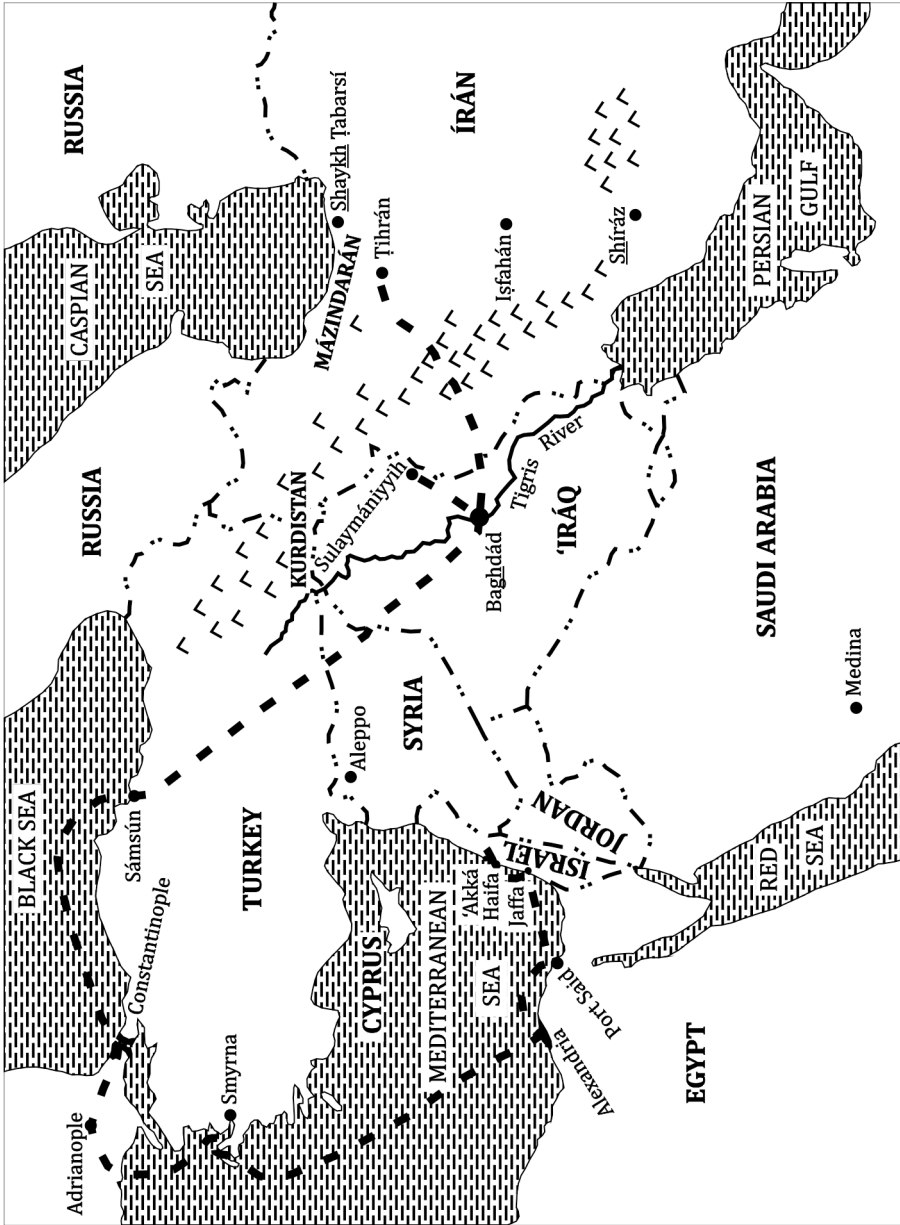
When Bahá'u'lláh learned that Navváb was so overcome with sorrow for her pure-hearted son, He came to her and told her of Mírzá Mihdí's dying request. When she learned that her son had offered himself as a sacrifice, and that Bahá'u'lláh had accepted this greatest of all offers, she was greatly comforted, and no longer grieved over her heavy loss. Within a few months the doors of the prison opened so that Bahá'u'lláh was permitted to receive visitors.

Most of the enemies of the Faith in 'Akká had now disappeared, and the most fruitful part of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry began. Through 'Abdu'l-Bahá's friendship with the new governor, He was gradually able to set his heart alight. So warm did the governor's feeling become for 'Abdu'l-Bahá that he would not enter His presence without first removing his shoes as a sign of respect for Him. He even sent his own son to 'Abdu'l-Bahá for study and guidance.

On many occasions the governor asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá for permission to visit His Father. Eventually, Bahá'u'lláh gave permission for him to pay Him a visit. During this meeting, the governor asked Bahá'u'lláh if there were any service—any service, whatever—which he could perform for Him. Bahá'u'lláh answered that there was no personal service which He would accept, but He had one request for others. He suggested that the governor repair the water system which used to bring fresh water from the mountains to the city of 'Akká. So devoted was the governor to Bahá'u'lláh that he immediately arose and carried out His suggestion. The wonderful fresh water which became the pride of 'Akká was due to this simple suggestion made by Bahá'u'lláh.

It was while this new governor was in 'Akká that a few pilgrims were permitted to visit the Prison. Although Bahá'u'lláh almost never granted personal interviews any more—this being taken care of by 'Abdu'l-Bahá—the people of 'Akká began to refer to Bahá'u'lláh as 'His Highness'. They even believed that the changes in the weather and the water were due to Bahá'u'lláh's being in their city.

On one occasion, a general from Europe was granted an audience by Him, but the general was so overcome that he just remained kneeling on the ground near the door. Amongst the many leaders in Syria and the Near East who came to see Him was even the 'Azíz Páshá who had become fond of 'Abdu'l-Bahá while He was in Adrianople. 'Azíz Páshá, now a governor, came to 'Akká twice to pay his respects to Bahá'u'lláh and renew his friendship with 'Abdu'l-Bahá.



Map showing Bahá'u'lláh's journeys.

8 *His Later Years*

The story of how the prison doors were finally opened to Bahá'u'lláh has been told best by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in words such as these:

Bahá'u'lláh loved the beauty and green of the country. One day He passed the remark that He had not seen green trees and grass for nine years. 'The country is the world of the soul, the city is the world of bodies.' When I heard indirectly of this remark, I realized that He was longing for the country. I was sure that whatever I could do towards carrying out His wish would be successful.

There was a man in 'Akká at that time who was very unfriendly to us. He had a large house called Mazra'ih about four miles north of the city, a lovely place, surrounded by gardens and with a stream of water running through it. I went and called on this man at his home in 'Akká. I said: 'Páshá, you have left your big house empty, and are living in 'Akká.' He replied: 'I am a sick man and cannot leave the city. If I go there it is lonely and I am cut off from my friends.' I said: 'While you are not living there and the place is empty, rent it to us.'

He was surprised at the suggestion, but soon agreed. I got the house at a very low rent, about five pounds per year, paid him for five years and made a contract. I sent workers to repair the place and put the garden in order and had a bath built.

One day I went to Bahá'u'lláh and said: 'The house at Mazra'ih is ready for you, and a carriage to drive you there.' He refused to go, saying, 'I am a prisoner.'

Later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, I requested Him again, but got the same answer. I went so far as to ask Him a third time, but He still said, 'No!' and I did not dare to ask Him again.

There was, however, a certain man in 'Akká who loved Bahá'u'lláh and was greatly favoured by Him. I called this man and explained to him. I said, 'You are brave. Go tonight to His Holy Presence, fall on your knees before Him, take hold of His hands and do not let go until He promises to leave the city!'

He was an Arab ... He went directly to Bahá'u'lláh and sat down close to His knees. He took hold of the hands of Bahá'u'lláh and kissed them, and said: 'Why do you not leave the city?' He answered, 'I am a prisoner.' The Arab replied: 'God forbid! Who has the power to make you a prisoner? You have kept yourself in prison. It is your own will to be in prison, and now I beg you to come out and go to Mazra'ih. It is beautiful and green. The trees are lovely and the oranges like balls of fire!'

As often as Bahá'u'lláh said, 'I am a prisoner, it cannot be', the Arab took His hands and kissed them. For a whole hour he kept on pleading. At

last, Bahá'u'lláh said, 'Very good,' and the Arab's patience and persistence were rewarded. The Arab came to me with great joy to give me the glad news.

Until this time there had been an order that I was not to have any contact with Bahá'u'lláh. But, in spite of that order I now took the carriage to Bahá'u'lláh's house and drove with Him to Mazra'ih. As we passed through the gates of the prison the guards did not even seem to see us. I left Bahá'u'lláh there at Mazra'ih and returned myself to the city.

For two years, Bahá'u'lláh lived at that charming and lovely spot. Then, it was decided to move to another place, at Bahjí. It so happened that a disease had broken out at Bahjí, and the owner of the house ran away from it with his family. We took the house at a very low rent, and there the doors of majesty and true sovereignty were flung wide open.

It should be explained that Bahá'u'lláh remained a prisoner in 'Akká until the day He died, because the orders of the Sultán were never changed. But, instead of living like a prisoner, He was permitted to live like a prince from the time He moved into the palace at Bahjí. From that time on, governors and priests, generals and local officials, every type of important person would humbly request the honour of seeing Bahá'u'lláh. However, He almost always refused.

One of the few visitors Bahá'u'lláh permitted to see Him was the famous British historian, Professor E. G. Browne of Cambridge University. He visited Bahá'u'lláh in 1890, and was the only man from Europe ever to speak with Him. Professor Browne wrote the following description of Bahá'u'lláh as He was at the age of seventy-three:

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

'A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued: "Praise be to God that thou hast attained! ... Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile ... We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations ... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened ... What harm is there in this? ... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come ... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind ...'"

Such was the interview which Professor E. G. Browne had with Bahá'u'lláh.

It was clear to everyone now that Bahá'u'lláh was not a prisoner, but was really the King of Kings. Two powerful kings had put Him in the prison of 'Akká and yet when He addressed them in His letters, He spoke to them as if He were the king speaking to His subjects. As Bahá'u'lláh Himself said many

times, ‘Verily, verily the most wretched prison has been converted into a Paradise of Eden.’ And, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá once said, ‘Surely, such a thing has not been witnessed since the creation of the world.’

Bahá’u’lláh spent twenty-four years as a Prisoner of ‘Akká. The Sultán of Turkey had issued the order that no one should meet Him, or talk to Him, or see Him. The Sultán’s purpose was to make Bahá’u’lláh and His companions hated by every one around them. God, however, had other plans for His Messenger and His faithful ones. As has been seen in this story of Bahá’u’lláh’s life, God was able to give Bahá’u’lláh the power to spread His Faith all over the world in spite of being in the Most Great Prison. Bahá’u’lláh’s enemies had thought that His Cause would disappear when He was put inside a prison. But, the Spirit of God cannot be held inside four walls, no matter how thick those walls are. Being a prisoner only made the news of His greatness spread further and faster.

‘From this Prison,’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, ‘His light was shed abroad; His lame conquered the world, and the proclamation of His glory reached the East and the West.’ ‘His light at first had been a star; now it became a mighty sun.’ The fact that Bahá’u’lláh’s Faith and His Teachings could spread outside His Prison and travel around the entire world proves the unlimited power of God.

In order to let men know what God’s Plan is for this world, God appointed Bahá’u’lláh to speak and to write. And He protected Bahá’u’lláh from His enemies, even by putting Him in Prison. In spite of all His sufferings, He still obeyed the call of God and wrote. Had not the Maid of Heaven appeared to Him in the *Síyáh-Chál* and said, ‘Verily, we will render Thee victorious through Thyself and through Thy pen’? And so, Bahá’u’lláh wrote over one hundred hooks of Holy Scripture, enough Scripture to explain all things to men for a thousand years.

Beginning with Bahá’u’lláh’s entry into the Prison of ‘Akká it was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who was called upon to protect Bahá’u’lláh from both His friends and His enemies. It was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who talked with Bahá’u’lláh’s friends, explained His teachings, protected Him against His enemies, took care of the daily needs of the family, encouraged Bahá’u’lláh’s companions to improve their characters and to go abroad and teach. He sent Bahá’í teachers throughout the East to spread the Message; He answered Bahá’u’lláh’s letters; He did all the things which Bahá’u’lláh did not have the time to do while He was obeying God’s command—to write!

While in Adrianople, Bahá’u’lláh had begun to write His letters to the kings and the rulers of the world. When He arrived in ‘Akká, He wrote, ‘Upon Our arrival at this Prison, We purposed to transmit to the kings the messages of their Lord, the Mighty, the All-Praised. Though We have transmitted to them, in several Tablets, that which We were commanded, yet We do it once again, as a token of God’s grace.’

And so, Bahá’u’lláh took His pen and wrote again to the world’s leaders—among them Queen Victoria; Napoleon III of France; Nicholas II, Czar of

Russia; William I, King of Prussia; Francis-Joseph, the Austrian Emperor and heir to the Holy Roman Empire; ‘Alí Páshá, the Grand Vazír of the Sultan of Turkey; Pope Pius IX; to the Rulers of America and the Presidents of the American Republics; to leaders of the Christian Churches; to the Muslim priests and clergy; to the Jewish people, the Christian people, and to the high priests of the Zoroastrian Faith. He addressed special messages to the followers of the Báb, to the wise men of the world, to its priests, its men of education, to its mystics and even to its tradesmen. Bahá’u’lláh left no one out of His Message.

It was in 1873 that Bahá’u’lláh revealed His Most Holy Book—*The Book of Aqdas*—while living in the House of ‘Abbúd. This is the Book of His Laws which must not be changed for at least a thousand years. In that same year, on the anniversary of the Birth of the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh revealed a Tablet called ‘The Tablet of the Vision’ in which He announced that the Maid of Heaven, dressed in shining white, had appeared to Him and told Him that He should hurry back to His Father in Heaven. However, Bahá’u’lláh continued to live on and work for nineteen more years.

Nine months before His ascension, Bahá’u’lláh told ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that He now wanted to leave this world. From that time on, it became clear that the end of His life on earth was fast approaching. On 8th May 1892, Bahá’u’lláh became ill with a slight fever. He continued to grant interviews to a few friends and pilgrims, but it soon became clear that He was not feeling well. His fever became greater and greater, His general condition became worse, and finally His spirit returned to His Father at 3.00 a.m. on 29th May 1892.

Bahá’u’lláh had lived seventy-five years, forty of those years being spent either in prison or exiled from His homeland. For twenty-nine years He carried on the responsibilities of Prophethood, and had suffered every form of pain and trouble to deliver men from their unhappy way of life. During all these years He laid the foundation of a new way of life which was to be so beautiful that all the Holy Books had called it ‘The Kingdom of God on Earth’.

9 *His Passing*

During Bahá’u’lláh’s lifetime, it had become clear to everyone around Him that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the perfect One to carry on the leadership of the Faith after Bahá’u’lláh’s passing. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had proved His qualities during the entire forty years which He had shared in and out of prison with Bahá’u’lláh. He had especially shown His abilities to teach and protect the Faith after arriving in the Prison of ‘Akká.

Bahá’u’lláh had in later years always referred to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as ‘the Master’, and would not let any of the other members of His family be addressed in this manner. As far back as Adrianople, Bahá’u’lláh had written special Tablets praising the qualities of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. And finally in both His last Will and Testament and in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the Book of Laws, He made it completely

clear that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the ‘Most Great Branch’, was His choice of His sons to carry on the Faith.

Bahá’u’lláh named ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the Centre of His Covenant and the only authorized Interpreter of His Teachings. He insisted that all His family and the entire community of the Bahá’ís should turn to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for their guidance. His other son, Muḥammad ‘Alí, ‘the Greater Branch’, was named second in importance to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Six days before He passed away, Bahá’u’lláh called the pilgrims and all His family into His bedroom. As He leaned against one of His sons, He said to them: ‘I am well pleased with you all.’ ‘May God assist you to remain united. May He aid you to exalt the Cause of the Lord of Being.’ To the weeping women at His bedside, He said that He had written a document in which He had turned them over to the care of the Most Great Branch, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

The news of His passing was immediately sent to Sulṭán ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd in a telegram which began with the words, ‘The Sun of Bahá has set’. The cable also told the Sulṭán that the family wanted to bury Bahá’u’lláh’s body near the house in which He had been living. The Sulṭán immediately cabled his permission for them to do so.

On the grounds where Bahá’u’lláh had lived there was one large house, ‘the Mansion’, and three other small houses built west of the big house, but very close to it. Bahá’u’lláh was buried in the third small house shortly after sunset on the same day that He died. This house is now a sacred place, a shrine, of the Bahá’í World.

During the day of Bahá’u’lláh’s passing, thousands of people from ‘Akká and neighbouring villages came to the Mansion to tell of their sorrow. Even in the field around the Mansion the people could be seen weeping, beating upon their heads, and crying aloud their grief.

For a whole week people from everywhere, rich and poor, came to see Bahá’u’lláh’s family. Very important representatives of every religion, poets, and government officials came, and left beautiful letters and poems telling of the great life which Bahá’u’lláh had lived. Many of these letters and poems also praised ‘Abdu’l-Bahá almost as much as they praised His Father. All of these letters and poems were given to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

While all these visitors came to tell the family of their sorrow, His family comforted each of them and served them with food. Thousands came and went during that heart-breaking week.

Another sad thing happened during that same week. The man named Nabil, who wrote the early history of the Bahá’í Faith called *The Dawn-Breakers*, was overcome with sorrow. He had a private conversation with Bahá’u’lláh just before Bahá’u’lláh had died. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá then asked Nabil to choose the prayer to be used by anyone in future who should visit Bahá’u’lláh’s shrine. After Nabil had selected the proper Writings, he felt that he could not live any longer. He went down to the sea and threw himself into it. In a few minutes

he was drowned. Like many others, nothing was able to comfort his grief, now that Bahá'u'lláh had left them.

But, Bahá'u'lláh, in some of His Writings told the world not to be sorrowful when He left. He said that there was a reason why He had come into the world, and there was also a reason why He must leave it. He had finished His work, and now it was time for His followers to do theirs.

10 New Teachings for the New Age

And what is the work of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh? It is to spread the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and to build a world-wide community which lives in accordance with His Teachings.

The Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh repeat all the divine principles announced by the Prophets of the past. Anyone can read these teachings in a very small book entitled *The Hidden Words*. But, added to these everlasting truths, Bahá'u'lláh gave new Teachings never announced by a Prophet before. Here are a few:

The first teaching of the Bahá'í faith is that all men belong to one human family. Speaking to all men, Bahá'u'lláh says, 'Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.' By this He means that the world of men is like a tree, the nations and people are the different branches of that tree, and the men and women are the fruits and blossoms of that tree. In all past religions, the world of men was divided into two parts—one known as the people of the Book of God or the pure tree, and the other the lost people or the evil tree. Bahá'u'lláh changed this teaching by announcing that the world was one world and all people in it members of one family. This is a special teaching of Bahá'u'lláh not to be found in any other religion. Some people are asleep, He says, they need to be awakened. Some are sick, they need to be healed. Some are like children, they need to be taught. But, all receive the bounty and gifts of God.

Another new principle in the Bahá'í Faith is the need to investigate truth. That is to say, no man should blindly follow his ancestors and forefathers. Each man must see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears, and investigate truth for himself.

Another teaching is this: that the foundation of all the religions of God is one. There is only God. Therefore, there can be only one religion—the Religion of God. All the past Prophets have taught the same basic truths, and all have come from the same mouth of God. This teaching is a new teaching and special in the Bahá'í Faith.

A new principle is that religion must be the cause of unity, harmony and agreement amongst men. If religion becomes the cause of disagreement and hatred, if it leads to separation and fighting, then it would be better if there were no religion in the world.

The Bahá'í Faith also teaches that religion must agree with science and reason. If it does not agree with science and reason it is superstition. Down to the present day it is the custom for a man to accept a religious teaching even if it does not agree with his reason and judgement. The agreement of religious beliefs with reason and science opens new windows on the soul of man.

Bahá'u'lláh taught the equality of men and women. This is special to the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith, for all other religions have placed man above woman.

A new religious principle is that prejudices, whether religious, racial, patriotic or political, destroy the solid foundations for a peaceful life. Therefore, men must overcome their prejudices so that they can see the underlying truth—that the family of man is one family and not divided into separate parts.

Universal Peace is promised in Bahá'í teachings. This Universal Peace will be accomplished by putting into practice the principles of Bahá'u'lláh. Peace shall come to all nations, governments, peoples, religions, races, and all parts of mankind. No other Prophet has ever promised peace to the world before, but this is one of the special teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh taught that every man must learn knowledge and receive an education. It is a religious law in the Bahá'í Faith that both girls and boys must be educated equally.

Bahá'u'lláh has set forth the solution and provided the remedy for the economic question. The solution of the economic problem, He says, lies in the realm of the spirit. No religious Books of the past Prophets speak of this important human problem.

He has ordained and established the House of Justice, at present on the local and national level known as the Spiritual Assembly. The Spiritual Assembly serves as a group of consultation for planning the growth of the Faith and the spiritual development of its members. This institution is under the protecting power of Bahá'u'lláh Himself. The Universal House of Justice guides international Bahá'í affairs with its seat in Haifa, Israel.

Bahá'u'lláh has forbidden interference in political affairs and has commanded obedience to government. 'Serve ye the sovereigns of the world with utmost truthfulness and loyalty. Show obedience unto them and be their well-wishers.'

The greatest new principle of this new religion is the establishment and appointment of the Centre of the Covenant. This is another teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past. Bahá'u'lláh appointed a Centre of the Covenant to carry on His work and hold the Bahá'ís together after His passing. When a person becomes a Bahá'í, he must agree to follow the laws contained in the Covenant. In this way, Bahá'u'lláh has protected the religion of God against splits and differences. He has made it impossible for anyone to create a new sect or faction of belief. To be sure of the unity of the believers, He has entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world,

including the Interpreter and Explainer of His Teachings, so that no one may interpret or explain the religion of God according to his own ideas or opinion, and thus create a sect founded upon his own understanding of the divine words.

These are some of the principles of religion brought by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh which are different from the religions of the past. Thousands of men and women died during the nineteenth century rather than give up their faith in these teachings. Today, in the twentieth century, millions of Bahá'ís live their lives so that they can bring these teachings to all men, everywhere.

11 Epilogue

To tell the stories of what happened to all those who worked with and against Bahá'u'lláh during His lifetime would take too long. But, some mention must be made of Mírzá Yahyá, the worst breaker of the Covenant of the Báb. Mírzá Yahyá lived long enough on the island of Cyprus to see all his hopes brought to nothing.

At first, he was financially supported by the Turkish government, and later by the government of Britain. But, when he applied for British citizenship, he was embarrassed by having the British authorities refuse him.

Mírzá Yahyá appointed eighteen of his followers as 'Witnesses', himself being the nineteenth (following the example of the Báb's 'Nineteen Letters of the Living'), but eleven of these eighteen turned against him in the end, and turned for forgiveness to Bahá'u'lláh.

Mírzá Yahyá and his eldest son became involved in a terrible scandal in Cyprus which ruined their reputation, and many years later this same son, as well as his nephew and niece, visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Haifa and asked His forgiveness. 'Abdu'l-Bahá graciously accepted them into the Faith, and the son remained a loyal follower of 'Abdu'l-Bahá until the hour of his death.

Such is the way of God, and may it not be said that Mírzá Yahyá's son is a symbol of what can be expected from the rest of the world? A world which has ignored and fought against the light of God's new Manifestation in this age will eventually see its mistakes, beg for forgiveness, and return to the Master's fold. For the call of God has gone forth to all nations and peoples, and no one can stop what the will of God has decreed through His latest Manifestation—the glorious light of Bahá'u'lláh.