

FOREWORD

The conclusion of the twentieth century provides Bahá'ís with a unique vantage point. During the past hundred years our world underwent changes far more profound than any in its preceding history, changes that are, for the most part, little understood by the present generation. These same hundred years saw the Bahá'í Cause emerge from obscurity, demonstrating on a global scale the unifying power with which its Divine origin has endowed it. As the century drew to its close, the convergence of these two historical developments became increasingly apparent.

Century of Light, prepared under our supervision, reviews these two processes and the relationship between them, in the context of the Bahá'í Teachings. We commend it to the thoughtful study of the friends, in the confidence that the perspectives it opens up will prove both spiritually enriching and of practical help in sharing with others the challenging implications of the Revelation brought by Bahá'u'lláh. THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

Naw-Rúz, 158 B.E.

CENTURY OF LIGHT

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, the most turbulent in the history of the human race, has reached its end. Dismayed by the deepening moral and social chaos that marked its course, the generality of the world's peoples are eager to leave behind them the memories of the suffering that these decades brought with them. No matter how frail the foundations of confidence in the future may seem, no matter how great the dangers looming on the horizon, humanity appears desperate to believe that, through some fortuitous conjunction of circumstances, it will nevertheless be possible to bend the conditions of human life into conformity with prevailing human desires.

In the light of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh such hopes are not merely illusory, but miss entirely the nature and meaning of the great turning point through which our world has passed in these crucial hundred years. Only as humanity comes to understand the implications of what occurred during this period of history will it be able to meet the challenges that lie ahead. The value of the contribution we as Bahá'ís can make to the process demands that we ourselves grasp the significance of the historic transformation wrought by the twentieth century.

What makes this insight possible for us is the light shed by the rising Sun of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and the influence it has come to exercise in human affairs. It is this opportunity that the following pages address.

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METADATA

Views122119 views since posted 2002-04; last edit 2025-07-12 11:33 UTC;

previous at archive.org.../uhj_century_light;

URLs changed in 2010, see archive.org.../bahai-library.org

Language

English

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History

Formatted 2002-04 by Julie Buckney; Proofread 2002 by Gary Fuhrman.

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