

who had been a witness to the rapidity and the manner in which the Báb had penned the verses with which He was inspired, has left the following testimony to posterity, after attaining, during those days, the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, and beholding with his own eyes what he himself had considered to be the only proof of the mission of the Promised One: `I bear witness that the verses revealed by Bahá'u'lláh were superior, in the rapidity with which they were penned, in the ease with which they flowed, in their lucidity, their profundity and sweetness to those which I, myself, saw pour from the pen of the Báb when in His presence. Had Bahá'u'lláh no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient, in the eyes of the world and its people, that He produced such verses as have streamed this day from His pen.'"

And further on he writes:

"`Day and night,' an eye-witness has written, `the Divine verses were raining down in such number that it was impossible to record them. Mírzá Áqá Ján wrote them as they were dictated, while the Most Great Branch was continually occupied in transcribing them. There was not a moment to spare.' `A number of secretaries,' Nabíl has testified, `were busy day and night and yet they were unable to cope with the task. Among them was Mírzá Báqir-i-Shírání.... He alone transcribed no less than two thousand verses every day. He laboured during six or seven months. Every month the equivalent of several volumes would be transcribed by him and sent to Persia. About twenty volumes, in his fine penmanship, he left behind as a remembrance for Mírzá Áqá Ján.' Bahá'u'lláh, Himself, referring to the verses revealed by Him, has written: `Such are the outpourings ... from the clouds of Divine Bounty that within the space of an hour the equivalent of a thousand verses hath been revealed.' `So great is the grace vouchsafed in this day that in a single day and night, were an amanuensis capable of accomplishing it to be found, the equivalent of the Persian Bayán would be sent down from the heaven of Divine holiness.' `I swear by God!' He, in another connection has affirmed, `In those days the equivalent of all that hath been sent down aforetime unto the Prophets hath been revealed.' `That which hath already been revealed in this land (Adrianople),' He, furthermore, referring to the copiousness of His writings, has declared, `secretaries are incapable of transcribing. It has, therefore, remained for the most part untranscribed.'"

In The Bahá'í World volumes there is a list of some one hundred and fifty of the best-known works of Bahá'u'lláh which were revealed in the form of books, epistles and Tablets. But this list is by no means exhaustive; it barely covers a portion of

His Writings. In order to get a fair idea of their scope and vastness we ought also to take into account:

1. Thousands of Tablets of varying length, ranging from a few lines to numerous pages which were addressed to individual believers in Persia and other neighbouring countries.

2. The vast amount of His original Writings which have been lost to posterity either through ill-preservation, or because they fell into wrong hands, or were destroyed by enemies, or obliterated by Bahá'u'lláh's own instruction. Concerning the fate of the last portion, Shoghi Effendi quotes Nabíl's testimony as follows:

"No less an authority than Mírzá Áqá Ján, Bahá'u'lláh's amanuensis, affirms, as reported by Nabíl, that by the express order of Bahá'u'lláh, hundreds of thousands of verses, mostly written by His own hand, were obliterated and cast into the river. `Finding me reluctant to execute His orders,' Mírzá Áqá Ján has related to Nabíl, `Bahá'u'lláh would reassure me saying: "None is to be found at this time worthy to hear these melodies...." Not once, or twice, but innumerable times, was I commanded to repeat this act.'"

3. Bahá'u'lláh's unrecorded utterances which rained down so profusely that the secretaries could not cope with their recording. Again the Guardian invokes Nabíl:

"So prolific was this period, that during the first two years after His return from His retirement, according to the testimony of Nabíl, who was at that time living in Baghdád, the unrecorded verses that streamed from His lips averaged, in a single day and night, the equivalent of the Qur'án!"

As to the immensity of the field of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings we would do well to refer to Shoghi Effendi's comments in God Passes By:

"With this book (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf) revealed about one year prior to His ascension, the prodigious achievement as author of a hundred volumes, repositories of the priceless pearls of His Revelation, may be said to have practically terminated--volumes replete with unnumbered exhortations, revolutionizing principles, world-shaping laws and ordinances, dire warnings and portentous prophecies, with soul-uplifting prayers and meditations, illuminating commentaries and interpretations, impassioned discourses and homilies, all interspersed with either addresses or references to kings, to emperors and to ministers, of

both the East and the West, to ecclesiastics of divers denominations, and to leaders in the intellectual, political, literary, mystical, commercial and humanitarian spheres of human activity."

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

In the following pages an attempt is made to give a brief description of some of the well-known Works of Bahá'u'lláh which were revealed before His declaration in 1863 and up to the time of His arrival in `Akká in 1868. These Writings are dealt with in chronological order following the path of His journey--Tihrán, Baghdád, Sulaymáníyyih, Baghdád, Constantinople and Adrianople. A few of these works have been translated into English by the beloved Guardian; others he has referred to in his writings, chiefly God Passes By.

RASHH-I-`AMÁ

This wondrous poem was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in Tihrán before He was exiled to `Iráq, and is regarded as the first intimation of the stirring of the Spirit of God within His Soul.

The language used in this poem is full of ecstasy and exultation and contains many veiled and figurative terms such as: "the hidden ocean", "the musk-laden breeze", "the Maid of heaven", "the Day of God", "the dawn of the revelation of I am He", "the warbling of the Dove", "the living waters of God", "the wondrous Beauty", which are but the effusions of that billowing ocean of divine Revelation which surged and swelled within His inner Being, though it was still hidden from the eyes of men.

TABLET OF KULLU'T-TA`ÁM

This is one of the outstanding Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh

revealed in the year 1854, soon after His banishment to `Iráq. It is rather long and written in exquisite Arabic. In a passage in *God Passes By* Shoghi Effendi describes the circumstances which led to the revelation of this eloquent and illuminating commentary. The passage runs as follows:

"The circumstances leading to the revelation of the Tablet of Kullu't-Ta`ám, written during that period, at the request of Hájí Mírzá Kamálu'd-Dín-i-Naráqí, a Bábí of honorable rank and high culture, could not but aggravate a situation that had already become serious and menacing. Impelled by a desire to receive illumination from Mírzá Yahyá concerning the meaning of the Qur'anic verse `All food was allowed to the children of Israel,' Hájí Mírzá Kamálu'd-Dín had requested him to write a commentary upon it--a request which was granted, but with reluctance and in a manner which showed such incompetence and superficiality as to disillusion Hájí Mírzá Kamálu'd-Dín, and to destroy his confidence in its author. Turning to Bahá'u'lláh and repeating his request, he was honored by a Tablet, in which Israel and his children were identified with the Báb and His followers respectively--a Tablet which by reason of the allusions it contained, the beauty of its language and the cogency of its argument, so enraptured the soul of its recipient that he would have, but for the restraining hand of Bahá'u'lláh, proclaimed forthwith his discovery of God's hidden Secret in the person of the One Who had revealed it."

Apart from the numerous interpretations of the terms "Israel" and "children of Israel", Bahá'u'lláh defines in this Tablet the qualities and attributes with which every seeker after truth must be endowed, dwells on the wrongs and afflictions He endured both at the hand of His foes and through the vile conduct of His friends, and alludes, in no ambiguous terms, to the imminent fulfilment of the Will of God amongst men. Another significant feature of this Tablet is that in it Bahá'u'lláh confers the exalted title of "The Last Point" upon Quddús.

On receiving this inspiring Tablet Hájí Mírzá Kamálu'd-Dín became an ardent admirer of Bahá'u'lláh and later, when He declared His mission, he distinguished himself as a devoted follower of the Faith. His name is immortalized by a number of Tablets Bahá'u'lláh revealed in his honour.

It is interesting to note that at the time of Bahá'u'lláh's departure from Baghdád, when He was actually leaving His house for the last time amidst the wailing and weeping of the Bábís, it was this same Kamál who, overwhelmed

by grief and despondency, was moved to offer his infant son as a ransom, by placing him at the feet of Bahá'u'lláh. The little child shriekingly grasped the hem of His garment with his tiny hands and made a poignant gesture which clearly meant he was begging Him not to leave. Bahá'u'lláh Himself confirms this incident in a Tablet which was revealed soon after His declaration: "He (Bahá'u'lláh) observed at His feet a suckling, withdrawn from the breast of his mother, grasp the sacred Hem with beseeching fingers and call to Him in a weak voice."

It should be noted, moreover, that Hájí Mírzá Kamál's great-grandfather was the well-known Mullá Mihdí, one of the leading Muslim clergy during the reign of Fath `Alí Sháh (1798-1834). He is the author of the book entitled *Muhriqul-Qulúb*, which contains a stirring account of the episode of Karbilá and the martyrdom of Imám Husayn. This is the same book parts of which were read aloud to the Báb every morning by His amanuensis during his [sic] period of incarceration, and in Nabíl's words: "...its recital would provoke intense emotion in the heart of the Báb and his [sic] tears would keep flowing as He listened to that tale." Hájí Mírzá Kamál passed away in his home town Naráq in Persia, in the year 1881.

SÁQÍ AZ GHAYB-I-BAQÁ

Another outpouring of divine grace which streamed from the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh during His retirement to the mountains of Sulaymáníyyih is this soul-entrancing ode in Persian which exhibits a rare beauty. The whole poem is full of veiled and symbolic terms which unmistakably hint at His forthcoming Revelation. Shoghi Effendi alludes to this point in these words: "These initial and impassioned outpourings of a Soul struggling to unburden itself, in the solitude of a self-imposed exile (many of them, alas lost to posterity) are, with the Tablet of Kullu't-Ta`ám and the poem entitled *Rashh-i-`Amá*, revealed in Tihrán, the first fruits of His Divine Pen."

The opening couplet of the above ode runs as follows:

Rend asunder Thy veil, O Cupbearer of the invisible eternity!
So that from the Face of the All-Glorious, I may quaff the wine of
immortality. All the wine in thy store can scarce allay the ardour of
my love: pour out for me an ocean of thy mystic wine!

And further on occurs this verse which is familiar to many of
the friends:

If thine aim be to cherish thy life, approach not our Court:
but if sacrifice be thy heart's desire, come and let others come
with thee. For such is the way of Faith, if in thy heart thou seekest

reunion with Bahá: shouldst thou refuse to tread this path, why trouble Us, begone!

QASÍDIY-I-VARQÁ'ÍYYIH

This wonderful ode is endowed with much beauty and power. It comprises a series of thought-provoking verses in Arabic and was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh during the period of His retirement to the mountains of Kurdistán in the year 1854-5.

In God Passes By Shoghi Effendi describes how Bahá'u'lláh was prompted to reveal this poem at the request of a delegation of eminent doctors and distinguished scholars of Kurdistan:

"Amazed by the profundity of His insight and the compass of His understanding, they were impelled to seek from Him what they considered to be a conclusive and final evidence of the unique power and knowledge which He now appeared in their eyes to possess. 'No one among the mystics, the wise, and the learned,' they claimed, while requesting this further favor from Him, 'has hitherto proved himself capable of writing a poem in a rhyme and meter identical with that of the longer of the two odes, entitled Qasídy-i-Tá'íyyih [sic] composed by Ibn-i-Fárid. We beg you to write for us a poem in that same meter and rhyme.' This request was complied with, and no less than two thousand verses, in exactly the manner they had specified, were dictated by Him, out of which He selected one hundred and twenty-seven, which He permitted them to keep, deeming the subject matter of the rest premature and unsuitable to the needs of the times. It is these same one hundred and twenty-seven verses that constitute the Qasídiy-i-Varqá'íyyih, so familiar to, and widely circulated amongst His Arabic speaking followers."

The theme of this inspiring poem, portrayed in symbolic terms, is the advent of the Promised Day and the release of the quickening power of the Spirit of God in this age. Referring to the same poem, Shoghi Effendi affirms that it was revealed "in praise of the Maiden personifying the Spirit of God recently descended upon Him." In a passage of this verse Bahá'u'lláh also gives vent to the "agonies of His sorrow-laden heart" in these words:

Noah's flood is but the measure of the tears I have shed,
and Abraham's fire an ebullition of My soul. Jacob's grief is but
a reflection of My sorrows, and Job's afflictions a fraction of My
calamity.

THE HIDDEN WORDS

The Hidden Words is another well-known work of Bahá'u'lláh which was revealed in Baghdád before His Declaration in 1863. It is unique in style and captivating in eloquence and power of appeal.

In God Passes By Shoghi Effendi extols the exalted character of this work in these words:

"Next to this unique repository of inestimable treasures (the Íqán) must rank that marvellous collection of gem-like utterances, The Hidden Words with which Bahá'u'lláh was inspired, as He paced, wrapped in His meditations, the banks of the Tigris. Revealed in the year 1274 A.H., partly in Persian, partly in Arabic, it was originally designated The Hidden Book of Fátimih, and was identified by its Author with the Book of that same name, believed by Shî'ah Islám to be in the possession of the promised Qá'im, and to consist of words of consolation addressed by the angel Gabriel, at God's command, to Fatimih, and dictated to the Imám `Alí, for the sole purpose of comforting her in her hour of bitter anguish after the death of her illustrious Father. The significance of this dynamic spiritual leaven cast into the life of the world for the reorientation of the minds of men, the edification of their souls and the rectification of their conduct can best be judged by the description of its character given in the opening passage by its Author: `This is that which hath descended from the Realm of Glory, uttered by the tongue of power and might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old. We have taken the inner essence thereof and clothed it in the garment of brevity, as a token of grace unto the righteous, that they may stand faithful unto the Covenant of God, may fulfill in their lives His trust, and in the realm of spirit obtain the gem of Divine virtue.'"

In the vast field of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings, The Hidden Words stands out forever as a shining beacon shedding the light of divine guidance upon the path of a wayward humanity.

KITÁB-I-ÍQÁN

(The Book of Certitude)

The Íqán bears ample testimony to the greatness and divine knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh and is an outstanding landmark in the vast field of His Writings. Plunging into this inexhaustible fountain of divine Truth one can find explicit answers to many questions which have, for centuries, perplexed the minds of men.

Concerning the revelation as well as the contents of this masterpiece of literary beauty and eloquence, Shoghi Effendi writes

in God Passes By:

"Foremost among the priceless treasures cast forth from the billowing ocean of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation ranks the Kitáb-i-Íqán (Book of Certitude), revealed within the space of two days and two nights, in the closing years of that period (1278 A.H.--A.D. 1862). It was written in fulfillment of the prophecy of the Báb, Who had specifically stated that the Promised One would complete the text of the unfinished Persian Bayán, and in reply to the questions addressed to Bahá'u'lláh by the as yet unconverted maternal uncle of the Báb, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad, while on a visit, with his brother, Hájí Mírzá Hasan-`Alí, to Karbilá. A model of Persian prose, of a style at once original, chaste and vigorous, and remarkably lucid, both cogent in argument and matchless in its irresistible eloquence, this Book, setting forth in outline the Grand Redemptive Scheme of God, occupies a position unequalled by any work in the entire range of Bahá'í literature, except the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh's Most Holy Book. Revealed on the eve of the declaration of His Mission, it proffered to mankind the `Choice Sealed Wine', whose seal is of `musk', and broke the `seals' of the `Book' referred to by Daniel, and disclosed the meaning of the `words' destined to remain `closed up' till the `time of the end.'

"Within a compass of two hundred pages it proclaims unequivocally the existence and oneness of a personal God, unknowable, inaccessible, the source of all Revelation, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent and almighty; asserts the relativity of religious truth and the continuity of Divine Revelation; affirms the unity of the Prophets, the universality of their Message, the identity of their fundamental teachings, the sanctity of their scriptures, and the twofold character of their stations; denounces the blindness and perversity of the divines and doctors of every age; cites and elucidates the allegorical passages of the New Testament, the abstruse verses of the Qur'án, and the cryptic Muhammadan traditions which have bred those age-long misunderstandings, doubts and animosities that have sundered and kept apart the followers of the world's leading religious systems; enumerates the essential prerequisites for the attainment by every true seeker of the object of his quest; demonstrates the validity, the sublimity and significance of the Báb's Revelation; acclaims the heroism and detachment of His disciples; foreshadows, and prophesies the world-wide triumph of the Revelation promised to the people of the Bayán; upholds the purity and innocence of the Virgin Mary; glorifies the Imáms of the Faith of Muhammad; celebrates the martyrdom, and lauds the spiritual sovereignty, of the Imám Husayn; unfolds the meaning of such symbolic terms as `Return',

`Resurrection', `Seal of the Prophets' and `Day of Judgment'; adumbrates and distinguishes between the three stages of Divine Revelation; and expatiates, in glowing terms, upon the glories and wonders of the `City of God', renewed, at fixed intervals, by the dispensation of Providence, for the guidance, the benefit and salvation of all mankind. Well may it be claimed that of all the books revealed by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation, this Book alone, by sweeping away the age-long barriers that have so insurmountably separated the great religions of the world, has laid down a broad and unassailable foundation for the complete and permanent reconciliation of their followers."

This "priceless treasure" to which Bahá'u'lláh subsequently gave the title of Íqán (Certitude) was originally known among the early believers as "Epistle to the Uncle (of the Báb)", since it was his request for elucidation regarding some specific questions which prompted Bahá'u'lláh to reveal this book. The questions he had asked were closely linked with the coming of the Promised Qá'im, such as the following:

The fulfillment of specific signs

The question of Muhammad being considered as the last of the Prophets

The resurrection of the dead

The sovereignty of the Qá'im

The Day of Judgment

Doomsday

The return of the Imáms

Belief in the perpetual character of the laws of Islám

Opposition of the clergy

These as well as many other interesting topics are treated in this outstanding work.

THE SEVEN VALLEYS AND THE

FOUR VALLEYS

Bahá'u'lláh's Seven Valleys is a monumental work in the realm of mystical thought. Shoghi Effendi refers to it as "a treatise that may well be regarded as His greatest mystical composition ... which He wrote in answer to the questions of Shaykh Muhyi'd-Dín, the Qádí of Kháníqayn, in which He describes the seven stages which the soul of the seeker must needs traverse ere it can attain the object

of its existence."

This profound essay opens up a new outlook on life and brings abiding delight to the heart of many a seeker after truth. The story is one of a lover who, despite much suffering and hardship, trudges through mystic valleys in his eager search for the One Who is the Object of his quest. The valleys referred to in the text are those of: Search, Love, Knowledge, Unity, Contentment, Wonder, True Poverty and Absolute Selflessness, each of which has been described in this treatise.

The Four Valleys is a sister essay to the former. It is revealed in the same mystical language and is full of charm and food for thought. It streamed from the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh some time after the Seven Valleys had been revealed, and is addressed to Shaykh `Abdu'r-Rahmán-i-Karkútí, a learned Súfí of that period. In it Bahá'u'lláh traces out four paths, namely: Spirit, Reason, Love and the Realm of Conscience, by which the ardent lover may set out on his spiritual journey to the court of the Beloved.

These two essays are unique among the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and their perusal serves immensely to enhance one's capacity for meditation and spiritual perception.

TABLET OF THE HOLY MARINER

This is one of the weightiest emanations from the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh. In it He hints at the ominous happenings which then loomed on the horizon and foreshadows the approach of a period of apprehension and grave anxiety. Expatiating on the circumstances which prevailed at the time when this Tablet was revealed Shoghi Effendi writes:

"It was on the fifth of Naw-Rúz (1863), while Bahá'u'lláh was celebrating the festival in the Mazra`iy-i-Vashásh, in the outskirts of Baghdád, and had just revealed the Tablet of the Holy Mariner, whose gloomy prognostications had aroused the grave apprehensions of His companions, that an emissary of Námiq Páshá arrived and delivered into His hands a communication requesting an interview between Him and the governor.

"Already, as Nabíl has pointed out in his narrative, Bahá'u'lláh had, in the course of His discourses, during the last years of His sojourn in Baghdád, alluded to the period of trial and turmoil that was inexorably approaching, exhibiting a sadness and heaviness of heart which greatly perturbed those around Him."

And further on:

"Oceans of sorrow,' Nabíl affirms, `surged in the hearts of the listeners when the Tablet of the Holy Mariner was read aloud to them.... It was evident to every one that the chapter of Baghdád was about to be closed, and a new one opened, in its stead. No sooner had that Tablet been chanted than Bahá'u'lláh ordered that the tents which had been pitched should be folded up, and that all His companions should return to the city. While the tents were being removed He observed: "These tents may be likened to the trappings of this world, which no sooner are they spread out than the time cometh for them to be rolled up." From these words of His they who heard them perceived that these tents would never again be pitched on that spot. They had not yet been taken away when the messenger arrived from Baghdád to deliver the afore-mentioned communication from the governor."

LAWH-I-HÚRÍYYIH

(Tablet of the Maiden)

This is yet another matchless outpouring from the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh in which, as affirmed by the beloved Guardian, "events of a far remoter future are foreshadowed."

This Tablet is wholly in Arabic and begins with these words:

"In the Name of God, the Most Holy, the Most Exalted!
Praise be to Thee, O Lord, my God. I make mention of Thee at this moment when Thy divine Luminary hath risen above the horizon of the sacred Mount of Thy celestial realm of oneness."

The main part of this Tablet is couched in figurative language, depicting a wondrous Maiden who embodies the Most Great Spirit.

SÚRIY-I-SABR

(Súrih of Patience)

This lengthy Epistle, also known as the Súrih of Ayyúb (Job) was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh on the first day of Ridvan 1863. The whole Súrih is written in Arabic. It is highly eloquent in style and vibrant with power and glory.

In it, among other things, Bahá'u'lláh refers to the woeful episode of Nayríz and praises in glowing terms the heroism and fortitude of Vahíd and the company of his fellow-sufferers. The recipient of this mighty Epistle is none other than the indomitable, the long-suffering Hájí Muhammad Taqí who bore heroically, over a long period, horrible tortures beyond human endurance.

Hájí Muhammad Taqí was one of the wealthiest natives of

Nayríz, famous for his honesty and noble character. When the Báb declared His mission in 1844, he embraced the new Faith and became one of its ardent followers. At the outbreak of the Nayríz upheaval in 1850, Hájí Muhammad Taqí threw in his lot with the defenders of the Fort of Khájih near Nayríz, and during the whole period of siege, which lasted no less than four months, he acted as the host, furnishing unstintingly from his own resources all the food and provisions needed for the subsistence of his besieged companions. This vital contribution, together with the daring deeds whereby he managed to get the supplies into the fort in the teeth of enemy vigilance and opposition, made Zaynu'l-`Ábidín Khán, the fanatical governor of Nayríz, so furious that he vowed to wreak his vengeance upon him as soon as the Bábís had surrendered. Later when, through enemy treachery, the evacuation of the fort took place, Hájí Muhammad Taqí was delivered into the hands of the ruthless governor, who imprisoned him in a dungeon and tortured him daily for nearly a year.

The nature of the torture the governor had prescribed for this victim is too shocking to contemplate. Every morning, even on cold, winter days, he was stripped of clothing, then cast into the pool in the courtyard, while a number of guards stood around the pool and thrashed him mercilessly with rods until the water was tinged red with his blood and the victim was in a state of collapse. After a short time, the sight of the havoc wrought upon his body through this daily torture was frightful. His head and shoulders were a mass of blood and swollen flesh, while his face was wholly disfigured beyond recognition. Sometimes, with his ghastly wounds exposed, he was paraded through the bazaars and along the streets at the head of a shouting and jeering crowd, while his jailers were busily engaged in extorting money from the awe-struck shopkeepers and passers-by.

The story of how Hájí Muhammad Taqí was miraculously rescued from jail is part of Bahá'í history. It remains to be said that he eventually went to Yazd where by the grace of God his wounds gradually healed and he was later able to go on foot to Baghdád where he attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh not long before His declaration in 1863.

COMMENTARY ON THE LETTERS PREFIXED

TO THE SÚRIHS OF THE QUR'ÁN

This lengthy Epistle, revealed in Arabic, is profound. It enshrines many pearls of divine reality and unfolds the meaning of a number of symbolic terms and passages, including various interpretations of the disconnected letters Alif, Lám, Mím, which occur at the commencement of the second Súrih of the Qur'án. Moreover, the commentary on the figurative passage in the Qur'án

which begins with the words "Alláh is the light of the heaven and of the earth" is highly illuminating. In this Epistle Bahá'u'lláh also expatiates on the significance and use of certain elements and makes reference to the substance known as "elixir and the philosopher's stone".

This Epistle was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád in reply to questions put to Him by one of the followers of the Báb, named Mírzá Áqáy-i-Rikáb-Sáz who was eventually martyred in Shíráz with two other Bábís. Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By* refers to this episode in these words:

"In Shíráz Mírzá Áqáy-i-Rikáb-Sáz, together with Mírzá Rafî -i-Khayyát and Mashhadí Nabí, were by order of the local mujtahid simultaneously strangled in the dead of night, their graves being later desecrated by a mob who heaped refuse upon them."

The mujtahid who condemned the above believers to death was named Shaykh Husayn-i-Názim, whom Bahá'u'lláh stigmatized as "the tyrant".

LAWH-I-MADÍNATU'T-TAWHÍD

(Tablet of the City of Unity)

Within the pages of this entralling Tablet Bahá'u'lláh proclaims the oneness of God, describes some of His transcendent attributes and affirms that no one can ever attain to His knowledge save by recognizing those who are the Bearers of His Message and the Repositories of His celestial wisdom and glory. The opening verse of this Tablet runs as follows:

"This is the City of Divine Unity. Enter ye therein, O concourse of the believers in divine unity, so that ye may, through heavenly tidings, be numbered among those who rejoice with exceeding gladness."

From the latter part of this Tablet is wafted the vivifying breeze of the coming Springtime. Here Bahá'u'lláh gives, in clear and thrilling language, the tidings of the approaching hour of His Revelation. One passage reads:

"Hearken unto the Day when the Herald raiseth His Call in the midmost heart of the immortal realm, when the Dove of Hijáz warbleth from the land of `Iráq summoning all unto concord, and when the gate of heaven is flung open before the face of the entire creation. This is the Day that shall not be overtaken by the gloom of night, as the sun receiveth its light therefrom, inasmuch as this Day is illumined by the splendour of His radiant face. By the

righteousness of God! At that moment a holy and new earth is spread out at the behest of God, the Omnipotent, the Mighty, the Inaccessible."

The recipient of this beautiful Tablet was the devoted Shaykh Salmán of Hindíyán in southern Persia, Bahá'u'lláh's trusted and high-spirited courier during the whole period of His ministry. He also continued his services during the days of the Master until he passed away in Shíráz after a life-long period of unexcelled devotion and sacrifice.

When Bahá'u'lláh was exiled to Baghdád in 1852, Salmán was the first follower of the Báb to enter His presence. Once he asked Him for some explanations about the oneness of God and how one could reach Him and know Him. In reply, Bahá'u'lláh revealed this soul-uplifting Tablet in his honour.

SAHÍFIY-I-SHATTÍYYÍH

In this inspiring, lengthy Tablet Bahá'u'lláh demonstrates the invincible power of the Cause of God. He asserts that no matter how formidable the reverses it might suffer in the future it is nevertheless endowed with a power such as to surmount every crisis and tear down every obstacle that stands in its way. It is simply undefeatable. It forges ahead victoriously from strength to strength until its glorious mission is wholly consummated. Dwelling on this subject, Bahá'u'lláh likens the irresistible march of the Faith to a great river (hence the title Sahífiy-i-Shattíyyíh meaning river-like) which when in flood carries everything before it. He portrays this point in these words:

"Behold the flow of this river which we see before Us. When torrential and swollen it rolleth on and surgeth forward. Whatever course it taketh, it is irresistible in its might. It taketh no notice of the hue and cry the populace raise, shouting: `The great dyke hath burst', or `the embankment is flooded', or `the house is ruined', or `the palace is devastated'. Unconcerned it rusheth on pursuing its path with vehement fury and force and with overwhelming strength and majesty."

MUSÍBÁT-I-HURÚFÁT-I-`ÁLÍYÁT

(The Calamities of the Letters of Loftiness)

A stream of sadness runs through this Tablet as Bahá'u'lláh dramatically depicts the transitory nature of this earthly life and brings home to one's mind, in graphic manner, the important fact that there is no refuge for man save through submission to the inscrutable Will of the Supreme Ordainer.

In the dedicatory note at the beginning of this Tablet Bahá'u'lláh affirms that this Epistle was written about the calamities of the Letters of Loftiness and that in those days He dedicated it to a particular person. Later certain individuals begged Bahá'u'lláh to write a commentary on it in the Persian tongue. It was done and this Tablet became manifest and resplendent in gem-like words. He explains also that since word-for-word translation, in conformity with the original style, lacks refinement, that which streamed forth from His Pen was recorded.

The person alluded to in the text is Bahá'u'lláh's cousin, Mírzá Muhammad Vazír, who was much loved and favoured by Him. He passed away in Mázindarán, Persia, at the time when Bahá'u'lláh was in Baghdád. His death came as a tragic blow both to Bahá'u'lláh and the rest of the Holy Family, particularly to the wife and sister of the deceased named Havvá (Eve) and Maryam (Mary) respectively. Therefore as a token of heartfelt sympathy for the loss His two loved kinswomen had sustained, Bahá'u'lláh honoured them with this Tablet which immortalized their memory and brought solace and consolation to their grief-laden hearts. In the closing paragraph of this Tablet Bahá'u'lláh recalls to mind, in touching language, the burdens of care and anguish these two souls were destined to bear. The epilogue opens with these words:

"However, Thou hast ordained that afflictions shall, in these times, be the lot of these two beauteous countenances. The first is named after the One whom Thou hast singled out to be the Mother of all mankind, and the other is the one who beareth the name of Her whom Thou hast raised above all the women in the world."

Maryam, the sister of the deceased Mírzá Muhammad Vazír, was Bahá'u'lláh's cousin who had married His half-brother, Mírzá Rídá Qulí. She was greatly devoted to Bahá'u'lláh, enjoyed His unqualified confidence and was highly admired by Him for her noble qualities and spiritual attainments. Notable among Maryam's writings is a poem she wrote in praise of Bahá'u'lláh in which she gives vent to the gnawing grief she bore for her separation from Him.

Among the Tablets Bahá'u'lláh revealed in her name is the well-known Tablet of Maryam from which Shoghi Effendi quotes a few passages in *God Passes By*. One passage is as follows:

"The wrongs I suffer have blotted out the wrongs suffered by My First Name (the Báb) from the Tablet of creation." "O Maryam!" He continues, "From

the Land of Tá (Tihrán), after countless afflictions, We reached `Irâq, at the bidding of the Tyrant of Persia, where after the fetters of Our foes, We were afflicted with the perfidy of Our friends. God knoweth what befell Me thereafter!"

And another passage:

"I roamed the wilderness of resignation, travelling in such wise that in My exile every eye wept sore over Me, and all created things shed tears of blood because of My anguish. The birds of the air were My companions and the beasts of the field My associates."

Maryam passed away in Tihrán and is buried in the precincts of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh's sepulchre in the outskirts of the capital.

The other "beauteous countenance" mentioned in the Tablet is Havvá. She was the wife of the deceased Mírzá Muhammad and a niece of Bahá'u'lláh whom He always regarded with much favour and affection and used to call by the pet name "Sháh Bájí". She died in Tákur, Mázindarán where she was laid to rest close to the tombs of her parents.

JAVÁHIRU'L-ASRÁR

(The Essence of Mysteries)

Javáhiru'l-Asrár is a monumental work. It is one of the choicest fruits that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh has yielded. Judged by the nature of its contents, this illuminating book, which is written in eloquent Arabic, may be regarded as a sister to the Íqán, since most of the subjects treated in that celebrated work are also briefly mentioned in this epistle. It was written by Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád sometime before the revelation of the Íqán, in answer to a number of questions put to Him by Hájí Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfáháfi, one of the most accomplished Persian students of Isfáhán who at that time resided in `Irâq.

In this mighty epistle, within the space of about one hundred pages, Bahá'u'lláh refers to the grievous tribulation and adversities that He suffered at the hand of the infidels; deplores the perversity of the followers of past religions; elucidates the meaning of the signs and prophecies concerning the advent of the new Manifestation, including the meaning of the passage in the Bible where it says: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass away"; affirms the continuity of divine revelation; unfolds the significance of such symbolic terms as "the Day of Judgment", "the Balance", "the

Way", "the resurrection of the dead", and "the identity of the Promised Qá'im and the place from which He is expected to appear"; asserts the inevitability of heaven-sent trials, and describes the inner meaning of such terms as "life and death", "attainment to the presence of God", "the valley of bewilderment", "the station of self-surrender" and "the character and qualities of those who have attained His Court".

Hájí Siyyid Muhammad was one of the distinguished disciples of the learned and well-known Shaykh Murtida Ansárí who was the recognized head of the Shî ah hierarchy and occupied a pre-eminent position among the leaders of Islám. (This is the same Ansárí to whom Bahá'u'lláh refers in His Epistle to the Sháh of Persia).

On completing his studies at the Muslim centre of learning at Sámarrá' in `Iráq, Siyyid Muhammad was elevated to the rank of Mujtahid, a title which confers upon the holder the authority to expound and apply the laws and doctrines of Islám. Having thus attained the pinnacle of the learning of his time, he decided to return to his home town of Isfáhán to practise law and act as the leading cleric of that city. He therefore left for Baghdád where he stayed for a time at the home of two Persian merchant brothers from his home town of Isfáhán.

During his sojourn there he learned that the Bábí movement had made great headway in that city under the leadership of one who bore the title of Bahá'u'lláh. Siyyid Muhammad, boastful of his high learning and priding himself on his new title and position, felt inclined to seek a confrontation with the leader of this new movement, with the view to confound him by his power of argument and superior knowledge, and to assert his ascendancy over him. Such a victory, he thought, would enhance his position in the eyes of the leading mullás and redound to his glory and reputation throughout Persia and `Iráq.

Therefore, one evening he sought a meeting with Bahá'u'lláh at His home and was admitted into His presence. This meeting must have been dramatic and stirring beyond words. It lasted several hours at the end of which time Siyyid Muhammad, far from having gained ascendancy over his adversary found, to his amazement, that he had virtually been reduced to a speck of dust in the face of the overwhelming power and knowledge of his Host. Presently his sense of pride and vanity evaporated and gave way to humility and submissiveness. There at this meeting he became convinced of the divine character of the new Revelation and was so impressed by the transcendent personality of Bahá'u'lláh that he sat in His presence for a long time, spellbound with wonder and

awe. Eventually when the time for leave-taking came, it was well past midnight.

On reaching his lodging that night he boldly told his landlords where he had been and what had transpired at the meeting. Being extremely fanatical in religious matters, the two Isfáhání brothers rebuked him severely, denied him food and drink, and in a rush of anger expelled him from their house in the dead of night. Undismayed by this ungracious treatment, Siyyid Muhammad trudged his way on foot to Sámarrá', a distance of about one hundred kilometers, where he sought the presence of his former master and spiritual leader, the far-famed Shaykh Murtida Ansárí at the same school which he himself had attended as a pupil. When he entered his presence, he found him giving a discourse to a vast company of his disciples. He sat there among the audience and, immediately after the talk was over, sprang to his feet and in a courageous and impressive manner expounded the teachings of the Báb and vindicated the truth of His mission. Thereupon a wave of indignation swept over the whole company who denounced him as a heretic and rushed upon him in fury, and had it not been for the tactful and timely intervention of their master they would have inflicted severe injuries upon him.

The words of Siyyid Muhammad, however, made a deep impression upon his learned master, who deplored the unseemly conduct of his students. Meanwhile he thought the moment was not propitious to comment on this subject, but promised to examine the teachings of this new creed and make a statement about it later.

As to Siyyid Muhammad, he remained firm and steadfast in the new Faith he had embraced, despite the bitter hatred and opposition of the Muslim clergy, and soon after this incident took up his residence in Najaf, renounced title and position and devoted much of his time to studying and spreading the teachings of this Revelation. Then sometime later he was prompted to write to Bahá'u'lláh and ask for elucidation of certain questions which baffled his mind. In reply, Bahá'u'lláh revealed this sparkling gem, the Javáhiru'l-Asrár, for his enlightenment and that of men of understanding in this age.

LAWH-I-SHIKKAR SHIKAN

This Tablet was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh sometime towards the end of His sojourn in Baghdád in reply to a seemingly mild communication addressed to Him by Mírzá Sa`íd Khán, the then Persian Foreign Minister.

In God Passes By Shoghi Effendi describes the evil machinations of this crafty man who stigmatized the Faith as a "misguided and detestable sect" and assiduously

endeavoured, through the dissemination of false reports and alarming accusations, to have Bahá'u'lláh banished to a place far removed from the Persian border. In his letter the minister feigned concern about Bahá'u'lláh's safety, saying that he had reasons to believe that His enemies were conspiring against Him, and that it would be advisable for him to transfer His place of residence to another town away from Baghdád. Bahá'u'lláh's reply, embodied in this Tablet, is imbued with the spirit of detachment and fortitude and strikingly reflects His imperturbable calm and serenity. One passage runs as follows:

"One should kiss the hand of the executioner and, rapt in holy ecstasy, set one's face towards the abode of the Beloved."

And further He says:

"Holding up Our neck, We eagerly yearn for the pitiless sword of the Loved One, and, exposing Our breast, We crave, with heart and soul, after the darts of His Decree. We disdain fame and keep aloof from aught else but Him. We neither flee from Our enemies nor disperse them. We earnestly pray for adversity in order to soar in the holy realms of the spirit, abide 'neath the shade of the tree of reunion and attain the loftiest station of love. Afflictions cannot annihilate this people. This wayfaring cannot be accomplished by human feet, nor can any veil obscure this Countenance."

And further He continues:

"We are established upon the seat of tranquillity and occupy the couch of resignation. Why should the mystic fish fear shipwreck, or the sanctified spirit allow itself to be distressed at the destruction of the physical body?"

LAWH-I-GHULÁMU'L KHULD

(Tablet of the Youth of Paradise)

This wonderful Tablet was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdád during the Ridván Festival. The first part is in Arabic, the latter in Persian. It begins with these words:

"This is in commemoration of what hath been manifested in the year sixty, in the Days of God, the Omnipotent, the Help in Peril, the Almighty, the All-Knowing."

Every word of this Tablet rings with ecstasy and heavenly delight and reverberates with the glorification of the dawning light of the Day of God which broke on the horizon of Shíráz through the appearance of the Báb.

Here Bahá'u'lláh extols this momentous event by means of symbolic expressions which are interspersed with many a soul-stirring refrain such as this one:

"Glad-tidings! This is the Youth of Paradise. Verily He is come with the crystal water."

In the latter part of this Tablet Bahá'u'lláh refers to the coming of Him Who is the Desired One, and proclaims:

"O friends! The Wine of eternal life is steaming forth. O ye that yearn after Him! The Beauty of the Beloved is unveiled and manifest. O beloved ones! The Flame on the Sinai of love is shining resplendent."

LAWH-I-HAWDAJ

(Tablet of the Howdah)

This Tablet which is also known as the Tablet of Sámsún is yet another wondrous outpouring of the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh. It was revealed in August 1863 when He, together with the company of the exiles, had reached the outskirts of Sámsún on the Black Sea, on their way to Constantinople.

In *God Passes By* Shoghi Effendi refers to this Tablet in these words:

"Sighting from His howdah the Black Sea, as He approached the port of Sámsún, Bahá'u'lláh, at the request of Mírzá Áqá Ján, revealed a Tablet, designated *Lawh-i-Hawdaj* (Tablet of the Howdah), which by such allusions as the 'Divine Touchstone', 'the grievous and tormenting Mischief', reaffirmed and supplemented the dire predictions recorded in the recently revealed Tablet of the Holy Mariner."

The opening passage of the Tablet runs as follows:

"These verses were revealed behind the Veil of Immortality, in the Howdah of Holiness, when the Most Great Name arrived from the court of the All-Glorious in the land of Sámsún, on the shore of the great sea. Thereupon the hosts of divine revelation descended, arrayed in such beauty that all that are in heaven and on earth were dumbfounded. The Day Star of Beauty shone forth before them in His holy and ethereal Temple and addressed to the Ark what had previously been revealed in a Tablet by the Pen of the Most High, in which the Holy Mariner is invoked in a tone of grief."

The theme which runs through the text of this historic Tablet is the affirmation of the invincible power of the Cause of God,

stressing that whatever the reverses and setbacks the Cause may yet suffer, there can be no shadow of doubt that its future glory and triumph are unimaginably great.

TABLET TO SULTÁN `ABDU'L-`AZÍZ

AND HIS MINISTERS

Unfortunately the text of this momentous Tablet is not available. However, in *God Passes By* Shoghi Effendi describes the historical background as well as the dire circumstances which led to the revelation of this mighty Tablet. The following extracts are highly illuminating:

"The initial phase of that Proclamation may be said to have opened in Constantinople with the communication (the text of which we, alas, do not possess) addressed by Bahá'u'lláh to Sultán `Abdu'l-`Azíz himself, the self-styled vicar of the Prophet of Islám and the absolute ruler of a mighty empire.... The occasion for this communication was provided by the infamous edict the Sultán had promulgated, less than four months after the arrival of the exiles in his capital, banishing them, suddenly and without any justification whatsoever, in the depth of winter, and in the most humiliating circumstances, to Adrianople, situated on the extremities of his empire.... No less a personage than the highly-respected brother-in-law of the Sadr-i-A`zam was commissioned to apprise the Captive of the edict pronounced against Him...

"That same day a Tablet, severely condemnatory in tone, was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, was entrusted by Him, in a sealed envelope, on the following morning, to Shamsí Big, who was instructed to deliver it into the hands of `Alí Páshá, and to say that it was sent down from God. `I know not what that letter contained,' Shamsí Big subsequently informed Áqáy-i-Kalím, `for no sooner had the Grand Vizir perused it than he turned the color of a corpse, and remarked: "It is as if the King of Kings were issuing his behest to his humblest vassal king and regulating his conduct." So grievous was his condition that I backed out of his presence.' `Whatever action,' Bahá'u'lláh, commenting on the effect that Tablet had produced, is reported to have stated, `the ministers of the Sultán took against Us, after having become acquainted with its contents, cannot be regarded as unjustifiable. The acts they committed before its perusal, however, can have no justification.'

"That Tablet, according to Nabíl, was of considerable length, opened with words directed to the sovereign himself, severely censured his ministers, exposed their immaturity and incompetence, and included passages in which the ministers themselves were

addressed, in which they were boldly challenged, and sternly admonished not to pride themselves on their worldly possessions, nor foolishly seek the riches of which time would inexorably rob them."

LAWH-I-NÁQÚS

(The Tablet of the Bell)

"O Monk of the Incomparable One! Ring out the Bell, inasmuch as the Day of the Lord hath shone forth and the Beauty of the All-Glorious is established upon His holy and resplendent Throne."

This Tablet, the opening verse of which is given above, reflects in every word the grandeur and sublimity of this divine Revelation. Whether this is due to its rare eloquence, or the captivating charm of its refrains, or the depth and wealth of its symbolic terms, or the beauty of its rhymed words and phrases, or the sense of heavenly joy its glad-tidings evoke, or is due to any combination of these features, it is hard to say. Bahá'u'lláh revealed these verses of praise in celebration of that auspicious night which witnessed the inception of the Faith of God on earth through the declaration of the Báb.

Shoghi Effendi in a letter to Mr. Ágáh of Shíráz affirms that this Tablet was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh and written in His own hand in Constantinople on the eve of the fifth of Jamádíyu'l-Avval, 1280 A.H. (October 19, 1863) which marks the twenty-first lunar anniversary of the Báb's declaration, at the request of one of His devoted companions named Muhammad `Alí Isfáhání. (An outline of his biography appears in `Abdu'l-Bahá's Memorials of the Faithful.)

Shoghi Effendi considers that it would be appropriate to read this Tablet at the meetings held for the celebration of this anniversary.

MATHNAVÍ

This is a collection of veritable mystic gems which the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh has strung together into a masterpiece of poetry. The work comprises more than three hundred lines of enchanting verse in Persian, and is yet another striking evidence of Bahá'u'lláh's matchless utterance.

In these verses Bahá'u'lláh communes with His own inner Being in the language of a lover whose heart leaps with joy and adoration, or like a nightingale which pours forth songs of praise in its ardent longing for the beauty of the mystic Rose. He invokes the Source of His Soul, beseeching It to reveal a glimpse of Its eternal

beauty and to bestow upon the world a dewdrop from the infinite ocean of divine mercy, so that wayward humanity may be redeemed and attain to a new life.

The verses abound in allegorical terms, and their reading evokes a subtle and deep thought in one's mind. It opens up a new approach to the knowledge of God and unfolds a vast horizon for contemplation of the greatness of Bahá'u'lláh's manifestation.

The work was revealed in Constantinople in 1863, as Bahá'u'lláh Himself affirms in His monumental apologia, the Kitáb-i-Badí, wherein He voices His yearning for tribulation in the path of His Beloved. There He quotes the closing lines of this work which refer to the same theme and give vent also to His anguish at the fate His Most Holy Habitation in Baghdád was destined to suffer. These few lines run somewhat like this:

"From the Court of the Beloved, O gentle breeze!

Wing for once thy way over the land of Baghdád.

Say unto her: O City of God!

How canst thou remain tranquil
since thy Beloved is gone away?

Thy Beloved is consigned to prison and sorely wronged,

Like unto Husayn on the plain of Karbilá.

One lonely Husayn amid thousands of Yazíds,

One single Friend among a host of fierce foes."

Notes by Gwyn Magaditsch, typist

The attached Bahá'í World article by Mr. Khavari and translated by Habib Tahirzadih, has been proofed several times, but that does not mean it is completely error-free. Our years of experience have proven that sometimes it takes six or seven different proofreaders to comb out all the errors in any typed or scanned text to catch the majority of typos--and even then there may be one or two left in a text as large as the Kitáb-i-Íqán or 10 or more in a text the size of Unfolding Destiny or God Passes By.

A few notes on the work: In the second paragraph

under Lawh-i-Shikkar Shikan, "...it would be advisable for him to transfer His place of residence..."-- does the "him" refer to the minister changing Bahá'u'lláh's place of residence or to Bahá'u'lláh changing His place of residence? That would determine if the "him" should be "Him" or not.

There were a few places in which double-quotes and single-quotes were transposed and which we have corrected in this text. There was a some inconsistency in using quote marks for offset paragraphs quoting Bahá'u'lláh. See the two quotations under the Tablet entitled SÁQÍ AZ GHAYB-I-BAQÁ, as well as the quotation beginning "Noah's flood..." under the Ode entitled QASÍDIY-I-VARQÁ'ÍYYIH.

Also, I used MARS to get the writings from God Passes By, and I noted that some punctuation was omitted from excerpts, the word "the" was used instead of "that" in one place, and a few other such discrepancies. The original work I had compiled for you with diacritical marks in MS-Word had those discrepancies, but this vanilla text, which I created for my own database [REFER module], and it has the writings exactly as found in the REFER version of God Passes By.

There were also a few typos which failed to capitalize the pronouns for the Manifestations. I inserted [sic] into the text where these typos occurred.

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