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“Verily I say! No one hath apprehended the root of this Cause. It is incumbent upon everyone, in this day, to perceive with the eye of God, and to hearken with His ear. Whoso beholdeth Me with an eye besides Mine own will never be able to know Me. None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.” (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Advent of Divine Justice*:77)

“In this day the verses of the Mother Book are resplendent and unmistakable even as the sun. They can in no wise be mistaken for any past or more recent utterances. Truly this Wronged One desireth not to demonstrate His Own Cause with proofs produced by others. He is the One Who embraceth all things, while all else besides Him is circumscribed. Say, O people, peruse that which is current amongst you and We will peruse what pertaineth unto Us.” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih*, in *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* revealed after the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* [TB]:74)

“The Cause is manifest, it shineth resplendent as the sun, but the people have become veils unto themselves. We entreat God that He may graciously assist them to return unto Him. He is, in truth, the Forgiving, the Merciful.” (Bahá'u'lláh, TB:79)

“Some of the divines who have declared this Servant an

infidel have at no time met with Me. Never having seen Me, or become acquainted with My purpose, they have nevertheless spoken as they pleased and acted as they desired. Yet every claim requireth a proof, not mere words and displays of outward piety.” (Bahá'u'lláh, Suriy-i-Haykal, in Summons of the Lord of Hosts:223)

“The breezes of Revelation can never be confounded with other breezes. Now the Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing standeth laden with countless fruits before thy face; besmirch not thyself with idle fancies, as have done the people aforetime. These utterances themselves proclaim the true nature of the Faith of God. He it is Who witnesseth unto all things. To demonstrate the truth of His Revelation He hath not been, nor is He, dependent upon any one. Well nigh a hundred volumes of luminous verses and perspicuous words have already been sent down from the heaven of the will of Him Who is the Revealer of signs, and are available unto all. It is for thee to direct thyself towards the Ultimate Goal, and the Supreme End, and the Most Sublime Pinnacle, that thou mayest hear and behold what hath been revealed by God, the Lord of the worlds.” (Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf:115)

FOREWORD

Whenever words and phrases are in italics or in CAPITAL LETTERS, these effects have been adopted for emphasis, and are not integral to the original source texts.

Long citations from the writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and others who are identified in this study as Prophets are indented, while in citations from the Writings and utterances of „Abdu'l-Bahá and the writings of Shoghi Effendi only the first line of the citation is indented.

All interpretations of texts cited in this study are not original to the compiler and commentator, and hence he does not claim to be their inventor. Nor does he claim that his interpretations are the only valid understandings of the texts cited. Let the reader read, reflect and come to his own conclusions.

The abbreviated titles of source texts are used almost without exception in this book:

ABDP: „Abdu'l-Bahá on Divine Philosophy

ABL: „Abdu'l-Bahá in London

ADJ: Shoghi Effendi, The Advent of Divine Justice

AHW: Bahá'u'lláh, Arabic Hidden Words

BG: Bhagavad-Gita

BP: Bahá'í Prayers

BWF: „Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í World Faith

ESW: Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf
 FV: Bahá'u'lláh, The Four Valleys
 GL: Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh
 GPB: Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By
 GTT: Shoghi Effendi, Guidance for Today and Tomorrow
 JA: Bahá'u'lláh, Javahiru'l-Asrar
 JN: Gospel of John
 KA: Bahá'u'lláh, Kitab-i-Aqdas
 KI: Bahá'u'lláh, Kitáb-i-Iqán
 LK: Gospel of Luke
 MK: Gospel of Mark
 MT: Gospel of Matthew
 PDC: Shoghi Effendi, The Promised Day is Come
 PHW: Bahá'u'lláh, Persian Hidden Words
 PM: Bahá'u'lláh, Prayers and Meditations
 PT: „Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks
 PUP: „Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace
 REV: Book of Revelation (The Apocalypse)
 SAQ: „Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions
 SDC: „Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization
 SLH: Bahá'u'lláh, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts
 SP: Báb, The Seven Proofs
 SV: Bahá'u'lláh, The Seven Valleys
 SW: Star of the West
 SWAB: Selections from the Writings of „Abdu'l-Bahá
 TAB: Tablets of „Abdu'l-Bahá
 TB: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas
 TF: „Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet to Dr. Auguste Forel
 UAB: Utterances of Abdul Beha Abbas to two young men, American pilgrims to Acre, 1901; New York: The Board of Counsel, 1902
 PREFACE

This book sets forth the proofs of prophethood described in the writings of Mírzá Husayn 'Alí Núrí (1817-1892), known as Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh was born in Tihran, the capital city of Iran, and was brought up in that city and on various properties in its vicinity and in the province of Mazindaran, northeast of Tihran. His father was a minister in the court of Muhammad Shah, the King of Iran, who left Bahá'u'lláh his extensive properties upon his demise, when his eldest son was only eighteen years of age. In spring of the year 1260 according to the Islamic calendar (1844 Gregorian), at a time of considerable ferment through the Muslim domains because of the time prophecies which many believed would be fulfilled with its advent, Bahá'u'lláh received a document from an emissary named Mullá Husayn-i-Bushru'i. Upon reading that document, Bahá'u'lláh was immediately and unequivocally convinced of the divine inspiration and prophetic calling of its Author, Siyyid 'Alí Muhammad Shírází (1819-

1850), known as the Báb. Henceforth, Bahá'u'lláh was a Bábí, a follower of the Báb. He was active in the promotion of the new Faith, and was chiefly responsible for administering the gathering of Bábís who, in June/July of 1848, affirmed the independence of the Bábí Scriptures (called Bayán) from the Qur'an and hadith of the Islamic Dispensation, and the abrogation of the Islamic law (called sha'riah) by the new Bábí ordinances. Scarcely two years later, in July 1850 the Báb was executed by order of a group of secular and religious officials in the city of Tabriz, subsequent to imprisonment in the mountain fortresses of Mah-Ku and Chihriq. Another two years after this martyrdom, in August 1852, Bahá'u'lláh was arrested and imprisoned following a failed attempt on the life of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, then reigning King of Iran, by a few Bábís bent upon revenge for the government's approval of the execution of their beloved Báb. When released from this imprisonment, Bahá'u'lláh was exiled, along with family members and other Bábís, from the city of Tihran and the kingdom of Iran. He journeyed to Baghdad, in the land of 'Iraq, where the family and devoted friends took up their residence for over ten years. Bahá'u'lláh sojourned near the city of Sulaymaniyyih, in Kurdistan, northeast of Baghdad, for two years, from 1854 until 1856, and before and after this period were spent in Baghdad.

In the same year that Bahá'u'lláh became a follower of the Báb, 'Abbás (1844-1921), known as „Abdu'l-Bahá was born, the eldest son of this eminent Exile. This son also became an ardent believer in the new Faith, whose favorite pass-time in youth was the memorization and recitation of Tablets revealed by the Báb. The Báb had promised the appearance of "Him Whom God shall make manifest," another Prophet to follow soon after the inception of the Bábí Faith, pointing to the years "9" (1269=1852/1853) and "19" (1279=1862/1863). In the year "9" „Abdu'l-Bahá recognized Bahá'u'lláh as "Him Whom God shall make manifest" but the loyal son did not tell anyone this secret, because the time had not come for its disclosure. However, in the year "19" Bahá'u'lláh openly proclaimed to „Abdu'l-Bahá and a few other Bábís, on the even of their departure from Baghdad, that "Him Whom God shall make manifest" was none other than himself. The family and many of their Bábí friends were summoned first to Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, then to Adrianople, a backwater town to the northwest of Constantinople, and finally to the prison-city of 'Akka, in the province of Palestine (now known as Acco, in the state of Israel). During these years of exile, first in Baghdad, then Sulaymaniyyih, then Constantinople, Adrianople, 'Akka, and finally in the house of Bahji, in the outskirts of 'Akka, Bahá'u'lláh wrote and dictated thousands of pages of prose and verse, on a fantastic range of subjects, in the Persian and Arabic languages.

One of the themes which is found in many of these Writings are the proofs of the prophets of God. Bahá'u'lláh does not consider only the

proofs of the prophethood claimed by the Báb, or proofs of his own prophetic claims. He sets forth, in clear and authoritative fashion, citing verses from the Bible and Qur'an alike, the proofs of all of the Prophets of God. His son, „Abdu"l-Bahá, whom he appointed the authoritative interpreter of his teachings, and his great-grandson, Shoghi Effendi, appointed to the same office by „Abdu"l-Bahá, both elaborated these proofs of prophethood. This book is devoted to setting forth all of the proofs of prophethood which have been discovered in their writings and utterances.

INTRODUCTION

Among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that science and religion are compatible; that religion must be in agreement with reason and science; that each must investigate reality for himself and all are encouraged to forego blind imitation of others in matters of religious belief and observance. These are lofty principles, but one might well wonder how they can be translated into practice. How might they be realized in the way we live our lives?

The writings of Bahá'u'lláh call upon every human being to do two things: First, to investigate reality, to search after truth, to seek out knowledge, to learn, and specifically, to read and to meditate on the Word of God; Second, to strive to understand the teachings, obey the commandments, live according to the ordinances, and aspire to approach the ideals set forth in the Word of God. Is the first purpose fulfilled by joining a religious community, taking an oath, converting or returning to a Faith? According to conventional wisdom, it is. Religious belief is generally assumed to be based on emotions which defy reasonable explanation and have no relation to logical or scientific thinking. Indeed, those who continue to ask questions after they have apparently become believers in a particular Faith are often looked upon with suspicion by their fellow religionists, and their "faith" is rendered doubtful, their "trustworthiness" is seriously compromised. This kind of "faith" is not well regarded by Bahá'u'lláh. He not only permits questioning, rather we are invited to ask questions if there is anything we do not understand. In "Seven Valleys" (Haft Vadi), a treatise penned in response to the questions of Shaykh Muhyi'd-Din, a Muslim judge [qadi] in the city of Khaniqin, in 'Iraq, Bahá'u'lláh writes:

"If any of the utterances of this Servant may not be comprehended, or may lead to perturbation, the same must be inquired of again, that no doubt may linger, and the meaning be clear..."¹

Some years later, in the "Book of Certitude" (Kitáb-i-Iqán), a two-part reply to the questions of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, one of the maternal uncles of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh reaffirmed this principle in relation specifically to the Word of God:

Seven Valleys [SV], p. 40

"They have even failed to realize, all this time, that, in every age, the reading of the scriptures and holy books is for no other purpose except to enable the reader to apprehend their meaning and unravel their innermost mysteries. Otherwise reading, without understanding, is of no abiding profit unto man."²

He insisted, in that same Book, that the understanding of the Word of God is not reserved for those with human learning, that it is accessible to the masses of humanity³:

"Heed not the idle contention of those who maintain that the Book and the verses thereof can never be a testimony unto the common people, inasmuch as they neither grasp their meaning nor appreciate their value. And yet, the unfailing testimony of God to both the East and the West is none other than the Qur'an. Were it beyond the comprehension of men, how could it have been declared as a universal testimony unto all people? If their contention be true, none would therefore be required, nor would it be necessary for them to know God, inasmuch as the knowledge of the divine Being transcendeth the knowledge of His Book, and the common people would not possess the capacity to comprehend it.

"Such contention is utterly fallacious and inadmissible. It is actuated solely by arrogance and pride. Its motive is to lead the people astray from the Ridvan of divine good-pleasure and to tighten the reins of their authority over the people.

"And yet, in the sight of God, these common people are infinitely superior and exalted above their religious leaders who have turned away from the one true God."

This first purpose of humanity, to investigate reality takes on an entirely different character when one considers it in the light of an Islamic tradition, cited by Bahá'u'lláh in that same Book:

"We will accordingly make mention of a few traditions, that these may impart constancy to the wavering soul, and tranquillity to the troubled mind. Thereby, will the testimony of God unto the people, both high and low, be complete and perfect.

²Kitáb-i-Iqán [KI], p. 172

³KI:210-211

"Among them is the tradition, 'And when the Standard of Truth is made manifest, the people of both the East and the West curse it.' The wine of renunciation must needs be attained, and the meditation referred to in the words 'One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious

worship' must needs be observed, so that the secret of the wretched behaviour of the people might be discovered, these people who, despite the love and yearning for truth which they profess, curse the followers of Truth when once He hath been made manifest."4

What sort of "faith" is this, which proclaims, along with Socrates, that the unexamined life is not worth living? Bahá'u'lláh designated his eldest son „Abdu'l-Bahá as the authoritative interpreter of his writings and the expounder of his teachings. „Abdu'l-Bahá has defined "faith" in the following terms:

"Although a person of good deeds is acceptable at the Threshold of the Almighty, yet it is first 'to know,' and then 'to do'... "By faith is meant, first conscious knowledge, and second, the practice of good deeds."5

This is not a "faith" merely composed of "belief" nor one grounded in "imitation"--it is "faith" which is in harmony with science and reason.

Bahá'u'lláh has invited all of humanity to recognize the Prophets of God, not one alone, but all. He affirms that each of the Prophets of God can be recognized through observing his signs, his proofs, his evidences and arguments. We may be accustomed to thinking of "signs" as pertaining to the seasons--April showers bring May flowers,

4KI:238

TAB:III:549 and BWF:383: The original text of this statement is found, in Persian, in Muntakhabátí az Makátíb-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, III:99-100: [avval dánistan ast va ba'da 'amal namúdan/ímán dánistan ast va 'amal khayr majrî dáshtan]; and in English translation, in Tablets of „Abdu'l-Bahá (TAB:III:549) and Bahá'í World Faith (BWF:383). The same principle was cited in:

“A humanity which has come of age can respond to a directness of teaching that goes beyond the language of parable and allegory; faith is a matter not of blind belief, but of conscious knowledge.” (Bahá'í International Community, 1992 May 29, Statement on Bahá'u'lláh, p. 5)

autumn leaves and winter's snow and ice; and to roads--finding our way as we drive our cars from place to place to place. It may be quite a stretch for us to even imagine what the "signs" of God could be.

The terminology of proofs, evidence and arguments may remind us of mathematical formulas and rhetorical tactics we may have learned in high-school and college, or of movies about lawyers and newscasts about politicians. For some these words will recall the occasional unsympathetic classmate who was certain to counter whatever one might say with one relentless refrain: "Prove it! Prove it! Prove it!" How can proofs, evidence and arguments be associated with things of the Spirit, with religion, with God and His Prophets?

Bahá'u'lláh affirms the truth of something we probably take for granted--that there is one reality. This is not to say that reality is undifferentiated, but that there are not plural, multiple realities coexisting in the same space and time. That reality is something objective and verifiable, although the manner in which we experience its verifiability may be modified depending upon which facet of reality we are encountering. Bahá'u'lláh establishes the prophethood of all of the Prophets of God on a rational basis, a scientific foundation--this we will discover in the course of this book. This is not positivistic reason, materialistic philosophy, a science of physical things which can be discerned through the senses--the reason and science with which we are all somewhat familiar. Rather, this is the science of metaphysics (that is, beyond the physical), the science of the extrasensory, and it is as systematic, logical, inclusive, associative and reliable as our "physical" science. Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that inasmuch as this science has been developed under the guidance of the infallible and divinely-inspired Prophets of God, it is actually more reliable than any physical science.

This systematic formulation of the proofs of prophethood by a claimant to the prophetic station is entirely unprecedented in the recorded history of religion. While it would have been astonishing enough if Bahá'u'lláh had merely set forth scientific proofs in support of his own prophetic mission, Bahá'u'lláh has added astonishment to astonishment through the establishment of the prophethood of all of the Prophets of God on the same foundation. Hence, when we find „Abdu'l-Bahá stating that the foundation of the religions of God is one, he is not saying something which is beyond our comprehension, something we must "believe" and not question, something which does not satisfy our minds. Rather, in affirming the one foundation of the teachings of the Prophets, „Abdu'l-Bahá was simply stating a fact, for it is upon evident and clear signs, proofs, evidences and arguments that Bahá'u'lláh established the validity of the Prophets of God. This one foundation of the proofs of prophethood establishes the essential truth of all of these divinely-revealed Faiths.

There are various terms used in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, „Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi to denote the signs, proofs, evidences and arguments for God and His Prophets. Study of this terminology and of the subjects it refers to may acquaint us with dimensions of the Bahá'í teachings which would otherwise remain hidden and unappreciated. Those who wish to acquaint themselves with these terms and their definitions in the original languages of the Bahá'í Writings--Arabic and Persian--are invited to read COMPANION TO PROOFS OF THE PROPHETS, Part One: The Nomenclature of Proof.

AN OUTLINE:

PROOFS OF THE PROPHETS OF GOD

FIRST PROOF:

PROPHECIES OF PREVIOUS PROPHETS

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:13,17,106,237;JA:7

„Abdu'l-Bahá:ABDP:43;SW XVI:2:434

SECOND PROOF:

WORDS OF THE PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:91-92,197,199-200,216,219-221,227;GL:105

„Abdu'l-Bahá:ABDP:43

THIRD PROOF:

REVELATION OF GOD

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:139-141;GL:60-62,67,85-86,105,142;BWF:116,117

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:143,377,378

FOURTH PROOF:

DEEDS OF THE PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh: KI:197

„Abdu'l-Bahá:ABDP:44;SAQ:14-42;PUP:364,366;PT:18

FIFTH PROOF:

THE PROPHET IN HIMSELF

Bahá'u'lláh: GL:47-48,105; KI:35,72-73,75,91-92,99-100;103-104

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:366;SAQ:43

Shoghi Effendi:GPB:5,11,14,19-21

SIXTH PROOF:

SUFFERING AND SACRIFICE OF THE PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:45,224,224-225,225-226,227-228;GL:56-57,75-76,85-86,

88-90,99-100;ESW:36,84-85; WOB:118-119

„Abdu'l-Bahá:KH:631-633/PUP:461

SEVENTH PROOF:

COURAGEOUS PROCLAMATION OF THE PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:35,45,230-234

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:340;SAQ:43-44;SW:XIV:8:231;

SW VIII:13:178

EIGHTH PROOF:

EVERY VALLEY SHALL BE EXALTED

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:146-147,154-156,221-222;GL:82-85;TB:186; K157

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:125,277,340,401-402;SAQ:30-31

NINTH PROOF:

AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL SHALL BE MADE

LOW

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:33,36,146-147;TB:186;K157

TENTH PROOF:

THE STAR-HERALD OF THE PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:62,63,65

ELEVENTH PROOF:

THE HUMAN HERALD OF THE PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:62-66;ESW:158,171

TWELFTH PROOF:

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CAUSE OF THE PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh:GL:91,219-220;PDC:90

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:405

Matthew 15:13; Acts 5:34,38-39

THIRTEENTH PROOF:

ANNULMENT OF PREVIOUS DISPENSATIONS BY
PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:38-39,44-45,238;GL:147;KA:#7

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:365

FOURTEENTH PROOF:

INNATE, DIVINELY-INSPIRED KNOWLEDGE OF
PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:100;SV:26;GL:58,90-91,219;TB:149;K104

„Abdu'l-Bahá:ABDP:53-54; SAQ:28-29

FIFTEENTH PROOF:

FULFILLMENT OF THE PROPHET'S PROPHECIES

Bahá'u'lláh:ESW:148,150;GL:58,221

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:232,339,410,432

SIXTEENTH PROOF:

REPUDIATION OF THE PROPHET BY RELIGIOUS
LEADERS

Bahá'u'lláh:GL:56-58,83;TB:206;KI:14-15,165,182,228-229,238

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PT:102;SAQ:30,35-36;PUP:431

SEVENTEENTH PROOF:

PENETRATION AND POTENCY OF THE PROPHET'S
WORD

Bahá'u'lláh:TB:173-174;GL:141;KA:#3-5

„Abdu'l-Bahá:SWAB:291-292;PUP:340-341,347;SW IX:9:104

EIGHTEENTH PROOF:

DIVINE AND ETERNAL SOVEREIGNTY OF THE
PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:99-100,106-107,234;GL:302

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:5,210-211,276-277

NINETEENTH PROOF:

PROPHET CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF PREVIOUS
PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:20-21;KA:#182

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:154,234,338-339,393,403,404

TWENTIETH PROOF:

PROPHET IS MATERIAL, HUMAN AND SPIRITUAL
EDUCATOR

Bahá'u'lláh:GL:156-158

„Abdu'l-Bahá:SAQ:8-13;PUP:77-78,308-311,352-353, 364,405-406,465

TWENTY-FIRST PROOF:

PROPHET IS THE DIVINE PHYSICIAN

Bahá'u'lláh:GL:80-81,213,254-255;KI:247

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:155,171,204;SWAB:59

TWENTY-SECOND PROOF:

MIRACLES ARE THE LEAST SIGNIFICANT OF PROOFS

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:364;ABDP:43-44;SAQ:44-45,115-118

TWENTY-THIRD PROOF:

TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHETS

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:38-39,120,121

„Abdu'l-Bahá:SWAB:7:20-21;ABDP:43-46;PUP:5-6,61,365-366

TWENTY-FOURTH PROOF:

SPIRITUAL PROOF OF THE SPIRITUAL SEASONS

Bahá'u'lláh:GL:27,84,94,167;TB:86

„Abdu'l-Bahá:SAQ:83-86,229

TWENTY-FIFTH PROOF:

SPIRITUAL PROOF OF THE SPIRITUAL SUN OF
REALITY

„Abdu'l-Bahá:SAQ:86-88;WOB:127;PT:127-129,137;ABDP:59-62

TWENTY-SIXTH PROOF:

SPIRITUAL PROOF OF THE MYSTIC HERALD

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:195-200;HWA:#1-2;SV:5-8,11-12

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:277

TWENTY-SEVENTH PROOF:

GARDENER OF MANKIND

Bahá'u'lláh:SV:3,4;HWP:#1,2,18;KI:191,211;GL:31,319,320-321

„Abdu'l-Bahá:BWF:309-310,352,379,420,438;SAQ:225-
226;SW:XIV:2,p.43;TAB:I:641;SWAB:129;PUP:24,51-52,77,118,214-
215,235,353,399,400,427-428

TWENTY-EIGHTH PROOF:

NOT WITHOUT HONOUR SAVE IN HIS COUNTRY
AND OWN HOUSE

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:174;ESW:92;P&M:LXVI:106-110

Shoghi Effendi:GPB:X,163

Jesus:MT 13:57;MK 6:4;LK 4:24;JN 4:44

TWENTY-NINTH PROOF:

EVERY PROPHET IS EXILED FROM HIS HOMELAND

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:174

„Abdu'l-Bahá:Tablet cited in letter of Shoghi Effendi, dated 9 April

1923;SAQ:IV:15-16

Shoghi Effendi:GPB:VII:107

THIRTIETH PROOF:

PROPHET OF GOD MUST COME FROM THE EAST

„Abdu'l-Bahá:GPB:XVI:253-254

THIRTY-FIRST PROOF:

PROPHET ALWAYS APPEARS AMONG THE MOST
SPIRITUALLY DEPRIVED AND DEGRADED OF
MANKIND

Shoghi Effendi:ADJ:17-18

Bhagavad-Gita:IV:7

Bhagavata:vol. IX, XXIV:56

Genesis:VI:5-8

THIRTY-SECOND PROOF:

PROPHET FOUNDS A NEW CIVILIZATION

„Abdu'l-Bahá:SDC:96

„Abdu'l-Bahá:Khitabat:393-394;PUP:142

„Abdu'l-Bahá:PUP:375

THIRTY-THIRD PROOF:

ALL PROPHETS MANIFEST THE GLORY OF GOD

„Abdu'l-Bahá:Muntakhabati: #4:14;SWAB:#4:15;Khitabat:117-
119;PT:68-70;SAQ:IX:35;X:43

Bhagavad-Gita:XI:12

Exodus:24:16-17;33:18-22;34:29-35;Leviticus:9:6;Isaiah:33:18-
22;35:2;40:5

Gospel of Matthew:16:27;Gospel of John:1:14;2:11;17:5,22;2

Corinthians:3:7-11,18;Revelation of St. John:21:23

Qur'an:24:36

Balyuzi:KG:132-133

F.E.Peters:A Reader in Classical Islam:382-383

THIRTY-FOURTH PROOF:

TESTING OF BELIEVERS IN EVERY DISPENSATION

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:49,52-53,68-69,162,255

THIRTY-FIFTH PROOF:

EVERY AGE THE LIGHT IS SEEMINGLY QUENCHED

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:73,127;GL:56-58,101-102;WOB:118-119

THIRTY-SIXTH PROOF:

PEOPLE KNOWN BY THEIR COUNTENANCE

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:173-174

Exodus 13:16;Deuteronomy 6:8, 11:18;Ezekiel 9:4

Revelation of St. John 7:3, 9:4, 13:16-17, 14:1, 14:9, 20:4, 22:4

THIRTY-SEVENTH PROOF:

LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:80-82;JA:14,22-24,48,72-73

THIRTY-EIGHTH PROOF:

OPPRESSION IN EVERY DISPENSATION

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:29-31

THIRTY-NINTH PROOF:

RETURN OF THE PROPHETS AND THEIR CHOSEN

ONES

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:116-117,118-119,120-121,148-149,150-152,152-153,153-154,158-160,161,162,179

FORTIETH PROOF:

REJECTION OF PROPHET IN EVERY DISPENSATION

BECAUSE HE DOES NOT CONFORM TO CURRENT

UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

Bahá'u'lláh:KI:170-171,181-182;GL:82-83

FIRST PROOF:

PROPHECIES OF PREVIOUS PROPHETS

The earliest proof that we come into contact with for every new Prophet of God are the prophecies of previous, preceding Prophets which are fulfilled in the manifestation of succeeding Prophets.

„Abdu'l-Bahá has stated regarding this proof of prophethood:

"One of the proofs is through the fulfillment of former prophecies...The prophecies deal with dates and symbols which proclaim the end of each dispensation. In former books the conditions are explained concerning subsequent manifestors of the divine plan." (ABDP:43)

On another occasion he categorically asserted that every Prophet predicted his successor and acknowledged the truth of his predecessor.

"The Prophets of God manifested complete love for all. Each One announced the glad tidings of His successor, and each subsequent One confirmed the teachings and prophecies of the Prophet Who preceded Him." (PUP:234)

"Abraham, on Him be peace, made a covenant concerning Moses and gave the glad-tidings of His coming. Moses made a covenant concerning the promised Christ, and announced the good news of His advent to the world. Christ made a covenant concerning the Paraclete and gave the tidings of His coming. The Prophet Muhammad made a covenant concerning the Báb, and the Báb was the One promised by Muhammad, for Muhammad gave the tidings of His coming. The Báb made a Covenant concerning the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh, and gave the glad-tidings of His coming for the Blessed Beauty was the One promised by the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh made a covenant concerning a Promised One Who will become manifest after one thousand or thousands of years. That Manifestation is Bahá'u'lláh's

Promised One, and will appear after a thousand or thousands of years. He, moreover, with His Supreme Pen, entered into a great Covenant and Testament with all the Bahá'ís whereby they were all commanded to follow the Centre of the Covenant after His ascension, and depart, not even to a hair's breadth, from obeying Him." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian, published in SW XVI:2, p. 434; and in "Bahá'í World Faith" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 358); cited in The Compilation of Compilations vol. I, pp. 114-115)

Bahá'u'lláh in "Kitáb-i-Iqán" makes several references to this theme which are quoted in full here:

"And now, ponder upon these things. What could have caused such contention and conflict? Why is it that the advent of every true Manifestation of God hath been accompanied by such strife and tumult, by such tyranny and upheaval? This notwithstanding the fact that all the Prophets, whenever made manifest unto the peoples of the world, have invariably foretold the coming of yet another Prophet after them, and have established such signs as would herald the advent of the future Dispensation. To this the records of all sacred books bear witness." (KI:12-13)

"Those words uttered by the Revealers of the beauty of the one true God, setting forth the signs that should herald the advent of the Manifestation to come..." (KI:17)

"Moreover, the Prophets of old, each and every one, whenever announcing to the people of their day the advent of the coming Revelation, have invariably and specifically referred to that sovereignty with which the promised Manifestation must needs be invested. This is attested by the scriptures of the past." (KI:106)

"For whatsoever hath come to pass, hath been prophesied by them who are the Mines of divine knowledge, and Recipients of God's eternal law." (KI:237)

"Through the power of God and His might, I shall now relate certain passages revealed in the Books of old, and mention some of the signs heralding the appearance of the Manifestations of God in the sanctified persons of His chosen Ones, that thou mayest recognize the Dayspring of this everlasting morn and behold this Fire that blazeth in the Tree which is neither of the East nor of the West.⁴ Perchance thine eyes may be opened upon attaining the presence of thy Lord and thy heart partake of the blessings concealed within these hidden treasuries. Render thanks then unto God, Who hath singled thee out for this grace and Who hath numbered thee with them that are assured of meeting their Lord. "

(Jawahiru"l-Asrar [JA]:7)

The detailed and painstaking application of this prophetic proof with regard to each of the Prophets is undertaken in subsequent books. In order to be acknowledged as a proof of all of the prophets, this proof must apply to each one of them. „Abdu"l-Bahá indicates however, in reference to Scriptural prophecies, that "those who do not follow closely these things will not be convinced by proofs such as these. This then is not a final proof."(ABDP) Many people do not pay much attention to prophecies in the Holy Books, let alone to the fine points of their interpretation, and their fulfillment in actual historicallyverifiable events and personalities. As real and infallible even as this proof may be, it will not be convincing to many of those who are not familiar with the prophecies. This is a pragmatic statement, and one which might inspire religionists to reconsider the age-old practice of repeating arguments 'ad nauseum' when they obviously are not convincing to many of their listeners simply because they believe them to be true and they want others to believe as they believe.

Furthermore, inasmuch as "religious traditions are the report and record of understanding and interpretation of the Book" (PUP:22) and as "this understanding, this interpretation" has been reached through "the analysis of human reason"(PUP:22), and as we have already learned from „Abdu"l-Bahá "that human reason is not to be relied upon as an infallible criterion"(PUP:21) then "Inasmmuch as the source of traditions and interpretations is human reason, and human reason is faulty, how can we depend upon its findings for real knowledge?"(PUP:22)

What is intended as a proof of the Prophets of God is turned by many into a prime reason for denial of and opposition to the Prophets of God. The essence of the teaching of divine philosophy on this matter is this: The only reliable, infallible interpretations of the prophecies are those of the Prophets of God themselves and whomever they may appoint as their spokesmen after their ascension from this world.

SECOND PROOF:

WORDS OF THE PROPHET

„Abdu"l-Bahá cites the "second proof" of the prophets of God as "their creative words and phrases which salute the hearts of humanity".⁶ It is imperative that distinction be made at this point between the Word of the Prophets, that is the actual physically manifested Word of God, and the process whereby the Word is revealed, which is called Revelation; and furthermore this must be distinguished from the Teachings contained in that Word which have come forth in that Revelation. Here we discuss the physically manifested Word of God itself as a proof. The most detailed exposition of this proof of the Prophets of God is found in the "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih" of the Báb. The seven proofs from which the book

takes its name and which are the primary substance of this work are all centered on this Second Proof. Furthermore, the Báb bases all of his arguments in support of this proof upon specific verses from the Qur'an. The Báb states in the Fourth Proof⁷:

"The verses and the Book are superior to no matter what miracle, in such manner that, for the Muslim, there is no other way but to believe in this superiority which God Himself has affirmed in the Surah of the Spider"⁸—"Is it not enough for them that We have revealed to you the Book for their instruction? Surely in this is a blessing and an admonition to true believers."⁹

Bahá'u'lláh cites this same Qur'anic verse and then writes⁹:

"This is the testimony which He, Himself, that ordained; greater proof than this there is none, nor ever will be: This proof is His Word; His own Self, the testimony of His truth."¹⁰

However, the Báb does not assert that all of the prophets of God have had the proof of the Word of God, the Book. Rather does he affirm that Muhammad was the first to show this proof¹⁰:

6 "„Abdu'l-Bahá on Divine Philosophy", p. 43.

7 "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih", p. 14; English translation from the French of

A.L.M.Nicolas.

8 Qur'an, XXIX:50, Dawood translation

"Kitáb-i-Iqán," pp. 91-92.

"Dala'il-i-Sab'ih", pp. 6-7; English translation from the French of A.L.M. Nicolas.

"The essence of this discourse is this that God, in His sublime wisdom, gave the Qur'an as proof of the Mission of Muhammad. That was a gift which He had never made in likeness to any nation before Muhammad, such, that a single one of its verses is a sufficient proof for all those who are upon the earth. The impossibility in which all are found to cause to descend one alone from heaven is a proof of the power of God."

Hence, the Word of God in this sense of the revealed verses has existed as a proof of the prophets only from the mission of Muhammad. While the text of the Scriptures has not been revealed verbatim in previous Dispensations, nevertheless, the Word of God is not confined to the past millennium and a half. The most important reality of the Word of God is not the perfect recollection and transmission of the exact words of God. Rather it is the existence of a revealed book, a revealed law, a revealed teaching from God in every Dispensation. Again this statement must be qualified, for the existence of such a record can not be proven for any time previous to

the Dispensation of Moses (although the Gathas of Zoroaster or the Bhagavad-Gita of Krishna may actual predate the Torah in their original redactions). However, in the historical memory of mankind, all of the prophets have revealed utterances which were recorded in books and have been preserved for posterity. Speaking of the prophets, „Abdu"l-Bahá states: "Their word is the word of God, the commandment is the commandment of God, their prohibition is the prohibition of God."(PUP:193) He reminds us that "There is no intrinsic meaning in the leaves of a book, but the thought they convey leads you to reflect upon reality."(PUP:155) "For the Word of God is collective wisdom, absolute knowledge and eternal truth."(PUP:154)

In the words of Bahá'u'lláh:

"...He hath established the words He hath revealed as proof of His reality and truth. This is, verily, an evidence of His tender mercy unto men." (Lawh-i-Ashraf, GL:LII:105)

"When the channel of the human soul is cleansed from all worldly and impeding attachments, it will unfailingly perceive the breath of the Beloved across immeasurable distances, and will, led by its perfume, attain and enter the City of Certitude." (KI:197)

"That city is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation. In the days of Moses it was the Pentateuch; in the days of Jesus the Gospel; in the day of Muhammad the Messenger of God the Qur'an; in this day the Bayán; and in the dispensation of Him Whom God will make manifest His own Book--the Book unto which all the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book which standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme." (KI:199-200)

"And likewise, He saith: 'And had We sent down unto Thee a Book written on parchment, and they had touched it with their hands, the infidels would surely have said "This is naught but palpable sorcery.'" [Qur'an 6:7] Most of the verses of the Qur'an are indicative of this theme. We have, for the sake of brevity, mentioned only these verses. Consider, hath anything else besides the verses been established in the whole Book, as a standard for the recognition of the Manifestations of His Beauty, that the people might cling to, and reject the Manifestations of God? On the contrary, in every instance, He hath threatened with fire those that repudiate and scoff at the verses, as already shown.

"Therefore, should a person arise and bring forth a myriad verses, discourses, epistles, and prayers, none of which have been acquired through learning, what conceivable excuse could justify those that reject them, and deprive themselves of

the potency of their grace? What answer could they give when once their soul hath ascended and departed from its gloomy temple? Could they seek to justify themselves by saying: 'We have clung to a certain tradition, and not having beheld the literal fulfilment thereof, we have therefore raised such cavils against the Embodiments of divine Revelation, and kept remote from the law of God?' Hast thou not heard that among the reasons why certain Prophets have been designated as Prophets 'endowed with constancy' was the revelation of a Book unto them? And yet, how could this people be justified in rejecting the Revealer and Author of so many volumes of verses, and follow the sayings of him who hath foolishly sown the seeds of doubt in the hearts of men, and who, Satan-like, hath risen to lead the people into the paths of perdition and error?" (KI:219-221)

This meaning of the Word of God is more inclusive than the use of this term (of the verses, "ayat") by Muhammad in the Qur'an and by the Báb in the Bayán (the collective name for all of His Writings as well as specifically for the "Bayán-i-Farsi" and the "Bayán-i-'Arabi"). There is, furthermore, yet another meaning of the Word of God which is universal to all of the prophets of God. „Abdu'l-Bahá speaks of this: "Consider the statement recorded in the first chapter of the book of John: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' This statement is brief but replete with the greatest meanings."(PUP:154) "In the Word of God there is still another unity--the oneness of the Manifestations of God, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. This is a unity divine, heavenly, radiant, merciful--the one reality appearing in its successive Manifestations."(PUP:192) Therefore, generally whatever applies to Jesus applies to all of the Prophets. "Therefore, as Christ conveyed the perfect meaning of divine reality and embodied independent significance, He was the Word...The reality of Christ was the embodiment of divine virtues and attributes of God. For in Divinity there is no duality. All adjectives, nouns and pronouns in that court of sanctity are one; there is neither multiplicity nor division."(PUP:155)

Consequently, all of the Prophets of God were successive Manifestations of the Word of God. "The first thing that emanated from God is that universal reality, which the ancient philosophers termed the 'First Mind', and which the people of Baha' call the 'First Will'. This emanation, in that which concerns its action in the world of God, is not limited by time or place; it is without beginning or end; beginning and end in relation to God are one."(SAQ:237) The Báb writes in "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih", that "the first Dhikr, which emanates from the Primal Will, is similar to the sun...if it rises until the end that will never have an end, will be, even as it has been in the past, but one only

and the same sun. But it is equally Him Who was manifested in all the prophets and it is He Who speaks in all their books."(pp. 4-5) He continues: "In the first evolution He was known under the name Adam, then under that of Noah in the epoch of this prophet; He was Abraham in His time, then Jesus, then Muhammad Rasu'l-Allah. Finally He is Him Whom God shall make manifest after Him Whom God shall make manifest in His epoch."(Ibid.,p. 6) From the 'First Will' or 'First Mind' emanated the 'Word of God', the 'Holy Spirit'. "The reality of prophethood, which is the Word of God and the perfect state of manifestation, did not have any beginning, and will not have any end."(SAQ:174) "The intention of this explanation is to show that the Words of God have innumerable significances and mysteries of meanings--each one a thousand and more."(PUP:155)1

THIRD PROOF:

REVELATION OF GOD

Divine philosophy requires that we define the terms we propose to use before any arguments are made. Revelation is defined as "the effulgence of God", "the bounties of God", and "the reality of Divinity is like unto the sun, and revelation is like unto the rays thereof."(PUP:377) "If we should assert that the bounties of God are not everlasting, we are forced to believe that Divinity can come to an end, whereas the reality of Divinity enfolds all virtues and by reason of these bounties is perfect. Were it not possessed of all these perfections or virtues, it could not be Divinity. The sun is the sun because of its rays, light and heat. If it could be dispossessed of them, it would not be the sun. Therefore, if we say that the divinity or sovereignty of God is accidental and subject to termination, we must perform think that Divinity itself is accidental, without foundation and not essential."(PUP:377) "Among the bounties of God is revelation. Hence revelation is progressive and continuous."(PUP:378) There are two kinds of Revelation described by Bahá'u'lláh:

KI:139-140: "Should they assert that the "Revelation" of God signifieth a "Universal Revelation", it is clear and evident that such revelation already existeth in all things. The truth of this We have already established, inasmuch as We have demonstrated that all things are the recipients and revealers of the splendours of that ideal King, and that the signs of the revelation of that Sun, the Source of all splendour, exist and are manifest in the mirrors of beings. Nay, were man to gaze with the eye of divine and spiritual discernment, he will readily recognize that nothing whatsoever can exist without the revelation of the splendour of God, the ideal King. Consider how all created things eloquently testify to the revelation of that inner Light within them."

And in another source Bahá'u'lláh writes:

BWF:116,117: "Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God, inasmuch as within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that Most Great Light. Methinks, but for the potency of that revelation, no being could ever exist. How resplendent the luminaries of knowledge that shine in an atom, and how vast the oceans of wisdom that surge within a drop!

"...From that which hath been said it becometh evident that all things, in their inmost reality, testify to the revelation of the names and attributes of God within them. Each according to its capacity, indicateth, and is expressive of, the knowledge of God. So potent and universal is this revelation, that it hath encompassed all things visible and invisible...Man, the noblest and most perfect of all created things, excelleth them all in the intensity of this revelation, and is a fuller expression of its glory. And of all men, the most accomplished, the most distinguished, and the most excellent are the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth. Nay, all else besides these Manifestations, live by the operation of Their Will, and move and have their being through the outpourings of Their Grace."

In referring to the second category of Revelation, Bahá'u'lláh in addressing certain Sufis writes:

KI:141-142: "And were they to say that by "divine Presence" is meant the "Secondary Revelation of God", interpreted as the "Holy Outpouring", this is admittedly applicable to the world of creation, that is, in the realm of the primal and original manifestation of God. Such revelation is confined to His Prophets and chosen Ones, inasmuch as none mightier than they hath come to exist in the world of being. This truth all recognize, and bear witness thereto. These Prophets and chosen Ones of God are the recipients and revealers of all the unchangeable attributes and names of God. They are the mirrors that truly and faithfully reflect the light of God. Whatsoever is applicable to them is in reality applicable to God, Himself, Who is both the Visible and the Invisible...Therefore, whosoever, and in whatever Dispensation, hath recognized and attained unto the presence of these glorious, these resplendent and most excellent Luminaries, hath verily attained unto the "Presence of God" Himself, and entered the city of eternal and immortal life. Attainment unto such presence is possible only in the Day of Resurrection, which is the Day of the rise of God Himself through His all-embracing Revelation."

In the "Lawh-i-Tawhid", Bahá'u'lláh again addresses this topic of the specific Revelations of the Prophets of God:

GL:60-61,62: "From each and every revelation emanating from the Source of His glory, holy and never-ending evidences of unimaginable splendour have appeared, and out of every manifestation of His invincible power oceans of eternal light have outpoured...In every age and cycle He hath, through the splendorous light shed by the Manifestations of His wondrous Essence, recreated all things, so that whatsoever reflecteth in the heavens and on the earth the signs of His glory may not be deprived of the outpourings of His mercy, nor despair of the showers of His favors. How all-encompassing are the wonders of His boundless grace!"

In yet another passage from another Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh writes:

GL:67: "These Essences of Detachment, these resplendent Realities are the channels of God's all-pervasive grace. Led by the light of unfailing guidance, and invested with supreme sovereignty, they are commissioned to use the inspiration of Their words, the effusions of Their infallible grace and the sanctifying breeze of Their Revelation for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitations. Then, and only then, will the Trust of God, latent in the reality of man, emerge, as resplendent as the rising Orb of Divine Revelation, from behind the veil of concealment, and implant the ensign of its revealed glory upon the summits of men's hearts."

It is evident from these quotations, that by Revelation is meant much more than the teachings of the prophets. When Bahá'u'lláh writes the "first and foremost testimony establishing His truth is His own Self. Next to this testimony is His Revelation. For whoso faileth to recognize either the one or the other He hath established the words He hath revealed as proof of His reality and truth." (GL:105) Hence, this Revelation, not just the Universal Revelation of God but even the Specific Revelation of God is not contained in words. Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

"How great the multitude of truths which the garment of words can never contain! How vast the number of such verities as no expression can adequately describe, whose significance can never be unfolded, and to which not even the remotest allusions can be made!" (BWF:133;GL:176)

However, he himself revealed innumerable verses. Shoghi Effendi writes in reference to Bahá'u'lláh's return from Kurdistan in 1856, that

"during the first two years after His return from His retirement,

according to the testimony of Nabil, who was at that time living in Baghdad, the unrecorded verses that streamed from His lips averaged, in a single day and night, the equivalent of the Qur'an! As to those verses which He either dictated or wrote Himself, their number was no less remarkable than either the wealth of material they contained, or the diversity of subjects to which they referred. A vast, and indeed the greater, proportion of these writings were, alas, lost irretrievably to posterity. No less and authority than Mirza Aqan Jan, Bahá'u'lláh's amanuensis, affirms, as reported by Nabil, 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," Mirza Aqa Jan has related to Nabil, "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.'" (Shoghi Effendi, "God Passes By", US edition 1971, p. 138)

Clearly, although these many thousands of revealed verses were destroyed by order of Bahá'u'lláh himself, this did not hold back in any way the Specific Revelation from God, either from reaching him, or from reaching all creation through his intermediation. This Revelation of the prophet is of course apparent in the outflow of his wisdom, his teachings, and these come in the form of words. But it is also clearly evident in all of the events of His time, in the "signs of the times":

GL:142: "Through the mere revelation of the word "Fashioner", issuing forth from His lips and proclaiming His attribute to mankind, such power is released as can generate, through successive ages, all the manifold arts which the hands of man can produce. This, verily, is a certain truth. No sooner is this resplendent word uttered, than its animating energies, stirring within all created things, give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfected. All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequences of the Revelation of this Name. In the days to come, ye will, verily, behold things of which ye have never heard before...Every single letter proceeding out of the mouth of God is indeed a mother letter, and every word uttered by Him Who is the Well Spring of Divine Revelation is a mother word, and His Tablet a Mother Tablet."

One of the sources of this transformative power of Revelation is the sacrifice which the prophets of God make in carrying out their mission to humanity. Each one of these prophets has endured great suffering, as will be recounted in a subsequent proof.

In the "Lawh-i-Fatah A'dham" Bahá'u'lláh describes the influence upon all creatures of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

GL:85-86: "Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things. Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, are now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His allpervasive, and resplendent Spirit. We testify that when He came into the world, He shed the splendour of His glory upon all created things."

As a demonstration of the power and influence of divine revelation, „Abdu"l-Bahá describes the present century in glowing words:

PUP:378: "Consider how great has been the progress in this radiant century. Civilization has unfolded. Nations have developed. Industrialism and jurisprudence have expanded. Sciences, inventions and discoveries have increased...For example, the sciences of bygone centuries are not adequate for the present because sciences have undergone reform. The industrialism of the past will not ensure present efficiency because industrialism has advanced. The laws of the past are being superseded because they are not applicable to this time. All material conditions pertaining to the world of humanity have undergone reform, have achieved development, and the institutions of the past are not to be compared with those of this age."

There are practically innumerable references in the writings and talks of „Abdu"l-Bahá to this theme, but one more will suffice to show that the Revelation of God is indeed a potent phenomenon and a convincing proof of the truth of the new prophet of God:

PUP:143: "In the estimation of historians this radiant century is equivalent to one hundred centuries of the past. If comparison be made with the sum total of all former human achievements, it will be found that the discoveries, scientific advancement and material civilization of this present century have equaled, yea far exceeded the progress and outcome of one hundred former centuries. The production of books and compilations of literature alone bears witness that the output of the human mind in this century has been greater and more enlightening than all the past centuries together."

Hence it is evident that divine philosophy considers the state of the world, indeed of the universe (hence of the sun, the other planets, comets, meteors, and the stars beyond this solar system) as revealing the truth of the prophet of God. Whether the universal or the specific Revelation, both are proofs of the prophet. The Báb in "Dala'il-i-

Sab'ih" has stated this argument succinctly as follows:

"And what proof then must you have of His Unity? His existence is the most complete proof thereof, and the very existence of exterior things is the most formal proof that they were created by Him. That is the philosophical proof for him who voyages upon the sea of Truth." (SP:3)

FOURTH PROOF:

DEEDS OF THE PROPHETS

Bahá'u'lláh writes in "Kitáb-i-Iqán" writes that the true seeker will discover in the "mighty deeds" of the Prophet "the signs of God":

KI:197: "He will likewise clearly distinguish all the signs of God--His wondrous utterances [Second Proof], His great works [Third Proof], and mighty deeds [Fourth Proof]--from the doing, words and ways of men, even as a jeweller who knoweth the gem from the stone, or the man who distinguisheth the spring from autumn and heat from cold."

„Abdu'l-Bahá states this proof succinctly in one of his talks:

"A clear proof of validity lies in the achievements and here we are confronted by certain irrefutable facts. The prophets have come from the lowliest and most humiliated of the nations and in each age the prophet has raised his downtrodden nation to the highest zenith of prosperity and success among the nations of the earth. For instance, His Holiness Christ was quite alone. He was a Jew among the Jews. He came at a time when the Israelites were under the yoke of the Romans. He revived the people till they were transferred from one state of existence into a higher state of existence." (ABDP:44)

„Abdu'l-Bahá develops this proof in great detail, in the cases of Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh in "Some Answered Questions" (pp. 14-42) and in talks collected in "Promulgation of Universal Peace". "The deeds of Moses are conclusive evidences of His Prophethood. If a man be fair, unbiased and willing to investigate reality, he will undoubtedly testify to the fact that Moses was, verily, a man of God and a great Personage."(PUP:364) "Christ ratified and proclaimed the foundation of the law of Moses. Muhammad and all the Prophets have revoiced that same foundation of reality. Therefore, the purposes and accomplishments of the divine Messengers have been one and the same. They were the source of advancement to the body politic and the cause of the honor and divine civilization of humanity, the foundation of which is one and the same in every dispensation. It is evident, then, that the proofs of the validity and inspiration of a Prophet of God are the deeds of beneficent accomplishment and the greatness emanating from Him. If He proves to be instrumental in the elevation and betterment of mankind, He is undoubtedly a valid and

heavenly Messenger."(PUP:366) He distinguishes between the philosophers who "glory in their exalted thoughts" to which class "the majority of philosophers belong, their teachings being above their actions", and the "Spiritual Teacher [who] is the first to follow His own teaching; He brings down into the world of action His spiritual conceptions and ideals. His Divine thoughts are made manifest to the world. His thought is Himself, from which He is inseparable."(PT:18)

The deeds of the prophet of God must be such as to be a convincing proof of the truth of the station claimed, the station of absolute servitude to the Threshold of God. The prophet must acknowledge his total dependency upon God, not just in words, but in his every action. Only the careful examination of the individual lives of the prophets as recorded in the Sacred Scriptures and in other reliable sources can enable the seeker to ascertain the merits of the individual prophets for himself.

FIFTH PROOF:

THE PROPHET IN HIMSELF

Bahá'u'lláh wrote in "Lawh-i-Ashraf", "Say: The first and foremost testimony establishing His truth is His own Self." (GL:105) Now we will consider the Self, the Personality of the Prophet apart from His deeds, His actions. Bahá'u'lláh in "Kitáb-i-Iqán" wrote about the prophets:

KI:99-100;GL:47: "...those luminous Gems of Holiness...are one and all, the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of Divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom."

Elsewhere in Kitáb-i-Iqán, Bahá'u'lláh writes:

KI:103-104;GL:48: "These attributes of God are not and have never been vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His wellfavoured, His holy, and chosen Messengers, are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light."

KI:35: "Immeasurably high are the Prophets of God exalted above the comprehension of men, who can never know them except by their own Selves. Far be it from His glory that His chosen Ones should be magnified by any other than their own persons. Glorified are they above the praise of men; exalted are they above human understanding!"

KI:75: "It behooveth us, therefore, to make the utmost endeavour, that, by God's invisible assistance, these dark veils, these clouds of Heaven-sent trials, may not hinder us from beholding the beauty of His shining Countenance, and that we may recognize Him only by His own Self."

KI:91-92: "Wert thou to explore the sacred domain of truth, thou wilt find that all things are known only by the light of His recognition, that He hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, known through Himself...greater proof than this there is none, nor ever will be: "This proof is His Word; His own Self, the testimony of His truth.""

„Abdu'l-Bahá has fully developed this proof but only insofar as it relates to Bahá'u'lláh. However, there are also indications in historical accounts that identify a "greatness emanating from"(PUP:366) other prophets of God, and an indication that in the case of earlier prophets "through the honour of entering his presence, many souls became confirmed believers; they had no need of other proofs."(SAQ:43) Two examples which come immediately to mind are those of Jesus Christ and Muhammad. Simon Peter and his brother Andrew met Jesus Christ according to the Gospel of Matthew (4:18-19), dropped their fishing nets and became his disciples, while Khadija and 'Ali, the wife and cousin of Muhammad became respectively the first female and male believers in his Revelation with no more proof than the proof of his own Person. In an historical account of the life of the Báb, we encounter repeatedly attestations to the Báb's personal charm, which attest to the power of his very presence to attest to the truth of his claims:

GPB:5: "I sat spellbound by His utterance, oblivious of time and of those who awaited me..."¹¹

GPB:11: "Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi, surnamed Vahid, one of the most erudite, eloquent and influential of his¹² subjects...he, in the course of three interviews, was completely won over by the arguments and personality of the Báb."

GPB:14: "He was ceremoniously received¹³, and such was the spell He cast over the people of that city that, on one occasion, after His return from the public bath, an eager multitude clamored for the water that had been used for His ablutions. So magic was His charm that His host, forgetful of the dignity of his high rank, was wont to wait personally upon Him."

GPB:19: "An unruly, a proud and unreasoning people were gradually subdued by the gentleness of the Báb, were chastened by His modesty, were edified by His counsels, and instructed by His wisdom.

¹¹Shoghi Effendi citing Mulla Husayn's account of witnessing the

declaration of the Báb, from Nabil's Narrative; in "The Dawnbreakers", p. 62.

¹²Muhammad Shah's.

¹³This refers to the reception of the Báb in the home of one of the principal ecclesiastical authorities of Isfahan circa 1846-47.

They were so carried away by their love for Him that their first act every morning, notwithstanding the remonstrations of the domineering 'Ali Khan, and the repeated threats of disciplinary measures received from Tihran, was to seek a place¹⁴ where they could catch a glimpse of His face, and beseech from afar His benediction upon their daily work."

GPB:20: "Though at the outset he acted with the utmost severity, he was eventually compelled to yield to the fascination of his Prisoner. Nor were the kurds, who lived in the village of Chihriq¹⁵, and whose hatred of the Shi'ahs exceeded even that of the inhabitants of Mah-Ku, able to resist the pervasive power of the Prisoner's influence. They too were to be seen every morning, ere they started for their daily work, to approach the fortress and prostrate themselves in adoration before its holy Inmate."

GPB:20: "On His arrival in that town¹⁶ Prince Malik Qasim Mirza ceremoniously received Him, and was even seen, on a certain Friday, when his Guest was riding on His way to the public bath, to accompany Him on foot, while the Prince's footmen endeavored to restrain the people who, in their overflowing enthusiasm were pressing to catch a glimpse of so marvelous a Prisoner."

GPB:20-21: "Tabriz, in its turn in the throes of wild excitement, joyously hailed His arrival. Such was the fervor of popular feeling that the Báb was assigned a place outside the gates of the city. This, however, failed to allay the prevailing emotion. Precautions, warnings and restrictions served only to aggravate a situation that had already become critical."

It would be inappropriate at this juncture to cite the copious references to the personality, the charm, the magnetism, the spiritual gifts of each of the prophets, signs and proofs of their divine vocation. In succeeding volumes the reader will find detailed evidence provided for many of the prophets, excepting only those for whom the traces are dim and fragmentary, be they described in the Tanakh, the Qur'an or other Holy Scriptures.

There is an entirely different sense in which this proof of the person

¹⁴This is related of the Báb's imprisonment in the mountain fortress of Mah-Ku.

¹⁵This is related of the Báb's imprisonment in the fortress of Chihriq

and refers to his prison warder, Yahya Khan.

16 This refers to the Báb's sojourn in Urumiyyih.

of the Prophet of God applies to every Dispensation, and this is the degree to which his person is a test for humanity at that time. For the Prophet appears to be a human being, a man like other men, and the people expect something else, something miraculous:

"In another sense, they mean the appearance of that immortal Beauty in the image of mortal man, with such human limitations as eating and drinking, poverty and riches, glory and abasement, sleeping and waking, and such other things as cast doubt in the minds of men, and cause them to turn away. All such veils are symbolically referred to as 'clouds.'

"These are the 'clouds' that cause the heavens of the knowledge and understanding of all that dwell on earth to be cloven asunder. Even as He hath revealed: 'On that day shall heaven be cloven by the clouds.' [Qur'an 25:25] Even as the clouds prevent the eyes of men from beholding the sun, so do these things hinder the souls of men from recognizing the light of the divine Luminary. To this beareth witness that which hath proceeded out of the mouth of the unbelievers as revealed in the sacred Book: 'And they have said: "What manner of apostle is this? He eateth food, and walketh the streets. Unless an angel be sent down and take part in His warnings, we will not believe.:"' [Qur'an 25:7] Other Prophets, similarly, have been subject to poverty and afflictions, to hunger, to the ills and chances of this world. As these holy Persons were subject to such needs and wants, the people were, consequently, lost in the wilds of misgivings and perplexity. How, they wondered, could such a personage be sent down from God, assert His ascendancy over all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and claim Himself to be the goal of all creation,--even as He hath said: 'But for Thee, I would not have created all that are in heaven and on earth,' -- and yet be subject to such trivial things? You must undoubtedly have been informed of the tribulations, the poverty, the ills, and the degradation that have befallen every Prophet of God and His companions. You must have heard how the heads of their followers were sent as presents unto different cities, how grievously they were hindered from that whereunto they were commanded. Each and every one of them fell a prey to the hands of the enemies of His Cause, and had to suffer whatsoever they decreed." (KI:72-73)

SIXTH PROOF:

SUFFERING AND SACRIFICE OF THE PROPHET AND HIS FOLLOWERS

This proof of the prophets of God is explicitly stated in "Kitáb-i-Iqán"

as a general principle:

"Moreover, consider the hardships and the bitterness of the lives of those Revealers of the divine Beauty." (KI:45)

"Other Prophets, similarly, have been subject to poverty and afflictions, to hunger, and to the ills and chances of this world...You must undoubtedly have been informed of the tribulations, the poverty, the ills, and the degradation that have befallen every Prophet of God and His companions. You must have heard how the heads of their followers were sent as presents unto different cities, how grievously they were hindered from that whereunto they were commanded. Each and every one of them fell a prey to the hands of the enemies of the Cause, and had to suffer whatsoever they decreed." (KI:73)

In His Tablet addressed to 'Abbas Faruq, Bahá'u'lláh writes as follows:

"Behold how the people, as a result of the verdict pronounced by the divines of His age, have cast Abraham, the Friend of God, into fire; how Moses, He Who held converse with the Almighty, was denounced as liar and slanderer. Reflect how Jesus, the Spirit of God, was, notwithstanding His extreme meekness and perfect tender-heartedness, treated by His enemies. So fierce was the opposition which He, the Essence of Being and Lord of the visible and the invisible, had to face, that He had nowhere to lay His head. He wandered continually from place to place, deprived of a permanent abode. Ponder that which befell Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, may the life of all else be a sacrifice unto Him. How severe the afflictions which the leaders of the Jewish people and of the idol-worshippers caused to rain down upon Him, Who is the sovereign Lord of all, in consequence of His proclamation of the unity of God and of the truth of His Message! By the righteousness of My Cause! My Pen groaneth, and all created things weep with a great weeping, as a result of the woes He suffered at the hands of them that have broken the Covenant of God, violated His Testament, rejected His proofs, and disputed His signs. Thus recount We unto thee the tale of that which happened in days past, haply thou mayest comprehend.

"Thou hast known how grievously the Prophets of God, His Messengers and Chosen Ones, have been afflicted." (GL:XXIII:56-57)

Bahá'u'lláh and „Abdu'l-Bahá have described the sufferings of the prophets in the context of their redemptive services to mankind. They have related the hardships and bitterness of Moses amongst his

brethren in Egypt, persecuted by Pharaoh, and languishing in the wilderness for forty years; the homelessness and betrayals of Jesus Christ and his martyrdom upon the crucifix; the attacks upon Muhammad almost throughout his life; the imprisonment and martyrdom of the Báb; the imprisonment, exile and betrayals which were the lot of Bahá'u'lláh. Their sufferings in themselves, were due cause for the redemption of mankind in their respective epochs. As Bahá'u'lláh attests in "Lawh-i-Rida":

"That which thou hast heard concerning Abraham, the Friend of the All-Merciful, is the truth, and no doubt is there about it. The Voice of God commanded Him to offer up Ishmael as a sacrifice, so that His steadfastness in the Faith of God and His detachment from all else but Him may be demonstrated unto men. The purpose of God, moreover, was to sacrifice him as a ransom for the sins and the iniquities of all the peoples of the earth. This same honor, Jesus, the Son of Mary, besought the one true God, exalted be His name and glory, to confer upon Him. For the same reason was Husayn offered up as a sacrifice by Muhammad, the Apostle of God."
(GL:XXXII:75-76)

In the "Lawh-i-Fatah A'zam", Bahá'u'lláh elaborates upon the influence of this sacrifice of the prophet of God:

"Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things. Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, and now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His allpervasive, and resplendent Spirit." (GL:XXXVI:85-86)

In a Tablet addressed to Muhammad Qabl Rida, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that he has submitted to suffering that mankind might be blessed:

"The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might

prosper and flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities!" (GL:XLV:99-100)

He returns to this affirmation in "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf":

"In these days there are some who, far from being just and fair-minded, have assaulted Me with the sword of hatred and the spear of enmity...Most men have until now failed to discover the purpose of this Wronged One, nor have they known the reason for which He hath been willing to endure countless afflictions...

"O Shaykh! I swear by the Sun of Truth Which hath risen and shineth above the horizon of this Prison! The betterment of the world hath been the sole aim of this Wronged One." (ESW:36)

In "Lawh-i-Burhan" and "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf" Bahá'u'lláh universalizes this sacrifice, this suffering of the prophets for the salvation of humanity:

"Reflect, that haply thou mayest recognize thine iniquity and be numbered with such as have repented. Thinkest thou that We fear thy cruelty? Know thou and be well assured that from the first day whereon the voice of the Most Sublime Pen was raised betwixt earth and heaven We offered Our souls, and Our bodies, and Our sons, and Our possessions in the path of God, the Exalted, the Great, and We glory therein amongst all created things and the Concourse on high. Unto this testify the things which have befallen Us in this straight Path. By God! Our hearts were consumed, and Our bodies were crucified, and Our blood was spilt, while Our eyes were fixed on the horizon of the loving-kindness of their Lord, the Witness, the All-Seeing." (Lawh-i-Burhan, cited in ESW:84-85)

This theme is reiterated in "Surah al-Dam" by Bahá'u'lláh:

"Praise be to Thee, O Lord My God, for the wondrous revelations of Thy inscrutable decree and the manifold woes and trials Thou hast destined for Myself. At one time Thou didst deliver Me [as Abraham] into the hands of Nimrod; at another Thou hast allowed Pharoah's rod to persecute Me [as Moses]. Thou, alone, canst estimate, through Thine all-encompassing knowledge and the operation of Thy Will, the incalculable afflictions I have suffered at their hands. Again Thou didst cast Me [as Joseph] into the prison-cell of the ungodly, for no reason except that I was moved to whisper into the ears of the well-favored denizens of Thy Kingdom

an intimation of the vision with which Thou hadst, through Thy knowledge, inspired Me, and revealed to Me its meaning through the potency of Thy might. And again Thou didst decree that I [as John the Baptist] be beheaded by the sword of the infidel. Again I [as Jesus Christ] was crucified for having unveiled to men's eyes the hidden gems of Thy glorious unity, for having revealed to them the wondrous signs of Thy sovereign and everlasting power. How bitter the humiliations heaped upon Me [as Imam Husayn], in a subsequent age, on the plain of Karbila! How lonely did I feel amidst Thy people! To what a state of helplessness I was reduced in that land! Unsatisfied with such indignities, My persecutors decapitated Me, and, carrying aloft My head from land to land paraded it before the gaze of the unbelieving multitude, and deposited it on the seats of the perverse and faithless. In a later age, I [as the Báb] was suspended, and My breast was made a target to the darts of the malicious cruelty of My foes. My limbs were riddled with bullets, and My body was torn asunder. Finally, behold how, in this Day, My treacherous enemies have leagued themselves against Me, and are continually plotting to instill the venom of hate and malice into the souls of Thy servants. With all their might they are scheming to accomplish their purpose...Grievous as is My plight, O God, My Well-Beloved, I render thanks unto Thee, and My Spirit is grateful for whatsoever hath befallen Me in the path of Thy good-pleasure. I am well please with that which Thou didst ordain for Me, and welcome, however calamitous, the pains and sorrows I am made to suffer." (GL:XXXIX:88-90; WOB:118-119)

„Abdu'l-Bahá has explained the meanings of this sacrifice of the Prophet of God in a number of his addresses, including this reference to the mission of Jesus Christ, in "Some Answered Questions" (XXIX:137-138):

"But Christ, Who is the Word of God, sacrificed Himself. This has TWO meanings, an apparent and an esoteric meaning. [1]The outward meaning is this: Christ's intention was to represent and promote a Cause which was to educate the human world, to quicken the children of Adam, and to enlighten all mankind; and since to represent such a Cause--a Cause which was antagonistic to all the people of the world and all the nations and kingdoms—meant that He would be killed and crucified, so Christ in proclaiming His mission sacrificed His life. He regarded the cross as a throne, the wound as a balm, the poison as honey and sugar. He arose to teach and educate men, and so He sacrificed Himself to give the spirit of life. He perished in body, so as to quicken others by the spirit. [2]The second meaning of sacrifice is this: Christ was like a

seed, and this seed sacrificed its own form so that the tree might grow and develop. Although the form of the seed was destroyed, its reality became apparent in perfect majesty and beauty in the form of a tree.

"The position of Christ was that of absolute perfection, He made His divine perfections shine like the sun upon all believing souls, and the bounties of the light shone and radiated in the reality of men. This is why he says 'I am the bread which descended from heaven; whosoever shall eat of this bread will not die.' [John 6:51] That is to say, that whosoever shall partake of this divine food, will attain unto eternal life; that is, every one who partakes of this bounty and receives these perfections will find eternal life, will obtain pre-existent favours, will be freed from the darkness of error, and will be illuminated by the light of His guidance....

"The form of the seed was sacrificed for the tree, but its perfections, because of this sacrifice, became evident and apparent; the tree, the branches, the leaves and the blossoms being concealed in the seed. When the form of the seed was sacrificed, its perfections appeared in the form of leaves, blossoms, and fruits."

In another address, given on 29 November 1912, he expands upon this theme, citing FOUR meanings for the sacrifice of the Prophet of God (PUP:450-452):

"In order to understand the reality of sacrifice let us consider the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. It is true that He sacrificed Himself for our sake. What is the meaning of this? [1]When Christ appeared, He knew that He must proclaim Himself in opposition to all the nations and peoples of the earth. He knew that mankind would arise against Him and inflict upon Him all manner of tribulations. There is no doubt that one who put forth such a claim as Christ announced would arouse the hostility of the world and be subjected to personal abuse. He realized that His blood would be shed and His body rent by violence. Notwithstanding His knowledge of what would befall Him, He arose to proclaim His message, suffered all tribulation and hardships from the people and humanity--gave His blood in order to guide the world of mankind. He accepted every calamity and suffering in order to guide men to the truth. Had He desired to save His own life, and were He without wish to offer Himself in sacrifice, He would not have been able to guide a single soul. There was no doubt that His blessed blood would be shed and His body broken. Nevertheless, the Holy Soul accepted calamity and death in His love for mankind. This is one of the meanings of sacrifice.

"[2]As to the second meaning: He said, 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven.' [John 6:51] It was not the body of Christ which came from heaven. His body came from the womb of Mary, but the Christly perfections descended from heaven; the reality of Christ came down from heaven. The Spirit of Christ and not the body descended from heaven. The body of Christ was but human.

There could be no question that the physical body was born from the womb of Mary. But the reality of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the perfections of Christ all came from heaven. Consequently, by saying He was the bread which came from heaven He meant that the perfections which He showed forth were divine perfections, that His light was the light of Reality. He said, 'If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.' [John 6:51] That is to say, whoever assimilates these divine perfections which are within Me will never die; whosoever has a share and partakes of these heavenly bounties I embody will find eternal life; he who takes unto himself these divine lights shall find everlasting life. How manifest the meaning is! How evident! For the soul which acquires divine perfections and seeks heavenly illumination from the teachings of Christ will undoubtedly live eternally. This is also one of the mysteries of sacrifice...

"[3]As to the third meaning of sacrifice, it is this: If you plant a seed in the ground, a tree will become manifest from that seed. The seed sacrifices itself to the tree that will come from it. The seed is outwardly lost, destroyed; but the same seed which is sacrificed will be absorbed and embodied in that tree, its blossoms, fruit and branches. If the identity of that seed had not been sacrificed to the tree which became manifest from it, no branches, blossoms or fruits would have been forthcoming. Christ outwardly disappeared. His personal identity became hidden from the eyes, even as the identity of the seed disappeared; but the bounties, divine qualities and perfections of Christ became manifest in the Christian community which Christ founded through sacrificing Himself. When you look at the tree, you will realize that the perfections, blessings, properties and beauty of the seed have become manifest in the branches, twigs, blossoms and fruit; consequently, the seed has sacrificed itself to the tree. Had it not done so, the tree would not have come into existence. Christ, like unto the seed, sacrificed Himself for the tree of Christianity. Therefore, His perfections, bounties, favors, lights and graces became manifest in the Christian community, for the coming of which He sacrificed Himself.

"[4]As to the fourth significance of sacrifice: It is the principle that a reality sacrifices its own characteristics. Man must sever himself from the influences of the world of matter, from the world of nature and its laws; for the material world is the world of corruption and death. It is the world of evil and darkness, of animalism and ferocity, bloodthirstiness, ambition and avarice, of self-worship, egotism and passion; it is the world of nature. Man must strip himself of all these imperfections, must sacrifice these tendencies which are peculiar to the outer and material world of existence.

"On the other hand, man must acquire heavenly qualities and attain divine attributes. He must become the image and likeness of God. He must seek the bounty of the eternal, become the manifestor of the love of God, the light of guidance, the tree of life and the depository of the bounties of God. That is to say, man must sacrifice

the qualities and attributes of the world of nature for the qualities and attributes of the world of God."

In two other addresses, „Abdu'l-Bahá stressed the first meaning of the suffering and sacrifice of the Prophets, and particularly emphasized the motivation which inspired, indeed which compelled this self-sacrifice:

PUP:256-257: "What an infinite degree of love is reflected by the divine Manifestations toward mankind! For the sake of guiding the people They have willingly forfeited Their lives. To resuscitate human hearts They have accepted the cross. To enable human souls to attain the supreme degree of advancement, They have suffered during Their limited years extreme ordeals and difficulties. If Jesus Christ had not possessed love for the world of humanity, surely He would not have welcomed the cross. He was crucified for the love of mankind. Consider the infinite degree of that love. Without love for humanity John the Baptist would not have offered his life. It has been likewise with all the Prophets and Holy Souls. If the Báb had not manifested love for mankind, surely He would not have offered His breast for a thousand bullets. If Bahá'u'lláh had not been aflame with love for humanity, He would not have willingly accepted forty years' imprisonment.

"Observe how rarely human souls sacrifice their pleasure or comfort for others, how improbable that a man would offer his eye or suffer himself to be dismembered for the benefit of another. Yet all the divine Manifestations suffered, offered Their lives and blood, sacrificed Their existence, comfort and all They possessed for the sake of mankind. Therefore, consider how much Thy love. Were it not for Their love for humanity, spiritual love would be mere nomenclature. Were it not for Their illumination, human souls would not be radiant. How effective is Their love! This is a sign of the love of God, a ray of the Sun of Reality."

PUP:28: "The Blessed Perfection [Bahá'u'lláh] was a prisoner twenty-five years. During all this time He was subjected to the indignities and revilement of the people. He was persecuted, mocked and put in chains. In Persia His properties were pillaged and His possessions confiscated. First, there was banishment from Persia to Baghdad, then to Constantinople, then to Adrianople, finally from Rumelia to the prison fortress of 'Akka.

"During His lifetime He was intensely active. His energy was unlimited. Scarcely one night was passed in restful sleep. He bore these ordeals, suffered these calamities and difficulties in order that a manifestation of selflessness and service might become apparent in the world of humanity; that the Most Great Peace should become a reality; that human souls might appear as the angels of heaven; that heavenly miracles would be wrought among men; that human faith should be strengthened and perfected; that the precious, priceless

bestowal of God--the human mind--might be developed to its fullest capacity in the temple of the body; and that man might become the reflection and likeness of God, even as it hath been revealed in the Bible, 'Let us make man in our image.' [Genesis 1:26]

"Briefly, the Blessed Perfection bore all these ordeals and calamities in order that our hearts might become enkindled and radiant, our spirits be glorified, our faults become virtues, our ignorance be transformed into knowledge; in order that we might attain the real fruits of humanity and acquire heavenly graces; in order that, although pilgrims upon earth, we should travel the road of the heavenly Kingdom, and although needy and poor, we might receive the treasures of eternal life. For this has He borne these difficulties and sorrows."

This suffering and sacrifice of the Prophet releases a power that transforms humanity, that recreates all existences. But it is not his suffering and sacrifice alone that is a proof of his mission, of his truth. It is the fact that the Prophet of God does not suffer for his own sake, or even because of the perversity of his oppressors, but for the sake of humanity. The Prophet of God is the living sacrifice which saves, which redeems mankind. His sacrifice makes the spiritual life of humanity possible. Hence one of the signs of all of the prophets is long-suffering and martyrdom in the path of the love of God.

A further elaboration of this proof indicates that the sufferings and sacrifices of the followers of the Prophet of God are a proof of his prophetic station. In "Kitáb-i-Iqán" Bahá'u'lláh expatiates upon the sufferings and sacrifices of the followers of the Báb (KI:222-227), and he articulates this principle therein in this fashion:

"Doth not the testimony of these holy souls, who have so gloriously risen to offer up their lives for their Beloved that the whole world marvelled at the manner of their sacrifice, suffice the people of this day?" (KI:224)

"Be fair: Is the testimony of those acceptable and worthy of attention whose deeds agree with their words, whose outward behaviour conforms with their inner life? The mind is bewildered at their deeds, and the soul marvelleth at their fortitude and bodily endurance. Or is the testimony of these faithless souls who breathe naught but the breath of selfish desire, and who lie imprisoned in the cage of their idle fancies, acceptable?" (KI:224-225)

He indicates that this proof is not reserved for the Dispensation of the Báb by citing the sacrifices of the Imam Husayn, during the Dispensation of Muhammad, as an earlier example of this proof, and comparing it to the glory of the Bábi martyrs:

"Were not the happenings of the life of the 'Prince of Martyrs'

regarded as the greatest of all events, as the supreme evidence of his truth? Did not the people of old declare those happenings to be unprecedented? Did they not maintain that no manifestation of truth hath ever evinced such constancy, such conspicuous glory? And yet, that episode of his life, commencing as it did in the morning, was brought to a close by the middle of the same day, whereas, these holy lights have, for eighteen years, heroically endured the showers of afflictions which, from every side, have rained upon them. With what love, what devotion, what exultation and holy rapture, they sacrificed their lives in the path of the All-Glorious! To the truth of this all witness. And yet, how can they belittle this Revelation? Hath any age witnessed such momentous happenings? If these companions be not the true strivers after God, who else could be called by this name? Have these companions been seekers after power or glory? Have they ever yearned for riches? Have they cherished any desire except the good-pleasure of God? If these companions, with all their marvelous testimonies and wondrous works, be false, who then is worthy to claim for himself the truth? I swear by God! Their very deeds are a sufficient testimony, and an irrefutable proof unto all the peoples of the earth, were men to ponder in their hearts the mysteries of divine Revelation." (KI:225-226)

"Furthermore, the sign of truth and falsehood is designated and appointed in the Book. By this divinely-appointed touchstone, the claims and pretensions of all men must needs be assayed, so that the truthful may be known and distinguished from the imposter. This touchstone is no other than this verse: 'Wish for death, if ye are men of truth.' [Qur'an 2:94] Consider these martyrs of unquestionable sincerity, to whose truthfulness testifieth the explicit text of the Book, and all of whom, as thou hast witnessed, have sacrificed their life, their substance, their wives, their children, their all, and ascended unto the loftiest chambers of Paradise. Is it fair to reject the testimony of these detached and exalted beings to the truth of this pre-eminent and glorious Revelation and to regard as acceptable the denunciations which have been uttered against this resplendent Light by this faithless people, who for gold have forsaken their faith, and who for the sake of leadership have repudiated Him Who is the First Leader of all mankind? This, although their character is now revealed unto all people who have recognized them as those who will in no wise relinquish one jot or one tittle of their temporal authority for the sake of God's holy Faith, how much less their life, their substance, and the like.

"Behold how the divine Touchstone hath, according to the explicit test of the Book separated and distinguished the true from the false. Notwithstanding, they are still oblivious of this truth, and in the sleep of heedlessness, are pursuing the vanities of the world, and are occupied with thoughts of vain and earthly leadership." (KI:227-228)²

SEVENTH PROOF:

COURAGEOUS PROCLAMATION OF THE PROPHETS

The foregoing passage speaks of the fortitude of the prophets in the face of persecution, trials, tortures, martyrdom. It also speaks of the courage and steadfastness of the prophets in the proclamation of their Message, as articulated by Bahá'u'lláh in Kitáb-i-Iqán:

"Reflect, how single-handed and alone they faced the world and all its peoples, and promulgated the Law of God! No matter how severe the persecutions inflicted upon those holy, those precious, and tender Souls, they still remained, in the plenitude of their power, patient, and, despite their ascendancy, they suffered and endured." (KI:45)

In "Kitáb-i-Iqán" Bahá'u'lláh refers to the Báb in these words:

"Another proof and evidence of the truth of this Revelation, which amongst all other proofs shineth as the sun, is the constancy of the eternal Beauty in proclaiming the Faith of God. Though young and tender of age, and though the Cause He revealed was contrary to the desire of all the peoples of the earth, both high and low, rich and poor, exalted and abased, king and subject, yet He arose and steadfastly proclaimed it. All have known and heard this. He was afraid of no one; He was regardless of consequences. Could such a thing be made manifest except through the power of a divine Revelation, and the potency of God's invincible Will? By the righteousness of God! Were any one to entertain so great a Revelation in his heart, the thought of such a declaration would alone confound him! Were the hearts of all men to be crowded into his heart, he would still hesitate to venture upon so awful an enterprise. He could achieve it only by the permission of God, only if the channel of his heart were to be linked with the Source of divine grace, and his soul be assured of the unfailing sustenance of the Almighty. To what, We wonder, do they ascribe so great a daring? Do they accuse Him of folly as they accused the Prophets of old? Or do they maintain that His motive was none other than leadership and the acquisition of earthly riches?" (KI:230-231)

Bahá'u'lláh refers to his own prophethood in similar terms:

"This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty

and All-Knowing." (Tablet to Nasiri'd-Din Shah³)

"Can anyone speak forth of his own accord that for which all men, both high and low, will protest against him? Nay, by Him Who taught the Pen the eternal mysteries, save him whom the grace of the Almighty, the All-Powerful, hath strengthened." (Tablet to Nasiri'd-Din Shah, cited in ESW:39-40)

"Think ye, O people, that I hold within My grasp the control of God's ultimate Will and Purpose? Far be it from Me to advance such a claim. To this I testify before God, the Almighty, the Exalted, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Had the ultimate destiny of God's Faith been in Mine hands, I would have never consented, even though for one moment, to manifest Myself unto you, nor would I have allowed one word to fall from My lips. Of this God Himself is, verily, a witness." (Tablet to Abu'l-Hasan fi'l-Shayan, GL:XLI:90-91)

"Had it been in my power, I would have, under no circumstances, consented to distinguish myself amongst men, for the Name I bear utterly disdaineth to associated itself with this generation whose tongues are sullied and whose hearts are false. And whenever I chose to hold my peace and be still, lo, the voice of the Holy Ghost, standing on my right hand, aroused me, and the Supreme Spirit appeared before my face, and Gabriel foreshadowed me, and the Spirit of Glory stirred within my bosom, bidding me arise and break my silence. If your hearing be purged and your ears be attentive, ye will assuredly perceive that every limb of my body, nay all the atoms of my being, proclaim and bear witness to this call: 'God, besides Whom is none other God, and He, Whose beauty is now manifest, is the reflection of His glory unto all that are in heaven and on earth.'" (Tablet to 'Ali Muhammad Sharaj, GL:L:103-104)

"By the righteousness of God, my Well-Beloved! I have never aspired after worldly leadership. My sole purpose hath been to hand down unto men that which I was bidden to deliver by God, the Gracious, the Incomparable, that it may detach them from all that pertaineth to this world, and cause they to attain such heights as neither the ungodly can conceive, nor the froward imagine." (Tablet to Jinab-i-Muhammad, GL:LIV:108)

He writes specifically of the longing of the Báb to sacrifice his life in the path of the Cause of God:

"Gracious God! In His Book, which He hath entitled "Qayyumu'l-Asma,"--the first, the greatest and mighteous of all books--He prophesied His own martyrdom. In it is this

passage: "O thou Remnant of God! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake; and have yearned for naught by martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient Witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days!"

"Likewise, in His interpretation of the letter "Ha," He craved martyrdom, saying: "Methinks I heard a Voice calling in my inmost being: 'Do thou sacrifice the thing which Thou lovest most in the path of God, even as Husayn, peace be upon him, hath offered up his life for My sake?' And were I not regardful of this inevitable mystery, by Him, Who hath my being between His hands even if all the kings of the earth were to be leagued together they would be powerless to take from me a single letter, how much less can these servants who are worthy of no attention, and who verily are of the outcast....That all may know the degree of My patience, My resignation, and self-sacrifice in the path of God." (KI:231-232)

And Bahá'u'lláh comments upon this extraordinary statement quoted from the Báb:

KI:232: "Could the Revealer of such utterance be regarded as walking any way but the way of God, and as having yearned for aught else except His good-pleasure? In this very verse there lieth concealed a breath of detachment, which if it were to be breathed full upon the world, all beings would renounce their lives, and sacrifice their souls..."

KI:233-34: "Steadfastness in the Faith is a sure testimony, and a glorious evidence of the truth...And now consider how this Sadrih of the Ridvan of God hath, in the prime of youth, risen to proclaim the Cause of God. Behold what steadfastness that Beauty of God hath revealed. The whole world rose to hinder Him, yet it utterly failed. The more severe the persecution they inflicted on that Sadrih of Blessedness, the more His fervour increased, and the brighter burned the flame of His love. All this is evident, and none disputeth its truth. Finally, He surrendered His soul, and winged His flight unto the realms above."

In an informal talk recorded by Laura Clifford-Barney circa 1904-1906 „Abdu'l-Bahá said:

SAQ:43-44: "We have undertaken to demonstrate logical proofs of the truth of His claim. We will cite another which alone is sufficient for all who are just, and which no one can deny. It is that this illustrious Being uplifted his Cause in the 'Greatest Prison'; from this Prison His light was shed abroad; His fame conquered the world; and the proclamation of His glory reached the East and West: until our time no such thing has ever occurred."

„Abdu'l-Bahá refers to this proof in another of his talks, in 1912:

"...we must discover for a certainty whether They have been real Educators of mankind. Among the revelators of the law of God was Moses. When He appeared, all the contemporaneous nations rejected Him. Notwithstanding this, single and alone He promulgated the divine teachings and liberated a nation from the lowest condition of degradation and bondage...Christ, single and alone, without schooling or outward education and trained to labor in the shop of a carpenter appeared in the world at the time when the Jewish nation was in the greatest abasement. This radiant Youth, without wealth, power of armies or prestige, rescued the Jews who believed on Him from tyranny and degradation and lifted them to the highest plane of development and glory."(PUP:340)

„Abdu'l-Bahá was asked in 1912 by a member of the English Parliament for the most concise and sufficient proof of the prophethood of Bahá'u'lláh, and the response received was this:

SW:XIV:8:231: "The concise and sufficient proof is that Bahá'u'lláh in such a prison as Acre, and when under chains, raised His banner. In Tihran He was in prison and under chains. In Acre He was in prison. Under these circumstances He raised His banner...There is nothing recorded comparable to this. What power is this, that from the beginning of the world until today such a thing has not happened!"

Later, in 1914 whilst confined to Palestine by the First World War, he was asked a similar question and replied:

SW:VIII:13:178: "The greatest proof of the Blessed Perfection--may my life be a ransom to Him!--consists in the fact that He was always manifest and evident under all conditions and circumstances. He was never concealed nor was He disguised for one day. In Persia, in Baghdad, in Constantinople, in Adrianople, and in the most great prison (Acca), Bahá'u'lláh ever withstood the persecutions of the enemies and kept His own ground in the face of the world. He never attempted to protect or shield Himself for one second. Before all nations and all religions He proclaimed His Cause and declared His teachings."

These are but the examples of two prophets, both of whom will be considered in much more detail in subsequent books. However, all of the prophets have labored for the Cause of God, labored in the face of opposition, oppression, poverty, betrayal and many other trials. Ultimately, however much we humans may study the lives of the prophets, we must remember: "Immeasurably high are the Prophets of God exalted above the comprehension of men, who can never know them except by their own Selves."(KI:35) Hence, the best source for the lives of the prophets are the descriptions of those lives penned by

or attested to by the prophets themselves. This is the true standard by which all the testimonies of men are to be weighed and judged.

EIGHTH PROOF:

EVERY VALLEY SHALL BE EXALTED

The divine philosophy of Bahá'u'lláh and „Abdu'l-Bahá waxes luxuriously eloquent upon this Proof, which indicates that the abased and ignorant ones among humanity are exalted and uplifted through contact with the prophet and the specific Revelation of God. This proof is not limited to certain prophets and withheld from others. Bahá'u'lláh writes in "Kitáb-i-Iqán":

KI:146: "This station is also one of the signs of the Day of Revelation; even as it is said: "The abased amongst you, He shall exalt; and they that are exalted, He shall abase." And likewise, He hath revealed in the Qur'an: "and We desire to show favour to those who were brought low in the land, and to make them spiritual leaders among men, and to make of them Our heirs."" [Qur'an 28:5]

We are reminded of the words from the Book of Isaiah (XL:4), also cited in the Gospel of Luke (3:5):

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain."

Also, of the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Luke (6:20):

"Blessed be ye poor, for your's is the kingdom of God"

And in all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25):

"Again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

Bahá'u'lláh elaborates on this same principle in "Kitáb-i-Iqán":

KI:146: "And how many of the ignorant who, by reason of their acceptance of the Faith, have soared aloft and attained the high summit of knowledge, and whose names have been inscribed by the Pen of Power upon the Tablet of divine knowledge."

KI:221-222: "Amongst the proofs demonstrating the truth of this Revelation is this, that in every age and Dispensation, whenever the invisible Essence was revealed in the person of His Manifestation, certain souls, obscure and detached from all worldly entanglements, would seek illumination from the Sun of Prophethood and Moon of divine guidance, and would attain unto the divine Presence. For this reason, the divines

of the age and those possessed of wealth, would scorn and scoff at these people. Even as He hath revealed concerning them that erred: 'Then said the chiefs of His people who believed not, "We see in Thee but a man like ourselves; and we see not any who have followed Thee except our meanest ones of hasty judgment, nor see we any excellence in you above ourselves: nay, we deem you liars.'" [Qur'an 11:27] They caviled at those holy Manifestations, and protested saying: 'None hath followed you except the abject amongst us, those who are worthy of no attention.' Their aim was to show that no one amongst the learned, the wealthy, and the renowned believed in them. By this and similar proofs they sought to demonstrate the falsity of Him that speaketh naught but the truth."

TB:186: "When the Word of God is revealed unto all created things. Whoso then giveth ear and heedeth the Call is, indeed, reckoned among the most distinguished souls, though he be a carrier of ashes. And he who turneth away is accounted as the lowliest of His servants, though he be a ruler amongst men and the possessor of all the books that are in the heavens and on earth."

K157: "Behold, the 'mystery of the Great Reversal in the Sign of the Sovereign' hath now been made manifest...In truth, it is in the hand of God to give what He willeth to whomsoever He willeth, and to withhold what He pleaseth from whomsoever He may wish. He knoweth the inner secrets of the hearts and the meaning hidden in the mocker's wink. How many an embodiment of heedlessness who came unto Us with purity of heart have We established upon the seat of Our acceptance; and how many an exponent of wisdom have We in all justice consigned to the fire. We are, in truth, the One to judge. He it is Who is the manifestation of 'God doeth whatsoever He pleaseth', and abideth upon the throne of 'He ordaineth whatsoever He chooseth.'"

Bahá'u'lláh refers to specific Prophets and their fulfillment of this proof:

KI:154-56: "For instance, consider that among the Prophets was Noah. When He was invested with the robe of Prophethood, and was moved by the Spirit of God to arise and proclaim His Cause, whoever believed in Him and acknowledged His Faith, was endowed with the grace of a new life. Of him it could be truly said that he was reborn and revived, inasmuch as previous to his belief in God and his acceptance of His Manifestation, he had set his affections on the things of the world, such as attachment to earthly goods,

to wife, children, food, drink, and the like, so much so that in the day-time and in the night-season his one concern had been to amass riches and procure for himself the means of enjoyment and pleasure. Aside from these things, before his partaking of the reviving waters of faith, he had been so wedded to the traditions of his forefathers, and so passionately devoted to the observance of their customs and laws, that he would have preferred to suffer death rather than violate one letter of those superstitious forms and manners current amongst his people...These same people, though wrapt in all these veils of limitation, and despite the restraint of such observances, as soon as they drank the immortal draught of faith, from the cup of certitude, at the hand of the Manifestation of the All-Glorious, were so transformed that they would renounce for His sake their kindred, their substance, their lives, their beliefs, yea, all else save God! So overpowering was their yearning for God, so uplifting their transports of ecstatic delight, that the world and all that is therein faded before their eyes into nothingness."

GL:XXXV:83-84: "In like manner, when Muhammad, the Prophet of God--may all men be a sacrifice unto Him--appeared and learned men of Mecca and Medina arose, in the early days of His Revelation, against Him and rejected His Message, while they who were destitute of all learning recognized and embraced His Faith. Ponder a while. Consider how Balal, the Ethiopian, unlettered though he was, ascended unto the heaven of faith and certitude, whilst 'Abdu'llah Ubayy, a leader among the learned, maliciously strove to oppose Him. Behold, how a mere shepherd was so carried away by the ecstasy of the words of God that he was able to gain admittance into the habitation of his Best-Beloved, and was united to Him Who is the Lord of Mankind, whilst they who pride themselves on their knowledge and wisdom strayed far from His path and remained deprived of His grace. For this reason He hath written: 'He that is exalted among you shall be abased, and he that is abased shall be exalted.' References to this theme are to be found in most of the heavenly Books, as well as in the sayings of the Prophets and Messengers of God."

K166: "Call ye to mind the shaykh whose name was Muhammad-Hasan, who ranked among the most learned divines of his day. When the True One [the Báb] was made manifest, this shaykh, along with others of his calling, rejected Him, while a sifter of wheat and barley accepted Him and turned unto the Lord."

The transformation of the believers through the influence of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are described by „Abdu'l-Bahá in many of his talks:

SAQ:30-31: "As for the Báb...Many Ulama and public men, as well as other people, joyfully sacrificed their lives in His Cause, and hastened to the plain of martyrdom."

PUP:125: "The Báb became a martyr, and over twenty thousand men and women sacrificed their lives for their faith."

PUP:277: "In this century of the latter times Bahá'u'lláh has appeared and so resuscitated spirits that they have manifested powers more than human. Thousands of His followers have given their lives; and while under the sword, shedding their blood, they have proclaimed, "Ya Baha'u'l-Abha!" Such resuscitation is impossible except through a heavenly potency, a supernatural power, the divine power of the Holy Spirit."

PUP:401-402: "In the nineteenth century strife and hostility prevailed among the people of the Orient. Apathy and ignorance characterized the nations. They were indeed gloomy and dark, negligent of God and under the subjection of the baser instincts and passions of mankind. The struggle for existence was intense and universal."

The followers of the new Prophet are not the only debased ones who are exalted in arrival of each new Dispensation. For the new prophet recreates all of creation, and in the new era everything is turned upside down and inside out. Civilizations which have withstood the ages suddenly crumble and vanish--as did Egypt and Assyria in the epoch of Moses, as did Rome and Persia in the age of Jesus, as did Byzantium and India in the era of Muhammad, and as is presently occurring in the civilization of the West--and other new civilizations-- Israel and Judah, India and China in the epoch of Moses; Western Europe in the age of Jesus; the various Islamic empires in the era of Muhammad; and the emerging world commonwealth in the present cycle. Those who have invested most in the old order will lose the most when it crumbles. Those who had the least to invest are the first ones to gain. In the old order of things, in every Dispensation, the poor are powerless and property-less and the rich have all the power and all the property. When the old order crumbles, either gradually or suddenly the rich are divested of their power and property, and the poor become the nouveaux riches and the new masters. Therefore, the exaltation of the abased has a temporal significance as well as a much more important spiritual meaning.

NINTH PROOF:

AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL SHALL BE MADE
LOW

Many references which affirm this proof have already been cited in the

portrayal of the previous proof, inasmuch as they are linked together in every Dispensation. Rather than cite those passages once more, the reader is directed to read them once more and consider their application to this proof. One manner of the fulfillment of this Proof of the Prophets is through the proclamation of the prophet to the ruling powers, ecclesiastical and secular, and the collapse of those powers as a consequence of rejecting the call of the prophet. There are innumerable examples of this scenario recorded in the Tanakh, including the stories of the prophet Samuel and king Saul; the prophet Moses and the Pharaoh of Egypt; the prophet Daniel and the king Belshazzar; the prophet Elijah and the followers of Baal; the prophet Nathan and king David. Such stories are also found in the Qur'an and in other Scriptures. Jesus Christ was opposed by the combined powers of the Jewish ecclesiastical authorities and the Roman surrogate temporal powers. The Jewish priesthood was virtually eliminated as a governing power structure with the razing of the Temple less than 40 years following the martyrdom of the Messiah. The Temple was of course razed by the Roman government, which worked in league with the Jewish authorities in the prosecution and execution of Jesus Christ. It took the Roman authorities much longer to collapse, but in the generation following the mission of the Messiah the teachings of Christ were preached throughout the Roman Empire, and within a century there were large and influential communities of Christians, while in the 4th century the Roman Emperor, Constantine converted to Christianity, and from henceforth the Roman realms were governed by the power of Christ.

Muhammad is alleged to have dictated letters to the monarchs of territories abutting Arabia, inviting them to accept Islam. None of these monarchs indicated a willingness to do so. Within a century of the founding of Islam all of these territories were under Islamic governments, and hence their ruling powers had been overturned, their ecclesiastics for the most part deprived of influence as the majority of their populations converted to Islam, and their kings unseated by the conquering Muslims and replaced with rulers subservient to the teachings of Muhammad, the Messenger of God. Likewise, the Báb sent letters to the Shah of Iran, Muhammad Shah; to the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, 'Abdu'l-Majid; to the Valid of Baghdad, Najib Pasha; to the Sherif of Makka; to the Grand Vizier of Iran, Hajji Mirza Aqasi; and to many of the Muslim clerics of Iran and Iraq. The response to his proclamation was, as in the case of all the prophets of the past, a negative one, and the consequences for the rulers will be discussed in the Gate devoted to the Proofs of the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh far outstripped his predecessors, in writing letters including the "Suriy-i-Muluk", addressed "to the entire company of the monarchs of East and West, and in which the Sultan of Turkey, and

his ministers, the kings of Christendom, the French and Persian Ambassadors accredited to the Sublime Porte, the Muslim ecclesiastical leaders in Constantinople, its wise men and inhabitants, the people of Persia and the philosophers of the world are separately addressed" 17; first Tablet to the Emperor of the French, Napoleon III; "the Lawh-i-Sultan, His detailed epistle to Nasiri'd-Din Shah" 18, the Shah of Iran; and to "Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizir[of the Sultan of Turkey], Bahá'u'lláh addressed the Suriy-i-Ra'is" 19. These epistles were penned in Adrianople.

In Akka, Bahá'u'lláh addressed passages of "Kitab-i-Aqdas" to the "kings of the earth" (K78-K84,K87); to the "Emperor of Austria"(K85)20; to the "King of Berlin"(K86)21, and to the "Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein"(K88)22; penned His second Tablet to Napoleon III23; addressed an Epistle to

17Shoghi Effendi in "God Passes By", US 1971 edition, p. 171-72.

18Ibid., p. 172.

19Ibid., p. 174.

20"Francis Joseph, the Austrian Emperor and heir of the Holy Roman Empire"(Ibid., p. 208)

21Kaiser Wilhelm I, "King of Prussia and newly-acclaimed emperor of a unified Germany"(Ibid.)

22Serving as Presidents of the Republics of the Americas in 1872 were

the following (with the Republics listed alphabetically): Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, President of Argentina; John A. MacDonald, Prime Minister of Canada; Federico Errazuriz Zañartu, President of Chile; Eustorgio Salgar and Manuel Murillo Toro, Presidents of Colombia; Tomas Guardia Gutierrez, President of Costa Rica; Buenaventura Baez, President of the Dominican Republic; Gabriel Garcia Moreno, President of Ecuador; Justo Rufino Barrios, President of Guatemala; Nissage Saget, President of Haiti; Benito Juarez and Sebastian Lerdo de Tejada, Presidents of Mexico; Jose Vicente Cuadra, President of Nicaragua; Francisco Solano Lopez, President of Paraguay; Manuel Pardo, President of Peru; Ulysses S. Grant, President of the United States of America; Lorenzo Batlle y Grau and Tomas Gomensoro, Presidents of Uruguay; Antonio Guzman Blanco, President of Venezuela.

23GPB, p. 207.

"Nicolaevitch Alexander II, the all-powerful Czar of Russia"24; "To 'Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizir of the Sultan of Turkey He addressed, shortly after His arrival in 'Akka, a second Tablet"25; while "To Queen Victoria He, during that same period, addressed an Epistle"26, and "Some of the weightiest passages of His Epistle to Queen Victoria are addressed to the members of the British Legislature, the Mother of Parliaments, as well as to the elected representatives of the peoples in

other lands."27 Bahá'u'lláh also proclaimed his mission in an Epistle to Pope Pius IX, "the undisputed head of the most powerful Church in Christendom, possessor of both temporal and spiritual authority"28; in the "Kitáb-i-Aqdas" he addressed the world's ecclesiastical leaders29; "To the patriarchs of the Christian Church He issued a specific summons"30; "To the archbishops of that Church...In passages addressed to its bishops...The concourse of Christian priests...And finally, in several passages addressed to the entire body of the followers of Jesus Christ"31; "To the entire body of Muslim ecclesiastics Bahá'u'lláh specifically devoted innumerable passages in His Books and Tablets"32. The replies of these various and sundry leaders to his letters, and the consequences of those responses will be considered in the volume devoted to Bahá'u'lláh's prophethood. Suffice it to say, as did David after the slaughter of king Saul and his son Jonathan and their army by the Amalekites in fulfillment of the prophecy of the prophet Samuel, "how are the mighty fallen!"(2 Samuel 1:19b)

This is not however the only significance of this Proof. Bahá'u'lláh in "Kitáb-i-Iqán" unravels another of the dimensions of this Proof:

KI:33: "And now, concerning His words--"The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give light, and the stars shall fall from heaven." By the terms "sun" and "moon", mentioned in the writings of the Prophets of God, is not meant solely the sun and moon of the visible universe.

24Ibid.

25Ibid.

26Ibid.

27Ibid., p. 211.

28Ibid, p. 209.

29Ibid.

30Ibid., pp. 209-210.

31Ibid., p. 210.

32Ibid.

Nay, rather, manifold are the meanings they have intended for these terms. In every instance they have attached to them a particular significance."

KI:36: "In another sense, by these terms is intended the divines of the former Dispensation, who live in the days of the subsequent Revelations, and who hold the reins of religion in their grasp. If these divines be illumined by the light of the latter Revelation they will be acceptable unto God, and will shine with a light everlasting. Otherwise, they will be declared as darkened, even though to outward seeming they be leaders of men, inasmuch as belief and unbelief, guidance and error, felicity and misery, light and darkness, are all dependent upon

the sanction of Him Who is the Day-Star of Truth.

Whosoever among the divines of every age receiveth, in the Day of Reckoning, the testimony of faith from the Source of true knowledge, he verily becometh the recipient of learning, of divine favour, and of the light of true understanding.

Otherwise, he is branded as guilty of folly, denial, blasphemy, and oppression."

Hence, the exalted are exalted if they submit to the new prophet, but in most cases the exalted do not submit and hence they are abased. This is as true of ecclesiastical leaders as it is of temporal leaders, indeed moreso inasmuch as the religious authorities have a grave responsibility, that of the spiritual guidance of the masses, and when they fail to recognize and follow the new prophet they not only deprive themselves of the Truth but also deprive their followers thereof. In "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih" the Báb writes that the Proofs are established for these knowledgeable ones, and in referring to the Second Proof:

SP:12: "Yes, the sight alone of but one of these verses (suffices) for those who have the intelligent and perspicacious eye: for the others, I do not speak of them, for they are not worthy of similar attention, God having said in the greater part of the Manifestations that these signs are for those who have Faith and Intelligence and not for the great majority of the creatures, who are not in a state to comprehend."

It may be useful for the reader to be reminded that, previous to the past century, it was not possible for the majority of mankind to comprehend, to understand the divine verses, inasmuch as the vast plurality of the human race was illiterate, and depended for what little learning they had upon an elite of professional educators who were not in the least motivated to uplift their charges out of the obscurity of ignorance. These instructors, who were in perhaps all cultures members of the ecclesiastical power structure, were not encouraged to facilitate the widespread education of the common people, rather, on the contrary, they were responsible for keeping the masses in a state of dependency upon themselves and upon the secular authorities and for rooting out any and all tendencies towards independent thinking, innovation and individual initiative. This order of things has persisted in most cultures until the dawn of the new age in the last century, and now, at the close of the twentieth century, the majority of humanity, although still far from its entirety is capable of reading at some level, and a considerable percentage of these have some training in systematic research, study and thinking which might enable them to appreciate the very signs and proofs which would have been unintelligible to their forefathers; to say nothing of their foremothers!

TENTH PROOF:

THE STAR-HERALD OF THE PROPHET

This divine philosophy makes the extraordinary assertion that preceding the appearance of every one of the Prophets of God there has been manifested in the sky a star heralding his coming. For Christians familiar with the account in the Gospel of Matthew (II:2,9-10) of the star which the Magi kings followed in search of the Promised One, this assertion may not seem as curious as it will certainly for many Jews, Muslims and other religionists. Bahá'u'lláh, in "Kitáb-i-Iqán" explains this phenomenon:

KI:62: "By "heaven" is meant the visible heaven, inasmuch as when the hour draweth nigh on which the Day-star of the heaven of justice shall be made manifest, and the Ark of divine guidance shall sail upon the sea of glory, a star will appear in the heaven, heralding unto its people the advent of that most great light. In like manner, in the invisible heaven a star shall be made manifest who, unto the peoples of the earth, shall act as a harbinger of the break of that true and exalted Morn. These twofold signs, in the visible and the invisible heaven, have announced the Revelation of each of the Prophets of God, as is commonly believed. Among the Prophets was Abraham, the Friend of God. Ere He manifested Himself, Nimrod dreamed a dream. Thereupon, he summoned the soothsayers, who informed him of the rise of a star in the heaven..."

This story is confirmed in the Sefer ha-Yashar, Ma"aseh Avraham (Version B, in Bet ha-Midrash, II:119; also in Rabbenu BaHya in Torah Shelemah, III:643, n. 89) and in other legendary material which is not part of the canonical Jewish Scriptures.

KI:63: "After Him came Moses, He Who held converse with God. The soothsayers of His time warned Pharaoh in these terms: "A star hath risen in the heaven, and lo! it foreshadoweth the conception of a Child Who holdeth your fate and the fate of your people in His hand.'"

Similar accounts are found in Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews (2.205), in Pirke Rabbi Eliezer (Torah Shelemah, VIII:48, n.212), Exodus Rabbah (I:18; Torah Shelemah, VIII:46, n. 202; 47, n. 207; 41, n. 176) and Asatir (8).

KI:64: "In like manner, when the hour of the Revelation of Jesus drew nigh, a few of the Magi, aware that the star of Jesus had appeared in heaven, sought and followed it, till they came unto the city which was the seat of the Kingdom of Herod. The sway of his sovereignty in those days embraced the whole of that land. These Magi said: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east and are

come to worship Him!" When they searched, they found out that in Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, the Child had been born. This was the sign that was manifested in the visible heaven."

This is the account found in the Gospel of Matthew, for the Magi discover the birth place of Jesus by themselves, whereas the Gospel of Luke has King Herod point them in the right direction.

KI:65: "Likewise, ere the beauty of Muhammad was unveiled, the signs of the visible heaven were made manifest..."

In the biography of Muhammad authored by Ibn Ishaq (85-151 A.H.), preserved in the work of Ibn Hisham (d. 213 A.H.), it is related that a Jew living in Yathrib (later renamed Madinat al-Nabi, city of the Prophet in honor of Muhammad) told a gathering of his community on the even of Muhammad's birth that "This night the star is risen, under which the Apostle is born."

KI:65: "And now concerning this wondrous and most exalted Cause. Know thou verily that many as astronomer hath announced the appearance of its star in the visible heaven..."

Astral phenomena associated with the declaration of the Báb in 1844 have been identified by several Seventh Day Adventist writers, including Leroy E. Froom, "The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers".

KI:66: "From all that We have stated it hath become clear and manifest that before the revelation of each of the Mirrors reflecting the divine Essence, the signs heralding their advent must needs be revealed in the visible heaven..."

Verification of the actual existence of stars or other celestial phenomena which heralded the appearance of each of the prophet of God will be attempted in subsequent volumes devoted to the proofs of prophethood applied to particular prophets.

ELEVENTH PROOF:

THE HERALDS OF THE PROPHETS

As we have already read, the star appearing in the physical heavens to announce the coming of the new prophet is complemented in the invisible heavens, that is in the spiritual realm which is manifested in holy souls. Bahá'u'lláh elucidates in "Kitáb-i-Iqán":

KI:62-63: "In like manner, in the invisible heaven a star shall be made manifest who, unto the peoples of the earth, shall act as a harbinger of the break of that true and exalted Morn. These twofold signs, in the visible and the invisible heaven, have announced the Revelation of each of the Prophets of God, as is commonly believed. Among the Prophets was Abraham, the Friend of God. Ere He manifested Himself,

Nimrod dreamed a dream. Thereupon, he summoned the soothsayers, who in-formed him of the rise of a star in the heaven. Likewise, there appeared a herald who announced throughout the land the coming of Abraham. After Him came Moses, He Who held converse with God...In like manner, there appeared a sage who, in the darkness of the night, brought tidings of joy unto the people of Israel, imparting consolation to their souls, and assurance to their hearts. To this testify the records of the sacred books..."

KI:64-66: "In like manner, when the hour of the Revelation of Jesus drew nigh...the sign in the invisible heaven--the heaven of divine knowledge and understanding--it was Yahya, son of Zachariah, who gave unto the people the tidings of the Manifestation of Jesus. Even as He hath revealed: "God announceth Yahya to thee, who shall bear witness unto the Word from God, and a great one and chaste." By the term "Word" is meant Jesus, Whose coming Yahya foretold. Moreover, in the heavenly Scriptures it is written: "John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." By John is meant Yahya. Likewise, ere the beauty of Muhammad was unveiled, the signs of the visible heaven were made manifest. As to the signs of the invisible heaven, there appeared four men who successively announced unto the people the joyful tidings of the rise of that divine Luminary. Ruz-bih, later named Salman, was honoured by being in their service. As the end of one of these approached, he would send Ruz-bih unto the other, until the fourth who, feeling his death to be nigh, addressed Ruz-bih saying: "O Ruz-bih! when thou hast taken up my body and buried it, go to Hijaz for there the Daystar of Muhammad will arise. Happy art thou, for thou shalt behold His face!" And now concerning this wondrous and most exalted Cause. Know thou verily that many an astronomer hath announced the appearance of its star in the visible heaven. Likewise, there appeared on earth Ahmad and Kazim, those twin resplendent lights--may God sanctify their resting-place! From all that We have stated it hath become clear and manifest that before the revelation of each of the Mirrors reflecting the divine Essence, the signs heralding their advent must needs be revealed in the visible heaven as well as in the invisible, wherein is the seat of the sun of knowledge, of the moon of wisdom, and of the stars of understanding and utterance. The sign of the invisible heaven must needs be revealed in the person of that perfect man who, before each Manifestation appeareth, educateth, and prepareth the souls of men for the advent of the divine Luminary, the Light of the

unity of God amongst men."

As for the "sign in the invisible heaven" whom Bahá'u'lláh identifies as having heralded his revelation, he writes in "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf":

ESW:158: "John, son of Zacharias, said what My Forerunner hath said: "Saying, repent ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after Me is mightier than I, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear." Wherefore, hath My Forerunner, as a sign of submissiveness and humility, said: "The whole of the Bayán is only a leaf amongst the leaves of His Paradise." And like-wise, He saith: "I am the first to adore Him, and pride Myself on My kinship with Him."

ESW:171: "The purpose of the Most Exalted One (the Báb) was to insure that the proximity of the Revelation should not withhold men from the Divine and everlasting Law, even as the companions of John (the Baptist) were prevented from acknowledging Him Who is the Spirit (Jesus).

TWELFTH PROOF:

THE TRIUMPH OF THE CAUSE OF THE PROPHET

In preceding proofs we have seen that all of the prophets have suffered rejection at the hands of the rulers of their lands and have been opposed or ignored by the majority of the commoners, so much so that it may be said, along with Jesus Christ: "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house."(Gospels of Matthew 13:57b; Luke 4:24; John 4:44) Nevertheless, the True Cause prevails, and nothing can impede it from eventual triumph. Jesus speaks to this theme, according to the Gospel of Matthew:

"Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

"Let them alone [the Pharisees]: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." (Gospel of Matthew 15:13-14)

After the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, the Book of Acts indicates that "one of the council"--that is, one of the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of Jewish elders in the land of Israel-- "a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law" who "who had in reputation among all the people" (Acts 5:34), spoke these words to the assembled members regarding the followers of Jesus Christ:

"And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

"But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest happily ye be found to fight against God." (Book of Acts 5:38-39)

It appears that this saying was quoted by the author(s) of the Book of Acts because it agreed with their understanding of this proof of prophethood. Bahá'u'lláh sets forth this proof in "Surat al-Muluk":

GL:219-220: "Dost thou imagine, O Minister of the Shah in the City (Constantinople), that I hold within My grasp the ultimate destiny of the Cause of God? Thinkest Thou that My imprisonment, or the shame I have been made to suffer, or even My death and utter annihilation, can deflect its course? Wretched is what thou hast imagined in thine heart! Thou art indeed of them that walk after the vain imaginings which their hearts devise. No God is there but Him. Powerful is He to manifest His Cause, and to exalt His testimony, and to establish whatsoever is His Will, and to elevate it to so eminent a position that neither thine own hands, nor the hands of them that have turned away from Him, can ever touch or harm it. Dost thou believe thou hast the power to frustrate His Will, to hinder Him from executing His judgment, or to deter Him from exercising His sovereignty? Pretendest thou that aught in the heavens or in the earth can resist His Faith? No, by Him Who is the Eternal Truth! Nothing whatsoever in the whole of creation can thwart His Purpose...If this Cause be of God, no man can prevail against it; and if it be not of God, the divines amongst you, and they that follow their corrupt desires and such as have rebelled against Him will surely suffice to overpower it." (GL:219-220; the last sentence is quoted in PDC:90)

In another Tablet, "Lawh-i-Abu'l-Hasan fi'l-shin", Bahá'u'lláh underscores this theme with a personal appeal which recalls the words of Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Gospel of Matthew 26:39b):

GL:91: "Think ye, O people, that I hold within My grasp the control of God's ultimate Will and Purpose? Far be it from Me to advance such a claim. To this I testify before God, the Almighty, the Exalted, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Had the ultimate destiny of God's Faith been in Mine hands, I would have never consented, even though for one moment, to manifest Myself unto you, nor would I have allowed one word to fall from My lips. Of this God Himself is, verily, a witness."

„Abdu'l-Bahá has expatiated liberally upon this theme, such as from this talk that refers to its fulfillment in the case of Moses:

PUP:405: "For example, let us review the events connected with the history of Moses--upon Him be peace! He dwelt in Midian at a time when the children of Israel were in captivity and bondage in the land of Egypt, subjected to every tyranny and severe oppression...At such a time as this and under such forbidding conditions Moses appeared and shone forth with a heavenly radiance. He saved Israel from the bondage of Pharaoh and released them from captivity. He led them out of the land of Egypt and into the Holy Land...In a word He led them out of their condition of hopelessness and brought them to efficiency in the plane of confidence and valor. They became renowned throughout the ancient world until finally in the zenith and splendor of their new civilization the glory of the sovereignty of Solomon was attained."

In subsequent volumes, the case of each of the Prophets will be considered. The achievements of the prophet Moses have already been cited in the Eighth Proof, and they will be mentioned again in relation to yet another proof. How is it possible to recycle this historical evidence to prove more than one Proof to be correct? In the first case, we consider a Proof in support of Moses based upon his exaltation of the abased, through his influence upon his followers over a lengthy period of time. In order to support such a claim we must cite historical evidence that such an exaltation occurred. In this second case, we are considering a Proof founded upon the triumph of the Cause of God in the face of opposition and separate from the person and presence of the prophet. The reader must be satisfied that the historical record shows that the Cause of God in the Dispensation of Moses did in fact triumph and that this triumph was not dependent upon the physical presence of Moses. Clearly, much of the same historical record will be cited for the first case and the second case. Likewise, as we shall see presently, the same evidence would be required for a later Proof. In all three cases it is not dogma or belief or legend or some magical or mystical formula which is being referred to as corroborative evidence in support of these proofs--it is universally recognized factual evidence. This is just a reminder to the reader that divine philosophy is not an obscure theological science, one of "those which begin with words and end with words"(Bahá'u'lláh, "Third Tajalli", TB:52), rather it is "in reality, the science of Divinity...the revelation of reality"(PUP:326).

This proof, called "daliil-i-taqriir" (proof of establishment) was much developed by Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Gulpaygani in his Kitabu'l-Fara'id, and the reader is referred to a fine article on this subject, written by Dr. Kavian Milani and Dr. Leila Milani, entitled "The Proof Based on Establishment and the Proof Based on Verses," in JBS:VII:4 (June-September 1997).

THIRTEENTH PROOF:

PROPHET'S ANNULMENT OF PREVIOUS

DISPENSATIONS

The universality of this Proof is stated briefly in Bahá'u'lláh's "Kitáb-i-Iqán":

KI:39: "Inasmuch as every subsequent Revelation hath abolished the manners, habits, and teachings that have been clearly, specifically, and firmly established by the former Dispensation, these have accordingly been symbolically expressed in terms of "sun" and "moon"."

This is written in relation to the interpretation of certain verses in the Scriptures (Tanakh, Gospels and Qur'an) which refer to the darkening of the sun and the eclipse of the moon at the time of the end. Bahá'u'lláh interprets this as a symbolic depiction of the annulment of fundamental laws in each new Dispensation:

KI:38,39: "In another sense, by the terms "sun", "moon", and "stars" are meant such laws and teachings as have been established and pro-claimed in every Dispensation, such as the laws of prayer and fasting...The traditions established the fact that in all Dispensations the law of prayer hath constituted a fundamental element of the Revelation of all the Prophets of God--a law the form and the manner of which hath been adapted to the varying requirements of every age."

In the interpretation of another verse from the Scriptures, Bahá'u'lláh again makes reference to this theme:

KI:44-45: "As He hath said: "When the heaven shall be cloven asunder. " By "heaven" is meant the heaven of divine Revelation, which is elevated with every Manifestation, and rent asunder with every subsequent one. By "cloven asunder" is meant that the former Dispensation is superseded and annulled. I swear by God! That this heaven being cloven asunder is, to the discerning, an act mightier than the cleaving of the skies! Ponder a while. That a divine Revelation which for years hath been securely established; beneath whose shadow all who have embraced it have been reared and nurtured; by the light of whose law generations of men have been disciplined; the excellency of whose word men have heard recounted by their fathers; in such wise that human eye hath beheld naught but the pervading influence of its grace, and mortal ear hath heard naught but the resounding majesty of its command--what act is mightier than that such a Revelation should, by the power of God, be "cloven asunder" and be abolished at the appearance of one soul?"

Bahá'u'lláh refers to his own Dispensation, annulling that of the Báb,

in "Lawh-i-Ahmad Quli Khan":

GL:147: "...after the lapse of a few years the heaven of Divine decree was cleft asunder, and the Beauty of the Báb appeared in the clouds of the names of God, arrayed in a new raiment..."

In "Kitáb-i-Iqán" Bahá'u'lláh writes of the opposition of the people to the new prophet:

KI:238: "It is evident that the reason for such behaviour is none other than the annulment of those rules, customs, habits, and ceremonials to which they have been subjected. Otherwise, were the Beauty of the Merciful to comply with those same rules and customs, which are current amongst the people, and were He to sanction their observances, such conflict and mischief would in no wise be made manifest in the world.

Bahá'u'lláh reaffirms in "Kitab-i-Aqdas" the principle established in "Kitáb-i-Iqán", that the laws of the new Prophet eclipse those of previous Dispensations:

KA:#7: "Whenever My laws appear like the sun in the heaven of Mine utterance, they must be faithfully obeyed by all, though My decree be such as to cause the heaven of every religion to be cleft asunder. He doeth what He pleaseth."

Bahá'u'lláh qualifies this assertion, by affirming that essentially the Faith of God is "changeless":

KA:#182: "This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future."

This affirmation is embodied in a distinct Proof of the prophets which will be considered presently. „Abdu'l-Bahá qualifies the annulment of divinely-ordained laws, by stipulating that the essential truths of the Cause of God are renewed in each Dispensation and by each Prophet. Therefore "the foundations of the religions of God are one foundation"(PUP:364), and for what "concerns the world of morality and ethical training of human nature...the advancement of the world of humanity in general...the knowledge of God...ideal and spiritual teaching, the essential quality of divine religion" this essence of religion is "not subject to change or transformation. It is the one foundation of all the religions of God. Therefore, the religions are essentially one and the same."(PUP:364-65)

However, religion is not comprised only of essential truths and eternal spiritual laws. Indeed, "each of the divine religions is separable into two divisions. One concerns the world of morality..." as we have already seen." (PUP:364) He elaborates upon the division of laws

which are subject to annulment in every Dispensation by every Prophet:

PUP:365: "The second classification or division comprises social laws and regulations applicable to human conduct. This is not the essential spiritual quality of religion. It is subject to change and transformation according to the exigencies and requirements of time and place...During the cycle of Adam it was lawful and expedient for a man to marry his own sister, even as Abel, Cain and Seth, the sons of Adam, married their sisters...For instance, in the time of Noah certain requirements made it necessary that all seafood be allowable or lawful. During the time of the Abrahamic Prophethood it was considered allowable, because of a certain exigency, that a man should marry his aunt, even as Sarah was the sister of Abraham's mother...But in the law of the Pentateuch revealed by Moses these marriages were forbidden and their custom and sanction abrogated. Other laws formerly valid were annulled during the time of Moses."

FOURTEENTH PROOF:

INNATE, DIVINELY-INSPIRED KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROPHETS

Bahá'u'lláh refers to the divine knowledge of all the Manifestations of God in Kitáb-i-Iqán:

KI:100: "They are the Treasuries of divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the light that can never fade."

In other Writings, including the Seven Valleys, a Tablet addressed to 'Abbas Faruq, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, and Lawh-i-Hikmat, Bahá'u'lláh refers to his own innate and divinely-inspired knowledge:

SV:26: "There is many an utterance of the mystic seers and doctors of former times which I have not mentioned here, since I mislike the copious citation from sayings of the past; for quotation from the words of others proveth acquired learning, not the divine bestowal. Even so much as We have quoted here is out deference to the wont of men, and after the manner of the friends. Further, such are beyond the scope of this epistle. Our unwillingness to recount their sayings is not from pride, but is it a manifestation of wisdom and a demonstration of grace."

GL:XXIII:58: "Consider this Wronged One...though, in spite of His not being accounted among the learned, His being unschooled and inexperienced in the disputations current among the divines, He hath rained upon men the showers of His manifold and Divinely-inspired knowledge; yet, behold how this generation hath rejected His authority, and rebelled

against Him!"

GL:XLI:90-91: "God is My witness, O people! I was asleep on My couch, when lo, the Breeze of God wafting over Me roused Me from My slumber. His quickening Spirit revived Me, and My tongue was unloosed to voice His Call. Accuse Me not of having transgressed against God. Behold Me, not with your eyes but with Mine. Thus admonisheth you He Who is the Gracious, the All-Knowing. Think ye, O people, that I hold within My grasp the control of God's ultimate Will and Purpose? Far be it from Me to advance such claim. To this I testify before God, the Almighty, the Exalted, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Had the ultimate destiny of God's Faith been in Mine hands, I would have never consented, even though for one moment, to manifest Myself unto you, nor would I have allowed one word to fall from My lips. Of this God Himself is, verily, a witness."

GL:CXIII: "Dost thou imagine, O Minister of the Shah in the City³³, that I hold within My grasp the ultimate destiny of the Cause of God? Thinkest thou that My imprisonment, or the shame I have been made to suffer, or even My death and utter annihilation, can deflect its course? Wretched is what thou hast imagined in thine heart! Thou art indeed of them that walk after the vain imaginings which their hearts devise."

KA: #104: "We have not entered any school, nor read any of your dissertations. Incline your ears to the words of this unlettered One, wherewith He summoneth you unto God, the Ever-Abiding. Better is this for you than all the treasures of the earth, could ye but comprehend it."

TB:149: "Thou knoweth full well that We perused not the books which men possess and We acquired not the learning current amongst them, and yet when We desire to quote the sayings of the learned and of the wise, presently there will appear before the face of thy Lord in the form of a tablet all that which hath appeared in the world and is revealed in the Holy Books and Scriptures. Thus do We set down in writing that which the eye perceiveth. Verily His knowledge encompasseth the earth and the heavens."

„Abdu'l-Bahá states this Proof in reference to all of the Prophets as follows:

ABDP:53-54: "The sun emanates from itself and does not draw its light from other sources. The divine teachers have the innate light; they have knowledge and understanding of all things in the universe; the rest of the world receives its light from them and through them the arts and sciences are revived in each age.

"Abraham and Moses went to no school; Jesus had neither school nor master; Muhammed never had a lesson: the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh had no professors. Read the books written by Bahá'u'lláh--the philosophers and savants in the Orient will bear witness to His

Constantinople.

eloquence and learning. In the Orient this is considered a proof of His divinity. There they say, "If some one can write a letter like Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'u'lláh's divinity cannot be denied." No one has yet competed. How can those who depend on mortals be divine messengers? How can a lamp which has to be lighted be eternal? The divine teacher does not come to acquire knowledge, for this tree of life is a fruit tree by birth and not through grafting. Behold the sacred tree which spreads its shade over the whole world! This is the mission of Bahá'u'lláh--for under this tree all questions are solved!"

While „Abdu'l-Bahá makes reference to four prophets in the course of this argument, very little information is given for three out of the four. While the lack of schooling and the innate knowledge of Jesus Christ are reported in the Gospels, those attributes of Muhammad are reported in the "ahadith" (which, like the Gospels, are the recorded acts and sayings of the prophet compiled by certain of His followers after His ascension) in considerable detail but many of these accounts (in the "ahadith") are difficult or impossible to substantiate. On the other hand, there are extant testimonies from eye-witnesses to the childhood and youth of both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, and in both of these cases there seems to have been very little formal education. „Abdu'l-Bahá cites one example of the innate knowledge revealed by Muhammad in the Qur'an:

"Though Pythagoras, and Plato during the latter part of his life, adopted the theory that the annual movement of the sun around the zodiac does not proceed from the sun, but rather from the movement of the earth around the sun; this theory had been entirely forgotten, and the Ptolemaic system was accepted by all mathematicians But there are some verses revealed in the Qur'an contrary to the theory of the Ptolemaic system. One of them is 'The sun moves in a fixed place,'³⁴ which shows the fixity of the sun, and its movement around an axis. Again, in another verse, 'And each star moves in its own heaven.'³⁵

“Thus is explained the movement of the sun, of the moon, of the earth, and of other bodies. When the Qur'an appeared all the mathematicians ridiculed these statements, and attributed the theory to ignorance. Even the doctors of Islam, when they saw that these verses were contrary to the accepted Ptolemaic system, were obliged to explain them away. It was not until after the fifteenth century of the

Christian era, nearly nine hundred years after Muhammad, that a famous astronomer made new observations and important discoveries

34Qur'an 36:38.

35Qur'an 36:39-40.

by the aid of the telescope which he had invented. The rotation of the earth, the fixity of the sun, and also its movement around an axis, were discovered. It became evident that the verses of the Qur'an agreed with existing facts, and that the Ptolemaic system was imaginary." (SAQ:28-29)

FIFTEENTH PROOF:

PROPHET'S PROPHECIES FULFILLED

„Abdu'l-Bahá asserts that "The purpose in religion is pure love and agreement. The Prophets of God manifested complete love for all. Each One announced the glad tidings of His successor, and each subsequent One confirmed the teachings and prophecies of the Prophet Who preceded Him. There was no disagreement or variance in the reality of Their teaching and mission. Discord has arisen among Their followers, who have lost sight of reality and hold fast to imitations."(PUP:234) "Each of the holy Manifestations announced the glad tidings of His successor, and each One confirmed the message of His predecessor."(PUP:339) "In conclusion, since the Prophets themselves, the Founders, have loved, praised and testified of each other, why should we disagree and be alienated?"(PUP:410) Inasmuch as divine philosophy asserts that all of the prophets have in turn prophesied of their successors and confirmed their predecessors, then we must conclude that in all cases the prophecies of the prophets have been fulfilled. The specific prophecies fulfilled by the Prophets are discussed in principle in the First Proof and, in great detail, in subsequent volumes devoted to particular Prophets. Bahá'u'lláh refers to this proof of his prophethood in His Tablet to 'Abbas Faruq:

GL:XXIII:58: "Consider this Wronged One. Though the clearest proofs attest the truth of His Cause; though the prophecies He, in an unmistakable language, hath made have been fulfilled...yet, behold how this generation hath rejected His authority, and rebelled against Him."

However, the prophet of God does not only prophesy the appearance of His immediate successor. There are many prophecies of the post-Mosaic Hebraic prophets recorded in the Tanakh which were not fulfilled by Jesus; there are prophecies attributed to Jesus Christ which are not realized in Muhammad; likewise, there are prophecies associated with Muhammad which were not claimed by the Báb. Sometimes the prophecies of a particular prophet skip over Dispensations and are fulfilled in a Dispensation far removed from that of the prophet himself. Also, a particular prophecy may be realized in one sense by the appearance of one Prophet and realized in

another meaning through the manifestation of a successive Prophet.

Many of the prophets of God have also prophesied events which had nothing whatsoever to do with their prophetic successors. Noah prophesied the Flood to His generation; Abraham revealed that His descendants would people the Holy Land; Joseph prophesied, interpreting the dream of Pharaoh that there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, and this was so; Daniel interpreted the dream of Belshazzar, which was prophetic in nature; Nathan prophesied the death of the firstborn of David and Bathsheba as a punishment for their wrongdoing; a number of the Hebraic prophets prophesied the punishment of Israel for its idolatry and immorality, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos and Micah. There are also the many testimonies of the prophecies of the Qur'anic prophets. The fulfillment of these many prophecies is sometimes attested in the text of the Scriptures, and in other cases discernible from the historical record.

Both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh revealed prophecies which were fulfilled within a matter of years, and both the prophecies and the fulfillments can be attested by factual evidences which are impossible to controvert. Speaking of Bahá'u'lláh, „Abdu'l-Bahá cites a portion of his father's "Tablet to the Sultan of Turkey" and says, "There are many other prophecies in this book, especially in the Epistle to the Shah of Persia, all of which prophecies have come to pass. As they are lengthy, we will not have time to quote them." (PUP:399) Speaking again of these two Epistles and to the Tablets to Napoleon III and to other world rulers, he says, "The book containing these Epistles to the kings was published in India about thirty years ago and is known as Suratu'l-Haykal ("Discourse of the Temple"). Whatever is recorded in these Epistles has happened. Some of the prophecies contained in them came to pass after two years; others were fulfilled after five, ten or twenty years. The most important prophecies relative to events transpiring in the Balkans are being fulfilled at the present time [1912] though written long ago. For instance, in the Epistle which Bahá'u'lláh addressed to the Sultan of Turkey, the war and the occurrences of the present day were foretold by Him. These events were also prophesied in the Tablet He addressed to the city of Constantinople, even to the details of happenings now being witnessed in that city." (PUP:432)

Bahá'u'lláh confirms that he did indeed reveal these prophecies and that they were fulfilled in such a short time interval in "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf":

ESW:148: "Accordingly in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, and in the Tablets to the Kings, and in the Lawh-i-Ra'is, and in the Lawh-i-Fu'ad, most of the things which have come to pass on this earth have been announced and prophesied by the Most

Sublime Pen."

ESW:150: "He, verily, hath manifested that which was hidden, when He, upon His return, mounted the throne of the Bayán. All that hath been sent down hath and will come to pass, word for word, upon earth. No possibility is left for anyone either to turn aside or protest. As fairness, however, is disgraced and concealed, most men speak as prompted by their own idle fancies."

Also, in the "Lawh-i-'Abbas Faruk", Bahá'u'lláh also asserts:

GL:58: "Consider this Wronged One. Though the clearest proofs attest the truth of His Cause; though the prophecies He, in an unmistakable language, hath made have been fulfilled; though, in spite of His not being accounted among the learned, His being unschooled and inexperienced in the disputations current among the divines, He hath rained upon men the showers of His manifold and Divinely-inspired knowledge; yet, behold how this generation hath rejected His authority, and rebelled against Him!"

And in "Lawh-i-Maqsud" Bahá'u'lláh quotes Muhammad:

GL:221: "He said, and He, verily, speaketh the truth: "Will ye slay a man because he saith my Lord is God, when he hath already come to you with proofs of his mission? And if he be a liar, on him will be his lie, but if he be a man of truth, part at least of what he threateneth will fall upon you." This is what God hath revealed unto His Well-Beloved One, in His unerring Book."

SIXTEENTH PROOF:

REPUDIATION OF PROPHETS BY RELIGIOUS LEADERS

"From the beginning of the world until the present time," is the testimony of „Abdu'l-Bahá, "each 'Manifestation' sent from God has been opposed by an embodiment of the 'Powers of Darkness'. This dark power has always endeavoured to extinguish the light. Tyranny has ever sought to overcome justice. Ignorance has persistently tried to trample knowledge underfoot. This has, from the earliest ages, been the method of the material world. In the time of Moses, Pharaoh set himself to prevent the Mosaic Light being spread abroad. In the day of Christ, Annas and Caiaphas inflamed the Jewish people against Him and the learned doctors of Israel joined together to resist His Power. All sorts of calumnies were circulated against Him. The Scribes and Pharisees conspired to make the people believe Him to be a liar, an apostate, and a blasphemer. They spread these slanders throughout the whole Eastern world against Christ, and caused Him to be condemned to a shameful death! In the case of Muhammad also, the learned doctors of His day determined to extinguish the light of

His influence. They tried by the power of the sword to prevent the spread of His teaching."(PT:102, UK-11th ed.)

In reference to the Báb he writes: "This illustrious soul arose with such power that He shook the supports of the religion, of the morals, the conditions, the habits, and the customs of Persia, and instituted new rules, new laws, and a new religion. Though the great personages of the State, nearly all the clergy, and the public men, arose to destroy and annihilate Him, He alone withstood them, and moved the whole of Persia."(SAQ:30) In reference to Bahá'u'lláh, "At the time when this great Light suddenly arose upon the horizon of Persia, all the people, the ministers, the Ulama, and men of other classes rose against Him, pursuing Him with the greatest animosity, and proclaiming 'that this man wishes to suppress and destroy the religion, the law, the nation, and the empire.' The same was said of Christ. But Bahá'u'lláh alone and without support resisted them all, without ever showing the least weakness."(SAQ:35-36) "When Bahá'u'lláh appeared in Persia, all the contemporaneous religious sects and systems rose against Him."(PUP:431) "His teachings were spread abroad, and his exhortations affected many of those who had been the most full of hatred, and made them firm believers; even the Persian government itself became awakened, and regretted that which had arisen through the fault of the Ulama."(SAQ:37)

Bahá'u'lláh has written on this theme, in "Kitáb-i-Iqán," "Lawh-i-'Abbas Faruq," "Lawh-i-Burhan," and other Tablets cited here:

KI:165: "It is clear and evident that whenever the Manifestations of Holiness were revealed, the divines of their day have hindered the people from attaining unto the way of truth. To this testify the records of all the scriptures and heavenly books. Not one Prophet of God was made manifest Who did not fall a victim to the relentless hate, to the denunciation, denial, and execration of the clerics of His day!"

KI:182: "For it behooveth no man to interpret the holy words according to his own imperfect understanding, nor, having found them to be contrary to his inclination and desires, to reject and repudiate the truth. For such, today, is the manner of the divines and doctors of the age, who occupy the seats of knowledge and learning, and who have named ignorance knowledge, and called oppression justice. Were these to ask the Light of Truth concerning those images which their idle fancy hath carved, and were they to find His answer inconsistent with their own conceptions and their own understanding of the Book, they would assuredly denounce Him Who is the Mine and Well-head of all Knowledge as the very negation of understanding. Such things happened in every age."

KI:228-229: "Let it be known, however, that none of these doctors and divines to whom We have referred was invested with the rank and dignity of leadership. For well-known and influential leaders of religion, who occupy the seats of authority and exercise the functions of leadership, can in no wise bear allegiance to the Revealer of truth, except whomsoever thy Lord willeth. But for a few, such things have never come to pass. 'And few of My servants are the thankful.' [Qur'an 34:13] Even as in this Dispensation [Bábi], not one amongst the renowned divines, in the grasp of whose authority were held the reins of the people, hath embraced the Faith. Nay, have striven against it with such animosity and determination that no ear hath heard and no eye hath seen the like. The Báb, the most exalted--may the life of all be a sacrifice unto Him,--hath specifically revealed an Epistle unto the divines of every city, wherein He hath fully set forth the character of the denial and repudiation of each of them."

GL:56-58: "Witness how every time the Day Star of Divine bounty hath shed the light of His Revelation upon the world, the people of His Day have arisen against Him, and repudiated His truth. They who were regarded as the leaders of men have invariably striven to hinder their followers from turning unto Him Who is the Ocean of God's limitless bounty. Behold how the people, as a result of the verdict pronounced by the divines of His age, have cast Abraham, the Friend of God, into fire; how Moses, He Who held converse with the Almighty, was denounced as liar and slanderer. Reflect how Jesus, the Spirit of God, was, notwithstanding His extreme meekness and perfect tender-heartedness, treated by His enemies. So fierce was the opposition which He, the Essence of Being and Lord of the visible and invisible, had to face, that He had nowhere to lay His head. He wandered continually from place to place, deprived of a permanent abode. Ponder that which befell Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, may the life of all else be a sacrifice unto Him. How severe the afflictions which the leaders of the Jewish people and of the idol-worshippers caused to rain upon Him, Who is the sovereign Lord of all, in consequence of His proclamation of the unity of God and of the truth of His Message! By the righteousness of My Cause! My Pen groaneth, and all created things weep with a great weeping, as a result of the woes He suffered at the hands of them that have broken the Covenant of God, violated His Testament, rejected His proofs, and disputed His signs. Thus recount We unto thee the tale of that which happened in days past, haply thou mayest comprehend...

"At no time, in no Dispensation, have the Prophets of God escaped the blasphemy of their enemies, the cruelty of their oppressors, the denunciation of the learned of their age, who appeared in the guise of uprightness and piety. Day and night they passed through such agonies as none can ever measure, except the knowledge of the one true God, exalted be His glory."

TB:206: "What proof did the Jewish doctors adduce wherewith to condemn Him Who was the Spirit of God, when He came unto them with truth? What could have been the evidence produced by the Pharisees and the idolatrous priests to justify their denial of Muhammad, the Apostle of God when He came unto them with a Book that judged between truth and falsehood with a justice which turned into light the darkness of the earth, and enraptured the hearts of such as had known Him? Indeed thou hast produced, in this day, the same proofs which the foolish divines advanced in that age. Unto this testifieth He Who is the King of the realm of grace in this great Prison. Thou hast, truly, walked in their ways, nay, hast surpassed them in their cruelty, and hast deemed thyself to be helping the Faith and defending the Law of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."

GL:XXXV:83: "Consider the Dispensation of Jesus Christ. Behold, the learned men of that generation, though eagerly anticipating the coming of the Promised One, have nevertheless denied Him. Both Annas, the most learned among the divines of His day, and Caiaphas, the high priest, denounced Him and pronounced the sentence of His death. In like manner, when Muhammad, the Prophet of God--may all men be a sacrifice unto Him--appeared, the learned of Mecca and Medina arose, in early days of His Revelation, against Him and rejected His Message...

It is evident then, that in every age virtually all of the ecclesiastical authorities have opposed the new prophet of God. Along with the opposition of religious leaders there has been in every age the denial and oppression of secular authorities as well, already indicated as Nimrod in the epoch of Abraham, Pharaoh in that of Moses, Herod in that of Jesus, various shaykhs and kings in that of Muhammad, Muhammad Shah and Nasiri'd-Din Shah and Grand Vizir Hajji Mirza Aqasi in that of the Báb, Nasiri'd-Din Shah and Sultan 'Abdu'l-Majid and Grand Vizir 'Ali Pasha in that of Bahá'u'lláh. However, divine philosophy does not regard the oppression and opposition of the secular leaders with the same seriousness as that of the religious authorities inasmuch as, in every age, the secular leaders follow the dictates of the religious authorities in matters of faith, and the

emergence of a new prophet is decidedly a matter of faith. Nimrod, Pharaoh and Herod were all of them warned by their respective soothsayers of the immanent appearance of a Manifestation of God, and it is clear from the Scriptural accounts that these monarchs acted on the advice of their so-called spiritual guides. This may account to some degree for the strongly condemnatory language found in the prophets' writings in repudiation of soothsayers, which is found in the Tanakh and the Qur'an.

Bahá'u'lláh's review of the opposition and denial of the people, the leaders and the followers, referring to the prophetic missions of Noah, Salih, Abraham and Moses, to be found in pages 4 through 15 (US edition, 1970) inclusive in the English translation of "Kitáb-i-Iqán" reaches these conclusions. A short excerpt is cited here:

KI:14-15: "Unto every discerning observer it is evident and manifest that had these people in the days of each of the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth sanctified their eyes, their ears, and their hearts from whatever they had seen, heard, and felt, they surely would not have been deprived of beholding the beauty of God, nor strayed far from the habitations of glory. But having weighed the testimony of God by the standard of their own knowledge, gleaned from the teachings of the leaders of their faith, and found it at variance with their limited understanding, they arose to perpetrate such unseemly acts.

"Leaders of religion, in every age, have hindered their people from attaining the shores of eternal salvation, inasmuch as they held the reins of authority in their mighty grasp. Some for the lust of leadership, others through want of knowledge and understanding, have been the cause of the deprivation of the people. By their sanction and authority, every Prophet of God hath drunk from the chalice of sacrifice, and winged His flight unto the heights of glory. What unspeakable cruelties they that have occupied the seats of authority and learning have inflicted upon the true Monarchs of the world, those Gems of divine virtue! Content with a transitory dominion, they have deprived themselves of an everlasting sovereignty."

Bahá'u'lláh continues to develop this same theme in "Kitáb-i-Iqán", with explanations of the reasons for the opposition of the leaders of religion which have in turn been largely responsible for the repudiation of the prophets by the generality of mankind in every age, and indeed, most of this book is devoted to unraveling this mighty theme along with establishing the true proofs of the prophets and the true interpretation of the meanings of the Scriptures. We will leave this proof for the present with a concluding quote from this peerless Epistle:

KI:238: "Among them is the tradition['hadith'], "And when the Standard of Truth is made manifest, the people of both the East and the West curse it." The wine of renunciation must needs be quaffed, the lofty heights of detachment must needs be attained, and the meditation referred to in the words "One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship" must needs be observed, so that the secret of the wretched behaviour of the people might be discovered, those people who, despite the love and yearning for truth which they profess, curse the followers of Truth when once He hath been made manifest. To this truth the above-mentioned tradition['hadith'] beareth witness."

SEVENTEENTH PROOF:

PENETRATION AND POTENCY OF WORD OF PROPHET

Divine philosophy considers that the Word of God, revealed in and through the prophet of God is a proof of each of the prophets of God. The penetration and potency of the Word of God is also considered a proof of each of the prophets of God, but while the first is a proof in itself, the second is a proof in its effects. „Abdu"l-Bahá describes this proof, as revealed in the ordering of the world, an historical proof.

"Consider the flowers of a garden: though differing in kind, colour, form and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. Thus when that unifying force, the penetrating influence of the Word of God, taketh effect, the difference of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions and dispositions embellisheth the world of humanity. This diversity, this difference is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the limbs and organs of the human body, for each one contributeth to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole. When these different limbs and organs come under the influence of man's sovereign soul, and the soul's power pervadeth the limbs and members, veins and arteries of the body, then difference reinforceth harmony, diversity strengtheneth love, and multiplicity is the greatest factor for coordination" (SWAB:291)

"In like manner, when diverse shades of thought, temperament and character are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men. Verily, it is the penetrating power in all things, the mover of souls and

the binder and regulator in the world of humanity... Can any power withstand the penetrating influence of the Word of God? Nay, by God! The proof is clear and the evidence is complete!"(SWAB:291-292, 292)

"The proof of the validity of a Manifestation of God is the penetration and potency ;of His Word, the cultivation of heavenly attributes in the hearts and lives of His followers and the bestowal of divine education upon the world of humanity. This is absolute proof. The world is a school in which there must be Teachers of the Word of God. The evidence of the ability of these Teachers is efficient education of the graduating classes."(PUP:341)

We have already encountered a proof of the prophet of God in His exaltation of the abased, and in the spiritual transformation of His followers. This present proof is not the proof of the "graduating classes themselves", but rather of the "efficient education" thereof. This is the proof of the power of the Word of God, which distinguishes the words, the utterances and the writings of the prophets of God from the words, whether spoken or written of ordinary men and women. „Abdu'l-Bahá gives a detailed exposition on this theme to which we will refer presently. First, let us consider the words of Bahá'u'lláh in "Lawh-i-Maqsud" on this subject:

TB:173-74: "The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the realm of being. The Great Being sayeth: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked. No sooner had but a glimmer of its effulgent splendour shone forth upon the mirror of love than the blessed word 'I am the Best-Beloved' was reflected therein. It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things. Every thing which can be perceived is but an emanation thereof. High, immeasurably high is this sublime station, in whose shadow moveth the essence of loftiness and splendour, wrapt in praise and adoration. Methinks people's sense of taste hath, alas, been sorely affected by the fever of negligence and folly, for they are found to be wholly unconscious and deprived of the sweetness of His utterance. How regrettable indeed that man should debar himself from the fruits of the tree of wisdom while his days and hours pass swiftly away. Please God, the hand of divine power may safeguard all mankind and direct their steps towards the horizon of true understanding."

In this passage Bahá'u'lláh speaks of the station of the Word of God and of its spiritual influence upon all things. There seems then to be

one exception however to this influence, and this is in the case of man. For man in general is "found to be wholly unconscious and deprived of the sweetness of His utterance...from the fruits of the tree of wisdom". The Word of God evidently has a universal influence upon the realities of all things, and, separate from this, a specific influence upon those men who are conscious and endowed "with the sweetness of His utterance", who have partaken of "the fruits of the tree of wisdom". Is this not in one sense Adam and Eve once again, choosing the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil--and in choosing what was forbidden already choosing evil--rather than the permitted fruit of the tree of eternal life? The fruit latter tree was not forbidden to Adam and Eve until after they had already chosen to break the commandment of God, until they had polluted themselves with the evil choice of the forbidden fruit; then, to become eternal as well as disobedient was not permitted, for man can only have eternal life if he sacrifices his selfish free will, if he submits his will to the Will of God, if he returns to his original and perfect state of absolute obedience. Evil is not permitted eternal existence, it is transitory and evanescent and hence it is called illusion. Likewise, self-consciousness is not permitted eternity unless it is transformed and reborn into the spiritual life in which self becomes dependent upon God rather than upon man or beast or itself. Hence, even as there is a universal Revelation and a specific Revelation there is also a universal influence of the Word of God and also a specific influence of the Word of God.

Regarding the universal potency and penetration of the Word of God, Bahá'u'lláh wrote in "Lawh-i-Sada":

GL:141: "Every word that procedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose."

Perhaps the most original aspect of this proof of the prophets is „Abdu'l-Bahá's application thereof to the bringing about of unity amongst divers peoples. In speaking of Jesus Christ, he asserts:

"Furthermore, various people of the Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Assyrian nations were brought together in unity and agreement; where warfare and bloodshed had existed, humility and love were manifest...The power of His Word in cementing these nations together is as clear and evident as the sun at midday. There is no need of further demonstration." (PUP:340-41) Speaking of the Arabs in the epoch of Muhammad, "The nation consisted of warring, hostile tribal peoples inhabiting the vast Arabian peninsula, and their business consisted in fighting and pillaging each other, making captive women and children, killing each other. Muhammad appeared among such a

people. He educated and unified these barbarous tribes, put an end to their shedding of blood."(PUP:346)

„Abdu'l-Bahá was modest. The historical facts are much more overwhelming when an accounting is made of all of the peoples who identify themselves as Christians and all of those who affirm that they are Muslims, whether historically or today. In 1912 „Abdu'l-Bahá stated that "The Christian people number nearly three hundred millions and the Muslims about the same."(PUP:347) Historically, the numbers of Christians and Muslims have numbered in the billions, and presently they may number as many as one billion in each Faith. This is a tremendous number of souls to become united under one agency. Speaking of the prophet Bahá'u'lláh, the theme of unity continues:

"Today in Persia and the Orient you will find the followers of Bahá'u'lláh united in the closest ties of fellowship and love. They have abandoned religious prejudices and have become as one family. When you enter their meetings, you will find Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Jews and representatives of other beliefs present, all conjoined in a wonderful unity without a trace of bigotry or fanaticism, and the light of the oneness of the world of humanity reflected in their faces. Day by day they are advancing, manifesting greater and still greater love for each other."(PUP:341)

Then the meaning of this proof is that the Word of God brings people together, harmonizes them, makes it possible for them to live together not just in peace but in love. If the word of the prophets can effect this influence upon the human soul then indeed it is more powerful than the word of any merely human being. The human soul though can not "taste" the "sweetness of His utterance" and partake of "the fruits of the tree of wisdom" (TB:173,174) unless it comes into contact with that soul. Speaking of the "sweetness" of the Word of God, says „Abdu'l-Bahá:

"The sweetest thing in this world is to obey strictly the commands of God and shun His prohibitions...For example, there is nothing sweeter in the world of existence than prayer. Man must live in a state of prayerfulness. The most blessed condition is the condition of prayer and supplication. Prayer is "conversation with God." The greatest attainment or the sweetest state is no other than "conversation with God." It creates spirituality, generates mindfulness and celestial feelings, begets the attraction of the Kingdom and engenders the susceptibilities of the higher intelligence...Often at night I do not sleep, and the thoughts of this world weigh heavily on my mind. I toss uneasily in my bed. Then in the darkness of the night I get up and pray--"converse with God." It is most sweet and uplifting. Prayer and supplication are so effective as to inspire one's heart for the whole day with high ideals and supreme serenity and calmness. One's heart must be sensitive to the music of prayer."(SW:IX:9:104)

As Bahá'u'lláh wrote, those souls which are affected by the "fever of negligence and folly" are "wholly unconscious and deprived of the sweetness of His utterance." (TB:173,174). This is a state of mind which is only possible for the soul that is healthy, that is not sick with the fever of negligence which neglects its exposure to the Word of God and the fever of folly which engages in behaviour that further estranges the soul from the Word of God. It is only possible if the soul wakes up, and becomes conscious of the sweetness of the Word of God. Bahá'u'lláh also writes in "Kitab-i-Aqdas":

KA:#3: "Were any man to taste the sweetness of the words which the lips of the All-Merciful have willed to utter, he would, though the treasures of the earth be in his possession, renounce them one and all, that he might vindicate the truth of even one of His commandments, shining above the Dayspring of His bountiful care and loving-kindness."

KA:#4: "Say: From My laws the sweet-smelling savour of My garment can be smelled, and by their aid the standards of Victory will be planted upon the highest peaks. The Tongue of My power hath, from the heaven of My omnipotent glory, addressed to My creation these words: "Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty." Happy is the lover that hath inhaled the divine fragrance of his Best-Beloved from these words, laden with the perfume of a grace which no tongue can describe. By My life! He who hath drunk the choice wine of fairness from the hands of My bountiful favour will circle around My commandments that shine above the Dayspring of My creation."

KA:#5: "Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power. To this beareth witness that which the Pen of Revelation hath revealed. Meditate upon this, O men of insight!"

The path which the soul must follow in order to heal itself of the fever of negligence and folly and in order to become conscious of the sweetness of the Word of God is elaborated in the scheme of divine philosophy in subsequent volume. A "mere code of laws" cannot transform a human soul, let alone unite millions of human beings in a spiritual community. The "sweetness of the words", the "sweetsmelling savour of My garment" and the "choice wine of fairness", these all describe the potency and power of the Word of God, the power of God in the world to entice, to enrapture and to intoxicate the heart of man.

**EIGHTEENTH PROOF:
DIVINE AND ETERNAL SOVEREIGNTY OF THE
PROPHET**

The prophet of God is no ordinary man. His reality becomes apparent to most ordinary men only in the course of history, after the passing of centuries. The prophet of God is the spiritual king and his sovereignty is eternal. „Abdu"l-Bahá compares the temporal monarch with the spiritual king:

"It is easy to bring human bodies under control. A king can bring under his rule and authority the bodies of his subjects throughout a whole country. In former centuries kings and rulers have absolutely dominated millions of men and have been thereby enabled to carry out whatsoever they desire. If they willed to bestow happiness and peace, they could do so; and if they determined to inflict suffering and discomfort, they were equally capable. If they desired to send men [in]to the field of battle, none could oppose their authority; and if they decreed their kingdoms should enjoy the bliss and serenity of immunity from war, this condition prevailed. In a word, kings and rulers have been able to control millions of human beings and have exercised that dominion with the utmost despotism and tyranny. The point is this: that to gain control over physical bodies is an extremely easy matter, but to bring spirits within the bonds[bounds] of serenity is a most arduous undertaking. This is not the work of everybody. It necessitates a divine and holy potency, the potency of inspiration, the power of the Holy Spirit. For example, Christ was capable of leading spirits into that abode of serenity. He was capable of guiding hearts into that haven of rest. From the day of His manifestation to the present time He has been resuscitating hearts and quickening spirits. He has exercised that vivifying influence in the realm of hearts and spirits; therefore, His resuscitating is everlasting."(PUP:276-77)

"How great the difference between the glory of Christ and the glory of an earthly conqueror! It is related by historians that Napoleon I embarked secretly by night from Egypt. His destination was France. During his campaign in Palestine revolution had broken out and grave difficulties had arisen in the home government. Christian worship had been forbidden by the revolutionists. The priests of Christianity had fled in terror. France had become atheistic; anarchy prevailed. The ship sailed out into a night brilliant with the light of the moon. Napoleon was pacing up and down the deck. His officers were sitting together, talking. One of them spoke of the similarity between Bonaparte and Christ. Napoleon stopped and said grimly, "Do you think I am going back to France to establish religion?" Jesus Christ established the religion of God through love. His sovereignty is everlasting. Napoleon overthrew governments in war and bloodshed. His dominion passed away: he himself was dethroned. Bonaparte destroyed human life; Christ was a Savior. Bonaparte controlled the physical bodies of men; Christ was a conqueror of human hearts. None of the Prophets of God were famous men, but They were unique in spiritual power. Love is the eternal sovereignty. Love is the

divine power. By it all the kings of [the] earth are overthrown and conquered."(PUP:210-211)

Still speaking of Christ he says:

"Kings and nations rose against Him. Philosophers and the greatest men of learning assailed and blasphemed His Cause. All were defeated and overcome, their tongues silenced, their lamps extinguished, their hatred quenched; no trace of them now remains. They have become as nonexistent, while His Kingdom is triumphant and eternal. The brilliant star of His Cause has ascended to the zenith, while night has enveloped and eclipsed His enemies. His name, beloved and adored by a few disciples, now commands the reverence of [the] kings and nations of the world. His power is eternal; His sovereignty will continue forever, while those who opposed Him are sleeping in the dust, their very names unknown, forgotten. The little army of disciples has become a mighty cohort of millions."(PUP:5)

This proof of the prophet of God is clearly described by „Abdu"l-Bahá, and although only the example of Jesus Christ is given here, in the appropriate Gates each of the prophets will be considered from this perspective, so that the reader may decide for himself whether or not that prophet is proven to be true. Bahá"u"lláh writes of this proof in "Kitáb-i-Iqán" in reference to all of the Prophets of God:

KI:106-107: "Yea, the sovereignty attributed to the Qa'im and spoken of in the scriptures, is a reality, the truth of which none can doubt. This sovereignty, however, is not the sovereignty which the minds of men have falsely imagined. Moreover, the Prophets of old, each and every one, whenever announcing to the people of their day the advent of the coming Revelation, have invariably and specifically referred to that sovereignty with which the promised Manifestation must needs be invested. This is attested by the records of the scriptures of the past. This sovereignty hath not been solely and exclusively attributed to the Qa'im. Nay rather, the attribute of sovereignty and all other names and attributes of God have been and will ever be vouchsafed unto all the Manifestations of God, before and after Him, inasmuch as these Manifestations, as it hath already been explained, are the Embodiments of the attributes of God, the Invisible, and the Revealers of the divine mysteries."

Bahá"u"lláh then explains the meaning of this divine sovereignty in several pages of "Kitáb-i-Iqán" (pp. 107-112). He returns to this theme with an explanation of the divine sovereignty of the Báb:

KI:234: "And among the evidences of the truth of His manifestation were the ascendancy, the transcendent power, and supremacy which He, the Revealer of being and

Manifestation of the Adored, hath, unaided and alone, revealed throughout the world. No sooner had that eternal Beauty revealed Himself in Shiraz, in the year sixty, and rent asunder the veil of concealment, than the signs of the ascendancy, the might, the sovereignty, and power, emanating from that Essence of Essences and Sea of Seas, were manifest in every land. So much so, that from every city there appeared the signs, the evidences, the tokens, the testimonies of that divine Luminary."

This statement will be studied carefully in the volume devoted to the Báb. Inasmuch as it states that "the signs of the ascendancy, the might, the sovereignty, and power" of the new prophet were "manifest in every land" and as soon as the Báb revealed himself, "in the year sixty", it should be easy enough to ascertain by this one proof alone whether or not the Báb was a prophet of God. Either there are evident signs of his power and sovereignty in every land and in every city or there are not. A study of the historical record should be sufficient for us to determine the truth of this stupendous claim. However, Bahá'u'lláh does not affirm that the Báb was the only prophet of God who manifested such signs of sovereignty and power. In "Lawh-i-Muhammad Zarandi Nabil-i-A'zam" Bahá'u'lláh writes:

GL:302: "Let thine ear be attentive, O Nabil-i-A'zam, to the Voice of the Ancient of Days, crying to thee from the Kingdom of His all-glorious Name. He it is Who is now proclaiming from the realms above, and within the inmost essence of all created things: "I truly am God, there is none other God but Me. I am He Who, from everlasting, hath been the Source of all sovereignty and power, He Who shall continue, throughout eternity, to exercise His kingship and to extend His protection unto all created things. My proof is the greatness of My might and My sovereignty that embraceth the whole of creation."...

"Blessed art thou, O My name, inasmuch as thou hast entered Mine Ark, and art speeding, through the power of My sovereign and most exalted might, on the ocean of grandeur, and art numbered with My favored ones whose names the Finger of God hath inscribed."

In "Kitáb-i-Iqán" Bahá'u'lláh writes of all of the prophets:

KI:99-100: "These sanctified Mirrors, these Day-springs of ancient glory are one and all Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty." (GL:47-48)

NINETEENTH PROOF:

PROPHET CONFIRMS TRUTH OF PREVIOUS PROPHET

Bahá'u'lláh articulates this proof in "Kitáb-i-Iqán":

KI:20-21: "Every discerning observer will recognize that in the Dispensation of the Qur'an both the Book and the Cause of Jesus were confirmed. As to the matter of names, Muhammad, Himself, declared: "I am Jesus." He recognized the truth of the signs, prophecies, and words of Jesus, and testified that they were all of God. In this sense, neither the person of Jesus nor His writings hath differed from that of Muhammad and His holy Book, inasmuch as both have championed the Cause of God, uttered His praise, and revealed His commandments."

In "Kitab-i-Aqdas" Bahá'u'lláh writes:

KA:#182: "This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it--verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures."

KA:#183: "Say: This is the infallible Balance which the Hand of God is holding, in which all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth are weighed, and their fate determined, if ye be of them that believe and recognize this truth. Say: This is the Most Great Testimony, by which the validity of every proof throughout the ages hath been established, would that ye might be assured thereof."

„Abdu'l-Bahá confirms and expands upon Bahá'u'lláh's words in many passages of his talks:

"The Prophets of God manifested complete love for all. Each One announced the glad tidings of His successor, and each subsequent One confirmed the teachings and prophecies of the Prophet Who preceded Him."(PUP:234)

"Each of the holy Manifestations announced the glad tidings of His successor, and each One confirmed the message of His predecessor."(PUP:339)

We have already encountered the two of the three proofs articulated in these statements by „Abdu'l-Bahá--the prophecies of each of the prophets and the fulfillment of the prophecies of preceding prophets by subsequent prophets--and now we encounter the third proof, the confirmation of the teachings of the prophets by their successors. It has already been attested that each prophet annuls certain teachings of His predecessor, and indeed that this annulment constitutes a proof of the new prophet. „Abdu'l-Bahá states that

"Each one of the divine religions has established two kinds of ordinances: the essential and the accidental. The essential ordinances rest upon the firm, unchanging, eternal foundations of the Word

itself...The accidental laws concern the administration of outer human actions and relations, establishing rules and regulations requisite for the world of bodies and their control. They are ever subject to change and supercedure according to exigencies of time, place and condition." (PUP:338-39)

"For example, each of the divine religions contains two kinds of laws or ordinances. One division concerns the world of morality and ethical institutions. These are the essential ordinances...The second division comprises laws and institutions which provide for human needs and conditions according to exigencies of time and place. These are accidental, of no essential importance and should never have been made the cause and source of human contention."(PUP:393)

"The divine religions embody two kinds of ordinances. First, there are those which constitute essential, or spiritual, teachings of the Word of God...Second, there are laws and ordinances which are temporary and nonessential. These concern human transactions and relations. They are accidental and subject to change according to the exigencies of time and place."(PUP:403,404)

The second category of laws were subject to change in each new Dispensation, and one of the proofs already advanced for the new prophet of God is that He annuls certain of these "accidental" ordinances and enacts new "accidental" ordinances which are adapted "to the exigencies of time and place".

The ordinances which are confirmed by every one of the prophets, these are of the first category. „Abdu"l-Bahá wants the reader to be entirely convinced that this category of ordinances is of much greater significance than the second category:

"The essential ordinances rest upon the firm, unchanging, eternal foundations of the Word itself. They concern spiritualities, seek to stabilize morals, awaken intuitive susceptibilities, reveal the knowledge of God and inculcate the love of all mankind...the fundamental realities of the knowledge of God and the holy Manifestations, the purification of morals, the awakening of spiritual susceptibilities--eternal principles in which there is no change or transformation. Briefly, the foundation of the divine religions is one eternal foundation...The purpose of all the divine religions is the establishment of the bonds of love and fellowship among men, and the heavenly phenomena of the revealed Word of God are intended to be a source of knowledge and illumination to humanity."(PUP:339)

"These are the essential ordinances. They instill and awaken the knowledge and love of God, love for humanity, and virtues of the world of mankind, the attributes of the divine Kingdom, rebirth and resurrection from the kingdom of nature. These constitute one kind of divine law which is common to all and never subject to change.

From the dawn of the Adamic cycle to the present day this fundamental law of God has continued changeless. This is the foundation of divine religion."(PUP:393)

"First, there are those which constitute essential, or spiritual, teachings of the Word of God. These are faith in God, the acquirement of the virtues which constitute perfect manhood, praiseworthy moralities, the acquisition of the bestowals and bounties emanating from the divine effulgences--in brief, the ordinances which concern the realm of morals and ethics. This is the fundamental aspect of the religion of God, and this is of the highest importance because knowledge of God is the fundamental requirement of man. Man must comprehend the oneness of Divinity. He must come to know and acknowledge the precepts of God and realize for a certainty that the ethical development of humanity is dependent upon religion. He must get rid of all defects and seek the attainment of heavenly virtues in order that he may prove to be the image and likeness of God."(PUP:403)

For the purpose of our discussion, let us consider the assertion that every prophet teaches these fundamental truths. "This is the essential foundation of all the divine religions, the reality itself, common to all. Abraham promulgated this; Moses proclaimed it. Christ and all the Prophets upheld this standard and aspect of divine religion."(PUP:404) "The divine Manifestations have been iconoclastic in Their teachings, uprooting error, destroying false religious beliefs and summoning mankind anew to the fundamental oneness of God. All of Them have, likewise, proclaimed the oneness of the world of humanity. The essential teaching of Moses was the law of Sinai, the Ten Commandments. Christ renewed and again revealed the commands of the one true God and precepts of human action. In Muhammad, although the circle was wider, the intention of His teaching was likewise to uplift and unify humanity in the knowledge of the one God. In the Báb the circle was again very much enlarged, but the essential teaching was the same. The Books of Bahá'u'lláh number more than one hundred. Each one is an evident proof sufficient for mankind; each one from foundation to apex proclaims the essential unity of God and humanity, the love of God, the abolition of war and the divine standard of peace. Each one also inculcates divine morality, the manifestation of lordly graces--in every word a book of meanings. For the Word of God is collective wisdom, absolute knowledge and eternal truth."(PUP:154)

TWENTIETH PROOF:

PROPHET IS MATERIAL, HUMAN AND SPIRITUAL
EDUCATOR

Bahá'u'lláh makes brief reference to this proof in "Lawh-i-'Abdu'l-Wahhab":

GL:156-57,158: "The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High...

"The majority of the truly wise and learned have, throughout the ages, as it hath been recorded by the Pen of Glory in the Tablet of Wisdom ["Lawh-i-Hikmat", TB:137-52], borne witness to the truth of that which the holy Writ of God hath revealed. Even the materialists have testified in their writings to the wisdom of these divinely-appointed Messengers, and have regarded the references made by the Prophets to Paradise, to hell fire, to future reward and punishment, to have been actuated by a desire to educate and uplift the souls of men. Consider, therefore, how the generality of mankind, whatever their beliefs or theories, have recognized the excellence, and admitted the superiority, of these Prophets of God. These Gems of Detachment are acclaimed by some as the embodiments of wisdom, while others believe them to be the mouthpiece of God Himself."

„Abdu'l-Bahá expands upon this theme:

"These are rational proofs; in this age the peoples of the world need the arguments of reason."(SAQ:8) „Abdu'l-Bahá offers here a series of rational proofs, reasonable arguments in support of the need for, the existence and truth of the prophets of God. Speaking to a student of divine philosophy: "Therefore it must be our task to prove to the thoughtful by reasonable arguments the prophethood of Moses, of Christ, and of the other Divine Manifestations. And the proofs and evidences which we give must not be based on traditional but on rational arguments."(SAQ:13)

"When we consider existence, we see that the mineral, vegetable, animal, and human worlds are all in need of an educator. If the earth is not cultivated it becomes a jungle where useless weeds grow; but if a cultivator comes and tills the ground, it produces crops which nourish living creatures. It is evident, therefore, that the soil needs the cultivation of the farmer. Consider the trees: if they remain without a cultivator they will be fruitless, and without fruit they are useless; but if they receive the care of a gardener, these same barren trees become fruitful, and through cultivation, fertilization, and engrafting, the trees which had bitter fruits yield sweet fruits."(SAQ:8)

"Nature is the material world. When we look upon it, we see that it is dark and imperfect. For instance, if we allow a piece of land to remain in its natural condition, we will find it covered with thorns and thistles; useless weeds and wild vegetation will flourish upon it,

and it will become like a jungle. The trees will be fruitless, lacking beauty and symmetry; wild animals, noxious insects and reptiles will abound in its dark recesses. This is the incompleteness and imperfection of the world of nature. To change these conditions, we must clear the ground and cultivate it so that flowers may grow instead of thorns and weeds--that is to say, we must illumine the dark world of nature. In their primal natural state, the forests are dim, gloomy, impenetrable. Man opens them to the light, clears away the tangled underbrush and plants fruitful trees. Soon the wild woodlands and jungle are changed into productive orchards and beautiful gardens; order has replaced chaos; the dark realm of nature has become illumined and brightened by cultivation."(PUP:308-309)

"If we should relegate this plot of ground to its natural state, allow it to return to its original condition, it would become a field of thorns and useless weeds, but by cultivation it will become fertile soil, yielding a harvest. Deprived of cultivation, the mountain slopes would be jungles and forests without fruitful trees. The gardens bring forth fruits and flowers in proportion to the care and tillage bestowed upon them by the gardener."(PUP:353)

"Consider this Canadian country during the early history of Montreal when the land was in its wild, uncultivated and natural condition. The soil was unproductive, rocky and almost uninhabitable--vast forests stretching in every direction. What invisible power caused this great metropolis to spring up amid such savage and forbidding conditions? It was the human mind. Therefore, nature and the effect of nature's laws were imperfect. The mind of man remedied and removed this imperfect condition, until now we behold as great city instead of a savage unbroken wilderness. Before the coming of Columbus America itself was a wild, uncultivated expanse of primeval forest, mountains and rivers--a very world of nature. Now it has become the world of man. It was dark, forbidding and savage; now it has become illumined with a great civilization and prosperity. Instead of forests, we behold productive farms, beautiful gardens and prolific orchards. Instead of thorns and useless vegetation, we find flowers, domestic animals and fields awaiting harvest. If the world of nature were perfect, the condition of this great country would have been left unchanged."(PUP:310-311)

"When we look upon the kingdoms of creation below man, we find three forms or planes of existence which await education and development. For instance, the function of a gardener is to till the soil of the mineral kingdom and plant a tree which under his training and cultivation will attain perfection of growth. If it be wild and fruitless, it may be made fruitful and prolific by grafting. If small and unsightly, it will become lofty, beautiful and verdant under the gardener's training, whereas a tree bereft of this cultivation retrogresses daily, its

fruit grows acrid and bitter as the trees of the jungle, or it may become entirely barren and bereft of its fruitage."(PUP:77)

"Likewise, we observe that animals which have undergone training in their sphere of limitation will progress and advance unmistakably, become more beautiful in appearance and increase in intelligence. For instance, how intelligent and knowing the Arabian horse has become through training, even how polite this horse has become through education."(PUP:77)

"The same is true with respect to animals: notice that when the animal is trained it becomes domestic, and also that man, if he is left without training, becomes bestial, and, moreover, if left under the rule of nature, becomes lower than an animal; whereas if he is educated he becomes an angel. For the greater number of animals do not devour their own kind, but men, among the Negroes of Central Africa, kill and eat each other."(SAQ:8)

"As to the human world: It is more in need of guidance and education than the lower creatures."(PUP:77)

"If the animals are savage and ferocious, it is simply a means for their subsistence and preservation. They are deprived of that degree of intellect which can reason and discriminate between right and wrong, justice and injustice; they are justified in their actions and not responsible. When man is ferocious and cruel toward his fellowman, it is not for subsistence or safety. His motive is selfish advantage and willful wrong."(PUP:352)

"Reflect upon the vast difference between the inhabitants of Africa and those of America. Here the people have been civilized and uplifted; there they are in the utmost and abject state of savagery. What is the cause of their savagery and the reason of your civilization? It is evident that this difference is due to education and the lack of education."(PUP:77-78)

"If man is left in his natural state, he will become lower than the animal and continue to grow more ignorant and imperfect. The savage tribes of central Africa are evidences of this. Left in their natural condition, they have sunk to the lowest depths and degrees of barbarism, dimly groping in a world of mental and moral obscurity. If we wish to illumine this dark plane of human existence, we must bring man forth from the hopeless captivity of nature, educate him and show him the pathway of light and knowledge, until, uplifted from his condition of ignorance, he becomes wise and knowing; no longer savage and revengeful, he becomes civilized and kind; once evil and sinister, he is endowed with the attributes of heaven. But left in his natural condition without education and training, it is certain that he will become more depraved and vicious than the animal, even to the extreme degree witnessed among African tribes who practice

cannibalism. It is evident, therefore, that the world of nature is incomplete, imperfect until awakened and illumined by the light and stimulus of education."(PUP:309)

"It is neither seemly nor befitting that such a noble creature, endowed with intellect and lofty thoughts, capable of wonderful achievements and discoveries in sciences and arts, with potential for ever higher perceptions and the accomplishment of divine purposes in life, should seek the blood of his fellowmen upon the field of battle. Man is the temple of God. He is not a human temple. If you destroy a house, the owner of that house will be grieved and wrathful. How much greater is the wrong when man destroys a building planned and erected by God! Undoubtedly, he deserves the judgment and wrath of God."(PUP:352)

"In these days there are new schools of philosophy blindly claiming that the world of nature is perfect. If this is true, why are children trained and educated in schools, and what is the need of extended courses in sciences, arts and letters in colleges and universities?"(PUP:309) "If a child is left in its natural state and deprived of education, there is no doubt that it will grow up in ignorance and illiteracy, its mental faculties dulled and dimmed; in fact, it will become like an animal. This is evident among the savages of central Africa, who are scarcely higher than the beast in mental development."(PUP:311)

"What would be the result if humanity were left in its natural condition without education or training? All scientific discoveries and attainments are the outcomes of knowledge and education. The telegraph, phonograph, telephone were latent and potential in the world of nature but would never have come forth into the realm of visibility unless man through education had penetrated and discovered the laws which control them. All the marvelous developments and miracles of what we call civilization would have remained hidden, unknown and, so to speak, nonexistent, if man had remained in his natural condition, deprived of the bounties, blessings and benefits of education and mental culture. The intrinsic difference between the ignorant man and the astute philosopher is that the former has not been lifted out of his natural condition, while the latter has undergone systematic training and education in schools and colleges until his mind has awakened and unfolded to higher realms of thought and perception; otherwise, both are human and natural."(PUP:310)

"Now reflect that it is education that brings the East and the West under the authority of man; it is education that produces wonderful industries; it is education that spreads glorious sciences and arts; it is education that makes manifest new discoveries and laws. If there were no educator, there would be no such things as comforts, civilization, facilities, or humanity. If a man be left alone in a

wilderness where he sees none of his own kind, he will undoubtedly become a mere brute; it is then clear that an educator is needed."(SAQ:9; see also: SW:XIV:2, p. 43)

Divine philosophy argues that an educator is needed for man. But what sort of educator? An educator which fits his nature. What then is his nature? „Abdu'l-Bahá states that man's "nature is threefold: animal, human and divine" (PUP:465):

"...education is of three kinds: material, human, and spiritual. Material education is concerned with the progress and development of the body, through gaining its sustenance, its material comfort and ease. This education is common to animals and man. Human education signifies civilization and progress; that is to say, government, administration, charitable works, trades, arts and handicrafts, sciences, great inventions and discoveries of physical laws, which are the activities essential to man as distinguished from the animal. Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true education; for in this estate man becomes the centre of divine appearance, the manifestation of the words, 'Let Us make man in Our image and after Our likeness.' This is the supreme goal of the world of humanity."(SAQ:9)

"Now we need an educator who will be at the same time a material, human, and spiritual educator, and whose authority will be effective in all conditions. So if any should say, 'I possess perfect comprehension and intelligence, and I have no need of such an educator,' he would be denying that which is clear and evident, as though a child should say, 'I have no need of education; I will act according to my reason and intelligence, and so I shall attain the perfections of existence'; or as though the blind should say, 'I am in no need of sight, because many other blind people exist without difficulty.'"(SAQ:9-10)

"Then it is plain and evident that man needs an educator, and this educator must be unquestionably and indubitably perfect in all respects, and distinguished above all men. For otherwise he cannot be their educator. More particularly because he must be at the same time their material and human as well as their spiritual educator; that is to say, he will teach men to organize and carry out physical matters, and to regulate the form of society with regard to the establishing of help and assistance in life, so that material affairs may be organized and regulated for any circumstances that may occur. In the same way he will establish human education, that is to say, he must educate intelligence and thought in such a way that they may attain complete development, so that knowledge and science may increase, and the reality of things, the mysteries of beings, and the properties of existence may be discovered; that day by day instructions, inventions, and laws may be improved; and from things perceptible to the senses

conclusions as to intellectual things may be deduced. He must also impart spiritual education; so that intelligence and comprehension may penetrate the metaphysical world, and may benefit from the sanctifying breeze of the Holy Spirit, and may enter into relationship with the Supreme Concourse. He must so educate the human reality that it may become the centre of the divine appearance, to such a degree that the attributes and names of God shall be resplendent in the mirror of the reality of man, and the holy verse, 'We will make man in Our image and likeness,' shall become true."(SAQ:10-11)

"It is clear that human power is not able to fill such a great office, and that the reason alone could not undertake the responsibility of so great a mission. How can one solitary person without help and without support lay the foundations of such a noble construction? He must depend on the help of the spiritual and divine power to be able to undertake this mission. One Holy Soul gives life to the world of humanity, changes the aspect of the terrestrial globe, causes intelligence to progress, vivifies souls, lays the foundation of a new existence, establishes the basis of a marvelous creation, organizes the world, brings nations and religions under the shadow of one standard, delivers man from the world of imperfections and vices, and inspires him with the desire and need of natural and acquired perfections."(SAQ:11)

"Therefore the universal educator must be at the same time not only a material, but also a human and spiritual educator; and he must possess a supernatural power, so that he may hold the position of a divine teacher. If he does not show forth such a holy power, he will not be able to educate, for if he be imperfect, how can he give a perfect education? If he be ignorant, how can he make others wise? If he be unjust, how can he make others just? If he be earthly, how can he make others heavenly?"(SAQ:12-13)

"Certainly nothing short of a divine power could accomplish so great a work. We ought to consider this with justice, for this is the office of justice. A Cause which all the governments and peoples of the world, with all their powers and armies, cannot promulgate and spread, one Holy Soul can promote without help or support! Can this be done by human power?"(SAQ:11-12) "It has now been proved by rational arguments that the world of existence is in the utmost need of an educator, and that its education must be effected by a divine power. There is no doubt that this holy power is due to inspiration, and that the world must be educated through this power which is above human power."(SAQ:13)

"Let me ask: What is the purpose of Prophethood? Why has God sent the Prophets? It is self-evident that the Prophets are the Educators of men and the Teachers of the human race. They come to bestow universal education upon humanity, to give humanity training,

to uplift the human race from the abyss of despair and desolation and to enable man to attain the apogee of advancement and glory. The people are in darkness; the Prophets bring them into the realm of light. They are in a state of utter imperfection; the Prophets imbue them with perfections. The purpose of the prophetic mission is none other than the education and guidance of the people. Therefore, we must regard and be on the lookout for the man who is thus qualified--that is to say, any soul who proves to be the Educator of mankind and the Teacher of the human race is undoubtedly the Prophet of His age."(PUP:405)

"What, then, is the mission of the divine Prophets? Their mission is the education and advancement of the world of humanity. They are the real Teachers and Educators, the universal Instructors of mankind. If we wish to discover whether any one of these great Souls or Messengers was in reality a Prophet of God, we must investigate the facts surrounding His life and history, and the first point of our investigation will be the education He bestowed upon mankind. If He has been an Educator, if He has really trained a nation or people, causing it to rise from the lowest depths of ignorance to the highest station of knowledge, then we are sure that He was a Prophet. This is a plain and clear method of procedure, proof that is irrefutable. We do not need to seek other proofs."(PUP:364)

In reference to the prophet Moses, „Abdu"l-Bahá asks:

"Could He have transformed a people from humiliation to glory without a holy and divine support? None other than a divine power could have done this. Therein lies the proof of Prophethood because the mission of a Prophet is education of the human race such as this Personage accomplished, proving Him to be a mighty Prophet among the Prophets and His Book the very Book of God. This is a rational, direct and perfect proof."(PUP:406)

"Now we must consider justly: did these Divine Manifestations who have appeared possess all these qualifications or not? If they had not these qualifications and these perfections, they were not real educators. Therefore it must be our task to prove to the thoughtful by reasonable arguments the prophethood of Moses, of Christ, and of the other Divine Manifestations. And the proofs and evidences which we give must not be based on traditional but on rational arguments."(SAQ:13)

„Abdu"l-Bahá applies this standard, that of the material, the human and divine educator to several prophets, and these arguments will be cited in subsequent volumes. In addition to the ones he treats, other prophets will be examined independently in an attempt to apply this standard universally to all of the prophets, inasmuch as he has explicitly stated the following: "Did these Divine Manifestations who

have appeared possess all these qualifications or not? If they had not these qualifications and these perfections, they were not real educators."(SAQ:13)

TWENTY-FIRST PROOF:

PROPHET IS THE DIVINE PHYSICIAN

Bahá'u'lláh in "Lawh-i-Manakji Sahib" sets forth this proof:

GL:213: "The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy. Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require. Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and center your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements."

In "Lawh-i-Muhammad Ibrahim Khalil" Bahá'u'lláh writes:

GL:80-81: "The Prophets of God should be regarded as physicians whose task is to foster the well-being of the world and its peoples, that, through the spirit of oneness, they may heal the sickness of a divided humanity. To none is given the right to question their words or disparage their conduct, for they are the only ones who can claim to have understood the patient and to have correctly diagnosed its ailments. No man, however acute his perception, can ever hope to reach the heights which the wisdom and understanding of the Divine Physician have attained. Little wonder, then, if the treatment prescribed by the physician in this day should not be found to be identical with that which he prescribed before. How could it be otherwise when the ills affecting the sufferer necessitate at every stage of his sickness a special remedy? In like manner, every time the Prophets of God have illumined the world with the resplendent radiance of the Day Star of Divine knowledge, they have invariably summoned its peoples to embrace the light of God through such means as best befitted the exigencies of the age in which they appeared. They were thus able to scatter the darkness of ignorance, and to shed upon the world the glory of their own knowledge. It is towards the inmost essence of these Prophets, therefore, that the eye of every man of discernment must be directed, inasmuch as their one and only purpose hath always been to guide the erring, and give peace to the afflicted. These are not days of prosperity and triumph. The whole of mankind is in the grip of manifold ills. Strive, therefore, to save its life through the wholesome medicine which the almighty hand of the unerring Physician hath prepared."

„Abdu'l-Bahá has applied the same metaphor in his Tablets and talks:

"Every divine Manifestation is the very life of the world, and the skilled physician of each ailing soul. The world of man is sick, and that competent Physician knoweth the cure, arising as He doth with teachings, counsels and admonishments that are the remedy for every pain, the healing balm to every wound. It is certain that the wise physician can diagnose his patient's needs at any season, and apply the cure."(SWAB:59)

"The world of humanity may be likened to the individual man himself; it has its illness[es] and ailments. A patient must be diagnosed by a skillful physician. The Prophets of God are the real Physicians. In whatever age or time They appear They prescribe for human conditions. They know the sicknesses; They discover the hidden sources of disease and indicate the necessary remedy. Whosoever is healed by that remedy finds eternal health."(PUP:204)

In these two separate statements „Abdu"l-Bahá has stated this proof of the prophet of God--that He must be a true Physician who knows the ailments of mankind and prescribes the real remedy needed "for every pain, the healing balm to every wound." Are the ailments of mankind always the same, and hence are the treatments prescribed by the divine Physicians identical? We know already that the answer to this question is "no". "The treatment ordered by wise physicians of the past, and by those that follow after, is not one and the same, rather doth it depend on what aileth the patient; and although the remedy may change, the aim is always to bring the patient back to health."(SWAB:59) In divine philosophy every affirmation is supported by evidences, every proof by arguments, and in this case there are specific examples cited for certain of the prophets. These will be found in the Gates devoted to those prophets.

There are definite steps in the healing process of humanity according to divine philosophy. The first step is that the divine "doctor diagnoses the case and prescribes treatment. He does not prescribe, however, until he has made the diagnosis."(PUP:171) The next step, following diagnosis, is prescription: "the real Physician...appeared, recognized the symptoms and prescribed the real remedy. What was that remedy? It was His revealed teaching especially applicable to that age."(PUP:204) The steps taken so far in this series are those initiated by God through the agency of His prophet. The next step (or rather an infinite series in itself) is that taken by the individual man and collective humanity. Speaking of this remedy of the real Physician in every age, „Abdu"l-Bahá stated, "Whosoever is healed by that remedy finds eternal health."(PUP:204) In speaking of the remedy of the most recent prophet of God, „Abdu"l-Bahá said: "His teachings are universal and the standard for human action. They are not merely theoretical and intended to remain in books. They are the principles of action. Results follow action. Mere theory is fruitless. Of what use is a book

upon medicine if it is never taken from the library shelf? When practical activity has been manifested, the teachings of God have borne fruit."(PUP:155) "Therefore, we must accept and partake of this healing remedy in order that complete recovery may be assured."(PUP:204)

Regarding the consequences visited upon humanity for neglecting the proper treatment of its maladies, Bahá'u'lláh writes in "Lawh-i-Malkah Victoria":

GL:254-55: "Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay its sickness waxed more severe, as if fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their personal desires, and have erred grievously. And if, at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before. Thus informeth you the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."

Just who are the "ignorant physicians" to which Bahá'u'lláh refers? One clue as to their identity is found in "Kitáb-i-Iqán":

KI:247: "Wherefore, then, do not these groveling, worm-like men pause to meditate upon these traditions, all of which are manifest as the sun in its noon-tide glory? For what reason do they refuse to embrace the Truth, and allow certain traditions, the significance of which they have failed to grasp, to withhold them from the recognition of the Revelation of God and His Beauty, and to cause them to dwell in the infernal abyss? Such things are to be attributed to naught but the faithlessness of the divines and doctors of the age."

TWENTY-SECOND PROOF:

MIRACLES ARE THE LEAST SIGNIFICANT OF PROOFS

Divine philosophy states that while so-called miracles may be the most commonly demanded proofs of prophethood, and the most popular proofs of prophethood among the generality of mankind, they are the least reliable and the least significant of all proofs. In reference to the prophet Moses, „Abdu'l-Bahá states: "We do not need to mention miracles, saying that out of rock water gushed forth, for such miracles and statements may be denied and refused by those who hear them."(PUP:364) "Miracles are likewise convincing to a limited number only. For instance, a Buddhist would not be convinced by the miracles of Moses which are proofs only for orthodox Jews, because they love and revere Moses. On the other hand, the miracles attributed to Jesus Christ are refuted by the Jews as a whole, saying 'No one lives today who has seen these miracles performed, therefore, who can bear testimony to them?'"(ABDP:43-44) „Abdu'l-Bahá is

cognizant of the great attachment of the followers of the prophets to the specific miracles which are traditionally claimed for these particular prophets, and understanding that such an attachment constitutes a veil between the Beloved and His lovers, a lengthy and detailed explanation is given of the true status of miracles as proofs of the prophets of God:

"The Holy Manifestations are the sources of miracles and the originators of wonderful signs. For them, any difficult and impracticable thing is possible and easy. For through a supernatural power wonders appear from them, and by this power, which is beyond nature, they influence the world of nature. From all the Manifestations marvellous things have appeared.

"But in the Holy Books an especial terminology is employed; and for the Manifestations these miracles and wonderful signs have no importance; they do not even wish to mention them. For, if we consider miracles a great proof, they are still only proofs and arguments for those who are present when they are performed, and not for those who are absent.

"For example, if we relate to a seeker, a stranger to Moses and Christ, marvellous signs, he will deny them and will say: 'Wonderful signs are also continually related of false gods by the testimony of many people, and they are affirmed in the Books. The Brahmans have written a book about wonderful prodigies from Brahma.' He will also say: 'How can we know that the Jews and the Christians speak the truth, and that the Brahmans tell a lie? For both are generally admitted traditions, which are collected in books, and may be supposed to be true or false.' The same may be said of other religions: if one is true, all are true; if one is accepted, all must be accepted. Therefore, miracles are not a proof. For if they are proofs for those who are present, they fail as proofs to those who are absent.

"But in the day of the Manifestation the people with insight see that all the conditions of the Manifestation are miracles, for they are superior to all others, and this alone is an absolute miracle. Recollect that Christ, solitary and alone, without a helper or protector, without armies and legions, and under the greatest oppression, uplifted the standard of God before all the people of the world, and withstood them, and finally conquered all, although outwardly He was crucified. Now this is a veritable miracle which can never be denied. There is no need of any other proof of the truth of Christ.

"The outward miracles have no importance for the people of Reality. If a blind man receive sight, for example, he will finally again become sightless, for he will die, and be deprived of all his senses and powers. Therefore causing the blind man to see is comparatively of little importance, for this faculty of sight will at last disappear. If the body of a dead person be resuscitated, of what use is it since the body will die again? But it is important to give perception and eternal life,

that is, the spiritual and divine life. For this physical life is not immortal, and its existence is equivalent to non-existence. So it is that Christ said to one of His disciples: 'Let the dead bury their dead'; for 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.'

"Observe: those who in appearance were physically alive, Christ considered dead; for life is the eternal life, and existence is the real existence. Wherever in the Holy Books they speak of raising the dead, the meaning is that the dead were blessed by eternal life; where it is said that the blind received sight, the signification is that he obtained the true perception; where it is said a deaf man received hearing, the meaning is that he acquired spiritual and heavenly hearing. This is ascertained from the text of the Gospel where Christ said: 'These are like those of whom Isaiah said, They have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not; and I healed them.'

"The meaning is not that the Manifestations are unable to perform miracles, for they have all power. But for them inner sight, spiritual healing, and eternal life are the valuable and important things. Consequently, whenever it is recorded in the Holy Books; that such an one was blind and recovered his sight, the meaning is that he was inwardly blind, and that he obtained spiritual vision, or that he was ignorant and became wise, or that he was negligent and became heedful, or that he was worldly and became heavenly.

"As this inner sight, hearing, life, and healing are eternal, they are of importance. What, comparatively, is the importance, the value, and the worth of this animal life with its powers? In a few days it will cease like fleeting thoughts. For example, if one re-lights an extinguished lamp, it will again become extinguished; but the light of the sun is always luminous. This is of importance."(SAQ:115-118)

"I do not wish to mention the miracles of Bahá'u'lláh, for it may perhaps be said that these are traditions, liable both to truth and to error, like the accounts of the miracles of Christ in the Gospel, which come to us from the apostles and not from any one else, and are denied by the Jews. Though if I wish to mention the supernatural acts of Bahá'u'lláh, they are numerous; they are acknowledged in the Orient, and even by some strangers to the Cause. But these narratives are not decisive proofs and evidences to all; the hearer might perhaps say that this account may not be in accordance with what occurred, for it is known that other sects recount miracles performed by their founders. For instance, the Brahmanists relate miracles: from what evidence may we know that those are false and that these are true? If these are fables, the others also are fables; if these are generally accepted, so also the others are generally accepted: consequently these accounts are not satisfactory proofs. Yes, miracles are proofs for the bystander only, and even he may regard them not as a miracle but as an enchantment. Extraordinary feats have also been related of some

conjurors.

"Briefly, my meaning is that many wonderful things were done by Bahá'u'lláh, but we do not recount them; as they do not constitute proofs and evidences for all the peoples of the earth; and they are not decisive proofs even for those who see them, they may think that they are merely enchantments.

"Also, most of the miracles of the Prophets which are mentioned have an inner significance. For instance, in the Gospel it is written that at the martyrdom of Christ darkness prevailed, and the earth quaked, and the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the dead came forth from their graves. If these events had happened they would indeed have been wonderful, and would certainly have been recorded in the history of the times. They would have become the cause of much troublings of heart. The soldiers would either have taken down Christ from the cross or they would have fled. These events are not related in any history, therefore it is evident they ought not to be taken literally, but as having an inner significance.

"Our purpose is not to deny such miracles; our only meaning is that they do not constitute decisive proofs, and that they have an inner significance."(SAQ:44-45)

The testimonies of the prophets themselves and of their disciples regarding miracles will be reviewed in succeeding volumes. Suffice it to say, however, that divine philosophy does not regard miracles as decisive proofs of the prophets of God, but it does affirm that every one of the prophets of God has been capable of making miracles and that there are many accounts of such miracles, but that such miracles were only convincing to the individuals who actually witnessed them. The prophets themselves may present differing interpretations of the meaning of miracles, and certainly divine philosophy does not intend to be dogmatic or exclusionist, nor does it claim to supersede the revelations of the prophets--not for a moment! „Abdu'l-Bahá simply affirms that there is a great difference between what men perceive as miracles--prodigies and wonders of which we humans are incapable and which we can perceive (or imagine that we perceive) with one or more of our physical senses--and the divine reality of miracles. True miracles are the myriad signs of the prophets of God. In this spirit the Báb writes in "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih":

SP:9: "If the verses of the Qur'an were not superior to the miracles of all of the prophets, how could those ones have been abrogated by these ones? How is it that, alone, the Qur'an could have remained? That is a strong and perfect proof that this proof is superior to the rod of Moses and other antecedent miracles of the preceding Manifestations."

Here, in this the First of Seven Proofs presented by the Báb, the

verses of the Qur'an are described as the miracle of Muhammad, the miracle which is proof of his prophethood, a miracle superior to the miracles claimed for all of the prophets who preceded him. The Seven Proofs will be described in the volume devoted to the Báb, and then this spiritual interpretation of what constitutes a true miracle and a convincing proof will be explored. It should be pointed out that while the Báb asserts the superiority of the Word of God to all physical miracles, nevertheless, towards the end of his treatise he describes certain physical miracles which have been associated with his Revelation. Likewise, while miracles are not regarded as "decisive proofs"(SAQ:45) by „Abdu"l-Bahá, and while "we do not recount them"(SAQ:45), nevertheless, "if I wish to mention the supernatural acts of Bahá"u"lláh, they are numerous; they are acknowledged in the Orient, and even by some strangers to the Cause."(SAQ:44) The miracles attributed to each one of the prophets will be discussed in the volume devoted to each, and always with this qualification--that stories of physical miracles "do not constitute proofs and evidences for all the peoples of the earth; and they are not decisive proofs even for those who see them, they may think that they are merely enchantments."(SAQ:45)

TWENTY-THIRD PROOF:

TEACHINGS OF THE PROPHETS

As we have already seen in previous proofs, each of the prophets of God reveals divine teachings, which constitute the true remedy for the ills that afflict mankind in the age to which they are addressed, and these teachings are of two kinds--the primary spiritual teachings, which are ratified and restated by every one of the prophets, and the secondary social teachings, which are annulled and recreated to suit the needs of each stage in the evolution of mankind. In "Kitáb-i-Iqán" we find that Bahá"u"lláh makes reference to certain teachings of the Prophets which are renewed in every Dispensation:

KI:38-39: "In another sense, by the terms 'sun', 'moon', and 'stars', are meant such laws and teachings as have been established and proclaimed in every Dispensation, such as the laws of prayer and fasting. These have, according to the law of the Qur'an, been regarded, the beauty of the Prophet Muhammad had passed beyond the veil, as the most fundamental and binding laws of His dispensation. To this testify the texts of the traditions and chronicles, which, on account of their being widely known, need not be referred to here. Nay rather, in every Dispensation the law concerning prayer hath been emphasized and universally enforced. To this testify the recorded traditions ascribes to the lights that have emanated from the Day-star of Truth, the essence of the Prophet Muhammad. The traditions established the fact that in all Dispensations the law of prayer hath constituted a

fundamental element of the Revelation of all the Prophets of God--a law the form and the manner of which hath been to the varying requirements of every age."

KI:120,121: "In every age and century, the purpose of the Prophets of God and their chosen ones hath been no other but to affirm the spiritual significance of the terms 'life,' 'resurrection,' and 'judgment'...Similarly, the records of all the scriptures bear witness to this and this most exalted word."

The dual character of the divine Word was explained by „Abdu"l-Bahá on a number of occasions, and recorded in numerous sources.³⁶ This

36UAB (Utterances of Abdul Beha Abbas to two young men, American pilgrims to Acre, 1901; New York: The Board of Counsel, 1902):18-19; SAQ:55-57; PUP:97-98, 106, 168, 338-39, 364-66, 393, 445.

truth was also affirmed by Shoghi Effendi in a number of his letters.³⁷ Separate studies are devoted to a)the essential and b)the secondary teachings and ordinances of the Religion of God, citing examples from the extant Scriptures associated with various of the Prophets of God. Yet another study examines the secondary teachings and laws of Bahá"u"lláh, those which are specific to this Age and Cycle, which pertain to the outward life of humankind at this time in its evolution. The twofold character of the Law of God is related to the twofold station of the Prophets of God, explained by Bahá"u"lláh in Kitáb-i-Iqán:

"These Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity..." (KI:152)

"We have already in the foregoing pages assigned two stations unto each of the Luminaries arising from the Daysprings of eternal holiness. One of these stations, the station of essential unity, We have already explained. 'No distinction do We make between any of them.' [Qur'an 2:136] The other is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation and to the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined Revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfils a definite Mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation." (KI:176)

"It hath ever been evident that all these divergences of utterance are attributable to differences of station. Thus, viewed from the standpoint of their oneness and sublime detachment, the attributes of Godhead, Divinity, Supreme

Singleness, and Inmost Essence, have been and are applicable to those Essences of being, inasmuch as they all abide on the throne of divine Revelation, and are established upon the seat of divine Concealment. Through their appearance the Revelation of God is made manifest, and by their countenance the Beauty of God is revealed. Thus it is that the accents of God Himself have been heard uttered by these Manifestations of the divine Being.

Included in GTT:2,118,129.

"Viewed in the light of their second station--the station of distinction, differentiation, temporal limitations, characteristics and standards,--they manifest absolute servitude, utter destitution and complete self-effacement. Even as He saith: 'I am the servant of God. I am but a man like you.'³⁸

"From these incontrovertible and fully demonstrated statements strive thou to apprehend the meaning of the questions thou hast asked, that thou mayest become steadfast in the Faith of God, and not be dismayed by the divergences in the utterances of His Prophets and Chosen Ones."

(KI:177-178)

We might conclude from these statements of Bahá'u'lláh that certain teachings of the Prophets of God relate to their first station, "the station of essential unity" (KI:152, 176), while other teachings, which are particular to certain Prophets and not to others are indicative of their second station, "the station of distinction" (KI:176), and that these teachings "pertaineth to the world of creation and to the limitations thereof." We will discover, in the utterances of „Abdu'l-Bahá, a depiction of the twofold character of the Law of God which appears to represent His interpretation of this teaching of Bahá'u'lláh. In the record of „Abdu'l-Bahá's utterances, the earliest source for this fundamental Bahá'í teaching is found in a talk on 24 November 1901, in which he explained:

"The law and commandments are divided into two branches, spiritual teachings and corporeal or material teachings. Spiritual teachings pertain to morality and character which are the breezes of the Holy Spirit, the life of the soul. The spiritual teachings will never be abolished in any cycle, as they are the eternal law. One of the commandments is the love of God, and is the virtue that crowns the heads of the believers...

"The material teachings, those which distinguish lawful from unlawful things, change according to the exigency of the times, because circumstances and conditions are not always the same."

(UAB:18-19)

In "Some Answered Questions." „Abdu'l-Bahá elaborates on this subject:

"--the law of God is divided into two parts; one is the fundamental basis which comprises all spiritual things, that is to say, it Hadith; see Qur'an 12:109; 14:11; 18:110; 19:58; 21:7,8 refers to the spiritual virtues and divine qualities; this does not change nor alter: it is the Holy of Holies which is the essence of the Law of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, and which lasts and is established in all the prophetic cycles...

"The second part of the Religion of God, which refers to the material world, and which comprises fasting, prayer, forms of worship, marriage, and divorce, the abolition of slavery, legal processes, transactions, indemnities for murder, violence, theft, and injuries, this part of the Law of God which refers to material things, is modified and altered in each prophetic cycle in accordance with the necessities of the times." (SAQ:XI:55,56-57)

In public and private addresses alike, „Abdu'l-Bahá returned repeatedly to this theme during his trips to Europe in 1911, and to Europe and North America, in 1912-1913. While "Paris Talks" and „Abdu'l-Bahá on Divine Philosophy," both of which were compiled from his European addresses, contain allusions to this theme, "The Promulgation of Universal Peace" has a number of explicit references thereto. In all of these sources, „Abdu'l-Bahá begins by affirming that there are two parts, branches, aspects, functions, kinds, divisions to the law of God:

"The cause of this fellowship and unity lies in the fact that the divine law has two distinct aspects or functions: one the essential or fundamental, the other material or accidental. The first aspect of the revealed religion of God is that which concerns the ethical development and spiritual progress of mankind, the awakening of potential human susceptibilities and the descent of divine bestowals. These ordinances are changeless, essential, eternal. The second function of the divine religion deals with material conditions, the laws of human intercourse and social regulation. These are subject to change and transformation in accordance with the time, place and conditions. The essential ordinances of religion were the same during the time of Abraham, the day of Moses and the cycle of Jesus, but the accidental or material laws were abrogated and superseded according to the exigency and requirement of each succeeding age." (PUP:97-98)

"Inasmuch as the essential reality of the religions is one and their seeming variance and plurality is adherence to forms and imitations which have arisen, it is evident that these causes of difference and divergence must be abandoned in order that the underlying reality may unite mankind in its enlightenment and upbuilding. All who hold fast to the one reality will be in agreement and unity. Then shall the religions summon people to the oneness of the

world of humanity and to universal justice; then will they proclaim equality of rights and exhort men to virtue and to faith in the loving mercy of God. The underlying foundation of the religions is one; there is no intrinsic difference between them. Therefore, if the essential and fundamental ordinances of the religions be observed, peace and unity will dawn, and all the differences of sects and denominations will disappear." (PUP:99)

"Each of the divine religions embodies two kinds of ordinances. The first is those which concern spiritual susceptibilities, the development of moral principles and the quickening of the conscience of man. These are essential or fundamental, one and the same in all religions, changeless and eternal--reality not subject to transformation. Abraham heralded this reality, Moses promulgated it, and Jesus Christ established it in the world of mankind. All the divine Prophets and Messengers were the instruments and channels of this same eternal, essential truth.

"The second kind of ordinances in the divine religions is those which relate to the material affairs of humankind. These are the material or accidental laws which are subject to change in each day of manifestation, according to the exigencies of the time, conditions and differing capacities of humanity.

"In brief, every one of the divine religions contains essential ordinances, which are not subject to change, and material ordinances, which are abrogated according to the exigencies of time. But the people of the world have forsaken the divine teachings and followed forms and imitations of the truth. Inasmuch as these human interpretations and superstitions differ, dissensions and bigotry have arisen, and strife and warfare have prevailed. By investigating the truth or foundation of reality underlying their own and other beliefs, all would be united and agreed, for this reality is one; it is not multiple and not divisible." (PUP:106)

"The religions of God have the same foundation, but the dogmas appearing later have differed. Each of the divine religions has two aspects. The first is essential. It concerns morality and development of the virtues of the human world. This aspect is common to all. It is fundamental; it is one; there is no difference, no variation in it. As regards the inculcation of morality and the development of human virtues, there is no difference whatsoever between the teachings of Zoroaster, Jesus and Bahá'u'lláh. In this they agree; they are one. The second aspect of the divine religions is nonessential. It concerns human needs and undergoes change in every cycle according to the exigency of the time. Therefore, the nonessentials which deal with details of community are changed according to the exigency of the time and conditions. But the essential foundations of the teachings of Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus and Bahá'u'lláh is identical, is one; there is no difference whatsoever. Man

must leave imitation and seek reality. The contemporaneous religious beliefs differ because of their allegiance to dogma. It is necessary, therefore, to abandon imitations and seek their fundamental reality." (PUP:168,169)

"Each one of the divine religions has established two kinds of ordinances: the essential and the accidental. The essential ordinances rest upon the firm, unchanging, eternal foundations of the Word itself. They concern spiritualities, seek to stabilize morals, awaken intuitive susceptibilities, reveal the knowledge of God and inculcate the love of all mankind. The accidental laws concern the administration of outer human actions and relations, establishing rules and regulations requisite for the world of bodies and their control. These are ever subject to change and supercedure according to the exigencies of time, place and condition, the fundamental realities of the knowledge of God and the holy Manifestations, the purification of morals, the awakening of spiritual susceptibilities--eternal principles in which there is no change or transformation. Briefly, the foundation of the divine religions in one eternal foundation, but the laws for temporary conditions and exigencies are subject to change. Therefore, by adherence to these temporary laws, blindly following and imitating ancestral forms, difference and divergence have arisen among followers of the various religions, resulting in disunion, strife and hatred. Blind imitations and dogmatic observances are conducive to alienation and disagreement; they lead to bloodshed and destruction of the foundations of humanity. Therefore, the religionists of the world must lay aside these imitations and investigate the essential foundation or reality itself, which is not subject to change or transformation. This is the divine means of agreement and unification." (PUP:338-339)

"But when we speak of religion, we mean the essential foundation or reality of religion, not the dogmas and blind imitations which have gradually encrusted it and which are the cause of the decline and effacement of a national allegiance to the essential foundation of the divine religions is ever the cause of development and progress, whereas the abandonment and beclouding of that essential reality through blind imitations and adherence to dogmatic beliefs are the causes of a nation's debasement and degradation." (Khatirat:610-621/PUP:363)

"Furthermore, we wish to establish the point that the foundations of the religions of God are one foundation. This foundation is not multiple, for it is reality itself. Reality does not admit of multiplicity, although each of the divine religions is separable into two divisions. One concerns the world of morality and the ethical training of human nature. It is directed to the advancement of the world of humanity in general; it reveals and inculcates the knowledge of God and makes possible the discovery of the verities of life. This is

ideal and spiritual teaching, the essential quality of divine religion, and not subject to change or transformation. It is the one foundation of all the religions of God. Therefore, the religions are essentially one and the same.

"The second classification or division comprises social laws and regulations applicable to human conduct. This is not the essential spiritual quality of religion. It is subject to change and transformation according to the exigencies and requirements of time and place. Time changes conditions and laws change to suit conditions. We must remember that these changing laws are not the essentials; they are the accidentals of religion. The essential ordinances established by a Manifestation of God are spiritual; they concern moralities, the ethical development of man and faith in God. They are ideal and necessarily permanent--expressions of the one foundation and not amenable to change or transformation. Therefore, the fundamental basis of the revealed religion of God is immutable, unchanging throughout the centuries, not subject to the varying conditions of the human world." (Khatirat:610-621/PUP:364-365, 365-366)

"Whence this conflict and strife? The real underlying cause is lack of religious unity and association, for in each of the great religions we find superstition, blind imitation of creeds, and theological formulas adhered to instead of the divine fundamentals, causing difference and divergence among mankind instead of agreement and fellowship. Consequently, strife, hatred and warfare have arisen, based upon this divergence and separation. If we investigate the foundations of the divine religions, we find them to be one, absolutely changeless and never subject to transformation. For example, each of the divine religions contains two kinds of laws or ordinances. One division concerns the world of morality and ethical institutions. These are the essential ordinances. They instill and awaken the knowledge and love of God, love for humanity, the virtues of the world of mankind, the attributes of the divine Kingdom, rebirth and resurrection from the kingdom of nature. These constitute one kind of divine law which is common to all and never subject to change. From the dawn of the Adamic cycle to the present day this fundamental law of God has continued changeless. This is the foundation of divine religion.

"The second division comprises laws and institutions which provide for human needs and conditions according to exigencies of time and place. These are accidental, of no essential importance and should never have been made the cause and source of human contention. Such ordinances, therefore, constitute the second or nonessential division of the divine religions and are not of importance, for they deal with human transactions which are ever changing according to the requirements of time and place. Therefore, the intrinsic foundations of the divine religions are one." (PUP:393-394)

"In reality, the foundations of the divine religions are one and

the same. The differences which have arisen between us are due to blind imitations of dogmatic beliefs and adherence to ancestral forms of worship. Abraham was the founder of reality. Moses, Christ, Muhammad were the manifestations of reality. Bahá'u'lláh was the Glory of reality. This is not simply an assertion; it will be proved.

"Let me ask your closest attention in considering this subject.

The divine religions embody two kinds of ordinances. First, there are those which constitute essential, or spiritual, teachings of the Word of God. These are faith in God, the acquirement of the virtues which characterize perfect manhood, praiseworthy moralities, the acquisition of the bestowals and bounties emanating from the divine effulgences—in brief, the ordinances which concern the realm of morals and ethics. This is the fundamental aspect of the religion of God, and this is of the highest importance because knowledge of God is the fundamental requirement of man. This is the essential foundation of all the divine religions, the reality itself, common to all. Abraham promulgated this; Moses proclaimed it. Christ and all the Prophets upheld this standard and aspect of divine religion.

"Second, there are laws and ordinances which are temporary and nonessential. These concern human transactions and relations. They are accidental and subject to change according to the exigencies of time and place. These ordinances are neither permanent nor fundamental.

"It has been shown conclusively, that the foundation of the religion of God remains permanent and unchanging. It is that fixed foundation which ensures the progress and stability of the body politic and the illumination of humanity. It has ever been the cause of love and justice amongst men. It works for the true fellowship and unification of all mankind, for it never changes and is not subject to supercedure. The accidental, or nonessential, laws which regulate the transactions of the social body and everyday affairs of life are changeable and subject to abrogation." (PUP:403, 404, 404-405)

"We must bestow commendation upon all people, thus removing the discord and hatred which have caused alienation amongst men. Otherwise, the conditions of the past will continue, praising ourselves and condemning others; religious wars will have no end, and religious prejudice, the prime cause of this havoc and tribulation, will increase. This must be abandoned, and the way to do it is to investigate the reality which underlies all the religions. This underlying reality is the love of humanity. For God is one and humanity is one, and the only creed of the Prophets is love and unity." (PUP:410)

"Therefore, we must investigate the reality of divine religion, discover its reality, reestablish it and spread its message throughout the world so that it may become the source of illumination and enlightenment to mankind, the spiritually dead become alive, the

spiritually blind receive sight and those who are inattentive to God become awakened.

"The teachings and ordinances of the divine religions are of two kinds. The first are spiritual and essential in nature--such as faith in God, faith in Christ, faith in Moses, faith in Abraham, faith in Muhammad, the love of God and the oneness of the world of humanity. These divine principles shall be spread throughout the world. Strife and enmity shall disappear, ignorance, hatred and hostility cease and all the human race be bound together. The second kind of ordinances and teachings concern the outer conditions and transactions of the world of mankind. They are the nonessential, accidental or temporary laws of human affairs which are subject to change and transformation according to the exigencies of time and place.

"But the followers of the divine religions have turned away from the principles and ordinances which are essential and unchanging in the Word of God, forsaking those fundamental realities which have to do with the life of the human world, the eternal life--such as the love of God, faith in God, philanthropy, knowledge, spiritual perception, divine guidance--holding these to be contingent and nonessential while wrangling and disagreeing over such questions as whether divorce is lawful or unlawful, or whether this or that observance of a minor law is orthodox and true. The Jews consider divorce lawful; the Catholic Christians deem it unlawful; the outcome is discord and hostility between them. If they would investigate the one fundamental reality underlying the laws revealed by Moses and Christ, this condition of hatred and misunderstanding would be dispelled and divine unity prevail. Investigation of the one fundamental reality and allegiance to the essential unchanging principles of the Word of God can alone establish unity and love in human hearts." (PUP:444-445,445-446)

"Each divine revelation is divided into two parts. The first part is essential, and belongs to the world of morality. It is the exposition of significances and realities. It is the expression of the love of God, the knowledge of God. This is one in all the religions, unchangeable and immutable. The second part is inessential. It belongs to practical life, to transactions and business, and changes according to the requirements of the time of each prophet." („Abdu'l-Bahá, *Khitabat*, pp. 737-747; "Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy," chapter V)

Shoghi Effendi wrote regarding these two parts of the religion of God in a number of his letters, including those excerpted here:

"The Revelation proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh, His followers believe, is divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men. The mission

of the Founder of their Faith, they conceive it to be, to proclaim that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is continuous and progressive, that the Founders of all past religions, though differing in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, "abide in the same Tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech and proclaim the same Faith." (Shoghi Effendi, in a letter to the High Commissioner for Palestine, entitled "The World Religion of Bahá'u'lláh: A Summary of Its Aims, Teachings and History," June 1933)

"The fundamental principle enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, followers of His Faith firmly believe, is that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is a continuous and progressive process, that all the great religions on the world are divine in origin, that their basic principles are in complete harmony, that their aims and purposes are one and the same, that their teachings are but facets of one truth, that their functions are complementary, that they differ only in the nonessential aspects of their doctrines, and that their missions represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society. His purpose, far from belittling the station of the Prophets gone before Him or of whittling down their teachings, is to restate the basic truths which these teachings enshrine in a manner that would conform to the needs, and be in consonance with the capacity, and be applicable to the problems, the ills, and perplexities, of the age in which we live." (Shoghi Effendi, in a letter to the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine, entitled "The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh," 14 July 1947; reprinted in "The Promised Day is Come," Foreword, p. v, 1961; reprinted also in GTT:2,3)

"The Faith standing identified with the name of Bahá'u'lláh disclaims any intention to belittle any of the Prophets gone before Him, to whittle down any of their teachings, to obscure, however slightly, the radiance of their Revelations, to oust them from the hearts of their followers, to abrogate the fundamentals of their doctrines, to discard any of their revealed Books, or to suppress the legitimate aspirations of their adherents. Repudiating the claim of any religion to be the final revelation of God to man, disclaiming finality for His own Revelation, Bahá'u'lláh inculcates the basic principle of the relativity of religious truth, the continuity of Divine Revelation, the progressiveness of religious experience. His aim is to widen the basis of all revealed religions and to unravel the mysteries of their scriptures. He insists on the unqualified recognition of the unity of their purpose, restates the eternal verities they enshrine, co-ordinates their functions, distinguishes the essential and the authentic from the non-essential and spurious in their teachings, separates the God-given truths from the priest-prompted superstitions, and on this as a basis proclaims the possibility, and even prophesies the inevitability, of their unification,

and the consummation of their highest hopes." (Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 28 March, 1941, entitled, "The Promised Day is Come," p. 112; reprinted in GTT:118)

"Nor does the Bahá'í Revelation, claiming as it does to be the culmination of a prophetic cycle and the fulfillment of the promise of all ages, attempt, under any circumstances, to invalidate those first and everlasting principles that animate and underlie the religions that have preceded it. The God-given authority, vested in each one of them, it admits and establishes as its firmest and ultimate basis. It regards them in no other light except as different stages in the eternal history and constant evolution of one religion, Divine and indivisible, of which it itself forms but an integral part. It neither seeks to obscure their Divine origin, nor to dwarf the admitted magnitude of their colossal achievements. It can countenance no attempt that seeks to distort their features or to stultify the truths which they instill. Its teachings do not deviate a hair-breadth from the verities they enshrine, nor does the weight of its message detract one jot or one tittle from the influence they exert or the loyalty they inspire. Far from aiming at the overthrow of the spiritual foundation of the world's religious systems, its avowed, its unalterable purpose is to widen their basis, to restate their fundamentals, to reconcile their aims, to reinvigorate their life, to demonstrate their oneness, to restore the pristine purity of their teachings, to co-ordinate their functions, and to assist in the realization of their highest aspirations, the fundamental principle which constitutes the bedrock of Bahá'í belief, the principle that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is orderly, continuous, and progressive, and not spasmodic or final." (Shoghi Effendi, letter addressed to the Western believers, 8 February 1934, entitled, "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh," reprinted in "The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh," pp. 114,115; reprinted in GTT:129,131)

Given the prominence given this teaching in Bahá'í source literature, it is not surprising that „Abdu'l-Bahá cites the teachings of the prophets as one of the most significant proofs of prophethood:

"When the prophets of God appear upon this earth, their validity is established by means of certain proofs. One of the proofs is through the fulfillment of former prophecies...their creative words and phrases which salute the hearts of humanity...their deeds...their teachings."(ABDP:43)

"A supreme proof is the teaching. For instance the precepts of Christ were sufficient proof of His validity. There is no greater proof than these teachings. They were the light of that cycle and the spirit of that age. All that He said accorded with the needs of the humanity of that time. They were peerless and unique. Consider His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh and His teaching[s]. They are the spirit of this cycle--the light of this age. They illumine the dark places of humanity,

for they address themselves to the heart of the race. For instance, the greatest evil of this century is war. In the new age Bahá'u'lláh has prohibited war. The need of this century is universal peace-- Bahá'u'lláh has instituted it. The most urgent requisite of mankind is the declaration of the oneness of the world of humanity--this is the great principle of Bahá'u'lláh. That which will leaven the human world is a love that will insure the abandonment of pride, oppression and hatred. The principles of Bahá'u'lláh are the remedy and balm for the wounded world; and without their inculcation, reconciliation between the nations will not be reached. These very teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are the greatest proofs of His claim. Such a power hath appeared from Him as will suffice to convince the whole world. The proof of the sun is its light and heat."(ABDP:45-46)

While 'Abdu'-Baha has developed this proof of all of the prophets mostly through a very detailed exposition of the teachings of the prophet Bahá'u'lláh; nevertheless, this is a universal proof of all of the prophets as attested in these statements: "In the world of existence the greatest bestowals of God are His teachings...Without the teachings of God the world of humanity is like the animal kingdom...the teachings of God are the bestowals specialized for man."(PUP:61) Regarding the teachings of Moses, he writes:

"Moses lived in the wilderness of Sinai where crime necessitated direct punishment. There were no penitentiaries or penalties of imprisonment. Therefore, according to the exigency of the time and place it was a law of God that an eye should be given for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It would not be practicable to enforce this law at the present time...In the Torah there are many commands concerning the punishment of a murderer. It would not be allowable or possible to carry out these ordinances today...In fact, laws for the ordinary conditions of life are only valid temporarily. The exigencies of the time of Moses justified cutting off a man's hand for theft, but such a penalty is not allowable now. Time changes conditions, and laws change to suit conditions. We must remember that these changing laws are not the essentials; they are the accidentals of religion. The essential ordinances established by a Manifestation of God are spiritual; they concern moralities, the ethical development of man and faith in God. They are ideal and necessarily permanent-- expressions of the one foundation and not amenable to change or transformation. Therefore, the fundamental basis of the revealed religion of God is immutable, unchanging throughout the centuries, not subject to the varying conditions of the human world. Christ ratified and proclaimed the foundations of the law of Moses. Muhammad and all the Prophets have revoiced that same foundation of reality."(PUP:365-66)

"The divine Prophets came to establish the unity of the

Kingdom in human hearts. All of them proclaimed the glad tidings of the divine bestowals to the world of mankind. All brought the same message of divine love to the world."(PUP:5)

The essential teachings of Jesus Christ are described:

"His essential teaching was the unity of mankind and the attainment of supreme human virtues through love. He came to establish the Kingdom of peace and everlasting life. Can you find in His words any justification for discord and enmity? The purpose of His life and the glory of His death were to set mankind free from the sins of strife, war and bloodshed. The great nations of the world boast that their laws and civilization are based upon the religion of Christ. Why then do they make war upon each other? The Kingdom of Christ cannot be upheld by destroying and disobeying it...Is this destruction of human life obedience to His laws and teachings? Where does He command it? Where does He consent to it? He was killed by His enemies; He did not kill. He even loved and prayed for those who hung Him on the cross. Therefore, these wars and cruelties, this bloodshed and sorrow are Antichrist, not Christ...No less bitter is the conflict between sects and denominations. Christ was a divine Center of unity and love. Whenever discord prevails instead of unity, wherever hatred and antagonism take the place of love and spiritual fellowship, Antichrist reigns instead of Christ. Who is right in these controversies and hatreds between sects? Did Christ command them to love or to hate each other? He loved even His enemies and prayed in the hour of His crucifixion for those who killed Him. Therefore, to be a Christian is not merely to bear the name of Christ and say, "I belong to a Christian government." To be a real Christian is to be a servant in His Cause and Kingdom, to go forth under His banner of peace and love toward all mankind...to refresh the world by the water of life of His teachings--in all things to be like Him and filled with the spirit of His love."(PUP:5-6)

TWENTY-FOURTH PROOF:

SPIRITUAL PROOF OF THE SPIRITUAL SEASONS

While divine philosophy asserts that "first we must speak of the logical proofs, afterwards the spiritual proofs...which we cannot at the beginning put forth for the benefit of the materialists"(SAQ:229); and while this argument in its original context applies to proofs of the origin of the human species; as we have already understood from studying the criteria of truth recognized by divine philosophy in the Introduction, besides logical proofs there are also spiritual proofs. Inasmuch as all of the logical proofs and traditional proofs have been stated, now there will be a careful consideration of the spiritual proofs. The first spiritual proof which we will study is that there are "spiritual cycles of the Prophets" which correspond in the spiritual realm to the cycle of seasons in the material world:

"In this material world time has cycles; places change through alternating seasons, and for souls there are progress, retrogression, and education.

"Sometime[s] it is the season of spring, at another time it is the season of autumn, and again it is the season of summer or the season of winter.

"In the spring there are the clouds which send down the precious rain, the musk-scented breezes and life-giving zephyrs; the air is perfectly temperate, the rain falls, the sun shines, the fecundating wind wafts the clouds, the world is renewed, and the breath of life appears in plants, in animals, and in men. Earthly beings pass from one condition to another. All things are clothed in new garments, and the black earth is covered with herbage; mountains and plains are adorned with verdure, trees bear leaves and blossoms, gardens bring forth flowers and fragrant herbs. The world becomes another world, and it attains to a life-giving spirit. The earth was a lifeless body; it finds a new spirit, and produces endless beauty, grace, and freshness. Thus the spring is the cause of new life, and infuses a new spirit.

"Afterwards comes the summer, when the heat increases, and growth and development attain their greatest power. The energy of life in the vegetable kingdom reaches to the degree of perfection, the fruit appears, and the time of harvest ripens; a seed has become a sheaf, and the food is stored for winter. Afterwards comes tumultuous autumn when unwholesome and sterile winds blow, it is the season of sickness, when all things are withered, and the balmy air is vitiated. The breezes of spring are changed to autumn winds, the fertile green trees have become withered and bare, flowers and fragrant herbs fade away, the beautiful garden becomes a dust-heap. Following this comes the season of winter, with cold and tempests. It snows, rains, hails, storms, thunders and lightens, freezes and congeals; all plants die, and animals languish and are wretched.

"When this state is reached, again a new life-giving spring returns, and the cycle is renewed. The season of spring with its hosts of freshness and beauty, spreads its tent on the plains and mountains with great pomp and magnificence. A second time the form of the creatures is renewed, and the creation of beings begins afresh; bodies grow and develop, the plains and wildernesses become green and fertile, trees bring forth blossoms, and the spring of last year returns in the utmost fullness and glory. Such is, and such ought to be, the cycle and succession of existence: such is the cycle and revolution of the material world.

"It is the same with the spiritual cycles of the Prophets. That is to say, the day of the appearance of the Holy Manifestations is the spiritual springtime, it is the divine splendour, it is the heavenly bounty, the breeze of life, the rising of the Sun of Reality. Spirits are quickened, hearts are refreshed and invigorated, souls become good, existence is set in motion, human realities are gladdened, and grow and

develop in good qualities and perfections. Universal progress takes place, and there are resurrection and lamentation; for it is the day of judgment, the time of turmoil and distress, at the same time that it is the season of joy, of happiness, and of absolute attraction.

"Afterwards the life-giving spring ends in fruitful summer.

The word of God is exalted, the Law of God is promulgated; all things reach perfection. The heavenly table is spread, the holy breezes perfume the East and the West, the teachings of God conquer the world, men become educated, praiseworthy results are produced, universal progress appears in the world of humanity, and the divine bounties surround all things. The Sun of Reality rises from the horizon of the Kingdom with the greatest power and heat. When it reaches the meridian it will begin to decline and descend, and the spiritual summer will be followed by autumn, when growth and development are arrested. Breezes change into blighting winds, and the unwholesome season dissipates the beauty and freshness of the gardens, plains, and bowers. That is to say, attraction and goodwill do not remain, divine qualities are changed, the radiance of hearts is dimmed, the spirituality of souls is altered, virtues are replaced by vices, and holiness and purity disappear. Only the name of the Religion of God remains, and the exoteric forms of the divine teachings. The foundations of the Religion of God are destroyed and annihilated, and nothing but forms and customs exist. Divisions appear, firmness is changed into instability, and spirits become dead; hearts languish, souls become inert, and winter arrives; that is to say, the coldness of ignorance envelops the world and the darkness of human error prevails. After this come indifference, disobedience, inconsiderateness, indolence, baseness, animal instincts, and the coldness and insensibility of stones. It is like the season of winter when the terrestrial globe, deprived of the effect of the heat of the sun, becomes desolate and dreary. When the world of intelligence and thought has reached to this state, there remain only continual death and perpetual non-existence.

"When the season of winter has had its effect, again the spiritual springtime returns and a new cycle appears. Spiritual breezes blow, the luminous dawn gleams, the divine clouds give rain, the rays of the Sun of Reality shine forth, the contingent world attains unto a new life, and is clad in a wonderful garment. All the signs and the gifts of the past springtime reappear, with perhaps even greater splendour in this new season."(SAQ:83-86)

Bahá'u'lláh refers to the spiritual springtime in which the new Prophet of God is made manifest in a number of his Tablets:

GL:XIV:27: "The Divine Springtime is come, O Most Exalted Pen, for the Festival of the All-Merciful is fast approaching. Bestir thyself, and magnify, before the entire creation, the name of God, and celebrate His praise, in such wise that all

created things may be regenerated and made new." (Tablet of Ridvan)

GL:XXXV:84: "God grant that, in these days of heavenly delight, ye may not deprive yourselves of the sweet savors of the All-Glorious God, and may partake, in this spiritual Springtime, of the outpourings of His grace."

GL:XLIII:94, LXXXV:167; TB:86: "It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favors which in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime are being showered upon you." (Lawh-i-Dunya)

TWENTY-FIFTH PROOF:

SPIRITUAL PROOF OF THE SPIRITUAL SUN OF REALITY

The second spiritual proof of all of the prophets is articulated by „Abdu"l-Bahá:

"The spiritual cycles of the Sun of Reality are like the cycles of the material sun: they are always revolving and being renewed. The Sun of Reality, like the material sun, has numerous rising and dawning places: one day it rises from the zodiacal sign of Cancer, another day from the sign of Libra or Aquarius, another time it is from the sign of Aries that it diffuses its rays. But the sun is one sun and one reality; the people of knowledge are lovers of the sun, and are not fascinated by the places of its rising and dawning. The people of perception are seekers of the Truth, and not of the places of its appearance, nor of its dawning points; therefore they will adore the Sun from whatever point in the zodiac it may appear, and they will seek the Reality in every Sanctified Soul who manifests it. Such people always attain to the truth, and are not veiled from the Sun of the Divine World. So, the lover of the sun and the seeker of the light will always turn towards the sun, whether it shines from the sign of Aries or gives its bounty from the sign of Cancer, or radiates from Gemini; but the ignorant and uninstructed are lovers of the signs of the zodiac, and enamoured and fascinated by the rising-places, and not by the sun. When it was in the sign of Cancer they turned towards it, though afterwards the sun changed to the sign of Libra; as they were lovers of the sign, they turned towards it and attached themselves to it, and were deprived of the influences of the sun merely because it had changed its place. For example, once the Sun of Reality poured forth its rays from the sign of Abraham, and then it dawned from the sign of Moses and illuminated the horizon; afterwards it rose with the greatest power and brilliancy from the sign of Christ: those who were the seekers of Reality, worshipped that Reality wherever they saw it, but those who were attached to Abraham were deprived of its influences, when it shone upon Sinai and illuminated the reality of Moses. Those who held fast to Moses when the Sun of Reality shone from Christ with the utmost

radiance and lordly splendour, were also veiled; and so forth.

"Therefore man must be the seeker after the Reality; and he will find that Reality in each of the Sanctified Souls. He must be fascinated and enraptured, and attracted to the divine bounty; he must be like the butterfly who is the lover of the light from whatever lamp it may shine, and like the nightingale who is the lover of the rose in whatever garden it may grow.

"If the sun were to rise in the West, it would still be the sun; one must not withdraw from it on account of its rising-place, nor consider the West to be always the place of sun-set. In the same way, one must look for the heavenly bounties, and seek for the Divine Aurora. In every place where it appears, one must become its distracted lover. Consider that if the Jews had not kept turning to the horizon of Moses, and had only regarded the Sun of Reality, without any doubt they would have recognized the Sun in the dawning-place of the reality of Christ, in the greatest divine splendour. But, alas! a thousand times alas! attaching themselves to the outward words of Moses, they were deprived of the divine bounties and the lordly splendours!"(SAQ:86-88)

The use of the sun as a metaphor for the prophetic reality has been anticipated in a number of Sacred Writings and religious practices. The Báb uses it in many of his Writings, including in this passage from "Dala'il-i-Sab'ih":

SP:3-6: "If you sail upon the Ocean of Creation, know that the first "Dhikr", which emanates from the Primal Will, is similar to the sun which God the Most Exalted created by His Power...in every Manifestation, it is this First Dhikr which He has revealed in keeping with His own decision. Know therefore, that in this sense, He is like the Sun. Indeed, this star, if it rises until the end that will never have an end, will be, even as it has been in the past, but one only and the same sun. But, it is equally Him Who was manifested in all the prophets and it is He Who speaks in all their books...In the first evolution He was known under the name Adam, then under that of Noah in the epoch of this prophet; He was Abraham in His time, then Jesus, then Muhammad Rasu'l-Allah. Finally He is Him Whom God shall make manifest after Him Whom God shall make manifest in His epoch."

This same solar metaphor is found throughout the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, and is often employed by „Abdu"l-Bahá as well. As for the identification of the dawning-points of the Sun of Reality, in other words the original homelands and nationalities and declaration dates of the prophets, with the signs of the zodiac, another example of this may serve to elucidate the purpose of „Abdu"l-Bahá.

He writes, in a Tablet addressed to a Bahá'í in Mazandaran:

WOB:127: "The Revelation of the Báb may be likened to the sun, its station corresponding to the first sign of the Zodiac—the sign Aries--which the sun enters at the Vernal Equinox. The station of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, on the other hand, is represented by the sign Leo, the sun's mid-summer and highest station. By this is meant that this holy Dispensation is illumined with the light of the Sun of Truth shining from its most exalted station, and in the plenitude of its resplendency, its heat and glory."

That „Abdu'l-Bahá identified the Revelation of the Báb (who called himself the "Primal Point") with the first sign of the Zodiac, the sign Aries is by no means accidental: the sun enters this sign at the Vernal Equinox, which is the first day of spring, and the first day of the ancient Persian calendar, called "Naw-Ruz". The Primal Point began the calendar he revealed in "Bayán-i-Farsi" (Third Vahid) on Naw-Ruz, hence at the Vernal Equinox, at the point at which the sun enters the zodiacal sign of Aries. Furthermore, in "Bayán-i-Farsi" the Primal Point calls this day "the Day of the Point" (Fifth Vahid, Third Báb), and "the Day of God" (Sixth Vahid, Fourteenth Báb). The attribution of the zodiacal sign of Leo to Bahá'u'lláh will be discussed in a succeeding volume, along with suggestions as to the apportionment of other signs to individual prophets according to the traditional histories and religious observances associated with them.

Before continuing with other proofs, it would seem to be necessary to explain the apparent contradiction between the first passage cited, which states that the true seeker will not be attached to the dawningplace of the Sun of Reality, and the second passage quoted which indicates that the dawning-place does indeed convey important significances, namely the character and intensity of the divine Revelation associated with its particular prophet. In the first text the seeker is advised that unless he is detached from these dawning-places he will not recognize the new appearance of the Sun of Reality and hence will be deprived of His divine illumination. The second passage can be interpreted along the same lines, for if the seeker has failed to recognize the Primal Point in his day because of his appearance in "the first sign of the Zodiac" then he will have deprived himself of the illumination of the Sun of Reality, and if he fails to recognize Bahá'u'lláh because his appearance is not in the same sign as that of his predecessor, because he is manifested in "the sign Leo, the sun's mid-summer and highest station" then once again he will be bereft of the "light of the Sun of Truth shining from its most exalted station, and in the plenitude of its resplendency, its heat and glory."

Another significance of this comparison of two Revelations with two zodiacal signs is that the Primal Point became manifest in the East, and from the province of Fars and land of Persia both of which are

associated historically and prophetically with the sign of the Ram (which is the animal associated with Aries), while Bahá'u'lláh through his successive banishments--from Tihran to Baghdad, from Baghdad to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Adrianople, from Adrianople to Akka and Haifa in the province of Palestine and land of Syria--journeyed westwards (as does the sun from its rising in the East to its noontide glory between East and West), manifesting his reality first to a small company of His closest associates in Baghdad, then more universally in Adrianople, and finally at the apex of his glory in Palestine. „Abdu'l-Bahá associates the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh then

with the western movement of the sun, with its manifestation in full brilliancy between East and West--which more perfectly describes the status of the Holy Land than any other place on the planet--and with the Lion, which is the ancient symbol of the tribe of Judah and hence of King David, from whose race, according to Jewish interpretations of their Holy Bible, must come the Saviour of the world. The Lion is the animal associated with the zodiacal sign of Leo and also gives this sign its name. This short exposition just begins to explore the correspondences which exist between the zodiacal signs and the dawning-points of the prophets of God. The principal principle underlying this proof however is that "the ignorant and uninstructed are lovers of the signs of the zodiac, and enamoured and fascinated by the rising-places, and not by the sun."

"It gives me great joy, for I see that you are seekers after truth. You are not held in bondage by the chains of prejudice, and your greatest longing is to know the truth. Truth may be likened to the sun! The sun is the luminous body that disperses all shadows; in the same way does truth scatter the shadows of our imagination. As the sun gives life to the body of humanity so does truth give life to their souls. Truth is a sun that rises from different points on the horizon.

"Sometimes the sun rises from the centre of the horizon, then in summer it rises farther north, in winter farther south--but it is always the self-same sun, however different are the points of its rising.

"In like manner truth is one, although its manifestations may be very different. Some men have eyes and see. These worship the sun, no matter from which point on the horizon it may dawn; and when the sun has left the winter sky to appear in the summer one, they know how to find it again. Others there are who worship only the spot from which the sun arose, and when it arises in its glory from another place they remain in contemplation before the spot of its former rising. Alas! these men are deprived of the blessings of the sun. Those who in truth adore the sun itself will recognize it from whatsoever dawning-place it may appear, and will straightway turn their faces towards its radiance.

"We must adore the sun itself and not merely the place of its

appearance. In the same way men of enlightened heart worship truth on whatever horizon it appears. They are not bound by personality, but they follow the truth, and are able to recognize it no matter from whence it may come. It is this same truth which helps humanity to progress, which gives life to all created beings, for it is the Tree of Life! "In His teaching Bahá'u'lláh gives us the explanation of truth, and I wish to speak to you briefly about this, for I see that you are capable of understanding."(PT:127-29)

"No one truth can contradict another truth. Light is good in whatsoever lamp it is burning! A rose is beautiful in whatsoever garden it may bloom! A star has the same radiance if it shines from the East or from the West. Be free from prejudice, so will you love the Sun of Truth from whatsoever point in the horizon it will arise! You will realize that if the Divine light of truth shone in Jesus Christ it also shone in Moses and in Buddha. The earnest seeker will arrive at this truth. This is what is meant by the 'Search after Truth'.

"It means, also, that we must be willing to clear away all that we have previously learned, all that would clog our steps on the way to truth; we must not shrink if necessary from beginning our education all over again. We must not allow our love for any religion or any one personality to so blind our eyes that we become fettered by superstition! When we are freed from all these bonds, seeking with liberated minds, then shall we be able to arrive at our goal.

"Seek the truth, the truth shall make you free.' So shall we see the truth in all religions, for truth is in all and truth is one!"(PT:137)

TWENTY-SIXTH PROOF:

SPIRITUAL PROOF OF THE MYSTIC HERALD

The highest station to which man may aspire is that station wherein he has become utterly transformed, in which he has been reborn into a spiritual life which is eternal. In this new life he perceives limitless and infinite proofs of the spiritual realities including the reality of the prophets of God. Speaking of this second birth, „Abdu'l-Bahá states:

"Such resuscitation is impossible except through a heavenly potency, a supernatural power, the divine power of the Holy Spirit. Through a natural and mere human power this is impossible. Therefore, the question arises: How is this resuscitation to be accomplished? There are certain means for its accomplishment by which mankind is regenerated and quickened with a new birth. This is the second birth mentioned in the heavenly Books. Its accomplishment is through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The resuscitation or rebirth of the spirit of man is through the science of the love of God." (PUP:277)

Bahá'u'lláh describes this second birth, or rebirth, in "Kitáb-i-Iqán":

KI:195-200: "Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker's heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being. At that hour will the mystic Herald, bearing the joyful tidings of the Spirit, shine forth from the City of God resplendent as the morn, and, through the trumpet-blast of knowledge, will awaken the heart, the soul, and the spirit from the slumber of negligence. Then will the manifold favours and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul. Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of divine Revelation and the evidences of an everlasting manifestation. I swear by God! Were he that treadeth the path of guidance and seeketh to scale the heights of righteousness to attain unto this glorious and supreme station, he would inhale at a distance of a thousand leagues the fragrance of God, and would perceive the resplendent morn of a divine Guidance rising above the dayspring of all things. Each and every thing, however small, would be to him a revelation, leading him to his Beloved, the Object of his quest.

"So great shall be the discernment of this seeker that he will discriminate between truth and falsehood even as he doth distinguish the sun from shadow. If in the uttermost corners of the East the sweet savours of God be wafted, he will assuredly recognize and inhale their fragrance, even though he be dwelling in the uttermost ends of the West. He will likewise clearly distinguish all the signs of God--His wondrous utterances, His great works, and mighty deeds--from the doings, words and ways of men, even as the jeweler who knoweth the gem from the stone, or the man who distinguisheth the spring from autumn and heat from cold. When the channel of the human soul is cleansed from all worldly and impeding attachments, it will unfailingly perceive the breath of the Beloved across immeasurable distances, and will, led by its perfume, attain and enter the City of Certitude. Therein he will discern the wonders of His ancient wisdom, and will perceive all the hidden teachings from the rustling leaves of the Tree--which flourisheth in that City. With both

his inner and his outer ear he will hear from its dust the hymns of glory and praise ascending unto the Lord of Lords, and with his inner eye will he discover the mysteries of "return" and "revival." How unspeakably glorious are the signs, the tokens, the revelations, and splendours which He Who is the King of names and attributes hath destined for that City! The attainment of this City quencheth thirst without water, and kindleth the love of God without fire. Within every blade of grass are enshrined the mysteries of an inscrutable wisdom, and upon every rose-bush a myriad nightingales pour out, in blissful rapture, their melody. Its wondrous tulips unfold the mystery of the Burning Bush, and its sweet savours of holiness breathe the perfume of the Messianic Spirit. It bestoweth wealth without gold, and conferreth immortality without death. In every leaf ineffable delights are treasured, and within every chamber unnumbered mysteries lie hidden. They that valiantly labour in quest of God's will, when once they have renounced all else but Him, will be so attached and wedded to that City that a moment's separation from it would to them be unthinkable. They will hearken unto infallible proofs from the Hyacinth of that assembly, and receive the surest testimonies from the beauty of its Rose and the melody of its Nightingale. Once in about a thousand years shall this City be renewed and readorned. "Wherefore, O my friend, it behooveth us to exert the highest endeavour to attain unto that City, and, by the grace of God and His loving-kindness, render asunder the "veils of glory"; so that, with inflexible steadfastness, we may sacrifice our drooping souls in the path of the New Beloved. We should with tearful eyes, fervently and repeatedly, implore Him to grant us the favour of that grace. That city is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation. In the days of Moses it was the Pentateuch; in the days of Jesus the Gospel; in the days of Muhammad the Messenger of God the Qur'an; in this day the Bayán; and in the dispensation of Him Whom God will make manifest His own Book--the Book unto which all the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book which standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme. In these cities spiritual sustenance is bountifully provided, and incorruptible delights have been ordained. The food they bestow is the bread of heaven, and the Spirit they impart is God's imperishable blessing. Upon detached souls they bestow the gift of Unity, enrich the destitute, and offer the cup of knowledge unto them who wander in the wilderness of ignorance. All the guidance, the blessings, the learning, the understanding, the faith, and certitude, conferred upon all that is in heaven and on earth,

are hidden and treasured within these Cities."

We also find these words in his "Haft Vadi":

SV:5-8,11-12 passim: "It is incumbent on these servants that they cleanse the heart--which is the wellspring of divine treasures--from every marking, and that they turn away from imitation, which is following the traces of their forefathers and sires, and shut the door of friendliness and enmity upon all the people of the earth. In this journey the seeker reacheth a stage wherein he seeth all created things wandering distracted in search of the Friend...

"The true seeker hunteth naught but the object of his quest, and the lover hath no desire save union with his beloved. Nor shall the seeker reach his goal unless he sacrifice all things. That is, whatever he hath seen, and heard, and understood, all must he set at naught, that he may enter the realm of the spirit, which is the City of God. Labor is needed, if we are to seek Him; ardor is needed, if we are to drink of the honey of reunion with Him; and if we taste of this cup, we shall cast away the world...

"And if, by the help of God, he findeth on this journey a trace of the traceless Friend, and inhaleth the fragrance of the longlost Joseph from the heavenly messenger, he shall straightway step into the Valley of Love and be dissolved in the fire of love. In this city the heaven of ecstasy is upraised and the world-illuminating sun of yearning shineth, and the fire of love is ablaze; and when the fire of love is ablaze, it burneth to ashes the harvest of reason...

"And if, confirmed by the Creator, the lover escapes from the claws of the eagle of love, he will enter the Valley of Knowledge and come out of doubt into certitude, and turn from the darkness of illusion to the guiding light of the fear of God. His inner eyes will open and he will privily converse with his Beloved; he will set ajar the gate of truth and piety, and shut the doors of vain imaginings. He in this station is content with the decree of God, and seeth war as peace, and findeth in death the secrets of everlasting life. With inward and outward eyes he witnesseth the mysteries of resurrection and in the realms of creation and the souls of men, and with a pure heart apprehendeth the divine wisdom in the endless Manifestations of God. In the ocean he findeth a drop, in a drop he beholdeth the secrets of the sea...

"After passing through the Valley of knowledge, which is the last plane of limitation, the wayfarer cometh to the Valley of Unity and drinketh from the cup of the Absolute, and gazeth on the Manifestations of Oneness. In this station he pierceth the veils of plurality, fleeth from the worlds of the flesh, and

ascendeth into the heaven of singleness. With the ear of God he heareth, with the eye of God he beholdeth the mysteries of divine creation."

The reader will certainly find many correspondences both between these two sources⁴ and between these verses of Bahá'u'lláh and the statements of „Abdu'l-Bahá. This spiritual proof will be examined fully in subsequent volumes.

TWENTY-SEVENTH PROOF:

THE PROPHET IS THE GARDENER OF HUMANITY

Bahá'u'lláh has used the image, the symbol of the garden to describe a number of phenomena, all of which are related to the Divine Gardener, the Prophet of God. In the prologue to the "Haft Vadi", he writes of the "green garden" of holiness and the "garden" of man's being:

SV:3,4: "...the bird of thy soul shall...gather the fruits of communion in the gardens of 'Then feed on every kind of fruit.' [Qur'an 16:71]

"By My life, O friend, wert thou to taste of these fruits, from the green garden of these blossoms which grow in the lands of knowledge, beside the orient lights of the Essence in the mirrors of names and attributes...thou wouldst soar in the air even as thou walkest upon the earth, and move over the water as thou runnest on the land. Wherefore, may it rejoice Me, and thee, and whosoever mounteth into the heaven of knowledge, and whose heart is refreshed by this, that the wind of certitude hath blown over the garden of his being, from the Sheba of the All-Merciful."

Bahá'u'lláh wrote "Kalimat-i-Maknuneh" at about the same time as "Haft Vadi" and in the Persian work by this name he writes:

HWP:#1,2,18: "The first call of the Beloved is this: O mystic nightingale! Abide not but in the rose-garden of the spirit...

"O friend! In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the rose of love...

"O ye dwellers in the highest paradise! Proclaim unto the children of assurance that within the realms of holiness, nigh unto the celestial paradise, a new garden hath appeared..."

In "Kitáb-i-Iqán" Bahá'u'lláh also refers to the "garden" of man's heart:

KI:211: "The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit. This is evidenced by those who, today, though without

a single letter of the accepted standards of learning, are occupying the loftiest seats of knowledge; and the garden of their hearts is adorned, through the showers of divine grace, with the roses of wisdom and the tulips of understanding." In the same Book he affirms that these spiritual treasures can only be found in "the ideal Garden":

KI:191: "O my brother! A divine Mine only can yield the gems of divine knowledge, and the fragrance of the mystic Flower can be inhaled only in the ideal Garden, and the lilies of ancient wisdom can blossom nowhere except in the city of a stainless heart."

During twelve days in the month of April (1863 C.E.), while residing in the garden of Najib Pasha, situated in the midst of an island in the Tigris River, adjoining the city of Baghdad, Bahá'u'lláh declared his Prophethood to a select group of his followers. Afterwards he referred to this period as "Ridvan," which originally means "garden" in Arabic, but has come to mean "paradise" in both Persian and Arabic. In one of the works which commemorates that season (which he designated as the Most Great Festival to be celebrated annually), entitled "Lawh-i-Ridvan", Bahá'u'lláh compares the presence of the Manifestation of God to a "garden of delight":

GL:XIV:31: "Guide, then, the people unto the garden of delight which God hath made the Throne of His Paradise."

Another Tablet, also written to honor the Festival of Ridvan, sounds the same theme:

GL:CLI:319: "Release yourselves, O nightingales of God, from the thorns and brambles of wretchedness and misery, and wing your flight to the rose-garden of unfading splendor. O My friends that dwell upon the dust! Haste forth unto your celestial habitation."

GL:CLI:320-321: "Hear Me, ye mortal birds! In the Rose Garden of changeless splendor a Flower hath begun to bloom, compared to which every other flower is but a thorn, and before the brightness of Whose glory the very essence of beauty must pale and wither. Arise, therefore, and, with the whole enthusiasm of your hearts, with all the eagerness of your souls, the full fervor of your will, and the concentrated efforts of your entire being, strive to attain the paradise of His presence, and endeavor to inhale the fragrance of the incorruptible Flower, to breathe the sweet savors of holiness, and to obtain a portion of this perfume of celestial glory."

We may compare these pronouncements to the depiction of the Garden of Eden. Gan Eden (as it is known in Hebrew) was not just an idyllic environment for man to live in, it was also his training

ground--it was where he learned to name and to govern the creatures of the earth, and also where he learned the consequences of disobedience to the divine command:

Bereshit/Genesis 1:26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

Bereshit/Genesis 2:15-17: "And the Lord God took the man, and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the Garden thou mayest freely eat:

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

„Abdu'l-Bahá speaks of the first man and his development in horticultural terms, in "Some Answered Questions":

"Man from the beginning was in this perfect form and composition, and possessed capacity and aptitude for acquiring material and spiritual perfections, and was the manifestation of these words, 'We will make man in Our image and likeness.' He has only become more pleasing, more beautiful, and more graceful. Civilization has brought him out of his wild state, just as the wild fruits which are cultivated by a gardener become finer, sweeter, and acquire more freshness and delicacy. The gardeners of the world of humanity are the Prophets of God." (SAQ:XLIX:225-226; BWF:309-310)

In his last "Tablet to America" there is the following reference to the "Divine Gardener":

"The Divine Gardener cuts off the dry or weak branch from the good tree and grafts to it, a branch from another tree. He both separates and unites. This is that which His Holiness Christ says: that from all the world they come and enter the Kingdom, and the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out." (BWF:438)

In another Tablet, „Abdu'l-Bahá explains that the death of a youth seemingly before his time is actually according to an "inscrutable divine wisdom" which is known only to the Divine Gardener:

"The inscrutable divine wisdom underlies such heart-rending occurrences. It is as if a kind gardener transfers a fresh and tender shrub from a narrow place to a vast region. This transference is not the cause of the withering, the waning or the destruction of that shrub, nay rather it makes it grow and thrive, acquire freshness and delicacy and attain verdure and fruition. This hidden secret is well-known to the gardener, while those souls who are unaware of this bounty

suppose that the gardener in his anger and wrath has uprooted the shrub. But to those who are aware this concealed fact is manifest and this predestined decree considered a favor. Do not feel grieved and disconsolate therefore at the ascension of that bird of faithfulness, nay under all circumstances pray and beg for that youth forgiveness and elevation of station." (BWF:379)

He describes the ideal garden of humanity, in one of the "Tablets of the Divine Plan":

"When the rain, the heat, the sun and the gentle zephyrs cooperate with each other, what beautiful gardens are produced! How the various kinds of hyacinths, flowers, trees and plants associate with each other and are conducive to the adornment and charm of one another! Hence the oneness of the bounty of the sun, the oneness of rain and the oneness of the breeze have so overcome all other considerations, that the variety of hues, fragrances and tastes have increased the adornment, the attraction and sweetness of the whole. In a similar manner, when the divine Collective Center and the outpouring of the Sun of Reality and the breaths of the Holy Spirit are brought together, the variety of races and the differences existing between countries will become the cause of the embellishment, decoration and elegance of the world of humanity." (BWF:420)

In an address at the Unitarian Church in Dublin, New Hampshire, on 11 August 1912, he likens the Manifestations of God generally (and Jesus Christ specifically) to Divine Gardeners and Divine Farmers:

"Man though he progress materially, is in need of the breaths of the Holy Spirit, of divine education, of the outpourings of the Kingdom. Not until man receives this bounty can he become perfect. Therefore the holy, divine Manifestations have appeared in every cycle and dispensation so that they may give the human souls this divine education, may banish the imperfections of the human world and make manifest ideal perfections. The world of nature is like a jungle. His Holiness the Christ was the Divine Gardener. He made this jungle to be a rose garden, these fruitless trees fruitful. These lands which according to the laws of nature should bring forth weeds and tares He filled with roses and tulips. This Divine Farmer sowed the earth with seeds; the worthless grass He threw away. The thorn bushes which according to the law of nature should grow He rooted out, and through divine education the thorny place became a rose garden. Had it remained in its original state it would have been either a jungle or a bramble patch.

"The point is this, that man, however much he may progress materially, however much he may acquire of material perfection belongs, still, to the animal world and is in need of the breaths of the Holy Spirit, of divine education. If man partakes of the breaths of the Holy Spirit then the divine reality appears in the human world in

utmost perfection and man becomes as the image and likeness of God." (SW:XIV:2, p. 43)

In an address delivered on 10 November 1912, Bahá'u'lláh is likened to a Gardener of humanity:

"The love of Bahá'u'lláh is in your hearts. Your souls are rejoicing in the glad tidings of Bahá'u'lláh. My hope is that the white and the black will be united in perfect love and fellowship, with complete unity and brotherhood. Associate with each other, think of each other, and be like a rose garden...Although different in colors, yet--praise be to God!--you receive rays from the same sun. From one cloud the rain is poured upon you. You are under the training of one Gardener, and this Gardener is kind to all. Therefore, you must manifest the utmost kindness towards each other, and you may rest assured that whenever you are united, the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abha will reach you, the heavenly favors will descend, the bounties of God will be bestowed, the Sun of Reality will shine, the cloud of mercy will pour its showers, and the breeze of divine generosity will waft its fragrances upon you." (PUP:427-428)

The need and function of the Gardener of humanity is explained in other addresses of „Abdu'l-Bahá:

"If a piece of ground is left in its natural state, wild weeds, thorns and trees of the jungle will grow upon it. But if we cultivate that same piece of ground, the result will be that it will rid itself of natural imperfections and become transformed into a beautiful rose garden or an orchard of fruitful trees. This is a proof that the world of nature is defective." (Address of 7 November 1912; PUP:400)

"When we look upon the kingdoms of creation below man, we find three forms or planes of existence which await education and development. For instance, the function of a gardener is to till the soil of the mineral kingdom and plant a tree which under his training and cultivation will attain perfection of growth. If it be wild and fruitless, it may be made fruitful and prolific by grafting. If small and unsightly, it will become lofty, beautiful and verdant under the gardener's training, whereas a tree bereft of his cultivation retrogresses daily, its fruit grows acrid and bitter as the trees of the jungle, or it may become entirely barren and bereft of its fruitage." (Address of 2 May 1912; PUP:77)

"If we should relegate this plot of ground to its natural state, allow it to return to its original condition, it would become a field of thorns and useless weeds, but by cultivation it will become fertile soil, yielding a harvest. Deprived of cultivation, the mountain slopes would be jungles and forests without fruitful trees. The gardens bring forth fruits and flowers in proportion to the care and tillage bestowed upon them by the gardener. Therefore, it is not intended that the world of

humanity should be left to its natural state. It is in need of the education divinely provided for it. The holy, heavenly Manifestations of God have been the Teachers. They are the divine Gardeners Who transform the jungles of human nature into fruitful orchards and make the thorny places blossom as the rose." (Address of 8 October 1912; PUP:353)

In all of these passages, „Abdu"l-Bahá likened humanity to a garden, and the Prophet of God as the Divine Gardener of humanity. In keeping with this symbolism, he also affirms the oneness of humanity in the imagery of flowers in a garden:

"Be as one spirit, one soul, leaves of one tree, flowers of one garden, waves of one ocean...The difference in adornment of color and capacity of reflection among the flowers gives the garden its beauty and charm. Therefore, although we are of different individualities, different in ideas and of various fragrances, let us strive like flowers of the same divine garden to live together in harmony." (Address of 17 April 1912; PUP:24)

"Flowers may be variegated in colors, but they are all flowers of one garden. Trees differ though they grow in the same orchard. All are nourished and quickened into life by the bounty of the same rain, all grow and develop by the heat and light of the one sun, all are refreshed and exhilarated by the same breeze that they may bring forth varied fruits. This is according to the creative wisdom. If all trees bore the same kind of fruit, it would cease to be delicious. In their never-ending variety man finds enjoyment instead of monotony.

"And now as I look into your faces, I am reminded of trees varying in color and form but all bearing luscious and delectable fruits, fragrant and delightful to the inner and outer senses." (Address of 23 April 1912; PUP:51-52)

"All mankind are the fruits of one tree, flowers of the same garden, waves of one sea." (Address of 12 May 1912; PUP:118)

"May you become as the waves of one sea, stars of the same heaven, fruits adorning the same tree, roses of one garden in order that through you the oneness of humanity may establish its temple in the world of mankind, for you are the ones who are called to uplift the cause of unity among the nations of the earth." (Address of 29 June 1912; PUP:214-215)

"O Lord God! Make us as waves of the sea, as flowers of the garden, united, agreed through the bounties of Thy love." (Address of 14 July 1912; PUP:235)

"My hope is that the white and the black will be united in perfect love and fellowship, with complete unity and brotherhood. Associate with each other, think of each other, and be like a rose

garden. Anyone who goes into a rose garden will see various roses, white, pink, yellow, red, all growing together and replete with adornment. Each one accentuates the beauty of the other. Were all of one color, the garden would be monotonous to the eye. If they were all white or yellow or red, the garden would lack variety and attractiveness; but when the colors are varied, white, pink, yellow, red, there will be the greatest beauty. Therefore, I hope that you will be like a rose garden." (Address of 10 November 1912; PUP:427)

As will have been noted by the reader, the garden is a symbol for the physical reality of humanity--their variety and essential harmony--and also for the spiritual reality of humanity, which is being realized among the believers at present and which will be more fully and universally manifested in the world of humanity in the future. In one of his addresses, that of 8 November 1912, „Abdu"l-Bahá reads from an Epistle written by Bahá"u"lláh to the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, which ends with these prophetic words:

"Verily, the Servant hath assuredly come to vivify the world and bring to union whosoever is upon the surface of the whole earth. That which God willeth shall overcome, and thou shalt see the earth as the garden of Abha. Thus hath it been written by the pen of command in an irrevocable Tablet." (PUP:399)

In an ecstatic Tablet written to celebrate the New Age and at the time of the vernal equinox, „Abdu"l-Bahá addresses these words to his followers:

"The new year hath appeared and the spiritual springtime is at hand. The black earth is becoming a verdant garden; the deserts and mountains are teeming with red flowers; from the borders of the wilderness the tall grasses are standing like advance guards before the cypress and jessamine trees; while the birds are singing among the rose branches like the angels in the highest heavens, announcing the glad tidings of the approach of that spiritual spring, and the sweet music of their voices is causing the real essence of all things to move and quiver." (TAB:I:641; BWF:352)

He also uses this imagery to describe the hearts of men, each one of which is a garden which must be properly tended by the Divine Gardener in order to yield the most beauty and fragrance:

"Be like a well-cultivated garden wherein the roses and variegated flowers of heaven are growing in fragrance and beauty. It is my hope that your hearts may become as ready ground, carefully tilled and prepared, upon which the divine showers of the bounties of the Blessed Perfection [Bahá"u"lláh] may descend and the zephyrs of this divine springtime may blow with quickening breath. Then will the garden of your hearts bring forth its flowers of delightful fragrance to refresh the nostril of the heavenly Gardener." (Address of 17 April

1912; PUP:24)

TWENTY-EIGHTH PROOF:

A PROPHET IS NOT WITHOUT HONOUR, SAVE IN HIS OWN COUNTRY, AND IN HIS OWN HOUSE

In all four of the canonical Gospels, Jesus the Messiah refers to this proof of Prophethood:

"A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house." (Gospel of Matthew 13:57)

"A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house." (Gospel of Mark 6:4)

"No prophet is accepted in his own country..." (Gospel of Luke 4:24)

"For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country." (Gospel of John 4:44)

Bahá'u'lláh has written, about the people in the days of the Manifestations of God:

KI:174: "Were these people, wholly for the sake of God and with no desire but His good-pleasure, to ponder the verses of the Book in their heart, they would of a certainty find whatsoever they seek. In its verses would they find revealed and manifest all the things, be they great or small, that have come to pass in this Dispensation. They would even recognize in them references to the opposition and disdainful arrogance of government and people..."

ESW:92: "Hath, from the foundation of the world until the present day, any Light or Revelation shone forth from the dayspring of the will of God which the kindreds of the earth have accepted, and Whose Cause they have acknowledged? Where is it to be found, and what is its name? Since the Seal of the Prophets (Muhammad)--may all else but Him be His sacrifice--and before Him the Spirit of God (Jesus), as far back as the First Manifestation, all have at thee time of Their appearance suffered grievously. Some were held to be possessed, others were called impostors, and were treated in a manner that the pen is ashamed to describe. By God! There befell Them what hath made all created things to sigh, and yet the people are, for the most part, sunk in manifest ignorance! Shoghi Effendi refers to this proof in "God Passes By", when he compares the rejection of various earlier Prophets with that endured by Bahá'u'lláh³⁹:

"More odious than the unrelenting hostility which Abu-Jahl,

the uncle of Muhammad, had exhibited, more shameful than the betrayal of Jesus Christ by His disciple, Judas Iscariot, more perfidious than the conduct of the sons of Jacob towards Joseph their brother, more abhorrent than the deed committed by one of the sons of Noah, more infamous than even the criminal act perpetrated by Cain against Abel, the monstrous behavior of Mirza Yahya, one of the halfbrothers of Bahá'u'lláh, the nominee of the Báb, and recognized chief of the Bábi community, brought in its wake a period of travail which left its mark on the fortunes of the Faith for no less than half a century."

Chapter X, p. 163.

TWENTY-NINTH PROOF:

EVERY PROPHET IS EXILED FROM HIS HOMELAND

Every Prophet of God has not only been rejected by his people, the neighbors and associates and often the very family into which he has been born, but every One has been exiled from his homeland. This is one of the signs of Prophethood. In "Kitáb-i-Iqán" Bahá'u'lláh sets forth this proof of prophethood:

"Were these people, wholly for the sake of God and with no desire but His good-pleasure, to ponder the verses of the Book in their heart, they would of a certainty find whatsoever they seek. In its verses would they find revealed and manifest all the things, be they great or small, that have come to pass in this Dispensation. They would even recognize in them references unto the departure of the Manifestations of the names and attributes of God from out their native land and to the dwelling and establishment of the Universal Manifestation in an appointed and specially designated land. No man, however, can comprehend this except he who is possessed of an understanding heart." (KI:174)

In one of his Tablets⁴⁰, „Abdu'l-Bahá states the following:

"Abraham's migration from his native land caused the bountiful gifts of the All-Glorious to be made manifest, and the setting of Canaan's brightest star unfolded to the eyes the radiance of Joseph. The flight of Moses, the Prophet of Sinai, revealed the Flame of the Lord's burning Fire, and the rise of Jesus breathed the breaths of the Holy Spirit into the world. The departure of Muhammad, the Beloved of God, from the city of His Birth was the cause of the exaltation of God's Holy Word, and the exile and banishment of the Sacred Beauty led to the diffusion of the Light of His Divine Revelation throughout all regions. Take ye good heed, O people of insight!"

In "Some Answered Questions" (chapter IV, pp. 15-16; last paragraph cited in "God Passes By", Chapter VII, p 107), „Abdu'l-Bahá writes of the exile of Abraham and compares it to the exiles of other

Manifestations of God:

Translated by Shoghi Effendi and quoted in a letter dated 9 April 1923 and addressed to a National Spiritual Assembly. The author is deeply grateful to the Research Department of the Bahá'í World Centre for bringing this statement to his attention.

"In consequence of His exile the descendants of Abraham became powerful, and the Holy Land was given to them in consequence of His exile a Moses and a being like Christ were manifested from His posterity, and Hagar was found from whom Ishmael was born, one of whose descendants was Muhammad. In consequence of His exile the Báb appeared from His posterity, and the Prophets of Israel were numbered among the descendants of Abraham. And so it will continue for ever and ever. Finally, in consequence of His exile the whole of Europe and most of Asia came under the protecting shadow of the God of Israel. See what a power it is that enabled a man who was a fugitive from His country to found such a family, to establish such a faith, and to promulgate such teachings. Can any one say that this occurred accidentally? We must be just--was this man an Educator or not?

"Since the exile of Abraham from Ur to Aleppo in Syria produced this result, we must consider what will be the effect of the exile of Bahá'u'lláh in His several progresses from Tihiran to Baghdad, from thence to Constantinople, to Roumelia, and to the Holy Land."

Shoghi Effendi writes in "God Passes By" (chapter VII, p. 107):

"This enforced and hurried departure of Bahá'u'lláh from His native land, accompanied by some of His relatives, recalls in some of its aspects, the precipitate flight of the Holy Family into Egypt; the sudden migration of Muhammad, soon after His assumption of the prophetic office, from Mecca to Medina; the exodus of Moses, His brother and His followers from the land of their birth, in response to the Divine summons, and above all the banishment of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to the Promised Land--a banishment which, in the multitudinous benefits it conferred upon so many divers peoples, faiths and nations, constitutes the nearest historical approach to the incalculable blessings destined to be vouchsafed, in this day, and in future ages, to the whole human race, in direct consequence of the exile suffered by Him Whose Cause is the flower and fruit of all previous Revelations."

THIRTIETH PROOF:

THE PROPHET OF GOD MUST COME FROM THE EAST

Every one of the Prophets of God has arisen in the East. „Abdu'l-Bahá affirms that this has always been the case, and hence this is also one of the proofs of the Prophet. Shoghi Effendi quotes „Abdu'l-Bahá's statement to this effect in "God Passes By" (chapter XVI, pp. 253-254):

"From the beginning of time until the present day," is „Abdu"l-Bahá's own testimony, "the light of Divine Revelation hath risen in the East and shed its radiance upon the West. The illumination thus shed hath, however, acquired in the West an extraordinary brilliancy. Consider the Faith proclaimed by Jesus. Though it first appeared in the East, yet not until its light had been shed upon the West did the full measure of its potentialities become manifest." "The day is approaching," He has affirmed, "when ye shall witness how, through the splendor of the Faith of Bahá"u"lláh, the West will have replaced the East, radiating the light of Divine guidance."

While „Abdu"l-Bahá only cites two Prophets in this passage in relation to this proof, Jesus and Bahá"u"lláh, in similar statements he refers to other Prophets who fulfilled this proof:

"In the Holy Books it is recorded that when the Sun of Truth dawns, it will appear in the East, and its light will be reflected in the West. Already its dawning has taken place in the East, and its signs are appearing in the West.

"On Sunday last at Carnegie Hall the revered soul who introduced „Abdu"l-Bahá gave voice to the statement that according to tradition demons would appear from the land of the sunrise, but now we find angels appearing instead. At the time this statement was made a reply was not possible, but today we will speak of it. The great spiritual lights have always appeared in the East. The Blessed Perfection, Bahá"u"lláh, appeared in the East. Jesus Christ dawned upon the horizon of the East. Moses, Aaron, Joseph and all the Israelitish prophets such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah and others appeared from the Orient. The lights of Muhammad and the Báb shone from the East. The eastern horizon has been flooded with the effulgence of these great lights, and only from the East have they risen to shine upon the West." („Abdu"l-Bahá at home of Mr. and Mrs. Kinney, New York, 17 April 1912, in PUP, p. 23)

"Therefore, it is shown that the divine Manifestations, the holy Mouthpieces of God, are the Collective Centers of God. These heavenly Messengers are the real Shepherds of humanity, for whenever They appear in the world They unite the scattered sheep. The Collective Center has always appeared in the Orient. Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, Muhammad were Collective Centers of Their day and time, and all arose in the East. Today Bahá"u"lláh is the Collective Center of unity for all mankind, and the splendor of His light has likewise dawned from the East." („Abdu"l-Bahá at Church of the Ascension, New York, 2 June 1912, PUP, p. 165)

"I have come from distant countries of the Orient where the lights of heaven have ever shone forth, from regions where the Manifestations of God have appeared and the radiance and power of God have been revealed to mankind." („Abdu"l-Bahá at Unitarian

Church, Philadelphia, 9 June 1912, "Khitabat," p. 432; PUP, p. 172)

"In the Books of the Prophets certain glad tidings are recorded which are absolutely true and free from doubt. The East has ever been the dawning point of the Sun of Reality. All the Prophets of God have appeared there. The religions of God have been promulgated, the teachings of God have been spread and the law of God founded in the East. The Orient has always been the center of lights. The West has acquired illumination from the East, but in some respects the reflection of the light has been greater in the Occident." (.,Abdu'l-Bahá at home of Madame Morey, 29 August 1912, PUP, p. 289)

"And ye who are the people of the Orient--the Orient which has ever been the dawning point of lights from whence the Sun of Reality has ever shone forth, casting its effulgence upon the West--ye, therefore, must become the manifestation of lights." (.,Abdu'l-Bahá at Japanese YMCA, 7 October 1912, "Khitabat," p. 600)

Inasmuch as .,Abdu'l-Bahá has stated that all of the Prophets have dawned from the East "from the beginning of time until the present day" this is a universal proof of Prophethood.

THIRTY-FIRST PROOF:

PROPHET OF GOD ALWAYS APPEARS AMONG THE MOST SPIRITUALLY DEPRIVED AND DEGRADED OF MANKIND

Bahá'u'lláh seems to allude to this proof in this passage:

"Were these people, wholly for the sake of God and with no desire but His good-pleasure, to ponder the verses of the Book in their heart, they would of a certainty find whatsoever they seek. In its verses would they find revealed and manifest all things, be they great or small, that have come to pass in this Dispensation. They would even recognize in them references unto the departure of the Manifestations of the names and attributes of God from out their native land⁴¹; to the opposition and disdainful arrogance of government and people⁴²; and the dwelling and establishment of the Universal Manifestation in an appointed and specially designated land." (KI:174)

The Manifestation invariably appears in "an appointed and specially designated land" which is, according to Shoghi Effendi, inhabited by the most spiritually deprived and depraved of mankind, hence those who are most in need of the redeeming grace of the Prophet of God, and whose transformation will most clearly demonstrate the divine influence of that Prophet. Shoghi Effendi has written eloquently, in "The Advent of Divine Justice"⁴³, that the Prophets of God have invariably appeared to depraved peoples:

"How often have the Prophets of God, not excepting Bahá'u'lláh Himself, chosen to appear, and deliver their Message in countries and amidst peoples and races, at a time when they were either fast declining, or had already touched the lowest depths of moral and spiritual degradation. The appalling misery and wretchedness to which the Israelites had sunk, under the debasing and tyrannical rule of the Pharaohs, in the days preceding their exodus

41Please see the Twenty-Ninth Proof.

42Please see the Twenty-Eighth Proof.

"The Advent of Divine Justice", pp. 17-18. The author is most grateful to the Research Department of the Bahá'í World Centre for bringing this passage from Shoghi Effendi's letter dated 25 December 1938 to the Bahá'ís of Canada and the United States of America to his attention.

from Egypt under the leadership of Moses; the decline that had set in the religious, the spiritual, the cultural, and the moral life of the Jewish people, at the time of the appearance of Jesus Christ; the barbarous cruelty, the gross idolatry and immorality, which had for so long been the most distressing features of the tribes of Arabia and brought such shame upon them when Muhammad arose to proclaim His Message in their midst; the indescribable state of decadence, with its attendant corruption, confusion, intolerance, and oppression, in both the civil and religious life of Persia, so graphically portrayed by the pen of a considerable number of scholars, diplomats, and travelers, at the hour of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh--all demonstrate this basic and inescapable fact. To contend that the innate worthiness, the high moral standard, the political aptitude, and social attainments of any race or nation is the reason for the appearance in its midst of any of these Divine Luminaries would be an absolute perversion of historical facts, and would amount to a complete repudiation of the undoubted interpretation placed upon them, so clearly and emphatically, by both Bahá'u'lláh and „Abdu'l-Bahá.

"How great, then, must be the challenge to those who, belonging to such races and nations, and having responded to the call which these Prophets have raised, to unreservedly recognize and courageously testify to this indubitable truth, that not by reason of any racial superiority, political capacity, or spiritual virtue which a race or nation might possess, but rather as a direct consequence of its crying needs, its lamentable degeneracy, and irremediable perversity, has the Prophet of God chosen to appear in its midst, and with it as a lever has lifted the entire human race to a higher and nobler plane of life and conduct. For it is precisely under such circumstances, and by such means that the Prophets have from time immemorial, chosen and were able to demonstrate their redemptive power to raise from the depths of abasement and of misery, the people of their own race and nation, empowering them to transmit in turn to other races and

nations the saving grace and the energizing influence of their Revelation.

"In the light of this fundamental principle it should be always borne in mind, nor can it be sufficiently emphasized, that the primary reason why the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh chose to appear in Persia, and to make it the repository of their Revelation, was because, of all the peoples and nations of the civilized world, that race and nation had, as so often depicted by „Abdu'l-Bahá, sunk to such ignominious depths, and manifested so great a perversity, as to find no parallel among its contemporaries. For no more convincing proof could be adduced demonstrating the regenerating spirit animating the Revelations proclaimed by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh than their power to transform what can be truly regarded as one of the most backward, the most cowardly, and perverse of peoples into a race of heroes, fit to effect in turn a similar revolution in the life of mankind."

Shoghi Effendi's emphatic formulation of this proof of Prophet must be applied to all Prophets, inasmuch as he affirms it to be "a fundamental principle." If we look for examples of this state of degradation, we find plenty in the Bible. For example, in the Book of Genesis (Bereshit), it is written in the sixth chapter:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

"And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.

"And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth Me that I have made them.

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." (6:5-8)

Also in the story of Abraham, Moses, Jesus (generation of vipers), Muhammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh we have clear examples of this which will be cited and discussed in subsequent volumes.

THIRTY-SECOND PROOF:

ALL PROPHETS FOUND CIVILIZATIONS

In "The Secret of Divine Civilization" ("Risalih-i-Madaniyyih"), „Abdu'l-Bahá wrote, regarding the founding of true civilization:

"By the Lord God, and there is no God but He, even the minutest details of civilized life derive from the grace of the Prophets of God. What thing of value to mankind has ever come into being which was not first set forth either directly or by implication in the Holy Scriptures?" (p. 96)

This same principle is found affirmed in some of his talks in North America, published in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace":

"The Prophets of God have founded the laws of divine civilization." („Abdu"l-Bahá to Unitarian Conference, Boston, 24 May 1912, "Khatirat," pp. 393/394; PUP, p. 142)

"The philosophers have founded material civilization. The Prophets have founded divine civilization. Christ was the Founder of heavenly civilization. Mankind receives the bounties of material civilization as well as divine civilization from the heavenly Prophets." („Abdu"l-Bahá at Hotel Sacramento, 25 October 1912, PUP, p. 375)

In the application of this proof to each of the Prophets of God, we will find that each of those Prophets have been the Founders of great civilizations--Moses the Founder of Israelite and Jewish civilization; Zoroaster the Founder of Persian civilization; Krishna the Founder of Hindu civilization; Buddha the Founder of Buddhist civilization; Jesus the Founder of Christian civilization; and Muhammad the Founder of Islamic civilization. On the basis of the fulfillment of this proof by the other Prophets of God, „Abdu"l-Bahá affirms that the Báb and Bahá'u"lláh are co-Founders of a universal human civilization which is gradually emerging during our own lifetimes.

THIRTY-THIRD PROOF:

ALL PROPHETS MANIFEST THE GLORY OF GOD

In the Torah and the Books of the Lesser Prophets there are many references to the radiance of "Kavod Adonai". Dr. Solomon Mandelkern, in his Biblical Concordance in Hebrew (with definitions of terms in Latin), entitled "Qonqordantsiah le-Tanakh", revised, corrected and completed by Rabbi Chaim Mordecai Brecher, with supplementary corrections and notes by Abraham Avrunin, published in New York by Shulsinger Brothers, 1955--has defined "Kavod" as "divitiae; opes; copia; honor, gloria, magnificentia, splendor, maiestas; praedicatio, hymnus" and in the English translations of the Bible we usually find this word translated as "Glory". In the book of Shmot (Exodus), the Prophet Moses has a conversation with the Lord God, which speaks directly to the heart of this subject and is therefore pertinent of a full citation here:

Exo 33:12 And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. 33:13 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. 33:14 And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. 33:15 And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. 33:16 For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy

people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.
33:17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also
that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight,
and I know thee by name. 33:18 And he said, I beseech thee,
shew me thy glory [Kavod]. 33:19 And he said, I will make all
my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of
the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be
gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. 33:20
And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man
see me, and live. 33:21 And the LORD said, Behold, there is a
place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: 33:22 And it shall
come to pass, while my glory [Kavod] passeth by, that I will put
thee in a cliff of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand
while I pass by: 33:23 And I will take away mine hand, and thou
shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

The first reference to the radiance of "Kavod Adonai" becoming
manifest in a Prophet is found in these verses of the Book of Exodus:

Exo 34:29: And it came to pass, when Moses came down
from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses'
hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist
not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.
34:30: And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw
Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were
afraid to come nigh him. 34:31: And Moses called unto them;
and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto
him: and Moses talked with them. 34:32: And afterward all the
children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in
commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him in
mount Sinai. 34:33: And till Moses had done speaking with
them, he put a veil on his face. 34:34: But when Moses went
in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off,
until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the
children of Israel that which he was commanded. 34:35: And
the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of
Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil upon his face again,
Until he went in to speak with him.

There are testimonies to this radiance of the "Glory of God" in the
Scriptures associated with Krishna and Zoroaster. In "Bhagavad-Gita"
we read, in chapter XI (verse 12):

"If the light of a thousand suns were to blaze forth all at once
in the sky, that might resemble the splendour of that exalted
Being." (translation by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, p. 273)

The seminal Zoroastrian principle which F.E.Peters transliterated as
"xvarneh" ("A Reader in Classical Islam," Princeton, 1994, pp. 382-
383); A.V. Williams-Jackson rendered as "hvarneh" ("Encyclopaedia of

Religion and Ethics," 1962, volume 2, p. 269); A.J. Carnoy transliterated as "xvarenanh" (Ibid., volume 12, p. 862); and Gherardo Gnoli as "khvarenah" ("The Encyclopedia of Religion," 1987, volume 15, p. 587)--is described as that "Glory" and radiance which is possessed by kings and heroes as a sign of the divine right of leadership, and associated at its apex with the Prophethood of Zoroaster.

In the Book of Isaiah we find a verse with "Kavod Adonai" which was translated into Greek in the Septuagint (LXX), into Arabic by Rabbi Saadia ben Yosef al-Fayyumi (ha-Gaon), and which we find in various English renderings. A comparison of this verse (35:2) finds that "Kavod Adonai" is "Doxa Theos" in Greek, "Karuma Allah" in Arabic, and "Glory" in English. In the Gospels we find references to the "doxa" of the Son of God (Gospel of John 1:14, 2:11, 17:5 and 17:22); to the "doxa" of the Son of Man (Gospel of Matthew 16:27). In one of the letters of Paul, his Second Epistle to the Corinthians (3:7-11), he says that "the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory [doxa] of his countenance". The Apocalypse of St. John of Patmos (21:23) tells of the heavenly Jerusalem, that "the glory [doxa] of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

As for translations of the Bible into Arabic, the first of such renditions to be preserved to this day is that of Saadia ha-Gaon al-Fayyumi. Saadia has sometimes translated the "Kavod Adonai" as "Nur Allah" as in Exodus (24:16-17), Leviticus (9:6), and Isaiah (40:5). He has also translated "Kavod" as "Nur" as in Exodus (33:18-22). The LXX renders the "Kavod Adonai" of Isaiah 40:5 as "Doxa Kirios"--which Saadia translated as "Nur Allah".

There are many references to a radiance which emanated from the Prophet Muhammad, but as these are found in traditions (hadith) and biographies which are not entirely reliable sources, we will turn to the text of the Qur'an and to its interpretation by „Abdu'l-Bahá, found in "Khitabat" (pp. 117-119) and in "Paris Talks" (pp. 68-70):

"This light of the intellect [nur-i-'aql] is the highest light that exists, for it is born of the Light Divine [nur ilahi].

"The light of the intellect enables us to understand and realize all that exists, but it is only the Divine Light [nur ilahi] that can give us sight for the invisible things, and which enables us to see truths that will only be visible to the world thousands of years hence.

"It was the Divine Light [nur ilahi] which enabled the prophets [anbaya'] to see two thousand years in advance what was going to take place and today we see the realization of their vision. Thus it is this Light which we must strive to seek, for it is greater than any other.

"It was by this Light that Moses was enabled to see and comprehend the Divine Appearance [tajali al-wahiyat], and to hear

the Heavenly Voice spoke to him from the Burning Bush [Exodus 3:2].

"It is of this Light Muhammad is speaking when he says, 'Allah is the light of the heavens, and of the earth.'" (Khatirat, pp. 17-118; PT, p. 69)

The Qur"anic verse to which „Abdu"l-Bahá refers here is from "Suratu'l-Nur" (24:36):

"Allah is the Light [nur] of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a lustrous niche, wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a glittering star. It is lit from a blessed tree--an olive--neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would well-nigh glow forth even though fire touched it not. Light upon light! Allah guides to His light whomsoever He will. And Allah sets forth parables to men, and Allah knows all things full well." (translation of Mawlavi Sher Ali, p. 342)

It is notable that Paul uses the same imagery, of the radiance from God in a glass in this verse from the Second Epistle to the Corinthians (3:18):

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory [doxa] of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory [doxa] to glory [doxa], even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

„Abdu"l-Bahá wrote a Tablet ("Munkhatabati az Makatib „Abdu"l-Bahá," No. 4, p. 14; "Selections from the Writings of „Abdu"l-Bahá," No. 4, p. 15) in which he sets forth this proof of Prophet in the case of Bahá"u"lláh:

"And among His signs [ayatih] are His splendours [anwarhi], rising [al-mashriqih] above the horizon of oneness [min afaq al-tawhid], His lights [ish'atahi] streaming out [as-salTa'ih] from the dayspring of might [min al-maTala' al-majid]"

In "Some Answered Questions," „Abdu"l-Bahá refers to Bahá"u"lláh as "this great Light" (chapter IX, p. 35) and "the evident Light" (chapter X, p. 43). Furthermore, the Most Great Name (Ism-i-A'zam), "Baha" or "Abha" in its superlative form, is rendered as "light, radiance, brilliancy" as well as "splendor, glory' beauty". But there is yet a more tangible sign of this proof in Bahá"u"lláh, and for a report in confirmation of this we go to the testimony of Aqa Siyyid Isma'il-I-Zavari'i, known as Dhabih, who described this meeting with Bahá"u"lláh to Muhammad Zarandi, Nabil-i-A'zam (cited in Balyuzi, "Bahá"u"lláh, King of Glory," pp. 132-133):

"What I have seen cannot be described. After I asked Him for spiritual sustenance, and He said that it had been granted to me, door after door opened upon my heart, and my soul became

acquainted with thoughts not of this world. One night, in His biruni, His Blessed Person asked for a candle to peruse a paper, and I, as usual lost in wonderment at my own condition, suddenly thought: 'Is it possible that that visage, the sight of which the Chosen Ones and the Messengers of God had longed to behold, could be unveiled in a human temple?' and as soon as this thought passed through my mind, His blessed voice called out to me: 'Aqa Siyyid Isma'il, look!' and when I gazed at His blessed face, I saw that which no word can ever describe. All that I can say is this: it seemed as if a hundred thousand seas, vast and sunlit, billowed upon that Blessed Face. What happened then, I do not know. My last word to you is this: never ask for anything like this and be contented with what is given unto you, and always say, 'O God! Allow it all to end well with us'--and pray for me that my own end shall be well."

It is essential that students of the proofs of Prophethood recognize that the divine "glory" is not manifest in one Prophet alone and exclusively. No matter how much we may esteem Moses or Jesus, Muhammad or Krishna, Zoroaster or Buddha, the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh, we would fail to understand this proof if we were to regard any one of these Prophets of God as the only manifestation of divine "glory"; likewise, if we allege that any one of the Prophets of God is deprived of this attribute, we have failed to understand the principle animating this proof. This, then, is one of the proofs of every Prophet of God. If it is true of one Prophet, then of all the Prophets.

THIRTY-FOURTH PROOF: TESTING OF THE BELIEVERS IN EVERY DISPENSATION

In many verses of the "Kitáb-i-Iqán" Bahá'u'lláh indicates that those who claim to believe in God and in His Prophets are tested in every Dispensation, and hence it appears that this testing is, in itself, a proof of authentic prophethood. He explains that there are two kinds of language employed in the holy Scriptures, and that the symbolic language is one of the means whereby the believers are tested, whereby their faith in God and His Prophets is found to be true or false, depending upon their understanding of the symbolic terms, and their fulfillment in the appearance of the new Prophet of God:

KI:254-255: "It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion. Such are the unveiled traditions and the evident verses already mentioned. The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the

malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sadiq [1], son of Muhammad [2], spoken: 'God verily will test them and sift them.' This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended."

Bahá'u'lláh has based this exposition upon Surat al-'Imran (3:7), in which it is revealed that there are two kinds of verses, muhkamatun and mutashabihatun, and that it is the latter which tests the hearts of men. He cites one of the traditions of Muhammad al-Sadiq, the sixth Imam, a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. This proof, which Bahá'u'lláh here articulates as "This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants" is referred to in various other verses of "Kitáb-i-Iqán":

KI:49: "Know verily that the purpose underlying all these symbolic terms and abstruse allusions, which emanate from the Revealers of God's holy Cause, hath been to test and prove the peoples of the world; that thereby the earth of the pure and illuminated hearts may be known from the perishable and barren soil. From time immemorial such hath been the way of God amidst His creatures, and to this testify the records of the sacred books."

KI: 52-53: "Yea, such things as throw consternation into the hearts of all men come to pass only that each soul may be tested by the touchstone of God, that the true may be known and distinguished from the false..."

"Were you to ponder, but for a while, these utterances in your heart, you would surely find the portals of understanding unlocked before your face, and would behold all knowledge and the mysteries thereof unveiled before your eyes. Such things take place only that the souls of men may develop and be delivered from the prison-cage of self and desire.

Otherwise, that ideal King hath, throughout eternity, been in His Essence independent of the comprehension of all beings, and will continue, for ever, in His own Being to be exalted above the adoration of every soul. A single breeze of His affluence doth suffice to adorn all mankind with the robe of wealth; and one drop out of the ocean of His bountiful grace is enough to confer upon all beings the glory of everlasting life. But inasmuch as the divine Purpose hath decreed that the true should be known from the false, and the sun from the

shadow, He hath, therefore, in every season sent down upon mankind the showers of tests from His realm of glory."

One example of this test in action, the literal rather than symbolic understanding which most Muslims have of the title, "Seal of the Prophets" given to Muhammad in the Qur'an [33:49], which literal understanding has prevented them from recognizing the Báb:

KI:161-162, 162: "Notwithstanding the obviousness of this theme, in the eyes of those that have quaffed the wine of knowledge and certitude, yet how many are those who, through failure to understand its meaning, have allowed the term "Seal of the Prophets" to obscure their understanding, and deprive them of the grace of all His manifold bounties!... "The mystery of this theme hath, in this Dispensation, been a sore test unto all mankind. Behold, how many are those who, clinging unto these words, have disbelieved Him Who is their true Revealer."

Bahá'u'lláh affirms that God can compel all of humanity to embrace His Cause ("a single breeze...one drop..."), but that the purpose of God is to test the souls of men, and that this is the pattern in every Dispensation. He further indicates, that were certain of the symbolic verses to be fulfilled in the literal sense which many believers expected, this would so overwhelm the consciousness of men that they would be unable either to accept or reject the new Prophet of God; thereby God's purpose would be frustrated:

KI:80-81: "They have even failed to perceive that were the signs of the Manifestation of God to appear in every age in the visible realm in accordance with the text of established traditions, none could possibly deny or turn away, nor would the blessed be distinguished from the miserable, and the transgressor from the God-fearing. Judge fairly: Were the prophecies recorded in the Gospel to be literally fulfilled; were Jesus, Son of Mary, accompanied by angels, to descend from the visible heaven upon the clouds; who would dare to disbelieve, who would dare to reject the truth, and wax disdainful? Nay, such consternation would immediately seize all the dwellers of the earth that no soul would feel able to utter a word, much less to reject or accept the truth."

He also indicates that there is a way for each soul to pass this test, to discover the true meaning of the symbolic verses of Scripture:

KI:68-69: "Wert thou to cleanse the mirror of thy heart from the dust of malice, thou wouldst apprehend the meaning of the symbolic terms revealed by the all-embracing Word of God made manifest in every Dispensation, and wouldst discover the mysteries of divine knowledge. Not, however,

until thou consumest with the flame of utter detachment
those veils of idle learning, that are current amongst men,
canst thou behold the resplendent morn of true knowledge."

THIRTY-FIFTH PROOF:

EVERY AGE THE LIGHT IS SEEMINGLY QUENCHED

Bahá'u'lláh points out that in every Age, that is, in every Dispensation associated with an independent Manifestation of God, it seems that the combined forces of the temporal world positively eclipse the radiance of that new Prophet:

KI:73: "You must undoubtedly have been informed of the tribulations, the poverty, the ills, and the degradation that have befallen every Prophet of God and His companions."

KI:126-127: "Were the verse 'And verily Our host shall conquer' [Qur'an 37:173] to be literally interpreted, it is evident that it would in no wise be applicable to the chosen Ones of God and His hosts, inasmuch as Husayn, whose heroism was manifest as the sun, crushed and subjugated, quaffed at last the cup of martyrdom in Karbila, the land of Taff. Similarly, the sacred verse 'Fain would they put out God's light with their mouths: But God hath willed to perfect His light, albeit the infidels abhor it.' [Qur'an XX:XXX] Were it to be literally interpreted it would never correspond with the truth. For in every age the light of God hath, to outward seeming, been quenched by the peoples of the earth, and the Lamps of God extinguished by them. How then could the ascendancy of the sovereignty of these Lamps be explained? What could the potency of God's will to 'perfect His light' signify? As hath already been witnessed, so great was the enmity of the infidels, that none of these divine Luminaries ever found a place for shelter, nor tasted of the cup of tranquillity. So heavily were they oppressed, that the least of men inflicted upon these Essences of being whatsoever he listed. These sufferings have been observed and measured by the people. How, therefore, can such people be capable of understanding and expounding these words of God, these verses of everlasting glory?"

TB:215: "How numerous the oppressors before thee who have arisen to quench the light of God, and how many the impious who murdered and pillaged until the hearts and souls of men groaned by reason of their cruelty? The sun of justice hath been obscured, inasmuch as the embodiment of tyranny hath been established upon the throne of hatred, and yet the people understand not." (Lawh-i-Burhan)

Bahá'u'lláh does not restrict his references to the sufferings of the Prophets. He also writes of the sufferings of the followers of the

Prophets, highlighting those of the Imam Husayn, the third Imam among the "chosen Ones" and "Lamps of God":

KI:73: "You must have heard how the heads of their followers were sent as presents unto different cities, how grievously they were hindered from that whereunto they were commanded. Each and every one of them fell a prey to the hands of the enemies of His Cause, and had to suffer whatsoever they decreed."

GL:XXIII:56-58: "Consider the former generations. Witness how every time the Day Star of Divine bounty hath shed the light of His Revelation upon the world, the people of His Day have arisen against Him, and repudiated His truth. They who were regarded as the leaders of men have invariably striven to hinder their followers from turning unto Him Who is the Ocean of God's limitless bounty.

"Behold how the people, as a result of the verdict pronounced by the divines of His age, have cast Abraham, the Friend of God, into fire; how Moses, He Who held converse with the Almighty, was denounced as liar and slanderer. Reflect how Jesus, the Spirit of God, was, notwithstanding His extreme meekness and perfect tender-heartedness, treated by His enemies. So fierce was the opposition which He, the Essence of Being and Lord of the visible and invisible, had to face, that He had nowhere to lay His head. He wandered continually from place to place, deprived of a permanent abode. Ponder that which befell Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, may the life of all else be a sacrifice unto Him. How severe the afflictions which the leaders of the Jewish people and of the idol-worshippers caused to rain down upon Him, Who is the sovereign Lord of all, in consequence of His proclamation of the unity of God and of the truth of His Message! By the righteousness of My Cause! My Pen groaneth, and all created things weep with a great weeping, as a result of the woes He suffered at the hands of them that have broken the Covenant of God, violated His Testament, rejected His proofs, and disputed His signs. Thus recount We unto thee the tale of that which happened in days past, haply thou mayest comprehend.

"Thou hast known how grievously the Prophets of God, His Messengers and Chosen Ones, have been afflicted. At no time, in no Dispensation, have the Prophets of God escaped the blasphemy of their enemies, the cruelty of their oppressors, the denunciation of the learned of their age, who appeared in the guise of uprightness and piety. Day and night they passed through such agonies as none can ever measure, except the knowledge of the one true God, exalted be His

glory.

"Consider this Wronged One. Though the clearest proofs attest the truth of His Cause; though the prophecies He, in an unmistakable language, hath made have been fulfilled; though, in spite of His not being accounted among the learned, His being unschooled and inexperienced in the disputations current among the divines, He hath rained upon men the showers of His manifold and Divinely-inspired knowledge; yet, behold how this generation hath rejected His authority, and rebelled against Him! He hath, during the greater part of His life, been sore-tryed in the clutches of His enemies. His sufferings have now reached their culmination in this afflicted Prison, unto which His oppressors have so unjustly thrown Him."

In this passage, Bahá'u'lláh refers to Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and himself as examples of "the Prophets of God", not one of whom has "escaped the blasphemy of their enemies, the cruelty of their oppressors, the denunciation of the learned of their age...such agonies as none can ever measure, except the knowledge of the one true God, exalted be His glory."

GL:XLVII:101-102: "O Jews! If ye be intent on crucifying once again Jesus, the Spirit of God, put Me to death, for He hath once more, in My person, been made manifest unto you. Deal with Me as ye wish, for I have vowed to lay down My life in the path of God. I will fear no one, though the powers of earth and heaven be leagued against Me. Followers of the Gospel! If ye cherish the desire to slay Muhammad, the Apostle of God, seize Me and put an end to My life, for I am He, and My Self is His Self. Do unto Me as you like, for the deepest longing of Mine heart is to attain the presence of My Best-Beloved in His Kingdom of Glory. Such is the Divine decree, if ye know it. Followers of Muhammad! If it be your wish to riddle with your shafts the breast of Him Who hath caused His Book the Bayán to be sent down unto you, lay hands on Me and persecute Me, for I am His Well-Beloved, the revelation of His own Self, though My name be not His name. I have come in the shadows of the clouds of glory, and am invested by God with invincible sovereignty. He, verily, is the Truth, the Knower of things unseen. I, verily, anticipate from you the treatment ye have accorded unto Him that came before Me. To this all things, verily, witness, if ye be of those who hearken. O people of the Bayán! If ye have resolved to shed the blood of Him Whose coming the Báb hath proclaimed, Whose advent Muhammad hath prophesied, and Whose Revelation Jesus Christ Himself hath announced, behold Me standing, ready and defenseless, before you. Deal

with Me after your own desires."

In this Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh, personally affirming the station of "essential unity" (KI:152,176) of the "Manifestations of God" (KI:152,176), "the standpoint of their oneness and sublime detachment" (KI:177), specifically identifies himself as one and the same as Jesus, as Muhammad, as the Báb, and as Him Whom God shall manifest.

WOB:118-119: "Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God, for the wondrous revelations of Thine inscrutable decree and the manifold woes and trials Thou hast destined for myself. At one time Thou didst deliver me into the hands of Nimrod [1]; at another Thou hast allowed Pharaoh's rod to persecute me [2]. Thou alone canst estimate, through Thine all-encompassing knowledge and the operation of Thy Will, the incalculable afflictions I have suffered at their hands. Again Thou didst cast me into the prison cell of the ungodly for no reason except that I was moved to whisper into the ears of the well-favored denizens of Thy kingdom an intimation of the vision with which Thou hadst, through Thy knowledge, inspired me and revealed to me its meaning through the potency of Thy might [3]. And again Thou didst decree that I be beheaded by the sword of the infidel [4]. Again I was crucified for having unveiled to men's eyes the hidden gems of Thy glorious unity, for having revealed to them the wondrous signs of Thy sovereign and everlasting power [5]. How bitter the humiliations heaped upon me, in a subsequent age, on the plain of Karbila [6]! How lonely did I feel amidst Thy people; to what state of helplessness I was reduced in that land! Unsatisfied with such indignities, my persecutors decapitated me and carrying aloft my head from land to land paraded it before the gaze of the unbelieving multitude and deposited it on the seats of the perverse and faithless. In a later age I was suspended and my breast was made the target to the darts of the malicious cruelty of my foes [7]. My limbs were riddled with bullets and my body was torn asunder. Finally, behold how in this day my treacherous enemies have leagued themselves against me, and are continually plotting to instill the venom of hate and malice into the souls of Thy servants [8]. With all their might they are scheming to accomplish their purpose...Grievous as is my plight, O God, my Well-beloved, I render thanks unto Thee, and my spirit is grateful for whatsoever hath befallen me in the path of Thy good-pleasure. I am well-pleased with that which Thou didst ordain for me, and welcome, however calamitous, the pains and sorrows I am made to suffer."

Again, in this Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh identifies himself as the One persecuted in the past in the Person of Abraham [1], Moses [2], Joseph [3], John the Baptist [4], Jesus [5], the Imam Husayn [6], and the Báb [7], as well as indicating that, once more, He is made to suffer the most grievous afflictions in this Age and with the name Bahá'u'lláh [8]. The identification of these persons is confirmed in a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi by his secretary, quoted as #100 in "Directives from the Guardian" (New Delhi: BPT, n.d., p. 57):

"The names of those cited in Bahá'u'lláh's Prayer in the Dispensation [The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, in WOB:97-157] are quite correct as you gave them (Abraham, Moses, Joseph, John the Baptist, Christ, Muhammad, Imam Husayn, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh)...In the prayer mentioned above, Bahá'u'lláh identifies himself with Imam Husayn. This does not make the Imam Husayn a Prophet, but his position was very unique, and we know Bahá'u'lláh claims to be the 'return' of the Imam Husayn. He, in other words, identifies His Spirit with these Holy Souls gone before, that does not, of course, make Him any way their re-incarnation. Nor does it mean all of them were Prophets."

THIRTY-SIXTH PROOF:

PEOPLE KNOWN BY THEIR COUNTENANCE

Bahá'u'lláh refers to another sign of each Dispensation, which might consequently serve as a proof of prophethood if fulfilled. In "Kitáb-i-Iqán" he writes:

KI:173-174: "And it came to pass that on a certain day a needy man came to visit this Soul, craving for the ocean of His knowledge...We then asked him saying: 'Hast thou not read the Qur'an, and art thou not aware of this blessed verse: 'On that day shall neither man nor spirit be asked of his Sin?' [Qur'an 55:39] Dost thou not realize that by 'asking is not meant asking by tongue or speech, even as the verse itself doth indicate and prove it?' For afterward it is said: 'By their countenance shall the sinners be known, and they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet.' [Qur'an 55:41]

"Thus the peoples of the world are judged by their countenance. By it, their misbelief, their faith, and their iniquity are all made manifest. Even as it is evident in this day how the people of error are, by their countenance, known and distinguished from the followers of divine Guidance."

While it may not be apparent from the literal wording of this text, that Bahá'u'lláh associates this sign with every Dispensation, when one takes into account the references to this theme in the Qur'an (one of which is cited here by Bahá'u'lláh), in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, it becomes clear that this sign is universal. Some selections

from these Scriptures are cited below:

Exodus 13:9: "And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the Lord's law may be in thy mouth..."

Exodus 13:16: "And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes..."

Deuteronomy 6:5-6: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart..."

Deuteronomy 6:8: "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes."

Deuteronomy 11:18: "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes."

The Torah speaks here of the sign upon the forehead, between the eyes, of the children of God, denoting their obedience to His law. Likewise, some of the other Hebrew prophets speak of the same principle, albeit in a broader context:

Proverbs 1:7-9: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

"For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck."

Ezekiel 9:3-6: "And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side;

"And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

"And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:

"Slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark..."

The frontlets between the eyes of the Israelites are not sufficient any longer to redeem them from the destruction of disbelief. Ezekiel

indicates nonetheless that it is a mark upon the forehead which distinguishes the righteous from the unrighteous, those who are condemned to death from those who are saved for life. In the Christian Scriptures are found verses which point to the mark of the righteous and also the mark of the unrighteous. In this excerpt from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus counsels his followers to put on the "phylacteries" which are the traditional response to the Torah's commandment to wear the Word of God as "frontlets" between the eyes:

Matthew 23:1-5: "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments..."

The most copious source of verses on the importance of the human countenance is the Book of Revelation. The first such reference is to those who are "sealed" with the "seal of the living God...in their foreheads":

Apocalypse 7:2-3: "And I saw another angel descending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."

Apocalypse 9:4: "And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads."

These citations from the Revelation (Apocalypse) of St. John are somewhat similar to the wording of the quote from the Book of Ezekiel. St. John continues as follows:

Apocalypse 7:4-5: "And I hear the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel."

Apocalypse 14:1: "And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads."

These verses do not seem to have a parallel in the Jewish Scriptures, although the association of the "chosen people" ("many are called, but

few are chosen" Matthew 20:16; 22:14) with the tribes of Israel, and with the number of those tribes--twelve--multiplied by itself and then by one thousand certainly has roots in the Torah, and in other books of the TANAKH. St. John also relates a vision of another sort of mark, one which identifies those who are unrighteous:

Apocalypse 13:11: "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth: and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon...

Apocalypse 13:15-17: "And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

Apocalypse 14:9-11: "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."

In another verse, the Apocalypse specifically distinguished the righteous from those who have received the mark of the beast upon their foreheads:

Apocalypse 20:4: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

Apocalypse 22:3-4: "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads."

THIRTY-SEVENTH PROOF:

LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF THE WORD OF GOD

In every Age and Dispensation, the learned in religion and their followers interpret the Scriptures in a literal fashion, thereby fail to recognize the new Prophet of God. Bahá'u'lláh refers to this sign of the new prophetic Dispensation in these words, first in reference to the Jews, then to Christians, to Muslims, and finally to Bábis:

KI:17-19: "And when the days of Moses were ended, and the light of Jesus, shining forth from the dayspring of the Spirit, encompassed the world, all the people of Israel arose in protest against Him. They clamoured that He Whose advent the Bible had foretold must needs promulgate and fulfil the laws of Moses, whereas this youthful Nazarene, who laid claim to the station of the divine Messiah, had annulled the law of divorce and of the sabbath day--the most weighty of all the laws of Moses. Moreover, what of the signs of the Manifestation yet to come? These people of Israel are even unto the present day still expecting that Manifestation which the Bible hath foretold! How Manifestations of Holiness, how many Revealers of the light everlasting, have appeared since the time of Moses, and yet Israel, wrapt in the densest veils of satanic fancy and false imaginings, is still expecting that the idol of her own handiwork will appear with such signs as she herself hath conceived! Thus hath God laid hold on them for their sins, hath extinguished in them the spirit of faith, and tormented them with the flames of the nethermost fire. And this for no other reason except that Israel refused to apprehend the meaning of such words as have been revealed in the Bible concerning the signs of the coming Revelation. As she never grasped their true significance, and, to outward seeming, such events never came to pass, she, therefore, remained deprived of recognizing the beauty of Jesus and of beholding the face of God. And they still await His coming! From time immemorial even unto this day, all the kindreds and peoples of the earth have clung to such fanciful and unseemly thoughts, and thus have deprived themselves of the clear waters streaming from the springs of purity and holiness."

KI:80-83: "As the adherents of Jesus have never understood the hidden meaning of these words, and as the signs which they are the leaders of their Faith have expected have failed to appear, they therefore refused to acknowledge, even until now, the truth of those Manifestations of Holiness that have since the days of Jesus been made manifest. They have thus deprived themselves of the outpourings of God's holy grace, and of the wonders of His divine utterance. Such is their low estate in this, the Day of Resurrection! They have even failed to perceive that were the signs of the Manifestation of God to

appear in every age in the visible realm in accordance with the text of established traditions, none could possibly deny or turn away, nor would the blessed be distinguished from the miserable, and the transgressor from the God-fearing. Judge fairly: Were the prophecies recorded in the Gospel to be literally fulfilled; were Jesus, Son of Mary, accompanied by angels, to descend from the visible heaven upon the clouds; who would dare to disbelieve, who would dare to reject the truth, and wax disdainful? Nay, such consternation would immediately seize all the dwellers of the earth that no soul would feel able to utter a word, much less to reject or accept the truth. It was owing to their misunderstanding of these truths that many a Christian divine hath objected to Muhammad, and voiced his protest in such words: 'If Thou art in truth the promised Prophet, why then art Thou not accompanied by those angels our sacred Books foretold, and which must needs descend with the promised Beauty to assist Him in His Revelation and act as warners unto His people?' Even as the All-Glorious hath recorded their statement: 'Why hath not an angel been sent down to him, so that he should have a warner with Him?' [Qur'an 25:7]

"Such objections and differences have persisted in every age and century. The people have always busied themselves with such specious discourses, vainly protesting: „Wherefore hath not this or that sign appeared?" Such ills befell them only because they have clung to the ways of the divines of the age in which they lived, and blindly imitated them in accepting or denying these Essences of Detachment, these holy and divine Beings. These leaders, owing to their immersion in selfish desires, and their pursuit of transitory and sordid things, have regarded these divine Luminaries as being opposed to the standards of their knowledge and understanding, and the opponents of their ways and judgments. As they have literally interpreted the Word of God, and the sayings and traditions of the Letters of Unity, and expounded them according to their deficient understanding, they have therefore deprived themselves and all their people of the bountiful showers of the grace and mercies of God. And yet they bear witness to this well-known tradition: „Verily Our Word is abstruse, bewilderingly abstruse." In another instance, it is said: „Our Cause is sorely trying, highly perplexing; none can bear it except a favorite of heaven, or an inspired Prophet, or he whose faith God hath tested." These leaders of religion admit that none of these three conditions is applicable to them. The first two conditions are manifestly beyond their reach; as to the third, it is evident that at no time have they been proof against those tests that have been sent by God, and that when

the divine Touchstone appeared, they have shown themselves to be naught but dross."

KI:213-215: "Even as thou dost witness how the people of the Qur'an, like unto the people of old, have allowed the words 'Seal of the Prophets' to veil their eyes. And yet, they themselves testify to this verse: 'None knoweth the interpretation thereof but God and they that are wellgrounded in knowledge.'

[Qur'an 3:7] And when He Who is well-grounded in all knowledge, He Who is the Mother, the Soul, the Secret, and the Essence thereof, revealeth that which is the least contrary to their desire, they bitterly oppose Him and shamelessly deny Him. These thou hast already heard and witnessed. Such deeds and words have been solely instigated by leaders of religion, they that worship no God but their own desire, who bear allegiance to naught but gold, who are wrapt in the densest veils of learning, and who, enmeshed by its obscurities, are lost in the wilds of error. Even as the Lord of being hath explicitly declared: 'What thinkest thou? He who hath made a God of his passions, and whom God causeth to err through a knowledge, and whose ears and whose heart He hath sealed up, and over whose sight He hath cast a veil--who, after his rejection by God, shall guide such a one? Will ye not then be warned?' [Qur'an 45:22]

"Although the outward meaning of 'Whom God causeth to err through a knowledge' is what hath been revealed, yet to Us it signifieth those divines of the age who have turned away from the Beauty of God, and who, clinging unto their own learning, as fashioned by their own fancies and desires, have denounced God's divine Message and Revelation. 'Say: it is a weighty Message, from which ye turn aside!' [Qur'an 38:67] Likewise, He saith: 'And when Our clear verses are recited to them, they say, "This is merely a man who would fain pervert you from your father's worship." And they say, "This is none other than forget falsehood."' [Qur'an 34:43]

"Give ear unto God's holy Voice, and heed thou His sweet and immortal melody. Behold how He hath solemnly warned them that have repudiated the verses of God, and hath disowned them that have denied His holy words."

KI:248: "We entreat the learned men of the Bayán not to follow in such ways, not to inflict, at the time of Mustaghath, upon Him Who is the divine Essence, the heavenly Light, the absolute Eternity, the Beginning and End of the Manifestations of the Invisible, that which hath been inflicted in this day. We beg them not to depend upon their intellect, their comprehension and learning, nor to contend with the Revealer of celestial and infinite knowledge."

JA:14: "Should they say: "These words are indeed from God, and have no interpretation other than their outward meaning", then what objection can they raise against the unbelievers among the people of the Book? For when the latter saw the aforementioned passages in their Scriptures and heard the literal interpretations of their divines, they refused to recognize God in those who are the Manifestations of His unity, the Exponents of His singleness, and the Embodiments of His sanctity, and failed to believe in them and submit to their authority. The reason was that they did not see the sun darken, or the stars of heaven fall to the ground, or the angels visibly descend upon the earth, and hence they contended with the Prophets and Messengers of God. Nay, inasmuch as they found them at variance with their own faith and creed, they hurled against them such accusations of imposture, folly, waywardness, and misbelief as I am ashamed to re-count. Refer to the Qur'án, that thou mayest find mention of all this and be of them that understand its meaning. Even to this day do these people await the appearance of that which they have learned from their doctors and imbibed from their divines. Thus do they say: "When shall these signs be made manifest, that we may believe?" But if this be the case, how could ye refute their arguments, invalidate their proofs, and challenge them concerning their faith and their understanding of their Books and the sayings of their leaders?"

This theme, of the literal interpretation of Scripture, is discussed by Bahá'u'lláh in "Kitáb-i-Iqán" (pp. 26, 32, 80-84, 126-127, 220, 255-256)

and "Jawahiru'l-Asrar" (pp. 22-24, 48, 72-73); by „Abdu'l-Bahá in "Some Answered Questions" (pp. 38, 85, 100, 106, 111, 123), in "Foundations of World Unity" (pp. 74, 75, 108), and in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace" (pp. 199, 245, 246, 291-293, 370, 416, 459, 460, 463) and in "Bahá'í World Faith" (p. 280). Shoghi Effendi also wrote regarding the limitations of literal interpretations of Scripture, in letters quoted in "Directives from the Guardian" (p. 65), "Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand" (p. 41), "Dawn of a New Day" (pp. 79-80, 200, 202), "Unfolding Destiny" (p. 427), "Lights of Divine Guidance" (volume II, pp. 66, 66-67), and in his book, "God Passes By" (pp. 151-152). While most of the references in these works critique the literal interpretation of Scriptural verses, particularly by the clergy of every religion, and the obstacle which such interpretations have been, in every Age, to the recognition of the new Prophet of God, this should not be taken as a statement of blanket approval for a metaphorical interpretation of all Scriptural language.

As was indicated by Bahá'u'lláh in "Kitáb-i-Iqán" (pp. 254-255), and

in

the Surat al-'Imran (Qur'an 3:7), there are two kinds of divine verses.

Some of them are meant to be interpreted in a literal fashion.

Bahá'u'lláh affirmed this to be the case in "Kitab-i-Aqdas," as follows:

KA:#144: "Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying impostor...Whosoever interpreteth this verse otherwise than its obvious meaning is deprived of the Spirit of God and of His mercy which encompasseth all created things. Fear God, and follow not your idle fancies. Nay, rather follow the bidding of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Wise."
(GLCLXV:346)

It is evident, from the language associated with this statement, that the literal interpretation of the divine verses may be a test to the believers and an obstacle to their recognition of the new Prophet of God in yet another fashion from that which has been described heretofore. If the believers fail to adhere to the literal interpretation of those verses which are meant to be understood according to their "obvious meaning" then that literal interpretation becomes a test of their faith, inasmuch as the one who strays from the authentic literal interpretation is "assuredly a lying impostor" and "is deprived of the Spirit of God and of His mercy". Likewise, if the believer does not adhere to this literal interpretation when intended by God, he will be tempted to consider the claims of prophetic pretenders who arise "ere the expiration of a full thousand years"--and as most readers will readily recognize, there have been a host of such pretenders who have arisen during the century since the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh. If those believers are seduced by such pretenders, they will fail to recognize the station of Bahá'u'lláh, whose divine authority reigns supreme over humankind until the coming of the next Prophet of God. Literal interpretation is a double-edged sword: when it is adhered to when the divine intention is symbolic, and when it is not adhered to when the divine intention is straightforward, in both cases it may result in souls failing to recognize the new Prophet.

THIRTY-EIGHTH PROOF:

OPPRESSION IN EVERY DISPENSATION

One of the proofs of the Prophets of God, is that there will come a time when, to employ the words of Krishna in the "Bhagavad-Gita" (Chapter IV, verse 7):

"Whenever there is a decline of righteousness [dharma] and rise of unrighteousness, O Bharata [Arjuna], then I send forth Myself." (translation of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, p. 154)

This verse is echoed in "Bhagavata" (volume IX, chapter 24, verse 56):

"Whenever righteousness [dharma] wanes, and

unrighteousness increases the Almighty Lord, Hari, creates himself." (translation of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, p. 154)

It is at this time that the new Prophet of God becomes manifest in the world of creation. Bahá'u'lláh cites from the Gospel of Matthew in "Kitáb-i-Iqán":

KI:24: "In the first Gospel according to Matthew it is recorded: And when they asked Jesus concerning the signs of His coming, He said unto them: 'Immediately after the oppression of those days shall the sun be darkened...'"

The King James Version gives the following version of this verse:

Matthew 24:29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened..."

Bahá'u'lláh translates this verse from its Arabic version (which he has earlier cited) into Persian as follows:

KI:25: "When the oppression and afflictions that are to befall mankind will have come to pass, then shall the sun be withheld from shining..."

He then explains this verse some pages later:

KI:29: "As to the words--'Immediately after the oppression of those days'--they refer to the time when men shall become oppressed and afflicted, the time when the lingering traces of the Sun of Truth and the fruit of the Tree of knowledge and wisdom will have vanished from the midst of men, when the reigns of mankind will have fallen into the grasp of the foolish and ignorant, when the portals of divine unity and understanding--the essential and highest purpose in creation--will have been closed, when certain knowledge will have given way to idle fancy, and corruption will have usurped the station of righteousness."

Even as he has affirmed that all of the signs cited in the Gospels by Jesus refer not only to the appearance of Muhammad, but to the advent of all of the Manifestations of God, Bahá'u'lláh seems to affirm that this "oppression" takes place prior to the coming of every Prophet of God. He continues his interpretation, relating it to his own time:

KI:29-30: "Such a condition as this is witnessed in this day when the reigns of every community have fallen into the grasp of foolish leaders, who lead after their own whims and desire. On their tongue the mention of God hath become an empty name; in their midst His holy Word a dead letter. Such is the sway of their desires, that the lamp of conscience and reason hath been quenched in their hearts, and this although the fingers of divine power have unlocked the portals of the

knowledge of God, and the light of divine knowledge and heavenly grace hath illumined and inspired the essence of all created things, in such wise that in each and every thing a door of knowledge hath been opened, and within every atom traces of the sun hath been made manifest...

KI:31-32: "What 'oppression' is greater than that which hath been recounted? What 'oppression' is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to obtain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it? For opinions have sorely differed, and the ways unto the attainment of God have multiplied. This 'oppression' is the essential feature of every Revelation. Unless it cometh to pass, the Sun of Truth will not be made manifest. For the break of the morn of divine guidance must needs follow the darkness of the night of error. For this reason, in all the chronicles and traditions reference hath been made unto these things, namely that iniquity shall cover the surface of the earth and darkness envelop mankind."

THIRTY-NINTH PROOF:

RETURN OF THE PROPHETS AND THEIR CHOSEN ONES

Bahá'u'lláh indicates that the Scriptural language which pertains to spiritual life is not meant to be understood literally, and that this has always been the case, in every Dispensation:

KI:116-117: "Nay, by „trumpet" is meant the trumpet-call of Muhammad's Revelation, which was sounded in the heart of the universe, and by „resurrection" is meant His own rise to proclaim the Cause of God. He bade the erring and wayward arise and speed out of the sepulchres of their bodies, arrayed them with the beauteous robe of faith, and quickened them with the breath of a new and wondrous life."

KI:118-119: "Such things have come to pass in the days of every Manifestation of God. Even as Jesus said: „Ye must be born again." [John 3:7] Again He saith: „Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." [John 3:5-6] The purport of these words is that whatsoever in every dispensation is born of the Spirit and is quickened by the breath of the Manifestation of Holiness, he verily is of those that have attained unto „life" and „resurrection" and have entered into the „paradise" of the love of God. And whosoever is not of them, is condemned to „death" and „deprivation," to the „fire" of unbelief, and to the „wrath" of God. In all the scriptures, the books and chronicles, the

sentence of death, of fire, of blindness, of want of understanding and hearing, hath been pronounced against those whose lips have tasted not the ethereal cup of true knowledge, and whose hearts have been deprived of the grace of the holy Spirit in their day. Even as it hath been previously recorded: „Hearts have they with which they understand not." [Qur'an 7:178]

"In another passage of the Gospel it is written: „And it came to pass that on a certain day the father of one of the disciples of Jesus had died. That disciple reporting the death of his father unto Jesus, asked for leave to go and bury him.

Whereupon Jesus, that Essence of Detachment, answered and said: “Let the dead bury their dead.”" [Luke 9:60]

KI:120-121: "In every age and century, the purpose of the Prophets of God and their chosen ones hath been no other than to affirm the spiritual significance of the terms „life," „resurrection," and „judgment."...Wert thou to attain to but a dewdrop of the crystal waters of divine knowledge, thou wouldst readily realize that true life is not the life of the flesh but the life of the spirit. For the life of the flesh is common to both men and animals, whereas the life of the spirit is possessed only by the pure in heart who have quaffed from the ocean of faith and partaken of the fruit of certitude. This life knoweth no death, and this existence is crowned by immortality. Even as it hath been said: „He who is a true believer liveth both in this world and in the world to come." If by „life" be meant this earthly life, it is evident that death must needs overtake it."

Bahá'u'lláh has indicated that even as these terms relating to spiritual life in the Scriptures are to be understood symbolically, relating to the life of faith and not to the life of the mortal flesh, likewise he has affirmed that the references to the „return" of the Prophets and their chosen ones are to be understood in a similar fashion. He begins by demonstrating the absurdity of a literal interpretation of certain Qur'anic verses which refer to the „return" of the Prophets and their chosen ones:

KI:148-149: "And it came to pass that on a certain day a number of the opponents of that peerless Beauty, those that had strayed far from God's imperishable Sanctuary, scornfully spoke these words unto Muhammad: „Verily, God hath entered into a covenant with us that we are not to credit an apostle until he present us a sacrifice which fire out of heaven shall devour." [Qur'an 3:183] The purport of this verse is that God hath covenanted with them that they should not believe in any messenger unless he work the miracle of Abel and Cain, that is, offer a sacrifice, and the fire from heaven

consume it; even as they had heard it recounted in the story of Abel, which story is recorded in the scriptures. To this, Muhammad, answering, said: „Already have Apostles before me come to you with sure testimonies, and with that of which ye speak. Wherefore slew ye them? Tell me, if ye are men of truth." [Qur'an 3:182] And now, be fair; how could those people living in the days of Muhammad have existed, thousands of years before, in the age of Adam or other Prophets? Why should Muhammad, that Essence of truthfulness, have charged the people of His day with the murder of Abel or other Prophets? Thou hast none other alternative except to regard Muhammad as an impostor or a fool--which God forbid!--or to maintain that those people of wickedness were the self-same people who in every age opposed and caviled at the Prophets and Messengers of God, till they finally caused them all to suffer martyrdom."

KI:150-152: "Likewise, Muhammad, in another verse, uttereth His protest against the people of that age. He saith: „Although they had before prayed for victory over those who believed not, yet when there came unto them, He of Whom they had knowledge, they disbelieved in Him. The curse of God on the infidels!" [Qur'an 2:89] Reflect how this verse also implieth that the people living in the days of Muhammad were the same people who in the days of the Prophets of old contended and fought in order to promote the Faith, and teach the Cause, of God. And yet, how could the generations living at the time of Jesus and Moses, and those who lived in the days of Muhammad, be regarded as being actually one and the same people? Moreover, those whom they had formerly known were Moses, the Revealer of the Pentateuch, and Jesus, the Author of the Gospel. Notwithstanding, why did Muhammad say: „When He of Whom they had knowledge came unto them"--that is Jesus or Moses—„they disbelieved in Him"? Was not Muhammad to outward seeming called by a different name? Did He not come forth out of a different city? Did He not speak a different language, and reveal a different Law? How then can the truth of this verse be established, and its meaning be made clear?

"Strive therefore to comprehend the meaning of „return" which hath been so explicitly revealed in the Qur'an itself, and which none hath as yet understood. What sayest thou? If thou sayest that Muhammad was the „return" of the Prophets of old, as is witnessed by this verse, His companions must likewise be the „return" of the bygone companions, even as the „return" of the former people is clearly attested by the text of the above-mentioned verses. And if thou deniest this, thou

hast surely repudiated the truth of the Qur'an, the surest testimony of God unto men. In like manner, endeavour to grasp the significance of „return," „revelation," and „resurrection," as witnessed in the days of the Manifestations of the divine Essence, that thou mayest behold with thine own eyes the „return" of the holy souls into sanctified and illumined bodies, and mayest wash away the dust of ignorance, and cleanse the darkened self with the waters of mercy flowing from the Source of divine Knowledge; that perchance thou mayest, through the power of God and the light of divine guidance, distinguish the Morn of everlasting of splendour from the darksome night of error."

KI:152-153: "Thus hath Muhammad, the Point of the Qur'an, revealed: „I am all the Prophets." Likewise, He saith: „I am the first Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus."" (see KI:162)

KI:153-154: "It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. Such is the unity of those Essences of being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendour. Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: „I am the return of all the Prophets," He verily speaketh the truth. In like manner, in every subsequent Revelation, the return of the former Revelation is a fact, the truth of which is firmly established. Inasmuch as the return of the Prophets of God, as attested by verses and traditions, hath been conclusively demonstrated, the return of their chosen ones also is therefore definitely proven. This return is too manifest in itself to require any evidence or proof."

KI:158-160: "O brother, behold how the inner mysteries of „rebirth," of „return," and of „resurrection" have each, through these all-sufficing, these unanswerable, and conclusive utterances, been unveiled and unravelled before thine eyes. God grant that through His gracious and invisible assistance, thou mayest divest thy body and soul of the old garment, and array thyself with the new and imperishable attire. "Therefore, those who in every subsequent Dispensation preceded the rest of mankind in embracing the Faith of God, who quaffed the clear waters of knowledge at the hand of the divine Beauty, and attained the loftiest summits of faith and certitude, these can be regarded, in name, in reality, in deeds, in words, and in rank, as the „return" of those who in a former

Dispensation had achieved similar distinctions. For whatsoever the people of a former Dispensation have manifested, the same hath been shown by the people of this latter generation. Consider the rose: whether it blossometh in the East or in the West, it is none the less a rose. For what mattereth in this respect is not the outward shape and form of the rose, but rather the smell and fragrance which it doth impart.

“Purge thy sight, therefore, from all earthly limitations, that thou mayest behold them all as the bearers of one Name, the exponents of one Cause, the manifestations of one Self, and the revealers of one Truth, and that thou mayest apprehend the mystic „return" of the Words of God as unfolded by these utterances. Reflect for a while upon the behaviour of the companions of the Muhammadan Dispensation. Consider how, through the reviving breath of Muhammad, they were cleansed from the defilements of earthly vanities, were delivered from selfish desires, and were detached from all else but Him. Behold how they preceded all the peoples of the earth in attaining unto His holy Presence--the Presence of God Himself--how they renounced the world and all that is therein, and sacrificed freely and joyously their lives at the feet of that Manifestation of the All-Glorious. And now, observe the return of the self-same determination, the self-same constancy and renunciation, manifested by the companions of the Point of the Bayán. Thou hast witnessed how these companions have, through the wonders of the grace of the Lord of Lords, hoisted the standards of sublime renunciation upon the inaccessible heights of glory. These Lights have proceeded from but one Source, and these fruits are the fruits of one Tree. Thou canst discern neither difference nor distinction among them. All this is by the grace of God! On whom He will, He bestoweth His grace."

KI:161: "From these statements therefore it hath been made evident and manifest that should a Soul in the „End that knoweth no end" be made manifest and arise to proclaim and uphold a Cause which in „the Beginning that hath no beginning" another Soul had proclaimed and upheld, it can be truly declared of Him Who is the Last and of Him Who was the First that they are one and the same, inasmuch as both are the Exponents of one and the same Cause. For this reason, hath the Point of the Bayán—may the life of all else but Him be His sacrifice!--likened the Manifestations of God unto the sun which, though it rise from the „Beginning that hath no beginning" until the „End that knoweth no end," is none the less the same sun. Now, wert thou to say, that this sun is the

former sun, thou speakest the truth; and if thou sayest that this sun is the „return" of that sun, thou also speakest the truth. Likewise, from this statement it is made evident that the term „first" applicable to the „last"; inasmuch as both the „first" and the „last" have risen to proclaim one and the same Faith."

KI:162: "Hath not Muhammad, Himself, declared: „I am all the Prophets"? Hath He not said as We have already mentioned: „I am Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus"? Why should Muhammad, that immortal Beauty, Who hath said: „I am the first Adam" be incapable of saying also: „I am the last Adam"? For even as He regarded Himself to be the „First of the Prophets"--that is Adam--in like manner, the „Seal of the Prophets" is also applicable unto that divine Beauty. It is admittedly obvious that being the „First of the Prophets," He likewise is their „Seal.""

KI:179: "Viewed in this light, they are all but Messengers of that ideal King, that unchangeable Essence. And were they all to proclaim: „I am the Seal of the Prophets," they verily utter but the truth, beyond the faintest shadow of doubt. For they are all but one person, one soul, one spirit, one being, one revelation."

FORTIETH PROOF:

**REJECTION OF PROPHET IN EVERY DISPENSATION
BECAUSE HE DOES NOT CONFORM TO CURRENT
UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE**

In "Kitáb-i-Iqán" Bahá'u'lláh addresses the diversity of the claims made by the Prophets of God and concludes with this weighty affirmation:

KI:181-182: "Those words uttered by the Luminaries of Truth must needs be pondered, and should their significance not be grasped, enlightenment should be sought from the Trustees of the depositories of Knowledge, that these may expound their meaning, and unravel their mystery. For it behooveth no man to interpret the holy words according to his own imperfect understanding, nor, having found them to be contrary to his inclination and desires, to reject and repudiate their truth. For such, today, is the manner of the divines and doctors of the age, who occupy seats of knowledge and learning, and who have named ignorance knowledge, and called oppression justice. Were these to ask the Light of Truth concerning those images which their idle fancy hath carved, and were they to find His answer inconsistent with their own conceptions and their own understanding of the Book, they would assuredly denounce Him Who is the Mine and Wellhead of all Knowledge as the very negation of understanding. Such

things have happened in every age."

Bahá'u'lláh issues a challenge to each of us, that we do our utmost to comprehend the reason for the rejection of the Prophets of God in every Dispensation:

GL:XXXV:82-83: "Ponder a while. What is it that prompted, in every Dispensation, the peoples of the earth to shun the Manifestation of the All-Merciful? What could have impelled them to turn away from Him and to challenge His authority? Were men to meditate on these words which have flowed from the Pen of the Divine Ordainer, they would, one and all, hasten to embrace the truth of this God-given, and everenduring Revelation, and would testify to that which He

Himself hath solemnly affirmed. It is the veil of idle imaginations which, in the days of the Manifestations of the Unity of God and the Day Springs of His everlasting glory, hath intervened, and will continue to intervene, between them and the rest of mankind. For in those days, He Who is the Eternal Truth manifesteth Himself in conformity with that which He Himself hath purposed, and not according to the desires and expectations of men. Even as He hath revealed: 'So oft, then, as an Apostle cometh to you with that which your souls desire not, do ye swell with pride, and treat some as impostors, and slay others.' [Qur'an XX:XXX]

"There can be no doubt whatever that had these Apostles appeared in bygone ages and cycles, in accordance with the vain imaginations which the hearts of men have devised, no one would have repudiated the truth of these sanctified Beings. Though such men have been, night and day, remembering the one true God, and have devoutly engaged in the exercise of their devotions, yet they failed in the end to recognize, and partake of the grace of, the Day Springs of the signs of God and the Manifestations of His irrefutable evidences. To this the Scriptures bear witness. Thou hast, no doubt, heard about it."

In "Kitáb-i-Iqán" Bahá'u'lláh has alluded to this fact, that devout adherence to religious obligations does not specialize souls for recognizing the new Prophet of God:

KI:238: "The wine of renunciation must needs be quaffed, the lofty heights of detachment must needs be attained, and the meditation referred to in the words 'One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship' must needs be observed, so that the secret of the wretched behaviour of the people might be discovered, those people who, despite the love and yearning for truth which they profess, curse the followers of Truth when once He hath been made manifest."

(KI:238)

In every age and Dispensation, the followers of the Prophets of old have permitted their own understandings to veil them from the truth, revealed in the Person and Teachings of the new Prophet of God. They have failed to understand that the Manifestation is not bound by human standards and limitations, that He doeth whatsoever He willeth:

KI:170-171: "But apart from all these things, had this people attained unto a drop of the crystal streams flowing from the words: „God doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth," they would not have raised any unseemly cavils, such as these, against the focal Center of His Revelation. The Cause of God, all deeds and words, are held within the grasp of His power. „All things lie imprisoned within the hollow of His mighty Hand; all things are easy and possible unto Him." He accomplisheth whatsoever He willeth, and doeth all that He desireth. „Whoso sayeth “why” or “wherefore” hath spoken blasphemy!" Were these people to shake off the slumber of negligence and realize that which their hands have wrought, they would surely perish, and would of their own accord cast themselves into fire—their end and real abode. Have they not heard that which He hath revealed: „He shall not be asked of His doings"? [Qur'an 21:23] In the light of these utterances, how can man be so bold as to question Him, and busy himself with idle sayings?"

As Bahá'u'lláh affirmed, in language of the most unmistakable clarity and spiritual potency in "Kitab-i-Aqdas":

"Say: O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring balance established amongst men. In this most perfect balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it." (KA:99; GL:XCVIII:198)

The editor of this collection of proofs has attempted to adhere to this high standard, and to remain faithful to Bahá'u'lláh's affirmation, in "Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih":

"In this day the verses of the Mother Book are resplendent and unmistakable even as the sun. They can in no wise be mistaken for any of the past or more recent utterances. Truly this Wronged One desireth not to demonstrate His Own Cause with proofs produced by others. He is the One Who embraceth all things, while all else besides Him is circumscribed." (TB:74)

CONCLUSIONS

This work has been over a decade in preparation. Nevertheless, its compiler has no doubt that there are other proofs of prophethood set forth in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Tablets and talks of „Abdu'l-

Bahá and the letters of Shoghi Effendi, and that proofs not found in these sources may also be discovered elsewhere, in other Scriptures. Indeed, he has not yet succeeded in discovering the references in other Scriptures to all the proofs cited in this book, and has only included such indicators when they were already familiar to him or when they became manifest during his investigation of the Bahá'í texts.

Furthermore, while many proofs have been articulated, yet there are infinite proofs which have never been written down, which cannot be written down. Bahá'u'lláh speaks of these proofs in "Tafsir Surat va'lshams" (GL:LXXXIX:176):

"How great the multitude of truths which the garment of words can never contain! How vast the number of such verities as no expression can adequately describe, whose significance can never be unfolded, and to which not even the remotest allusions can be made!"

„Abdu'l-Bahá refers to such proofs in relation to human recognition of the existence of God, in "Some Answered Questions" (II:7):

"These obvious arguments are adduced for weak souls; but if the inner perception be open, a hundred thousand clear proofs become visible."

The proofs of prophethood set forth in this volume are not just an abstract paradigm. Bahá'u'lláh and his interpreters claim that the Prophets of God have, each and every one, appeared in conformity with these proofs. The proofs articulated here are an objective standard whereby the prophethood of any claimant to divine guidance may be effectively evaluated. While some examples of the fulfillment of particular proofs by specific Prophets have been included in this text, a systematic study of the manner in which any particular Prophet has embodied these proofs has not been attempted here. In subsequent volumes, the compiler will apply each of these prophetic standards to a number of the Founders of religions, including Krishna, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad. Those same standards will be applied to those two more recent claimants to the prophetic office, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh. Is it not appropriate that Bahá'u'lláh should be judged according to the criteria he himself established for recognizing the truth, the authenticity of the Prophets of God? The reader familiar with his Writings may recall that Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly affirmed that he should only be judged according to his own standards, that he can only be understood when

seen through his own eyes. In his last Book, Bahá'u'lláh cites the following prophecy of the Báb, referring to “Him Whom God shall manifest”:

ESW:153: "And also He [the Báb] saith: „Know thou with absolute certainty, and through the firmly established and most irrevocable decree, that He--exalted be His glory, and magnified be His might, and sanctified be His holiness, and glorified be His grandeur, and lauded be His ways--maketh each thing to be known through its own self; who then can know Him through any one except Himself."...And again, He--exalted be He--saith: „Look not upon Him with any eye except His own. For whosoever looketh upon Him with His eye, will recognize Him; otherwise he will be veiled from Him.""

Bahá'u'lláh restated this teaching of the Báb in “Kitáb-i-Iqán”:

KI:199-200: "That city is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation...in the dispensation of Him Whom God will make manifest His own Book--the Book unto which all the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book which standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme."

In one of his Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh reaffirms the words of the Báb:

ADJ:77: "Whoso beholdeth Me with an eye besides Mine own will never be able to know Me. None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation."

He affirms this as a general principle and not just in relation to his own Book:

KA:#99: "Say: O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it."

Whether in consideration of the proofs of prophethood as set forth in this volume, or in the consideration of the fulfillment of those proofs by the Founders of various religions, the reader is entirely at liberty to continue or to discontinue his perusal at any time; s/he is free to accept or to reject the signs, proofs, evidence and arguments set forth here. This is a right which is guaranteed to every human being by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and recognized by most of the governments of the world. It is likewise a right which is solemnly and repeatedly affirmed by Bahá'u'lláh himself, in many of his Tablets,

some of which are cited below:

KI:24: "This is My counsel unto thee and unto the beloved of God. Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away."

KI:221: "We have shown thee these two ways; walk thou the way thou choosest."

BP:210-211: "Thus doth the Nightingale utter His call unto you from this prison. He hath but to deliver this clear message. Whosoever desireth, let him turn aside from this counsel and whosoever desireth let him choose the path to his Lord." (Lawh-i-Ahmad)

KA:#182: "Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it--verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures."

TB:41: "This Wronged One calleth aloud for the sake of God. Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away." (Tarazat)

TB:211: "We exhort, wholly for the sake of God, His servants. Let him who wisheth turn unto Him, and him who wisheth turn aside." (Lawh-i-Burhan)

EPILOGUE

Those whose thirst has not been quenched, who wish to consider how these forty proofs may be applied to each of the Prophets of God may proceed to the volume devoted to each in this series on Prophetic Proofs. These volumes will be published sequentially, from the most recent Prophet to the Prophet most shrouded in legend and mystery. This will permit the reader to consider the implications of progressive revelation in reverse order rather than from start to finish. If you do not have the COMPANION TO PROOFS OF THE PROPHETS and wish to purchase a copy, it can be ordered from most bookstores and online from Amazon.com and from the publisher at:
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If the reader wishes to contact the author with a kind word of encouragement, a question, or to point out anything in this volume that is incorrectly cited, ill-conceived, poorly explained, or awkwardly positioned in the sequence of ideas presented, the author may be reached at: proofsoftheprophets@yahoo.com

All readers who wish to participate in a community of interest related to the PROOFS OF THE PROPHETS are invited to become members of a yahoo group:
proofsoftheprophetssubscribe@yahoogroups.com

ENDNOTES

In conclusion, this Second Proof applies in one sense literally to Muhammad and to all the prophets who follow him; in another sense rather literally--in the sense of "There is no intrinsic meaning in the leaves of a book, but the thought they convey leads you to reflect upon reality"(PUP:155)--to the prophets who are historically recognized, all of whom are survived by books which are attributed to their revelations; and in yet another meaning which applies to all of the prophets of God, the many named and the many more unnamed.

2.,Abdu'l-Bahá, in a talk given on 3 December 1912, encouraged those assembled in a home in New York City with words which recall those of Bahá'u'lláh in reference to the followers of the Báb:

"You must become the lamps of Bahá'u'lláh so that you may shine with eternal light and be the proofs and evidences of His truth. Then will such signs of purity and chastity be witnessed in your deeds and actions that men will behold the heavenly radiance of your lives and say, 'Verily, ye are the proofs of Bahá'u'lláh. Verily, Bahá'u'lláh is

the True One, for He has trained such souls as these, each one of which is a proof in himself.' They will say to others, 'Come and witness the conduct of these souls; come and listen to their words, behold the illumination of their hearts, see the evidences of the love of God in them, consider their praiseworthy morals, and discover the foundations of the oneness of humanity firmly implanted within them. What greater proof can there be than these people that the message of Bahá'u'lláh is truth and reality?' It is my hope that each one of you shall be a herald of God, proclaiming the evidences of His appearance, in words, deeds and thoughts. Let your actions and utterances be a witness that you are of the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh." (Khitabat, pp. 631-633; PUP:461)

Tablet to the Shah, cited in ESW:11,39.

Bahá'u'lláh has also described this state in "Kalimat-i-Maknun-i-'Arabiyyah":

HWA:#1-2: "O son of spirit!

"My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.

"O son of spirit!

"The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own

eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily Justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My lovingkindness. Set it then before thine eyes."

— Proofs of the Prophets (Used by permission of the curator)