

rank and station of Bahá'u'lláh, His Relation with the Creation, the influence of His Laws and Administrative Principles upon the old decadent Order, and last but not least, the influence of His Words upon the entire Creation, especially upon the hearts of men.

In order to comprehend the rank and station of Bahá'u'lláh, we must explore and understand the magnitude of the Manifestation of God. The magnitude of the Manifestation of God has been described as follows:

The Manifestation of God is the Archetype, and His life is the supreme pattern. His vision, not arrested by time and space, encompasses the future as well as the past. He is the only and the necessary link between one cycle of social evolution and another. Furthermore, the Manifestation of God releases deep reservoirs of spiritual powers and quickens the forces latent in Man. By Him, and by Him alone, can Man attain 'second birth'. Through Him, and Him alone, can Man know God. [3]

In other words, the Manifestation of God is the Arche, the Beginning, the Cause and the Purpose of the existence of Man, i.e., to know and worship God. Humanity only achieve its purpose of existence through a Manifestation of God. For this age the Manifestation of God is Bahá'u'lláh since: "The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh must be regarded as the culmination of a cycle, the final stage in a series of successive, of preliminary and progressive revelations." [4] The prophetic cycle has been ended and we have now entered in the Universal Cycle inaugurated by Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh' Own Words clearly testify to this: "In this most mighty Revelation, all the Dispensation of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation." [5] "That which hath been made manifest in this pre-eminent, this most exalted Revelation, stands unparalleled in the annals of the past, nor will future ages witness its like." [6] "Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness. The soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted for this wondrous Day." [7]

There are many passages in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi as well as the letters of the Universal House of Justice on the greatness of this Day and the eminent station of Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God.

Through His Revelation, Bahá'u'lláh, the Manifestation of God for this Day, has released in the world of man the forces of universality and the oneness of mankind. These forces are exerting pressure upon humanity. Those people who have recognized the source of these forces are guided by these in their task of erecting the frame-work of Bahá'u'lláh's New World Order for Mankind. Over a century ago, Bahá'u'lláh emphatically prophesied that "Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead." [8]

In His communication of 28 March 1941, The Promised Day is Come, our Beloved Shoghi Effendi speaks of a "tempest" which "is at present sweeping the face of

the earth." [9] He, moreover, affirms that "Its driving power is remorselessly gaining in range and momentum" and that "Its cleansing force, however much undetected, is increasing with every passing day." [10] In another passage of *The Promised Day is Come*, the Beloved Guardian points out that "The powerful operations of this titanic upheaval are comprehensible to none except such as have recognized the claims of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb" [11] or the Creative Word of God.

Besides the effect of the Laws of Bahá'u'lláh upon humanity, we must also take into consideration the effect of these Laws upon the individual.

As everything in nature, the individual is ruled by certain laws which can help to develop his or her capacities according to the conditions and the needs of time. Thus, in the world of man there are certain laws which if put into practice create energy and power. The Source of the laws which are presently influencing the entire creation is, as we already established, Bahá'u'lláh.

We understand from the Bahá'í Writings that the laws brought to us by Bahá'u'lláh are not, as He Himself assures us, "a mere code of laws", but they are signs of His special love and bounty towards humanity:

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! [12]

The Blessed Beauty has bestowed His special bounty upon us by giving us the basic laws of spiritual existence, the laws of the growth of a human soul, and of the flowering of human civilization. We have been invited by Bahá'u'lláh to "Observe My Commandments, for the love of My Beauty," [13] because "by their aid the standards of Victory will be planted upon the highest peaks." [14] He assures us that "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." [15] Bahá'u'lláh Himself defines His Laws as "the breathe of life unto all created things;" "the mightiest stronghold;" the "fruits" of His "Tree;" "the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples;" "the lamps of His wisdom and loving-providence;" "the sweet smelling savour of His garment;" and the "keys" of His "mercy" to His creatures. He further reveals the significance of His Laws as follows: "In such a manner hath the Kitáb-i-Aqdas been revealed that it attracteth and embraceth all the divinely appointed Dispensations... So vast is its range that it encompassed all men ere their recognition of it. Erelong will its sovereign power, its pervasive influence and the greatness of its might be manifested on earth." [16] "By My Life," Bahá'u'lláh declares in another passage, "if you knew what We have desired for you in revealing Our holy laws, you would offer up your souls for this sacred, mighty and lofty Cause." [17]

Great indeed is the reservoir of energy that Bahá'u'lláh has released. The only channel to this energy is the Covenant which is "indeed, the potent

instrument by which individual belief in Him is translated into constructive deeds." [18]

As was previously pointed out, the only way to understand these operations is by regularly reading and studying the Holy Word. This is a very important topic related to the concept of transformation. "Necessary to the progress of this life-fulfilling transformation," is according to the Universal House of Justice, "the knowledge of the Will and Purpose of God, through regular reading and study of the Holy Word." [19]

When we analyze very carefully the passage in which the Universal House of Justice touches upon the concept of transformation, we will find key-words that, upon examination, can help each one of us to comprehend what transformation is. The following three key-words may be distinguished: COVENANT, RECONSECRATED; and CONSCIENTIOUS.

With regard to the first key-word, we already considered that the Covenant is "the potent instrument by which individual belief in Him is translated into constructive deeds." [20] It is also a "stronghold," and "he that entereth therein is safe and secure, and he that turneth away shall surely stray and perish;" [21] it is "the pivot of the oneness of mankind;" it acts "as the sun which quickeneth and promoteth the development of all created things on earth;" it is "the educator of the minds, the spirits, the hearts and souls of men." [22] It goes without saying that the scope of the subject Covenant is vast. Its many aspects require further deepening by one of us individually.

When we look up in the dictionary the second above-mentioned key-word, "reconsecrated," we learn that it stems from the word "sacred", and means "separating from a common to a sacred use." [23] In the Sacred Writings we read that "consecrate to service in the Cause of God," means to "limit" our "thoughts to teaching the Faith. Act by day and night according to the teachings and counsels and admonitions of Bahá'u'lláh." [24] In His Writings, Bahá'u'lláh exhorts us to "consecrate" ourselves "to the Will of God;" our "consecration" must be "So complete... that every trace of worldly desire will be washed from" [25] our hearts.

Last, but not least, the third key-word we found was the term "conscientious." Bahá'u'lláh clearly states that the "First and foremost" favour "which the Almighty hath conferred upon man, is the gift of understanding." [26] The purpose of such a gift "is none other except to enable His creature to know and recognize the one true God – exalted be His glory." [27] This priceless gift of the Blessed Beauty provides humanity with "the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation." [28] Next in rank to this power which enables man to discern the secrets of creation, is "the power of vision, the chief instrument whereby his understanding can function." [29]

Therefore, in order for us to know and understand the Will and Purpose of God, to act conscientiously, and to consecrate and obey the Covenant, we have to daily read and study the Holy Word. In the words of the Universal House of

Justice:

The Holy Word has been extolled by the Prophets of God as the medium of celestial power and the wellspring of all spiritual, social and material progress. Access to it, constant study of it and daily use of it in our individual lives are vital to the inner personal transformation towards which we strive and whose ultimate outer manifestation will be the emergence of that divine civilization which is the promise of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. [30]

Bahá'u'lláh clearly explains that "the Word of God... is higher and far superior to that which the senses can perceive, for it is sanctified from any property or substance. It transcendeth the limitations of known elements and is exalted above all the essential and recognized substances." [31]

In a passage on "the task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power," Bahá'u'lláh declares that the Force capable of such a transformation is none other than "The Word of God", which "alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change." [32] This force "became manifest without any syllable or sound and is none but the Command of God which pervadeth all created things." [33] It is "the Cause of the entire creation," [34] that "Firstness which cannot be regarded as firstness and originated by a Cause inscrutable even unto all men of learning," [35] the beginning about which John speaks in his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." [36] In one of His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh has also stated that "Every word that proceedeth 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." [37] Its significance will be understood when we teach the Faith, to relate "them to the Most Great Name....," which exerts "an abiding influence in the world. The Teachings are like the body, and this Holy Name is like the Spirit. It imparteth life to the body. It causeth the people of the world to arouse from slumber." [38]

The Bahá'í Writings stress time and again the importance of teaching the Cause of God; Bahá'u'lláh emphatically "decreed and imposed upon every one the obligation to teach this Cause." [39]

When we teach, we render "assistance unto God:" In one of His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh states: "To assist Me is to teach My Cause." [40] In a Message to the Bahá'ís of the world, the Universal House of Justice explains us the significance of teaching as follows:

Teaching is the food of the spirit; it brings life to unawakened souls and raises the new heaven and the new earth; it uplifts the banner of a unified world; it ensures the victory of the Covenant and brings those who give their lives to it the supernal happiness of attainment to the good pleasure of their Lord. [41]

In the very same Message, the Supreme Body urged every individual Bahá'í to consecrate their efforts to the teaching activities: "The present challenge calls for teaching on a scale and of a quality, a variety, and intensity outstripping all current efforts. The time is now, lest opportunity be lost in the swiftly changing moods of a frenetic world." At this time in history, the Universal House of Justice further calls upon us to transform the souls of the people.

The processes of teaching and transformation will set in motion further steps in the development of our Beloved Faith: one the one hand the so long awaited entry by troops and on the other hand the consolidation of the communities, which implies the evolution of the National and Local Spiritual Assemblies and of course the construction of the Arc on the Mountain of God. Teaching and transformation will, furthermore, lead to the establishment of the Lesser Peace and prepare humanity for "the emergence of that divine civilization which is the promise of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh." [42]

Notes

1 Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Iqán* (trans. Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1950), p. 240-41.

2 Webster Dictionary (1975).

3 H.M. Balyuzi, *Bahá'u'lláh, the King of Glory* (Oxford, UK: George Ronald, 1980), p. 7 (prologue).

4 Shoghi Effendi, *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 103.

5 Shoghi Effendi, *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 103.

6 Shoghi Effendi, *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 103-04.

7 Quoted in: Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, rev. ed. 1963), p. 65.

8 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (trans. Shoghi Effendi, 2 nd. Ed. Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 7.

9 Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* (Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1941), p. 1.

10 Ibidem, p. 1.

11 Ibidem, p. 2.

12 Bahá'u'lláh, *A Synopsis and Codification of the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (comp. The Universal House of Justice, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1973), p. 12.

13 Ibidem.

14 Ibidem.

15 Ibidem.

16 Ibidem, p. 3.

17 Ibidem, p. 7.

18 Universal House of Justice, Individual Rights and Freedoms in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, a Statement by Universal House of Justice to the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the United States of America, 29 December 1988, (Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1989), p. 15.

19 Message of The Universal House of Justice on the occasion of Ridván 146 of the Bahá'í Era.

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Universal House of Justice, Individual Rights and Freedoms in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, a Statement by Universal House of Justice to the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the United States of America, 29 December 1988, (Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1989), p. 15.

21 Bahá'u'lláh, The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, Part I – From the Arabic, no. 9.

22 Covenant, p. 17.

23 Webster Dictionary (1975).

24 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, (trans. Marzieh Gail et al., Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), p. 100.

25 Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, (trans. Shoghi Effendi, 2 nd ed., Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1978), p. 338.

26 Ibidem, p. 194.

27 Ibidem.

28 Ibidem.

29 Ibidem.

30 Letter of the Universal House of Justice dated 10 July 1989.

31 Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (Haifa, Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), p. 140-41.

32 Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh (trans. Shoghi Effendi, 2 nd ed., Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 200.

33 Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Revealed after Kitáb-i-Aqdas (Haifa, Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), p. 141.

34 Ibidem, p. 140.

35 Ibidem.

36 John 1:1.

37 Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh (trans. Shoghi Effendi, 2 nd ed., Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 200.

38 'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Gift of Teaching, p. 13.

39 Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh (trans. Shoghi Effendi, 2 nd ed., Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 314.

40 Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Revealed after Kitáb-i-Aqdas (Haifa, Bahá'í World Centre, 1978), p. 196.

41 Message of The Universal House of Justice on the occasion of Ridván 145 of the Bahá'í Era.

42 Letter of the Universal House of Justice dated 10 July 1989.

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