The Revelation of Baha'u'llah v 2

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THE REVELATION OF BAHA'U'LLAH Adrianople, 1863-1868 THE REVELATION OF BAHA'U'LLAH, Baghdad 1853-63 <pii> THE FIRST PAGE OF THE SURIY-I-AMR In Baha'u'llah's own hand, revealed soon after the attempt on His life.

His amanuensis read this Tablet aloud to Mirza Yahya to acquaint him formally with the mission of Baha'u'llah <piii> THE REVELATION OF BAHA'U'LLAH Adrianople 1863-68 Adib Taherzadeh GR George Ronald Oxford <piv> George Ronald, Publisher 46 High Street, Kidlington, Oxford OX5 2DN <pv> To those brilliant souls the Baha'i Pioneers and Teachers in every land who have expended their lives and their substance in the path of Baha'u'llah. <pvii> CONTENTS

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He was the recipient of the Suriy-i-Ra'is <pxiii> NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS The extracts from the Writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah contained in this book are mainly from the matchless translations by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, and their published sources are acknowledged in the references and bibliography.

There are many other quotations from Persian manuscripts and publications, and these I have translated, unless otherwise indicated.

Most quotations had to be edited prior to translation.

The footnotes to these quotations, however, are mostly mine, and this is sometimes indicated explicitly where confusion may arise.

Verses taken from the Qur'an are numbered in accordance with the Arabic text, although their numbering may differ from that given in English translations.

Persian and Arabic names are transliterated in accordance with the system adopted for books on the Baha'i Faith, but quotations are reproduced in their original form.

The early followers of Baha'u'llah seldom sought to be photographed.

Occasionally group photographs were taken, from which it has been possible to obtain many of the individual photographs which I have included, in the belief that their historical interest outweighs the fact that some are faded and out of focus.

It should be noted that Volume I includes photographs of a number of individuals who also feature in this volume.

I am deeply indebted to the Audio-Visual Department of the Baha'i World Centre for supplying most of these photographs, and also to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran, to Mr.

Habib Manavi and to Mr.

Ebrahim Khalili, who provided one each.

The Radio Times Hulton Picture Library kindly supplied the view of Adrianople.

I should like to thank Mr.

Rouhullah Shakibai for his excellent reproduction of most of the photographs printed in this book. <pxiv> I wish to acknowledge with sincere thanks the co-operation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Iran, the Baha'i Publishing Trust, London, and the Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Illinois, in permitting me to quote from their publications.

I desire to record my warm appreciation to Mrs.

May Ballerio (nee:

Hofman) for her untiring efforts in helping me to speed up the preparation of the manuscript and for her skilful editing; also to Mr.

Mark Hofman for the making of the index.

My thanks go to Mrs.

Rosemary O'Mara for proof reading and typing the manuscript from my original scribbled notes, many of which were illegible and often difficult to decipher, to Dr.

Margaret Magill, to Mrs.

Frances Beard and to Miss Eithna Early for additional typing assistance.

I am also grateful to Mr.

Rustom Sabit, Mrs.

Sammi Smith and Mr.

Paddy O'Mara for their careful reading of the proofs.

And finally, this volume, which has taken so long to produce because of the lack of time on my part, has been written during my free hours at home.

I am indebted to my wife Lesley for her constant support and encouragement.

FOREWORD This, the second volume of The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, follows the same pattern as the first one.

The aim has been to describe the contents of some of the writings of Baha'u'llah revealed by Him in Constantinople and Adrianople.

However, in order to present the background to the revelation of these writings, it has been found necessary to touch briefly upon the history of His life and that of His companions during His five-year sojourn in these two cities.

There is a distinctive tone in the Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed in Adrianople in as much as they were revealed soon after the public unveiling of His station.

In these He often portrays the treacherous behaviour of Mirza Yahya, the arch-breaker of the Covenant of the Bab, and, as the outpouring of His Revelation reaches its climax, He proclaims the advent of the Day of God to the

generality of mankind and issues His summons to the kings and rulers of the world.

While for the most part the author has merely outlined the main points of a Tablet, he has in some cases dwelt at length on certain topics which constitute the basic spiritual verities of the Faith of Baha'u'llah and, at times, has deliberately taken excursions into other subjects which throw further light on the original theme, and which are thought to be of interest to the reader.

A reading of the first volume is recommended prior to this one, to help provide continuity and further depth.

The study of the Tablets of Baha'u'llah is not similar to the study of a normal literary work, no matter how profound that might be.

A Tablet is the repository of the Word of God, and to appreciate it one must acquire a pure heart and rid oneself of the veil of acquired knowledge. 'O My servants!' Baha'u'llah thus proclaims to the peoples of the world, 'My holy, My <pxvi> divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing lustre.

It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been preordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets.' In writing this book the author has been able to do no more than skim the surface of this great Ocean. <p1> 1 Baha'u'llah in Constantinople The five-year period that Baha'u'llah spent in Constantinople and Adrianople may be regarded as one of the most eventful and momentous times in His ministry.

In this short period the sun of His Revelation mounted to its zenith and, in the plenitude of its splendour, shed its radiance upon the whole of mankind.

This was also a most turbulent period in which He bore with much resignation and fortitude the pains, the betrayals and calamities heaped upon Him by His unfaithful brother Mirza Yahya who broke the Covenant of the Bab and rose up in rebellion against the One whom the world had wronged.

The arrival of Baha'u'llah in Constantinople, the capital city of the Ottoman empire, on 16 August 1863, marks a significant milestone in the unfoldment of His Mission.

It was during Baha'u'llah's sojourn in the capital that the conciliatory attitude of the authorities changed to that of hostility as a direct consequence of the intrigues and misrepresentations of Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, the Persian Ambassador.

It was also during the same eventful period that the initial phase of the proclamation of the Message of Baha'u'llah to the kings and rulers of the world was ushered in by the revelation of a Tablet addressed to Sultan Abdu'l-'Aziz and his ministers sternly rebuking them for their actions against the new-born Faith of God and its Leader.

Probably very few among His loved ones had the vision at that time to foresee this banishment as only a further stage in His exile to the Holy Land where, according to prophecy, the Lord of Hosts, the Everlasting Father, was to manifest His <p2> glory to mankind.

Some three thousand years before, Micah, the prophet of Israel, had foretold the appearance of the Lord in these words:

In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.(1) How strikingly accurate was the fulfilment of this prophecy!

Baha'u'llah came from Assyria; Constantinople and Akka are both fortified cities -- the latter a fortress; He voyaged upon the Black Sea and the Mediterranean and journeyed from the mountains of Kurdistan to Mount Carmel.

Amos, another prophet of Israel, refers to Baha'u'llah in Constantinople when he says:

For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name.(2) In one of His Tablets revealed in Akka Baha'u'llah states that this prophecy refers to Him, that it concerns the year eighty (1280 A.H. -- A.D.

1863) and that the 'high places of the earth' are Constantinople and the Holy Land (Mount Carmel).

Furthermore, alluding to Mirza Yahya whose title was Subh-i-Azal (Morning of Eternity), He asserts that through His power the untrue morn was completely darkened.(3) Baha'u'llah arrived in Constantinople in conspicuous majesty and was received by the authorities with great honour as He disembarked from the ship.

He was driven with all the members of His family to the residence of Shamsi Big, an official who was present at the port and appointed by the Government to entertain its guests.

His companions were given accommodation elsewhere in the city.

The house of Shamsi Big, a two-storey building in the vicinity of the Khirqiy-i-Sharif mosque, proved to be too <p3> small a residence for Baha'u'llah and soon He was moved into the House of Visi Pasha, a three-storey building more commodious than the first and situated near the mosque of Sultan Muhammad.

Neither of these houses exists today in its original form.

The house of Visi Pasha, like most houses in those days, consisted of an inner and an outer apartment.

Each consisted of three storeys.

Baha'u'llah resided in the inner section on the first floor, and His family occupied the remainder.

In the outer apartment, Abdu'l-Baha lived on the first floor, the believers on the second, while the third floor was turned into a store and a kitchen.

Shamsi Big, on behalf of the Government, used to call every morning and attend to any matter pertaining to the needs and well-being of Baha'u'llah and His companions.

In the courtyard a tent was pitched for two Christian servants whom the Government had sent to attend to shopping and various other duties.

Several eminent personalities including state ministers called on Baha'u'llah to pay their respects to Him.

Among them was Kamal Pasha, a former Sadr-i-A'zam (Prime Minister), who was at that time one of the ministers of the Sultan.

He knew several languages well and prided himself on this accomplishment.

Baha'u'llah recounts one of His conversations with him in these words:

One day, while in Constantinople, Kamal Pasha visited this Wronged One.

Our conversation turned upon topics profitable unto man.

He said that he had learned several languages.

In reply We observed: 'You have wasted your life.

It beseemeth you and the other officials of the Government to convene a gathering and choose one of the divers languages, and likewise one of the existing scripts, or else to create a new language and a new script to be taught children in schools throughout the world.

They would, in this way, be acquiring only two languages, one their own native tongue, the other the language in which all the peoples of <p4> the world would converse.

Were men to take fast hold on that which hath been mentioned, the whole earth would come to be regarded as one country, and the people would be relieved and freed from the necessity of acquiring and teaching different languages.' When in Our presence, he acquiesced, and even evinced great joy and complete satisfaction.

We then told him to lay this matter before the officials and ministers of the Government, in order that it might be put into effect throughout the different countries.

However, although he often returned to see Us after this, he never again referred to this subject, although that which had been suggested is conducive to the concord and the unity of the peoples of the

world.(4) Many of the high-ranking authorities who visited Baha'u'llah had expected Him to solicit their help in securing the support of the Government for Himself and His Cause, but they soon discovered that He was far removed from the expedient practices current among men.

His standards were exalted above human statesmanship which is based upon compromise, and often upon deceit and selfish exploits.

The authorities became conscious of His spiritual powers born of God and were deeply impressed by His uprightness and dignity.

Some of these men had urged Baha'u'llah to send a plea to the Sublime Porte for a thorough and just investigation of His case so that any misgivings in the minds of the Sultan and his ministers might be dispelled.

Baha'u'llah is reported to have made this response:

If the enlightened-minded leaders [of your nation] be wise and diligent, they will certainly make enquiry, and acquaint themselves with the true state of the case; if not, then [their] attainment of the truth is impracticable and impossible.

Under these circumstances what need is there for importuning statesmen and supplicating ministers of the Court?

We are free from every anxiety, and ready and prepared for the things predestined to us. 'Say, all is from God' is a sound and sufficient argument, and 'If God toucheth thee <p5> with a hurt there is no dispeller thereof save Him' is a healing medicine.(5) In one of His Tablets revealed soon after His arrival in Constantinople, Baha'u'llah expresses disappointment in the people He had met, saying that their welcome for Him was an act of formality and that He found them cold as ice and lifeless as dead trees.(6) In the Suriy-i-Muluk (Surih of the Kings), in a passage addressing the inhabitants of Constantinople, Baha'u'llah states that He found their leaders as 'children gathered about and disporting themselves with clay'.

And He further comments:

We perceived no one sufficiently mature to acquire from Us the truths which God hath taught Us, nor ripe for Our wondrous words of wisdom.

Our inner eye wept sore over them, and over their transgressions and their total disregard of the thing for which they were created.

This is what We observed in that City, and which We have chosen to note down in Our Book, that it may serve as a warning unto them and unto the rest of mankind.(7) The companions of Baha'u'llah, those faithful lovers of His glory who had travelled with Him to Constantinople, were given the privilege of attaining His presence from time to time.

According to a list(8) which bears the seal of Baha'u'llah[1] and which was presumably prepared under His direction for the authorities in Baghdad, altogether fifty-four people including the members of His family were to

accompany Him to Constantinople.

Of these one child died, and at least two people, including Mirza Yahya, joined Him on the way. [1 For official purposes Baha'u'llah used His seal bearing the inscription] The list comprises the following:

Mirza Husayn-'Ali [Baha'u'llah], 1; eldest son, 1; brothers, 2; female members of the household, 12;[1] children of all ages, 12 <p6> (less one who died); servants, 20;[2] others, with their own mules, [who would return], 7; horses, 6. [1 'Husayn-'Ali'.

Among them were the wives of His brothers including Mirza Yahya.] [2 Including His companions.] It is interesting to note that Baha'u'llah rode a red roan Arab stallion some of the way, but travelled mostly in a howdah[1] which was shared by His wife Asiyih Khanum.[2] Abdu'l-Baha supervised the entire convoy and organized and directed the activities of those to whom certain tasks were allocated.

He often used to ride Baha'u'llah's horse in order to keep in contact with various members of the party.

About an hour before entering a town, He would usually bring the horse to Baha'u'llah who would then ride into the town, while Abdu'l-Baha took His place in the howdah; and the same arrangements were made when the caravan was leaving the town. [1 See vol.

I, p.

284, f.n.] [2 See vol.

I, p.

15.] Lawh-i-Hawdaj Baha'u'llah on many occasions had warned His companions of their fate and of the calamities which would befall them in future.

Now He predicted dire afflictions in the Lawh-i-Hawdaj (Tablet of the Howdah) revealed in Arabic in the port of Samsun on His way to Constantinople.

At the request of His amanuensis, Mirza Aqa Jan, He revealed this Tablet as He sighted the Black Sea from His howdah.

As far as we know this was the first Tablet revealed by Baha'u'llah after He left Baghdad.

In it He referred to the forthcoming voyage by sea and stated that it had been foreshadowed in the Tablet of the Holy Mariner.

Thus he linked the Tablet of Hawdaj with the Holy Mariner and mentioned that the study of these two Tablets would enable the believers to understand the mysteries of the Cause of God and become strong in faith.

The dire predictions already foreshadowed in the Tablet of the Holy Mariner would come to pass, He affirmed, and He further warned His companions of the 'grievous and tormenting <p7> mischief' which would assail them from every

direction, and would act as a divine touchstone through which the faith of every one would be severely tested and truth separated from falsehood.

Probably few among His companions realized that this 'grievous and tormenting mischief' would emanate from Baha'u'llah's own half-brother Mirza Yahya, precipitating a crisis of enormous proportions within the community, or that he would become the embodiment of man's rebelliousness, the centre of all the forces of darkness, who would arise to battle with the light of God's Supreme Manifestation.

By virtue of being close to the person of Baha'u'llah, the sincerity of His companions was tested to the utmost, for to associate with One who embodied within Himself the Spirit of God, and Who was the focal point of all His attributes and powers, required the highest degree of faith and detachment.[1] Any trace of self could destroy the soul of the believer.

Another feature of this association was the way in which Baha'u'llah's awe-inspiring majesty affected those who came in contact with Him.

The authority that emanated from Him, the radiance of His countenance and especially the magnetic power of His eyes, together with His all-encompassing love and compassion which surrounded all created things, exerted an influence which at once overwhelmed, vivified and comforted His disciples and transported them into the realms of the spirit. [1 See also vol.

I, pp.

130-31.] Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali of Isfahan,[1] one of the most devoted disciples of Baha'u'llah and one who attained His presence in Adrianople and Akka on numerous occasions, has left some enlightening descriptions from his own observation.

Referring to the effect which Baha'u'llah's presence had on the believers, he writes: [1 See Appendix III, also vol.

I.] To describe a spiritual experience is impossible.

For example two or more people may attain the presence of <p8> Baha'u'llah together.

Each will regard His loving-kindness, compassion and bounty as directed to himself alone, and will be moved to declare 'He is my God'.

Although all have attained the presence of the same blessed Person, Whose words are not addressed to one alone, yet His Words penetrate into the veins and arteries, into the hearts, minds and souls.

Each one will be affected in a personal way and will experience inner spiritual feelings which he finds impossible to describe to others.

All that can be said is that one may address his friend and say: 'I was intoxicated and in a state of ecstasy.' His friend, who may have experienced similar effects at some time, can only appreciate this

feeling to the extent of his own susceptibility...

I mean to say that whatever concerns one's inward feelings, spiritual perceptiveness, inner enlightenment, and all that pertains to the realms of divinity, is far removed from, and exalted above, nature, material things, place, time, form and substance.

For example, no one can explain the state of maturity or the mental faculties of a mature person to a child who has not come of age, even though these relate to the world of nature.

For the child has not yet acquired the capacity to understand.

How much less is it possible, then, to explain a spiritual matter, an abstract condition, to an individual.

Should a person be enabled to acquire, through the bounty and assistance of God and His Manifestations, an inner spiritual feeling [as a result of attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah], letting it penetrate his soul, not in the form of a temporary flash or vain imagining, but as imbuing his very being, then such an attainment will pave the way for his progress in the realms of spirit, provided it does not become mixed with self-glorification and egotism...

The import of these words is that it is impossible to describe the effusions of the grace [of Baha'u'llah] experienced in His presence or to recount the effulgent glories of the Speaker on the Mount[1]...(9) [1 Baha'u'llah.] Concerning the power and the authority of Baha'u'llah, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes:<p9> A certain man, who was a follower of Azal,[1] once requested the late Haji Siyyid Javid-i-Karbila'i ...,[2] an early believer and one of the Mirrors of the Babi Dispensation, to describe the countenance of the Bab ... and its beauty.

He said 'He was unsurpassed in beauty and sweetness; I saw in Him all the goodness and beauty ascribed to the person of Joseph.' [1 Mirza Yahya.] [2 See The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

I, pp.

221-4.] Since the questioner was an Azali and a few other Azalis were also present, I felt that these men might deduce from the late Haji Siyyid Javad's statement that he was also a follower of Azal.

Therefore I asked him to tell us about the beauty of the One[1] in Whose holy presence the Kingdom of beauty prostrates itself and at whose threshold the most high realm of omnipotence and majesty raises a song of praise and glory.

He replied, 'Know with absolute certainty that if anyone, whether friend or foe, claims that he was able to look directly into the blessed face of Baha'u'llah he is a liar.

I tested this repeatedly and tried time and again to gaze upon His

blessed countenance, but was unable to do so.

Sometimes, when a person attains the presence of Baha'u'llah, he is so enamoured and carried away that in fact he becomes dumbfounded, awe-struck, oblivious of himself and forgetful of the world.

And whenever he is not carried away, should he try to look into His blessed face with concentration, it would be like looking into the sun.

In the same way that the eye is blinded by the effulgent rays of the sun, causing tears to flow, should one persist in gazing upon the countenance of the Blessed Beauty,[2] tears will fill the eyes making it impossible to gain any impression of Him.' [1 Baha'u'llah.] [2 Baha'u'llah.] I myself had this experience.

During the seven months that I stayed in Adrianople, I was so carried away and dazzled [by His presence] that I was completely oblivious of myself and all creation.

Fourteen or fifteen years later I arrived in the holy city of Akka, the luminous Spot round which <p10> circle in adoration the Concourse on High,[1] the Sinai of Revelation unto Moses.

I attained the presence of Baha'u'llah for three months.

During all this time I had wanted to know the colour of the blessed taj[2] He was wearing, and yet I forgot to think of it every time I was in His presence, until one day He adorned, perfumed and illumined the Garden of Ridvan[3] with His blessed footsteps.

The realities of the promised gardens of Paradise, both hidden and manifest, lay prostrate at that Garden of Ridvan [Paradise].

He was having a midday meal in the room which pilgrims still visit and where a couch, chair, and some items used by Him are kept.

Two or three people were standing inside and several outside the room.

They were all enamoured of His peerless, imperishable and glorious Beauty.

I saw the taj then ... as I stood behind the friends and His companions ... its colour was green...(10) [1 The gathering of the holy souls in the next world.] [2 A tall felt head-dress worn by Baha'u'llah.] [3 Literally 'Garden of Paradise', the designation of a garden outside Akka which Baha'u'llah used to visit.

It is not to be confused with the Garden of Ridvan outside Baghdad.] Another account which portrays the dazzling glory of the countenance of Baha'u'llah is to be found in the memoirs of Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri,[1] who went on pilgrimage to Akka about 1878.

He remained there for nine months and was permitted by Baha'u'llah to attain His presence every other day.

During these memorable meetings he longed to gaze fully into the face of Baha'u'llah, but every time he came into His holy presence, he found himself dazzled by His beauty and spellbound by His utterance; until one day he happened to look into the face of Baha'u'llah.

This is a translation of his own words: [1 The father of the author; see The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

I.] One day, I attained the presence of the Blessed Beauty.

Graciously He bade me be seated.

When I sat down, He <p11> called Khadimu'llah[1] and said, 'Bring tea for Aqa Tahir'.

Khadimu'llah brought a cup of tea and handed it to me.

As I took the cup into my hands, my eyes fell upon the face of the Blessed Beauty and I became unconscious.

I could not take my eyes from the transcendent beauty of His countenance.

He then said to me, 'Oh, look what you have done!

You have spilt the tea and spoilt your aba![2] Protect this aba, it is going to be your only clothing all the way to Persia.

We also had only one shirt and underwear on Our journey to Sulaymaniyyih.'[3] From these words of the Blessed Beauty, I realized that I held only the saucer in my hand and had dropped the cup.

The hot tea had poured over the aba and penetrated my clothes, but I had not felt it at all.[4](11) [1 Literally 'the servant of God', a designation by which Baha'u'llah referred to Mirza Aqa Jan, His amanuensis.] [2 A cloak worn by orientals.] [3 Haji Muhammad-Tahir has written in detail the story of this aba, and how on the way back home, all his belongings were stolen from him.

The only things he was able to recover were this aba and two envelopes.

He wore the aba, a thin silk material, over his shirt and shivered in the cold of winter, remembering the words of Baha'u'llah that it would be his only clothing on his way to Persia, and realizing how much Baha'u'llah had suffered from the cold of Sulaymaniyyih.] [4 Passages quoted from Baha'u'llah in this account are not to be taken as containing His exact words.

But they convey the import of what He said.] Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, to whom we have referred previously, has recounted a brief story in which he describes the reaction of some government officials in Akka when they saw Baha'u'llah for the first time.

He writes in his book, the Bihjatu's-Sudur: ...It was the festival of Ridvan, which was celebrated in the home of Jinab-i-Kalim.[1] I was staying in the outer apartment of his house.[2] There were other

apartments <p12> occupied by non-Baha'is; one was the residence of a certain 'Big' or 'Pasha'[3] who had arrived in Akka as the head of customs and excise. [1 Mirza Musa, the faithful brother of Baha'u'llah.] [2 Houses in those days consisted of two sections; the inner part was strictly for private residence, the outer section was reserved for visitors or guests.

Meetings were held in the outer part.] [3 Titles for a high-ranking Turkish official.] In the afternoon of the first day of Ridvan Baha'u'llah came out of the inner apartment to the place where the head of the customs and his officers were seated.

As soon as He arrived, they arose spontaneously and, although it was not their way, they bowed.

Lost in bewilderment and filled with wonder, they remained standing.

Their hearts were enamoured of His peerless and beauteous countenance.

Baha'u'llah went to them and spoke words of loving kindness.

He then went back to the inner section.

Bewildered and perplexed, the officer asked, 'Who was this distinguished personage?

Is He the Holy Spirit or the King of Kings?' We answered, 'He is the father of Abbas Effendi'.[1](12) [1 Abdu'l-Baha.] These accounts give some impression of the glory of Baha'u'llah and His awe-inspiring majesty, and perhaps explain why none of His disciples was able to write a pen-portrait of Him.

The only pen-portrait we have was written by the orientalist, Edward Granville Browne, who was not a Baha'i.

This is how he describes his visit to the Mansion of Bahji in 1890 and his meeting with Baha'u'llah: ...my conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes.

Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs.

Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted.

In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind <p13> called taj by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban.

The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot

describe it.

Those piercing eyes seemed to read ones very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie.

No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!

A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued: 'Praise be to God that thou hast attained!...

Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile...

We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment...

That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled -- what harm is there in this?...

Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come...

Do not you in Europe need this also?

Is not this that which Christ foretold?...

Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind...

These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family...

Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind...' Such, as far as I can recall them, were the words which, besides many others, I heard from Beha.[1] Let those who read them consider well with themselves whether such doctrines merit death and bonds, and whether the world is more likely to gain or lose by their diffusion.(13) [1 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)]
<p14> Concerning those who accompanied Baha'u'llah to Constantinople, we know that a few among them were not pure in heart.

Baha'u'llah had kept these men with Him so that their mischief could be checked.

Only those who, through the grace of God, were able to submit themselves entirely to the will of God's Manifestation, who detached themselves from every desire, remained steadfast in His Cause and showed absolute faithfulness and

humility, were worthy to be called His companions.

In future ages, when the station of Baha'u'llah will have been fully recognized, humanity will look back upon these souls, the embodiments of certitude and devotion, with feelings of praise and gratitude.

For it was through their intense faith and love that they were enabled to receive the grace and bounties of God on behalf of all mankind.

Had it not been for their loyalty and utter self-abnegation in the face of tests and calamities, the human race would have betrayed its God and postponed the establishment of the promised Kingdom upon this earth.

These disciples, many of whom laid down their lives in the path of Baha'u'llah, were the fruits of the Revelation of the Bab.

It was He who created them especially for this Day.

Indeed, the whole purpose of the Bab's Mission was to prepare His followers to become worthy to meet Baha'u'llah.

In one of His Writings(14) the Bab stated that the moment an individual could be found ready and able to understand the Revelation which would follow His, God would without an instant's delay manifest Himself and reveal His Cause.

The Bab also gave the example of His own Revelation and affirmed that had Mulla Husayn, the first to believe in Him, been ready to recognize Him even a few moments before he did, He would have announced His Mission that much earlier.

The person upon whom God had conferred the greatest capacity to understand the Revelation of Baha'u'llah was His eldest son Abdu'l-Baha, Who at the age of nine instinctively knew the station of His Father.

Soon after His arrival in <p15> Iraq, Baha'u'llah unfolded the Mission with which God had entrusted Him to Abdu'l-Baha Who immediately acknowledged the truth of His Cause, prostrated Himself at His feet, and with great humility and earnestness begged the privilege of laying down His life in His Father's path.

Such momentous events do not come about casually.

The hand of God was at work creating the means of manifesting His own Self to mankind.

Not only was the Bab sent to pave the way for the coming of Baha'u'llah, but also Abdu'l-Baha was created especially for the purpose of receiving the Revelation of Baha'u'llah on behalf of mankind.

How significant it is that Abdu'l-Baha, who was to become the instrument of such a sublime Revelation, was born the same night that the Bab communicated His Mission to Mulla Husayn and set in motion the process of preparing His followers for the appearance of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

Moreover, the history of the Baha'i Faith demonstrates that the divine Power which raised up the incomparable figures of the Bab and Abdu'l-Baha, and

delineated their sacred missions, also vivified many other souls who recognized Baha'u'llah and embraced His Faith.

In every Dispensation those who recognized the Manifestation of God and followed Him became a new creation endowed with new spirit.

This is the rebirth spoken of in the Holy Books.

In one of His Tablets(15) best known for the beauty of its imagery, Baha'u'llah portrays a delightful panorama of divine mysteries.

In allusive language He recounts some fascinating spiritual events in the worlds of God prior to the unveiling of Baha'u'llah's Revelation.

It is impossible to describe these enchanting scenes, but their essence is that since there was no one capable of understanding this Revelation, God ordained the birth of a new creation.

Baha'u'llah affirms that He unveiled His glory to mankind only after it appeared, and describes in glowing terms the exalted character of this new creation. <p16> Having warned His companions of grievous tests which would descend upon them, Baha'u'llah in the Lawh-i-Hawdaj then addresses them in words of affection.

He assures them of the bounties of God through which they may rid themselves of vain imaginings, purify their hearts from earthly desires and enter into the realms of nearness to God.

He also reminds them that the Almighty has chosen them from among all humanity, has enabled them to recognize His Manifestation, bestowed upon them the unique distinction of being His companions, exalted their stations above all who dwelt on earth and has recorded their names in the 'Preserved Tablet'.[1] [1 This term is a symbol for the knowledge of God Who 'knoweth all things and is known of none'.] The theme of the remainder of the Tablet is the greatness of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

Addressing the whole of creation He bids mankind rejoice, for the Day of blissfulness has appeared, the day in which man has attained the presence of God.

The belief that one day man will attain the presence of his God is based on the Holy Scriptures of the past.

In the Qur'an there are many references to this theme.

In fact this is the clearest and most important promise given by the Prophet of Islam.

The great Baha'i scholar, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, states that any man of insight who has a true knowledge of the Qur'an will bear witness that at least one-third of that Book deals with the advent of the great Day of God.

The following verses are only a few examples among many: 'As for those who believe not in the signs of God, or that they shall ever meet Him, these of my

mercy shall despair, and for them doth a grievous chastisement await';(16) and 'let him then who hopeth to attain the presence of His Lord work a righteous work';[l7] and again 'They who bear in mind that they shall attain unto the presence of their Lord, and that unto Him shall they return';(18) and yet again 'He ordereth all things.

He maketh His signs clear, that ye may have firm faith in attaining the presence of your Lord.'(19)<p17> Similar prophecies appear in great number in the New Testament also.

For example: '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...';(20) and again 'And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.'[2l] The Old Testament is also full of the promise of the coming of the Lord God.

Here are a few instances: 'It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.'(22) 'Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you.'(23) 'And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.'(24) 'For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.'(25) In many of His Tablets Baha'u'llah has explained that God is beyond thc comprehension of man and 'immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress...

He standeth exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness.'(26) The view that God will come in person is completely against the nature of God.

Such an event would reduce Him instantly from the realm of the infinite to that of the finite.

But man can attain the presence of God by attaining the presence of His Manifestation.[1] In the Persian Bayan (6:7) the Bab has clearly <p18> stated that any reference in the Holy Scriptures to the presence of God means the presence of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. [1 See The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

I, pp.

175-6, p.

185.] Ever since recorded history began the Prophets and Messengers of

God have foretold an age of consummation for mankind.

The visions of all the Prophets, the thoughts of many poets and seers have focused on the coming of the Lord,[1] and yet when He manifested Himself all the peoples of the world failed to recognize Him.

Only a few beheld His glory and recognized His station.

Therefore, how awe-inspiring is it to look back upon those days when less than three score men, women and children accompanied their Lord in person from Baghdad, crowded into a Turkish steamer at the port of Samsun and sailed with Him to Constantinople, while men in general were unaware of such stupendous happenings.

God passed them by and they remained in deep slumber. [1 There are innumerable prophecies in Islam, Judaism and Christianity which indicate the date of this event as 1844, the year of the Bab's declaration.] Subhanika-Ya-Hu A beautiful tablet in Arabic and in Baha'u'llah's own hand was revealed in Constantinople on the eve of the 5th of Jamadiyu'l-Avval 1280 A.H. (19 October 1863), the anniversary of the Declaration of the Bab.[1] This Tablet, because of its opening verse, is known as Lawh-i-Naqus (Tablet of the Bell) and is also referred to as the Subhanika-Ya-Hu.

It was revealed following a request made through Abdu'l-Baha by one of Baha'u'llah's companions, Aqa Muhammad-'Ally-i-Tambaku-Furush-i-Isfahani.[2] The revelation of this Tablet on such <p19> an auspicious occasion brought immense joy to the hearts of those who were celebrating that historic festival.

Baha'u'llah opens this Tablet with these words: [1 The Declaration of the Bab was on the evening of 5 Jamadiyu'l-Avval, 1260 A.H. (22 May 1844), but at present in the East, the anniversary of this festival is celebrated according to the lunar calendar.] [2 This is the same Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Isfahani referred to in vol.

I, p.

287.

See also p.

370 below.] O Monk of the Incomparable One!

Ring out the Bell, inasmuch as the Day of the Lord hath shone forth and the Beauty of the All-Glorious is established upon His holy and resplendent Throne.(27) These few lines give us a glimpse of the majesty and sublimity of the Tablet.

Like those revealed near the time of Baha'u'llah's declaration, this Tablet pulsates with an indescribable power that can emanate only from the Pen of the Supreme Manifestation of God.

Here, the matchless utterances of Baha'u'llah, original and profound, are possessed of such beauty and rhythm as no pen can describe.

Composed in a style that lends itself to collective chanting, this Tablet creates an atmosphere of ecstasy and joy when chanted by the believers.[1] Revealed soon after His departure from Baghdad, it announces in clear and majestic terms the rising of the Orb of His Revelation, asserts that He[2] who was hidden behind the veils of concealment is now made manifest, extols the potency and glory of His Cause, declares that the Day of God has come, summons the inhabitants of the highest Paradise to prepare themselves and acquire the capacity for attaining the presence of God,[3] bids his lovers rejoice and celebrate the coming of the Well-Beloved, and calls upon all created things to proclaim the glad-tidings of this Revelation to mankind.

And finally, He prays for His companions: that they may become detached from everything besides Him, that their hearts may burn with the fire <p20> of His love and become pure and without desire.

He also prays that His companions, devoted to the promotion of His Cause, may become victorious over all who dwell on earth. [1 Not to be confused with congregational prayer, which (with the exception of the Prayer for the Dead) is forbidden by Baha'u'llah.

Tablets in the original language are chanted by an individual.

Occasionally, when there is a refrain in a Tablet, it has been customary for others to join in the refrain if it is suitable to do so.] [2 Baha'u'llah.] [3 See vol.

I, p.

299, footnote.] The history of the Faith amply demonstrates the fulfilment of this prayer.

Through God's assistance, His disciples, though bitterly persecuted and lacking any earthly power, triumphed over the forces of darkness and won memorable victories for the Cause of their Lord.

Two despotic monarchs, Nasiri'd-Din Shah and Sultan Abdu'l-'Aziz were determined with unyielding hostility to uproot the foundation of the new-born Faith of God.

The former, during whose reign the Bab was martyred and countless souls were massacred, tried his utmost to extinguish the light of the Faith and even to obliterate its very name from the pages of history, while the latter incarcerated its Author and imposed the harshest of restrictions upon Him and His companions.

Yet today the Faith of Baha'u'llah is established in every part of the world and His followers, representing all colours, races and nations, are spreading His Cause with astonishing speed and earnestness.

They have been, and are increasingly, bringing to the attention of a tormented humanity the fundamental verities of their Faith, its history, its teachings, its world-embracing institutions and its transforming power.

In past Dispensations, as in this Day, God has promoted His Faith through the work of men and women who were meek and humble.

Of these people it is stated 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.'(28) Similarly these words are recorded in the Gospels: 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.'(29) By exalting His Cause through the aid of the lowliest among men, God has proved the ascendancy and power of His Manifestations.

No one can accuse Them of having established religion through the influence of important people.

For example, those few souls who first recognized and followed <p21> Christ were not outstanding people.

They were treated with contempt and were persecuted.

Others who followed in their footsteps suffered the same fate and many of them died martyrs' deaths.

Yet in spite of their seeming helplessness at the time, the Message of Christ was noised abroad and His Faith established.

This is one of the proofs of the authenticity of His Mission.

Similarly, those who believed in Muhammad in the early days were among the lowly and the outcast.

This is why many people ridiculed the Prophet saying: 'We see in thee but a man like ourselves; and we see not any who have followed thee except our meanest ones of hasty judgement, nor see we any excellence in you above ourselves:

Nay, we deem you liars.'(30) Muhammad Himself was bitterly opposed and persecuted by the people of Mecca and eventually fled to Medina for safety.

Yet, through the power of God, He and His disciples, though downtrodden and debased, triumphed over their adversaries and gave spiritual life to great multitudes.

The manner in which the Faith of Islam was established, however, is greatly criticized in the West.

This is almost entirely due to distorted reports of fanatical Christians who, over the centuries, ignored the spiritual teachings and noble precepts of Islam, misinterpreted its doctrines, exaggerated its unfamiliar background and disseminated gross calumnies about its Author.

An interesting account of this is given by Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri in his memoirs, quoting the gist of a long interview he had in Yazd with a certain Christian missionary who knew the Persian language well.

The object of the interview was to prove the authenticity of the Message of Baha'u'llah.

In the course of discussion the subject of Islam was broached.

The following is a translation of a small portion of this dialogue:

He [the Christian missionary] said to me 'How about Muhammad?' I said 'I think in a sense the efficacy of <p22> Muhammad's word was greater than that of Christ.' 'How could that be?' was his prompt response.

I replied, 'You know Christ was born and bred in the Holy Land which is an eastern country.

There He declared His Mission, spent years of His ministry and there He was finally crucified.

Yet for well over six centuries His Faith did not make appreciable headway in any of the Eastern countries, while today every Muslim you may come across in the East regards Jesus as the Spirit of God and the Bible as the Word of God.

The belief in Christ and the appreciation of His divine mission were brought to Eastern peoples through the influence of Muhammad.

Isn't that so?' 'That is right,' he said, 'but it was done by the sword.' I explained, 'During the thirteen years Muhammad lived in Mecca after declaring Himself a prophet no sword was used, although throughout the whole time He was the object of ever-growing ridicule and oppression.

These attacks grew so fierce at times that He used to take refuge in caves and dug-outs, and at last had to flee to Medina for safety.

The skirmishes that Muhammad took part in were entirely defensive in character.

However, let us accept your assertions as correct.

Let us assume that Muhammad established His religion with the aid of the sword, whereas Christ diffused His Faith solely by the aid of the Holy Spirit.

You know the sword is a deadly weapon; it takes life, it destroys, rends asunder.

However, in the hand of Muhammad it turned out to be a blessing in disguise.

It brought spiritual life to some three hundred million souls; it united many warring factions and diverse communities into a permanent bond of unity and brotherhood; it raised the savage Arab tribes to the fairest heights of knowledge and culture.

Now, be fair in your judgement, which task is more difficult and wonderful -- to give life by means of a sword or by spiritual means?

Which one is more skilful, the physician who heals his patients at once by giving them poison or the one who gradually brings relief by

administering soothing drugs?' 'All right,' he said, 'but Muhammad was a lustful polygamist whereas Christ did not even marry.' I replied 'If by saying Christ didn't marry you try to enhance His divine <p23> virtues I am afraid you are mistaken.

Because Christ's physical body was the same as any other man's, and the fact that He did not marry was probably because He found no place to settle down, as during the short period of His Ministry He was moving about the country.

Or if you want to attribute lack of sexual urge to Christ then such an implication would indicate physical deficiency rather than divine virtue, whereas the Messengers of God are perfect in body as in soul.

In addition Christ has never said anything against matrimony.

But suppose we take your premise, nevertheless no one can deny that Muhammad was able to inculcate in His adherents the highest degree of chastity and moral rectitude, and to foster a wonderful measure of integrity and spiritual consciousness among a community so degenerate that in those days it had reached the lowest depths of savagery and ignorance.

And today, well over 1300 years after Him, the evidence of His spiritual power, which still binds those multi-racial communities together, is quite discernible everywhere.

Spirituality and sexual urge, like water and fire, are opposites.

Muhammad reconciled these two contrasting powers within His own self, whereas you say Christ was solely of pure spirit and conferred life as such.

Now I leave this to your unbiased judgement to determine whether Muhammad's nature was more spiritual or lustful.

We must not, however, be misled by such material considerations.

Christ taught: "Ye shall know the tree by its fruit."

Then he said, "How about the truth of the mission of Baha'u'llah?"'...(31) In most of the Tablets revealed in Constantinople and Adrianople, as in the Lawh-i-Naqus, Baha'u'llah urges His disciples to purge their hearts from worldly desires, and to cling fast to His Cause so that the words and evil whisperings of the unfaithful may not turn them from the path of Truth.

When we study the events leading to the rebellion of Mirza Yahya in Adrianople we may realize the importance of such exhortations.

As we shall see, several outstanding believers, some of whom were actually present in Constantinople when <p24> the Lawh-i-Naqus was revealed, were caught in the clutches of this crisis which later engulfed the community, and fell

victims to its evil force.

But in spite of this, the exhortations of Baha'u'llah continued unabated.

Indeed, one of the remarkable features of His life was His loving kindness to everyone who came in contact with Him.

His divine and all-embracing mercy encompassed believers and unbelievers alike.

Only when someone was about to harm the Cause of God did He expel him from His presence.

To His followers He extended the hand of protection and guided them every step of the way.

This is evident in all His Writings.

His Tablets are replete with counsels, exhortations and guidance on spiritual, moral and social aspects of life.

Even on personal matters Baha'u'llah always guided His disciples.

To cite one example which concerns His journey to Constantinople: before His departure from Baghdad, Baha'u'llah advised His companions who were to travel with Him to grow their hair long in the same fashion as the Baktashes[1] did.

This measure was taken to give them prestige and some protection, as the Baktashes were highly influential in Turkey.

This statement must not be taken to mean that Baha'u'llah had approved the practice of men growing their hair long.

The advice was given that they might conform to the conditions prevailing at the time and thus ensure their safety and well-being. [1 A Sufi order very powerful at that time.] In Persia, too, there was some regard for the dervishe.[1] People did not harass them, nor did they interfere in their beliefs and practices.

In those days, if a stranger arrived in a town the inhabitants were anxious to find out his identity and the real purpose of his visit.

But not so in the case of the dervishes who often travelled from town to town.

The public was accustomed to seeing dervishes come from distant lands, and often did not investigate them.

In the early days of <p25> the Faith this situation helped some Baha'i teachers in Persia who grew their hair long and dressed in the garb of the dervish.

In this way they managed to move freely throughout the country without being harassed or persecuted. [1 Sufis from various orders in Persia are categorically referred to as dervishes.] There were also some genuine dervishes who had embraced the Faith during the ministries of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

Notable among them was Mirza Qurban-'Ali,[1] one of the Seven Martyrs of

Tihran.

Naturally, these men continued to appear as dervishes.

They carried their alms-boxes and followed the custom of singing the praises of the Lord in the bazaars and public places.

These songs of praise, often recited from the works of famous poets, were among the most exciting performances of a dervish.

Although Baha'u'llah had exhorted His followers to be wise and discreet when teaching His Cause and had advised them not to announce their faith in public, nevertheless some of the more audacious among these dervishes dared to sing the praises of Baha'u'llah in the streets and bazaars.

Such unwise action inevitably brought untold suffering in its wake.

At last Baha'u'llah sent a strong message to a few dervishes telling them to stop this practice and urging them to exercise wisdom. [1 See The Dawn-Breakers.] Because of their habits of mendicancy and renunciation, a few of the dervishes who became Baha'is began to interpret the laws and ordinances of the Faith to suit themselves.

In a Tablet Baha'u'llah denounces the attitudes and practices of these men who sought a sequestered life, and declares that they cared for nothing except eating and sleeping.(32) Since Baha'u'llah addressed The Seven Valleys to a Sufi, outlining the spiritual prerequisites for man to attain to his ultimate goal, and since He Himself went to Sulaymaniyyih in the garb of a dervish, some may be under the false impression that His teachings are in conformity with the practice of Sufism.

The study of His Cause will demonstrate that this is not so.

That Baha'u'llah appeared as a dervish for two years in the mountains of Kurdistan was entirely due to the circumstances <p26> of His solitary retirement, and cannot be construed as an approval of the Sufi way of life.

The basic principle of Sufism is that it is possible for man to have direct experience of God by seeking contact with the Source of being and reality, and thus attain absolute spiritual freedom wherein his intuitive senses may be allowed full scope.

But the Faith of Baha'u'llah teaches that there can be no direct relationship between the Creator and the created, the Infinite and the finite, and that 'the door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being ... closed in the face of all beings',(33) the only way that man can know God is through knowledge of His Manifestations.

It is a major Baha'i belief that man's spiritual advancement depends upon his obedience to, and practice of, the teachings of the Manifestations of God and not upon the promptings and dictates of his own life.

Another main difference between Sufi and Baha'i belief is that Baha'u'llah has

prohibited asceticism and mendicancy.

He has given His followers a different understanding of detachment and renunciation which is, in fact, opposite to the views held by Sufis in general.

In one of His Tablets Abdu'l-Baha states that The Seven Valleys[1] gives us guidance in treading the path of detachment.(34) Its purpose is to teach the wayfarer how to love God.

But in no way does it condone or justify the attitude adopted by many dervishes who claim to have renounced the world.

Such men wander about like vagrants, are confused and lazy, live without work and are a burden to others.

As already stated in an earlier volume, The Seven Valleys was revealed by Baha'u'llah in response to the questions of Shaykh Muhyi'd-Din, a man of learning who was well-versed in Sufi philosophy.

Baha'u'llah mentions in a Tablet(35) that The Seven Valleys was written before His Declaration in the idiom of the people concerned.

In His divine wisdom, Baha'u'llah used the Sufi terminology current at the time, so that the questioner might comprehend it.

In this Tablet he also affirms that anyone, who in this day has <p27> turned to Him and truly recognized His station, has indeed attained all the seven stages mentioned in that book. [1 See The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

I, p.

96.] Baha'u'llah has condemned asceticism, mendicancy and monasticism.(36) He states that there are people in certain islands who live among wild beasts, shut themselves away from humanity, abstain from eating and carry on an ascetic life.

They consider themselves as leaders of men.

Yet none of these acts is acceptable in the sight of God.

In the same Tablet He describes His own observations while in Baghdad, where in a certain Sufi quarter a man was inflicting severe blows upon himself until he fell unconscious to the ground.

This foolish exercise, presumably carried out to attain mastery over self, was considered by his co-religionists as highly meritorious and a supernatural act.

Baha'u'llah affirms that God is weary of these people.

In one of his works Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, the celebrated Baha'i scholar, has carefully traced the decline in the fortunes of Islam, attributing it to the rise of Sufism.

After describing Islam's great contribution to mankind in fields of learning such as medicine, science, mathematics and astronomy he writes:

...And all the countries and cities of Islam from east to west were illumined with the light of knowledge.

But alas, before the newly planted trees of learning and education had yielded their fruit, the thorn of piety grew in the garden of this shining nation [Islam].

When the disease of Sufism, which may be likened to paralysis and decay, afflicts the healthy organs of a nation, its joy, supremacy, advancement and influence will be completely obliterated.

This disease has now been inflicted upon the nation of Islam.

A great number of people in the name of asceticism and self-purification engaged in excessive prayer and meditation...

Although in fairness it is admitted that some great men have appeared among these people and because of their genuine piety the hearts of some have been illumined with the splendours of the light of truth, yet, since the great majority were worshippers of their own selfish desires rather than God, and seekers after leadership instead of faith, they often invented <p28> false devotions and introduced expressions alien to the principles of religion.

Through their many deceitful acts they managed to turn towards themselves the hearts of kings and rulers.

Consequently the vigour of the kings in disseminating science grew weak, and the diffusion of knowledge was replaced by adoration of the divines.

The lights of learning began to dim slowly and the shadow of Sufism spread instead.(37) <p29> 2 Mathnaviy-i-Mubarak One of the most beautiful works which Baha'u'llah revealed in Constantinople is the Mathnavi.

It is a masterpiece of Persian poetry, noted for the beauty and power of its composition, and acclaimed as one of the most soul-stirring among His poems.

No pen can adequately describe the contents of this great work even in the original language.

For every one of its three hundred lines is a book in itself with infinite depth and profound significances.

Like a vast ocean which gushes out through a tiny outlet, Baha'u'llah reveals, with a potency that overwhelms the soul, a small measure of the glory and power of God and vouchsafes to mankind a glimmer of His divine Revelation.

The knowledge He bestows upon the pure in heart, the mysteries He unravels for the sincere, the insight He confers upon the seeker, the wisdom He dispenses to the wise, and the counsels and exhortations He delivers to His loved ones, all these stand out in this divine poem as the ultimate to which man can hope to attain.

In this poem, and within the bounds of a finite world, Baha'u'llah has unveiled

the mysteries of a vast and limitless Revelation, disclosed some of the realities of the world of man and indicated how he can achieve the summit of glory.

Some of His exhortations in this work are in the same vein as those in The Hidden Words.

Baha'u'llah has identified Himself in the poem as the Day-Star of Truth which sheds its radiance upon all created things.

Just as the physical sun is the primary cause of life on this planet, so the Supreme Manifestation of God is the source of spiritual life for all mankind.

He releases spiritual energies <p30> into the human world which cause man to progress and grow.

In one of His Tablets,[l]Baha'u'llah states that the primary purpose of divine revelation is not merely the changing of laws in human society nor is it to impart knowledge; but rather, its purpose is to pour forth heavenly bounties so that at the time of divine revelation all created things may become the instruments of the grace of God and acquire fresh capacities.

When the Mathnavi was revealed the news of the Declaration of Baha'u'llah and its significance had not been fully communicated to the Babi Community.

Therefore Baha'u'llah calls on Himself in this poem to rend asunder the veils and let the sun of His Revelation arise in full splendour.

In another passage He calls on Himself to shed upon this dark world a measure of His light, to open the doors of the knowledge of God to humanity, and to waft over them the musk-laden breezes of His mercy so that the spiritually dead may be resurrected from their sepulchres of ignorance and heedlessness.

Alluding to the diffusion of the light of His Faith to the Western world, Baha'u'llah makes a remarkable statement.

He urges the innermost spirit of God within Himself to unveil His glory so that the Sun may rise from the West.

Elsewhere in His writings, Baha'u'llah has prophesied that although the Cause of God was born in the East, its influence would appear in the West.[1] [1 The rise and establishment of the Baha'i Faith in the Western world has been remarkable.

For further information see God Passes By and volumes of The Baha'i World.]
In the Mathnavi Baha'u'llah describes His coming as the advent of the Day of God and the appearance of springtime.

In many of His Tablets He has referred to this theme.

Just as the physical spring gives new life to all creation in this world, so the Revelation of Baha'u'llah enables the hearts of men to be filled with His love and to manifest the noblest fruits of virtues and perfections.

These heavenly qualities manifested by the believer do not originate entirely from himself.

Without <p31> the light of the sun the eye is a useless instrument and the seed an impotent organism.

Similarly if it were not for the appearance of the Manifestations of God no man could ever attain to nobility and righteousness.

It is through the radiance of these Suns of Truth that humanity has been led progressively from darkness into light.

One of the themes of the Mathnavi is that man himself is a manifestation of God, that within him are deposited the powers and attributes of God, and that God's light is reflected in him; yet he is veiled from these bounties and spends the precious hours of his life unaware of the exalted forces latent within him.

Baha'u'llah warns that not until man makes an effort to purify his heart can these qualities and attributes be manifested in him.

In The Hidden Words, speaking with the voice of God, Baha'u'llah states:

O Son of Being!

Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee.

Get thou from it thy radiance and seek none other than Me.

For I have created thee rich and have bountifully shed My favour upon thee.(2) Baha'u'llah teaches in the Mathnavi that man will not be able to receive the light of God in this day unless he acquires a new eye.

Eyes which are fixed on the things of this world can never see the glory of His Revelation, and ears which are tuned to the voices of the ungodly cannot hear the melodies of the Kingdom.

By 'new eyes' and 'new ears' He means spiritual eyes and spiritual ears.

He states that since the eye of the spirit receives its light from God it is shameful to let it turn to a stranger, and re-affirms that the purpose of God in creating the inner eye was that man might behold the beauty of His Manifestation in this world.

In The Hidden Words Baha'u'llah reveals:

O Son of Dust!

Blind thine eyes, that thou mayest behold My beauty; stop thine ears, that thou mayest hearken unto the sweet <p32> melody of My voice; empty thyself of all learning, that thou mayest partake of My knowledge; and sanctify thyself from riches, that thou mayest obtain a lasting share from the ocean of My eternal wealth.

Blind thine eyes, that is, to all save My beauty; stop thine ears to all

save My word; empty thyself of all learning save the knowledge of Me; that with a clear vision, a pure heart and an attentive ear thou mayest enter the court of My holiness.(3) In a Tablet(4)He affirms that should the eyes of an observer be as large as the universe and turn for one moment to someone other than Him, such a person is not worthy to enter His presence.

We can appreciate this statement of Baha'u'llah if we ponder the case of a man who seeks illumination from a candle when the sun is shining at its zenith.

In another Tablet(5)Baha'u'llah explains that this is the Day of God, and nothing else is worthy of mention.

He further states that this is the day of eyes, of ears and of hearts.

He calls on His loved ones to try to acquire these three and reminds them that only a tiny impediment can prevent the eyes from seeing, the ears from hearing and hearts from understanding.

The veils which come between the inner eye of the soul and the Manifestation of God all originate from the world of man.

A great many people in the world today are as yet unable to witness the glory of Baha'u'llah, the Supreme Manifestation of God, for they have wrapped their hearts in many veils.

One of the cruelest veils is that of tradition.

Men are born into a tradition and are inclined to remain as prisoners within it for life.

History shows that whenever God has manifested Himself and brought new standards and teachings for mankind, such men have followed their fathers, religious leaders and countrymen in denouncing the new Manifestation of God.

The best example is the coming of Christ when only a handful of people recognized Him, while the rest, who were slaves of tradition, rejected His Cause.

One of the most important teachings of Baha'u'llah is that man should not imitate his fellow men in matters of faith, that he should carry out an <p33> unfettered search after truth and open his inner eyes to behold the glory of the new-born Faith of God in this day.

Another grievous veil which has prevented people from recognizing the Manifestation of God is that of knowledge.

Men who possess knowledge often become proud, sometimes without realizing it, and close their eyes to the truth.

This is one of those 'veils of glory' -- spoken of in Islam and referred to by Baha'u'llah in many of His Writings, including the Kitab-i-Iqan -- whereby one of the lofty attributes of God becomes a barrier.[1] Though knowledge is a praiseworthy attribute for man to acquire and Baha'u'llah, like Muhammad, has enjoined His followers to gain knowledge, yet it becomes a 'veil of glory' if

through it man is rendered vain and egotistical. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

43-4.] In the early days of the Faith, a certain wealthy and knowledgeable person from Kashan set off with his family for pilgrimage to the cities of Najaf and Karbila.

Circumstances had forced him to engage a Babi caravan-driver by the name of Hashim Khan to transport the party to its destination and back.

The reason for his reluctance to travel in company with Hashim Khan, in spite of the fact that the latter was known to be the most trusted caravan-driver in the area, was that he was a Babi.

Hashim Khan was tall and strong.

He had little education, yet his heart was touched by the light of God's infant Faith.

As a result, he was endowed with the gift of understanding and was able to convince people in his simple way of the truth of the Cause he had espoused.

He was commonly referred to as Hashim Babi.

The merchant and his family shunned Hashim throughout the journey.

They did not wish to associate with one who in their estimation had embraced a heretical Faith.

On such long journeys the party has to stop two or three times a day for rest and to feed the animals.

On one occasion when they were resting, the merchant decided to speak to Hashim to try to guide him back to the fold.

So he called him to come and join the others.

Having thanked him <p34> for his selfless service and care, he began to converse with Hashim and remarked, 'How is it that with all my knowledge, I have failed to appreciate the validity of the Message of the Bab while you, an almost illiterate person, claim to have recognized the truth of His Mission?' Hashim took a handful of sand in his hand and said, 'People like me have no merit in society.

They are like the sand in the desert which has no value, yet, when the sun rises in the morning this sand is the first to become illumined by its rays.

A learned man, however, is like a precious jewel.

It is kept in a box and locked up in a room, and when the sun rises it remains in darkness.' The merchant was moved by this answer.

He continued to learn from Hashim all the way home, until the veils which obscured his vision were removed and the jewel of his heart was enlightened by the radiance of God's new-born Faith.

This simple answer by Hashim is very profound indeed.

While it exalts the station of knowledge, it demonstrates that when the Sun of Truth appears in the world, men of learning must make an effort to open their hearts and souls to its rays and to become illumined by them.

Other veils which prevent people from embracing the new Faith of God are prejudices of all kinds, materialism, wealth, power and many others which have surrounded human society today and plunged it into a state of utter darkness and deprivation.

Detachment In the Mathnavi Baha'u'llah speaks about the potency of His Revelation and affirms that through it man can scale the loftiest heights of virtue and spirituality.

He calls on His loved ones to endeavour to attain this station by turning to Him with pure hearts and with devotion, and then detaching themselves from earthly things.

In many of His Tablets Baha'u'llah has stated that the greatest achievement for man is detachment from all things save God.

The soul can acquire faith and <p35> progress towards God to the degree of its detachment from this world.

But detachment is often misunderstood and is taken to mean renouncing the world.

Many sects and groups of people are inclined to shut themselves away in monasteries or similar institutions, thinking that such a practice will enhance their spiritual status.

The teachings of Baha'u'llah are emphatically against this.

For instance, in His second Tablet to Napoleon III, Baha'u'llah addresses the monks in these words:

O concourse of monks!

Seclude not yourselves in churches and cloisters.

Come forth by My leave, and occupy yourselves with that which will profit your souls and the souls of men.

Thus biddeth you the King of the Day of Reckoning.

Seclude yourselves in the stronghold of My love.

This, verily, is a befitting seclusion, were ye of them that perceive it.

He that shutteth himself up in a house is indeed as one dead.

It behoveth man to show forth that which will profit all created things, and he that bringeth forth no fruit is fit for fire.(6) Man may possess all the good things of the world, live in luxury and yet be detached from

earthly things.[1] God has created this world and all it contains for man's use and enjoyment, provided he lives in accordance with the teachings of God. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

75-7.] Baha'u'llah in one of His Tablets(7)mentions that this world is filled with material bounties from God, that all good and beautiful things are manifestations of His attributes and that to possess them is not attachment.

He warns, however, that the things of this world are all transitory and man should not fix his affection upon them, nor allow himself to be possessed by them.

In the same Tablet Baha'u'llah explains the meaning of attachment to the world as being attachment to those who have denied Him and turned aside from His Cause.

In another Tablet(8)Baha'u'llah states that there are three barriers between <p36> God and man.

He exhorts the believers to pass beyond them so that they may be enabled to attain His presence.

The first one, which we have just discussed, is attachment to this mortal world.

The second is attachment to the next world and all that is destined for man in the life hereafter.

And the third is attachment to the 'Kingdom of Names'.

To understand the significance of the second barrier let us remember that the purpose of life is to know and worship God.

One of the traditions of Islam states that in the beginning God was a hidden treasure; because He desired to be discovered and recognized, He created man.

And man, through endeavour and spiritual instinct, has been successful in discovering God.

Through the powers and attributes which God has bestowed upon him, as well as through the light which His Manifestations have shed on his path, he has been enabled to know his Creator[1] and worship Him.

Baha'u'llah states in The Hidden Words: [1 Since it is not possible to know God in His essence, man attains to the knowledge of God when he knows His Manifestation.

See vol.

I, pp.

175-7.] O Son of Man!

I loved thy creation, hence I created thee.

Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life.(9) And in a prayer which Baha'u'llah revealed for His followers to recite He writes: 'I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee...'[2](10) [2 Worship of God is not only through prayer and devotion.

Baha'u'llah has ordained that work performed in the spirit of service to mankind is also to be regarded as worship.] This, therefore, is the purpose of creation.

Man's deeds are praiseworthy in the sight of God when they are performed solely for His love and for no other reason.

To this Baha'u'llah testifies in the Kitab-i-Aqdas: 'Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty.'(11) If man's motive for his actions <p37> is that he may reap a reward for himself in the next world, then this is attachment.

To be detached means to do everything for the sake of God and to seek no recompense.

What a contrast between this attitude and that prevailing in human society at the present time, where almost every action is designed to bring forth rewards for the individual.

The attitude of expediency and self-interest has so conditioned the mind of man today that even in spiritual matters such as faith and belief in God, man often looks for something that will primarily satisfy his own needs.

Many people today join one religion or another in the hope of receiving some spiritual help or other benefit such as peace of mind or salvation.

This is not the right motive for following a religion.

For the story of every religion is written with the language of love.

A true lover has no ulterior motives or self-interest, but only a passionate love for his beloved.

Man's first duty is to recognize and love the Manifestation of God and then to follow Him, for He alone in the whole of creation deserves to be glorified and exalted and is worthy of praise and worship.

Man, because of his animal nature, is a selfish being.

The instinct for survival drives him to find food, clothing and other necessities of life.

Then he seeks after security, wealth, power and similar possessions.

All these, as well as his intellectual, emotional and spiritual pursuits, revolve around his own self, and are aimed to serve his well-being, prosperity and happiness.

He is always in search of things to add to his possessions as long as he can derive some benefit from them.

When man encounters the Faith of God and recognizes its glory he tends to add it, in the usual way, to his other treasures.

He puts his religion on a par with his other pursuits, and selfishly expects to benefit from it just as he benefits from his other possessions.

He wants the Faith of God to serve him and bring him joy and satisfaction.

This concept and practice is attachment to the world and against the law of creation.

For God has not given His Revelation in order that it may satisfy <p38> the selfish interests of man.

On the contrary, man is expected to arrange his life in such a way as to serve and revolve around the Revelation of God.

If the individual follows the Cause of God unselfishly and with pure motive, his life will be so blessed that the powers and attributes of God will be revealed within his soul.

Whereas if he seeks these attributes to gratify his own ego, such a motive will cause him to be deprived of the outpouring of God's grace and bounty.

In this day those who have fully recognized the station of Baha'u'llah, and are endowed with the gift of true understanding, have embraced His Faith not because they discovered that it would bring happiness to them, solve their personal problems, remove their afflictions and enrich their spiritual lives, but rather because they recognized that Baha'u'llah is the Manifestation of God for this age and were drawn to Him as iron is attracted to a magnet.

Their eyes have been dazzled by the glory of His Revelation and their hearts seized by the potency of His Word.

They know that the Cause He has revealed is exalted above all creation and that man has come into being primarily to serve it.

This, and only this, should be the motive for following the Faith of God.

When the believer turns with true love to the Manifestation of God, he cannot help but leave aside his own interests and desires and seek only the good pleasure of His Lord.

Yet in so doing, he will receive heavenly virtues and powers as a by-product of his love for and submission to the Manifestation of God.

Indeed, it is true to say that the only people who experience real happiness and acquire divine virtues to the utmost are those who with no self-interest recognize and follow the Manifestation of God and are detached from the rewards of this life and the next.

Mirza Azizu'llah-i-Misbah was one of the great scholars of the Faith.

His life and learning have shed imperishable lustre on the annals of the Cause during the ministries of Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.

In his collection of gem-like meditations we find this short yet profound statement:<p39> He who seeks reward for his deeds will be given the Garden of Paradise; and he who seeks God is in no need of paradise.(l2) The third barrier which Baha'u'llah mentions is attachment to the 'Kingdom of Names'.

In His Writings there are many references to this kingdom.

For instance in a Tablet Baha'u'llah states:

The Pen of the Most High is unceasingly calling; and yet, how few are those that have inclined their ear to its voice!

The dwellers of the kingdom of names have busied themselves with the gay livery of the world, forgetful that every man that hath eyes to perceive and ears to hear cannot but readily recognize how evanescent are its colours.(l3) God in His own essence is exalted above attributes.

However, in all His dominions and within each of His worlds, both spiritual and physical, He reveals the kingdom of His attributes.

Every created thing manifests the names and attributes of God.

In the spiritual world, these attributes are manifest with such intensity that man will never be able to comprehend them in this life.

In the human world, however, these attributes appear within the 'Kingdom of Names' and man often becomes attached to these names.

In the Lawh-i-Nasir,[1](14) speaking with the voice of God, Baha'u'llah states that a name from among His names which He had created with one Word and into which He had breathed a new life, rose up against Him and opposed His authority.

Because of attachment to this name, He testifies that some people of the Bayan rejected His Cause and deprived themselves of His glory.

Here Baha'u'llah is alluding to the name 'Azal',[2] the title of Mirza Yahya.

Indeed, this name, which is one of the attributes of God, became a barrier for many who blindly <p40> followed him because of their attachment to an exalted title.

Mirza Yahya himself was also misled by this name.

He extolled its virtues and remained attached to it till the end of his life.
[1 See pp.

245-47.] [2 'Azal' (Eternity) is one of the attributes of God.

This was a title conferred upon Mirza Yahya who was referred to as Subh-i-Azal (Morn of Eternity).] In many of His Tablets Baha'u'llah exhorts His followers not to become the bond-slaves of the Kingdom of Names.

The well-known Islamic saying, 'The Names come down from heaven', has many

significances.

In this world every one of God's attributes is clad with a name, and every such name reveals the characteristics of its attribute.

For instance, generosity is an attribute of God, and it manifests itself in human beings.

However, a person who has this attribute often becomes proud of it and loves to be referred to as generous.

When his generosity is acknowledged by other people, he becomes happy, and when it is ignored, unhappy.

This is one form of attachment to the Kingdom of Names.

Although this example concerns the name 'generosity', the same is true of all the names and attributes of God manifested within the individual.

Usually, man ascribes these attributes to his own person rather than to God and employs them to exalt his own ego.

For instance, a learned man uses the attribute of knowledge to become famous and feels gratified and uplifted when his name is publicized far and wide.

Or there is the individual whose heart leaps with feelings of pride and satisfaction when he hears his name mentioned and finds himself admired.

These are examples of attachment to the Kingdom of Names.

Human society at present exerts a pernicious influence upon the soul of man.

Instead of allowing him to live a life of service and sacrifice, it teaches him to pride himself on his accomplishments.

From early childhood he is trained to develop his ego and to seek to exalt himself above others.

His ultimate aim is to achieve self-importance, success and power.

The Revelation of Baha'u'llah aims to reverse this process.

The soul of man needs to be adorned with the virtues of humility and self-effacement so that it may become detached from the Kingdom of Names.

Abdu'l-Baha, the true Exemplar of the teachings of Baha'u'llah <p41> demonstrated this form of detachment by His actions.

Throughout His life, He never wished to exalt His name nor did He seek publicity for Himself.

For instance, He had an immense dislike of being photographed.

He said '... to have a picture of oneself is to emphasize the personality...'[l5] During the first few days of His visit to London, He refused to be photographed.

However, as a result of much pressure by the newspaper reporters, and persistent pleas by the friends to take His photograph, Abdu'l-Baha acquiesced in order to make them happy.

The exalted titles which were conferred upon Him by Baha'u'llah were indicative of Abdu'l-Baha's lofty station.

Yet Abdu'l-Baha never applied them to Himself.

Instead, after the ascension of Baha'u'llah, He took the title of Abdu'l-Baha (Servant of Baha) and urged the believers to call Him only by this name.

True servitude at the threshold of Baha'u'llah was all he prized.

These are some of His words as He describes with utter self effacement the reality of His station:

My name is Abdu'l-Baha.

My qualification is Abdu'l-Baha.

My reality is Abdu'l-Baha.

My praise is Abdu'l-Baha.

Thralldom to the Blessed Perfection[1] is my glorious and refulgent diadem, and servitude to all the human race my perpetual religion...

No name, no title, no mention, no commendation have I, nor will ever have, except Abdu'l-Baha.

This is my longing.

This is my greatest yearning.

This is my eternal life.

This is my everlasting glory.(16) [1 Baha'u'llah.] One of the distinguishing features of Baha'u'llah's embryonic world order is that it does not harbour egotistical personalities.

Baha'u'llah has conferred authority on its institutions, whether local, national or international.

But the individuals who are privileged to serve on them are devoid of any authority.

Unlike men who wield power in the world today and seek to acquire fame and popularity, members of Baha'i institutions cannot but manifest humility and self-effacement if they are to <p42> remain faithful to Baha'u'llah.

Those who do not succeed, through immaturity or lack of faith, in living up to these standards are indeed attached to the Kingdom of Names and are deprived of the bounties of God in this age.

To sever oneself from the Kingdom of Names may prove to be the most difficult task for a Baha'i, and the struggle may indeed last a lifetime.

If a man can only realize that his virtues are not intrinsically his own, but rather are manifestations of the attributes of God, then he is freed from the Kingdom of Names and becomes truly humble.

Such a man will bestow divine perfections upon the world of humanity.

This is the loftiest station that God has destined for man.

Some of the followers of Baha'u'llah attained this exalted station where they viewed their virtues as having emanated from the realms of God and not from themselves.

One such person was Nabil-i-Akbar,[1] who may be regarded as one of the most learned among the Apostles of Baha'u'llah.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali has described a meeting at Qazvin where this great man was speaking to some of the believers.

Here are some of his words concerning Nabil-i-Akbar: [1 See vol.

I, pp.

91-5.] I was so enchanted by the talks of this great Fadil[2] that I must have recounted his words in various gatherings on numerous occasions.

One feature of his greatness was that no one could surpass his extraordinary power for expounding and elucidating matters.

For instance, if he wished, he could prove that water was hot and dry and fire cold and wet, and no one was capable of arguing with him.

Yet I have observed that even as the ocean of his utterance was surging and he was speaking with great vigour and conviction, he would, should someone point out a mistake he had made in his discourse, or should he himself become aware of it, immediately acknowledge his ignorance and confess his misjudgment.<p43> [2 Literally 'an erudite man of great eminence'; an appellation by which Nabil-i-Akbar was often known.] One of his profound and weighty observations was that man is naturally impotent, ignorant, weak, wretched and imperfect, whereas all strength, power, knowledge, wisdom, ascendancy, virtue and goodness are from God, praised be His glory.

Therefore man should under all circumstances regard himself as imperfect, ignorant and a captive of self and passion.

He should not feel depressed or hurt if people impute to him these characteristics which, after all, are inherent within him.

On the contrary, he should be happy and thankful to them, while at the same time he should feel disappointed in himself, should take refuge in God and beg protection from his own base and appetitive nature.(l7) Men such as these were truly detached from the Kingdom of Names.

No doubt it is concerning these men that Baha'u'llah writes:

O Shaykh!

This people have passed beyond the narrow straits of names, and pitched their tents upon the shores of the sea of renunciation.

They would willingly lay down a myriad lives, rather than breathe the word desired by their enemies.

They have clung to that which pleaseth God, and are wholly detached and freed from the things which pertain unto men.

They have preferred to have their heads cut off rather than utter one unseemly word.(18) These thoughts of Nabil-i-Akbar are fully supported by the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

Many Baha'i prayers revealed by Him are replete with passages in which man confesses his weakness, ignorance and poverty and God's might, wisdom and sovereignty.

The Veil of Ego There are passages in the Mathnavi in which Baha'u'llah exhorts man to burn away every veil that comes between him and God.

Then and only then can he behold the beauty and grandeur of his Lord.

One of these veils is the ego.

Baha'u'llah <p44> calls on the individual to kindle a fire within his soul and burn away every trace of self so that the concept and the very word 'I' may totally disappear from his being.

Indeed this is one of the most profound teachings of Baha'u'llah.

When a person tries to exalt himself, to celebrate his own name and aspires to become famous he is, in fact, going right against the plan of creation.

Such an individual hinders the flow of the bounties of God to himself.

Although outwardly he may be considered a great success, in reality he has failed to fulfil the purpose for which he was created.

When a man attains to real greatness, he then recognizes his helplessness, unworthiness and impotence.

And when he becomes truly learned he genuinely discovers that he is ignorant.

It is then that he can manifest the attributes of God within himself and impart them to others.

We find among the meditations of Aziz'u'llah Misbah the following utterances which truly exemplify his own life of detachment and self-effacement:

To relinquish one's love for oneself and to destroy every trace of self, is a proof that one has comprehended the meaning of existence and the purpose of life.(19) The difference between true knowledge and

formal learning is that the former creates lowliness and humility within the soul; the latter drives insatiably towards the search for glory and exaltation.(20) Notable among those who had attained the station of true knowledge was Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, the great Baha'i scholar and one of the Apostles of Baha'u'llah.[1] He is renowned for his vast knowledge, not only within the Baha'i community but throughout the East.

He was an acknowledged authority on many subjects including history and divine philosophy and was an outstanding master of Arabic and Persian literature.

Once in academic circles in Egypt he was referred to as 'God of the pen, a pillar of history and the corner-stone of knowledge and virtue.'<p45> [1 More information about him will be contained in vol.

III of this series.] Dr.

Habib Mu'ayyad, who knew him personally, has written a great deal in his memoirs concerning the greatness of this man.

Here is one passage:

Once people asked him [Mirza Abu'l-Fadl] how he had acquired this vast erudition and how he had become the recipient of this God-given knowledge.

He became so displeased with his questioners that he angrily remarked 'Who is Abu'l-Fad'l!+[1] What is Abu'l-Fadl!

I am only a drop from the vast ocean of Baha'u'llah's school.

If you also enter the same school, you will become the master of Abu'l-Fadl.

If you don't believe me go to Gulpaygan,[2] see my relatives and then you will understand.'(21) [1 His name meant 'the father of learning'. (A.T.)] [2 The birthplace of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl where his relatives lived. (A.T.)] The following story gives us a glimpse of his greatness.

In the early years of this century, Abdu'l-Baha sent Mirza Abu'l-Fadl to the United States of America to teach and help the believers deepen in the Faith.

After his return, he and a number of American pilgrims were seated in the presence of Abdu'l-Baha in Akka.

The pilgrims began to praise Mirza Abu'l-Fadl for the help he had given them, saying that he had taught many souls, defended the Cause most ably against its adversaries, and had helped to build a strong and dedicated Baha'i community in America.

As they continued to pour lavish praise upon him, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl became increasingly depressed and dejected, until he burst into tears and wept loudly.

The believers were surprised and could not understand this, even thinking that they had not praised him enough!

Then Abdu'l-Baha explained that by praising him they had bitterly hurt him, for he considered himself as utter nothingness in the Cause and believed with absolute sincerity that he was not worthy of any mention or praise.[1] [1 This account by Harlan F.

Ober was given to the writer by the Hand of the Cause of God Mr.

John Robarts.] Mirza Abu'l-Fadl has truly set an example for Baha'is to <p46> follow, in that throughout his Baha'i life he never used the word 'I' to ascribe merit to himself.

Courage and Sacrifice In the Mathnavi Baha'u'llah speaks about the greatness of His Cause, and in matchless language portrays the longing of the Prophets of the past to attain His presence and partake of the outpourings of His Revelation.

In this poem He extols the lovers of His Beauty who unhesitatingly sacrifice their lives in the path of God, and exhorts them never to turn away from the field of martyrdom.

Those who truly recognized the station of Baha'u'llah accepted persecutions and sufferings for His love.

They knew that after embracing the Faith of God their lives would be endangered.

Indeed, when they left their homes to go out they could not be sure they would ever return.

The enemy was poised at all times to strike at any one who was identified with the new-born Faith.

So, those who followed the Bab and Baha'u'llah in the early days clearly understood that at any time they might have to lay down their lives in the path of God.

This was their test of faith and the great majority of them remained steadfast till the end.

The following account depicting the scene of the martyrdom of one of the early believers, demonstrates this faith.

Here is one who laid down his life in such a dramatic fashion that many among the multitude of spectators who had thronged the square to deride the victim and make merry at the sight of his execution were moved to tears.

Even the hearts of those callous men who had been appointed to commit this heinous deed were deeply touched.

The illustrious hero who appeared on this tragic scene was Ali-Akbar-i-Hakkak, a very attractive and handsome young man from Yazd, Persia.

He was an engraver by profession and highly skilled in his art.

He was married and had a four-year-old son by the name of Habibu'llah.

As soon as the <p47> tragic news of the Nayriz upheaval reached Yazd, Ali-Akbar set out at once on a journey to visit the historic site where the peerless Vahid together with his band of valiant crusaders had fought and fallen.

On his return to Yazd he manifested such a spiritual joy and overwhelming zeal in the teaching work that soon he was denounced and branded as a 'Babi' whereupon the despotic Governor had him arrested on a charge of heresy and reported the matter to Tihran asking for instructions.

Nearly two months wore on and no word came from Tihran.

Therefore a fine was exacted from the captive and then he was released on bail on the understanding that as soon as the decree was received he should place himself immediately at the disposal of the Governor.

Unruffled by the dire fate which awaited him, Ali-Akbar resumed his occupation in a spirit of complete resignation until after a lapse of three months a message came from Tihran to the effect that any person found to belong to the Babi Faith should be put to death forthwith.

This odious order invested the Governor with plenary powers to carry out his design.

Therefore early in the morning of 15 July 1852 he sent his men to arrest Ali-Akbar at his home.

Having done so they conducted him to the Governor's office in the barracks where the Governor interviewed him.

Though the people in Yazd were steeped in prejudice against the new Faith and apt to fly into a fierce fury at the sight of anyone who was identified as 'Babi', they nevertheless admired Ali-Akbar for his rare qualities and charming manners.

Moreover, his reputation as the best engraver had won him real affection by all who had come to know him.

Even the Governor and the officials felt reluctant to have him executed.

They did everything in their power to make him utter a mere word of lip-denial against the new Faith and thus save his own life.

They employed many a word of persuasion, threat and promise but none could induce this valiant hero to recant nor did the pomp and might of a ruthless potentate influence this stout-hearted man of God to compromise his cherished faith in favor of this fleeting life and its earthly vanities.

The Governor grew <p48> angry; he could not tolerate one who dared to

challenge his authority and persist in his own ideas.

Furious with rage, the Governor summoned his Farrash-bashi (chief steward) and ordered him to put this defiant Babi to death at once by blowing him from the mouth of a cannon.

The order was immediately passed on to the artillery unit who hauled their gun out of the barracks to the adjoining public square.

Then the Farrash-bashi accompanied by the executioner led the valiant victim to the square amidst a gathering multitude of spectators.

Eager to save Ali-Akbar from his fate, the Farrash-bashi employed ingenious ways of intimidation and inducement in a futile effort to break down his spirit and make him abjure his allegiance to the new Faith.

The cannon from which he was to be blown was an old type muzzle-loader, and the Farrash-bashi, knowing that it was as yet unloaded, hit upon the idea of staging a mock execution in the hope that the victim would succumb to the fright and terror that such an ordeal would usually provoke.

Therefore, assuming a wild and serious look, he barked orders at the executioner to hurry up, tie down the victim tightly to the mouth of the gun and have him blown off without further delay.

Thus Ali-Akbar was bound to the gun and left in this frightful position for quite a long while during which the gun crew kept running back and forth pretending to be adjusting their gun, as though they were just about to fire.

During the whole time the Farrash-bashi was watching the victim closely, urging him to recant.

However, he was amazed to see that instead of becoming terrified and shaken Ali-Akbar had maintained his calm and fortitude throughout.

The Farrash-bashi soon realized that intimidation had failed to bring about what he hoped for.

He ran towards the gunner, stopped him from his false attempt at discharging the unloaded gun, and asked the executioner to set the victim free.

By that time (about ll a.m.) the whole square was fully packed with a seething mass of spectators who looked stupefied and bewildered.<p49>

As soon as Ali-Akbar was unfastened the Farrash-bashi came over to him expressing his sympathy in a kindly manner.

He then conducted him to an adjacent public cistern away from the crowd where he offered him a seat near to himself on a little platform.

He reasoned with Ali-Akbar most earnestly, urged and persuaded him again and again to denounce the Faith and save his own life, but the

effort proved unsuccessful.

There sat Ali-Akbar solid as a rock, immovable and uncompromising, resisting the full force of these dire tests.

As these painful moments dragged on, the Farrash-bashi began to perceive with bitter plainness that nothing whatever could induce this invincible youth to recant.

Dismayed and disappointed, he led him back to the scene of death and ordered the gun crew to load their gun forthwith.

Meanwhile a new idea occurred to him which might well prove effective in breaking down the victim's fortitude.

He sent his men to fetch Ali-Akbar's poor wife and child to the scene -- a very strong and challenging inducement indeed.

After a few moments the unfortunate wife appeared in a state of panic holding the hand of their beloved child who looked sweet and attractive in this best suit.

She faced her husband and weeping bitterly implored, 'Come and have pity on this child!' 'What am I to do without you?' she sobbed.

But Ali-Akbar did not answer; he turned his back on them.

Again the wife and child came forward and stood in front of him.

She flung herself at his feet, begging and imploring.

But Ali-Akbar kept silent and once again turned away from them.

Then the little child ran over to his father and grabbing the hem of his garment exclaimed 'Daddy, Daddy, why do you turn away from me?

Don't you love me any more?' These simple, these piercing words must have moved Ali-Akbar more than anything else.

Perhaps he could not bear it, for he raised his head heavenward in such a gesture as to make an impassioned appeal.

It seemed as if he were saying: 'Oh God!

I entreat Thee to spare me from further temptations.' The tragic episode had reached its climax.

The occasion <p50> had become so gripping, so heart-rending that many among the onlookers were stricken with grief and sympathy.

Even the Farrash-bashi's eyes were dimmed with tears.

The heroic self-renunciation and superhuman fortitude manifested by this gallant martyr shattered the last scrap of hope which the Farrash-bashi entertained in making the victim abjure his faith.

Browbeaten and dismayed, he decided to put an end to this sad spectacle

by carrying out the Governor's order at once.

So the victim was presently bound up once again to the mouth of the cannon in front of his unfortunate wife and child.

As soon as this had been done the site was cleared of all those who stood nearby, but the child refused to be pushed further away.

He became restive and kept crying and pleading, 'Take me to my Daddy!

Let me go near him!' The dreadful end was now at hand.

A tense feeling had seized upon the souls and a sense of dread and awe overwhelmed the whole mass of the people in the square.

At a sharp signal from the Farrash-bashi the gunner ignited the explosive charge which was designed to send the victim sky-high, torn into bits in a split of a second.

But to the profound amazement of all the gun didn't go off!

Again and again the charge was ignited but the gun still wouldn't go off!

Everybody looked stupefied and spellbound.

The Farrash-bashi ran towards the victim and calling him by his name exclaimed, 'We don't want you to be killed; it seems that God does not wish it either.

Now won't you have sympathy for your child?!' But he did not say a word, even when his horror-stricken wife and child rushed once again to his side.

He stayed as calm and unconcerned as ever.

In the meantime the gunner was busy at the breech refilling the charge.

The Farrash-bashi paused a moment in earnest expectation.

Perhaps he would now give way.

Perhaps he would say a word of denial.

Perhaps something would happen that could save his life.

However, to Ali-Akbar's mind a compromise was utterly unthinkable...

The soul longed and craved to sacrifice his puny frame for the love of his Lord and to take <p51> his flight to the abode of the Beloved.

Now the golden opportunity had offered itself...

His prolonged and unexampled fortitude served increasingly to throw into relief the striking contrast between his own noble vision and the Farrash-bashi's base pattern of thought.

Far from being grieved and shaken, how jubilant, how thrilled, how

relaxed must have felt his soul when the Farrash-bashi in his utter despair and bewilderment signaled once again to fire.

And this time in a flash of a second the body of Ali-Akbar, blasted into bits amidst a tremendous burst of fire and smoke, flew sky-high, then came down from heaven like a swarm of tiny meteors, accompanied by a shower of crimson droplets, to be scattered far and wide all over the square.

The Governor ordered that the fragments of his body should be left exposed until sunset, that they might be trampled upon by men and animals.

This tragic martyrdom came as a shattering blow to the entire body of the early believers, particularly to his unfortunate wife.

Her grief knew no bounds as she continued to weep and wail, and to beat her head.(22) In contrast to this heroism there were those who were so afraid of being identified with the Faith that they would literally run away from the followers of Baha'u'llah.

Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri, in his detailed 'History of the Faith in the Province of Yazd'[1] has recounted this interesting story concerning a certain Siyyid Abu'l-Qasim-i-Bayed: [1 Not to be confused with the 'History of the Martyrs of Yazd' by the same author.] Aqa Siyyid Abu'l-Qasim was a merchant by profession and a gifted poet.

His pen-name was Bayda [Shining].

He was a well-respected citizen who used to associate with merchants and dignitaries of the city.

He was a staunch Muslim, very truthful and honest, and a grandson of Haji Mulla Rida, a well-known Rawdih-Khan (professional narrator of <p52> the tragedies of Karbila where Imam Husayn was martyred) who used to live in the district of Malamir and was a neighbour of this servant.[1] When Siyyid Abu'l-Qasim wanted to visit his grandfather he had to pass by the house of this servant.

Because our house was known as the house of the Babis, he was so frightened to approach it that he used to run with tremendous speed and pass it by as quickly as possible so as not to be affected by its evil influence.

Eventually this man embraced the Faith, used to attend meetings in the house and often talked about his earlier days, saying, 'Every time I passed by this house my whole being would so tremble that during the whole day I felt disturbed and shaken.'(23) [1 Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri.] A somewhat similar story is recounted by Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali when he was staying at a khan[2] with some believers in one of the towns of Persia.

He describes how two people knocked on his door at night out of curiosity to find out about the beliefs of the Baha'is.

After some hours of talking one of them accepted the Faith.

This is the story as he writes it: [1 Eastern inn with a large court-yard.]
One of them embraced the Faith.

The other one who was staying in the same khan took the Kitab-i-Iqan to his room so that he might learn about the Cause.

He told me the story himself in these words: 'In the evening I sat down and began to read.

After a while I was overtaken by fear in case someone would walk in and find out that this was the book of the Babis,[1] then my life and all my possessions would be gone with the wind.

So I locked the door and continued to read the book.

Then I thought that as it was early in the evening, if someone came and found that I had locked the room so early he would think that since you people were in the khan, the <p53> reason for my locking the door was that I was reading the book of the Babis.

At this time I decided to go to bed and sleep.

Then I began to think that if anyone discovered that I had gone to bed so early, he would become certain that the Babis had left their book with me and therefore I had gone to bed early that I might arise later at night and read it peacefully.

To be concise, at last I took the book into the stable and placed it in the manger.

I returned to my room and began to meditate, wondering how I could read this book after all...' [1 For a long time the Baha'is have been referred to as Babis by the Persians.

Even now some still confuse the two.] At this point, he decided to read the Qur'an and pray.

He continued: 'In a state of helplessness, humility and self-effacement I turned my heart to God, the Knower, the Merciful.

I begged him to show me the way to salvation and confer upon me the water of life.

Suddenly it flashed across my mind that I was distressed, alarmed, and trembling with fear merely because I was trying to read or keep this book.

How fearless and stout-hearted must have been its Author, from Whose heart, tongue and pen this book had come into being.

To produce it was a miracle.

How potent is His influence that He has filled the hearts of many people with such courage and strength as to welcome martyrdom.'(24) Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali goes on to describe how this man embraced the Faith and acquired such courage that whenever he had time during his business hours he used to make copies of the Kitab-i-Iqan in public and teach the people openly.

These incidents, common in those days, clearly illustrate that followers of the Bab and Baha'u'llah did not enter the Faith because of its novelty, or for any personal gain or sensational reason.

This Cause was baptized in the fire of adversity and martyrdom and the heroic souls who embraced it had truly recognized its glory and were transformed into a new and wonderful creation.

In one of His Tablets(25) Baha'u'llah explains that the persecutions heaped on the believers, the opposition of the clergy and the perversity of the masses, all served to restrain unworthy <p54> souls from entering the Cause of God.

In that same Tablet, He calls on His followers to appreciate the special bounties of this unique period in which only a few are chosen.

For, when His Faith is fully established throughout the world, He states, men without merit will claim allegiance to it.

When Baha'u'llah was in Baghdad a certain Mirza Muhit-i-Kirmani, a Shaykhi who had attained the presence of the Bab and whose attitude towards the Faith was that of concealed opposition, sent a message to Baha'u'llah through Prince Kayvan Mirza.

He requested a confidential interview with Baha'u'llah late at night so that no one except the Prince would know about it.

The reason given for this secrecy was that, should the meeting become public knowledge, the position of Mirza Muhit in the Muslim community would be undermined.

Baha'u'llah asked the Prince to share with him two lines of an ode He had composed while in Kurdistan, setting forth the conditions for those who wish to partake of His glory.

These are the lines:

If thine aim be to cherish thy life, approach not our court; but if sacrifice be thy heart's desire, come and let others come with thee.

For such is the way of Faith, if in thy heart thou seekest reunion with Baha; shouldst thou refuse to tread this path, why trouble us?

Begone!

Baha'u'llah is reported to have said to the Prince, 'If he be willing, he will openly and unreservedly hasten to meet Me; if not I refuse to see

him.'(26) When Mirza Muhit heard this, he did not find the courage to go and meet Baha'u'llah.

A few days later he died.

Baha'u'llah touches upon several other subjects and reveals many mysteries in the Mathnavi which are beyond the scope of this work.

Indeed this soul-stirring poem is a marvellous depository of divine wisdom, which it is impossible to exhaust. <p55> 3 The Exile to Adrianople When we look at the circumstances which had led the Ottoman Government to remove Baha'u'llah from Baghdad, we recall the outright refusal of that Government to hand Baha'u'llah over to the Persian authorities and its reluctance to banish Him from Baghdad.

When Abdu'l-Baha was in the Garden of Ridvan prior to His departure for Constantinople, He wrote a letter to a relative in Persia in which He said that after bringing much pressure to bear upon the Ottoman Government, the Persian Ambassador Haji Mirza Husayn Khan became so frustrated by the Sublime Porte that he cut his relationships with his friends in government circles, stayed at home for seven days and refused to see any of the Sultan's ministers.

At last Ali Pasha,[1] a very close friend of his, found no alternative but to give in and order the removal of Baha'u'llah from Baghdad. [1 The Grand Vizir of the Sultan.

See p.

413.] Now that Baha'u'llah was in Constantinople, the Persian Ambassador was making a desperate bid to misrepresent Him to the authorities and thereby secure their support for banishing Him further.

The day after Baha'u'llah's arrival in Constantinople, the Ambassador sent Prince Shuja'u'd-Dawlih and Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Safa, the two most prominent men in his circle, to call on Baha'u'llah on his behalf.

He expected that Baha'u'llah would return the call and see him in person, but he soon found that this was not going to happen.

In those days it was customary for prominent guests of the Government, soon after their arrival in the capital, to call upon the Shaykhu'l-Islam,[1] <p56> the Prime Minister and other high-ranking officials.

It was on the occasion of these visits that people solicited all kinds of favours, made deals and secured the support of the authorities for themselves.

Baha'u'llah refused to do this and did not even return the visits of some of the Sultan's ministers who had already called on him to pay their respects. [1 The highest religious dignitary of the Islamic community.] Kamal Pasha and a few others went so far as to remind Him of this custom.

Baha'u'llah responded by saying that He was aware of the practice but had no demands to make of anyone nor did He require favours from them; therefore there

was no reason for Him to call.

Baha'u'llah refers to this in the Suriy-i-Muluk in these words:

Call Thou to remembrance Thine arrival in the City (Constantinople), how the Ministers of the Sultan thought Thee to be unacquainted with their laws and regulations, and believed Thee to be one of the ignorant.

Say:

Yes, by My Lord!

I am ignorant of all things except what God hath, through His bountiful favour, been pleased to teach Me.

To this We assuredly testify, and unhesitatingly confess it.

Say:

If the laws and regulations to which ye cleave be of your own making, We will, in no wise, follow them.

Thus have I been instructed by Him Who is the All-Wise, the All-Informed.

Such hath been My way in the past, and such will it remain in the future, through the power of God and His might.[l] This attitude of detachment played into the hands of the Persian Ambassador who decided to introduce Baha'u'llah to the Sublime Porte as one who was arrogant and proud, considering Himself subject to no law.

The Ambassador did this mainly through the influence of Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Safa.

This was a man of learning who had travelled widely in Africa and Asia and had been living in Constantinople at the time that Haji Mirza Husayn Khan arrived there as Ambassador.

He became an intimate friend of the Ambassador and was one of his closest confidants.

Haji Mirza Hasan was also one of the <p57> leading figures among the Sufis of Constantinople and was highly respected in government circles, as in those days there was much regard for the Sufis in the country.

During Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Constantinople Haji Mirza Hasan visited Him more than once.

He became aware of Baha'u'llah's innate knowledge and when in His presence showed much respect and humility; but outside he worked against Him.

Knowing that his word carried much weight at the Sublime Porte, the Persian Ambassador used Haji Mirza Hasan as a tool to circulate unfounded reports among the authorities about Baha'u'llah's conduct and His aspirations.

Indeed this man assisted the Ambassador ably in his campaign to discredit

Baha'u'llah and misrepresent His Cause.

At last the machinations of Mirza Husayn Khan yielded their fruit.

Ali Pasha, the Prime Minister, presented a report to the Sultan informing him of the Persian Government's request that Baha'u'llah be banished either to Boursa or Adrianople.

He asked the Sultan's approval for banishment to Adrianople and suggested that an allowance of 5,000 qurush per month be given to Baha'u'llah for subsistence, adding that during His stay in Constantinople He had been a guest of the Government.

He also enclosed the list[1] of all those who had accompanied Him from Baghdad to Constantinople. [1 See pp.

5-6.] Immediately upon receipt of this report the Sultan endorsed these measures and the edict was issued the following day.

Shoghi Effendi has summarized the events leading to Baha'u'llah's further banishment in these words:

No less a personage than the highly-respected brother-in-law of the Sadr-i-A'zam was commissioned to apprise the Captive of the edict pronounced against Him -- an edict which evinced a virtual coalition of the Turkish and Persian imperial governments against a common adversary, and which in the end brought such tragic consequences upon the Sultanate, the Caliphate and the Qajar dynasty.

Refused an <p58> audience by Baha'u'llah that envoy had to content himself with a presentation of his puerile observations and trivial arguments to Abdu'l-Baha and Aqay-i-Kalim, who were delegated to see him, and whom he informed that, after three days, he would return to receive the answer to the order he had been bidden to transmit.

That same day a Tablet, severely condemnatory in tone, was revealed by Baha'u'llah, was entrusted by Him, in a sealed envelope, on the following morning, to Shamsi Big, who was instructed to deliver it into the hands of Ali Pasha, and to say that it was sent down from God. 'I know not what that letter contained,' Shamsi Big subsequently informed Aqay-i-Kalim, 'for no sooner had the Grand Vizir perused it than he turned the colour of a corpse, and remarked: "It is as if the King of Kings were issuing his behest to his humblest vassal king and regulating his conduct."

So grievous was his condition that I backed out of his presence.' 'Whatever action,' Baha'u'llah, commenting on the effect that Tablet had produced, is reported to have stated, 'the ministers of the Sultan took against Us, after having become acquainted with its contents, cannot be regarded as unjustifiable.

The acts they committed before its perusal, however, can have no

justification.' That Tablet, according to Nabil, was of considerable length, opened with words directed to the sovereign himself, severely censured his ministers, exposed their immaturity and incompetence, and included passages in which the ministers themselves were addressed, in which they were boldly challenged, and sternly admonished not to pride themselves on their worldly possessions, nor foolishly seek the riches of which time would inexorably rob them.

Baha'u'llah was on the eve of His departure, which followed almost immediately upon the promulgation of the edict of His banishment, when in a last and memorable interview with the aforementioned Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Safa, He sent the following message to the Persian Ambassador:

'What did it profit thee, and such as are like thee, to slay, year after year, so many of the oppressed, and to inflict upon them manifold afflictions, when they have increased a <p59> hundredfold, and ye find yourselves in complete bewilderment, knowing not how to relieve your minds of this oppressive thought...

His Cause transcends any and every plan ye devise.

Know this much:

Were all the governments on earth to unite and take My life and the lives of all who bear this Name, this Divine Fire would never be quenched.

His Cause will rather encompass all the kings of the earth, nay all that hath been created from water and clay...

Whatever may befall Us, great shall be our gain, and manifest the loss wherewith they shall be afflicted.(2) The night before His departure for Adrianople Baha'u'llah directed Nabil-i-A'zam[1] and Mirza Aqa surnamed Munib[2] to travel to Persia in order to disseminate the news of Baha'u'llah among the Babis, to teach them the Faith and help them to recognize His station.

Others whom He dismissed from His presence that evening were Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Kashani, Khayyat-Bashiy-i-Kashani, Aqa Husayn-i-Naraqi, Mir Muhammad-i-Mukari,[3] and Aqa Siyyid Husayn-i-Kashani.

The last-named had a great sense of humour and at times he used to come into the presence of Baha'u'llah and make Him laugh with some amusing remark. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

202-6.] [2 ibid. pp.

283-7.] [3 See chapter 14.] That evening witnessed a great commotion.

The thought of separation from their Beloved plunged them into such grief that all the companions of Baha'u'llah were moved to tears.

Knowing the vital need for someone in Constantinople to serve as a channel of

communication for the believers in Persia and assist those who passed through the city, Baha'u'llah arranged for Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Sabbagh of Yazd to remain there.

This believer stayed for about two years in Constantinople until others were able to take over his work.

He then proceeded to Adrianople where he joined the exiles and was once again close to his Lord.

On the day Baha'u'llah was to leave Constantinople, a <p60> devoted believer by the name of Mirza Mustafa arrived.

He was a native of Naraq, and had embraced the Faith of the Bab in the early days.

During Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Iraq he had visited that country, and attained His presence.

He had remained there for some time, and beheld the glory of his Lord which was as yet unrevealed to the eyes of men.

In Constantinople he had the opportunity to meet Him only once, when Baha'u'llah summoned him and directed him to return to Persia and engage in teaching His Cause.

He went to Adhirbayjan.

The following are the words of Abdu'l-Baha concerning this heroic soul:

When Mirza Mustafa reached Adhirbayjan, he began to spread the Faith.

Day and night he remained in a state of prayer, and there in Tabriz he drank of a brimming cup.

His fervour increased, his teaching raised a tumult.

Then the eminent scholar, the renowned Shaykh Ahmad-i-Khurasani, came to Adhirbayjan and the two of them joined forces.

The result was such overwhelming spiritual fire that they taught the Faith openly and publicly and the people of Tabriz rose up in wrath.

The farrashes hunted them down, and caught Mirza Mustafa.

But then the oppressors said, 'Mirza Mustafa had two long locks of hair.

This cannot be the right man.' At once, Mirza Mustafa took off his hat and down fell the locks of hair. 'Behold!' he told them. 'I am the one.' They arrested him then.

They tortured him and Shaykh Ahmad until finally, in Tabriz, those two great men drained the cup of death and, martyred, hastened away to the Supreme Horizon.

At the place where they were to be killed, Mirza Mustafa cried out:

'Kill me first, kill me before Shaykh Ahmad, that I may not see them shed his blood!'(3) It was customary at the time of execution for the victim to turn his face towards the Qiblih[1] of Islam.

But Mirza Mustafa <p61> turned towards Adrianople.

He was reminded to face the Qiblih but he refused to do so.

He said 'This is the true Qiblih,' and shouted 'Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha'.[2] [1 The point of adoration, the direction towards which the faithful turn at the time of devotion and prayers.

For the followers of Muhammad, this is the Ka'bah at Mecca.

For Baha'is it was the Person of Baha'u'llah during His lifetime, and since His passing it has been the Shrine of Baha'u'llah outside Akka.] [2 Literally 'O Thou the Glory of the Most Glorious', an invocation, the Greatest Name of God.] Another person who laid down his life in the path of God on that occasion was Mulla Ali-Naqiy-i-Nishapuri.

These three believers were beheaded by the order of Sardar Aziz Khan, the governor of Tabriz, in the same square in which the Bab had been martyred.

This was in 1283 A.H. (A.D.

1866-67).

Baha'u'llah revealed many Tablets for Mirza Mustafa and referred to his martyrdom in some of His Writings.[1] After the martyrdom of Mirza Mustafa, Baha'u'llah renamed his son after the father.

This son and his mother were given the honour of serving in the household of Baha'u'llah in Akka.

But after the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Mirza Mustafa broke His Covenant and rebelled against Abdu'l-Baha. [1 For instance, see Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp.

72-3.] In one of the coldest December months that Turkey had seen for years, Baha'u'llah and His family -- including His two faithful brothers, Mirza Musa, entitled Aqay-i-Kalim, and Mirza Muhammad-Quli, together with Mirza Yahya[1] -- set out on their journey to the city of Adrianople.

The officer commissioned to take charge of the journey was Ali Big Yuz-Bashi.

According to a statement by Mirza Aqa Jan, it appears that Baha'u'llah was accompanied by twelve of His companions.(4) Among them was the notorious Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani whose evil spirit was increasingly casting its shadow upon the exiles.

Through his satanic influence he brought much pain and anguish to their hearts and created severe tests and trials for them. [1 On leaving Baghdad, he had acquired a passport in the name of Mirza Ali, a newly assumed name.

During his sojourn in Adrianople and later in Cyprus, the authorities referred

to him by this name.] In the Suriy-i-Muluk, addressing Sultan Abdu'l-'Aziz, Baha'u'llah speaks of His arrival in the city of Constantinople <p62> in conspicuous glory and His departure 'with an abasement with which no abasement on earth can compare'.(5) He also describes the manner in which He and His loved ones were banished to Adrianople and the sufferings they were made to endure on their way to that city and on their arrival there.

These are some of His words: 'Neither My family, nor those who accompanied Me, had the necessary raiment to protect them from the cold in that freezing weather.' 'The eyes of Our enemies wept over Us, and beyond them those of every discerning person.'(6) The circumstances of Baha'u'llah's banishment were tragic as well as humiliating.

The authorities did not give adequate time to Baha'u'llah and His party to prepare themselves for this long and hazardous journey.

The weather was unusually cold, many rivers were frozen and the only way to obtain water on the journey was by lighting a fire and melting ice.

The members of the party, which included women and children, were inadequately clad, yet some of them were made to ride in wagons normally used for carrying goods while others had to ride on animals.

Of this journey Shoghi Effendi writes:

Travelling through rain and storm, at times even making night marches, the weary travellers, after brief halts at Kuchik-Chakmachih, Buyuk-Chakmachih, Salvari, Birkas, and Baba-Iski, arrived at their destination, on the first of Rajab 1280 A.H. (December 12, 1863), and were lodged in the Khan-i-'Arab, a two-storey caravanserai, near the house of Izzat-Aqa.

Three days later, Baha'u'llah and His family were consigned to a house suitable only for summer habitation, in the Muradiyyih quarter, near Takyiy-i-Mawlavi, and were moved again, after a week, to another house, in the vicinity of a mosque in that same neighbourhood.

About six months later they transferred to more commodious quarters, known as the house of Amru'llah (House of God's command) situated on the northern side of the mosque of Sultan Salim.(7) The two houses in Muradiyyih are now both completely demolished.

An eye-witness has described the second house as a <p63> large mansion with eighteen rooms and a Turkish bath.

Soon after their arrival the companions of Baha'u'llah found accommodation elsewhere and, as instructed by Him, engaged in trades and professions in the city.

It was not long after Baha'u'llah's arrival in Adrianople that its inhabitants became aware of His greatness and were deeply impressed by His genuine love and exalted character.

Their leaders, including the Governor of the city and other high-ranking officials, as well as men of culture and learning, were drawn to Him and soon discovered that He was the source of all knowledge and the embodiment of virtues.

Some of these people earnestly sought His presence, sat at His feet and received spiritual enlightenment from Him.

Such were the marks of honour and esteem shown to Baha'u'llah that on occasions when He walked in the streets and bazaars the people spontaneously stood and bowed before Him.

Their veneration for Him was profound and whole-hearted.

Among the people He was referred to as 'Shaykh Effendi', a designation which carried with it great prestige at the time.

In Adrianople Baha'u'llah did not appear in public as much as He had done in Baghdad.

Instead He allowed Abdu'l-Baha to do this for Him.

But He did occasionally visit the mosques of Muradiyyih and Sultan Salim where some of the learned and devout came in contact with Him, recognized His greatness and became His admirers.

This is one of the remarkable features of the life of Baha'u'llah -- that although the powerful machinery of a despotic and tyrannical government was directed against Him, bringing about untold personal suffering and persecutions, He yet evinced such glory and imparted such love that a great many people were magnetized by Him and were deeply affected by His peerless and exalted character.

That a prisoner and an exile could exert such abiding influence upon men both high and low is one of the evidences of His Divine power and a sign of His authority as the Supreme Manifestation of God.

In spite of the hardships and rigours of yet another exile, the outpourings of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah continued unabated <p64> in Adrianople.

In one of his writings dated 17th Jamadi 1281 A.H. (19 October 1864), Mirza Aqa Jan has testified that from the days of Iraq up to that day, Tablets had been sent down successively and unceasingly from the heaven of the Will of God.(8) This process acquired still greater momentum in Adrianople.

From the tone of these Tablets it became clear that the Revelation of Baha'u'llah had already entered a new phase and that He, who in previous years had only alluded to His station, was now openly summoning the believers to Himself as the Supreme Manifestation of God. <p65> 4 Suriy-i-Ashab One of the early Tablets revealed in Adrianople is the Suriy-i-Ashab (Surih of Companions).

This Tablet played a significant role in the unveiling of the station of

Baha'u'llah to the Babis of Persia.

It is a lengthy Tablet in Arabic and is addressed to Mirza Aqay-i-Munib.[1] Baha'u'llah addresses the recipient of this Tablet as Habib (Friend) and in one instance He mentions Munib by name.

This appears to have led some scholars of the Faith to state that this Tablet was revealed for Mirza Habib-i-Maraghi'i and that Munib was also addressed in it.

A careful study of the Tablet and other historical facts, however, make it clear beyond doubt that it was revealed for Mirza Aqay-i-Munib whom He addressed as Habib.

When Jinab-i-Munib received this important Tablet, He arose with wisdom and courage to disclose the station of Baha'u'llah to those Babis whom he considered faithful. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

283-7 for further information about him.] In order to appreciate the significance of the Suriy-i-Ashab and other early Tablets revealed in Adrianople, one must become more familiar with the state of the Babi Community in Persia before and after the Declaration of Baha'u'llah.

Knowledge of this background is helpful in acquiring a better insight into the writings of Baha'u'llah during this period.

Ever since the days of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad, the great majority of believers in Persia had increasingly turned to Him as the focal point of the Babi community.

To Him they went for help and enlightenment and from Him received their guidance.

His spiritual ascendancy and influence were so strikingly manifest that even the enemies of the Cause had felt their force. <p66> For instance, as we have already learned, a congregation of the divines of Shi'ah Islam in Iraq demanded the performance of a miracle from Him, even though at that stage He had not claimed a station for Himself.

It is clearly demonstrated that Baha'u'llah alone was the fountain-head of spiritual potency and the source of guidance for the Babi community after the martyrdom of the Bab in 1850.

Many believers who had attained His presence in Baghdad had recognized His station while His glory was still wrapped within a 'myriad veils of light'.(1) Others had been forcefully struck by the manifold evidences of His supreme authority and innate knowledge.

During the ten years of Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Iraq, these believers, on their return to their native lands, had described His greatness to their fellow believers and each according to his understanding extolled His virtues and

powers.

Added to these personal accounts of Baha'u'llah, numerous Tablets and Books streaming from His pen had enabled the majority of the believers to appreciate the unique and exalted position that He held within the community.

The State of the Babi Community But alas that human beings are not always sincere or faithful.

There were those who were corrupt and egotistical and who longed for leadership.

A few such men in various towns in Persia made mischief among the believers.

They considered themselves followers of the Bab, but acted against His commandments and exhortations.

Some of them had attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, only to become jealous of His rising prestige and authority.

These men congregated around Mirza Yahya not because he had any outstanding qualities, nor because they particularly liked him, but rather because of their opposition to Baha'u'llah.

For instance, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani had no doubt concerning Mirza Yahya's weakness and superficial knowledge.

Many times had he defeated Mirza Yahya in the course of an argument.

The latter had always <p67> grown angry on these occasions.

Once, before the days of Adrianople, he was so irritated by Siyyid Muhammad's belittling of him that he took his complaint to Baha'u'llah Who called Siyyid Muhammad, rebuked him for his behaviour and instructed him to leave Mirza Yahya alone.

To cite another example: once Shaykh Salman, the devoted servant of Baha'u'llah and entitled by Him 'The Messenger of the Merciful',[1] asked Mirza Yahya to explain the meaning of a certain poem of Sa'di.

Mirza Yahya complied with this request and Shaykh Salman received his reply.

Upon reading the explanation, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani reported to Baha'u'llah that the reply was inadequate and shallow and requested Him to stop Shaykh Salman from taking such misleading statements to Persia.

Furthermore, Siyyid Muhammad, accompanied by Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani,[2] went to the house of Aqay-i-Kalim (Baha'u'llah's faithful brother) and there proved to Mirza Yahya that his explanations were erroneous.

Yet from the early days in Baghdad, men such as these were spreading highly complimentary remarks about Mirza Yahya within the Babi community in Persia.

They circulated unfounded reports about his greatness and claimed that he was the successor to the Bab, that all the Writings of Baha'u'llah had emanated

from Mirza Yahya, and that Baha'u'llah had usurped his position and forced him to hide himself away.

Propaganda such as this always confuses the minds of simple-hearted people, especially when the great majority of them had never known Mirza Yahya.

During the ten years of his sojourn in Iraq he had so effectively disguised himself that even a considerable number of believers who had lived there for years did not know him.

For instance, when he joined Baha'u'llah's party at Mosul, he was able to introduce himself as a stranger, and some of Baha'u'llah's companions did not know his real identity.

The fact that he was the nominee of the Bab was sufficient for the <p68> rank and file of the believers to attach great importance to him. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

109-13.] [2 One of the unfaithful who became a follower of Mirza Yahya.

See chapter 6.] However, most Babis who had been able to meet Mirza Yahya were struck by his ignorance and cowardice.

These men had no doubt about the station of Baha'u'llah and were convinced that Mirza Yahya was merely a figure-head appointed by the Bab for the purpose of diverting attention from Baha'u'llah.

But those who had not attained the presence of Baha'u'llah were often confused by rumours and controversy among the Babis concerning the position of Mirza Yahya.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali has left to posterity a vivid picture of the Babi community in certain parts of Persia during the latter part of Baha'u'llah's sojourn in Baghdad, soon after the revelation of the Kitab-i-Iqan.

This account illustrates the turmoil and agitation created by Mirza Yahya's supporters and draws attention to their misrepresentations.

These are his words as he recalls the early days of his conversion to the Babi Faith:

Although I was persecuted several times in Isfahan and suffered great hardships and ill-treatment, I was happy, on fire with the Faith, attracted and in love with the Writings and Tablets of the Bab, especially the Persian Bayan.

I made two copies of this Book.

The more I read it the more eager I became to read further.

In those days everyone was convinced that the coming of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' was at hand.

I often used to say ... that if the Dispensation of the Bab ... were not

followed immediately by the Dispensation of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', then all the writings, tablets and testimonies of the Bab would remain unfulfilled and were useless.

I did not have a heart-felt regard for Azal.[1] I used to remark, 'What is the difference between the hidden Azal and the Hidden Qa'im?[2]...' Furthermore, I regarded his writings to be truly nonsensical, <p69> except of course his quotations from the Writings of the Bab which were exalted words.

However, I used to be condemned by my own conscience for these thoughts, as I had imagined my own understanding to be above that of other people.

Then two holy Tablets from the Blessed Beauty[3] ... arrived in honour of Zaynu'l Muqarrabin[4] and Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Tambaku-Furush from Isfahan.

These Tablets captivated me and I became enamoured of the utterances of Baha'u'llah. [1 Mirza Yahya. (A.T.)] [2 It is believed by the majority of Shi'ah Islam that the promised Qa'im is living, but hidden away from the sight of men.

So was Mirza Yahya, who lived in disguise and whose whereabouts nobody knew.] [3 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)] [4 See vol.

I, p.

25.] Later ...

Haji Siyyid Muhammad, the uncle of the Bab ... came for a visit to Isfahan and brought with him the Kitab-i-Iqan, revealed in answer to his own questions.

As a result of reading the Kitab-i-Iqan, I became a thousand times more enchanted with the blessed utterances of the Ancient Beauty.[1] I used to mention quite openly that I regarded Baha'u'llah's magnanimity, His unique and incomparable reality, the power of His utterance, the sway of His pen and the persuasiveness of His proofs to be supernatural and the greatest and foremost miracle of all.

But some people were not pleased with my views and would intimate to me that the Kitab-i-Iqan had been written by Azal. [1 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)] Even Mir Muhammad-'Aliy-i-'Attar, one of the early believers, called on me and told me in confidence that 'since the Bab has always given the glad-tidings of the coming of "Him Whom God shall make manifest", has not laid down any conditions or specified any time for His advent, has enjoined upon all to accept and acknowledge Him as soon as He reveals Himself, has prohibited investigation, caution or delay [in accepting His Message], has condemned to hell-fire [those who do not recognize Him], has strictly forbidden the seeking of proofs from Him, and has regarded Himself as the servant and forerunner of "Him Whom God

shall make manifest", all these have prompted Jinab-i-Baha[1] to claim this position for Himself.

He has imprisoned Azal and some times has whipped him so that he might answer His questions. [1 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)] <p70> These answers are recorded by Jinab-i-Baha and published in His own name.

Siyyid Muhammad[1] has journeyed twice from Baghdad to Isfahan on behalf of Azal and has confidentially told the faithful about his loneliness and the wrongs he has suffered!' [1 Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani. (A.T.)]
My amazement at hearing this knew no bounds.

I stated that it was impossible and I had never heard such nonsense and vain assertions.

The words and passages in the Kitab-i-Iqan were of a style easy to apprehend yet impossible to imitate.

The words of Azal were neither weighty nor eloquent...

Soon I found that I had become well-known and the city of Isfahan was becoming too small for me, and my friends were avoiding me.(2)
Eventually Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali decided to go on a retreat for a period of four months.

He took four books with him, the Qur'an, the Mathnavi,[1] the Bayan and the Kitab-i-Iqan, and went to live in a place away from everyone.

He continues his story in these words: [1 By Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi.]
At last I realized that to seclude oneself is a barbaric act and a waste of one's life.

In order to acquire the good-pleasure of God and guide the people to Him, one must be self-sacrificing.

I was watchful for the advent of the Supreme Manifestation of God, 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

The hypocrisy, lies and machinations of Mir Muhammad-'Ali and Siyyid Muhammad were as clear as the sun to me.

Therefore I decided to leave Isfahan.

Although I was most eager to attain the presence of the Day-Star of Revelation,[1] I was apprehensive lest my coming in contact with the two hypocrites Siyyid Muhammad and Mulla Rajab-'Ali,+[2] who were in Karbila and Baghdad, might somehow affect my soul and conscience.

Therefore for a period of five or six years I travelled around Persia...

With <p71> great difficulties and hardships I visited many places sometimes on foot, sometimes riding, but I was in the utmost joy.

I spoke everywhere about the Revelation of the Bab and gave the glad-tidings that the advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' was at

hand.

In many towns I was persecuted, beaten and imprisoned... [1 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)] [2 A brother of the second wife of the Bab and a follower of Mirza Yahya.] In Shiraz I met Haji Siyyid Muhammad, the uncle of the Bab, and some other believers...

They were filled with love for Him and were joyously awaiting the Revelation of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

There was no mention of Azal...

The late Aqa Siyyid Abdu'r-Rahim-i-Isfahani had made certain extracts from the Bayan and other books of the Bab through which he used to prove that Baha'u'llah, exalted be His glory, was the Promised One of the Bayan, that Azal was only a name without a reality, like a body without a soul.

As a result of such pronouncements Aqa Siyyid Abdu'r-Rahim was denounced by some.

He used to give us the following account: 'After the martyrdom of the Bab when Azal had become famous, I travelled from Isfahan to Tihran with the express purpose of meeting him.

In the bazaar I met Baha'u'llah, the Day-Star of Revelation, the Speaker of Sinai ... the mention of whose name has adorned the Books and Tablets of the Bab.

I attained His presence at a time when His glory was hidden behind a myriad veils of light.

He asked me if I had come to meet Azal?

I answered in the affirmative.

I had actually attained the presence of Baha'u'llah before this at Badasht.

I had recognized His glory and greatness, His uniqueness and magnanimity by the manner in which Quddus and Tahirih used to bow before Him.

I also knew the deeds and actions of Azal; nevertheless since he was known as the nominee of the Bab I considered meeting with him as a means of nearness to God.

I went, in the company of Baha'u'llah, to His house.

He asked for tea to be served.

Thereupon Azal brought the samovar and served the tea.

He was standing in the presence of Baha'u'llah, from Whose tongue were flowing the rivers of wisdom and knowledge.

After drinking tea, Baha'u'llah rose, and turning to Azal said, "He has come to see you", and then went into the inner court of the house.

Azal sat down, I <p72> bowed and expressed my devotion to him, but he had nothing to say to me.'(3) The controversy concerning Mirza Yahya's position lasted for the whole of the Baghdad and Constantinople periods, during which time no one openly challenged his position as the nominee of the Bab, and he always stayed near to Baha'u'llah for his own protection.

It was after his rebellion against Baha'u'llah in Adrianople that any doubt which had hitherto confused the minds of some pure-hearted men was entirely eradicated.

The Declaration of Baha'u'llah in the Garden of Ridvan was made only to a few of His companions.

The news of this historic event was not communicated to most Babis until later.

The Suriy-i-Ashab and other early Tablets disclosed the station of Baha'u'llah clearly and openly.

Mirza Aqay-i-Munib shared this important Tablet with many souls.

Among them was Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, who describes his feelings when he read this Tablet for the first time in these words: ...I arrived in Tihran at a time that Mirza Aqay-i-Munir[1] ... was also in the city.

The Suriy-i-Ashab had been revealed by the Pen of the Lord of Lords in his honour and was received by him.

Since he was aware of my convictions and knew that my heart is turned towards the Ancient Beauty[2] ... he called me and, in private, handed me the Tablet to read.

With the perusal of each verse, I felt as if a world of exultation, of certitude and insight was created within me.

After reading a few verses with great joy, I asked Mirza Munir whether Siyyid Muhammad had duped Azal, or Azal duped Siyyid Muhammad; or whether the two of them had joined together in denying and opposing [Baha'u'llah] and had taken a course of obstinacy and hostility [against Him].

On hearing this Mirza Munir was so delighted that he hugged me and said, 'Their enmity towards the Ancient <p73> Beauty is the cause of their unity.

They deceive and mislead each other so that they may arise in enmity [against Him]'. [1 Jinab-i-Munib. (A.T.)] [2 Baha'u'llah.] I was enraptured and set aglow by the Suriy-i-Ashab.

It affected me so deeply that even now after the lapse of fifty years at an advanced age when torpidity, stiffness and cold have set in by nature, whenever I read this Tablet or remember my feelings on that day, I find myself filled with such joy that I pass into a state of intoxication

and bewilderment.(4) In the Suriy-i-Ashab Baha'u'llah addresses Mirza Aqay-i-Munib with words of love and encouragement.

He reminds him of the days when he journeyed with His Lord, when through his insight and devotion he had recognized the truth of His Cause.

He bids Munib thank the Almighty for having raised him from the depths of ignorance and bestowed upon him such favour and bounty.

He calls on him, first to detach himself from all that is in heaven and on earth, and then to arise with supreme determination and steadfastness to awaken the people of the Bayan.

When we look at the state of the Babi community at that time, we realize that Baha'u'llah had assigned a tremendous task to Munib and other teachers, namely, the reorientation of that community and its transformation into a world community destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind.

The declaration of the station of Baha'u'llah as 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' in the gatherings of the friends was the most exciting and challenging event since the inception of the Faith two decades before.

To counter the unwholesome elements in the Babi community needed enormous courage, and to guide the pure in heart, great wisdom.

Baha'u'llah had inspired His emissaries in Persia with these two characteristics.

The following is the testimony of Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar+F1 who recounts the excitement and agitation among the believers <p74> when they heard the Suriy-i-Ashab read out to them.

He was one of those addressed by Baha'u'llah in this Tablet, and therefore Munib sent him a copy which reached him in his native town of Qazvin. [1 He became an outstanding believer, and one of the Apostles of Baha'u'llah.

We will refer to him in more detail in future volumes.] ...He [Munib] accompanied Baha'u'llah from Baghdad and at nights used to carry a lantern in front of Baha'u'llah's howdah.

He went in His company as far as Constantinople.

From there as instructed [by Baha'u'llah] he came to Persia.

He used to teach the Faith very discreetly, until in Tihran he received the Suriy-i-Ashab which was revealed in his name.

By Baha'u'llah's permission he gradually removed the veil from the glorious countenance of the Cause.

As a result, the trumpet was sounded and a new fervour and enthusiasm were created among the friends.

Through earnest striving and by careful investigation each one was enable to cross this delicate Sirat.[1] [1 Literally 'road'.

It is believed in Islam that on the Day of Judgement a very long bridge will be established and only those who are able to cross it will be saved.

This bridge, according to tradition, is sharper than a sword, hotter than fire and thinner than a hair.

All this signifies that when the Supreme Manifestation of God appears men will be severely tested and only those who pass the tests will attain to His glory. (A.T.)] When a copy of this Tablet (in which, among others, this insignificant servant is mentioned) reached the town of Qazvin, it precipitated a great upheaval and created a severe convulsion [among the community].

Several meetings for explanation and clarification were arranged.

After discussions, talks, investigations and reference to the Holy Writings, each one of the community, somehow in some way, through the bounty of God was guided [to the Truth] and reached the stage of steadfastness.(5) Through the creative influence of the Suriy-i-Ashab and other Tablets revealed in this period, and through the dedicated labours of some outstanding teachers of the Faith, the community throughout Persia was gradually cleansed from the ills which Mirza Yahya and his supporters had inflicted upon it. <p75> It took much time and effort on the part of Baha'u'llah's valiant heroes until Mirza Yahya's satanic influence, his misrepresentations, falsehoods and calumnies, which had polluted the minds of the Babi community for more than ten years, were eradicated.

This process, begun in 1864, took two to three years, during which time the great majority of the Babis in Persia joined the community of the Most Great Name.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali has made an interesting observation on the number of Babis who entered the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

He explains that Muhammad and the Holy Imams guided and nourished the nation of Islam for 260 lunar years[1] so that it might bring forth its fruit through the appearance of the Qa'im, the Promised One.

After 1260 years the Bab, who was the fruit of Islam, appeared and yet only approximately one out of every hundred thousand Muslims entered His Faith and followed Him.

In contrast to this the Bab guided the people of the Bayan for six years.

He constantly gave the glad-tidings of the appearance of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', prepared His followers for His coming, focused their attention on His greatness and glory, sowed the seed of His love in their hearts and watered it with the flow of His words.

Consequently, when Baha'u'llah manifested His Cause, about ninety-nine per cent of the Babi community recognized Him and embraced His Cause.

Only one per cent through their selfish ambitions withheld themselves from His

glory. [1 After the death of Muhammad the Imams were the spiritual governors of the Faith of Islam and elucidated its teachings.

The last Imam died in the year 260 A.H.

According to Baha'i belief, a verse of the Qur'an anticipated that the promised Qa'im would appear a thousand years after this date, i.e. in 1260 A.H. (A.D.

1844). 'He governeth the Cause [of God] from heaven to earth; hereafter shall It return to Him for one day, whose length shall be a thousand years of those which you compute.' Qur'an, xxxii.

5.] The mission of Munib and other teachers whom Baha'u'llah sent to Persia during the early years of His sojourn in Adrianople was primarily to teach the members of the Babi community.

The Suriy-i-Ashab itself is also mainly directed towards the <p76> Babis, and Baha'u'llah has addressed several of them by name in this Tablet.

In it He unveils the glory of His station and clearly proclaims Himself as the Supreme Manifestation of God whose advent the Bab had foretold.

He identifies His person with the prophecy of the Bab concerning the year nine,[1] and states that through His Revelation the trumpet-blast[2] has been sounded.

He calls on Munib to proclaim these glad-tidings with courage and faith. [1 1852-3, the year of the birth of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah in the Siyah-Chal of Tihran.

See vol.

I, chapter I.] [2 The sounding of two trumpet-blasts is prophesied in Islam as one of the signs of the Day of Judgement.

The prophecy is interpreted as the advent of the Manifestations of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.] In this Tablet, Baha'u'llah explains to the people of the Bayan[1] that He, in essence, is the same Reality as the Bab, and that the same Truth has been manifested again.

He admonishes them for their blindness in not recognizing Him the second time, rebukes them for their failure to perceive the creativeness and potency of the Words revealed by Him, notwithstanding their claim that the Words of the Bab constituted the proof of the authenticity of His Message, and warns them that as long as they rejected His Revelation, they would be rejecting all the Revelations of the past including that of the Bab. [1 Followers of the Bab.] The utterances of Baha'u'llah reach their climax when He describes the greatness of His Revelation.

The beauty and majesty of His words as He glorifies His own station are beyond description.

Indeed the perusal of these passages in the original language is bound to ignite a fire in the heart of any sincere and pure-hearted soul, who will

testify that no man, however great, can utter such words of consummate power and exalted character.

In peerless language Baha'u'llah proclaims that the Sun of His Revelation is shining in the midmost heart of creation, shedding its rays upon the whole world, but the blind are unable to appreciate it.

He declares Himself as the sovereign <p77> Lord of all mankind and the Manifestation of God Himself, announces His establishment upon the throne of glory, affirms that no one is capable of undermining His sovereignty, states that the universe is but a handful of dust in His estimation, asserts that one word uttered by Him is sweeter than all that is revealed in the kingdoms of earth and heaven, and praises the true believers who attain His presence and witness the Revelation of His Words.

Since the full text of the Suriy-i-Ashab is not as yet translated into English it is not possible to put into words those exalted passages which Baha'u'llah has revealed, nor is it easy to convey their import in a befitting manner.

Further, the unfamiliarity of Western readers with the terminology used by the Bab and Baha'u'llah makes this task more difficult still.

The statements so far made are only poor attempts at describing some of the utterances of Baha'u'llah in this Tablet concerning the greatness of His Revelation.

The Station of Baha'u'llah There are innumerable Tablets in which Baha'u'llah has proclaimed His station in similar terms.

Some passages from these are translated into English by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, and we may do well at this juncture to quote a few.

He it is [Baha'u'llah] Who in the Old Testament hath been named Jehovah, Who in the Gospel hath been designated as the Spirit of Truth, and in the Qur'an acclaimed as the Great Announcement.

But for Him no Divine Messenger would have been invested with the robe of prophethood, nor would any of the sacred scriptures have been revealed.

To this bear witness all created things.

The word which the one true God uttereth in this day, <p78> though that word be the most familiar and commonplace of terms, is invested with supreme, with unique distinction.

The generality of mankind is still immature.

Had it acquired sufficient capacity We would have bestowed upon it so great a measure of Our knowledge that all who dwell on earth and in heaven would have found themselves, by virtue of the grace streaming from Our pen, completely independent of all knowledge save the knowledge of God, and would have been securely established upon the throne of

abiding tranquillity.

The Pen of Holiness, I solemnly affirm before God, hath writ upon My snow-white brow and in characters of effulgent glory these glowing, these musk-scented and holy words: 'Behold ye that dwell on earth, and ye denizens of heaven, bear witness, He in truth is your Well-Beloved.

He it is Whose like the world of creation hath not seen, He Whose ravishing beauty hath delighted the eye of God, the Ordainer, the All-Powerful, the Incomparable!' Naught is seen in My temple but the Temple of God, and in My beauty but His Beauty, and in My being but His Being, and in My self but His Self, and in My movement but His Movement, and in My acquiescence but His Acquiescence, and in My pen but His Pen, the Mighty, the All-Praised.

There hath not been in My soul but the Truth, and in Myself naught could be seen but God.

The Holy Spirit Itself hath been generated through the agency of a single letter revealed by this Most Great Spirit, if ye be of them that comprehend...

Within the treasury of Our Wisdom there lies unrevealed a knowledge, one word of which, if we chose to divulge it to mankind, would cause every human being to recognize the Manifestation of God and to acknowledge His omniscience, would enable every one to discover the secrets of all the sciences, and to attain so high a station as to find himself <p79> wholly independent of all past and future learning.

Other knowledge We do as well possess, not a single letter of which We can disclose, nor do We find humanity able to hear even the barest reference to their meaning.

Thus have We informed you of the knowledge of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.(6) These statements of Baha'u'llah can be appreciated only by those who have recognized His station and are fully convinced that the Manifestation of God alone represents the Godhead in this World.

He reveals God in every aspect and therefore stands far above the world of humanity.

There is no comparison between the Creator and the created.

Indeed, the world of being is as utter nothingness compared with the glory of the Manifestation of God.

He and He alone can sing His own praise and extol His own virtues.

Beyond Him, no one merits to be glorified.

For the station of man is that of servitude and as such he is not worthy of mention when face to face with the Manifestation of the power and majesty of God.

In the same way that the colours, the beauty and the life of all created things are dependent upon the rays of the sun, man's goodness and virtues all come to light as a result of the appearance of the Manifestation of God.

Although the Revelation of Baha'u'llah is immeasurably great and His station infinitely glorious, He should never be confused with God, the Invisible, the Inaccessible.

Shoghi Effendi in explaining this theme writes:

The divinity attributed to so great a Being [Baha'u'llah] and the complete incarnation of the names and attributes of God in so exalted a Person should, under no circumstances, be misconceived or misinterpreted.

The human temple that has been made the vehicle of so overpowering a Revelation must, if we be faithful to the tenets of our Faith, ever remain entirely distinguished from that 'innermost Spirit of Spirits' and 'eternal Essence of Essences' -- that invisible yet rational God Who, however much we extol the divinity of His <p80> Manifestations on earth, can in no wise incarnate His infinite, His unknowable, His incorruptible and all-embracing Reality in the concrete and limited frame of a mortal being.

Indeed, the God Who could so incarnate His own reality would, in the light of the teachings of Baha'u'llah, cease immediately to be God.

So crude and fantastic a theory of Divine incarnation is as removed from, and incompatible with, the essentials of Baha'i belief as are the no less inadmissible pantheistic and anthropomorphic conceptions of God -- both of which the utterances of Baha'u'llah emphatically repudiate and the fallacy of which they expose... 'From time immemorial,' Baha'u'llah, speaking of God, explains, 'He, the Divine Being, hath been veiled in the ineffable sanctity of His exalted Self, and will everlastingly continue to be wrapt in the impenetrable mystery of His unknowable Essence...

Ten thousand Prophets, each a Moses, are thunderstruck upon the Sinai of their search at God's forbidding voice, "Thou shalt never behold Me!"; whilst a myriad Messengers, each as great as Jesus, stand dismayed upon their heavenly thrones by the interdiction "Mine Essence thou shalt never apprehend!"' 'How bewildering to me, insignificant as I am,' Baha'u'llah in His communion with God affirms, 'is the attempt to fathom the sacred depths of Thy knowledge!

How futile my efforts to visualize the magnitude of the power inherent in Thine handiwork -- the revelation of Thy creative power!' 'When I contemplate, O My God, the relationship that bindeth me to Thee,' He, in yet another prayer revealed in His own handwriting, testifies, 'I am moved to proclaim to all created things "verily I am God!"; and when I consider my own self, lo, I find it coarser than clay!'(7) In order to appreciate the claims of Baha'u'llah, it is essential to grasp the concept and

recognize the functions of the 'Manifestation of God' who appears from age to age.

But unfortunately we live in an age when godlessness has spread widely throughout the world and therefore this task becomes difficult.

The leaders of religion have so distorted the essence of religion and dimmed its light that a growing number of people, mostly <p81> honest but disillusioned, are joining the ranks of the agnostics and atheists, while the great majority of those who claim to believe in God are not sure what their beliefs entail.

The One, the Incomparable, the Omnipotent God, Whose praises have been extolled in all the Holy Books, is now either forgotten in the churches and in the minds of men or has become a subject of controversy, described in countless ways by those who still cling to their old and divided religions.

The words 'God' and 'religion' have acquired strange connotations in this age, and this is due to the fact that the light of true religion has been obscured by the corrupt practices and misrepresentations of religious leaders.

Mirza Azizu'llah-i-Misbah,[1] one of the great scholars of the Faith, has written this profound and yet simple verse in his marvellous collection of poetry and meditations: [1 See p.

38.] If the bishops had not called vain imaginings religion, the philosophers would not have regarded religion as vain imaginings.(8) In another instance he writes:

There is one who worships God, yet is attached to an idol; there is another who, although he bows before an idol, is intoxicated with the wine of the Oneness of God.(9) In many of His Tablets Baha'u'llah has warned that prior to the full establishment of His Cause the forces of irreligion and disbelief will spread in the world.

In one instance He testifies:

The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it.

The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it?(10) Not only is humanity turning towards waywardness and unbelief, but it is losing the language of religion altogether. <p82> The central theme of religion revolves around the Manifestations of God,[1] the Founders of the world's great religions.

One of the great stumbling-blocks in the way of their recognition, however, is that they appear as ordinary human beings devoid of learning and earthly power.

Their apparent helplessness and abasement have led the majority of the people to deny Them.

Only those with spiritual eyes have been able to witness the glory hidden behind Their human temples.

This is the law of God through which good and evil are separated in this life.

One of the governing principles of creation is that man will not be able to receive the bounties of God unless he acquires the capacity for them.

The greatest bounty is the recognition of the Manifestation of God, and this is not given to man freely.

He must earn it by cleansing the mirror of his heart so that the Sun of Truth may shine within it.

The personal circumstances of the Manifestations of God, Who without any apparent greatness or superiority claim to be the vicegerents of God on earth, become the main cause of their rejection by the unbelievers. [1 See also vol.

I: 'Manifestations of God'.] In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah states:

He Who is the Day Spring of Truth is, no doubt, fully capable of rescuing from such remoteness wayward souls and of causing them to draw nigh unto His court and attain His Presence. 'If God had pleased He had surely made all men one people.' His purpose, however, is to enable the pure in spirit and the detached in heart to ascend, by virtue of their own innate powers, unto the shores of the Most Great Ocean, that thereby they who seek the Beauty of the All-Glorious may be distinguished and separated from the wayward and perverse.

Thus hath it been ordained by the all-glorious and resplendent Pen...

That the Manifestations of Divine justice, the Day Springs of heavenly grace, have when they appeared amongst men always been destitute of an earthly dominion and shorn of the means of worldly ascendancy, should be attributed to this same principle of separation and distinction which animateth <p83> the Divine Purpose.

Were the Eternal Essence to manifest all that is latent within Him, were He to shine in the plenitude of His glory, none would be found to question His power or repudiate His truth.

Nay, all created things would be so dazzled and thunderstruck by the evidences of His light as to be reduced to utter nothingness.

How, then, can the godly be differentiated under such circumstances from the froward?(11) In another Tablet(12) He testifies that if the Manifestation of God so desires, He can through only one word conquer the world and possess the hearts of all its inhabitants.

Should such a thing happen every man would acknowledge His truth, but there would be no merit in such an acknowledgement.

Baha'u'llah states that God proves the hearts of His servants, so that good may be differentiated from evil.

To bring this about, His Manifestations occasionally reveal the tokens of His glory and power and withhold them at other times.

There are indications which point to the fact that on numerous occasions Baha'u'llah deliberately concealed from men, in order to test them, the signs of His all-encompassing knowledge and the tokens of His power.

He drew a veil before His glory and therefore to many who were devoid of a penetrating insight He appeared to be unendowed with divine attributes.

The trials associated with the coming of the Manifestation of God are so great that even some who recognize Him and claim allegiance to His Cause find themselves unable to withstand these tests.

Their faith and belief eventually wither and die.

There are others who, through pride and ambition, aspire to achieve the same ascendancy as the Manifestation of God.

Several people of note who came in contact with Baha'u'llah witnessed His greatness, but in their delusion sought to elevate themselves to His position.

The basic reason for their blindness was that they gloried in their own accomplishments.

The Manifestation of God occupies a station far beyond the understanding of man.

He dwells in a realm exalted above all created things.

When He manifests Himself to man, He has no alternative but to communicate His Message in the language of <p84> man.

But because he does this, He is looked upon as an ordinary human being, devoid of any divine powers.

In one of His Tablets[l3] Baha'u'llah mentions that people are suffering from a disease which is very difficult to cure, namely, that those who have acquired a small measure of understanding and knowledge consider the Manifestation of God to be like themselves.

They judge Him according to their own standards and therefore fail to appreciate His station.

Baha'u'llah affirms that many are suffering from this disease today.

He prays that God may remove the veil from their hearts so that they may recognize their own worth and be enabled to distinguish between the truth of His Cause and the affairs of men.

In the Suriy-i-Ashab, Baha'u'llah declares that nothing will benefit man in this day except love for Him.

This love cannot be created in the hearts of men unless they purify themselves from attachment to all things.

Then, and only then, He affirms, will the mirrors of their hearts reflect the image of His resplendent Beauty.

Baha'u'llah confirms this in The Hidden Words:

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.(14) Addressing the Babi community He warns them in the Suriy-i-Ashab that this is not the day of questioning, for He who from eternity was hidden from the eyes of men is now come.

He rebukes them for having failed to witness His glory and omnipotence.

Alluding to the words of the Bab concerning the creative power conferred upon 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', Baha'u'llah asserts that all created things have come into being through a word of His mouth and in challenging language affirms that there is no soul among the whole of creation who has the power to stand before Him and utter one word in His presence.

He testifies that every soul is humbled by the evidences of His sovereignty.

He concludes with this moving challenge: <p85> Within the throat of this Youth there lie prisoned accents which, if revealed to mankind to an extent smaller than a needle's eye, would suffice to cause every mountain to crumble, the leaves of the trees to be discoloured and their fruits to fall; would compel every head to bow down in worship and every face to turn in adoration towards this omnipotent Ruler Who, at sundry times and in diverse manners, appeareth as a devouring flame, as a billowing ocean, as a radiant light, as the tree which, rooted in the soil of holiness, lifteth its branches and spreadeth out its limbs as far as and beyond the throne of deathless glory.(15) Similar statements are to be found in other Tablets.

For instance, in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah proclaims:

O ye leaders of religion!

Who is the man amongst you that can rival Me in vision or insight?

Where is he to be found that dareth to claim to be My equal in utterance or wisdom?

No, by My Lord, the All-Merciful!

All on the earth shall pass away; and this is the face of your Lord, the Almighty, the Well-Beloved.(16) One of the unique features of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah is that for about ten years its Author chose not to disclose His station to the followers of the Bab, and yet during that period He revealed the verses of God unceasingly.

Many were attracted to His person and those who had spiritual insight were able to recognize Him as 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', the Promised One of the Bayan.

But He made no claim during that time, and counselled those who knew of His exalted station not to divulge it to others.

In the Suriy-i-Ashab Baha'u'llah explains the reason for this.

He states that He unveiled His Cause gradually as a mercy to mankind.

For had the light of so potent a Revelation been allowed to break upon the world suddenly, those who were spiritually weak would have been dazzled by its glory and would have perished by its impact.

In another instance in the same Tablet Baha'u'llah mentions <p86> that should He disclose the full potency of His Word,[1] the earth would quake and the heavens be cleft asunder.

However, by an act of concealment God has shown forbearance and mercy towards His servants.

Indeed, as we survey the history of the Faith, we note that the Bab too unveiled His exalted station gradually to the eyes of men.

He who was the 'King of Messengers', the Promised One of Islam and the 'Primal Point' from which was generated all created things, consented, in the early days of His Revelation, as a token of His loving-kindness to men, to be known merely as the Bab (Gate), believed by the Shi'ahs to be the intermediary between the Promised Qa'im and the people.[2] That claim was not as challenging as the subsequent revelation that He was the Qa'im Himself.

As His followers acquired the capacity to bear the weight of His Message, He progressively revealed His station to them. [1 The significance and potency of the Word of God is more fully explained in vol.

I.] [2 Although the claim of the Bab was that he was the 'Gate' to a greater revelation than His own, nevertheless the general public recognized the title of the Bab as indicating that He was the intermediary between the Qa'im and the people.

In fact, some of His followers lost their faith or were shaken when they heard His claim to be the Qa'im Himself.

See for instance the story of Azim, The Dawn-Breakers, pp.

227-8 (Brit.), p.F2 313 (U.S.).] The Command to Avoid Sedition In the Suriy-i-Ashab Baha'u'llah exhorts His companions to arise for the promotion of His Faith, and warns them that the sword will not bring victory to the Cause of God.

The Cause will be exalted by pure deeds, detachment from all earthly things, and steadfastness in His love.

In this connection Baha'u'llah gives His companions a directive: that if the army of the deniers should attack them, they should defeat it through the power of His Word and not resort to force.[1]<p87> [1 See also vol.

I, pp.

278-9.] One of the most important injunctions of Baha'u'llah which appears in this and many other Tablets is to avoid stirring up sedition and mischief.

This commandment is the basis of Baha'i life and affects both the individual and society.

It protects the soul from ungodliness and the community from corruption.

In one of His Tablets[l7] Baha'u'llah says that the believers should never take part in any affair from which the slightest odour of mischief or dissension may be detected.

He exhorts them to flee from it as one would flee from a serpent.

In another Tablet He states:

O ye that dwell on earth!

The distinguishing feature that marketh the pre-eminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity.

Well is it with them that keep My statutes.

Time and again have We admonished Our beloved ones to avoid, nay to flee from, anything whatsoever from which the odour of mischief can be detected.

The world is in great turmoil, and the minds of its people are in a state of utter confusion.

We entreat the Almighty that He may graciously illuminate them with the glory of His Justice, and enable them to discover that which will be profitable unto them at all times and under all conditions.

He, verily, is the All-Possessing, the Most High.(18) As the gloom of strife and sedition deepens in the world today and mankind is helplessly drawn into its dark abyss, it becomes increasingly difficult to find any cause, whether religious, political or social, which can possibly be free from the 'odour of mischief'.

On the other hand, the Cause of Baha'u'llah, which stands for unity and fellowship among the peoples of the world, intrinsically repels any attempt by individuals or groups to introduce into its unique system the pernicious influence of dissension, discord and wrangling.

These are the <p88> words of Baha'u'llah in a Tablet addressed to Jamal-i-Burujirdi,[1] a proud and arrogant believer: [1 See pp. 118-19.] Nothing whatever can, in this Day, inflict a greater harm upon this Cause than dissension and strife, contention, estrangement and apathy, among the loved ones of God.

Flee them, through the power of God and His sovereign aid, and strive ye to knit together the hearts of men, in His Name, the Unifier, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.(19) Those who have embraced the Cause of Baha'u'llah, while associating with the followers of other religions in a spirit of love and friendship, will not take part in or lend support to any activity which tends to run counter to this basic principle of their Faith.

A prime example is their non-participation by word or deed in political affairs.

It may be true to say that no human institutions today are as corrupt as political ones.

They are agencies through which man's worst characteristics find expression.

For the motivating principle which governs politics today is self-interest; the tools it employs are, in most cases, intrigue, compromise and deceit; and the fruits it yields are mainly discord, strife and ruin.

How could the followers of Baha'u'llah work within this framework?

How could they take part in politics and remain loyal to those lofty principles enunciated by Baha'u'llah?

The principles of universality and the oneness of the human race, of truthfulness and honesty, of uprightness and integrity, of love and fellowship are completely opposite to the way in which politics are conducted today.

Recognizing the destructive nature of the present-day order in human society, the bankruptcy of its political, religious and social institutions and their inability to bring unity to the human race, the Baha'is are engaged in erecting on a global scale the framework of a new world order based on the teachings of Baha'u'llah.[1] [1 For a comprehensive study of this subject, see the writings of Shoghi Effendi, especially The World Order of Baha'u'llah and The Promised Day is Come.] <p89> Describing the Baha'i world community and its role in creating a new order for mankind, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, writes:

Conscious of their high calling, confident in the society-building power which their Faith possesses, they press forward, undeterred and undismayed, in their efforts to fashion and perfect the necessary instruments wherein the embryonic World Order of Baha'u'llah can mature and develop.

It is this building process, slow and unobtrusive, to which the life of the world-wide Baha'i Community is wholly consecrated, that

constitutes the one hope of a stricken society.

For this process is actuated by the generating influence of God's changeless Purpose, and is evolving within the framework of the Administrative Order of His Faith.

In a world the structure of whose political and social institutions is impaired, whose vision is befogged, whose conscience is bewildered, whose religious systems have become anemic and lost their virtue, this healing Agency, this leavening Power, this cementing Force, intensely alive and all-pervasive, has been taking shape, is crystallizing into institutions, is mobilizing its forces, and is preparing for the spiritual conquest and the complete redemption of mankind.

Though the society which incarnates its ideals be small, and its direct and tangible benefits as yet inconsiderable, yet the potentialities with which it has been endowed, and through which it is destined to regenerate the individual and rebuild a broken world, are incalculable...

Though loyal to their respective govemments, though profoundly interested in anything that affects their security and welfare, though anxious to share in whatever promotes their best interests, the Faith with which the followers of Baha'u'llah stand identified is one which they firmly believe God has raised high above the storms, the divisions, and controversies of the political arena.

Their Faith they conceive to be essentially non-political, supra-national in character, rigidly non-partisan, and entirely dissociated from nationalistic ambitions, pursuits, and purposes.

Such a Faith knows no division of class or of party.

It subordinates, without hesitation or <p90> equivocation, every particularistic interest, be it personal, regional, or national, to the paramount interests of humanity, firmly convinced that in a world of inter-dependent peoples and nations the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole, and that no abiding benefit can be conferred upon the component parts if the general interests of the entity itself are ignored or neglected...

Their Faith, Baha'is firmly believe, is moreover undenominational, non-sectarian, and wholly divorced from every ecclesiastical system, whatever its form, origin, or activities.

No ecclesiastical organization, with its creeds, its traditions, its limitations, and exclusive outlook, can be said (as is the case with all existing political factions, parties, systems and programmes) to conform, in all its aspects, to the cardinal tenets of Baha'i belief.

To some of the principles and ideals animating political and ecclesiastical institutions every conscientious follower of the Faith of Baha'u'llah can, no doubt, readily subscribe.

With none of these institutions, however, can he identify himself, nor can he unreservedly endorse the creeds, the principles and programmes on which they are based.

How can a Faith, it should moreover be borne in mind, whose divinely-ordained institutions have been established within the jurisdiction of no less than forty different countries,[1] the policies and interests of whose governments are continually clashing and growing more complex and confused every day -- how can such a Faith, by allowing its adherents, whether individually or through its organized councils, to meddle in political activities, succeed in preserving the integrity of its teachings and in safeguarding the unity of its followers?

How can it insure the vigorous, the uninterrupted and peaceful development of its expanding institutions?

How can a Faith, whose ramifications have brought it into contact with mutually incompatible religious systems, sects and confessions, be in a position, if it permits its adherents to subscribe to obsolescent observances and doctrines, to claim the unconditional allegiance of those <p91> whom it is striving to incorporate into its divinely-appointed system?

How can it avoid the constant friction, the misunderstandings and controversies which formal affiliation, as distinct from association, must inevitably engender?(20) [1 Written in 1936.

In April 1977 there were Baha'i institutions in at least 330 countries, islands and dependencies. (A.T.)] The Command to Teach Throughout the Suriy-i-Ashab, Baha'u'llah urges Munib to be steadfast, to put his trust in God and to be afraid of no one, even should all men draw their swords against him and assail him from every side.

With the potency of His sublime words Baha'u'llah instils in him a spirit of might and power, directs him to teach His Cause fearlessly, but with wisdom and prudence, among the Babis, commands him to tear away the veils which have prevented them from recognizing Him with such vigour that every other veil may be rent asunder from the faces of all created things, and assures him that God has bestowed divine protection upon him.

In many instances Baha'u'llah reminds Munib to teach His Faith only to those who are sincere and to avoid the companionship of anyone who shows enmity towards Him.

He counsels Munib to share the Suriy-i-Ashab only with those Babis whose faces are radiant with the love of God and not to reveal it to others.

From the early days of the Faith, Baha'u'llah has enjoined upon His followers to teach His Cause.

His commandment, which is directed to every believer, is the basis of all

Baha'i activity and constitutes the bedrock upon which rests the spiritual well-being of the individual.

Wishing to stress the paramount importance of teaching His Cause, Baha'u'llah, in a Tablet(21) addressed to Jamal-i-Burujirdi, states that should he be residing in the West and learn that a person in the East is anxious to attain the knowledge of God and the recognition of His Manifestation, then it is incumbent upon him, if he has the means, to travel to distant lands in order to bestow the water of life upon that enquirer.

In another Tablet Baha'u'llah writes: <p92> Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Baha, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds.

Such a deed is acceptable only when he that teacheth the Cause is already a firm believer in God, the Supreme Protector, the Gracious, the Almighty.

He hath, moreover, ordained that His Cause be taught through the power of men's utterance, and not through resort to violence.

Thus hath His ordinance been sent down from the Kingdom of Him Who is the Most Exalted, the All-Wise.

Beware lest ye contend with any one, nay, strive to make him aware of the truth with kindly manner and most convincing exhortation.

If your hearer respond, he will have responded to his own behoof, and if not, turn ye away from him, and set your faces towards God's sacred Court, the seat of resplendent holiness.(22) In the early days in Persia, the cradle of the Faith, teaching work went ahead with tremendous devotion and sacrifice.

The believers worked together as a team.

There were those who made contact with people, won their confidence, and after careful assessment of their motives and background introduced the Faith to them and brought them along to the gatherings of the friends.

There were others who were knowledgeable and spoke at meetings, yet others who were excellent hosts and provided the right atmosphere for discussing the challenging claims of the Cause of God.

All these friends worked together hand in hand.

With absolute unity and devotion the believers consecrated their lives to teaching the Cause of Baha'u'llah until great numbers entered the Faith and many of them laid down their lives in His path.

It is true to say that during the seventy-seven years of the Heroic Age of the Faith (which included the ministries of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha) the pure in heart among the Persian people were brought under the shadow of the

Cause of Baha'u'llah.

In this period the gem-like essence of that nation was attracted into the community of the Most Great Name. <p93> In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah affirms:

By the righteousness of the one true God!

If one speck of a jewel be lost and buried beneath a mountain of stones, and lie hidden beyond the seven seas, the Hand of Omnipotence would assuredly reveal it in this Day, pure and cleansed from dross.(23)

Indeed, the hand of divine power had within a short period raised up many heroes among the people of Persia, and made them the recipients of His grace and bounty.

Baha'u'llah has counselled His followers that the first step for a teacher is to teach his own self.

In one of His Tablets He states:

Whoso ariseth among you to teach the Cause of His Lord, let him, before all else, teach his own self, that his speech may attract the hearts of them that hear him.

Unless he teacheth his own self, the words of his mouth will not influence the heart of the seeker.

Take heed, O people, lest ye be of them that give good counsel to others but forget to follow it themselves.

The words of such as these, and beyond the words the realities of all things, and beyond these realities the angels that are nigh unto God, bring against them the accusation of falsehood.

Should such a man ever succeed in influencing any one this success should be attributed not to him, but rather to the influence of the words of God, as decreed by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise.

In the sight of God he is regarded as a lamp that imparteth its light, and yet is all the while being consumed within itself.(24) In His second Tablet to Napoleon III, Baha'u'llah addresses His followers and urges them in these words to teach the Cause:

God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of teaching His Cause.

Whoever ariseth to discharge this duty, must <p94> needs, ere he proclaimeth His Message, adorn himself with the ornament of an upright and praiseworthy character, so that his words may attract the hearts of such as are receptive to his call.

Without it, he can never hope to influence his hearers.(25) An important point which needs clarification is that the basic purpose of teaching is not merely to increase the membership of the Baha'i community, although this happens as a result.

The prime motive is that the individual may know Baha'u'llah and draw near to Him.

In the whole creation there is nothing more important than the attraction of the soul to its God.

In the physical world we observe the attraction which exists between the earth and every object which comes within its orbit.

The earth tends to draw everything to itself and the final goal of every object is to reach and rest upon it.

The same law of attraction binds the Creator to His creation.

The soul is attracted to the worlds of God and if barriers which intervene between the two are lifted, the individual will reach his ultimate destiny.

Teaching the Cause of God is the very act of removing these barriers.

When the soul recognizes Baha'u'llah, it will reach its abode and there is nothing more meritorious in the sight of God than that His servants should be wholly drawn to Him.

The aim of the Baha'i teacher is that the Message of God may be glorified and that the individual may be enabled to embrace His Cause, celebrate His praise, and draw nearer to Him.

The act of teaching, more than anything else, evokes the good-pleasure of God.

In one of His Tablets(26) Baha'u'llah states that there are two things pleasing to God: the tears shed in fear of Him and the blood of the martyr spilt in His path.

But since Baha'u'llah has advised His followers not to volunteer to give their lives, He has replaced it with teaching His Cause.

In several Tablets Baha'u'llah has described the fear of God as the cause of nearness to Him.

This statement may be difficult for some to appreciate.

For why should a loving God be <p95> feared?

Fear is engendered in man when he feels inadequate to deal with a situation, and confidence is generated when he finds himself completely in control.

For example, a man who has been given a responsibility but has failed to fulfil his obligations will be filled with fear when he meets his superiors, because he knows that they will deal with him with justice.

Man, in this life, fails to carry out the commandments of God.

He commits sins and violates the laws of God.

In such a case how can he feel at ease when he knows that one day he will be called on to account for his deeds?

If man does not fear God, it is a sign either that he is without shortcomings or that he has no faith in the next life when he will have to answer for his wrong-doings.

In The Hidden Words Baha'u'llah counsels His servants in these words:

O Son of Being!

Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.(27) The closer one draws to God, the more he becomes conscious of his wrong-doings and the more he will fear God.

The following passages, gleaned from the writings of Baha'u'llah, clearly indicate that the fear of God is the means by which man may acquire spiritual qualities and grow stronger in faith.

The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence and a safe stronghold for all the peoples of the world.

It is the chief cause of the protection of mankind, and the supreme instrument for its preservation.

Indeed, there existeth in man a faculty which deterreth him from, and guardeth him against, whatever is unworthy and unseemly, and which is known as his sense of shame.

This, however, is confined to but a few; all have not possessed, and do not possess, it.

It is incumbent upon the kings and the spiritual leaders of the world to lay fast hold on religion, inasmuch as through it the fear of God is instilled in all else but Him.(28) <p96> And again:

Admonish men to fear God.

By God!

This fear is the chief commander of the army of Thy Lord.

Its hosts are a praiseworthy character and goodly deeds.

Through it have the cities of men's hearts been opened throughout the ages and centuries, and the standards of ascendancy and triumph raised above all other standards.(29) In the Words of Wisdom, He states:

The essence of wisdom is the fear of God, the dread of His scourge and the apprehension of His justice and decree.(30) As already mentioned the other deed which is most acceptable in the sight of God is to lay down one's life in His path and die as a martyr.

One of the great mysteries of creation is the act of sacrifice.

We will not be able to appreciate it fully in this world.

Yet we can readily observe in nature that any created thing, if it is to be

elevated to a higher kingdom, must give up its own existence and become part of a new and more exalted form of life.

Man's greatest attainment on this earth is to serve the Cause of God.

The eagerness and devotion with which he arises to serve the Cause invokes the good-pleasure of God, especially if the believer is ready to sacrifice his interests, time, possessions, and all that is dear to him, in order to render this service to His Lord.

However, to be prepared to give one's life for the promotion of the Cause of God is man's ultimate sacrifice in this world and is the most meritorious in the sight of God.

In The Hidden Words Baha'u'llah reveals:

O Son of Man!

Ponder and reflect.

Is it thy wish to die upon thy bed, or to shed thy life-blood on the dust, a martyr in My path, and so become the manifestation of My command and the revealer of My light in the highest paradise?

Judge thou aright, O servant! <p97> O Son of Man!

By My beauty!

To tinge thy hair with thy blood is greater in My sight than the creation of the universe and the light of both worlds.

Strive then to attain this, O servant!(31) By replacing this greatest act of devotion with teaching the Cause, Baha'u'llah has discouraged his followers from seeking martyrdom.

Instead He has commanded them to devote their entire lives to teaching His Cause to the whole human race.

In one of His Tablets(32) Baha'u'llah even explicitly states that in this dispensation it is preferable to teach with wisdom than to give one's life.

Throughout His ministry Baha'u'llah exhorted His followers to teach the Cause of God with great wisdom.

He did not approve of teaching the public indiscriminately.

He repeatedly advised the believers in Persia, especially after the martyrdom of Badi',[1] that for their own safety and the protection of the Cause they should exercise more care and prudence in their approach to people and not excite or antagonize them.

In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah counsels His followers: [1 An illustrious youthful martyr of the Faith, whose exemplary sacrifice will be described in some detail in the next volume.] In this Day, We can neither approve the conduct of the fearful that seeketh to dissemble his faith, nor

sanction the behaviour of the avowed believer that clamorously asserteth his allegiance to this Cause.

Both should observe the dictates of wisdom, and strive diligently to serve the best interests of the Faith.(33) The great majority of Baha'i teachers in Persia followed this advice.

They taught the Faith to those who were earnest seekers, not to fanatics and trouble-makers.

A few, who were unable to withhold themselves from mentioning the Faith in public, often brought untold suffering and even martyrdom upon themselves and the rest of the community.

A notable example is Mulla Muhammad-Rida of Muhammad-Abad,[1] who <p98> spoke in public openly and with unbounded enthusiasm about the Faith.

By so doing, however, he antagonized the fanatical populace who as a result created great trouble for the friends and inflicted many persecutions upon them.

Baha'u'llah, in one of His Tablets,(34) affirms that Mulla Muhammad-Rida had acted unwisely, but forgives him through His loving-kindness and mercy. [1 For an account of his life, see vol.

I, pp.

84-91.] As we dwell on this important subject, let us remember that the commandment of Baha'u'llah to be wise in teaching and proclaiming His Cause was not intended only for the early believers who lived in the Heroic Age of the Faith.

It is equally applicable to the present day and will remain as one of the essential prerequisites for bringing victory to the Cause of God throughout this Dispensation.

Indeed, wisdom is one of the greatest gifts of God to man, and without it the individual will bring harm to himself and to the Cause.

But wisdom in teaching must not lead to apathy, compromise, or inactivity.

The history of the Faith demonstrates that the early believers in Persia taught the Faith with zeal and enthusiasm, with courage and determination.

They devoted their entire lives to seeking receptive souls and confirming them in the Faith.

No earthly agency, no preoccupation ever deflected them from this exalted purpose.

With that single-mindedness characteristic of the Heroic Age they spent hours of the day and night praying and devising plans to meet those whom they could attract to the Cause.

In most towns and villages in Persia the believers held meetings to which

seekers of truth were admitted.

However, these meetings were often held in the dead of night in someone's home.

For the safety of the friends and the protection of the Faith the believers had to be very careful not to attract anyone's attention when entering or leaving a house.

For the same reasons no enquirer would be admitted until they were assured of his sincerity.

In spite of all this vigilance there were occasions when enemies of the Faith were able to deceive the believers and find their way to these meetings in the guise of <p99> seekers of truth.

Such events always led to great trouble, for once the friends were identified, their lives could be in danger.

On the other hand, there were many occasions in which the believers, for various reasons, had to teach or defend their Faith in public.

Depending on the circumstances, they often suffered great persecutions as a result.

The following account gleaned and translated from the memoirs of Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri helps to illustrate the way in which the early believers grasped every opportunity to teach the Cause, and when the situation demanded it, demonstrated the validity of their faith in public fearlessly and with great eagerness.

They faced the challenge with courage and resourcefulness even though they knew that their actions might lead to suffering and persecution.

Soon after his return from Akka where he attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, Haji Muhammad-Tahir, as bidden, began his teaching work with unbounded enthusiasm and devotion in the district of Yazd.

Baha'u'llah had personally taught him how to teach His Faith.

Many people with whom he talked joined the ranks of the believers, but he never attributed this success to himself.

He was absolutely convinced that the hand of Baha'u'llah was always at work.

One of those with whom he came in contact was Mulla Muhammad-i-Manshadi, a distinguished mujtahid[1] and one of the leading figures among the divines of the district of Yazd.

Being sincere and pure at heart, this great man recognized the truth of the Cause of God and later laid down his life in the path of Baha'u'llah.

This is the story: [1 Doctor of Islamic law who has the authority to exercise independent initiative in enforcing the laws of Islam.] In the winter, I paid a visit to Manshad[1] and stayed in the house of Rada'r-Ruh.[2] One day his brother, Aqa Mulla [1 A large village about forty

miles from Yazd, well known for its Baha'is and Baha'i martyrs. (A.T.)] [2 One of the outstanding martyrs of Manshad.

Baha'u'llah said once, when Haji Muhammad-Tahir was in His presence, that He liked Manshad because of Rada'r-Ruh.

See vol.

I, and p.

258 below.] <p100> Baba'i, who was later martyred, talked about a certain Muslim divine [Mulla Muhammad-i-Manshadi], saying that he was a good person.

He asked my advice as to whether he should invite him, so that I could speak to him about the Faith.

I thought there was no harm provided he did not create trouble.

Mulla Baba'i assured me that this man was not a trouble-maker ... so I agreed that he should be invited.

Mulla Baba'i informed me that Mulla Muhammad was the most learned among the divines and that this opinion was shared by all the Muslim clergy in the city of Yazd, because most of the divines in the city usually spent two or three years studying at Najaf and Karbila,[1] whereas Mulla Muhammad had studied for twenty-one years at Najaf and had received the rank of mujtahid from three different leaders of the Shi'ah hierarchy.

Since Mulla Muhammad was a native of Manshad, he preferred to live in his home village rather than having his office in the city...

He was an acknowledged authority on religious matters and the clergy in Yazd used to refer to him those problems about which they could not agree. [1 Two holy cities of Shi'ah Islam where clergymen receive the rank of mujtahid. (A.T.)] However, he came one evening.

Although I was not a knowledgeable person, I did not feel in any way inadequate, since God, exalted be His glory, was assisting me.

I spoke with Mulla Muhammad for about four to five hours that evening.

But he did not talk much.

When leaving, he said that he would like to come the next evening and bring with him a certain Mulla Ali-Akbar.

Mulla Baba'i, however, felt it was not wise to invite Mulla Ali-Akbar since he might stir up trouble.

But Mulla Muhammad assured him that in his presence Mulla Ali-Akbar would not be able to do any harm.

So the next evening two of them came.

Mulla Ali-Akbar was a brother-in-law of Mulla Muhammad.

He did not have great knowledge but was a meddler and an argumentative person who used to confuse the issues during conversation.

That evening, he took part in discussions with me which lasted till midnight.

In the course of discussion he continually tried to pervert the truth, but Mulla Muhammad, <p101> who always realized this, would intervene and support my argument...

The next evening Mulla Muhammad came alone, but he would neither agree nor disagree with my talks and explanations.

When he was leaving I gave him the Kitab-i-Iqan to read at home.

When he arrived the next evening he said to me, 'I did not grasp much from your talks during this period, but after reading a part of this book, I was assured that God has manifested Himself, because these words are new and unique.'...

So Mulla Muhammad was confirmed in the Faith as a result of reading the Kitab-i-Iqan...

The next day He ascended the pulpit and made the following statement: 'Up to now all of us have been used to consider that the Babis are misled, but during the last few days I have come to realize, and I am now assured, that the Promised Qa'im has manifested Himself.

Anyone who wishes to know this may investigate and find the truth for himself.' Mulla Ali-Akbar who was sitting close to the pulpit shouted loudly 'Jinab-i-Mulla!

What are you saying?

Do you realize that after speaking in this manner you may not be allowed to come to the mosque again or to remain the Imam-Jum'ih?'[1] [1 The leading divine of the Muslim community who leads prayers in the mosque.] Mulla Muhammad answered 'I will not come to the mosque again.' And he never did.(35) The news of Mulla Muhammad's conversion to the Faith created a sensation in Manshad.

Some were dismayed, some bewildered, and many were angered.

The chiefs of the village who were Mulla Muhammad's admirers and friends asked him to help them overcome their perplexity and confusion.

In response to their request, he arranged a meeting to be held in the house of one of the chiefs and asked Haji Muhammad-Tahir to go with him and speak to them about the Faith.

In his memoirs Haji Muhammad-Tahir writes: ...Jinab-i-Mulla Muhammad

came and told me what had happened.

He said that he had promised them [the chiefs of <p102> the village] that tomorrow afternoon he and I would go to the home of Haji Qurban-'Ali ... to speak about the Faith.

I agreed to go, although I knew that such an action was unwise.

But since he had promised to attend, I felt that I had to go, otherwise he might become somewhat shaken in his faith.

In the meantime Mulla Ali-Akbar had become informed of this arrangement and had advised the chiefs that it was not wise for them to take part in discussions on their own.

He told them that he intended to attend ... and bring with him a number of clergymen.

The next day we went to the appointed place where we found about thirty-five people present.

They included a number of ulama[1] and dignitaries of Manshad, all of them opposed to the Faith...

After a short while they suggested that we might begin discussion.

I said to that gathering, 'You had better appoint one person from among yourselves to take part in the discussions and the rest just listen.' Unanimously they chose Mulla Ali-Akbar.

I was absolutely sure that this meeting would bring about great trouble because a meeting such as this had never been held in Yazd or perhaps in any other place.(36) [1 Learned divines.] Knowing that the spokesman for the divines was an argumentative person who distorted the truth and had no regard for logic or fairness, Haji Muhammad-Tahir approached the subject in a manner that completely discomfited his opponent and confounded him throughout.

He spoke for over four hours during which he recounted the history of past religions and demonstrated the truth of the Cause of Baha'u'llah through rational proofs as well as the Qur'an and traditions of Islam.

Concerning that meeting Haji Muhammad-Tahir writes:

That day God vouchsafed such confirmation and ascendancy that the Cause of God was proclaimed and its proof established for all.

On that day Jinab-i-Mulla Muhammad was transformed into a ball of fire.

He was so enraptured that it is impossible for me to describe it...

That same evening, when the meeting was ended, a number <p103> of divines ... prepared a document, put their seals to it and sent it to Shaykh Muhammad-Hasan-i-Sabzivari[1] in Yazd.

In this document they testified that Haji Muhammad-Tahir had come

to Manshad and converted Mulla Muhammad who had openly proclaimed ... the truth of the Faith of Baha'u'llah from the pulpit and had now withdrawn altogether from the mosque.

They also stated that Haji Muhammad-Tahir had been openly teaching the Baha'i Faith in a public meeting at the home of Haji Qurban-'Ali.

They expressed the view that the situation in Manshad was out of hand and asked for instructions. [1 The leading mujtahid of Yazd who was one of the greatest enemies of the Faith.

He passed the death sentence on many believers who were martyred in that area. (A.T.)] Upon receiving this news Shaykh Muhammad-Hasan wrote the death warrant of this servant, and took it along with the sealed document to Haji Mu'addilu's-Saltanih, the Governor of Yazd.

Consequently two officials were sent to Manshad to arrest this servant.

It was, however, providential that I had left for Mihriz[1] a day before the officials arrived. ...On hearing the news, the believers in Manshad immediately dispatched a messenger ... who reached Mihriz in time to warn me.

Together with this friend we set off for the city [Yazd]...

There I stayed for some time ... out of sight ... in the home of Ustad Ali-Askar-i-Shal-Baf...[2](37) [1 A village almost half-way between Yazd and Manshad. (A.T.)] [2 It was Baha'u'llah's instruction that Haji Muhammad-Tahir should not allow himself to fall into the hands of the enemy, so that he might live to teach the Faith. (A.T.)] During the time that he stayed in this house an event of great consequence took place.

Concerning this he writes:

One day Ustad Ali-Askar said to me 'There is a Zoroastrian youth by the name of Bahram [later known as Mulla Bahram] who comes to the door periodically to sell beetroot to us.

He is a very nice young man.

If it meets with your approval, I will bring him in to talk with you next time he calls here.' I said, 'Very well'...

A few days later Jinab-i-Mulla <p104> Bahram came ... and Ustad Ali-Askar brought him to me.

Up to that time no one from among the Zoroastrians [in Yazd] had accepted the Faith.

Indeed, the Baha'is could not even imagine that these people would embrace the Faith, because they were not involved in the early history and events associated with the Manifestations of God and were not included in any discussions concerning the Faith.[1] However, that day I spoke about the Faith to Mulla Bahram.[2] He came the next day, and

after a few days he acknowledged the truth of the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

As a result, his blessed person attained such a state of joy and eagerness that it is difficult to describe.

He became restless, and every time he visited us he showed much tenderness and often wept aloud.

He then brought with him [a fellow Zoroastrian] Jinab-i-Aqa Rustam-i-Khursand, who also embraced the Faith after several meetings.(38) [1 There is a large Zoroastrian community in Yazd.

In those days, apart from some trade and business links, they had almost no cultural or religious relationship with the Muslim community.

Today a great number of Baha'is in Persia come from Zoroastrian background.

The first Zoroastrian to believe in Baha'u'llah was Kay-Khusraw-i-Khudadad, although Suhrab-i-Pur-Kavus in Kashan recognized the truth of the Babi Faith during the ministry of the Bab.] [2 It should be noted that Mulla Bahram had previously met older Baha'is who had informed him about the Faith. (A.T.)] Soon after his conversion to the Faith, Mulla Bahram rose up with heroism and devotion to teach his fellow Zoroastrians.

It was through his dedicated efforts that a great many from among his co-religionists joined the Faith.

Later, Abdu'l-Baha conferred upon him the title of Akhtar-i-Khavari (Star of the East).

After three months of seclusion in the home of Ustad-'Ali-'Askar, Haji Muhammad-Tahir left for the village of Mihriz.

But somehow the enemies discovered his whereabouts and made another attempt to arrest him and have him executed.

But the hand of Baha'u'llah protected him, and he left just in time.

Eventually he had to leave the Province of Yazd until the situation had changed. <p105> In the meantime, as a result of Mulla Muhammad's conversion to the Faith and the proclamation of the Faith to the clergy, the situation in Manshad reached crisis point.

Having failed to capture Haji Muhammad-Tahir, the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Yazd, in desperation, arranged for the arrest of six Baha'is in Manshad.

These six men were taken to the city and put in prison.

From there, they were sent to Isfahan to appear before Prince Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, the Governor of the Province.

They were chained together and, escorted by armed officials, were made to walk, in the heat of summer, a distance of about 250 miles.

One of these men, a certain Aqa Siyyid Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Gazur, had become ill

while in prison.

Yet Shaykh Muhammad-Hasan-i-Sabzivari, the notorious mujtahid of Yazd, ordered that this sick man was to lead the chained prisoners to Isfahan and carry on his shoulder the extra length of chain and the heavy iron spike[1] attached to it.

On hearing this, Fatimih-Bagum, the only sister of Aqa Muhammad-'Ali and a devoted Baha'i, volunteered to accompany the prisoners on foot and carry the extra length of chain. [1 The spike would be used to fasten the chain to the ground when they were resting or sleeping at night.] Although in those days women lived a sheltered life, seldom left the confines of their home and never took part in public affairs, Fatimih-Bagum, a maiden, twenty-seven years of age, was determined to walk with the prisoners.

The friends tried very hard to dissuade her from going, pointing out the hazards of the journey by foot in the heat of the summer and under such difficult circumstances.

But their pleas brought no result.

She is reported to have told the believers: 'How can I allow them to take my brother ... and five other beloved of God to Isfahan, while I stay here!

I shall go with these six persons to Isfahan.

If they decide to kill them, they must first take my life and then proceed to execute the rest...

My life is not more precious than theirs.' With a courage and steadfastness that amazed the officials and <p106> onlookers, Fatimih-Bagum, walking barefoot and wearing her veil, led the party of prisoners to Isfahan, and carried the end of the chain and the spike on her shoulder all the way.

These men were sent to prison on arrival in Isfahan.

Through the efforts of Fatimih-Bagum, who managed to plead their case to Prince Zillu's-Sultan, they were freed and sent back to Yazd.

But the persecutions did not stop here.

Some years later these valiant souls were martyred.

Fatimih-Bagum herself was dragged out of her home and done to death in such humiliating circumstances as no pen can describe.

The indignities to which her body was subjected after her martyrdom constitute one of the most shameful episodes in the history of the Faith.

As to Mulla Muhammad, once the great mujtahid of Manshad, whose conversion to the Faith of Baha'u'llah had sparked off such cruelties, he renounced the leadership of the Muslim community after his recognition of the station of Baha'u'llah.

Having no earthly possessions to support himself and his family, he found no

alternative but to earn his living by working as a building labourer.

He was a tower of strength to the Baha'is and served the Cause with great humility and self-effacement, until after some years he won the crown of martyrdom and laid down his life in the path of Baha'u'llah.

The same people who were once his admirers and servants, who used to bow before him as he appeared in their midst, who crowded in the mosque to hear him speak and lead them in prayer, were now intent upon taking his life, for he had embraced the Cause of God.

During the Baha'i massacre of 1903 in the city of Yazd and neighbouring villages Mulla Muhammad was martyred.

The crowds dragged his body through the villages and delivered it to the flames.

The chain of events, leading one to another, amply demonstrates that teaching the Cause in the early days needed great courage and wisdom.

It also shows that victories won for the Faith of God have often resulted in trials and persecutions which in turn have spurred the believers on to achieve greater victories for their Lord. <p107> 5 Tablet of Ahmad (Arabic) The Lawh-i-Ahmad (Tablet of Ahmad) is one of the best known Tablets of Baha'u'llah, translated into English and many other languages.

It was revealed around 1282 A.H. (1865) in honour of Ahmad, a native of Yazd.

A cursory glance at the original Tablet makes it clear that Baha'u'llah wrote this before He was poisoned by Mirza Yahya.[1] [1 See chapter 7.] The life story of Ahmad is very interesting.

An account of his life is recorded in the annals of the Faith prepared by the Baha'i community of Ishqabad.

According to this account he lived to be one hundred and died in the year 1320 A.H. (1902).

In his unpublished 'History of the Faith in the Province of Yazd', Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri has also written a brief account of Ahmad's life.

In it he states that Ahmad died at the age of one hundred and thirteen!

Probably one of the reasons for this discrepancy is that in an Islamic community, people often did not know the date of their birth.

There was no such thing as public registration of births; some parents used to record the birth of their children privately, but the individual did not care about the date.

He did not attach importance to his birthday, nor did he ever celebrate it.

This attitude was due to the teachings of Islam which taught man to be self-effacing and not to glory in himself.

The only person whose birthday merited celebration was the Prophet of God.

Ahmad was born into a rich and influential family in Yazd.

From his early days, when he was still in his teens, he felt a great attraction towards mysticism.

At that age he often <p108> secluded himself in a room in order to commune with God.

His greatest hope in life was to come face to face with the promised Qa'im (Promised One of Islam).

He listened to any person who would show him the way, and often sat at the feet of ascetics and dervishes who claimed to possess the divine light within them.

However, his father and the family, who were orthodox Muslims, were perturbed by the way Ahmad was inclined towards mendicancy and asceticism.

They brought much pressure upon him to relinquish his ideas, but Ahmad's indomitable spirit could not be fettered by orthodoxy.

Knowing that the atmosphere of his homeland was not conducive to his spiritual development, Ahmad took the unusual step of leaving his home.

In those days it was a rare occasion for a young person to leave his native town, especially without the consent of his parents.

But Ahmad was driven by an irresistible force to find the essence of Truth and attain the presence of the Qa'im.

Pretending that he was going to the public bath, one morning Ahmad took a bundle of clothes and disappeared.

He travelled towards the south until he reached India where he hoped he might find a clue leading him to his Beloved.

This was possibly around 1242 A.H. (1826), some twenty years before the Declaration of the Bab.

According to Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri, Ahmad was over twenty years of age when he left Yazd.

He writes:

I was with him [Ahmad] for about four years during the latter part of his life when he lived in Munj-i-Bavanat [in the province of Fars].

He was twenty years of age during the reign of Fath-'Ali Shah when Prince Khanlar Mirza was the Governor of Yazd.

He was then leading an ascetic life, spending his time in prayer and meditation.

He was inclined to be a dervish, and left Yazd for India in the garb of a dervish.

On his way, in Bushihr [Bushire] he came in contact with a baker, and he remained there for some time.

He used to recount some stories about this baker, saying that he [the baker] had a great station in the spiritual realms, was aware <p109> of divine presence and was reputed to be undergoing spiritual experiences.

However, Ahmad left Bushihr for Bombay where he continued his ascetic life and was engaged in prayer and meditation.(1) Ahmad had said that throughout these journeys he came in contact with many mystics, Sufis and other leaders of thought.

But he became disappointed and disillusioned.

In spite of imposing upon himself a rigorous self-discipline, and carrying out may prayerful exercises such as prostrating himself and repeating a certain verse of the Qur'an twelve thousand times, he did not find the object of his quest in India.

Dismayed and disheartened, he retraced his steps to Persia.

He made his home in Kashan where he married and worked as a hand-weaver.

The following is an extract from his spoken chronicle to some believers.

Some time passed, and the news of the Bab from Shiraz reached many areas including Kashan.

A strong urge was created in me to investigate this message.

I made enquiries through every channel, until one day I met a traveller[1] in the caravanserai.

When I enquired of him, he said 'If you are a seeker of truth proceed to Mashhad[2] where you may visit a certain Mulla Abdu'l-Khaliq-i-Yazdi who can help you in your investigations.' [1 This traveller must have been a Babi himself.] [2 The distance between Kashan and Mashhad (Meshed) is approximately 500 miles.] After hearing this, I set off on my journey early next day.

I walked all the way to Tihran and from there to Mashhad.

However, upon my arrival I became ill and had to convalesce for two months in that city.

On recovering, I called at the home of Mulla Abdu'l-Khaliq and informed the servant that I wished to meet his master.

I met the Mulla and acquainted him with my quest.

On hearing this, he became very angry with me and threw me out.

However, I called again the next day, cried aloud and implored him to guide me.

When he saw I was earnest and steadfast in my search for truth, he

then told me to meet him that night in the mosque of <p110> Gawhar-Shad where he would put me in touch with someone who could tell me the whole truth.[1] [1 In those days, the believers were very careful not to disclose their Faith indiscriminately to the public.

They taught the Faith only to those who were truly sincere.] I went to the mosque in the evening, but after attending the prayers and listening to him preach, I lost him because of the crowds.

The next morning, I arrived at his house and explained what had happened.

He instructed me to go to the mosque of Pir-Zan that evening and promised that he would send someone there to meet me and take me to the appointed place.

Guided by the man who met me in the mosque, after walking some distance I passed through a corridor into the courtyard of a house and went upstairs into a room.

I saw a venerable figure who occupied the seat of honour.

Mulla Abdu'l-Khaliq, who was standing at the door, intimated to me that this great man was the one he wanted me to meet.

This was no less a person than Mulla Sadiq-i-Khurasani.[1] [1 One of the outstanding followers of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

For more information about him refer to The Dawn-Breakers, Memorials of the Faithful and The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

I.] After attending a few meetings I was enabled to recognize and acknowledge the truth of the Message of the Bab.

Afterwards, Mulla Sadiq instructed me to return to my wife and family in Kashan and resume my work.

He also advised me not to teach the Faith unless I found a hearing ear.

Thereupon, I returned to Kashan and soon discovered that Haji Mirza Jani of Kashan was also a believer.

The two of us were the only Babis in that city.

When the Bab was conducted from Isfahan to Tihran, Haji Mirza Jani paid the sum of two hundred tumans[1] to the officers [in charge of conducting the Bab to Tihran] who allowed him to entertain the Bab in his house where He stayed for two nights.[2] Haji Mirza Jani also invited me to go there and attain the presence of our beloved Lord.(2) [1 This was considered a very large sum of money in those days.] [2 The Bab actually stayed three nights in Kashan.

Some historians have stated that one of the reasons that Haji Mirza Jani gave to the officers for entertaining the Bab in his house, was that the two of them were merchants and Haji Mirza Jani was anxious to clear up his accounts with

Him.] <p111> Ahmad then describes his meeting with the Bab and talks about His majesty, dignity and beauty as He conversed with a few of the divines of Kashan.

Soon after this the number of believers in Kashan increased and persecutions started.

Ahmad continues his story:

One day, a number of ruffians attacked the believers and took all our possessions, they even broke all doors and windows.

I hid myself in the wind tower[1] of the house and remained there for forty days.

The friends brought me food and water in secret. [1 Most old houses in central Persia had a huge ventilation shaft which looked like a tall tower.

In the summer hot air would rise through it and cause a natural draught which helped cool part of the house.

These were the wind towers which puzzled Marco Polo as he travelled through that part of the world.] Since it became difficult to live in Kashan, I set off for Baghdad.

It was about five years since Baha'u'llah had taken up residence in that city.

On the way, I met a stranger who was also travelling.

Both of us indicated that our destination was Karbila.[1] Throughout the journey we conducted ourselves as Muslims and prayed according to Muslim rites.

On our arrival in Baghdad, I walked in the direction of the house of Baha'u'llah.

I found that my friend was also going in the same direction, and soon I discovered that he was also a Babi!

We had both dissimulated our faith.[2] [1 A holy city to which the followers of Shi'ah Islam go on pilgrimage.

Since Baghdad in those days was the focal point for the Babis, people became suspicious, if someone set off for Baghdad, and often accused him of being a Babi.] [2 Dissimulation of one's faith which is a form of lip-denial had been practised among Shi'ah Muslims for centuries and was regarded as justifiable at times of peril.

The Babis often resorted to it also.

It is, however, against the teachings of Baha'u'llah to dissimulate one's faith.] After being admitted to the house of Baha'u'llah, I attained His presence.

He turned to me and said 'What a man!

He becomes a Babi and then goes and hides in the wind tower!'[1] I remained in Baghdad for six years and worked as a <p112> hand-weaver.

During this period my soul was bountifully nourished from His glorious presence and I had the great honour to live in the outer apartment of His blessed house. [1 Not to be taken as the exact words of Baha'u'llah.

However, they convey the sense of what He said. (A.T.)] One day, they brought the news of the death of Siyyid Isma'il of Zavarih.[1] Baha'u'llah said: 'No one has killed him.

Behind many myriad veils of light, We showed him a glimmer of Our glory; he could not endure it and so he sacrificed himself.'[2] Some of us then went to the bank of the river and found the body of Siyyid Isma'il lying there.

He had cut his own throat with a razor which was still held in his hand.

We removed the body and buried it. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

101-3.] [2 Not to be taken as the exact words of Baha'u'llah.

However, they convey the sense of what He said. (A.T.)] However, I was basking in the sunshine of Baha'u'llah's presence until the Sultan's decree for Baha'u'llah's departure to Constinantinople was communicated.

It was thirty-one days after Naw-Ruz that the Blessed Beauty went to the Garden of Najib Pasha.

On that day the river overflowed and they had to open the lock gates to ease the situation.

On the ninth day the flooding subsided and Baha'u'llah's family left the house in Baghdad and went to the Garden.

Immediately after their crossing, however, the river began to swell again and the lock gates had to be re-opened.

On the twelfth day Baha'u'llah left for Constantinople.

Some of the believers accompanied Him and some including this servant had to remain in Baghdad.

At the time of His departure, all of us were together in the Garden.

Those who were to remain behind were standing on one side.

His blessed Person came to us and spoke words of consolation to us.

He said that it was better that we remain behind.

He also said that He had allowed some to accompany Him, merely to prevent

them from making mischief and creating trouble.

One of the friends recited the following poem of Sa'di in a voice filled with emotion and deep sorrow: 'Let us shed tears as clouds pour down in the spring; Even the stones wail when lovers part.'

Baha'u'llah responded, 'These words were truly meant for today.'[3+]F2

<p113> These few stories of Baha'u'llah which Ahmad has left to posterity, together with this brief account of his own life, constitute the major part of his spoken chronicle.

In it he has not described in detail the tremendous impact which his attaining the presence of the Bab and Baha'u'llah had upon him.

Nor has he spoken about those six glorious years that he lived in such close proximity to Baha'u'llah.

But we know that there were very few among the companions of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad who acquired such faith and spiritual insight as Ahmad did.

He was vivified by the potency of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, and had the capacity and worthiness to acquire from Him such great spiritual magnetism and radiance that they dominated his being throughout his long life.

Of him, Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri writes:

Ahmad stayed in Baghdad for some years and attained the presence of Baha'u'llah there.

He became the recipient of His bounties and favours.

Once he told me that he had beheld the innermost Beauty of the Blessed Perfection.[1] He was speaking the truth, because he had a Tablet in the handwriting of Baha'u'llah which testified that Ahmad had gazed upon His hidden Beauty.(4) [1 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)] After Baha'u'llah's departure for Constantinople, Ahmad remained in Baghdad and served the Faith in that city with great devotion.

However, in his heart he was longing to attain the presence of His Lord again.

After some time, he could no longer bear to stay away and so he set off for Adrianople.

When he arrived in Constantinople, Baha'u'llah sent him a Tablet which is now universally known as The Tablet of Ahmad.

On reading this Tablet, Ahmad knew what was expected of him.

He surrendered his own will to Baha'u'llah's and instead of completing his journey to Adrianople and attaining the presence of His Lord, he returned to Persia with the sole purpose of teaching and propagating the Message of Baha'u'llah to the Babi community. <p114> Following the example of Munib and Nabil-i-A'zam who were sent by Baha'u'llah to teach His Cause, Ahmad travelled extensively throughout Persia and gave the glad-tidings of the coming of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' to many of the Babis.

Through his dedicated efforts a great many recognized the station of Baha'u'llah and became His ardent followers.

The Babi community at that time was in such a state of deprivation and perversity that sometimes the Babis showed hostility towards Baha'i teachers.

In his spoken chronicle Ahmad has recounted one such incident in Khurasan.

He says:

I left Tihran for Khurasan and spoke to many concerning the advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

I went to Furugh[1] (Province of Khurasan) in the garb of a dervish, and spoke about 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' to Mulla Mirza Muhammad[2] and his brothers.

In the course of our discussions they became aggressive and fiercely assaulted me.

In the struggle which ensued they broke my tooth.

When the fighting had stopped and emotions subsided, I resumed my discussion, saying that the Bab had specifically mentioned that 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' would appear by the name of Baha.

They promised to accept the claims of Baha'u'llah should I be able to verify my statement.

I asked them to bring the Writings of the Bab to me.

They made an opening in the wall and took out all the Writings which were hidden for fear of the enemy.[3] As soon as I opened one of them, we found a passage which indicated that 'He Whom God shall make manifest' would bear the <p115> name of Baha.

They happily embraced the Faith of Baha'u'llah and I left them and travelled to other towns.(5) [1 Baha'u'llah has designated new names for certain towns and villages in the Province of Khurasan:

Furugh (Brightness) for Dugh-Abad; Madinatu'r-Ridvan (City of Paradise) for Nishapur; Madinatu'l-Khadra (the Verdant City) for Sabzivar; Faran (Paran) for Tun; and Jadhba (Ecstasy) for Tabas.

Baha'i writers use the new designations in their writings.] [2 A survivor of the struggle of Shaykh Tabarsi, he became an ardent follower of Baha'u'llah.] [3 To protect the Holy Writings as well as their own lives, the early believers often kept the Writings in containers which were hidden in the walls or under the ground.] It is interesting to note that these brothers in Furugh became outstanding Baha'is, especially Mirza Mahmud-i-Furughi, the son of Mulla Mirza Muhammad.

He was an heroic soul, an embodiment of faith and courage, and the indefatigable defender of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

Concerning Ahmad and his latter days, Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri has written the following:

For some time Ahmad lived and worked in Kashan.

The Tablet of Ahmad (Arabic) was revealed in his honour and he used to carry with him the original Tablet which is in the handwriting of the Blessed Beauty.

However, his wife died in Kashan and his daughter[1] was married to a man who held the post of Saqqa-Bashi [water supplier] to the court of Nasiri'd-Din Shah in Tihran.

Soon after this he went to Shiraz and then to Nayriz where he married again and lived in that area for about twenty years.

He also spent some time at Sarvistan (province of Fars).

He was a very simple man, pure and truthful.

The reason for his coming to Munj was that he wanted to go to Tihran.

His daughter ... had written repeatedly to Aqay-i-Bashir-i-Ilahi,[2] requesting him to arrange for her aged father to go to Tihran, as she longed to see him once again.

However, Ahmad was not much inclined to go.

He was ninety-six years of age when he arrive in Munj, but was in the utmost health and vigour.

He spent most of his time in reading the Holy Writings, especially his own Tablet which he chanted very often.

He stayed for four years in Munj until the Afnan[3] arranged for him to travel to Tihran in the care of his trusted servant.

He stayed for some time in Tihran and went for a visit to Qazvin.(6) [1 Soon after Ahmad became a Babi he lost his only son who was survived by a younger boy named Jamal, the grandson of Ahmad.

Later Ahmad took Jamal under his care and protection and Jamal remained a steadfast Baha'i all his life.] [2 A believer of wide repute in Shiraz.

Mirza Muhammad-Baqir-i-Afnan.] <p116> The Tablet of Ahmad is endowed with a special potency, and for this reason the believers often recite it at times of difficulty or trouble.

Although a short Tablet, it contains all the verities of the Cause of Baha'u'llah and may be regarded as a charter setting out the requirements of faith and servitude for the individual.

In it Baha'u'llah refers to Himself as the 'Nightingale of Paradise', the 'Most Great Beauty' and the 'Tree of Life' and proclaims His august station to those who are pure in heart; He announces the advent of the Day of God and clearly

indicates that he who attains His presence has entered the presence of God.

In the opening passages of this Tablet, Baha'u'llah announces the exalted nature of His Revelation.

The terms He has used are such as to leave no doubt, for the followers of the Bab, that He was unmistakably declaring Himself to be 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', the Promised One of the Bayan.

He also makes it clear that only those who are sincere and detached from everything may approach His court of holiness.

The fact that Baha'u'llah, in this and many other Tablets, emphasizes sincerity as a prerequisite for recognition of His station is in itself one of the proofs of the authenticity of His Message.

In the presence of God there is no room for hypocrisy and deceit.

In the same way that light dispels darkness, the power of truth rejects falsehood.

However, through His mercy God shows forbearance in order that the unfaithful may have the opportunity to mend their ways.

For years Baha'u'llah tolerated the companionship of some insincere and perfidious men, with such magnanimity and grace that they all felt at ease in His presence.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, in his soul-stirring book or reminiscences, the Bihjatu's-Sudur (The Delight of the Hearts), has recorded what Baha'u'llah said on this subject in Akka: ...He [Baha'u'llah] then said 'If people had eyes to see, they would not confuse the signs of God with those of <p117> others.

By observing the unseemly conduct of some of those who circle around Me, they would be enabled to realize, to a greater extent, the glory, the majesty, the greatness, the power and the ascendancy of God, the All-Sufficient, the Sin-Coverer, the Forgiving, the Merciful, He Who is patient and forbearing.

We hear lies, but We conceal them and remain silent.

Then the people who lie think that We have believed their words and that they have managed to confuse the issue in Our presence.'[1](7) [1 These are not the exact words of Baha'u'llah.

They are the recollections from memory of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, as no one would be capable of taking notes in the presence of Baha'u'llah and in any case this would have been considered disrespectful in such a holy atmosphere, except when He revealed Tablets and his amanuensis took them down.] In a Tablet to a certain Muhammad-'Ali, Baha'u'llah reveals the following:

I swear by the beauty of the Well-Beloved!

This is the Mercy that hath encompassed the entire creation, the Day whereon the grace of God hath permeated and pervaded all things.

The living waters of My mercy, O Ali, are fast pouring down, and Mine heart is melting with the heat of My tenderness and love.

At no time have I been able to reconcile Myself to the afflictions befalling My loved ones, or to any trouble that could becloud the joy of their hearts.

Every time My name 'the All-Merciful' was told that one of My lovers hath breathed a word that runneth counter to My wish, it repaired, grief-stricken and disconsolate to its abode; and whenever My name 'the Concealer' discovered that one of my followers had inflicted any shame or humiliation on his neighbour, it, likewise, turned back chagrined and sorrowful to its retreats of glory, and there wept and mourned with a sore lamentation.

And whenever My name 'the Ever-Forgiving' perceived that any one of My friends had committed any transgression, it cried out in its great distress, and, overcome with anguish, fell upon the dust, and was borne away by a company of the invisible angels to its habitation in the realms above. <p118> By Myself, the True One, O Ali!

The fire that hath inflamed the heart of Baha is fiercer than the fire that gloweth in thine heart, and His lamentation louder than thy lamentation.

Every time the sin committed by any one amongst them was breathed in the Court of His Presence, the Ancient Beauty would be so filled with shame as to wish He could hide the glory of His countenance from the eyes of all men, for He hath, at all times, fixed His gaze on their fidelity, and observed its essential requisites.(8) In another Tablet(9)He explains that through His attribute 'The Concealer' He has concealed the faults and shortcomings of many deceitful men, who, as a result, have thought that the Manifestation of God was ignorant of their evil deeds.

These men did not realize that through the knowledge of God Baha'u'llah was fully aware of their wrong-doings, but the sin-covering eye of God had not disclosed their iniquities.

Only when they were about to harm the Cause of God did He expel them from His presence and cast them out from among the 'people of Baha'.

This is how, for example, Baha'u'llah treated Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, or Haji Mirza Ahmad-i-Kashani[1] and several others who for many years were associating with Him, Otherwise their insincerity was so obvious that even Baha'u'llah's faithful companions had noticed it.

Eventually He dismissed these unfaithful souls and they threw in their lot with Mirza Yahya. [1 See chapter 6.] There were others who remained in the Faith for several decades, although from the beginning it became clear to many that

they were corrupt and sinful men.

Notorious among them were Jamal-i-Burujirdi, entitled by Baha'u'llah, Ismu'llahu'l-Jamal (The Name of God, Jamal), and Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji entitled Ismu'llahu'l-Mihdi (The Name of God, Mihdi).

For many years these ambitious and deceitful men were foremost among the teachers of the Faith and their fame spread throughout the community.

However, their hypocrisy was known to those who were close to them.

Baha'u'llah concealed their <p119> faults, revealed many Tablets for each of them, exhorted them to faithfulness and nobility and with forbearance and magnanimity overlooked their shortcomings.

However, He admonished them for some of their actions which were harmful to the Faith.

For example, on one occasion, two outstanding believers, one of whom was later appointed by Baha'u'llah as one of the Hands of His Cause, were on their way to the province of Khurasan to meet the believers and teach the Cause.

Jamal-i-Burujirdi became highly jealous of these two men.

Secretly he warned the friends to keep away from them and introduced them with a vulgar term as two foreboders of evil.

This action evoked the wrath of Baha'u'llah.

The veil of concealment which for years had protected Jamal in the hope that he would repent, was not rent asunder.

The sin-covering eye of God which through loving-kindness had watched over him for so long was withdrawn.

In a wrathful Tablet Baha'u'llah condemned the actions of Jamal and severely rebuked him for his behaviour.

Jamal, however, survived this great blow which for a time shattered his prestige and reputation among the friends.

He was a master of hypocrisy and soon managed to regain his position as one of the renowned teachers of the Faith in the community.

After the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Jamal and Siyyid Mihdi both broke the Covenant and rebelled against Abdu'l-Baha.

They and their supporters tried very hard to bring divisions in the Faith, but were utterly confounded by the power of the Covenant, and soon perished.[1] [1 For more details of their lives see p.

264 ff. and p.

272 ff. respectively.] In the Tablet of Ahmad Baha'u'llah pays a moving tribute to the Bab and affirms that He was the King of Messengers.

This statement, which constitutes one of the basic beliefs of the followers of Baha'u'llah, had a special significance for Baha'i teachers in those days.

For their primary mission was to teach the Cause of Baha'u'llah to the members of the Babi community. <p120> Those who have denied and opposed the Manifestations of God have always resorted to using the two weapons of the weak, namely persecution and the dissemination of false propaganda.

Certainly some of the Babis who had rejected the Cause of Baha'u'llah used this second weapon and spread false accusations that the Baha'is had no regard for the Bab.

Such preposterous claims were designed to poison the minds of simple-hearted people.

Baha'u'llah, in this Tablet and many others which were revealed in this period, extols the station of the Bab, refers to the Bayan as the Mother Book and enjoins on all to obey its laws and ordinances.

However, most of these laws were later abrogated when Baha'u'llah formulated the laws and ordinances of His Faith in the Kitab-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Book) which became the Mother Book of this Dispensation.

One of the most illuminating passages in the Tablet of Ahmad is the following:

O people, if ye deny these verses, by what proof have ye believed in God?

Produce it, O assemblage of false ones.

Nay, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, they are not, and never shall be able to do this, even should they combine to assist one another.(10)

In this challenging statement Baha'u'llah reaffirms that one of the mightiest proofs of His divine station is His Word.

In His writings Baha'u'llah states that the first testimony which establishes the truth of the Manifestation of God is His own self.

Often it is said that the proof of the sun is the sun itself.

These are the words of Baha'u'llah revealed in the Lawh-i-Ashraf:[1] [1 See chapter 10.] Say:

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.

This is, verily, an evidence of His tender mercy unto men.(11)<p121>

The disciples of Baha'u'llah who were endowed with pure hearts and had the inestimable privilege of attaining His presence were similar to those who have seen the sun with their own eyes.

They witnessed the glory of His Revelation and were in no need of proofs.

The arguments, controversies and doubts are always heard from those quarters which are placed in darkness.

In this day, however, in order to recognize the station of Baha'u'llah we must turn to His words.

For the Word of the Manifestation is endowed with spiritual forces beyond the ken of men.

No human being, however accomplished, not even the whole of the human race put together, could ever hope to create such spiritual potency as is released by the Word of God.

Indeed, one of the differences between the Word of God and the word of man is that the former derives its power from the worlds of God, is creative and penetrates deep into the hearts of men; while the latter pertains to the world of creation.

It is limited and basically impotent.

The word of man has no lasting influence upon society unless it derives its potency from the teachings of God.

History has amply demonstrated the power of the Word of the Manifestations of God.

Moses appeared poor and helpless in the eyes of Pharaoh, but His Word had such influence as to defeat the forces of tyranny and transform the children of Israel from a state of bondage into that of sovereignty.

Christ was condemned for proclaiming a new Message.

The civil and ecclesiastical authorities, hand in hand, crucified Him in order to destroy His Cause.

His Word, however, potent and creative, penetrated into the western world, changed the hearts of millions, swept aside the standards of the Roman Empire and reared a new civilization in its place.

Likewise Muhammad, often misunderstood in the West, revealed the Word of God as recorded in the Qur'an.

His teachings and words shaped the conduct of a multiracial nation for centuries and now after a thousand years the influence of His words and the signs of His sovereignty are discernible among the Muslim communities. <p122> The utterances of the Bab and Baha'u'llah constitute the Word of God for this age.

So tremendous has been the effect of Their words that thousands of men and women have gone to the field of martyrdom and given their lives in order to promulgate Their teachings.

The Old Testament, the New Testament, the Qur'an, the Babi and Baha'i Scriptures, all have been the source of guidance, inspiration and spiritual

life for many millions.

No other book, however exalted its theme -- and there are millions of them -- has had a comparable influence upon the minds and souls of men as these heavenly books.

A careful study of the Faith of Baha'u'llah will demonstrate that the efficacy and potency of His words are unprecedented in the annals of mankind.

We can already witness the creative power of these words of Baha'u'llah within the present society.

To cite one example, Baha'u'llah wrote only a few lines in the Kitab-i-Aqdas enjoining upon His followers to establish, in every town, a House of Justice[1] (at present known as a Spiritual Assembly).

This injunction, written just over a hundred years ago by a prisoner in Akka, exerted such an influence upon the hearts that thousands of men and women from all walks of life, of all colours and backgrounds, left their homes, scattered throughout the world, pioneered to the most inhospitable outposts of the globe, suffered many hardships and difficulties, sacrificed their substance and poured out their resources in order to establish these institutions.

And they are continuing to carry out this commandment until every locality on this planet has its House of Justice.

Such is the creative power of the Word of God uttered by Baha'u'llah!

The same is true of every other commandment issued by the Supreme Pen.[2] [1 Not to be confused with the Universal House of Justice, the supreme international body of the Faith.] [2 Baha'u'llah.] Addressing the unbelieving Arabs, the Voice of God proclaims in the Qur'an: <p123> And if ye be in doubt as to that which We have sent down to Our Servant,[1] then produce a Surah like it, and summon your witnesses, beside God, if ye are men of truth.(12) [1 Muhammad.] When this verse was revealed, a few learned men among the unbelievers composed some verses and publicized them saying that they were much more eloquent than the words of Muhammad.

But they did not realize that their verses could not influence a soul, whereas the Qur'an revolutionized the lives of millions throughout the world, and in its own time created a great civilization embracing many nations.

These words of Baha'u'llah in the Tablet of Ahmad 'Produce it, O assemblage of false ones!' echo the words of the Qur'an, but with this greater challenge: 'Nay, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, they are not, and never shall be able to do this, even should they combine to assist one another.'(13) Another proof of the Manifestations of God is the manner in which They influenced society.

This is a unique phenomenon which no man can ever hope to equal.

Let us consider some of the ways and means by which a human being can become a leader and establish a following for himself.

History shows many examples.

For instance, a despotic ruler can rely on his power to subdue millions under his leadership.

People will rally around him as long as he remains in power.

Once he is gone, the whole system collapses, and his followers are dispersed.

Similarly, a man of wealth and affluence who is willing to bestow his riches upon the people may emerge as a leader.

As long as his support is forthcoming there will be many who will cluster around him.

A person with social popularity and prestige may find himself becoming the centre of attraction for some admirers.

A strong-willed man, by appealing to the lower nature of man, or exciting the people's sentiments, may succeed in bringing about an uprising or a revolution in which he himself becomes the focal point.

Another category worth mentioning is the religious leader who leads by teaching his <p124> congregation what they already believe.

Should he ever decide to teach them something new, and persist in doing this, he is almost bound to be dismissed from office.

In all these examples the leader must rely on some worldly agency in order to succeed in his plans to influence people.

Such an agency could be earthly power, or wealth, or social or political prestige, or religious leadership or many more.

The Manifestation of God, however, lacks all these material forces.

Let us take the example of Christ.

When He appeared and manifested His Cause among the Jews, He did not have earthly power or wealth by which He could influence His followers.

Because of the circumstances of His birth He did not have any social standing in the community.

He was not promoting His Cause by appealing to the lower instinct of man.

Nor was He a religious leader preaching the established religion of the time; on the contrary He was teaching a new faith.

During the three years of His ministry He suffered persecution and in the end was crucified.

Yet there was a mysterious power in His Cause which penetrated the hearts of many people who became His followers.

And even after the lapse of almost two thousand years, millions still turn to Him in devotion and love.

This demonstrates the power of the Holy Spirit and shows the contrast between human enterprise and divine Revelation.

Similarly, the Cause of Baha'u'llah is spreading and being established throughout the world solely through the power of God.

However, being the Supreme Revelation of God, it is endowed with a potency greater than all the Revelations of the past.[1] Though its Author spent forty years of His ministry in exile and imprisonment under the most cruel circumstances, though the forces of two despotic potentates were leagued against Him, yet in the course of that ministry He never sought assistance for the promotion of His Faith from anybody, nor did he try to establish it through compromise, expedient measures or material means.

With a meekness that is characteristic of all the Manifestations of God, He submitted Himself to <p125> His enemies and bore with resignation and patience the wrongs they inflicted on Him.

In spite of bitter opposition, however, the proclamation of His Message from His prison cell reached the ears of the most powerful rulers of the time.

The light of His Faith projected itself, during His lifetime, to thirteen countries on the Asiatic and African continents.

The light is now diffused over the entire surface of the earth.

His teachings have become the Spirit of the Age and the institutions of His World Order, designed to bring about the oneness of the human race on this planet, are rising throughout the world. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

64-7.] All these achievements, foreshadowing the future triumph of the Cause of Baha'u'llah and its establishment in the fullness of time as the all-encompassing religion for mankind, have come about through the power of Baha'u'llah which is born of God, while the forces of this world work against Him.

Every religion has a period of validity during which it exerts a great influence upon humanity and brings about spiritual and material development, especially for those who have embraced it.

The Word of the Founder of that religion influences the hearts of the people and His teachings can be put into practice.

But when a new Manifestation of God appears the former religion becomes ineffective.

Its influence wanes and its creative power diminishes.

Its message no longer moves the heart and its teachings cease to be practical.

For God has imparted to the new Revelation the validity, inspiration and influence which will lead humanity to a further point in the course of its

development.

The following verse in the Qur'an clearly indicates that for every religion there is a time of birth and a time of death:

Unto every nation[1] there is a prefixed time; therefore when their term is expired, they shall not have respite for an hour, neither shall they be anticipated.(14) [1 The word 'nation' is a translation of the Arabic word 'ummat' which also means religious community.] In this day, the power of God and His mighty Revelation animates the Cause of Baha'u'llah, endowing it with a world-vitalizing <p126> spirit which, unaided by any earthly agency, diffuses its light over the entire surface of this planet, and builds the foundations of a universal order for the advancement and spiritualization of the entire human race.

In the Tablet of Ahmad, Baha'u'llah reveals: ...verily, he who turns away from this Beauty[1] hath also turned away from the Messengers of the past and showeth pride towards God from all eternity to all eternity.(15) [1 Baha'u'llah.] This statement reaffirms one of the fundamental verities of the Faith of God, that divine Revelation is progressive, the latest Manifestation of God embodying within His Revelation the essence of all past Revelations.

This is similar to a human being who contains within himself at every stage in his life those qualities and attributes which he had previously acquired.[1] [1 See vol.

I, p.

65.] Through the potency and inspiration of His words Baha'u'llah instilled in Ahmad a tremendous power of faith and detachment.

He conferred upon him the capacity and strength to become as 'a flame of fire' to His enemies and 'a river of life eternal' to His loved ones.

Water and fire have different characteristics.

Water gives life, enabling things to grow; whereas fire, while burning away objects which are perishable, creates warmth and incandescence in solid materials.

The love of Baha'u'llah, once implanted in the heart of the believer, needs to be nourished and watered.

On the other hand, the evils of hate and animosity which have been imbedded in the hearts of the enemies must needs be consumed with the fire of the love of God, so that those who are sincere may acquire the radiance and warmth of faith.

Ahmad and other distinguished teachers of the Faith who travelled throughout the land performed this function.

They enthused the believers, raised their spirits and vivified their souls with

the life-giving waters of the Cause of <p127> God.

On the other hand, they appeared as a 'flame of fire' to the enemies of the Cause.

Baha'u'llah has made similar exhortations in other writings.

For example, in a Tablet(16) to Umm-i-'Attar (Mother of Attar), He counsels her not to associate with those who have denied His Cause and risen against Him.

But if ever she met them, she should appear as the 'fire of God' so that they might feel the warmth of her love towards her Lord.

In another Tablet,(17) he urges a certain believer to burn, with the fire of the Word of God, the hearts of those who have denied Him and turned aside from His Cause.

Statements such as these should not be taken literally.

Baha'u'llah never taught His followers to act aggressively towards others.

But there is an invisible power, a spiritual dynamism in the Cause of God which removes every obstacle in its path and shatters the forces of its enemies.

Some of Baha'u'llah's disciples were endowed with this power.

Their tongues were as swords tearing asunder those hearts which were filled with animosity towards the Blessed Beauty.

Through the potency and fire of their utterance these heroic souls burned away the veils of prejudice and hatred and overwhelmed the forces of the unfaithful who had risen to subvert the edifice of the Cause of God.

In a Tablet which was revealed for Haji Mirza Ahmad of Kashan,[1] Baha'u'llah exhorts his servants in these words: [1 See chapter 6.] Be ablaze as the fire, that ye may burn away the veils of heedlessness and set aglow, through the quickening energies of the love of God, the chilled and wayward heart.

Be light and untrammeled as the breeze, that ye may obtain admittance into the precincts of My court, My inviolable Sanctuary.(18) Faith in God and steadfastness in His path are relative terms.

The strength of a weak person is considered weakness for a strong man.

To the saint, the love and devotion of the insincere <p128> towards God is nothing but profanity.

Therefore the measure of faith varies with the individual.

Baha'u'llah in His Tablet has summoned Ahmad to attain the highest degree of faith.

His exhortations to him are designed to lead him and others to the summit of steadfastness and courage.

It is difficult to visualize that God may require a higher degree of steadfastness and faith than that demanded by Baha'u'llah in these words:

And be thou so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall not waver, even if the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee and all the heavens and the earth arise against thee.(19) These words of Baha'u'llah may well serve as a criterion by which the individual may determine whether he has said this Tablet with 'absolute sincerity'.

The sign of sincerity is that the believer rises to such heights of faith and steadfastness that his heart does not waver even if he finds himself faced with martyrdom at the hand of the enemy.

The fact that Baha'u'llah has established this exalted standard of faith is in itself a proof that many people will arise and achieve it.

For the words of Baha'u'llah are creative, and the moment He uttered them, He instilled a new spirit of courage into the hearts of those who had truly recognized Him.

Not only had Ahmad become endowed with the power of faith, but many others reached the loftiest heights of certitude and heroism.

These souls completely banished every trace of trepidation and doubt from their hearts, remained steadfast as a mountain in the Cause of God and fearlessly faced their executioners.

To cite one example, let us recount some of the events leading to the martyrdom of one of the outstanding followers of Baha'u'llah, Haji Abdu'l-Majid-i-Nishapuri, who became the embodiment of faith and detachment.

He was the father of Aqa Buzurg entitled Badi', who at the age of seventeen attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in the barracks of Akka, delivered the Tablet of Baha'u'llah to Nasiri'd-Din Shah and was consequently put to death by his men. <p129> Haji Abdu'l-Majid, addressed by Baha'u'llah as Aba Badi' (Father of Badi') embraced the Faith during the ministry of the Bab.

He was among those early believers in the province of Khurasan taught by Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i.[1] He took part in the struggles at Shaykh Tabarsi[2] and was one of the survivors of that bloody upheaval. [1 The first person to believe in the Bab.

For further information see The Dawn-Breakers.] [2 See The Dawn-Breakers.] On his way to that fortress, Aba Badi', who was a wealthy man, was also the first to obey the exhortation of Mulla Husayn calling on his companions to discard their earthly possessions and leave behind everything except their swords and horses.

He flung by the roadside a satchel full of turquoise which was worth a fortune.

When the news of the Declaration of Baha'u'llah reached him, Aba Badi' joyously acknowledged His station and with great devotion spent his days in serving His Cause.

In 1876, at an advanced age, longing to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah, he travelled to Akka where he basked in the sunshine of His glory.

He has left to posterity the following spoken chronicle concerning one of his memorable interviews with Baha'u'llah:

One day I had the honour to be in the presence of the Blessed Beauty when He was talking about Badi' who had attained His presence, carried His Blessed Tablet to Tihran [for Nasiri'd-Din Shah] and won the crown of martyrdom.

As He was speaking, my tears were flowing profusely and my beard became wet.

Baha'u'llah turned to me and said 'Aba Badi'!

A person who has already spent three-quarters of his life should offer up the remainder in the path of God...' I asked 'Is it possible that my beard which is now soaked in my tears may one day be dyed crimson with my blood?' The Blessed Beauty replied 'God willing...'[1](20) [1 The words attributed to Baha'u'llah are not necessarily His exact words.

These are the recollections of Aba Badi', but convey the sense of what He said.] <p130> Aba Badi' returned to his native land of Khurasan, his heart glowing with the fire of the love of Baha'u'llah and his soul radiant with the light of His glory.

He used to attend the gatherings of the friends at Mashhad where he enthused and encouraged them to steadfastness in the Cause of God and also read to them passages from the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the first copy of which he had brought to Khurasan.

One of the subjects he often discussed was the then imminent fulfilment of the prophecy of Baha'u'llah concerning the downfall of Sultan Abdu'l-'Aziz mentioned in the Tablets of Ra'is and Fu'ad.[1] He spent most of his time transcribing the Tablets of Baha'u'llah. [1 These Tablets will be discussed in vol.

III.] The enthusiasm with which Aba Badi' taught the Faith soon aroused the animosity of the enemies of the Cause.

Foremost among them were his own brother and sister who reported his activities to a certain mujtahid, Shaykh Muhammad Taqiy-i-Bujnurdi.

They informed him that their brother, a Babi for many years, had been one of the disciples of Mulla Husayn and had fought at Shaykh Tabarsi, and that his son had been put to death by order of the Shah.

They disclosed all his activities including his recent visit to Baha'u'llah and his open teaching of the Baha'i Faith.

The mujtahid was alarmed by these reports and despatched two of his men to question Aba Badi' who openly spoke to them about his beliefs and proclaimed

the Message of Baha'u'llah to them.

This open confession of faith meant that there was no difficulty then in issuing his death warrant.

This was in 1877, one year after Aba Badi' had attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Akka.

He was then eighty-five years of age.

As the machinations of the clergy and the people were beginning to bear fruit, an implacable enemy of the Cause, Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir of Isfahan, stigmatized by Baha'u'llah as 'Wolf',[1]arrived in Mashhad, and played a major part in this heinous crime.

At first he ordered that Aba Badi' appear before him.

When the latter did not pay any attention to his orders, he joined hands with the fore-mentioned Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi <p131> and a certain Shaykh Abdu'r-Rahim who was foremost among the divines of Khurasan.

These three mujtahids sent a petition to Prince Muhammad-Taqi Mirza, the Rukni'd-Dawlih, a brother of the Shah and the Governor of Khurasan, demanding the execution of Aba Badi'.

The Prince was good-natured and very reluctant to harm the Baha'is, but could not resist the enormous pressures which were brought to bear by the clergy.

He issued orders for the arrest of Aba Badi' who was taken into custody.

But the Rukni'd-Dawlih, unwilling to harm the prisoner, did not pursue the matter any further.

The divines became impatient with him and took their complaint to Nasiri'd-Din Shah.

The King issued orders that the victim should be freed only if he denied allegiance to the new Faith. [1 See Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Introduction.] After this, Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir kept on pressing the Prince for execution.

He went to the home of the Governor and discussed his evil plans with him.

These involved tying Aba Badi' to an airborne balloon which had just been brought to Mashhad as a novelty, and letting him fall to his death.

As discussions were proceeding, a tragedy struck the home of the Prince.

His young daughter, to whom he was very attached, fell into a pool in the house and was drowned.

The grief-stricken Prince left the meeting and Shaykh Baqir's plans had to be abandoned.

The wife of the Prince was convinced that the tragic death of her daughter had come about as a punishment from God for inflicting imprisonment upon the aged

Aba Badi'.

She rebuked her husband very sternly and the only thing he could do was to order the transfer of Aba Badi' to other quarters whose officer in charge was friendly to the Baha'is.

Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, who could no longer tolerate the passive attitude and delaying tactics of the Prince, sent another complaint to the Shah.

For the second time, the monarch instructed the Prince to release the prisoner if he recanted, otherwise to deal with him in accordance with the law of religion.

The Prince, who was very anxious to save Aba Badi' from execution, sent two prominent men to talk to him and induce him to recant his faith.

One was Mirza Sa'id Khan, the <p132> former Minister of Foreign Affairs;[1] the other was Prince Abu'l-Hasan Mirza, the Shaykhu'r-Ra'is,[2] who was a follower of Baha'u'llah.

These two men pleaded with him on behalf of the Governor, that for his own protection he should make a statement that he bore no allegiance to the Cause.

Only then would the Governor be able to defend his case and save his life.

They explained to him that there was no other way, because the hands of the Governor were tied and he could do nothing else to avert this situation. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

225-6.] [2 He was a poet of remarkable talent, a literary man of great eloquence, who because of his rank and personality was able to carry on his public function and at the same time associate with the Baha'is.

He attained the presence of Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land and has written many moving poems in glorification of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha.] Aba Badi' stood firm and resolute.

He could not barter his Faith for this transitory world.

The love of Baha'u'llah had so magnetized him that there was no fear in his heart.

He told them to convey to the Rukni'd-Dawlih that he could neither recant nor dissimulate his Faith, and that he would be prepared to give his life if necessary.

The Governor did not give up.

He persevered in his plan to induce Aba Badi' to recant.

He is reported to have sent about twelve men at different times, all of whom were reckoned among the dignitaries of the Province of Khurasan, to persuade him to change his course of action.

But they all failed.

One of these men reported that instead of paying heed to the exhortations of the Rukni'd-Dawlih, Aba Badi' was engaged in teaching him the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

Eventually the end came.

The Prince had no choice but to carry out the wishes of the clergy and therefore issued orders for the execution of Aba Badi'.

One day before his martyrdom, Aba Badi' asked a certain believer, Khadijih Khanum, who used to visit him every day in jail and was a link between him and the believers, not to come again, for he knew that the next day was to be his last in this world.

He had a dream that they brought a horse on which to <p133> take him away; he mounted the horse, but when he arrived at Maydan-i-Arg (a public square at Mashhad) he fell from the horse.

He told Khadijih Khanum that this public square would be the scene of his martyrdom.

The following day, the jailer secretly informed the believers that the fateful hour had arrived and the execution would take place that day.

The friends, grief-stricken, gathered in the House of Babiyyih[1] praying and waiting for news.

In the meantime a number of government officials, the executioners and a large crowd of people had gathered outside the prison.

After a few hours, the old but imposing figure of Aba Badi' emerged from the prison.

His radiant face and white beard gave him a dignified bearing, while the heavy chain around his frail neck made him the very picture of meekness and resignation.

He was conducted amid the jeers and insults of a hostile crowd to the court of the Governor.

On the way he faced the spectators and, beaming with joy, recited these two lines of a celebrated Persian poem: [1 An historic house which was once the centre of great activities for the Babis in Mashhad.

See The Dawn-Beakers.] To God's pleasure we are resigned;
A chained lion feels no shame.

To my neck the Beloved's cord is tied; He leads me whither His will ordains.

In the government house, he appeared before three people: the Governor, the fore-mentioned Mirza Sa'id Khan and Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir.

The latter, addressing Aba Badi', said: 'We have no doubt about your being a Baha'i, but if you are not, you must now execrate and denounce the Founders of this Faith.' Aba Badi' refused to do so.

The Shaykh then asked him: 'What was wrong with Islam that you became a Baha'i?' Aba Badi' spoke about the beliefs of the followers of Baha'u'llah and concluded his statement by saying that the reality and the essence of Islam was within this Faith.

Next the Governor <p134> pleaded with Aba Badi' to comply with the Shaykh's orders, but he again reiterated his refusal.

The Shaykh insisted that unless he uttered words of execration against Baha'u'llah, he must be put to death.

Mirza Sa'id Khan, who had previously interviewed Aba Badi' in the prison, was perturbed by the attitude of the Shaykh and stated that he found nothing in the prisoner's statements to indicate that he was an infidel and blasphemous, deserving of death.

The Shaykh, angered by these remarks, merely pointed out to Mirza Sa'id Khan that he could not hope to secure the prisoner's freedom with these words, and thus deal a blow to the Faith of Islam.

Addressing the Governor, the Shaykh then reiterated his verdict of death and the former ordered his men to carry it out.

Aba Badi' was led by the executioners to Maydan-i-Arg where great crowds had gathered to watch him die.

One of the friends pushed his way through the people, until he came close to him.

There he pleaded with him to recant at the last moment, saying it would save his life and would do no harm to his Faith.

In reply Aba Badi' recited this Persian poem:

Set thy trap for another bird; This is the phoenix and it nests high.

The Governor, who was very reluctant to shed the blood of a holy and innocent man, hoped that the fierce scene of execution might frighten Aba Badi' and induce him to recant.

Just as the execution was about to take place a special envoy from the Governor arrived at the scene and for the last time pleaded with him in vain to save his own life.

But Aba Badi' was the embodiment of steadfastness in the Cause of God.

Neither the clamour of the people, their insults and persecutions, nor the dreadful sight of the executioner, who stood dagger in hand beside him, were able to deter him from the path of God.

Most probably at the height of his ordeal his soul was communing with Baha'u'llah, longing to take its flight to the realms of the spirit.

His thoughts must also have been focused on those <p135> memorable hours he had spent with His Lord in Akka, and the martyrdom of his beloved son at the age of seventeen, 'The Pride of the Martyrs of the Faith'.[1] Surrounded by thousands who were steeped in prejudice and hatred, hurling abuse and curses at him, this great hero, this old man of God glowed with the fire of faith and certitude.

He stood serene and calm, unperturbed by the ferocity and brutality of his persecutors. [1 A title conferred on Badi' by Baha'u'llah.] At last the officer in charge gave the signal and the executioner, dressed in red, stepped forward.

He removed Aba Badi's head-dress, shawl and cloak, brought him a bowl of water,[1]turned him to face the Qiblih[2] of Islam and with a powerful stroke of the dagger ripped him open from waist to throat.

His head, exposed for the public to see, was placed on a marble slab and his body dragged through the bazaars until it was abandoned at the city morgue.

Many ruffians stayed near the corpse and prevented his family from approaching it.

His inconsolable daughter (the sister of Badi'), with tears streaming from her face and holding her baby son in her arms, stood for hours at a distance along with her husband in order to visit the battered remains of her illustrious father.

But the mob kept on hurling stones at them and she was forced to leave the scene in an agony too heart-rending to describe.

The believers, who were watching these developments with great concern, worked out a plan to rescue the remains of Aba Badi'.

Since his body was placed in the morgue in front of the mosque of the Sunnis, it was only natural for a Sunni to remove it.

So one of the Baha'is, dressed in the garb of a Kurd and accompanied by two others, managed to take the body, carry it out of the city gate and bury it in the dead of night at a disused cemetery. [1 It is a ritual among the Shi'ah Muslims to offer a bowl of water to anyone who is to be put to death.

This is because, at the time of his martyrdom, Imam Husayn was thirsty.

He had asked for water, but was denied it by the enemy.] [2 'Point of Adoration' for the Muslims in Mecca, to which they turn in prayer.] Thus ended the life of one who, till the end, stood firm and <p136> immovable as a mountain in the Cause of his Lord, and with his own life-blood testified to its truth.

He amply demonstrated the power of Baha'u'llah Who, through a single word, had created a new race of men, and instilled into them such faith that they became

the embodiments of these words: 'And be thou so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall not waver, even if the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee and all the heavens and the earth arise against thee.' <p137> 6 Lawh-i-Ahmad (Persian) Unlike the Tablet of Ahmad in Arabic, this is a lengthy Tablet in Persian and was revealed for Haji Mirza Ahmad of Kashan.

He was a half-brother of Haji Mirza Jani and Haji Muhammad-Isma'il,[1] the latter entitled Dhabih (Sacrifice) and Anis (Companion) by Baha'u'llah.

Haji Mirza Jani was the first to embrace the Faith of the Bab in Kashan.

He had attained the presence of the Bab in Mecca and had become an ardent believer.

When the Bab was on His way to Tihran, Haji Mirza Jani, after having secured permission from the officials who were conducting the Bab to the Capital, entertained Him in his house for three days.

Later he was martyred in Tihran.[2] [1 See pp.

411-13 ff.] [2 See The Dawn-Breakers.] As a result of association with this brother, Haji Mirza Ahmad and his other half-brother, Haji Muhammad Isma'il both became Babis.

Unlike his two brothers who stayed steadfast in the Cause of God, Haji Mirza Ahmad showed unfaithfulness to Baha'u'llah and became a follower of Mirza Yahya.

He first attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad and later accompanied Him to Constantinople and Adrianople.

He was one of those whom Baha'u'llah took with Him in order to check his mischief.

In one of His Tablets[l]Baha'u'llah refers to Haji Mirza Ahmad as one who attained the presence of His Lord and was honoured to associate with Him, yet failed to recognize His station.

He heard the voice of God many a time but did not respond.

The Lawh-i-Ahmad (Tablet of Ahmad) was revealed by Baha'u'llah in Adrianople, in order to guide him to the path of faith and <p138> belief.

This Tablet demonstrates the loving-kindness and forbearance of Baha'u'llah.

For Haji Mirza Ahmad was a man insincere in heart, vulgar in conduct and foul in language.

The counsels of Baha'u'llah fell on deaf ears.

Instead of mending his ways, he remained heedless, joined hands with Mirza Yahya and created much dissension and discord among the companions.

At last, Baha'u'llah expelled him from His presence and ordered him to leave Adrianople for Iraq.

While in Iraq, Ahmad sought the company of some evil men, who eventually killed him mainly because of his vile language.

Almost two-thirds of this Tablet has been rendered into English by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith[1] In it Baha'u'llah has poured out His loving counsels and exhortations upon the Babis in general and Ahmad in particular.

In order to appreciate this Tablet we must remember that it was revealed in the early part of His sojourn in Adrianople and prior to Mirza Yahya's attempt to assassinate Him.

It was a period in which some corrupt elements among the Babis were raising their heads and sowing the seeds of sedition among the believers.

They gathered around Mirza Yahya, boosted his ego and made of him an idol in their midst.

Because of their deviation from the path of truth and their insincerity towards Baha'u'llah, the spirit of these men became truly satanic.

The reason for this is that God has created man to 'love and worship Him'.

But man violates the laws of God and commits many sins which are injurious to himself.

However, God is merciful and through His grace forgives His servants.

Indeed, if it were not for God's bounty no created thing could come into existence, nor could any human being ever progress in this or the next world.

The study of the Holy Writings reveals that the mercy of God and His forgiveness which have encompassed all creation are withheld from those who recognize the Manifestation of God but knowingly and consciously arise to oppose Him.

In fact, by doing this they try to assume the same station <p139> as the Manifestation of God and endeavour to place themselves on the same level.

This action, which violates the Covenant of God, is unforgivable unless the individual, who has become spiritually dead, turns to God in genuine repentance.

Christ refers to it as the 'sin against the Holy Ghost'.

It invokes the wrath of God and obstructs the channels of grace from on high. [1 The passages are included in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, sections CLII and CLIII.] The few Babis, including Haji Mirza Ahmad, who gathered around Mirza Yahya for the sole purpose of opposing Baha'u'llah, were of this category.

Their thoughts, their words and their deeds were devoid of truth.

They spent their time in Adrianople creating dissension, poisoning the minds of the believers, and devising evil plans to uproot the Cause of God and bring

division within its ranks.

The Lawh-i-Ahmad was revealed by Baha'u'llah to bring these men back to their God.

He begins the Tablet by urging Ahmad to possess a pure heart.

This is part of the opening paragraph:

O banished and faithful friend!

Quench the thirst of heedlessness with the sanctified waters of My grace, and chase the gloom of remoteness through the morning-light of My Divine presence.

Suffer not the habitation wherein dwelleth My undying love for thee to be destroyed through the tyranny of covetous desires, and overcloud not the beauty of the heavenly Youth with the dust of self and passion.

Clothe thyself with the essence of righteousness, and let thine heart be afraid of none except God.

Obstruct not the luminous spring of thy soul with the thorns and brambles of vain and inordinate affections, and impede not the flow of the living waters that stream from the fountain of thine heart.

Set all thy hope in God, and cleave tenaciously to His unfailing mercy.(2) In this Tablet Baha'u'llah defines the real purpose for which God bestowed faculties on man:

Thine eye is My trust, suffer not the dust of vain desires to becloud its lustre.

Thine ear is a sign of My bounty, let not <p140> the tumult of unseemly motives turn it away from My Word that encompasseth all creation.

Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein.

Thine hand is a symbol of My loving-kindness, hinder it not from holding fast unto My guarded and hidden Tablets...(3) These exalted concepts give us a glimpse of the nobility and purity to which man, under the shadow of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, will attain.

The study of the Writings clearly indicates that the purpose underlying the Revelation of Baha'u'llah is to create a new race of men whose thoughts and deeds will reflect and manifest in this world the most lofty attributes and divine virtues.

In this connection it is appropriate to quote an interesting account of Nabil-i-A'zam concerning several statements which were made by Baha'u'llah to certain Persian princes in Baghdad on the subject of the future nobility of mankind.

This is known as 'Panj Kanz' (Five Treasures).

The following is a translation of a part of it: ...Once there were certain Persian princes in the presence of Baha'u'llah.

He was engaged in conversation with them and with loving-kindness sought news of their country.

In the course of this interview one of the princes made the following remark: 'How is it that You speak of spiritual matters to Your friends when they attain Your presence, while to us You talk only about the news of the town and the market?' He was trying to ask: 'How could such men who are devoid of learning and discernment be preferable to us?' In answer to him Baha'u'llah said: '...I will tell you which people are worthy of listening to My utterances and attaining My presence.

Suppose that a person is taken to a vast plain, on the right side of which are placed all the glories of this world, its pleasures and comfort, together with a sovereignty which would be everlasting and freed from every affliction and grief.

On the left-hand side of this plain are preserved for eternity all the calamities, hardships, pains and immense sufferings.

Then suppose that the <p141> Holy Spirit appears before this person and addresses him in these words: "Shouldst thou choose to have all the eternal pleasures that are placed on the right side in preference to the calamities on the left, not the slightest thing would be reduced from thy station in the sight of God.

And shouldst thou choose to be inflicted with innumerable sufferings that are placed on the left, not the slightest thing would be added to thy station in the estimation of God, the Almighty, the Unconstrained."

'If at that moment this person were moved to choose, with the utmost eagerness and enthusiasm, the left hand of abasement rather than the right hand of glory, then he would be worthy to attain My presence and hearken to My exalted words.

In this connection the Tongue of Grandeur,[1] addressing the inquirers, says "If thine aim be to cherish thy life, approach not our court; but if sacrifice be thy heart's desire, come and let others come with thee.

For such is the way of faith, if in thy heart thou seekest reunion with Baha; Shouldst thou refuse to tread this path, why trouble us?

Begone!'"...[2] [1 Baha'u'llah.] [2 Two lines of the poem Saqi-Az-Ghayb-i-Baqa, revealed by Baha'u'llah in Kurdistan and quoted in The Dawn-Breakers, p.

96 (Brit.), pp.

137-8 (U.S.).] To the same enquirer Baha'u'llah further said, 'My purpose in coming to this corrupt world where the tyrants and traitors, by their acts of cruelty and oppression, have closed the doors of

peace and tranquillity to all mankind, is to establish, through the power of God and His might, the forces of justice, trust, security and faith.

For instance [in the future] should a woman ..., who is unsurpassed in her beauty and adorned with the most exquisite and priceless jewels, travel unveiled and alone, from the east of the world to the west thereof, passing through every land and journeying in all countries, there would be such a standard of justice, trustworthiness and faith on the one hand, and lack of treachery and degradation on the other, that no one would be found who would wish to rob her of her possessions or to cast a treacherous and lustful eye upon her beauteous chastity!...' <p142> Then Baha'u'llah affirmed, 'Through the power of God I shall transform the peoples of the world into this exalted state and shall open this most great door to the face of all humanity.(4)

In this connection Baha'u'llah has revealed the following words concerning the people of Baha:

He is My true follower who, if he come to a valley of pure gold will pass straight through it aloof as a cloud, and will neither turn back, nor pause.

Such a man is assuredly of Me.

From his garment the Concourse on high can inhale the fragrance of sanctity...

And if he met the fairest and most comely of women, he would not feel his heart seduced by the least shadow of desire for her beauty.(5)

Nabil continues the story of Baha'u'llah's conversation with the princes:

Concerning the sincerity of motive and purity of deeds, the Tongue of Grandeur[1] addressed them in these words: [1 Baha'u'llah.] 'Suppose there is a very rich person whose wealth is enormous and beyond measure.

And suppose that gradually and in the course of time he bestows so much of his wealth upon a poor person ... that he himself is reduced to absolute poverty while the poor man has turned into a very rich man...

Suppose in his poor and distressed state he reaches a situation in which he incurs some small debt.

Being unable to pay it, he is brought to a public square in town where he is humiliated and punished.

He is further informed that his release will not be considered until he pays his debt.

At this point suppose he sees his friend (who once was poor and as a result of his generosity has become rich).

Should the thought flash through his mind that he wishes that in return

for all his generosity to him, this friend would now come forward and relieve him of this calamity, immediately all his deeds would become void, he would become deprived of the virtue of contentment and acquiescence, and would be shut away from the virtues of the human spirit.

The same thing is true of the second man who has become <p143> rich (through the generosity of the captive).

Should he think in his heart that he is obliged to pay this man's debts, free him from his ordeal, and enable him to live the rest of his life in comfort, because he had earlier shown immeasurable love and kindness towards him, then such a motive leading him to repay his friend's generosity (instead of giving for the sake of humanity) would cause him to be deprived of the chalice of sincerity and would drive him into the world of ignominy.

The only way acceptable to God would have been for the first man to have based his acts of generosity on humanitarian principles wholly for the sake of God.

In the same way, the second rich man should have acted for the sake of God and as a duty to the world of humanity regardless of the events of the past or the future.

Thus is it revealed: "We nourish your souls for the sake of God; we seek from you neither recompense nor thanks"'...[1](6) [1 Qur'an, lxxvi.

9.] In the Tablet of Ahmad Baha'u'llah counsels humanity in these words:

O My servants!

Deprive not yourselves of the unfading and resplendent Light that shineth within the Lamp of Divine glory.

Let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within your radiant hearts.

Feed it with the oil of Divine guidance, and protect it within the shelter of your constancy.

Guard it within the globe of trust and detachment from all else but God, so that the evil whisperings of the ungodly may not extinguish its light.

O My servants!

My Holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing lustre.

It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been pre-ordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets.

If no one be willing to direct his steps towards its shores, if every one should fail to arise and find Him, can such a failure be said to have robbed this ocean of its power or to have <p144> lessened, to any degree, its treasures?

How vain, how contemptible, are the imaginations which your hearts have devised, and are still devising!

O My servants!

The one true God is My witness!

This most great, this fathomless and surging Ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you.

Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein!

Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favour, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty.

O My servants!

Could ye apprehend with what wonders of My munificence and bounty I have willed to entrust your souls, ye would, of a truth, rid yourselves of attachment to all created things, and would gain a true knowledge of your own selves -- a knowledge which is the same as the comprehension of Mine own Being.(7) This last statement is to be found in Islam also.

In one of the traditions it is recorded, 'He who recognizes his own self has verily recognized God'.

Mirza Hadiy-i-Qazvini, one of the Letters of the Living,[1] requested Baha'u'llah to explain among other things the meaning of this tradition for him.

In a lengthy Tablet to Mirza Hadi(8)Baha'u'llah explains that the soul of man, which He refers to as the rational faculty, is an emanation from the worlds of God.

Every faculty in man, whether physical or spiritual, is a manifestation of the soul.

For instance, each of the senses derives its power from the soul and every spiritual quality is due to it.

Yet the sum total of all these faculties within a human being does not make the soul.

So, we might ask, what is the soul?

Baha'u'llah affirms that the soul is unknowable.

Should one contemplate this theme till eternity, he will never be able to understand the nature of his soul, or fathom the mysteries enshrined in it.

He then says: [1 The first eighteen disciples of the Bab.] Having recognized thy powerlessness to attain to an adequate understanding of that Reality[1] which abideth within thee, thou will readily admit the futility of such efforts as <p145> may be attempted by thee, or by any of the created things, to fathom the mystery of the Living God, the Day Star of unfading glory, the Ancient of everlasting days.(9) [1 The soul of man. (A.T.)] When man recognizes his impotence to know the nature of his own soul, and more so the nature of God, then he has attained the highest degree of knowledge and understanding.

These are the words of Baha'u'llah:

This confession of helplessness which mature contemplation must eventually impel every mind to make is in itself the acme of human understanding, and marketh the culmination of man's development.(10) Baha'u'llah explains to Mirza Hadi that in all the worlds of God this verse assumes many other meanings which are beyond the comprehension of man.

Mirza Hadi, who as mentioned was one of the Letters of the Living, failed at the end to remain loyal to the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

He followed Mirza Yahya and deprived himself of the bounties of God.

This tragic ending, for one who had the inestimable privilege of being one of the first eighteen disciples of the Bab, is a demonstration of how God tests His servants.

The closer one gets to the Manifestation of God the more severe become the tests.[1] [1 See vol.

I, p.

130.] There were a few others among the Letters of the Living who succumbed to the tests of God.

One such was Mulla Hasan-i-Bajistani who attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad.

He expressed his doubts to Baha'u'llah concerning the Revelation of the Bab.

One of his objections was that the Bab in His Writings extolled the virtues and praised the station of the Letters of the Living in glowing terms, and yet as a Letter of the Living himself, he knew that he was devoid of these qualities.

Baha'u'llah answered that a farmer irrigates his field in order to water his crop.

In this process, however, the weeds are also watered.

He explained that the tributes paid by the Bab to the Letters of the Living, and the praises that He showered <p146> upon them, all referred to Mulla Husayn, the first to believe in Him, and to a few others.

The rest received these bounties as a matter of course.

The great majority of the Letters of the Living remained steadfast in the Cause of the Bab and no less than twelve of them laid down their lives in the path of their Lord.

Most of the Letters of the Living died before the birth of Baha'u'llah's Revelation, but had the privilege of attaining His presence in Persia, when some were enabled to recognize His station.

Mulla Baqir-i-Tabrizi, who survived all the other Letters of the Living, was the only one who embraced the Cause of Baha'u'llah and remained loyal and devoted to Him.

He accompanied Baha'u'llah to the Fort of Shaykh Tabarsi and was also present at the Conference of Badasht.[1] It was to him that the Bab had addressed these exalted words in praise of Baha'u'llah, 'Him Whom God shall make manifest': [1 For further information refer to The Dawn-Breakers.] I have written down in My mention of Him[1] these gem-like words: 'No allusion of Mine can allude unto Him, neither anything mentioned in the Bayan'... 'Exalted and glorified is He above the power of any one to reveal Him except Himself, or the description of any of His creatures.

I Myself am but the first servant to believe in Him and in His signs, and to partake of the sweet savours of His words from the first-fruits of the Paradise of His knowledge.

Yea, by His glory!

He is the Truth.

There is none other God but Him.

All have arisen at His bidding.'(11) [1 Him Whom God shall make manifest. (A.T.)] In answer to Mulla Baqir's question regarding 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', the Bab in a special Tablet promised him that he would attain His presence either in the beginning or towards the end of the year 'eight', 1268 A.H. (1852).

Soon after Baha'u'llah's release from the Siyah-Chal of Tihran, Mulla Baqir attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad and, remembering the promise of the Bab, recognized <p147> His station and became filled with the glory of His Revelation.

He was an outstanding believer and teacher of the Cause.

It was to him that the Bab, shortly before His martyrdom, entrusted a coffer containing all His important documents and Tablets, seals and agate rings, which was to be handed to Mulla Abdu'l-Karim-i-Qazvini, surnamed Mirza Ahmad, who was instructed to deliver it to Baha'u'llah.

Soon after the declaration of the Message of Baha'u'llah, Mulla Baqir arose to teach His Cause with great determination and devotion among his fellow countrymen in the province of Adhirbayjan.

He wrote an epistle in which he refuted the claims and rejected the writings of Mirza Yahya.

Longing to attain the presence of His Lord, he travelled twice to Akka, and on his last visit he obtained permission from Baha'u'llah to reside in Constantinople where he died around the year 1881.

In the Lawh-i-Ahmad Baha'u'llah, rebuking those who had arisen to oppose Him, declares:

O My servants!

Let not your vain hopes and idle fancies sap the foundations of your belief in the All-Glorious God, inasmuch as such imaginings have been wholly unprofitable unto men, and failed to direct their steps unto the straight Path.

Think ye, O My servants, that the Hand of My all-encompassing, My overshadowing, and transcendent sovereignty is chained up, that the flow of Mine ancient, My ceaseless, and all-pervasive mercy is checked, or that the clouds of My sublime and unsurpassed favours have ceased to rain their gifts upon men?

Can ye imagine that the wondrous works that have proclaimed My divine and resistless power are withdrawn, or that the potency of My will and purpose hath been deterred from directing the destinies of mankind?

If it be not so, wherefore, then, have ye striven to prevent the deathless Beauty of My sacred and gracious Countenance from being unveiled to men's eyes?

Why have ye struggled to hinder the Manifestation of the Almighty and All-Glorious Being from shedding the radiance of His Revelation upon the earth?

Were ye to be fair in your judgment, ye would readily <p148> recognize how the realities of all created things are inebriated with the joy of this new and wondrous Revelation, how all the atoms of the earth have been illuminated through the brightness of its glory.

Vain and wretched is that which ye have imagined and still imagine!(12)

Baha'u'llah further warns that in this Dispensation God will stay the hand of those who are working against His Cause.

These are His ominous words:

O heedless ones!

Though the wonders of My mercy have encompassed all created things, both visible and invisible, and though the revelations of My grace and bounty have permeated every atom of the universe, yet the rod with which I can chastise the wicked is grievous, and the fierceness of Mine anger against them terrible.(13) In one of His Tablets[l4] Baha'u'llah mentions

that if it were not for the bounty of God and the wisdom of His decree, the hand of divine power would have taken hold of those who had inflicted the slightest harm upon the believers, and this earth would not have harboured them for one moment.

This is true of those who are weak and ignorant.

However, Baha'u'llah states that in the case of those who have stood up with the utmost enmity to persecute the loved ones of God and have arisen with all their power to destroy His Cause, God, in this Dispensation, will assuredly strike them down.

The history of the Faith has amply demonstrated this phenomenon.

All those who opposed the Faith and its central Figures -- the Bab, Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha -- were made to suffer a condign punishment.

Speaking of this retributory process, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, writes:

Kings, emperors, princes, whether of the East or of the West, had, as we look back upon the tumultuous record of an entire century, either ignored the summons of its Founders, or derided their Message, or decreed their exile and banishment, or barbarously persecuted their followers, or sedulously striven to discredit their teachings.

They were visited <p149> by the wrath of the Almighty, many losing their thrones, some witnessing the extinction of their dynasties, a few being assassinated or covered with shame, others finding themselves powerless to avert the cataclysmic dissolution of their kingdoms, still others being degraded to positions of subservience in their own realms.

The Caliphate, its arch-enemy, had unsheathed the sword against its Author and thrice pronounced His banishment.

It was humbled to dust, and, in its ignominious collapse, suffered the same fate as the Jewish hierarchy, the chief persecutor of Jesus Christ, had suffered at the hands of its Roman masters, in the first century of the Christian Era, almost two thousand years before.

Members of various sacerdotal orders, Shi'ah, Sunni, Zoroastrian and Christian, had fiercely assailed the Faith, branded as heretic its supporters, and laboured unremittingly to disrupt its fabric and subvert its foundations.

The most redoubtable and hostile among these orders were either overthrown or virtually dismembered, others rapidly declined in prestige and influence, all were made to sustain the impact of a secular power, aggressive and determined to curtail their privileges and assert its own authority.

Apostates, rebels, betrayers, heretics, had exerted their utmost endeavours, privily or openly, to sap the loyalty of the followers of

that Faith, to split their ranks or assault their institutions.

These enemies were, one by one, some gradually, others with dramatic swiftness, confounded, dispersed, swept away and forgotten.

Not a few among its leading figures, its earliest disciples, its foremost champions, the companions and fellow-exiles of its Founders, trusted amanuenses and secretaries of its Author and of the Centre of His Covenant, even some of those who were numbered among the kindred of the Manifestation Himself, not excluding the nominee of the Bab and the son of Baha'u'llah, named by Him in the Book of His Covenant, had allowed themselves to pass out from under its shadow, to bring shame upon it, through acts of indelible infamy, and to provoke crises of such dimensions as have never been experienced by any previous religion.

All were precipitated, without exception, from the enviable positions they occupied, many of them lived to behold the <p150> frustration of their designs, others were plunged into degradation and misery, utterly impotent to impair the unity, or stay the march, of the Faith they had so shamelessly forsaken.

Ministers, ambassadors and other state dignitaries had plotted assiduously to pervert its purpose, had instigated the successive banishments of its Founders, and maliciously striven to undermine its foundations.

They had, through such plottings, unwittingly brought about their own downfall, forfeited the confidence of their sovereigns, drunk the cup of disgrace to its dregs, and irrevocably sealed their own doom.[l5] Baha'u'llah in the Lawh-i-Ahmad reveals the role that man must play in creation.

He states:

O My servants!

Be as resigned and submissive as the earth, that from the soil of your being there may blossom the fragrant, the holy and multicolored hyacinths of My knowledge.(16) In the same way that the earth must receive the rays of the sun and the showers of spring in order to produce its fruit, a human being must likewise turn to the Sun of Truth,[1] in this day to Baha'u'llah, so that he may fulfil the purpose for which he is created.

This is a law of creation, for without this relationship, man remains a material being.

Devoid of true spiritual life he produces a society in which prejudice, hatred and conflict become the pivot of his social life.

And this is the plight of mankind today! [1 The Manifestation of God.] In this Tablet, Baha'u'llah repeatedly addresses Ahmad and exhorts him to rectitude of conduct, purity of heart, and sincerity, urges him not to imitate

the wayward, counsels him to illumine his eyes with the light of His Revelation and summons him to enter the straight path.

He states that the purpose underlying His Revelation has been to enable those who are pure-hearted and endowed with capacity to acquire faith and ascend to the realms of Glory.

Otherwise, He affirms, His glory is exalted above, and independent of all understanding hearts.

He gives the example of <p151> the sun.

Should all the sighted peoples of the world testify to its light and those who are blind declare its darkness, neither of these testimonies could ever affect the sun.

The praise or condemnation of the people relates to themselves, while the sun remains luminous and resplendent in the heavens and is independent of the views held by men.

Of the greatness of His Revelation Baha'u'llah in this Tablet declares:

O My servants!

Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean.

I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine -- words of consummate power and wisdom.

I have, moreover, with the hand of divine power, unsealed the choice wine of My Revelation, and have wafted its holy, its hidden, and musk-laden fragrance upon all created things.

Who else but yourselves is to be blamed if ye choose to remain unendowed with so great an outpouring of God's transcendent and all-encompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy?...

O My servants!

There shineth nothing else in Mine heart except the unfading light of the Morn of Divine guidance, and out of My mouth proceedeth naught but the essence of truth, which the Lord your God hath revealed.

Follow not, therefore, your earthly desires, and violate not the Covenant of God, nor break your pledge to Him.

With firm determination, with the whole affection of your heart, and with the full force of your words, turn ye unto Him, and walk not in the ways of the foolish.

The world is but a show, vain and empty, a mere nothing, bearing the semblance of reality.

Set not your affections upon it.

Break not the bond that uniteth you with your Creator, and be not of those that have erred and strayed from His ways.

Verily I say, the world is like the vapour in a desert, which the thirsty dreameth to be water and striveth after it with all his might, until when he cometh unto it, he findeth it to be mere illusion.(17) <p152> 7 The Forces of Evil Gather Momentum As the news of the Declaration of Baha'u'llah as 'He Whom God shall make manifest' began to reach the ears of the Babis in Persia, and a few Baha'i teachers actively engaged in the propagation of His Cause and the dissemination of His newly-revealed Tablets, a crisis unprecedented in its scope and severity was brewing in Adrianople and soon assailed the companions of Baha'u'llah in that city.

Originating from Mirza Yahya and engineered by Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, it eventually engulfed the whole community, bringing in its wake untold sufferings to Baha'u'llah and creating a temporary breach in the ranks of the believers.

Soon after his arrival in Adrianople Mirza Yahya realized that his life was no longer in danger.

He had feared persecution and death ever since the martyrdom of the Bab.

It was this fear which had prompted him to hide himself away in Persia and Iraq for about thirteen years.

During these years he lived in disguise and was often on the run going from one hiding-place to another, while maintaining contact with Baha'u'llah and arranging for his wives and family to live in His household.

But now, in Adrianople, he knew the situation was different and there was no persecution.

Baha'u'llah, soon after His arrival, had won the respect and admiration of the people of Adrianople including the Governor and other dignitaries.

The co-operation and goodwill of the people became apparent when most of Baha'u'llah's companions, as directed by Him, engaged themselves in some work or profession and were integrated into the community.

Highly jealous of the rising prestige of Baha'u'llah and <p153> aware of the declaration of His station as 'He Whom God shall make manifest', Mirza Yahya decided it was time to come into the open and wrest the leadership of the community from the hands of the One who had been his guide and refuge all his life, and who had, through His sin-covering eye, concealed many of his shameful deeds.

Emboldened by Baha'u'llah's loving forgiveness, duped by Siyyid Muhammad's enticing prospects and spurred on by his own ambitious lust for leadership, Mirza Yahya embarked upon a path which is exclusively reserved for the evil, namely, to attempt a person's life.

This was his only way, for he knew that he had no power whatsoever to confront Baha'u'llah.

It is a fact that whenever Mirza Yahya came into the presence of Baha'u'llah, he found himself speechless.

The majesty and authority of the Supreme Manifestation of God was so overwhelming that he was unable to utter a word.

Several people have testified to this including Mirza Aqa Jan, who mentions that in the early days in Baghdad he discovered that Mirza Yahya was so insignificant in the presence of Baha'u'llah that he could not speak.

This puzzled Mirza Aqa Jan, until later he realized that Mirza Yahya was like anyone else in the presence of Baha'u'llah.

However, Baha'u'llah had instructed His amanuensis not to disclose his observations to anyone.

It was not surprising for a man such as Mirza Yahya, who had already committed several crimes[1] including the issuing of orders for the assassination of some of the outstanding disciples of the Bab and His cousin, to make elaborate plans for the taking of Baha'u'llah's life.

The first attempt, carried out by Mirza Yahya's own hands, was to poison Him.

Shoghi Effendi has summarized this shameful episode in these words: [1 See vol.

I, chapter 15.] Desperate designs to poison Baha'u'llah and His companions, and thereby reanimate his own defunct leadership, began, approximately a year after their arrival in Adrianople, to agitate his mind.

Well aware of the erudition of his half-brother, <p154> Aqay-i-Kalim, in matters pertaining to medicine, he, under various pretexts, sought enlightenment from him regarding the effects of certain herbs and poisons, and then began, contrary to his wont, to invite Baha'u'llah to his home, where, one day, having smeared His tea-cup with a substance he had concocted, he succeeded in poisoning Him sufficiently to produce a serious illness which lasted no less than a month, and which was accompanied by severe pains and high fever, the aftermath of which left Baha'u'llah with a shaking hand till the end of His life.

So grave was His condition that a foreign doctor, named Shishman, was called in to attend Him.

The doctor was so appalled by His livid hue that he deemed His case hopeless, and, after having fallen at His feet, retired from His presence without prescribing a remedy.

A few days later that doctor fell ill and died.

Prior to his death Baha'u'llah had intimated that doctor Shishman had sacrificed his life for Him.

To Mirza Aqa Jan, sent by Baha'u'llah to visit him, the doctor had stated that God had answered his prayers, and that after his death a certain Dr.

Chupan, whom he knew to be reliable, should, whenever necessary, be called in his stead.

On another occasion this same Mirza Yahya had, according to the testimony of one of his wives, who had temporarily deserted him and revealed the details of the above-mentioned act, poisoned the well which provided water for the family and companions of Baha'u'llah, in consequence of which the exiles manifested strange symptoms of illness.(1) In spite of this Baha'u'llah did not wish to disclose the wicked deeds of His brother to the public.

He advised His companions not to spread the news.

However, it was through Mirza Yahya's own actions later that the story had to be told.

For soon after Baha'u'llah's recovery, Mirza Yahya openly and by insinuation shamefully claimed that it was Baha'u'llah who had tried to poison him!

This outrageous and false accusation against One who was the well-spring of love and forgiveness served to unmask Mirza Yahya, and revealed his satanic nature to friends and strangers alike. <p155> Some time passed and Mirza Yahya was still waiting for the opportunity to make another attempt on the life of Baha'u'llah.

According to his plans the scene of attack this time was to be the public bath[1] which Baha'u'llah was sure to visit.

With a certain subtlety he intimated to Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani,[2] the barber who was Baha'u'llah's bath attendant,[3] the merits of assassinating Baha'u'llah, and made it quite clear that it would be a service to the Faith of God if he would do this when attending Him in the bath.

On hearing this suggestion Ustad Muhammad-'Ali was so enraged that, as we shall see later, he felt a great urge to kill Mirza Yahya on the spot. [1 In the days of Baha'u'llah it was necessary for most people in the Middle East to visit public baths as there were no bathing facilities in their houses.

Public baths, which were set aside for men on certain days of the week, and for women on others, were mostly of the kind known as Turkish baths.

People often visited them once a week and remained inside for many hours in order to wash and relax in the warm and steamy atmosphere.

At the same time the gathering of people in one place created a social occasion where they exchanged news and discussed many topics.

Often friends visited the bath together so that they could spend some hours with each other.

Public baths provided customers with attendants who washed them and performed

other services such as applying henna to the hair or shaving.

Important people often had their own bath attendants.] [2 Not to be confused with the celebrated Shaykh Salman.] [3 According to custom, a barber could often be a bath attendant also.] Ustad Muhammad-'Ali was one of Baha'u'llah's disciples and had the honour to be His attendant in the bath since the Baghdad days; he continued this service in Akka.

He was one of the servants of Baha'u'llah and a man of great courage and faith.

He had recognized the station of Baha'u'llah with such depth and conviction that his whole being was dominated by a passionate love for Him, a love that knew no bounds and often carried him to the verge of rapture.

Historians have stated that he was illiterate and claim that his autobiography was dictated by him.

One thing, however, is clear: that even if he had barely learnt to read and write, he had no education whatsoever. <p156> However, Baha'u'llah had bestowed upon him the knowledge of God.

He became the recipient of such divine gifts that in spite of his illiteracy and humble origins, he was enabled to make a valuable contribution to Persian literature through his poems.

In the history of the Faith we come across many distinguished Baha'i poets, most of whom were men of learning and knowledge.

Yet some claim that Ustad Muhammad-'Ali's poems are endowed with a special power which make them outstanding.

Those who appreciate poetry have acknowledged the beauty, lucidity and profundity of his composition.

The believers who recite his soul-stirring poems often become uplifted and inspired, transported from this mortal life into the world of realities.

His words, deep and full of significances, move the soul and open before one's eyes vistas of love and adoration for Baha'u'llah.

Those who are as yet unaffected by the potency of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah may find it hard to believe that such a man, unlettered and unaccomplished, could ever rise to such heights as to make a notable contribution to human knowledge and literature.

And when we study the life of Ustad Muhammad-'Ali closely, and take into account his daily encounters with people, his manners and his language which at times were harsh and offensive, we realize that not only was he uneducated but he was also a somewhat unrefined person.

Nevertheless, when the heart is pure and the soul turns with sincerity and devotion to Baha'u'llah, it becomes the recipient of the knowledge of God referred to in Islam as 'a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth.'(2) Ustad Muhammad-'Ali was an example of this; he may be described

as a flame of the love of Baha'u'llah.

His poems are likewise songs of love and rapture and we cannot find even one line in which he has deviated from this theme.

The object of his adoration is none other than Baha'u'llah and this is made clear in his poems.

He extols and glorifies Him in beautiful language and lays bare the fire of love which burns within his heart.

Most of his poems were composed extemporaneously as <p157> he attended to Baha'u'llah's hair.

When he came in contact with his Beloved he was carried into the realms of the spirit and became oblivious of all that was around him.

It was in this state that these beautiful poems flowed forth in an uncontrollable fashion.

Having no education, he would sometimes ask the meaning of some of the words he had used.

For instance, Haji Mirza Buzurg-i-Afnan, a distinguished believer who for many years was the custodian of the house of the Bab in Shiraz, has recounted the following story:

Salmon had a tiny barber's shop in Akka and in it had built a small platform with sun-baked bricks for his customers to sit upon.

Many times I sat on that platform for hairdressing.

He was illiterate and on occasions when he was busy dressing my hair he used to ask me the meaning of some of the words he did not know and which he had used in his poems.(3) Ustad Muhammad-'Ali was a native of Isfahan.

His father sent him to a barber's shop when he was nine years old.

At the age of fifteen he began to work on his own.

Soon after, he came in contact with the Babis in Isfahan and about three years after the martyrdom of the Bab, he embraced the Babi Faith.

Together with some others, Ustad Muhammad-'Ali was persecuted in Isfahan for being a Babi.

Two of his co-religionists were martyred in the public square.

They were Aqa Muhammad-Javad and Mulla Ali, who danced his way to the field of martyrdom.

These two devoted Babis were conducted to the square and had to lie down until the executioner arrived and decapitated them.

Then came the turn of Ustad Muhammad-'Ali and a certain Ustad

Abdu'l-Karim-i-Kharrat, a woodturner.[1] However, the Governor ordered these men to be tortured and put in jail.

Later their relatives paid a sum of money to the authorities as ransom and secured their freedom.

After being released they both left Isfahan for Baghdad where <p158> they attained the presence of Baha'u'llah.

Ustad Muhammad-'Ali worked in Baghdad as a barber where he was given the honour of attending Baha'u'llah in the bath.

He also attended Baha'u'llah's brothers, Abdu'l-Baha, and other believers. [1 He became a Covenant-breaker and has since been referred to as Kharatin (earth-worm).] For the sake of honouring Baha'u'llah and the Cause of the Bab, the companions of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad and Adrianople had always shown consideration and regard for Mirza Yahya who, after all, was the nominee of the Bab and a brother of their Lord.

This attitude, which was shown purely for the exaltation of the Cause of God, was misinterpreted by Mirza Yahya and led him to imagine that these men would be willing to carry out his orders regardless of their import.

However, he soon discovered how gravely he had erred in his judgement by asking Ustad Muhammad-'Ali, one of the most faithful servants of Baha'u'llah, to carry out his sinister design.

Ustad Muhammad-'Ali in his memoirs has recounted in detail this shameful episode and the events leading to it.

The following is a translation of some of his words:

One day I went to the bath and awaited the arrival of the Blessed Beauty.

Azal[1] arrived first.

I attended to him and applied henna.

He began to talk to me.

For some time he was trying hard to make me his follower, but he was doing this in a secret way.

He said to me: 'Last night I dreamt that someone had a sweeping brush in his hand and was sweeping the area around me.'[2] He gave me to understand that this person was the Blessed Beauty.

From the tone of his conversation, I knew that he wanted me to do something for him, but he did not tell me anything and soon left the bath. [1 Mirza Yahya.] [2 The connotation of these words in Persian is that Baha'u'llah was a humble servant of Mirza Yahya.] Then the Blessed Beauty came in.

There was a mirror on the wall, and as his image appeared in it, He recited this line of poetry, 'Thou art great, and the mirror too small to

reflect Thy beauty.'<p159> I was deep in my thoughts concerning the words of Azal.

I did not understand his purpose in implying that the Blessed Beauty was sweeping the floor around him.

However, it was quite clear that he wanted me to carry out a special task for him.

At the same time I noticed that Haji Mirza Ahmad[1] was trying to convert me to follow Azal.

During the course of several days he persisted in trying to win me over.(4) [1 The recipient of the Lawh-i-Ahmad (Persian).] Ustad Muhammad-'Ali stood firm and immovable as a rock.

He rejected Haji Mirza Ahmad's arguments and at the end used such harsh and unspeakably offensive language that his opponent went to Baha'u'llah and complained.

The following day, Mirza Aqa Jan, as instructed by Baha'u'llah, gathered the believers together and in order to help them resolve their differences read out some Tablets including the Lawh-i-Ahmad (Persian) which was addressed to the same Haji Mirza Ahmad.

Ustad Muhammad-'Ali continues in his memoirs:

One day I was waiting at the bath for the arrival of Baha'u'llah.

Azal came in first, washed himself and began to apply henna.

I sat down to serve him and he began to talk to me.

He said 'A certain Mirza Na'im, the former Governor of Nayriz, killed many believers and perpetrated many crimes against the Cause'.

He then praised courage and bravery in glowing terms.

He said that some were brave by nature and at the right time they would manifest that quality in their actions.

He then continued the story of Mirza Na'im. 'From the persecuted family of the believers there remained a young boy aged ten or eleven.

One day, when Mirza Na'im went into the bath, this boy went in with a knife.

As he was coming out of the water, the boy stabbed him and ripped his belly open.

Mirza Na'im screamed and his servants who were in the ante-room rushed in.

They went for the boy, attacked and beat him.

Then they went to see how their master was.

The boy, although wounded, <p160> rose up and stabbed him again.' Azal praised courage again and said 'How wonderful it is for a man to be brave.

Now, see what they are doing to the Cause of God.

Everybody harms it, everyone has arisen against me, even my Brother.

I have no comfort whatsoever and am in a wretched state.' His tone and implications were that he, the successor of the Bab, was the wronged one, and his Brother (I take refuge in God!) was the usurper and aggressor.

Then he once more praised courage and said that the Cause of God needed help.

In all this talk, the tone of his remarks, the story of Mirza Na'im, the praise of courage and his encouragement to me, he was in fact telling me to kill Baha'u'llah.

The effect of all this upon me was so disturbing that in all my life I had never felt so shattered.

It was as if the whole building was falling upon my head.

I was frightened; without uttering a word I went out to the ante-room.

My mind was in a state of the utmost agitation.

I thought to myself that I would go inside and cut his head off regardless of consequences.

Then I thought, to kill him is easy, but perhaps I would offend the Blessed Beauty.

One thing which prevented me from carrying out my intention was the thought that if I killed him and then went into the presence of the Blessed Beauty, and He asked me why I had killed him, what answer could I give?

I returned to the bath and being extremely angry, I shouted at him 'Go and get lost, clear off!' He whimpered and trembled and asked me to pour water over him.

I complied.

Washed or unwashed he went out in a state of great trepidation, and I have never seen him since.

My state of mind, however, was such that nothing could calm me.

As it happened, that day the Blessed Beauty did not come to the bath, but Aqa Mirza Musay-i-Kalim [Baha'u'llah's faithful brother] came.

I told him that Azal had set me on fire with his sinister suggestion.

Aqa Mirza Musa said: 'He has been thinking of this for years, this man

has always been thinking in this way.

Do not pay any attention to him.' He counselled me to disregard the whole thing and went inside the bath.

However, when my work was finished in the bath, I went <p161> to the Master[1] and reported to Him what Mirza Yahya had told me, and how I was filled with rage and wanted to kill him ... the Master said, 'This is something that you alone know.

Do not mention it to anyone, it is better that it remain hidden.' I then went to Mirza Aqa Jan, reported the details of the incident and asked him to tell Baha'u'llah.

He returned and said 'Baha'u'llah says to tell Ustad Muhammad-'Ali not to mention this to anyone.' [1 Abdu'l-Baha. (A.T.)] That night I collected all the writings of Azal and went to the tea-room[1] of Baha'u'llah's house and burnt them all in the brazier.

Before doing so, I showed them to seven or eight of the believers who were present.

They all saw that they were the writings of Azal.

They all protested to me and asked me the reason for doing this.

I said, 'Until today I esteemed Azal highly, but now he is less than a dog in my sight'.[2](5) [1 In this room the believers often gathered, talked among themselves and drank their tea. (A.T.)] [2 In Persian, to call someone a dog sounds much more insulting than it does in English. (A.T.)] In the end Ustad Muhammad-'Ali found himself unable to keep this matter to himself.

Soon the news spread and created much fear and anguish in the hearts of the believers in Adrianople.

It was after this event that Baha'u'llah decided to announce formally to Mirza Yahya, as the nominee of the Bab, His claim to be the Fountain-head of Divine Revelation, 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

Although Mirza Yahya was already informed of the declaration of Baha'u'llah and was aware of His claim through His Tablets, nevertheless, this announcement was of great significance, in so far as it left no excuse for Mirza Yahya to cloud the issue.

Baha'u'llah had formally summoned him to pay allegiance to His Cause.

Failure to do so would have meant the parting of the ways.

This announcement was made by Baha'u'llah through the revelation of a special Tablet known as Suriy-i-Amr (Surih of <p162> Command).

In it He clearly stated His claims and conveyed the character of His Mission.

He commissioned Mirza Aqa Jan, His amanuensis, to take it personally to Mirza

Yahya, read it aloud to him and demand a conclusive reply.

Mirza Yahya asked for a time during which he could meditate his answer.

This request was granted, and the following day he replied that he himself had become the recipient of divine Revelation, and it was incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to follow him and pay allegiance to his person.

Such a claim by one who was the embodiment of deceit and falsehood evoked the wrath of God, and was clearly regarded as a signal for the eventual split between Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya.

We must bear in mind that the majority of the community in Adrianople was faithful to Baha'u'llah and wholly devoted to Him.

The rest consisted of a few men who were evil or mischief-makers, and some weak and vacillating.

They freely associated with each other and consequently tests and trials were immense at that period.

Ever since their banishment to Adrianople the faithful companions of Baha'u'llah had been filled with anguish and sorrow as a result of the activities of Mirza Yahya and his supporters.

With the revelation of the Suriy-i-Amr and Mirza Yahya's reactions, the contest between the forces of light and darkness came to a head.

Embarking on an action reminiscent of His solitary retirement to the mountains of Kurdistan when the unfaithful were shamefully destroying the Cause of God, Baha'u'llah, who at this time was residing in the house of Amru'llah, withdrew with His family to the nearby house of Rida Big which was rented by His order, and refused to associate with anybody.

This was on 10 March 1866.

The reason for this withdrawal, which fortunately was of short duration, was similar to that which had motivated Him to retire to Kurdistan a decade earlier: namely, to relieve the tension and alleviate the feelings of enmity which during the course of years had been engendered in the hearts of some by Mirza Yahya and were fanned into flame by his latest actions. <p163> The withdrawal of Baha'u'llah on these two occasions produced a drastic effect on both the sincere and the unfaithful.

It also afforded the exiles the freedom to choose between Him and Mirza Yahya.

The true believers who were sustained by His unfailing grace found themselves suddenly cut off from the Source of Life.

The Light went from their midst and their souls were plunged into a world of darkness and deprivation.

Like plants which wither away and shrivel up when barred from the rays of the sun, the true disciples of Baha'u'llah, those lovers of His beauty, became

dispirited and disconsolate.

They would willingly have offered up their lives and all their possessions had they thought that such an action would bring about their reunion with their Beloved.

Aqay-i-Kalim, the faithful brother and a staunch supporter of Baha'u'llah, who with Abdu'l-Baha carried the weight of many responsibilities during the dark hours of tests and trials, especially during the absence of Baha'u'llah, has reported to Nabil these words concerning Baha'u'llah's retirement in the house of Rida Big:

That day witnessed a most great commotion.

All the companions lamented in their separation from the Blessed Beauty.(6) One of the companions of Baha'u'llah who was present at the time has left to posterity this account which portrays the feelings of His loved ones:

Those days were marked by tumult and confusion.

We were sore-perplexed, and greatly feared lest we be permanently deprived of the bounty of His presence.(7) The enemies and the wavering souls who leaned towards Mirza Yahya, but who often attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, were discomfited in their activities as a result of His withdrawal.

The guiding hand of Baha'u'llah which had so far sustained them, in spite of their unfaithfulness, and protected <p164> them with care and loving-kindness, was now withdrawn.

They were thrown back on their own resources and were caught in the clutches of a strife which hastened their doom.

As time passed, they sank deeper and deeper into the swamp of their own machinations and perished ingloriously.

When Baha'u'llah moved His residence from the house of Amru'llah to the house of Rida Big, He ordered His brother Aqay-i-Kalim to divide all the furniture, bedding and utensils and send half of them to the house of Mirza Yahya, and to see that he received his full share of the government allowance allocated to the exiles.

He also directed that several items such as the rings of the Bab, His seals and some manuscripts be delivered to him.

Mirza Yahya had longed to possess these relics which the Bab, before His martyrdom, had specifically sent to Baha'u'llah.

Upon His retirement to the house of Rida Big, Baha'u'llah took only one servant for Himself and His family.

He instructed Aqay-i-Kalim to take one of the companions to serve him and to appoint anyone of the companions whom Mirza Yahya might select as a servant to

his household.

Mirza Yahya asked for Darvish Sidq-'Ali,[1] one of the most faithful disciples of Baha'u'llah.

When informed of this, Baha'u'llah directed Aqay-i-Kalim to tell the Darvish to present himself to Mirza Yahya and serve him with the utmost truthfulness and sincerity, stating that no one among the unfaithful would be able to rob him of the love he cherished in his heart for the Blessed Beauty.

He further urged the Darvish to read the Lawh-i-Laylatu'l-Quds[2] (Tablet of the Holy Night) which had been revealed in his honour, and assured him that when he read it this time, he would be able to understand its hidden meanings. [1 For a brief account of his life see Memorials of the Faithful, also The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

I, p.

289, and below, pp.

329-30 ff.] [2 See p.

188.] No sooner did Aqay-i-Kalim convey Baha'u'llah's message to Darvish Sidq-'Ali, than he fell prostrate on the ground as a <p165> gesture of humility and thankfulness to his Lord, and said that this message of Baha'u'llah and His loving-kindness were sufficient to sustain him, and that he would remain happy even if he had to endure afflictions for the rest of his life.

While the Darvish was in his service, Mirza Yahya offered him a sum of money which he refused, saying that Baha'u'llah looked after his needs and that he was serving Mirza Yahya solely in obedience to Baha'u'llah's command and not for money.

Darvish Sidq-'Ali, however, did not have to remain in the service of Mirza Yahya for very long.

Through a succession of events he was relieved from this unpleasant task.

Indeed, as we shall see, soon after Baha'u'llah's withdrawal to the house of Rida Big, all the followers of Baha'u'llah completely dissociated themselves from Mirza Yahya and were cleansed from the pollution of his satanic spirit.

The 'Most Great Separation' The withdrawal of Baha'u'llah to the house of Rida Big and His refusal to meet any of the exiles created a situation in which some of the unfaithful openly turned against Him and transferred their allegiance to Mirza Yahya.

Emboldened by the absence of Baha'u'llah, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, who until then used to attain His presence and associate with His loved ones, publicly threw in his lot with the arch-breaker of the Covenant of the Bab and, thinking that the arena was now cleared for him, openly rose up in opposition to Baha'u'llah and began a vigorous campaign to discredit Him among the people.

A period of intense activity ensued in which Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad

played a major part.

Assisted by their infamous allies and associates they loaded their letters with calumnies and false accusations against Baha'u'llah and disseminated them far and wide among the believers in Persia and Iraq.

These letters caused much confusion and dissension among some of the Babi community in Persia.

Certain individuals were <p166> misled by these slanderous statements and lost their faith altogether.

A number of Babis wrote to Baha'u'llah and begged for guidance and enlightenment.

Several Tablets in this period were revealed in response to such questions.

Other believers had already reached the stage of certitude in their faith.

These souls were moved by the dissemination of these evil letters to take action, and they arose, together with others whom Baha'u'llah had specifically chosen, such as Nabil, to champion the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

They defended it most ably against those egotistical personalities in the Babi community who were determined to bring division within the Cause of God.

It was Mirza Yahya himself who, by his actions, revealed to the Babi community his disobedience to the Covenant which the Bab had so irrefutably established concerning 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', a disobedience long concealed by Baha'u'llah.

The tests and trials which Baha'u'llah had foretold in His Tablets were now beginning to descend upon the believers.

The news of the opposition of Mirza Yahya, the nominee of the Bab, created a great commotion among the Babis, and served as a signal for the permanent rupture between him and his illustrious Brother.

It was during this period that Mirza Yahya entrusted one of his companions with some papers for distribution among the Babis in Persia.

On learning their contents, this man refused to comply with his orders and instead showed them to some faithful believers.

These papers contained many statements misrepresenting Baha'u'llah and accusing Him of those very crimes which Mirza Yahya himself had already committed.

They fell ultimately into the hands of Baha'u'llah's friends in Adrianople who were astonished by Yahya's shameful behaviour when they saw them.[1] [1 Despite the contents of these letters, Baha'u'llah advised the messenger that he should carry out the instructions of Mirza Yahya and deliver them.] Not satisfied with these perfidious deeds, Mirza Yahya decided to carry his rebellion to circles hitherto untouched by these matters.

Thinking that Baha'u'llah would continue to <p167> bear every false accusation

and any amount of ill-treatment with resignation and forbearance, he sent a petition to Khurshid Pasha, the Governor of Adrianople, and to the Governor's assistant Aziz Pasha.

This communication, which the Governor shared with Baha'u'llah, was couched in obsequious language, contained false statements about Baha'u'llah and was aimed at discrediting Him in the eyes of the Governor, who was one of His most ardent admirers.

One of Yahya's false accusations was that he was not receiving his share of the allowance which the Government had allotted to Baha'u'llah and His fellow exiles.

To support this claim he sent one of his wives to call on the Governor to complain that her husband's share of allowance was cut off by Baha'u'llah and that as a result he had become destitute and his children were on the verge of starvation.

As we have already stated, the fact was that Baha'u'llah had always supported Mirza Yahya and his family.

And when He retired to the house of Rida Big, He had arranged for Yahya to receive his full share of the government allowance.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, who arrived in Adrianople a few months after these distasteful events and attained the presence of Baha'u'llah many times, has written concerning Mirza Yahya's petition to the authorities in these words:

When Azal arose in hostility with his satanic spirit to oppose and challenge the Blessed Beauty, through calumnies and false accusations, he wrote a letter to the Governor of Adrianople.

We[1] all saw this letter.

It opened with these words: 'May my soul and body be a sacrifice for thee.' It went on to say: 'O thou Aziz,[2] we come to you in destitution, grant us some corn.' He continues falsely to accuse the Ancient Beauty of having cut off his livelihood. [1 Referring to himself and other disciples of Baha'u'llah.] [2 Aziz Pasha, the Deputy Governor of Adrianople.] The opening sentence of his letter, the statement of his needs, and the complaints all demonstrate that God cannot be confused with man, and that there is no likeness between <p168> the two.

We see the contrast, for instance, in these words of the Ancient Beauty as He addresses the late Sultan Abdu'l-'Aziz:[1] 'O thou Ra'is [Chief], hearken to the voice of God, the Supreme Ruler, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

He verily calleth between earth and heaven and summoneth mankind to the scene of effulgent glory.' [1 This Tablet is actually addressed to Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizir.] In this blessed Tablet, He foreshadows that the Sultan would lose his throne and the country would pass out of his

hands...

To return to our subject:

Baha'u'llah had, through an intermediary, proved to the Governor that these allegations [by Mirza Yahya] were false and, in a message, explained to him that these calumnies were designed to hurt and humiliate Him...(8) The accusations of Mirza Yahya spread far and wide.

Shoghi Effendi writes: ...He [Baha'u'llah] was soon after informed that this same brother [Mirza Yahya] had despatched one of his wives to the government house to complain that her husband had been cheated of his rights, and that her children were on the verge of starvation -- an accusation that spread far and wide and, reaching Constantinople, became, to Baha'u'llah's profound distress, the subject of excited discussion and injurious comment in circles that had previously been greatly impressed by the high standard which His noble and dignified behaviour had set in that city.(9) In a Tablet to Shaykh Salman,[1] Baha'u'llah describes the agony of His heart for Mirza Yahya's shameful deeds.

He recounts his calumnies concerning his share of the allowance, stating that it has always been divided between the exiles, and mentions that had it not been for the sake of those who accompanied Him, He Himself would never have accepted the government allowance in spite of all the hardships which such an action would have entailed.

As we shall see later, when the campaign of calumnies was intensified, Baha'u'llah refused to <p169> draw this allowance and had to sell some of His belongings in order to provide for His livelihood. [1 See chapter 13 and also vol.

I, pp.

109-13.] One of the features of the life of Baha'u'llah was that although born of one of the wealthiest families in Persia and having lived many years in luxurious surroundings, He spent forty years of His Ministry in an austerity to which He had never been accustomed during the earlier days of His life.

For two years he lived in the utmost poverty in the mountains of Kurdistan where many a day He subsisted on milk alone.

In Baghdad He lived a simple life and had to endure many privations. 'There was a time in Iraq,' He affirms in a Tablet, 'when the Ancient Beauty ... had no change of linen.

The one shirt He possessed would be washed, dried and worn again.'(10) In Adrianople and Akka He submitted Himself to the privations and hardships which a ruthless enemy had imposed upon Him.

Although many believers through their devotion, and often by sacrificing their own needs, offered gifts to Baha'u'llah, He usually distributed such gifts among the poor and He Himself lived with the utmost simplicity.

For example, Husayn-i-Ashchi, a youth from Kashan who served Baha'u'llah as a cook in Adrianople and later in Akka, has left to posterity the following account of the days when He stayed in the house of Amru'llah in Adrianople.

This house [of Amru'llah] was very large and magnificent.

It had a large outer apartment where all the loved ones of Baha'u'llah used to gather.

They were intoxicated with the wine of His Peerless Beauty...

However, the means of livelihood were very inadequate and meagre.

Most of the time there was no food which could be served to Baha'u'llah other than bread and cheese.

Every day I used to save some meat and oil and store them in a special place until there was enough to cook.

I would then invite Baha'u'llah to a meal on the lawn.

We managed to save some money and buy two cows and one goat.

The milk and yogurt which were produced were served in the holy household... <p170> In the winter there was a brazier[1] in each room.

It was among my duties to light them.

In order to economize I used to measure the amount of coal that I placed in each brazier.

Someone had informed Baha'u'llah of this.

He summoned me to His presence and said: 'I hear you count the pieces of coal which go into each brazier!' Baha'u'llah smiled and was very amused.

He agreed that such economy was necessary in a large house.[ll] [1 Portable fireplace made of cast iron in which charcoal is burnt.] Because of the harmful actions of Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad, Baha'u'llah was forced to end His withdrawal, which had lasted about two months, and come forward to protect the Cause of God from the onslaught of the unfaithful.

It was at this time that Baha'u'llah expelled Siyyid Muhammad from the gatherings of His followers and soon the 'Most Great Separation', which was a clear division between the followers of Baha'u'llah and those of Mirza Yahya, became public.

The two-months' withdrawal of Baha'u'llah acted as a spiritual vacuum for the exiles in Adrianople.

It created a great test and as a result each one of them showed the measure of his sincerity and faith.

When the time of separation came, each person knew to which side he belonged.

However, the great majority of the exiles remained steadfast in the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

Only a few, who had gathered around Mirza Yahya, were expelled from the presence of Baha'u'llah.

Several ambitious men and egotistical personalities in Persia also threw in their lot with Mirza Yahya.

They strengthened his hand and, as we shall see later, he, instigated by Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, intensified his evil activities and spread the seeds of dissension and strife among the authorities in the capital city of the Ottoman Empire. <p171> 8 The Promised One of the Bayan:

Some Tablets Lawh-i-Baha One of the Tablets revealed by Baha'u'llah during this period is the Lawh-i-Baha (Tablet of Baha).

It was probably revealed just before Baha'u'llah took up residence in the house of Rida Big.

For in it He refers to the anguish of His heart and states that He intends to withdraw from everybody in the community.

This Tablet, which is in Arabic with parts translated by Himself into Persian, was revealed in honour of Khatun Jan, the eldest daughter of Haji Asadu'llah-Farhadi,[1] a native of Qazvin. [1 See The Dawn-Breakers.] Khatun Jan was a devoted believer.

Her father, Haji Asadu'llah, was one of the followers of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti.

As Tahirih was also one of the disciples of the Siyyid, there was a great friendship between Tahirih and the daughters of Haji Asadu'llah.

When the Bab revealed Himself, Tahirih, who was then in Karbila, acknowledged the truth of His Message and was named as one of the Letters of the Living.

Soon after this news of the Bab's declaration reached Qazvin.

Haji Asadu'llah and his family were among the early believers in that town.

When Tahirih returned to Qazvin, the bond of love and union between herself and the Farhadi family grew much stronger.

Khatun Jan, in particular, became an ardent admirer of Tahirih.

She used to sit at her feet and was enthralled by Tahirih's devotion and love for the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

Soon after Tahirih's arrival in Qazvin, persecutions started <p172> against the Babis.

Haji Asadu'llah, the father of Khatun Jan, was dragged from his sick-bed and at an advanced age was made to walk in chains, for a distance of no less than one hundred and seventy kilometres, in company with his fellow prisoners to a Tihran prison.

Concerning their fate Nabil writes:

No sooner were the captives delivered into the hands of the mischief-makers than they set about gratifying their feelings of implacable hatred towards them.

On the first night after they had been handed over to their enemies, Haji Asadu'llah, the brother of Haji Allah-Vardi and paternal uncle of Muhammad-Hadi and Muhammad-Javad-i-Farhadi, a noted merchant of Qazvin who had acquired a reputation for piety and uprightness which stood as high as that of his illustrious brother, was mercilessly put to death.

Knowing full well that in his own native town they would be unable to inflict upon him the punishment they desired, they determined to take his life whilst in Tihran in a manner that would protect them from the suspicion of murder.

At the hour of midnight, they perpetrated the shameful act, and the next morning announced that illness had been the cause of his death.

His friends and acquaintances, mostly natives of Qazvin, none of whom had been able to detect the crime that had extinguished such a noble life, accorded him a burial that befitted his station.[l] The tragic martyrdom of Haji Asadu'llah and others was the signal for further persecutions in Qazvin.

The house of the Farhadis was plundered and all their belongings confiscated.

Muhammad-Hadiy-i-Farhadi, a nephew of Haji Asadu'llah and the husband of Khatun Jan, had to leave the city for his own safety and went to Tihran.

In the meantime Tahirih, by the order of an implacable enemy, was confined to the house of her father and constantly watched by certain women whose task it was to ensure that she did not leave her room except for performing her daily ablutions.

As the situation became worse, the enemy planned to end the life of Tahirih.

Concerning this Nabil writes: <p173> The failure of the Shah and of his government to inflict immediate punishment upon the malefactors encouraged them to seek further means for the gratification of their relentless hatred towards their opponents.

They now directed their attention to Tahirih herself, and resolved that she should suffer at their hands the same fate that had befallen her companions.

While still in confinement, Tahirih, as soon as she was informed of the designs of her enemies, addressed the following message to Mulla Muhammad, who had succeeded to the position of his father and was now recognized as the Imam-Jum'ih of Qazvin: "'Fain would they put out God's light with their mouths: but God only desireth to perfect His light, albeit the infidels abhor it" [Qur'an 9:33].

If my Cause be the Cause of Truth, if the Lord whom I worship be none other than the one true God, He will, ere nine days have elapsed, deliver me from the yoke of your tyranny.

Should He fail to achieve my deliverance, you are free to act as you desire.

You will have irrevocably established the falsity of my belief.' Mulla Muhammad, recognizing his inability to accept so bold a challenge, chose to ignore entirely her message, and sought by every cunning device to accomplish his purpose.(2) Mulla Muhammad, mentioned by Nabil, was the chief enemy of the Babis in Qazvin.

It is interesting to note that he was the cousin and husband of Tahirih.

But soon after Tahirih became a follower of Siyyid Kazim, a rift came between them.

Tahirih left her husband and lived with her father.

When she became a follower of the Bab, this rift became much greater.

When she returned to Qazvin after having championed the Cause of the Bab, Mulla Muhammad invited her to come and stay in his house.

She sent this message to him:

Say to my presumptuous and arrogant kinsman, 'If your desire had really been to be a faithful mate and companion to me, you would have hastened to meet me in Karbila and would on foot have guided my howdah all the way to Qazvin.

I would, while journeying with you, have aroused <p174> you from your sleep of heedlessness and would have shown you the way of truth.

But this was not to be.

Three years have elapsed since our separation.

Neither in this world nor in the next can I ever be associated with you.

I have cast you out of my life for ever.'(3) During the time that Tahirih was confined in her home, the only person who managed to keep in touch with her was Khatun Jan.

She went to her house almost every day, sometimes disguised as a beggar and sometimes as a washer-woman who would do her washing in the public waterway nearby.

By this regular contact she performed an important function in bringing news to and from Tahirih.

She also managed to smuggle in food during the time that the enemies were bent upon taking the life of Tahirih, and there was every possibility that they might attempt to poison her food.

And finally she played a significant role, together with her husband Muhammad-Hadi, in rescuing her beloved lady from imprisonment.

Almost coinciding with the fore-mentioned challenge which Tahirih delivered to Mulla Muhammad concerning her release, Baha'u'llah in Tihran summoned to His presence Muhammad-Hadiy-i-Farhadi, who had fled from Qazvin, and directed him to return there immediately and carry out the rescue operation which He had planned.[1] This is how Nabil describes this episode: [1 Aqa Muhammad-Hadi served Tahirih in many other ways.

For instance, he was among those who accompanied her to Badasht and there acted as a guard at the gate of the garden which was assigned to her by Baha'u'llah.

For details of the conference of Badasht, see The Dawn-Breakers.] Muhammad-Hadi was charged to deliver a sealed letter to his wife, Khatun Jan, and instruct her to proceed, in the guise of a beggar, to the house where Tahirih was confined; to deliver the letter into her hands; to wait awhile at the entrance of her house until she should join her, and then to hasten with her and commit her to his care. 'As soon as Tahirih has joined you,' Baha'u'llah urged the emissary, <p175> 'start immediately for Tihran.

This very night, I shall dispatch to the neighbourhood of the gate of Qazvin an attendant, with three horses, that you will take with you and station at a place that you will appoint outside the walls of Qazvin.

You will conduct Tahirih to that spot, will mount the horses, and will, by an unfrequented route, endeavour to reach at daybreak the outskirts of the capital.

As soon as the gates are opened, you must enter the city and proceed immediately to My house.

You should exercise the utmost caution lest her identity be disclosed.

The Almighty will assuredly guide your steps and will surround you with His unfailing protection.'(4) The manner in which Muhammad-Hadi carried out the rescue operation with the help of Khatun Jan is described in detail by Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar:[1] [1 One of the Apostles of Baha'u'llah.

More details of his life will be given in vol.

III.] Tahirih was confined in the house of her father.

Mulla Muhammad, her cousin and husband, was trying to poison her but had no access.

None of the friends, with the exception of the eldest daughter of the late Haji Asadu'llah [Khatun Jan] who was truly devoted to her, was able to communicate with her.

Khatun Jan contrived several plans and disguised herself in various forms.

Posing as a washer-woman carrying her washing or appearing as a beggar, she managed to contact Tahirih and take food to her.

This was important since Tahirih was taking precautions about the food which was given to her in the house, and consequently she was living under difficult circumstances.

Aqa Hadi,[1] ... had fled to Tihran.

There he visited Vahid whom he knew from earlier days.

Vahid took him to the Blessed Beauty and introduced him.

Thereupon Baha'u'llah wrote a letter to Tahirih and directed Aqa Hadi to rescue her and bring her to Tihran.

Aqa Hadi returned to Qazvin in disguise.

He managed with the help of his wife ... who used her usual methods of contact, to hand the <p176> letter to her.

After reading the letter Tahirih indicated that she would shortly come out of the house.

She joined them about one hour later.

Aqa Hadi and his wife immediately took Tahirih to the house of their neighbour, a certain Aqa Hasan-i-Najjar [carpenter] who was a friend, a reliable confidant and one whom nobody suspected of harbouring her. [1 Aqa Muhammad-Hadiy-i-Farhadi, the husband of Khatun Jan. (A.T.)]

Shortly afterwards, her relatives discovered that Tahirih was missing.

They searched everywhere in vain and, when the news spread, the theological students and groups of ruffians crowded the streets and created a great upheaval again...

That night Aqa Hadi, with the help of a certain Aqa Quli,[1] conducted Tahirih out of the city through the gate of Shahzadih Husayn.

They mounted the horses which were kept ready for them in the abattoir outside the city wall and ... went to Tihran.

At first they arrived in the gardens of Imamzadih Hasan.[2] Aqa Quli was to look after the horses while Tahirih was resting, and Aqa Hadi had gone to the city to give the news of their whereabouts.

In the meantime, a certain Karbila'i Hasan, a merchant of Qazvin, had heard the news of Tahirih's arrival and went there.

Aqa Quli, who did not know that this man was a friend, warned him not to come in, but the man came in with a smile.

Aqa Quli used force and twice smote him on the face.

Tahirih, who realized what had happened, ordered Aqa Quli to stop.

She called both of them to her, took some fruits from Karbila'i Hasan and shared them with Aqa Quli.

When night fell, several horsemen arrived and with full honours escorted Tahirih with her companions to the house of the Ancient Beauty [Baha'u'llah].

When the time for sleeping arrived, they showed Aqa Quli to his bed.

But because he was dressed in rags, he refused at first to sleep in such a luxurious bed.

He pointed to his torn clothes and <p177> said to Tahirih: 'I don't dare to get into this bed while dressed in this way.' But she persuaded him to sleep and assured him that God would soon provide him with a bed as luxurious as that. [1 He was not a Babi, but a faithful friend of Aqa Hadi and his confidant.

He was a tradesman in the bazaar who understood the secret nature of the mission, and accepted to carry it out in spite of the dangers it entailed. (A.T.)] [2 On the outskirts of Tihran. (A.T.)] [Illustrations appear on the next 2 unnumbered pages] The following day, Tahirih, accompanied by Aqa Hadi, [leaving Aqa Quli behind] went to a village outside Tihran where a number of believers resided.[1] Baha'u'llah left home and soon returned with a porter who brought in a sack full of coins and emptied it on the floor.[2] He called for a saddle-bag to be brought in and asked Aqa Quli to place the coins within it.

But He instructed him to place the gold coins in one side of the bag and the silver in the other.

Aqa Quli, however, decided to put the gold in the bottom and the silver on the top!

When Baha'u'llah saw this, He said 'Why did you do this?

We told you to put the gold on one side and the silver on the other.' 'I did it,' replied Aqa Quli, 'for the simple reason that if some coins should fall, either during the journey or when placing the saddle-bag on the horse or taking it off, they would be silver and not gold.' Baha'u'llah did not pursue the matter any further.

He gave the bag and its key to Aqa Quli who placed it on the horse's back and mounted.

Baha'u'llah mounted His horse and, followed by Aqa Quli, went to the village where Tahirih was staying.

Baha'u'llah and other guests spent the night there. [1 This was possibly the village of Quch-Hisar owned by Baha'u'llah.(A.T.)] [2 In those days, money was only in the form of coins and there were no banking facilities.

People used to carry the coins in bags.

Wealthy people often had to carry their bags of money on horses.

On all His journeys for the promotion of the Cause of God in Persia, Baha'u'llah was accompanied by the friends and servants and it was He who provided all the finance and entertained His guests.(A.T.)] In the morning, Tahirih awakened Aqa Quli, told him to arise for the purpose of saying his prayers, and informed him that he was not fortunate enough to remain there and the time had come for him to return to his native Qazvin, otherwise, great troubles would arise thereto.

Tahirih was seated under the shadow of a tree writing letters.

Aqa Quli, having finished his prayers, came forward and stood beside <p178> Aqa Hadi in front of Tahirih.

At this time Baha'u'llah arrived, and Tahirih finished writing.

Baha'u'llah asked for the bag of money.

He opened it and called Aqa Quli to come forward.

He then told him to hold out the hem of his garment, as He was about to pour some coins into it.

As an act of courtesy and politeness Aqa Quli hesitated to comply with Baha'u'llah's orders.

Thereupon, his friend Aqa Hadi persuaded him to obey Baha'u'llah's instructions.

So Aqa Quli held out the hem of his garment and Baha'u'llah pushed His own hand nine times into the bag and emptied each handful onto his out-stretched cloak.

As Baha'u'llah was pouring the coins out, Aqa Quli for one brief moment wished in his heart that the coins were gold!

Baha'u'llah instantly responded by saying: 'We give you enough to take you to Qazvin, the money for your wedding feast will reach you later.

In any case it is your own fault, you put the gold in the bottom!'(5) Aqa Quli went home and delivered the letters of Tahirih.

If he had arrived any later there would have been great trouble, as his kinsmen had already become suspicious and were making enquiries about him from Khatun Jan.

The faithfulness with which Aqa Quli served Tahirih pleased Baha'u'llah and, as He had promised him, soon after God bestowed upon him wealth and position.

He became one of the influential men in Qazvin.

Later, he went to live in Tihran and till the end of his life he remained a friend of the Faith.

Khatun Jan, who had performed such heroic deeds during the life of Tahirih, was

plunged into grief and consternation when her beloved heroine was martyred.

Some time after this she also lost her husband, Muhammad-Hadi.

But these calamities did not quench the fire of faith which was burning within her breast.

She continued to serve the Cause of God with fervour and enthusiasm.

The seed of the love of Baha'u'llah had been sown in the heart of Khatun Jan by the hand of Tahirih, who had recognized His station from the early days.

Consequently Khatun Jan turned to Baha'u'llah with stainless <p179> faith and devotion throughout her life.

Her sisters and some other members of the family also remained steadfast in His Cause.

From the days of Baghdad, Khatun Jan used to receive Tablets from Baha'u'llah.

This great bounty continued and when in Adrianople, at a time of greatest crisis, when He was so viciously attacked by the unfaithful, Baha'u'llah revealed the Lawh-i-Baha in her honour, and poured out His heart to her.

In this Tablet He condemns the actions of the people of the Bayan, those who had arisen to take His life and inflicted upon Him so much suffering.

He grieves that they had broken the Covenant of God, likens them to the followers of Islam who persecuted the Bab, stigmatizes them as the hosts of Satan, admonishes them for having ignored the commandments of God, and rebukes them for having caused the eyes of God to weep.

He refers to Himself as Abraham in the hands of Nimrod, Christ in the midst of the Jews and Joseph betrayed by his brethren and thrown into a well.

It is in this Tablet that Baha'u'llah refers to His followers as the 'people of Baha'.

He calls on them to enter the 'Ark of God' which sails upon the 'Crimson Sea', an Ark which is exclusively intended for them.

This is a reference to the words of the Bab revealed in the Qayyumu'l-Asma' in which He refers to the 'people of Baha' as the 'companions of the Crimson-Coloured Ark'.

In the Writings, the 'Ark' is usually a designation for the Cause of God and the Covenant.

The term 'people of Baha' signifying the followers of Baha'u'llah as distinct from the 'people of the Bayan', the followers of the Bab, was first used in Adrianople when the 'Most Great Separation' took place.

Those faithful to the Covenant of the Bab clearly identified themselves as Baha'is and those who broke His Covenant and followed Mirza Yahya were referred to as Babis and sometimes Azalis.

Consequent upon this, the greeting 'Allah-u-Akbar' (God is the Most Great) which was used by the Babis as a salutation among themselves was changed into 'Allah-u-Abha' (God is the Most Glorious).

Baha'u'llah affirms that every word revealed in the Lawh-i-Baha <p180> may be regarded by all mankind as ample testimony to the truth of His Cause.

He further states that from the horizon of the Words revealed in that Tablet, innumerable suns of effulgent glory have appeared, suns which illumine the worlds of God and whose numbers are inscrutable to all except God.

He exhorts the people of Baha to turn the mirror of their hearts to their rays and become illumined by them.

Khatun Jan, for whom the Lawh-i-Baha was revealed, longed to attain the presence of her Lord.

At last her prayers were answered.

Accompanied by her daughter and son-in-law, Haji Hasan-i-Zargar, she travelled to Akka and for some time basked in the sunshine of His love and protection.

The home of Haji Asadu'llah, the father of Khatun Jan, is one of the historic sites in Qazvin.

Before the appearance of the Bab it was the focal point of Shaykhi activity in that city.

No less a person than Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i[1] had stayed in that house.

Later, it became the centre of Babi and Baha'i gatherings.

Within its walls many eminent heroes of the Faith such as Tahirih, Quddus, Vahid and several others had been entertained.

In one of its basement rooms, Aqa Muhammad-Hadi had made swords for the defenders of the fortress of Shaykh Tabarsi,[2] swords which are rumoured to have been tested by Quddus and Vahid when they passed through that town.

Khatun Jan and her two sisters, who had inherited this house, donated it to the Cause.

In a letter to Baha'u'llah they expressed the desire that it might be used as a Mashriqu'l-Adhkar.[3] Baha'u'llah accepted their gift and approved of their intention. [1 The founder of the Shaykhi sect of Islam.

See The Dawn-Breakers.] [2 The scene of many battles between three hundred and thirteen Babis, the heroic defenders of the fortress, and the forces of the army -- battles which were forced upon the Babis and resulted in the defeat of a powerful army.

Later most of its defenders were martyred.

For more information, see The Dawn-Breakers.] [3 Literally 'the dawning-place of the mention of God', a Baha'i House of Worship.] <p181>

Lawh-i-Ruh Among the Writings which appear to have been revealed by Baha'u'llah in the house of Rida Big during His two-months' withdrawal was the Lawh-i-Ruh (Tablet of the Spirit) in Arabic.

Like many of His Tablets in this period, it has two major themes: one, the proclamation of His mission and the unveiling of His exalted station; the other, the opposition, the treachery and the wickedness of those Babis who inclined towards Mirza Yahya and to whom Baha'u'llah has often referred as 'those who have joined partners with God'.

Denouncing the odious deeds perpetrated by these people, Baha'u'llah describes in tender language the anguish of His heart in that lonely house.

He rebukes them for having inflicted upon God Himself such afflictions that He had to hide the glory of His countenance after it had been unveiled to men.

Their evil actions had dishonoured His name among the people; He recalls, too, the humiliating incident when once He had to answer the door personally to the Governor of the City as there was no one available to serve Him; on that day the whole of creation wept at this abasement, while the hearts of those nigh unto God melted at this degradation.[1] [1 We can appreciate this statement if we reflect on the humiliation to the institution of kingship, if a king had to usher in his visitors in person.

Apart from the fact that Baha'u'llah was the Supreme Manifestation of God, and His loved ones and disciples were always ready to wait on Him with the utmost devotion, the customs of the time demanded that a man of eminence should have several servants in his household.

It was inconceivable that a person of high position would ever take part in the actual running of his house.] In the Lawh-i-Ruh, Baha'u'llah dwells further on the wickedness of Mirza Yahya and those who had gathered around him.

Addressing a faithful believer named Ali, He refers to their plot to take His life in spite of the fact that His unceasing help and protection for over a decade had spread their fame widely.

When they discovered their impotence to carry out their sinister designs, they pleaded innocence and began to spread <p182> false accusations against Him by attributing their own crimes to His person.

Characterizing them as bond-slaves of the Kingdom of Names who pride themselves on their own positions, He prophesies that God will soon reduce them to utter nothingness until no trace will be left of them.

These words of Baha'u'llah have already been fulfilled.

Whereas in the early days of the Faith, there were many who were misled by Mirza Yahya and raised the standard of rebellion against the Cause of God, in this day they have been reduced to insignificance.

In this Tablet Baha'u'llah foretells the triumph of His Cause when, ere long, God will raise up a new creation under its shadow.

In another passage, He asserts that God will send down His hosts armed with power and might to assist the Manifestation of His own Self, and will cause the realities of the Prophets and Messengers to arise and serve His Cause.

Similar statements are found in other Tablets.

In one of His Writings,(6)speaking of the greatness of His Revelation and the tests which accompany it, Baha'u'llah affirms that the realities of the Prophets and Manifestations of God were tested in this day.

As we survey the history of the Cause, we come across certain truths which may stagger the imagination.

The Bab, whose Revelation was described by Baha'u'llah as 'Mine Own Revelation', stated that the Letters of the Living[1] had the station of the Holy Imams in the Islamic Dispensation.(7) In one of His Tablets(8)the Bab, enumerating the powers, the attributes and the exalted station of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest',[2]states that in the day of His Manifestation anyone whom He might appoint as a Prophet of God would be regarded as a Prophet from the beginning that has no beginning till the end that has no end.

He further states that the will of God would never be realized except through the will of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. [1 The first eighteen disciples of the Bab.] [2 Baha'u'llah.] These statements may well stagger the imagination.

However, <p183> if we reflect upon the Cause of God we realize that Baha'u'llah has ushered in the Day of God, a Day that all the Prophets and Messengers of the past were longing to attain.

His Revelation is the Revelation of God Himself, the Heavenly Father spoken of by Christ.

Let us for a moment examine the station of Baha'u'llah in the light of the New Testament.

Christ was manifested in the station of the Son.

This does not mean that God, the Inaccessible, the All-Glorious, had a physical son.

Such a literal interpretation would reduce God from the realm of the Infinite to that of the finite.

In His essence He is exalted above all things, even His own attributes.

Therefore, when Christ spoke about His station as the Son of God, He was establishing a relationship.

He introduced Himself as the Son, and God as the Heavenly Father.

A son who appears in public on behalf of his father must possess two major signs.

He must have the authority of the father and manifest similar characteristics

which he has inherited from him.

In order to demonstrate the source of His authority, Christ chose to describe Himself as the Son of God and portrayed God as the Father.

The terms 'Son' and 'Father' are both figurative in the New Testament.

Christ also made it clear that it was the Father who sent Him.

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.(9) He also made it clear that He would return in the 'glory of the Father'.

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels...(10) From those and many similar statements we can deduce that the same Heavenly Father who sent Christ will Himself return. <p184> Baha'u'llah, in many Tablets, has clearly proclaimed His station as that of the Father.

Addressing the religious leaders of Christendom, He declares:

O concourse of bishops!...

He Who is the Everlasting Father calleth aloud between earth and heaven.

Blessed the ear that hath heard, and the eye that hath seen, and the heart that hath turned unto Him Who is the Point of Adoration of all who are in the heavens and all who are on earth...(11) And in another Tablet He announces this joyful tiding:

He, verily, is come with His Kingdom, and all the atoms cry aloud: 'Lo!

The Lord is come in His great majesty!' He Who is the Father is come, and the Son (Jesus), in the holy vale, crieth out: 'Here am I, here am I, O Lord, My God!' whilst Sinai circleth round the House, and the Burning Bush calleth aloud: 'The All-Bounteous is come mounted upon the clouds!'(12) As we have already observed, the Reality of God is indivisible.

In the world of creation, His Essence is manifested through His attributes.

But in his own domain His Essence and attributes are one and the same.

To describe Him by any attribute is tantamount to bringing Him down into the realm of limitations.

These are the words of Baha'u'llah as He extols the Almighty in His inaccessible heights of glory.

Too high art Thou for the praise of those who are nigh unto Thee to ascend unto the heaven of Thy nearness, or for the birds of the hearts of them who are devoted to Thee to attain to the door of Thy gate.

I testify that Thou hast been sanctified above all attributes and holy above all names.

No God is there but Thee, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious.(13) We know that God is the Source of all things and their Creator, but we can never

know how He brings this about in the realm of His Essence.

Even the Manifestations of God have <p185> no knowledge of this, for they have no access to His Reality.

However, in this world there is a pattern for creation in so far as all things come into being through some means.

For example, man comes to this world through the instrumentality of parents, although the power which causes his birth, and which proceeds from the realms of God, remains unknowable.

If we presume that this power emanates from the Essence of God itself, then such an assertion, as already observed, is tantamount to limiting Him.

Yet we know that all things must be generated from God Himself.

This is the point where we realize that our minds can never fathom these realities.

The way is completely barred for the finite to seek direct knowledge of the Infinite.

From the Writings of Baha'u'llah it appears that all the powers and attributes which God bestows upon creation emanate from the 'Kingdom of His Revelation'.

Through the instrumentality of this kingdom, life, both physical and spiritual, is conferred upon all created things.

It is from this kingdom that all the Revelations of God have originated and His Manifestations been sent down.

Baha'u'llah explains in a Tablet[l4] that although outwardly the Manifestation of God has many limitations, inwardly He dwells in the world of the Absolute, free from all limitations.

This world of the Absolute, however, is different from the realm of God himself and, in relation to it, has its limitations.

The Lord of the 'Kingdom of Revelation' is Baha'u'llah, the Supreme Manifestation of God whose advent in the station of the Father has been promised in the Heavenly Books.

This statement should not be misconstrued so as to contradict the basic principle of the oneness of the Manifestations of God.

We have already referred to this theme in the former volume.[1] The Manifestations of God are the same in essence, but differ in the intensity of their Revelations.

This is similar to an individual who retains the same identity, although he grows and develops his powers and capacities progressively. [1 See vol.

1. pp.

64-7.] <p186> In the Lawh-i-Ruh Baha'u'llah states that nothing can be found

on earth or in heaven that will enrich mankind except to come under the shadow of His Cause.

He further testifies that in this day, the value of one's faith in God depends on recognition of Baha'u'llah and enlightenment through His Revelation.

To illustrate this, He uses the analogy of an unlit lantern, which does not serve its purpose and is of little value though it be made of the most exquisite crystal.

If we reflect upon these words we may conclude that man's salvation in any age depends on his acceptance of the guidance given by God for that time in history.

Baha'u'llah has made similar statements in other Tablets.

For example the opening paragraph of Baha'u'llah's most Holy Book declares in unequivocal language that the first duty of man to God is to recognize His Manifestation.

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation.

Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof, hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed.

It behoveth every one who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world.

These twin duties are inseparable.

Neither is acceptable without the other.

Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration.[l5] In one of the most beautiful passages of the Lawh-i-Ruh the voice of the Spirit from the Kingdom on high proclaims the exalted station of Baha'u'llah, and in moving language announces Him as the 'Beauty of the Adored One', the 'Trust of God' among the people, 'Soul of God Himself' manifested to His servants, 'God's Treasure' for all who are in heaven and on earth, the 'Word of God' for mankind. 'The Light of God' <p187> in the Kingdom of His Revelation, 'He Who enshrines within Himself such mysteries one word of which if revealed would rend the heavens asunder'.

Designations such as these and many more are attributed to Baha'u'llah from the unseen realms of Glory.

The voice of the Spirit continues to extol His station to such an extent that He tries to prevent it from revealing any further, but finds it to be endowed with the power of God and impossible to silence.

In the Lawh-i-Ruh is another fascinating scene in which the Pen of Baha'u'llah figuratively plays a major part.

In this dialogue the Pen begins to lament while held between the fingers of Baha'u'llah and entreats His Lord to be allowed to disclose unto all created things one Word from the hidden mysteries of God so that the dwellers of the Kingdom might learn that of which no one has ever been informed.

It appeals to the fingers of Baha'u'llah not to restrain it from vivifying the whole of creation with the living waters which from time immemorial have flowed within its inner being.

It longs to be permitted to rend asunder the veils from the face of His Cause so that the ignorant may witness its glory.

Seeing that Baha'u'llah is without a helper and afflicted with suffering, it seeks permission to lend Him assistance by using the power which the Almighty has bestowed upon it, a power which is generated by its mere movement and which is capable of subduing the whole of creation.

It expresses amazement at Baha'u'llah's patience and forbearance in spite of His omnipotence and might, knowing that if He wished, He could, through the utterance of one Word, enable all mankind to arise for the service of His Cause.

The Pen continues to plead in this vein with much earnestness and devotion, until the Tongue of Grandeur[1] exhorts it to restrain itself, not to divulge the mysteries of God's Revelation and to exercise patience under all circumstances. [1 Baha'u'llah.] In the Lawh-i-Ruh, Baha'u'llah counsels His loved ones to be united through the love of God, and to be as one soul in <p188> many bodies.

He assures them that this act alone will defeat their enemies.

He emphatically censures sedition, discord and division among the believers and warns that should they transgress they will harm the Cause of God.

Lawh-i-Laylatu'l-Quds A Tablet which confirms this statement is the Lawh-i-Laylatu'l-Quds[1] which was revealed in Adrianople in honour of Darvish Sidq-'Ali and has as its theme the unity between the believers.

Baha'u'llah in this Tablet exhorts His followers to be united in such wise that all traces of division and estrangement may vanish from among them.

The following passages translated by Shoghi Effendi and included in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah are extracted from the Lawh-i-Laylatu'l-Quds: [1 When incarcerated in the barracks of Akka, one evening Baha'u'llah revealed a certain Tablet and referred to that evening as 'Laylatu'l-Quds' (Holy Night).

But the Lawh-i-Laylatu'l-Quds revealed in Adrianople is not to be confused with that later Tablet.] The Most Great Name beareth Me witness!

How sad if any man were, in this Day, to rest his heart on the transitory

things of this world!

Arise, and cling firmly to the Cause of God.

Be most loving one to another.

Burn away, wholly for the sake of the Well-Beloved, the veil of self with the flame of the undying Fire, and with faces, joyous and beaming with light, associate with your neighbour.

Ye have well observed, in all its aspects, the behaviour of Him Who is the Word of Truth amidst you.

Ye know full well how hard it is for this Youth to allow, though it be for one night, the heart of any one of the beloved of God to be saddened by Him.

The Word of God hath set the heart of the world afire; how regrettable if ye fail to be enkindled with its flame!

Please God, ye will regard this blessed night as the night of unity, will knit your souls together, and resolve to adorn yourselves with the ornament of a goodly and praiseworthy <p189> character.

Let your principal concern be to rescue the fallen from the slough of impending extinction, and to help him embrace the ancient Faith of God.

Your behaviour towards your neighbour should be such as to manifest clearly the signs of the one true God, for ye are the first among men to be re-created by His Spirit, the first to adore and bow the knee before Him, the first to circle round His throne of glory.

I swear by Him Who hath caused Me to reveal whatever hath pleased Him!

Ye are better known to the inmates of the Kingdom on high than ye are known to your own selves.

Think ye these words to be vain and empty?

Would that ye had the power to perceive the things your Lord, the All-Merciful, doth see -- things that attest the excellence of your rank, that bear witness to the greatness of your worth, that proclaim the sublimity of your station!

God grant that your desires and unmortified passions may not hinder you from that which hath been ordained for you.(16) The thought of disunity had been so distressing to Baha'u'llah that in this Tablet He pours out His heart, saying that He would rather be afflicted with fresh calamities every day than see despondency and ill-feeling among the believers.

One of the outstanding counsels of Baha'u'llah in this Tablet concerns the manner in which two individuals should act towards each other.

The spiritual principle upon which Baha'u'llah's advice is based constitutes one of the fundamental verities governing the creation of man.

He states that nothing in this world can harm a man of insight.

His integrity and exalted station will never be affected by whatever may befall him in this life.

For when such a man shows love and humility towards another man for the sake of God, it is as if he has loved God and humbled himself before Him.

This will cause the bounties and blessings of God to descend upon him and he will be rewarded for his deeds.

If the other individual, however, reacts in the opposite way and treats his fellow man with contempt and pride, such an action will never affect the man whom he has despised, but will be regarded as showing <p190> hatred and arrogance towards God, and for this he will receive his punishment.

In one of His Tablets(17) Baha'u'llah states that in this Dispensation God has condemned those who create sedition and show malice towards people.

Should a person be inclined to harm another, it is as if he has arisen against God to harm Him.

This teaching of Baha'u'llah throws a new light upon, and opens up an exciting approach to, human relationships.

It confers upon the individual a great insight into the world of realities, enabling him to rid himself effectively of hatred, prejudice and many other vices often displayed by human beings in their association with one another.

For example, a soul becomes offended when he is wrongly criticized and his actions denounced.

In the normal course of events this can often lead to coolness, alienation, bitterness and even hatred between people.

Unwarranted criticism and false accusations can place so much pressure upon the individual as to bring him to the point of utter destruction and complete breakdown.

But when a person believes in the words of Baha'u'llah and sincerely follows this exalted teaching, his attitude towards his fellow man will completely change and he will become immune to this danger.

For he knows that falsehood, enmity and malice can never affect him as long as he puts his trust in God, while the misdeeds of the offenders are directed towards God Who will punish them for their actions.

When a person reaches this stage of maturity and discernment, he will neither be discouraged by undue criticism, nor pleased with praise and glorification.

It is always the ego which feels offended in the former case and gratified in the latter.

The above-mentioned teaching of Baha'u'llah helps the individual to subdue his ego.

The mere consciousness of the fact that one is acting against God in condemning and attacking his fellow man, is sufficient to deter him in the pursuit of such reprehensible behaviour.

It also enables him to realize that as long as he turns to God, the forces of evil will never be able to harm him in any way. <p191> The devout Mirza Azizu'llah-i-Misbah, a man of great erudition to whom reference has been made in previous chapters, has written these thought-provoking words:

Should they attribute blindness to a person who has seeing eyes, no harm can befall his sight, and should they acclaim the totally blind to be possessed of keen sight, such a compliment would be of no value to him.

For, in reality, what is regarded as praiseworthy or condemnatory is the actual possession of sight or lack of it respectively, and not the affirmative or negative comments of people.

From this it follows that the only sign of keen sight is when a person pays heed to neither the praise nor the condemnation of others.(18)

Abdu'l-Baha states(19) that if someone in the presence of Baha'u'llah mentioned that there was a slight disunity among the believers in any place, the Blessed Beauty would become so overwhelmed with grief that His face would display the signs of intense pain and displeasure.

Many times Baha'u'llah affirmed to those who attained His presence, that if He knew that the Cause of God was becoming a source of division between two individuals, He would dispense with it.

The establishment of unity among the believers is the cornerstone of the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

Without it the Faith and its institutions cannot function, neither can the individual or society make any progress spiritually or materially.

Unity between the believers and, in the fullness of time, the unity of mankind, cannot be achieved by expedient measures, by man-made plans, or even by goodwill and understanding on the part of all humanity.

By those and similar methods man may establish political unity, but not the unity envisaged by Baha'u'llah -- a unity which surpasses all human limitations, which binds the hearts and souls of men in a spirit of true brotherhood and which derives its cohesive force from Baha'u'llah Himself.

Man is capable of achieving great feats in all fields of human <p192> activity.

He can break the laws of nature, travel faster than sound and into space, can create, control and utilize sources of enormous energy.

Nor is there any limit to what he can achieve in the future.

But he has no power of his own to influence the hearts of men and enable two antagonistic individuals to love one another.

If, by himself, he expends all the material resources at his disposal to unite

two souls spiritually, he will fail.

The uniting of the hearts of men is the function of the Manifestations of God.

To this Baha'u'llah testifies in one of His Tablets:

Out of the whole world He hath chosen for Himself the hearts of men -- hearts which the hosts of revelation and of utterance can subdue.

Thus hath it been ordained by the Fingers of Baha, upon the Tablet of God's irrevocable decree, by the behest of Him Who is the Supreme Ordainer, the All-Knowing.(20) In another Tablet He states:

Unlock, O people, the gates of the hearts of men with the keys of the remembrance of Him Who is the Remembrance of God and the Source of wisdom amongst you.

He hath chosen out of the whole world the hearts of His servants, and made them each a seat for the revelation of His glory.

Wherefore, sanctify them from every defilement, that the things for which they were created may be engraven upon them.

This indeed is a token of God's bountiful favour.(21) When Manifestations of God appear, the hearts of Their followers, through the influence of the Word, become united in a bond of oneness.

Though previously these souls were enemies, they become as lovers.

They are transformed into a new creation and are given the power to influence others and change their hearts.

This is the story of all religions.

Moses, Christ and Muhammad did this in Their days.

Today, only the words of Baha'u'llah can change the hearts of men.

The followers of Baha'u'llah, armed with the power of the creative <p193> Word of God, have been able to unite the hearts of millions who were previously enemies.

Jews, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and followers of other religions as well as pagans, agnostics and atheists in all continents of the globe, representatives of every race and almost every tribe, though speaking different languages and coming from different backgrounds, have, in this day, recognized the station of Baha'u'llah as the promised Father and become His followers.

Through the influence of His Word, hatred and prejudice have vanished from their hearts and been replaced by spiritual unity and universal love for all mankind.

This vast, ever-growing, harmoniously functioning world community of Baha'u'llah is something unique in the annals of mankind.

It constitutes the pattern, and demonstrates the glory and the promise of the

Baha'i Commonwealth of the future.

The unbiased observer who looks for proofs of the authenticity of the Message of Baha'u'llah may readily find that the power of unity which binds together the Baha'i community of today is one of the most evident signs of its Founder's glory and divine origin. <p194> 9 Some Early Pilgrims From the time that the news of Baha'u'llah's arrival in Adrianople reached the believers, many of them longed to travel to that city and attain His presence.

At first only a few succeeded, but as time went on, and especially after the 'Most Great Separation' became effective, several believers from Persia came as pilgrims to the residence of the One who had unmistakably identified Himself as 'He Whom God shall make manifest' -- the Revealer of God Himself and the Promised One of all ages.

Some of these pilgrims were permitted by Baha'u'llah to remain in Adrianople while the majority were sent to Persia or the adjoining countries to spread His Cause among the people.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali Notable among those who travelled to Adrianople and attained the presence of their Lord was Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, one of the most illustrious of Baha'u'llah's disciples.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali has written in his book, the Bihjatu's-Sudur (Delight of the Hearts) some reminiscences of Baha'u'llah and of some events which he witnessed in Adrianople and later in Akka as well as in Persia and Iraq.

He travelled to Adrianople in the year 1283 A.H. (1866-7) and was permitted by Baha'u'llah to remain there for about seven months.

During this period he attained the presence of Baha'u'llah almost every day.

As a result of this personal contact with Baha'u'llah, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was set on fire and was filled with a new spirit.

He was an embodiment of detachment, humility and <p195> self-effacement.

Having truly recognized the august station of Baha'u'llah, his whole being was dominated by a passionate love and adoration for Him.

Once a Muslim clergyman from Isfahan requested Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali to recount his impressions of Baha'u'llah.

He did not, he said, wish to enter into discussion concerning proofs of the authenticity of His claims, but rather was interested in hearing about some of the things Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali had witnessed with his own eyes.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes about his conversation with the clergyman:

Much as I tried to explain to him [the clergyman] that contrary to all physical phenomena, which are possible of explanation, one cannot describe a spiritual experience, he was not able to understand.

So I said, 'Before attaining His presence, I was hopeful of seeing many

miracles -- physical, intellectual and spiritual.

Also I had stored up several questions in my mind and wished them answered.

But when I beheld the light of His beauteous Countenance, I was transported into such a state that all the miracles I had hoped to see and all the physical and spiritual mysteries I had longed to understand, paled into insignificance.

They all appeared to me as a mirage to which the thirsty hasten, not the pure water which quenches the thirst and gives life.' He [the clergyman] asked me, 'What did you see that enabled you to acquire such a state of mind and heart?'...

I said, 'His blessed person appeared in the form of a human being, but His very movements, His manners, His way of sitting or standing, eating or drinking, even His sleep or wakefulness, were each a miracle to me.

Because His perfections, His exalted character, His beauty, His glory, His most excellent titles and most august attributes revealed to me that He was peerless and without parallel.

He was matchless with no one to join partners with Him, unique with no peer or equal, the One and Single without a deputy, the Ever-Abiding God, the Incomparable Being.

He who "begetteth not, neither is He begotten and there is not anyone like unto Him"'.[l] He [the clergyman] said, 'But Baha'u'llah's father was one <p196> of the outstanding ministers [of the Government], and His Son, Abbas Effendi,[1] is renowned throughout the world and is reputed to be the most perfect being on this earth.' I replied, 'Neither His father nor His Son were seated upon the Throne of the Speaker on Sinai,[2] they were not Founders of religion nor Revealers of the Book.

Baha'u'llah alone is the Throne wherein abides the splendour of God's Revelation, the Mirror reflecting His light, He Who "begetteth not, neither is He begotten".

Should you stand in front of a mirror and announce your identity, the mirror will do likewise, but in reality it is dissociating itself from you.'[3] He [the clergyman] was very pleased with this answer and told me that it was a convincing and weighty reply which revealed many truths.

He asked me to tell him more.

I said, '...

I saw a Person Who, from the human point of view, was like the rest of humanity.

However, if one were to add the love, mercy and compassion of all the peoples of the world together, it would appear as a drop when compared with the ocean of His tender mercy and loving-kindness.

I even seek God's forgiveness for making such a comparison.

Similarly, if one brought together all the knowledge of sciences, crafts, philosophy, politics, natural history and divinity possessed by mankind, it would seem, in comparison with His knowledge and understanding, as an atom compared to the sun.

If one weighed the might and power of kings, rulers, Prophets and Messengers against His omnipotence and sovereignty, His grandeur and glory, His majesty and dominion, they would be as insignificant as a touch of moisture compared with the waters of the sea...

As I observed every one of His attributes, I discovered my inability to emulate Him, and realized that all the peoples of the world will never be able to attain to His perfections.' He [the clergyman] admitted that all these were miracles and constituted the signs and tokens of the power of God, exalted be His glory.(2) [1 Abdu'l-Baha. (A.T.)] [2 One of Baha'u'llah's designations. (A.T.)] [3 Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali is saying that Abdu'l-Baha is a reflection of Baha'u'llah, that there is a vast difference between the two, and that the reflection is not the same as the reality of the One Who is reflected. (A.T.)] <p197> To some who have not recognized the station of Baha'u'llah, the above statements by Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali may seem exaggerated.

The truth, however, is that if any just man were to describe his meeting with God, should this be possible, he would tell his story in the same vein and extol Him in the same fashion.

To portray the powers and attributes of the Manifestation of God is beyond the capacity of man.

For man can only communicate his feelings through the use of words, and words are inadequate tools for expressing spiritual phenomena or explaining divine qualities.

It is for this reason that Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, like many other Baha'i writers who attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, has extolled the virtues and attributes of his Lord with absolute sincerity and to the best of his ability by using as many superlative adjectives as he could find.

When reading his book one can appreciate his utter self-effacement and humility before Baha'u'llah, as well as his vision, his nobility, and purity of spirit.

He writes an interesting story of his own spiritual awakening and struggles:

In the early days of the Faith in Isfahan, when I began to study the Tablets and Writings of the Bab, and listen to the explanations of the friends, I found the proofs of His Revelation convincing and conclusive

and the testimonies supremely sound and perfect.

So I was assured in myself that this Cause was the Cause of God and the Manifestation of His Grandeur, the dawning of the Day-Star of Truth promised to be revealed by the Almighty.

But when I was alone with no one to talk to, I was often overtaken with doubts.

The idle fancies of my past life, and the whisperings of the evil one were tempting me...

God knows how much I wept and how many nights I stayed awake till morning.

There were days when I forgot to eat because I was so immersed in my thoughts.

I tried by every means to relieve myself of these doubts.

Several times I became steadfast in the Cause and believed, but later I would waver and become perplexed and dismayed.

Then one night I dreamt that a town-crier in ...

Isfahan <p198> was announcing this message: 'O people, the Seal of the Prophets[1] is here in a certain house and has given permission for anyone who wishes to attain His presence to go there.

Remember that a mere glance at His countenance is more meritorious than service in both worlds.' On hearing this, I hastened and entered the house.

I had never seen such a building.

I went upstairs and arrived in an area which had a roof over it and was surrounded by rooms and chambers.

The Manifestation of the All-Glorious was pacing up and down and some people were standing motionless.

I arrived and spontaneously prostrated myself at His feet.

Graciously, He lifted me up with His own hands and, standing, said 'A person may claim that he has come here wholly for the sake of God, and has truly attained the presence of His Lord, when he is not held back by the onslaught of the peoples of the world, who with drawn swords attack him and intend to take his life because he has embraced the Cause of God.

Otherwise, he cannot truthfully say that his motive was to seek God.'
[1 The Prophet Muhammad. (A.T.)] On hearing these words, I woke up from my dream and found myself assured, joyous and thankful.

All my doubts had completely disappeared.

I learnt the mysteries of martyrdom, persecution and sufferings which

were inflicted upon the believers in every Dispensation.

I was amazed as I looked back upon the doubts I had entertained, my ignorance, low-mindedness, weakness of faith and shallowness of thought.

I used to laugh at myself also, because in my wakeful hours, I had heard many similar statements and also read them in the Tablets and holy Books of the past, and was not assured by them.

And now, through this dream, I had acquired faith and assurance...

However, time passed, and about fourteen years later I was in the 'Land of Mystery'[1]where I stayed for seven months.

Every day, through His bounty, I used to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah once, twice and sometimes more.

But during this period, I never thought of my dream.

One evening about four or five hours after sunset I was sitting with Aqa Mirza <p199> Muhammad-Quli[2] and Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi,[3] in the tea-room [a room set aside for Baha'u'llah's companions and visitors].

That day I had not attained the presence of Baha'u'llah and was most eager for an opportunity to do so.

Although I could never bring myself to ask for permission, in my innermost heart I was entreating and invoking Him for this honour.

But there was no hope, for it was far too late.

Suddenly, the door opened and the Most Great Branch,[4] Who in those days was known as Sirru'llah [the Mystery of God] entered and summoned me to follow Him.

When I came out of the room, I saw the Ancient Beauty[5] pacing in the roofed area of the house.

The stream of His utterance was flowing and a few souls were standing.

I prostrated myself at His feet, whereupon He lifted me up with His blessed hands.

He turned to me and said: [1 Adrianople. (A.T.)] [2 The youngest half-brother of Baha'u'llah and one who was faithful to Him; see vol.

I, pp.

15-16. (A.T.)] [3 See pp.

329-30 ff. (A.T.)] [4 Abdu'l-Baha. (A.T.)] [5 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)]
'A person may claim that he has arrived here wholly for the sake of God, and has truly attained the presence of His Lord, when he is not held back by the onslaught of the peoples of the world, who with drawn swords attack him and intend to take his life because he has embraced the

Cause.' These were exactly the words I had heard fourteen years before, and I saw the same incomparable Beauty and the same building as in my dream.

I stood by the wall, awe-struck and motionless.

Gradually, I recovered and in a state of full consciousness attained His presence.

My purpose in telling this story was not, God forbid, to attribute any miracles,[1] but rather to state the facts as they happened... [1 See vol.

I, p.

291, fn. (A.T.)] That evening there was talk of my leaving.

Baha'u'llah sent a message to find out from me what my aims and intentions were.

I entreated Abdu'l-Baha and begged Him to intervene that my affairs might not be left in my own hands nor my wishes sought, but rather that Baha'u'llah might indicate His wishes and direct me to carry them out.

I <p200> beseeched Him to send His confirmation and assistance so that I might be enabled to fulfil what was required of me.

I further submitted that I was alone in this world, had no home or family and sought only the shelter of His Providence.

Through mediation by Abdu'l-Baha, this plea was accepted and I was told that Baha'u'llah would bestow upon me the honour and privilege of serving His Cause and would send down His confirmations and assistance to succour me.

So it was arranged that I should go to Constantinople and serve as a channel of communication for the believers who travelled to and from that city, as well as dispatching letters and Tablets to various places...

I arrived in Constantinople having taken with me books and Tablets in the handwriting of Aqay-i-Kalim, Abdu'l-Baha and others.

I was accompanied by Mirza Husayn,[1] and we were both happy and successful in our service.

Each week some Tablets would arrive for dispatch to many parts and I used to read them.

I also had the opportunity to meet the believers who arrived with the intention of making the pilgrimage to Adrianople.

These had to remain a few days in Constantinople making preparations for the journey or seeking permission from Baha'u'llah for pilgrimage.

They also stayed a few days on their way back. [1 Known as Mirza

Husayn-i-Khurtumi of Shiraz, he accompanied Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali to Egypt.

Both were taken prisoner, together with five others, and sent to the Sudan.

This man later became a Covenant-breaker.] I used to receive instructions from the late Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Tambaku-Furush of Isfahan on matters which were connected with worldly affairs such as the purchasing of provisions and other goods, and from Aqay-i-Kalim on spiritual matters.

On one occasion, Aqa Muhammad-'Ali ordered some tea.

I purchased some and sent it off to him.

Not being pleased with the tea he wrote me a very kind letter and lovingly pointed out that since I knew this tea would be served in the presence of Baha'u'llah and His family, I should have tried it first and been more careful in choosing a good brand.[1] [1 One of the essential features of life, and one which gave much pleasure, especially at gatherings, was the serving of tea.

Not only was the quality important, but also the preparation needed great attention and skill.

Tea was served in small glass cups.

In order to enjoy its aroma, nothing would be added to it except lump sugar which was broken off sugar cones.

There were those who were expert tea-makers.

In Adrianople it was Aqa Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi who made tea for Baha'u'llah and His companions. (A.T.)] <p201> This advice by an affable counsellor and sincere friend did not please me.

My vanity and ignorance played their part here.

I showed no regard for his courtesy, love and seniority and instead wrote him a reply which was wrong and unfair.

The letter reached its destination.

Soon after this, I received an exalted Tablet from the Ancient Beauty, the All-Bountiful, He Who conceals the faults of men and is the All-Merciful.[1] This Tablet was addressed to me, a sinful, arrogant, rebellious and conceited person.

In it He assured me that I and my deeds were praiseworthy and blessed with His good-pleasure. [1 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)] Upon reading this Tablet, I became aware of my errors and realized that I had made a grave mistake and committed a serious transgression.

For in spite of my ignorance and the vanity of my youth, I had, through the study of the holy Tablets and my observations during the seven months that I had attained His presence, understood the way in which God

works in this Most Great, this Most Ancient Revelation ... and it is this, that in order to educate the sinners, edify the souls of the evil-doers, and teach them human virtues and the way of servitude Baha'u'llah chastises them with the scourge of loving-kindness and compassion, of tender mercy and grace.

To them He manifests His attributes of the All-Merciful, the Concealer of the faults of men, the Forgiver of sins, and the All-Bounteous.

It was for this reason that I became distressed, sore-perplexed and dismayed.

In a state of devotion and with tears I returned to God.

I prayed, fervently entreating and invoking Him to accept my repentance.

Again I turned to Abdu'l-Baha, the Mystery of God, to mediate for me.

As the rays of the Sun of His Name, 'the Concealer of sins', shone forth with greater intensity, as the waves of the Sea of His Mercy surged with greater fury and as the rains of His loving-kindness <p202> and compassion showered more profusely, I became seized with more fear and trembling.

In brief, I was so overtaken with shame that I could not rest.

I pleaded that the outpourings of Baha'u'llah's tender mercy and loving providence were well-nigh consuming me.

I begged Him to direct me clearly to carry out that which was conducive to my serving the Cause and attaining His good-pleasure.

This time, Baha'u'llah instructed me to proceed to Egypt and there to teach the Cause with wisdom and utterance, with goodly deeds and lofty character.

I knew that my sins were forgiven, I became confident and happy...(3)
Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was arrested in Egypt.

This happened as a result of his teaching unwisely and becoming known as a Baha'i.

He was sent to the Sudan as a prisoner and it was about nine years before he gained his freedom.[1] [1 For a brief account of his eventful life see Appendix III and vol.

I, pp.

28-9.] Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri Another distinguished believer who came on pilgrimage to Adrianople and attained the presence of Baha'u'llah was the devout Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri, who had had the privilege of meeting Him some years before in Baghdad.

Mirza Muhammad-'Ali came from a prominent family in Isfahan blessed with material wealth and spiritual gifts.

He and his brother Mirza Hadi spent some years in Karbila where they joined the Shaykhi sect and used to sit for hours at the feet of Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti in order to receive spiritual enlightenment.[1] [1 Concerning the Shaykhi sect and its leader Siyyid Kazim, see The Dawn-Breakers.] It was in Karbila that these brothers met the Bab for the first time.

As they watched Him pray at the shrine of Imam Husayn, they became deeply attracted to His person, and recognized in Him extraordinary powers.

They became aware, too, of the profound reverence and high esteem in which He was held by <p203> Siyyid Kazim.

No wonder that when the news reached them that a youth in Shiraz had declared Himself to be the Bab, they immediately recognized His identity.[1] [1 Soon after His declaration the Bab instructed His disciples to spread the news but not to disclose His identity until a later date, when it would be announced.] Obedient to the behest of the Bab, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his brother proceeded to Isfahan.

On their way to that city they met Mulla Husayn who acquainted them fully with the Cause.

The zeal and enthusiasm of Mulla Husayn, the staunchness of his faith and the ardour of his love for the Bab greatly inspired the two brothers and assisted them to recognize the truth of the new-born Faith of God.

They attained the presence of the Bab in Shiraz at the time when He was under house arrest by order of the Governor of the province.[1] This meeting created a new spirit of dedication and certitude in Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and Mirza Hadi and from that time on they ranked as foremost among the early disciples of the Bab. [1 See The Dawn-Breakers.] From Shiraz, Mirza Hadi went to Karbila while Mirza Muhammad-'Ali returned to Isfahan.

Soon after his arrival in that city, the latter learnt that his wife had died in Karbila.

He remarried and remained in Isfahan until the Bab arrived there on his way to Tihran.

Up to that time Mirza Muhammad-'Ali had no children.

His first wife, who had died after a few years of marriage, had borne him no child.

His second wife was also childless until an event of great significance took place.

Nabil-i-A'zam describes this joyous episode:

Ere the Bab had transferred His residence to the house of the Mu'tamid, Mirza Ibrahim, father of the Sultanu'sh-Shuhada[1] and elder brother of Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Nahri, to whom we have already referred, invited the Bab to his home one night.

Mirza Ibrahim was a friend of the Imam-Jum'ih, was intimately associated with him and controlled the management of all his affairs.

The banquet which was <p204> spread for the Bab that night was one of unsurpassed magnificence.

It was commonly observed that neither the officials nor the notables of the city had offered a feast of such magnitude and splendour.

The Sultanu'sh-Shuhada and his brother, the Mahbubu'sh-Shuhada,[2] who were lads of nine and eleven respectively, served at that banquet and received special attention from the Bab.

That night, during dinner, Mirza Ibrahim turned to his Guest and said: 'My brother, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, has no child.

I beg You to intercede in his behalf and to grant his heart's desire.' The Bab took a portion of the food with which He had been served, placed it with His own hands on a platter, and handed it to His host, asking him to take it to Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his wife. 'Let them both partake of this,' He said; 'their wish will be fulfilled.' By virtue of that portion which the Bab had chosen to bestow upon her, the wife of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali conceived and in due time gave birth to a girl, who eventually was joined in wedlock with the Most Great Branch,[3] a union that came to be regarded as the consummation of the hopes entertained by her parents.(4) [1 Mirza Hasan, entitled by Baha'u'llah the 'King of the Martyrs'. (A.T.)] [2 Mirza Husayn, entitled the 'Beloved of the Martyrs'.

A more detailed account of their lives will be given in future volumes. (A.T.)] [3 Reference to Munirih Khanum's marriage with Abdu'l-Baha.] The new-born daughter was named Fatimih by her parents.

Baha'u'llah, later on, conferred upon her the name of Munirih (Illumined).

Her birth took place around the time that her father and her uncle Mirza Hadi had gone to take part in the conference of Badasht.[1] It is interesting to note that at that conference the two brothers were among those who became extremely agitated when Tahirih removed her veil.

They reacted by leaving the scene of the conference and taking residence in the ruins of an old castle.

Baha'u'llah sent for them, calmed their emotions and pointed out that it was unnecessary for them to desert their companions.

When the conference of Badasht ended, the believers were attacked in the village of Niyala.

Mirza Hadi died on the way home as a result of these persecutions, <p205> and Mirza Muhammad-'Ali returned to Isfahan.

Through the potency of his belief, he became a leading exponent of the Faith in

that city.

It was mainly through his help and guidance that those two of his nephews referred to by Nabil and entitled the 'King of the Martyrs' and 'Beloved of the Martyrs' were confirmed in the Cause.

They became the most illustrious among the martyrs of the Faith. [1 See The Dawn-Breakers for details.] When Baha'u'llah was in Baghdad, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali conducted his two youthful nephews to that city where they attained His presence.

They saw the Glory of God hidden behind many veils of concealment; their souls were magnetized by His love and transformed into a new creation.

They truly detached themselves from this world and returned home in a spirit of joy and steadfastness.

Some years later Mirza Muhammad-'Ali travelled to Adrianople.

Once again, he was privileged to attain the presence of His Lord and achieve his heart's desire.

But he did not live long enough to witness the honour which was conferred upon his daughter Munirih Khanum in becoming the consort of Abdu'l-Baha.

It was during the Adrianople period that certain events took place which paved the way for Abdu'l-Baha's marriage in Akka some years later.

The custom of the time, especially among the nobility, was to arrange the marriages of their sons and daughters when they were children.

Most marriages were arranged inside the family and the couple had very little say in this choice.

When Abdu'l-Baha was a child in Tihran, they chose for Him Shahr-banu, a cousin, and betrothed her to Him.

She was a daughter of Mirza Muhammad-Hasan, an older half-brother of Baha'u'llah.[1] When Baha'u'llah and His family were exiled to Iraq, Shahr-banu remained in the district of Nur in Mazindaran, until in 1285 A.H. (1868) Baha'u'llah instructed His uncle Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin[2] to conduct Shahr-banu to <p206> Tihran and from there to arrange her journey to Adrianople. [1 See vol.

I, p.

16.] [2 Baha'u'llah had four paternal uncles.

Among those to whom He taught the Faith of the Bab in Nur were these uncles.

Two of them rejected the Cause of God and actively rose up against it.

These were Shaykh Aziz'u'llah and Safi Quli Big.

The other two, Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin and Karbila'i Zaman, became ardent believers.

The former accompanied Baha'u'llah to the fortress of Shaykh Tabarsi, and when Baha'u'llah was bastinadoed in Amul, threw himself upon His feet and was beaten so much that he fainted.

For details of the incident at Amul, see The Dawn-Breakers.] No sooner had this news reached Shah Sultan Khanum[1] (a half-sister of Baha'u'llah and a follower of Mirza Yahya), than she arose in enmity to prevent the marriage from taking place.

She took Shahr-banu to her home in Tihran and practically forced her to marry instead Mirza Ali-Khan-i-Nuri, the son of the Prime Minister.

Baha'u'llah has referred to this in Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.[2] This marriage, so rudely imposed upon her, plunged Shahr-banu into a state of perpetual grief and misery.

Her youngest brother, Mirza Nizamu'l-Mulk, a faithful and devoted follower of Baha'u'llah, has recorded in his memoirs that after her marriage Shahr-banu prayed fervently to God for her deliverance from her tragic plight.

It seems that her prayers were answered, as shortly afterwards she became afflicted with tuberculosis and died. [1 See vol.

I, p.

50.] [2 Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.

170.] As for Munirih Khanum, she spent her childhood and youth in Isfahan under the care and protection of her parents and illustrious cousins.

Some time after the death of her father, the family, including the 'King of the Martyrs' and the 'Beloved of the Martyrs' decided that the time had come for her to be married.

Therefore, arrangements were made for Munirih Khanum to be united in wedlock with Mirza Kazim, the youngest brother of the 'King of the Martyrs' and the 'Beloved of the Martyrs'.

When the wedding day arrived, a splendid feast was given and the festive atmosphere came to its climax when the couple were married.

When the ceremony ended, however, a distressing incident turned everyone's joy into deep sorrow.

The <p207> bridegroom, who up to then had been in perfect health, was suddenly struck down by a strange phenomenon as he approached the entrance of his home.

He appeared to be stunned by an inexplicable force, and had to be helped to his feet.

He became gravely ill and died soon afterwards.

After this tragic incident, Munirih Khanum turned her thoughts away from this world and spent her days in prayer and meditation.

The circumstances of her marriage with Abdu'l-Baha are very thrilling indeed.

The following account, mainly in her own words, reveals the joy and excitement of such an exalted life: 'In compliance with the command of the Blessed Perfection (Baha'u'llah) Siyyid Mihdi Dhaji [Dahaji] arrived in Persia, and later passed through Isfahan to promulgate the Cause of God.

A great feast was prepared for him, and all the believers clustered around inquiring eagerly the news of the Holy Land, and all the details concerning the Blessed Family and an account of the imprisonment of the believers in the barracks of Akka.

Among the inquirers was Shams of Zoha, [Shamsu'd-Duha] the wife of my uncle, and a member of the household of the King of the Martyrs.

She asked of Siyyid Mihdi: "While you were in the Presence of Baha'u'llah, did you ever hear whether any girl had been spoken of or selected for the Master Abdu'l-Baha?"

He answered, "No, but one day the Blessed Perfection was walking in the men's apartment and speaking.

Then He turned His face to me and said, 'Aga Siyyid Mihdi!

I had a remarkable dream last night.

I dreamt that the face of the beautiful girl who is living in Tihran, whose hand in marriage we asked from Mirza Hasan for the Greatest Branch, became dark and obscure.

At the same moment, the face of another girl appeared on the scene whose countenance was luminous and whose heart enlightened.

We have selected her to become the wife of the Greatest Branch.' Except for the above talk from the lips of the Blessed Perfection, I have heard nothing." 'When my aunt returned to the house and saw me, she declared by the One God that the very moment when Siyyid <p208> Mihdi was relating to us the dream of Baha'u'llah, it had occurred to her mind that, without question, I was that girl, and ere long we would realize that she was right.

I wept and answered: "Far be it, for I am not worthy of such a bounty.

I beg of thee never let another word concerning the matter issue from thy lips; do not speak about it.'" Munirih Khanum continues the story of how she travelled to the Holy Land through successive instructions from Baha'u'llah to her relatives.

En route to their destination they met many friends who tried to prevent them from going to the Holy Land, saying that in these days no one is permitted to go to Akka because some sad and unfortunate events had caused anew the incarceration of the friends, and the authorities did not

permit any Baha'i to enter the city of Akka. 'This news disturbed us a great deal, and we wondered what we should do, but Shaykh Salman assured us that these conditions did not apply to us, and made us feel confident that we should enter the Holy Land with the utmost ease and tranquillity, even if all the believers were thrown into prison and under chains.' After many trials and difficulties on the way, they finally arrived in Akka. '...members of the Blessed Family came to visit and welcome us.

I returned with them, and for the first time stood in the Presence of the Blessed Perfection.

The state of ecstasy and rapture that possessed me was beyond description.

The first words of Baha'u'llah were these: "We have brought you into the Prison at such a time when the door of meeting is closed to all the believers.

This is for no other reason than to prove to everyone the Power and Might of God."

I continued to live in the house of Kalim for nearly five months.

I visited Baha'u'llah many times and then returned to my abode.

Whenever Kalim returned from his visit to the Blessed Perfection he would tell me of His infinite bounties, and bring a material gift from Him for me.

One day he arrived with a great happiness in his face.

He said: "I have brought a most wonderful gift for you.

It is this -- a new name has been given you and that name is Munirih (Illumined)." 'Then the night of union ... drew nigh.

I was dressed in a <p209> white robe which had been prepared for me by the fingers of the Greatest Holy Leaf, and which was more precious than the silks and velvets of Paradise.

About nine o'clock ...

I was permitted to stand in the Presence of Baha'u'llah.

Attended by the Greatest Holy Leaf, I listened to the words of the Blessed Perfection...

He said: "You are welcome!

You are welcome!

O thou My blessed leaf and maid-servant.

We have chosen thee and accepted thee to be the companion of the Greatest Branch and to serve Him.

This is from My Bounty, to which there is no equal; the treasures of the earth and heaven cannot be compared with it...

Thou must be very thankful, for thou hast attained to this most great favor and bestowal...

May you always be under the protection of God!'"(5) Of her companionship with Abdu'l-Baha, Munirih Khanum writes these words:

If I were to write the details of the fifty years of my association with the Beloved of the world, of His love, His mercy and bounty, I would need fifty years more of time and opportunity in order to write it; yet, if the seas of the world were turned into ink and the leaves of the forest into paper, I would not render adequate justice to the subject.(6)

Mirza Aliy-i-Sayyah The betrayal of the trust of the Bab by Mirza Yahya had plunged the Faith into a crisis of such magnitude that it shattered the unity and solidarity of the community and brought in its wake untold sufferings to Baha'u'llah and His loved ones.

Without acquiring a full knowledge of all the machinations, plots and evil deeds of Mirza Yahya and his supporters, it is not possible to understand the extent of the harm which they inflicted upon Baha'u'llah and His Cause.

A full account of their pernicious influence and foul deeds is beyond the scope of this work.

Suffice it to say that the rebellion of Mirza Yahya caused so much pain and anguish for Baha'u'llah that the persecutions <p210> which were heaped upon Him by enemies from outside the Baha'i community cannot compare with them.

Baha'u'llah remained in the house of Rida Big for about one year and then transferred His residence to the house of Amru'llah where He stayed about three months.

In almost every Tablet revealed during this whole period, He refers to the unfaithfulness and perfidy of Mirza Yahya and the harm he had inflicted upon the Cause of God.

One of the Tablets of this period is the Lawh-i-Sayyah revealed in honour of Mulla Adi-Guzal, otherwise known as Mirza Aliy-i-Sayyah.

The title 'Sayyah' (Traveller) was given to him by the Bab.

He was a native of Maraghih, and had received his education as a mulla in that town.

In the early days of the Faith he attained the presence of the Bab, recognized His station and was numbered among His followers.

No sooner did he embrace the Cause of the Bab than he began to serve his Lord with great dedication and earnestness.

When the Bab was imprisoned in the castles of Maku and Chihriq, Sayyah served Him as a faithful messenger.

He attained His presence many times in these fortresses and was one of His leading companions.

From there he proceeded to various parts of Persia bearing the messages of the Bab to His followers and bringing their letters back to Him.

On one occasion he carried some Tablets in the handwriting of the Bab together with an exquisite pen-case as a gift from the Bab to Quddus.

One of his unforgettable services to the Bab at a time when He was grief-stricken at the news of the martyrdom of many heroes in Mazindaran, was to visit, on His behalf, the spot where the martyrs of Tabarsi[1] had fallen.

Concerning this Nabil recounts: [1 See The Dawn-Breakers.] No sooner had He [the Bab] completed His eulogies of those who had immortalized their names in the defence of the fort, than He summoned, on the day of Ashura,[1] Mulla <p211> Adi-Guzal, one of the believers of Maraghih, who for the last two months had been acting as His attendant instead of Siyyid Hasan, the brother of Siyyid Husayn-i-'Aziz.

He affectionately received him, bestowed upon him the name Sayyah, entrusted to his care the visiting Tablets He had revealed in memory of the martyrs of Tabarsi, and bade him perform, on His behalf, a pilgrimage to that spot. 'Arise,' He urged him, 'and with complete detachment proceed, in the guise of a traveller, to Mazindaran, and there visit, on My behalf, the spot which enshrines the bodies of those immortals who, with their blood, have sealed their faith in My Cause.

As you approach the precincts of that hallowed ground, put off your shoes and, bowing your head in reverence to their memory, invoke their names and prayerfully make the circuit of their shrine.

Bring back to Me, as a remembrance of your visit, a handful of that holy earth which covers the remains of My beloved ones, Quddus and Mulla Husayn.

Strive to be back ere the day of Naw-Ruz, that you may celebrate with Me that festival, the only one I probably shall ever see again.' [1 The tenth of Muharram, the anniversary of the martyrdom of the Imam Husayn, which fell in that year on 26 November 1849.] Faithful to the instructions he had received, Sayyah set out on his pilgrimage to Mazindaran.

He reached his destination on the first day of Rabi'u'l-Avval in the year 1266 A.H. [15 January A.D.

1850] and by the ninth day of that same month [23 January A.D.

1850], the first anniversary of the martyrdom of Mulla Husayn, he had performed his visit and acquitted himself of the mission with which he had been entrusted.

From thence he proceeded to Tihran.

I have heard Aqay-i-Kalim, who received Sayyah at the entrance of Baha'u'llah's home in Tihran, relate the following: 'It was the depth of winter when Sayyah, returning from his pilgrimage, came to visit Baha'u'llah.

Despite the cold and snow of a rigorous winter, he appeared attired in the garb of a dervish, poorly clad, barefooted, and dishevelled.

His heart was set afire with the flame that pilgrimage had kindled.

No sooner had Siyyid Yahyay-i-Darabi, surnamed Vahid, who was then a guest in the home of Baha'u'llah, been informed of the return of Sayyah from the fort of Tabarsi, than he, oblivious of the pomp and circumstance to <p212> which a man of his position had been accustomed, rushed forward and flung himself at the feet of the pilgrim.

Holding his legs, which had been covered with mud to the knees, in his arms, he kissed them devoutly.

I was amazed that day at the many evidences of loving solicitude which Baha'u'llah evinced towards Vahid.

He showed him such favours as I had never seen Him extend to anyone.

The manner of His conversation left no doubt in me that this same Vahid would ere long distinguish himself by deeds no less remarkable than those which had immortalized the defenders of the fort of Tabarsi.'

Sayyah tarried a few days in that home.

He was, however, unable to perceive, as did Vahid, the nature of that power which lay latent in his Host.

Though himself the recipient of the utmost favour from Baha'u'llah, he failed to apprehend the significance of the blessings that were being showered upon him.

I have heard him recount his experiences, during his sojourn in Famagusta: 'Baha'u'llah overwhelmed me with His kindness.

As to Vahid, notwithstanding the eminence of his position, he invariably gave me preference over himself whenever in the presence of his Host.

On the day of my arrival from Mazindaran, he went so far as to kiss my feet.

I was amazed at the reception accorded to me in that home.

Though immersed in an ocean of bounty, I failed, in those days, to appreciate the position then occupied by Baha'u'llah, nor was I able to suspect, however dimly, the nature of the Mission He was destined to perform.'(7) After the martyrdom of the Bab, Sayyah tarried for a short while in Adhirbayjan.

He then proceeded to Karbila where he resided for a considerable time.

In the course of his interrogation in Constantinople in 1868,[1] he declared that he had lived in Karbila for twelve years.

He married the daughter of Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunuzi, an eminent disciple of the Bab and one to whom He had given the glad-tidings and the assurance of meeting the 'Promised Husayn'[2] in Karbila.

Sayyah himself was <p213> also promised by the Bab that he would attain the presence of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. [1 See pp.

328-9 ff.] [2 In Shi'ah Islam, it is believed that after the advent of the Qa'im (the Promised One of Islam), Imam Husayn will return.

The name of Baha'u'llah was Husayn-'Ali.

It was in the summer of 1851 that Baha'u'llah encountered Shaykh Hasan in Karbila and confided to him His station.

See vol I, pp.

207-8.

It was from that time, before Baha'u'llah was imprisoned in the Siyah-Chal, that Shaykh Hasan fully recognized the station of Baha'u'llah as 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.] Sayyah travelled to Adrianople in the early part of 1284 A.H. (1867).

There he attained the presence of Baha'u'llah and told the believers, in one of their gatherings, how the promise made by the Bab concerning his meeting with 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' was fulfilled.

He also wrote about this to Mirza Yahya.

He was one of the most devoted followers of Baha'u'llah.

When he had been in Adrianople three months,[1] Baha'u'llah sent him with Mishkin-Qalam[2] and Jamshid-i-Gurji to Constantinople on an important mission.

The nature of this mission and their imprisonment in that city will be referred to later. [1 When interrogated in Constantinople, Sayyah stated that he stayed in Adrianople for three months.] [2 See vol.

I, pp.

26-8.] In the Tablet of Sayyah Baha'u'llah unveils the glory of His station, states that He is the Ancient Beauty through Whose command the whole of creation has come into being, affirms that mankind turns to Him in adoration and clings to the hem of His bounty even though it is unable to recognize Him in His wondrous Revelation.

He alludes to the followers of the Bayan who have denied and repudiated His Cause, refers to them as the people of sedition and the company of Satan, reminds them that for many years He had associated with them, but had hidden His glory from their eyes so that none might recognize Him; but they had risen up against Him in great enmity.

It was then that He unveiled the beauty of His Countenance and shed the radiance of His Face upon all creation.

He declares that the days of tests have come and that the balance has been established, a balance through which the deeds of all men will be <p214> weighed with justice.

He proclaims to the peoples of the world that if they wish to hear the voice of God they should hearken to His wondrous melodies, and if they desire to behold the Face of God they should gaze into His beauteous Countenance.

He warns them, however, that they shall not be able to do this unless they cleanse their hearts of all idle fancy and detach themselves from this world and all that is therein.[1] [1 See vol.

I, pp.

187-9.] It is in this Tablet that Baha'u'llah, by allusion, foretells His exile to the city of Akka, designating it as the 'vale of Nabil'.[1] He describes in allegorical terms His arrival in that city in these words: [1 The numerical value of the word Nabil is equal to that of Akka.] Upon Our arrival, We were welcomed with banners of light, whereupon the Voice of the Spirit cried out saying: 'Soon will all that dwell on earth be enlisted under these banners.'(8) There are passages in this Tablet which throw light on the severity of the tests which the believer encounters when he treads the path of faith.

Alluding to the people of the Bayan, Baha'u'llah refers to some who were among the most holy of men, who worshipped God with great devotion, who were considered the most devout, who were endowed with the keenest insight; yet when the breezes of His Revelation were wafted over them, they were found to be shut out as by a veil from Him.

This notwithstanding the fact that He associated with them for so long and manifested His glory to their eyes.

He attributes the reason for this failure to pride and attachment to self and ego.

He grieves that their acts of devotion and service had become the cause of pride and had deprived them of God's bounty.

The subject of detachment occurs in numerous Tablets.

Perhaps it may be said that there are few, if any, among Baha'u'llah's exhortations which have been stressed so much as detachment from this world and from every selfish desire.

We have already referred to this important theme in previous chapters. <p215> The perusal of the Tablet of Sayyah makes it absolutely clear that Baha'u'llah's companions, because of their closeness to Him, could not remain faithful to the Cause of God unless they were able to cast out entirely the evil of self.

Any trace of self-glorification, however insignificant, was fatal to them, and in His holy presence nothing but utter self-effacement could survive.

There were many among His disciples who were enabled to subdue their ego.

By their words and deeds they demonstrated their utter nothingness when they came face to face with their Lord.

These became the spiritual giants of this Dispensation, and through their faith they shed an imperishable lustre upon the Cause of God.

It is concerning such men, during the days of Baghdad, that Nabil writes:

Many a night, no less than ten persons subsisted on no more than a pennyworth of dates.

No one knew to whom actually belonged the shoes, the cloaks, or the robes that were to be found in their houses.

Whoever went to the bazaar could claim that the shoes upon his feet were his own, and each one who entered the presence of Baha'u'llah could affirm that the cloak and robe he then wore belonged to him.

Their own names they had forgotten, their hearts were emptied of aught else except adoration for their Beloved...

O, for the joy of those days, and the gladness and wonder of those hours!(9) That a few souls have been able to achieve such distinction, to soar into the realms of detachment, and to humble themselves before their Lord, augurs well for the human race which, in the fullness of time, is destined to follow in their footsteps.

Today, the followers of Baha'u'llah cannot attain His presence in this life and therefore the tests which were particularly associated with His person do not seem to affect them.

But the requirements of faith and the path to Baha'u'llah remain unchanged.

It is necessary for the believer of today, as in the days of Baha'u'llah, to detach himself from all earthly things and to banish from his soul the traces of passion and desire, of ego and <p216> self-glorification in order that he may truly appreciate the awe-inspiring station of Baha'u'llah and become a worthy servant of His Cause.

If he fails to do this, although he may not be faced with the same perils that surrounded Baha'u'llah's companions, he is bound to feel a measure of doubt in his innermost heart concerning the Faith and may experience great conflicts in his mind.

Although intellectually he may accept Baha'u'llah as a Manifestation of God and may be well versed in His Writings, he will not be able to have that absolute certitude which endows a human being with divine attributes and confers upon him perpetual contentment, serenity and happiness.

The acquiring of true faith is man's greatest accomplishment.

Faith endows a human being with powers that no earthly agency can equal.

By the power of their faith, the believers have overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles and won memorable victories for the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

In order to have faith, a man must banish from his heart every trace of vain imagination and idle fancy.

Let us examine the road to the achievement of this exalted goal and explore the many pitfalls and obstacles which confront the soul in its quest.

There are two focal points of enormous power within a human being.

One is the brain, the centre of intellect and thinking and the storehouse of his knowledge and learning.

Through the agency of this faculty man can manifest the unique powers of the rational soul which distinguish him from the animal.

The intellect is the greatest gift of God to man.

But since man has free will, he may be led by his intellect either to faith and belief in God, or else to disbelief.

The other focal point is the heart which is the centre of warmth and love.

The heart of man falls in love with the world and its own self.

But it is also the habitation wherein God's attributes are revealed.

Baha'u'llah states:

O Son of Being!

Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent...(10) <p217> It is within the heart of man that the spark of faith appears.

But this can only happen when the heart becomes freed from attachment to the things of the world.

Baha'u'llah declares in The Hidden Words:

O Son of Dust!

All that is in heaven and earth I have ordained for thee, except the human heart, which I have made the habitation of My beauty and glory; yet thou didst give My home and dwelling to another than Me; and whenever the manifestation of My holiness sought His own abode, a stranger found He there, and, homeless, hastened unto the sanctuary of the Beloved.

Notwithstanding I have concealed thy secret and desired not thy shame.(11) God has created man in such wise that the two focal points in his being, namely the mind and the heart, should complement each other.

The mind without the heart illumined by faith does not acquire the capacity to investigate, or the language to understand, the truth of the Cause of God.

Similar to the eye when deprived of light, it is unable to explore the world of the spirit.

Instead, it develops its powers in the field of materialism and naturally rejects the concept of God and religion.

Thus it becomes the most effective barrier to the individual's acquisition of faith.

In such circumstances the heart becomes filled with love of the world and its own self, for it is a characteristic of the heart to love.

If it is not allowed to love God, it will love itself and its worldly possessions.

And this is one significance of the 'stranger' that Baha'u'llah refers to in The Hidden Words:

O My Friend in word!

Ponder awhile.

Hast thou ever heard that friend and foe should abide in one heart?

Cast out then the stranger, that the friend may enter His home.(12) To acquire faith man must cast out the 'stranger' from his heart.

To the extent that he succeeds in doing this, he will acquire faith.

Once the spark of faith is ignited within the heart it must be allowed to grow steadily into a flame, otherwise it <p218> could die because of attachment to this world.

For instance, when an individual reaches a point where he recognizes Baha'u'llah as a Manifestation of God, his heart becomes the recipient of the light of God's Faith for this day.

If the believer immerses himself from the start in the ocean of Baha'u'llah's Revelation, reads His writings daily not merely in order to add to his own knowledge but to receive the food of the spirit, seeks the companionship of the righteous, and arises to serve Him with sincerity and detachment, then he may steadily grow in faith and become a radiant and enthusiastic soul.

He may obtain a deeper understanding of the writings and reach a point where both his mind and his heart work together in harmony.

Such a believer will eventually find no conflict between the teachings of Baha'u'llah and his own thinking.

He will discover many a wisdom hidden in the utterances of Baha'u'llah and will recognize the limitations and shortcomings of his own finite mind.

But if a believer, after having recognized Baha'u'llah, fails to follow this

path, he may soon find himself in conflict with many aspects of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

His intellect may not be able to understand the wisdom behind many of His Teachings, he may indeed reject some of His precepts and eventually lose faith altogether.

Some people struggle for years to overcome this problem, for they long to be confirmed in their faith.

Often such an individual may be helped to acquire a true understanding of the Faith by those who truly believe in Baha'u'llah and are detached from this world.

But if everything else fails, the only remedy for the individual who still has a glimmer of faith in his heart, but who has doubts about the Cause, is to admit that he may be wrong in his assessment of the teachings of the Faith, to affirm that Baha'u'llah's knowledge is of God, and to surrender his feelings and thoughts completely to Him.

Once he submits himself in this way and perseveres in doing so with sincerity and truthfulness, the channels of the grace of God open and his heart becomes the recipient of the light of true knowledge.

He will discover, some time in his life, either by intuition or through <p219> prayer and meditation, the answer to all his problems and objections.

Every trace of conflict will disappear from his mind.

He will readily understand the reasons behind those very teachings which previously baffled his intellect, and will find many mysteries enshrined in the utterances of Baha'u'llah, mysteries of which he was completely unaware in earlier days.

The following words of Baha'u'llah in The Hidden Words demonstrate that not until man submits himself to God can he attain to the knowledge of His Revelation:

O Son of Dust!

Blind thine eyes, that thou mayest behold My beauty; stop thine ears, that thou mayest hearken unto the sweet melody of My voice; empty thyself of all learning, that thou mayest partake of My knowledge; and sanctify thyself from riches, that thou mayest obtain a lasting share from the ocean of My eternal wealth.

Blind thine eyes, that is, to all save My beauty; stop thine ears to all save My word; empty thyself of all learning save the knowledge of Me; that with a clear vision, a pure heart and an attentive ear thou mayest enter the court of My holiness.[l3] The following story in the life of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, the outstanding scholar of the Cause and its famous apologist, is one which demonstrates that reading the Word of God with the eye of intellect can lead a man astray.

He himself has recounted the story that soon after he came in contact with the believers, they gave him the Kitab-i-Iqan to read.

He read it with an air of intellectual superiority and was not impressed by it.

He even commented that if the Kitab-i-Iqan was a proof of Baha'u'llah's claims, he himself could certainly write a better book.

At that time he was the head of a theological college in Tihran.

The following day a prominent woman arrived at the college and approached some students asking them to write an important letter for her.[1] The students referred her to Mirza <p220> Abu'l-Fadl saying that he was an outstanding writer, a master of eloquence and a man unsurpassed in the art of composition.

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl took up his pen to write, but found himself unable to compose the first sentence.

He tried very hard but was unsuccessful.

For several minutes he scribbled in the corner of the page and even drew lines on his own fingernail, until the woman realized that the learned scribe was unable to write.

Losing her patience she arose to go and mockingly said to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, 'If you have forgotten how to write a simple letter why don't you say so instead of keeping me here while you scrawl?' [1 In those days people who were not educated often paid a small sum of money to a learned man to write letters for them.

The essential requirements for writing good letters were good composition and fine penmanship.] Mirza Abu'l-Fadl says that he was overcome with feelings of shame as a result of this incident, and then suddenly remembered his own comments the night before about his being able to write a better book than the Kitab-i-Iqan.

He had a pure heart and knew that this incident was nothing but a clear answer to his arrogant attitude towards that holy Book.

However, it took Mirza Abu'l-Fadl several years to be convinced of the truth of the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

He reached a stage where he accepted the Faith intellectually, but for years his heart was not convinced.

The only thing which caused him to recognize the truth of the Cause of God after having struggled for so long was to submit himself and surrender his intellectual gifts to God.

One evening he went into his chamber, and prayed with yearning as tears flowed from his eyes, beseeching God to open the channels of his heart.

At the hour of dawn he suddenly found himself possessed of such faith that he felt he could lay down his life in the path of Baha'u'llah.[1] The same person

who once had said he could write a better book than the Kitab-i-Iqan, read this book many times with the eye of faith and found it to be an ocean of knowledge, limitless in scope.

Every time he read it he found new pearls of wisdom within it and discovered new mysteries which he had not come across before. [1 An account of the life of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl will appear in the next volume.] <p221> Faith comes to a man through submission to God.

The surrendering of the self with all its accomplishments renders the soul free of attachment to this mortal world.

It drives the 'stranger' away from the heart and enables him to receive the 'Friend' within its sanctuary.

Baha'u'llah states:

O Son of Man!

Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee...(14) In another passage He reveals:

O Son of Man!

If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee.(15) <p222> 10 Illustrious Martyrs Aqa Najaf-'Aliy-i-Zanjani A devoted believer who came to Adrianople in the early years of Baha'u'llah's sojourn there was Aqa Najaf-Aliy-i-Zanjani.

He was an admirer of Mulla Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Hujjat, and had been one of his companions during the struggle of Zanjan.[1] After the horrid massacre there in 1851, forty-four of the survivors, including Aqa Najaf-'Ali, were despatched to Tihran.

All of them were put to death except for Aqa Najaf-'Ali whose life was saved by the kindness of a certain officer in the army.

Later, he went to Baghdad and was permitted by Baha'u'llah to remain in Iraq.

He was one of the devoted companions of Baha'u'llah who recognized His station during the days of Baghdad. [1 See The Dawn-Breakers.] Abdu'l-Baha mentions[l]that all the way from Baghdad to the port of Samsun, Najaf-'Ali would assist Mirza Muhammad-Quli (Baha'u'llah's youngest brother) to erect the tent of Baha'u'llah in the various towns and villages in which the caravan stopped to rest.

On one occasion they had some difficulty.

The governor of the town, who was present, showed so much reverence for Baha'u'llah that he insisted on pitching the tent with his own hands.

In the year 1283 A.H. (1866-7), Najaf-'Ali was in Adrianople.

Baha'u'llah sent him to Persia and gave him some Tablets to carry.

Upon his arrival in Tihran, he was arrested and taken to prison on the charge of being a follower of Baha'u'llah.

They tortured him in order that he might disclose the identity of <p223> those for whom he was carrying the Tablets.

But Aqa Najaf-'Ali did not reveal any name.

When the time for his execution arrived his body was already covered with deadly wounds as a result of these tortures.

Baha'u'llah has referred to his martyrdom in these words:

They arrested his honour Najaf-'Ali, who hastened, with rapture and great longing, unto the field of martyrdom, uttering these words: 'We have kept both Baha and the khun-baha (bloodmoney)!' With these words he yielded up his spirit.(2) Shoghi Effendi has also written this brief yet moving portrayal of the martyrdom of Aqa Najaf-'Ali:

Among the sufferers may be singled out the intrepid Najaf-Aliy-i-Zanjani, a survivor of the struggle of Zanjan, and immortalized in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, who, bequeathing the gold in his possession to his executioner, was heard to shout aloud 'Ya Rabbiya'l-Abha'[1] before he was beheaded.(3) [1 Literally 'O Thou my Lord, the Most Glorious', an invocation. (A.T.)] Siyyid Ashraf and Aba-Basir Another illustrious soul from Zanjan who attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Adrianople and later drank the cup of martyrdom in his native city was a youth by the name of Siyyid Ashraf.[1] His father, Aqa Mir Jalil, a man of courage and considerable influence in the city, had been one of the companions of Hujjat in the struggle of Zanjan, and was martyred.

His mother Anbar Khanum, known in the Writings as Umm-i-Ashraf (Mother of Ashraf) is reckoned as one of the immortal heroines of the Faith. [1 Not to be mistaken for Aqa Mirza Ashraf-i-Abadi'i who was martyred in Isfahan, and concerning whom Baha'u'llah writes these words in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p.

72: 'Before them one named Kazim ...and after them, his honour Ashraf, all quaffed the draught of martyrdom...'] <p224> Siyyid Ashraf was born during the siege of Zanjan in the fortress of Ali-Mardan Khan.[1] Neither the hardships and sufferings of that cruel and mournful struggle nor the martyrdom of her beloved husband succeeded in breaking down the fortitude of Umm-i-Ashraf.

On the contrary, they served to steel her faith and reinforce her physical endurance.

In spite of many privations and trials she reared that infant and two young daughters with great affection and care. [1 For further details of the Zanjan upheaval see The Dawn-Breakers.] When the Message of Baha'u'llah reached Zanjan, Umm-i-Ashraf and her children embraced His Faith, recognized His station and turned to Him with the utmost devotion.

As a youth, to meet his Lord face to face, Siyyid Ashraf travelled to Adrianople and attained his heart's desire.

There he basked in the sunshine of Baha'u'llah's bounties, became filled with a new spirit and returned home with a renewed zeal and enthusiasm.

The fire of the love of Baha'u'llah which was burning within his heart prompted him to make yet another pilgrimage to the abode of his Beloved.

This time, accompanied by Haji Iman, one of the survivors of the Zanjan upheaval, he took one of his sisters with him to Adrianople.

Baha'u'llah showered His favours upon them, and after a short stay directed them to return to Zanjan.

The circumstances of their dismissal from the presence of Baha'u'llah are described by a granddaughter of Umm-i-Ashraf.

When Siyyid Ashraf and his sister left Zanjan, there was a good deal of speculation about their whereabouts, especially among Ashraf's paternal uncles who were not Baha'is.

They were anxious to prevent Ashraf and his sister from becoming involved in the Faith, so they put a great deal of pressure on their mother.

They blamed her for having been the driving force behind her husband's activities in the Faith, activities which had resulted in his martyrdom, and now for being the major factor in her children's involvement in the Faith.

About four months after the party had left Zanjan, three of the uncles came on one occasion to rebuke Umm-i-Ashraf for sending her children <p225> away to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah.

They became very aggressive and at one point even suggested immoral intentions on the part of her daughter.

Umm-i-Ashraf could no longer bear their malice and evil suggestions.

She left the room crying bitterly, raised her hands in supplication to Baha'u'llah and prayerfully beseeched Him to send her children home.

Later, Siyyid Ashraf, by checking the date with his mother, was able to verify that it was the morning after this night that Baha'u'llah summoned him, his sister and Haji Iman to His presence.

He told them that the night before Umm-i-Ashraf had prayed to Him to send them back.

Therefore they were to leave at once.

That morning He particularly showered His praise and bounties upon Umm-i-Ashraf.

Ashraf is reported to have said to Baha'u'llah, 'Adam ate the forbidden fruit and was cast out of heaven, in our case it is our mother who has done this to

us!' On their way home it was very clear to many that Ashraf had been transformed into a new creation.

He could not help but display such radiance of spirit that, as attested by Haji Iman, all those who travelled with the caravan were deeply moved.

Along the way he used to chant, in a beautiful voice, some poems and Tablets of Baha'u'llah he knew by heart.

Whenever he wanted to chant, he used to unwind his green turban, the sign of his lineage, and place it around his shoulder.

On these occasions he radiated such love, and he conveyed such power and beauty through his voice that the caravan drivers would often leave their duties and walk beside him instead, slowing down the speed of the caravan.

Once Haji Iman asked one of them to go away, and attend to his work, so that the pace could be speeded up. 'How can I go,' he replied. 'Can't you hear the exhilarating voice of the descendant of the Prophet.

He is undoubtedly a holy man.

I have never seen such a radiant face before.' According to the advice of Baha'u'llah, the sister of Ashraf was joined in wedlock to Haji Iman on her return home.

Throughout his long life, Haji Iman became the target of many <p226> persecutions and spent some years in prison in Tihran.

At one time he shared with Mirza Ali-Muhammad-i-Varqa[1] and his son Ruhu'llah, both of whom were martyred, the weight of chains and fetters in the prison of Tihran.

But Haji Iman's life was providentially spared.

He lived many years after, and served the Cause with great dedication.

He travelled to Akka in 1330 A.H. (1913) where he attained the presence of Abdu'l-Baha.

He spent the remainder of his life in Ishqabad, and passed away in that city.
[1 Varqa was a distinguished poet and one of the Apostles of Baha'u'llah.

We shall refer to his life in future volumes.

Varqa married the daughter of Haji Iman.

Varqa's children, however, were by a different marriage.] As to Siyyid Ashraf, he was directed by Baha'u'llah to teach His Cause to the sincere among the people of the Bayan.

He began this work with unbounded zeal and enthusiasm.

He built a room in the grounds of his estate outside the city and made it a centre of Baha'i activities, praying, reading the writings and meeting the believers.

Having come in contact with the Source of divine power, and being transformed into a spiritual giant, Siyyid Ashraf radiated the love of Baha'u'llah to the friends, and enabled many of them to recognize Him as the Promised One of the Bayan.

A group of Babis came to talk to Ashraf soon after his arrival from Adrianople.

They were misguided by Mirza Yahya.

One of them asked Ashraf about the station of Mirza Yahya.

He simply replied that Baha'u'llah was the Sun of Truth resplendent and radiant in His glory, but Mirza Yahya acted as a thick dark cloud in front of it.

These words caused the insincere and the unfaithful among the believers in Zanjan to be separated from the true followers of Baha'u'llah in that city.

In his teaching work, Siyyid Ashraf was ably supported by Aba-Basir, whose name is for ever linked with the former.

The original name of Aba-Basir was Aqa Naqd-'Ali.

His father, a certain Haji Muhammad-Husayn, was martyred in the struggle of Zanjan.

Aqa Naqd-'Ali was born blind but possessed such insight and understanding that Baha'u'llah gave him the title of <p227> Basir (Seeing).

He was one of the most steadfast followers of Baha'u'llah in Zanjan.

When it became clear to some members of his family that he had embraced the Cause of Baha'u'llah and was actively teaching it, they drove him out of his home.

It was after this incident that Aba-Basir went to live with Siyyid Ashraf.

The spiritual ties which united these two souls were further strengthened when Aba-Basir married the sister of Haji Iman, Ashraf's brother-in-law, and settled in that household permanently.

Aba-Basir, in spite of his blindness, was a man of great capacity.

He had memorized many verses of the Qur'an and the traditions, and had such a deep understanding of their meanings that many students of theology used to seek enlightenment from him.

The activities of Ashraf, Aba-Basir, and a few others, in promoting the Cause of Baha'u'llah, aroused the fears and antagonism of an enemy who vividly remembered the bloody struggle of Zanjan only two decades before, when thousands of men and women had fought and died for their Faith with courage and heroism.

The fire of hatred and fanaticism, which for some time had remained dormant, was now beginning to blaze, engulfing in its fury the most active and dedicated adherents of a revived and re-animated Faith.

The divines issued the death warrant of Aba-Basir and Ashraf and handed it to the Governor of Zanjan for implementation.

As a result, orders were given that unless they recanted they must be put to death.

Accordingly these two were arrested, and Aba-Basir was conducted to a meeting of the divines where he was asked to recant his Faith.

Instead, he openly spoke about the Cause of Baha'u'llah and proved its divine origin most eloquently.

This audacious confrontation only served to evoke the wrath of the clergy who unhesitatingly demanded his execution.

The executioner conducted Aba-Basir to the public square in front of the government house and beheaded him as he knelt in prayer, watched by thousands of men and women who had gathered to see him die.

In the meantime, as these heart-rending afflictions were going on, Siyyid Ashraf was being cruelly <p228> persecuted in the prison.

Yet there were some people, including Siyyid Abdu'l-Vasi', the Imam-Jum'ih of the city and a relative of his, who were anxious to save him from his fate, for he was dear to many because of his marvellous qualities and good conduct.

They tried very hard to persuade him to recant and, when they failed to achieve their object, they sent for his mother to come and make him recant.

The divines clamoured for Ashraf's death.

He was beaten so hard that blood flowed from under his nails, and was taken to the same public square where the body of Aba-Basir lay on the ground, exposed to the eyes of the onlookers.

As soon as he beheld the decapitated body of his companion, he ran towards it and held it in his arms.

His mother, Umm-i-Ashraf, arrived when he was covered in blood.

It is reported by one member of the Ashraf family that she went forward, threw her arms around her son, kissed him on the cheeks, wiped away the sweat and blood from his face, took his bloodstained skull-cap as a souvenir and urged him again not to barter his precious faith for the fleeting days of a mortal life. "'I will disown you as my son," cried the mother, when brought face to face with him, "if you incline your heart to such evil whisperings and allow them to turn you away from the Truth.'"(4) Although his mother exhorted him to remain faithful to the Cause of God, Ashraf, who had attained the presence of Baha'u'llah twice, was by himself a tower of strength.

He had reached the stage of certitude in his faith and could not entertain the thought of compromise.

As his friends were putting pressure upon him to recant, the fore-mentioned

Imam-Jum'ih is reported to have taken Ashraf into his arms, whispered a few words into his ears, and then, as he stood on a high platform, falsely proclaimed to the teeming multitude that Ashraf had recanted his Faith and should no longer be considered a Baha'i.

When he heard this false declaration, Ashraf, who was standing beside him, raised his hands and in a loud voice denied the allegation and announced that he had never recanted, nor would he ever do so.

He remained steadfast <p229> in his love for Baha'u'llah until the executioner moved forward and ruthlessly dealt him a deadly blow.

He was beheaded as he held the body of Aba-Basir in his arms.

Of Ashraf and his mother, Nabil writes:

Faithful to his mother's admonitions, Ashraf met his death with intrepid calm.

Though herself a witness to the cruelties inflicted on her son, she made no lamentation, neither did she shed a tear.

This marvellous mother showed a courage and fortitude that amazed the perpetrators of that shameless deed. 'I have now in mind,' she exclaimed, as she cast a parting glance at the corpse of her son, 'the vow I made on the day of your birth, while besieged in the fort of Ali-Mardan Khan.

I rejoice that you, the only son whom God gave me, have enabled me to redeem that pledge.'(5) Baha'u'llah has revealed a Tablet of Visitation jointly for Ashraf, Aba-Basir and Aqa Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Tabib, who also laid down his life in the path of Baha'u'llah in the city of Zanjan.

He has also extolled the station of Ashraf and his mother in other Tablets.

In one, He has revealed these exalted words concerning Umm-i-Ashraf and her son:

Call thou to mind the behaviour of Ashraf's mother, whose son laid down his life in the Land of Za (Zanjan).

He, most certainly, is in the seat of truth, in the presence of One Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty.

When the infidels, so unjustly, decided to put him to death, they sent and fetched his mother, that perchance she might admonish him, and induce him to recant his faith, and follow in the footsteps of them that have repudiated the truth of God, the Lord of all worlds.

No sooner did she behold the face of her son, than she spoke to him such words as caused the hearts of the lovers of God, and beyond them those of the Concourse on high, to cry out and be sore pained with grief.

Truly, thy Lord knoweth what My tongue speaketh.

He Himself beareth witness to My words. <p230> And when addressing him she said: 'My son, mine own son!

Fail not to offer up thyself in the path of thy Lord.

Beware that thou betray not thy faith in Him before Whose face have bowed down in adoration all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth.

Go thou straight on, O my son, and persevere in the path of the Lord, thy God.

Haste thee to attain the presence of Him Who is the Well-Beloved of all worlds.' On her be My blessings, and My mercy, and My praise, and My glory.

I Myself shall atone for the loss of her son -- a son who now dwelleth within the tabernacle of My majesty and glory, and whose face beameth with a light that envelopeth with its radiance the Maids of Heaven in their celestial chambers, and beyond them the inmates of My Paradise, and the denizens of the Cities of Holiness.

Were any eye to gaze on his face, he would exclaim: 'Lo, this is no other than a noble angel!'(6) In the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Baha'u'llah refers to Ashraf and his mother in these words:

Ponder upon the conduct of Aba-Basir and Siyyid Ashraf-i-Zanjani.

They sent for the mother of Ashraf to dissuade her son from his purpose.

But she spurred him on until he suffered a most glorious martyrdom.(7) Lawh-i-Ashraf When Siyyid Ashraf was in Adrianople, Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet in Arabic for him which is known as the Lawh-i-Ashraf (Tablet of Ashraf).

A part of this Tablet has been translated into English by Shoghi Effendi and included in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah.[1] From its contents it appears that this Tablet was revealed some time after Mirza Yahya's attempt on the life of Baha'u'llah.

In it He urges Ashraf to offer thanks to God for having enabled him to attain to His presence and behold His glory.

He bids him take the Tablet of God back to <p231> his home and share it with those who have embraced His Cause.

He directs him to inform the believers of His sufferings at the hands of the unfaithful and to impart to them the glad-tidings of His Revelation.

He exhorts the faithful to arise and assist His Cause, counsels them to be as bountiful as the rain to those who believe in God and warns them not to be influenced by the misrepresentations of Mirza Yahya's followers, those who had opposed God, denied His proofs and mustered such audacity as to stand before His Face and make attempts on His Life. [1 Section LII.] In the Tablet of

Ashraf Baha'u'llah admonishes the followers of the Bayan in these words:

...The blind in heart, however, among the people of the Bayan -- and to this God is My witness -- are impotent, no matter how long the Sun may shine upon them, either to perceive the radiance of its glory, or to appreciate the warmth of its rays.

Say:

O people of the Bayan!

We have chosen you out of the world to know and to recognize Our Self.

We have caused you to draw nigh unto the right side of Paradise -- the Spot out of which the undying Fire crieth in manifold accents: 'There is none other God besides Me, the All-Powerful, the Most High!' Take heed lest ye allow yourselves to be shut out as by a veil from this Day Star that shineth above the day-spring of the Will of your Lord, the All-Merciful, and whose light hath encompassed both the small and the great.

Purge your sight, that ye may perceive its glory with your own eyes, and depend not on the sight of any one except yourself, for God hath never burdened any soul beyond its power.

Thus hath it been sent down unto the Prophets and Messengers of old, and been recorded in all the Scriptures.(8) Baha'u'llah in this Tablet summons Ashraf to hearken to the voice of Him Who is the Ancient of Days.

He proclaims that the Blessed Beauty, in this day, has shed the radiance of the Greatest Name upon all other names and attributes.

He exhorts <p232> him to adorn himself with goodly deeds and become steadfast in His love, so that he may abide under the shadow of His exalted Name.

The Tablet of Ashraf contains a significant statement concerning the power of prayer when freed from desire.

He declares that the outpouring of grace in this day is so great, that should an individual raise his hands in supplication to God and ask for the treasures of earth and heaven, his wish will be granted even before he lowers his hands, provided that he is freed from attachment to all created things.

Indeed, the key for attaining this glory lies in the word 'detachment'.

From the study of the Writings it becomes clear that not until man reaches a state of absolute servitude wherein he dies to his own self, and has no desire except what God desires, can he ever ascend to such a lofty station.

The purest form of prayer is one which is freed from desire.

Such a prayer will cause the bounties of God to descend upon the soul.

Nevertheless, human beings have many needs in this life and when in difficulty, pain or grief, they turn to God for assistance.

The Bab and Baha'u'llah have both revealed special prayers for various occasions to be said when one is in need.

If a man must have a desire -- and it is quite natural for him to do so -- his prayer should be that in the end he may attain the good-pleasure of his Lord.

For any other desire, even service to the Cause, meritorious though it is, will not necessarily result in his salvation.

There have been some who rendered notable service to the Cause and yet spiritually their lives ended in tragedy.

We may recall the words of Baha'u'llah:

How often hath a sinner, at the hour of death, attained to the essence of faith, and quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the celestial Concourse.

And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire.(9)

However, the most befitting form of prayer is that of praising God.

Through it the channels of grace are opened up and He <p233> bestows His powers and blessing upon the individual.

Turning to God in prayer for the sole purpose of glorifying His Name and extolling His Attributes is the most natural move that man can make towards his Creator.

It is like a plant which turns towards the sun.

Although the sun pours out its energies regardless, yet, by its very nature, the tree cannot help but stretch its boughs and branches in the direction of the sun.

For it to remain insensible to the life-giving rays of the sun is a sign that it is dead.

To use another analogy, we see in nature that a babe cries for food and his mother feeds him.

But if he does not hunger for food, he is not healthy even though the mother may feed him by force.

This two-way relationship is the basis for growth.

Similarly, God bestows His boundless favours and grace upon His creation, but man must by his own volition turn to Him in adoration and praise in order to receive them.

If he fails to do this, he becomes deprived and spiritually starved.

In The Hidden Words Baha'u'llah confirms this when He says:

O Son of Being!

Love Me, that I may love thee.

If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee.

Know this, O servant.(10) The sign of true spiritual life in man is to yearn after God and long to adore and glorify Him.

The Bab and Baha'u'llah have shown us the way by revealing most of their prayers in praise of God.

These prayers evoke in the soul feelings of utter self-effacement and absolute poverty, while the power of God and His glory become the motivating influence in guiding and sustaining it throughout its life.

The power which can be generated in the heart of the believer, when he is freed from all desire and turns to God with songs of praise and glorification, is beyond the comprehension of man.

Suffice it to say that many heroes of the Faith have derived their courage and steadfastness from this source.

At this juncture it is befitting to quote one of the prayers of Baha'u'llah in glorification of the Almighty: <p234> Lauded and glorified art Thou, O Lord, my God!

How can I make mention of Thee, assured as I am that no tongue, however deep its wisdom, can befittingly magnify Thy name' nor can the bird of the human heart, however great its longing, ever hope to ascend into the heaven of Thy majesty and knowledge.

If I describe Thee, O my God, as Him Who is the All-Perceiving, I find myself compelled to admit that They Who are the highest Embodiments of perception have been created by virtue of Thy behest.

And if I extol Thee as Him Who is the All-Wise, I, likewise, am forced to recognise that the Well Springs of wisdom have themselves been generated through the operation of Thy Will.

And if I proclaim Thee as the Incomparable One, I soon discover that they Who are the inmost essence of oneness have been sent down by Thee and are but the evidences of Thine handiwork.

And if I acclaim Thee as the Knower of all things, I must confess that they Who are the Quintessence of knowledge are but the creation and instruments of Thy Purpose.

Exalted, immeasurably exalted, art Thou above the strivings of mortal man to unravel Thy mystery, to describe Thy glory, or even to hint at the nature of Thine Essence.

For whatever such strivings may accomplish, they never can hope to transcend the limitations imposed upon Thy creatures, inasmuch as these efforts are actuated by Thy decree, and are begotten of Thine invention.

The loftiest sentiments which the holiest of saints can express in praise of Thee, and the deepest wisdom which the most learned of men can utter in their attempts to comprehend Thy nature, all revolve around that Centre Which is wholly subjected to Thy sovereignty, Which adoreth Thy Beauty, and is propelled through the movement of Thy Pen.

Nay, forbid it, O my God, that I should have uttered such words as must of necessity imply the existence of any direct relationship between the Pen of Thy Revelation and the essence of all created things.

Far, far are They Who are related to Thee above the conception of such relationship!

All comparisons and likenesses fail to do justice to the Tree of Thy Revelation, and every way is barred to the comprehension <p235> of the Manifestation of Thy Self and the Day Spring of Thy Beauty.

Far, far from Thy glory be what mortal man can affirm of Thee, or attribute unto Thee, or the praise with which he can glorify Thee!

Whatever duty Thou hast prescribed unto Thy servants of extolling to the utmost Thy majesty and glory is but a token of Thy grace unto them, that they may be enabled to ascend unto the station conferred upon their own inmost being, the station of the knowledge of their own selves.

No one else besides Thee hath, at any time, been able to fathom Thy mystery, or befittingly to extol Thy greatness.

Unsearchable and high above the praise of men wilt Thou remain for ever.

There is none other God but Thee, the Inaccessible, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Holy of Holies.[ll] <p236> 11 Some Significant Tablets Suriy-i-Damm This Tablet (in Arabic) is addressed to Nabil-i-A'zam and contains many celebrated passages concerning the greatness of His Revelation, as well as counsels and exhortations to Nabll.

Apparently it was revealed at a time when Nabil, as instructed by Baha'u'llah, had returned to Persia after attaining His presence in Adrianople.

In this Tablet Baha'u'llah directs Nabil to travel throughout the land, meet the sincere souls among the community, and rend asunder the grievous veils that have hindered them from recognizing the Countenance of Glory.

As we have already stated, the mission of Nabil and other disciples of Baha'u'llah at this period was primarily to teach His Cause to the members of the Babi community.

But He warns him not to associate with, and even to flee from, those who show enmity towards Him.

This is mainly a reference to the Babis who were unfaithful to the Cause and were drawn to Mirza Yahya.

This exhortation to shun those who arise to oppose the Centre of the Cause from

within the community is unique in the field of religion.

It is aimed at protecting the faithful from the pernicious influence of the egotist, the vainglorious and the insincere who strive to divide the Faith of God and bring schism within its ranks.

In past Dispensations no provisions were made to protect the Faith from division.

In many cases the followers interpreted the words of their Prophets to suit themselves and consequently many sects appeared within each religion.

In this Dispensation Baha'u'llah has made strict provision <p237> to prevent this from happening.

To no one, except the appointed Centre of His Covenant, Abdu'l-Baha, has He given the right to interpret His Writings with authority,[1]and He has made it clear that if two people argue among themselves concerning their understanding of a subject in the Faith, both are wrong.

These are among the provisions which are incorporated in the institution of the Covenant and which safeguard the unity of the Baha'i community. [1 Abdu'l-Baha in his turn appointed Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Faith, and conferred upon him the same exclusive right of interpretation.] The Bab made a Covenant with His followers concerning 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

Mirza Yahya and his supporters broke this Covenant, and instead of showing loyalty and submission to Baha'u'llah they rebelled against Him and strove with all their power to destroy the Cause of God.

Unlike the Manifestations of the past, Baha'u'llah did not allow these poisonous elements to remain within the body of the Cause and contaminate it.

He cast them out from the community and forbade His followers to associate with them.[1] [1 See vol.

I, pp.

129-37, 240-2.] Baha'u'llah made a Covenant with His followers, that after His ascension they should all turn to Abdu'l-Baha.

Those who broke this Covenant and rose up against its Centre still regarded themselves as Baha'is.

But Abdu'l-Baha, following the example set by Baha'u'llah, expelled these unwholesome elements from the community, cleansed the Cause from their pollution, and instructed the believers to shun them for their own protection.

In a Tablet(1)Abdu'l-Baha states that some people attain faith and certitude and arise to serve and teach the Cause of God, but later become confused and disenchanted.

The reason for this is that they have disobeyed His commandments and have associated with the ungodly.

Baha'u'llah has clearly exhorted His followers to avoid the company of the evil ones.

In The Hidden Words He enjoins: <p238> O Son of Dust!

Beware!

Walk not with the ungodly and seek not fellowship with him, for such companionship turneth the radiance of the heart into infernal fire.(2)

In one of His Tablets Abdu'l-Baha declares:

In short, the point is this:

Abdu'l-Baha is extremely kind, but when the disease is leprosy, what am I to do?

Just as in bodily diseases we must prevent intermingling and infection and put into effect sanitary laws -- because the infectious physical diseases uproot the foundation of humanity; likewise one must protect and safeguard the blessed souls from the breaths and fatal spiritual diseases; otherwise violation, like the plague, will become a contagion and all will perish.(3) During the ministry of Shoghi Effendi similar events took place.

But those who raised their heads to create schism in the Faith were cast out and, like their predecessors, perished and died.

This principle of cleansing the community from the pernicious influence of the breakers of the Covenant, thereby protecting the unity of the Cause of God, has been of the utmost importance in the past and will continue to be so in the future.

In the Suriy-i-Damm Baha'u'llah counsels Nabil to adorn himself with His characteristics, to waft the musk-laden breeze of holiness upon the believers and to bear with resignation and fortitude the sufferings and persecutions which may be inflicted upon him.

He exhorts him to be resigned and submissive when sorely oppressed, reminds him that resignation and submission are among His own attributes and states that of all deeds there is nothing more meritorious in the estimation of God than the sighs of one wronged and oppressed who endures suffering with patience and fortitude.

He urges Nabil to seek the companionship of the loved ones of God wherever he goes, to appear among the people with dignity and serenity, to teach the Cause of His Lord in accordance with the capacity of those who hear him, and to rely upon God for His assistance and confirmations. <p239> In this Tablet Baha'u'llah dwells upon the nature of His exalted Revelation as well as the sufferings and persecutions which were heaped upon Him by a perverse generation.

The following passages translated by Shoghi Effendi are gleaned from the Suriy-i-Damm:

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 into the hands of Nimrod; at another Thou hast allowed Pharaoh's rod to persecute Me.

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-favoured 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 be beheaded by the sword of the infidel.

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.

How bitter the humiliations heaped upon Me, 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 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 instil 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 <p240> 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.(4) Nabil faithfully carried out the instructions of Baha'u'llah.

He travelled throughout Persia and confirmed a great many souls who embraced His Cause.

Surihs of Hajj During this period Baha'u'llah revealed the Suriy-i-Hajj (Surih of Pilgrimage) for visiting the house of the Bab, sent the Tablet to Nabil, and directed him to go to Shiraz.

In this Tablet Baha'u'llah prescribes the rites which have to be performed when pilgrims visit the house of the Bab.

He instructed Nabil to perform them on His behalf.

When Nabil carried out these lengthy rites, which begin outside the city and continue all the way to the house and inside, he attracted a great deal of attention and passers-by concluded that he had lost his mind!

Having carried out the instructions of Baha'u'llah in Shiraz, Nabil received another Tablet, the Suriy-i-Hajj (Surih of Pilgrimage) for the house of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad, and was directed to proceed to that city and perform the rites of pilgrimage for that house also on His behalf.

With great devotion and enthusiasm, and in spite of a curious public, he succeeded again in carrying out the rites ordained by Baha'u'llah in this Tablet.

These holy observances were later affirmed in the Kitab-i-Aqdas and will be implemented in the future when the Cause of Baha'u'llah is fully established and circumstances radically changed.[1] [1 See vol.

I, pp.

211-12.] <p241> The Story of the Nightingale and the Crow Around the time that the followers of Mirza Yahya were cast out of the community of the Most Great Name, Baha'u'llah revealed a beautiful Tablet in Persian, written in terms of imagery.

It describes the true relationship between Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya.

In this Tablet Baha'u'llah portrays Himself as a mystic Rose appearing in the Garden of Paradise.(5) The Rose, the object of adoration of the nightingale, calls out to its lovers to come and be united with the deathless beauty of the Beloved.

A few birds resembling nightingales come near the Rose but are not enchanted by its perfume and charm.

There is a dialogue between the two which is beautiful and soul-stirring.

The birds maintain that they are familiar with other roses and they argue that this One is not a true Rose, as it grows in a different garden.

The Rose appeals to them in loving language and reminds them that there is only one Rose; once it appeared in Egypt, at another time in Jerusalem and Galilee, at a later period it manifested itself in Arabia, then in Shiraz and now it has

unveiled its Beauty in Adrianople.

It rebukes them for having focused their affection on their surroundings rather than on the True Friend and claims that they are the embodiments of evil and have only disguised themselves as nightingales.

Then the Rose tells them a story:

It likens the birds to the Owl[1]who once argued that the song of the Crow was much more melodious than that of the Nightingale.

Challenging this statement, the Nightingale demanded some evidence, and invited the Owl to investigate the truth by hearing the melody of each bird, so that the sweet music of the Bird of Heaven might be distinguished from the croaking of the Crow.

But the Owl refused and said 'Once from inside a rose-garden the enchanting voice of a bird reached my ears, and when I enquired its origin, I was informed that the voice was that of the Crow.

Simultaneously, a crow flew out of the garden and it became clear to me who the singer was.' [1 The owl in Persian and Arabic literature is a symbol of doom and ruin.] <p242> 'But that was My voice,' said the Nightingale to the Owl, 'and to prove it I can warble similar if not more beautiful melodies now.' 'I am not interested to hear Thy songs,' the Owl made reply, 'for I saw the Crow and have been assured by others that the melody from inside the garden was his.

If the tune of this heavenly music was Thine, how is it that thou wert hidden from the eyes of men and Thy fame did not reach them?' 'Because of My beauty,' replied the Nightingale, 'I have been despised by My enemies.

They were resolved to put an end to My life, and for this reason My melodies were noised abroad in the name of the Crow.

But those with unsullied hearts and sanctified ears have been able to distinguish the voice of the true Nightingale from that of the Crow.'[1] [1 This story of the Nightingale and the Crow clearly refers to Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya respectively.

In order to protect Baha'u'llah from the assaults of an implacable enemy, the Bab appointed Mirza Yahya as +F1 the leader of the Babi community so that he might divert public attention from Baha'u'llah and at the same time provide a means whereby Baha'u'llah could unobtrusively direct the affairs of the Babi community until such a time as His station was revealed to the eyes of men; (see A Traveller's Narrative, p.

62; p.

247 below and vol.

I, pp.

53-4).

For quite some time Baha'u'llah used to dictate various directions to Mirza Yahya, who would faithfully convey them to the community in his own name.

His unfaithfulness to Baha'u'llah began when he came under the spell of the notorious Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani in Iraq.] The story of the Owl ends here, and the Rose continues its dialogue with the birds disguised as nightingales.

It tells them that they too are of the same nature as the Owl, in that they prefer their own vain imaginings to the multitude of proofs and testimonies which have been demonstrated by the rose-like beauty of the Friend.

It calls upon them to recognize the Rose by its charm and perfume and not through their own standards.

As these exhortations reach their climax, a beautiful nightingale[1] with a melodious voice enters the garden and, enchanted with the beauty of the Rose, begins to circumambulate it. 'Although outwardly you look like nightingales,' it addresses <p243> the birds in a tone of rebuke, 'as a result of association with the Crow, you have learnt its ways and have acquired its characteristics.' Pointing to the Rose it then declares: 'This divine Rose is the object of the adoration of the nightingales of paradise, and this rose-garden is their abode.

It is not a habitation for mortal birds.

Take your leave and begone.'[2] [1 This signifies a faithful lover of Baha'u'llah, who has truly recognized Him.] [2 This is a reference to the followers of Mirza Yahya who were cast out of the community.] Having spoken in this language of imagery, Baha'u'llah exhorts His followers to gird up their loins in the service of their Lord and to protect the Cause of God from the onslaught of the unfaithful.

He counsels them to adorn themselves with pure deeds and praiseworthy character, and assures them that only by living a virtuous life can they bring victory to the Cause and protect it from the assaults of the enemy.

In innumerable Tablets Baha'u'llah has urged the believers to rectitude of conduct, truthfulness, faith, holiness and noble deeds.

In one of them He summons His loved ones to arise and assist Him by living a saintly life.

These are His exhortations:

One righteous act is endowed with a potency that can so elevate the dust as to cause it to pass beyond the heaven of heavens.

It can tear every bond asunder, and hath the power to restore the force that hath spent itself and vanished...

Be pure, O people of God, be pure; be righteous, be righteous...

Say:

O people of God!

That which can ensure the victory of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, His hosts and helpers on earth, have been set down in the sacred Books and Scriptures, and are as clear and manifest as the sun.

These hosts are such righteous deeds, such conduct and character, as are acceptable in His sight.

Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world.(6) In this Tablet Baha'u'llah warns His followers to be on their guard lest through their misdeeds they bring dishonour to the <p244> Faith.

He states that any sinful action committed by them will inflict a grievous blow upon Him and will serve to promote the interests of the enemies of the Cause of God.

The study of the Writings clearly demonstrates that of all the sufferings inflicted upon Baha'u'llah, by far the greatest and the most grievous came from two quarters: one, those who betrayed Him, broke the Covenant of the Bab, and followed Mirza Yahya; the other, some of His own followers who by their corrupt deeds damaged the reputation of the Faith in the eyes of men, and caused Him much anguish and pain.

In one of His Tablets He pours out His heart in these words:

I sorrow not for the burden of My imprisonment.

Neither do I grieve over My abasement, or the tribulation I suffer at the hands of Mine enemies.

By My life!

They are My glory, a glory wherewith God hath adorned His own Self.

Would that ye knew it!

The shame I was made to bear hath uncovered the glory with which the whole of creation had been invested, and through the cruelties I have endured, the Day Star of Justice hath manifested itself, and shed its splendour upon men.

My sorrows are for those who have involved themselves in their corrupt passions, and claim to be associated with the Faith of God, the Gracious, the All-Praised.

It behoveth the people of Baha to die to the world and all that is therein, to be so detached from all earthly things that the inmates of Paradise may inhale from their garment the sweet smelling savour of sanctity, that all the peoples of the earth may recognize in their faces the brightness of the All-Merciful, and that through them may be spread abroad the signs and tokens of God, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

They that have tarnished the fair name of the Cause of God, by following the things of the flesh -- these are in palpable error!(7)

and again:

My captivity can bring on Me no shame.

Nay, by My life, it conferreth on Me glory.

That which can make Me ashamed <p245> is the conduct of such of My followers as profess to love Me, yet in fact follow the Evil One.

They, indeed, are of the lost.(8) Lawh-i-Nasir The Lawh-i-Nasir was revealed in honour of Haji Muhammad-Nasir, a native of Qazvin.

This relatively long Tablet is, for the most part, in Persian, and a small part of it was translated into English by Shoghi Effendi and included in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah.[1] [1 Sections LIII and LXXV.]

Haji Nasir was a well-known merchant and held in high esteem by his fellow citizens until he embraced the Babi Faith.

From that time onwards, he suffered persecutions and was bitterly opposed by the people.

He recognized the divine origin of the Message of the Bab through Mulla Jalil-i-Urumi, one of the Letters of the Living.[1] It is reported that when Haji Nasir had acknowledged the authenticity of the claims of the Bab, Mulla Jalil warned him that a mere acknowledgement was not sufficient in this day, that he could not call himself a Babi unless he were prepared to lay down his life willingly in the path of God, should the enemy rise up against him.

He bade him go home and search his heart to see whether he had sufficient faith to remain steadfast in the face of tortures and martyrdom.

If he did, he was a Babi, and otherwise not.

Haji Nasir responded to the words of Mulla Jalil by spending the whole night in prayer and meditation.

At the hour of dawn, he felt possessed of such faith and detachment as to be ready to sacrifice his life in the path of his Beloved.

Overnight, he became endowed with a new zeal and radiance which sustained him throughout his eventful life. [1 For more information see The Dawn-Breakers.] Soon the persecutions started; the first onslaught began when Haji Nasir became the target of attacks by a blood-thirsty mob in Qazvin.

They plundered all his possessions and he was temporarily forced to leave his native city.

When the situation <p246> calmed down he returned home.

From there, in obedience to the call of the Bab, he proceeded to Khurasan.

He was privileged to attend the conference of Badasht where, some historians have stated, he acted as a guard at the entrance of the garden which was

reserved for Baha'u'llah's residence.

From Badasht he proceeded to Mazindaran and was one of the defenders of the fortress of Shaykh Tabarsi.[1] As history records, hundreds of his fellow disciples were massacred in that upheaval, but the hand of divine power spared Haji Nasir's life and enabled him to render further services to the Cause of God. [1 For details see The Dawn-Breakers.] He returned to Qazvin and engaged in his work once again, but soon another upheaval engulfed the believers.

The attempt on the life of Nasiri'd-Din Shah in 1852[1]unleashed a wave of persecution against the Babis.

Haji Nasir was arrested in Qazvin and put in prison.

But after some time he was released.

Another imprisonment he suffered was in Tihran, where he was chained and fettered.

When released from his ordeal, he found that all his possessions were gone.

It was through the help and co-operation of Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar[2] that, in spite of much harassment by the enemy, Haji Nasir continued to earn a living, but he had to move his residence to the city of Rasht. [1 See The Dawn-Breakers.] [2 One of the Apostles of Baha'u'llah.

We shall refer to him in more detail in vol.

III.] The crowning glory of his life was to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah in Akka.

On this pilgrimage he was accompanied by the above-named Shaykh Kazim.

Baha'u'llah showered His bounties upon him and assured him of His loving-kindness.

He spent the latter part of his life in the city of Rasht and was engaged in teaching the Cause of God by day and night.

The enemies once again cast him into prison.

This time, because of old age, he could not endure the rigours of prison life and his soul, after so many years of toil and suffering, took its flight to the abode of the Beloved.

He died a martyr's death in the prison of Rasht in the year 1300 A.H. (1888). <p247> When the news of Haji Nasir's death reached the enemies of the Cause, many of them, including children, attacked his corpse and pelted it with stones.

As soon as his remains were brought home a number of ruffians forced their way in and attempted to dismember it.

It is impossible to describe the feelings of horror and consternation which

befell his family and loved ones as they stood helplessly watching the cruel atrocities perpetrated by the mob of heartless fanatics.

They had Haji Nasir's nose cut off and his eyes gouged out before they were stopped by the neighbours who, in a humiliating manner, threw his body into a disused brick furnace in that vicinity and covered it with stones.

Baha'u'llah has paid glowing tribute to Haji Nasir for his steadfastness in the Cause of God and has revealed a Tablet of Visitation for him.

In the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf He remembers him in these words:

Among them was his honour, Haji Nasir, who, unquestionably, was a brilliant light that shone forth above the horizon of resignation.

After he had suffered martyrdom, they plucked out his eyes and cut off his nose, and inflicted on him such indignities that strangers wept and lamented, and secretly raised funds to support his wife and children.(9)
The revelation of the Lawh-i-Nasir in Adrianople was in response to Haji Nasir's request for clarification of the position of Mirza Yahya.

He had been trying for some time to unravel this mysterious situation and to discover the station of Baha'u'llah.

When the news of the rebellion of Mirza Yahya in Adrianople reached him, he wrote to Baha'u'llah and begged him for enlightenment.

It is in this Tablet that Baha'u'llah throws light on the appointment, by the Bab, of Mirza Yahya as the leader of the Babi community and mentions that only two people were informed of the real circumstances of his appointment.[1] He condemns his treacherous deeds, his attempt to take Baha'u'llah's <p248> life, and his shameful accusations attributing his own crimes to Him. [1 Mirza Musa (Aqay-i-Kalim) and Mulla Abdu'l-Karim-i-Qazvini.] A considerable portion of this Tablet is addressed to the people of the Bayan.

Baha'u'llah reminds them of the innumerable prophecies and exhortations of the Bab concerning the exalted station of the One who was to come after Him.

He proclaims to them in unequivocal language the glad-tidings of His Revelation, passionately counsels them to purge their hearts from vain and corrupt issues, summons them with the utmost loving-kindness to embrace His Cause, and grieves that so many of them had arisen in opposition to Him.

The following passage from the Lawh-i-Nasir, included in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, is addressed to the people of the Bayan.

Tear asunder, in My Name, the veils that have grievously blinded your vision, and, through the power born of your belief in the unity of God, scatter the idols of vain imitation.

Enter, then, the holy paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful.

Sanctify your souls from whatsoever is not of God, and taste ye the sweetness of rest within the pale of His vast and mighty Revelation, and

beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority.

Suffer not yourselves to be wrapt in the dense veils of your selfish desires, inasmuch as I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men.

It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified.

Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure?

If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, whilst standing in the presence of God, be asked: 'Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self,' and if such a man should reply and say: 'Inasmuch as all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the Beauty of the Eternal,' such a plea will, <p249> assuredly, be rejected.

For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.(10)

In this Tablet Baha'u'llah affirms that the bounties of God have been vouchsafed to every human being, but only those who have the capacity and whose hearts are pure can receive them.

He gives the example of the seed which will produce goodly trees if planted in fertile soil, whereas in barren land it will not develop.

He urges Nasir to become the recipient of the grace of God in this day, and asserts that if all the peoples of the world were to deprive themselves of its glory, it would have no effect upon the outpouring of the bounties of God.

Referring to Himself as the 'Celestial Youth', Baha'u'llah reveals these soul-stirring verses in the Lawh-i-Nasir and extols the station of those who have recognized Him:

O Nasir, O My Servant!

God, the Eternal Truth, beareth Me witness.

The Celestial Youth hath, in this Day, raised above the heads of men the glorious Chalice of Immortality, and is standing expectant upon His seat, wondering what eye will recognize His glory, and what arm will, unhesitatingly, be stretched forth to seize the Cup from His snow-white Hand and drain it.

Only a few have as yet quaffed from this peerless, this soft-flowing grace of the Ancient King.

These occupy the loftiest mansions of Paradise, and are firmly established upon the seats of authority.

By the righteousness of God!

Neither the mirrors of His glory, nor the revealers of His names, nor any created thing, that hath been or will ever be, can ever excel them, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.

O Nasir!

The excellence of this Day is immensely exalted above the comprehension of men, however extensive their knowledge, however profound their understanding.

How much more must it transcend the imaginations of them that have strayed from its light, and been shut out from its glory!

Shouldst thou rend asunder the grievous veil that blindeth thy vision, thou wouldst behold such a bounty as naught, from the beginning that hath no beginning till the end that hath no end, can either resemble or equal.(11) <p250> There is a verse in the Qur'an which states: 'We will surely show them our signs in the world and within themselves.'(12) This refers to the influence which the Manifestation of God exerts upon the whole creation.

By His advent He releases to the world a measure of spiritual potency.

He also manifests the tokens of His grace within the hearts of men.

Baha'u'llah in the Lawh-i-Nasir affirms that both these 'signs' have been manifested in this day.

He states that the signs of His power and ascendancy have encompassed the world, and the whole creation has been endowed with a new capacity.

They have even affected the hearts of men, and yet the peoples are blind to them.

When Baha'u'llah made these statements to Nasir, the evidences of His influence in the world of humanity were not as clear as they are today.

Any unbiased observer may witness that the energies released by His Revelation have set in motion a regenerative process which is now affecting the whole fabric of human society.

On the one hand the compelling power born of His Revelation has illumined the hearts of millions who have recognized His station, followed His Teachings, and become the recipients of His Cause and the champion-builders of His World Order.

The rest of mankind, on the other hand, as yet untouched by the light of His Faith, is deeply affected by the spirit of the age which is generated and sustained by each and every one of the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

These people are caught up in the whirlwind of its resistless force.

Helpless and confused, they recognize their inability to hold on to their age-old and antiquated orders, which have been their only haven and refuge for centuries.

They make every effort to find a way to revive the old so that it may co-exist with the new.

But as time goes on they are gradually realizing the futility of such attempts.

Some try to adapt their time-honoured institutions to the new spirit of the age, but with every compromise they progressively weaken their cause.

Others have given up hope, become disillusioned and passive, and even dropped out of society altogether.

The process of integration and consolidation which marks <p251> the growth of the Baha'i community is accelerating with every passing day, and derives its animating force directly from the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

No force in the universe can, before the appearance of the next Manifestation of God,[1] stop the onward march of the Faith or alter the course which God has chosen for the unfoldment and establishment of its Divine institutions.

On the contrary, as history has clearly demonstrated, every incident, whether constructive or destructive, has been the cause of the advancement of the Faith of Baha'u'llah and will continue to be in the future.

The selfless activities of its avowed adherents, as well as the opposition and persecutions of an unbelieving world will, hand in hand, further the interests of the Faith to the point where it will embrace the whole of mankind. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

279-80.] The process of disintegration, on the other hand, caused by man's indifference or opposition to the Cause of Baha'u'llah, is ruthlessly pulling down the old order.

The spirit of the age released by Baha'u'llah may be likened to forces which press hard upon humanity and drive it towards universality and the oneness of mankind.

When people, whether consciously or unconsciously, oppose these forces, they create tensions within their societies.

Like a tidal wave as it gathers momentum, the magnitude of the forces released by Baha'u'llah is increasing day by day and consequently there will come a time when these tensions reach breaking-point.

Almost every war or distressing event which has happened on this planet during the last hundred years has been caused by man's opposition to the forces of universality and unity which have been influencing the world since the coming of Baha'u'llah.

Racial, religious, national and other prejudices run counter to the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

Any people, therefore, whose actions are motivated by prejudice, hatred,

selfishness, greed and above all opposition to the principle of the oneness of mankind, will cause unrest, tension and bloodshed in the world and, sooner or later, seal their own doom. <p252> Having looked briefly at the appearance of this 'sign' of Baha'u'llah's Revelation in the world, referred to in the forementioned verse of the Qur'an and in the Lawh-i-Nasir, let us examine the other 'sign' indicated in that same verse, namely the manifestation of the tokens of God within the individual.

Ever since the Declaration of Baha'u'llah in the Garden of Ridvan, His Revelation has endowed every soul with a new capacity and breathed a new spirit into every frame,[1] as His words testify: [1 See vol.

I. pp.

277-8 and 280.] Verily, We have caused every soul to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty.

We have, then, called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men.

I am, verily, the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days.(13) And the Bab has prophesied:

The year-old germ that holdeth within itself the potentialities of the Revelation that is to come is endowed with a potency superior to the combined forces of the whole of the Bayan.[l4] Today, human beings everywhere, regardless of race, colour or nationality, have the capacity to attain to the knowledge of God and acquire spiritual qualities; and they have demonstrated that they can learn and become equally proficient in arts, cultures and sciences whether they come from the East or the West.

This was not possible in the past when the majority of the peoples of the world were backward, when slavery was rife and vast numbers were under the domination of the few.

But the universality of the Message of Baha'u'llah and the forces of new life released by Him within the individual, have given birth to a new race of men who have acquired a new vision and the will to think independently and act with purpose.

Because of his failure to recognize Baha'u'llah, man's new capacity, instead of leading him to the path of truth, has created enormous conflict and confusion within his mind.

To appreciate this point, we must look back to the time just before the <p253> coming of Baha'u'llah.

Then, human beings throughout the world were reasonably satisfied with their lives.

There was not as much contention and strife among people.

The majority accepted their traditional religious beliefs, and there were not

so many agnostics and atheists as there are now, neither were there so many religious sects.

But with the coming of Baha'u'llah, the situation changed radically.

To illustrate this, let us use the analogy of light and darkness.

If a number of people were to live in a darkened room, there would be no reason for them to argue about things they could not see.

But should the room be lit, everyone would be able to see for himself.

It would be then that differences could arise concerning the shape and order of things in their midst.

Before the Faith of Baha'u'llah was born, mankind was in a state of darkness.

People held their beliefs as a matter of course and seldom involved themselves independently in controversial issues.

It was mainly the rulers and religious leaders who held the reins and guided the masses to whatever they felt was appropriate.

But when the Sun of Truth appeared, the minds of men were illumined.

They acquired a new vision and began to think for themselves.

People started to question the validity and truth of their Faiths and within a short period of time great differences occurred.

Religions were divided, many sects came into being and multiplied with the passage of time.

Great numbers left their religions altogether and swelled the ranks of agnostics and atheists.

Millions of people rose up to demand their rights.

Revolutions took place in several parts of the world and new doctrines and ideologies were promulgated.

Arts and sciences suddenly burst into a new era of unprecedented technological advance, establishing a marvellous system of communication throughout the world.[1] [1 See vol.

I, p.

217.] All these developments within the last hundred and fifty years have not come about accidentally.

They are due to the infusion of a new capacity into every soul.

Baha'u'llah, in one of His Tablets, proclaims: <p254> Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency.

All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration.[l5] In addition to the two fore-mentioned 'signs', Baha'u'llah declares that the very profusion of the Words sent down to Him by God constitutes yet another sign establishing the truth of His Revelation for this day.

Concerning this profusion, Baha'u'llah informs Nasir that Such are the outpourings ... from the clouds of Divine Bounty that within the space of an hour the equivalent of a thousand verses hath been revealed.(16) As we have already mentioned, many of the disciples present when Baha'u'llah revealed the verses of God were awestruck by the outward evidences of His great power and glory.[1] In the Lawh-i-Nasir Baha'u'llah refers to this and affirms that had it not been for man's spiritual weakness, He would have granted permission for all to be present at the time of Revelation, so that they might witness its outpouring and behold the transcendent majesty of the One who is the Revealer of the Word of God. [1 For more information concerning the manner of Revelation, the potency of the Word and the vastness of the Holy Writings, refer to vol.

I, chapter 3.] In this Tablet Baha'u'llah unveils the exalted station of the true believers and describes the wretchedness of the deniers.

He states that every human being in this day potentially contains within himself all the powers and attributes that are to be found in the physical creation.

The counterpart of the heavens, the mountain, the valley, the tree, the fruit, the river and the sea may be found to exist in every soul.

They appear as divine virtues in the believers, and as satanic vices in the deniers.

For example, in the faithful are manifested the heavens of understanding, <p255> standing, the trees of oneness, the leaves of certitude, the fruits of the love of God, the seas of knowledge and the rivers of wisdom.

Whereas in the deniers one finds the heaven of faithlessness, the earth of hatred, the trees of rebellion, the branches of pride and the leaves of lust and wickedness.

But the believers are of two kinds.

Some are unaware of this bounty.

They have deprived themselves of His grace through unworthy deeds and are shut out as by a veil from beholding its great glory.

Others who have been endowed with insight through the Mercy of God, are able, with both their inner and outer eyes, to witness within themselves the signs of His power and the wonders of His handiwork.

This is a state in which the individual becomes independent of all things but God, and will possess infinite powers over all things.

Indeed he will encompass in his soul all that has been created in this universe.

Baha'u'llah states that should such a soul, conscious of these powers within him, arise with determination to serve the Cause of God, he would establish his ascendancy over all humanity, even if all its forces were to be arrayed against him.

The history of the Faith is replete with stories of the heroism and courage of men and women who attained this lofty station.

The immortal names of Mulla Husayn, Quddus, Tahirih, Vahid, Hujjat and Badi' are a few examples among many.

These souls had acquired such ascendancy and influence in the realms of God that their words became creative.

When faced with the onslaught of the enemy they demonstrated a strength and power that can only be described as superhuman.

Mulla Husayn, the first to believe in the Bab, has left the following testimony concerning his complete transformation on the night of His declaration:

This Revelation, so suddenly and impetuously thrust upon me, came as a thunderbolt which, for a time, seemed to have benumbed my faculties.

I was blinded by its dazzling splendour and overwhelmed by its crushing force.

Excitement, joy, awe, and wonder stirred the depths of my soul.

Predominant among these emotions was a sense of gladness and <p256> strength which seemed to have transfigured me.

How feeble and impotent how dejected and timid, I had felt previously!

Then I could neither write nor walk, so tremulous were my hands and feet.

Now, however, the knowledge of His Revelation had galvanised my being.

I felt possessed of such courage and power that were the world, all its peoples and potentates, to rise against me, I would, alone and undaunted, withstand their onslaught.

The universe seemed but a handful of dust in my grasp.

I seemed to be the Voice of Gabriel personified calling unto all mankind: 'Awake, for lo! the morning Light has broken.

Arise, for His Cause is made manifest.

The portal of His grace is open wide; enter therein, O peoples of the world!

For He who is your promised One is come!'[l7] Ever after that memorable evening Mulla Husayn became endowed with superhuman courage and

fortitude.

Every incident connected with his life of service to the new-born Faith of God demonstrates this.

The same is true of many other disciples of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

For example, the following incident in the life of Vahid[1] stands out as an example of his powers born of God and is reminiscent of many such heroic deeds.

In the year 1850 in Yazd, at the instigation of Navvab-i-Radavi, one of the powerful dignitaries of the city, a great many people arose to attack Vahid.

This is how Nabil-i-A'zam recounts the story: [1 See The Dawn-Breakers and vol.

I, Appendix III.] Meanwhile the Navvab had succeeded in raising a general upheaval in which the mass of the inhabitants took part.

They were preparing to attack the house of Vahid when he summoned Siyyid Abdu'l-'Azim-i-Khu'i, surnamed the Siyyid-i-Khal-Dar, who had participated for a few days in the defence of the fort of Tabarsi and whose dignity of bearing attracted widespread attention, and bade him mount his own steed and address publicly, through the streets and bazaars, an appeal on his behalf to the entire populace, and urge them to embrace the Cause of the Sahibu'z-Zaman. 'Let them know,' he added, 'that I disclaim any intention of waging holy warfare <p257> against them.

Let them be warned, however, that if they persist in besieging my house and continue their attacks upon me, in utter defiance of my position and lineage, I shall be constrained, as a measure of self-defence, to resist and disperse their forces.

If they choose to reject my counsel and yield to the whisperings of the crafty Navvab, I will order seven of my companions to repulse their forces shamefully and to crush their hopes.' The Siyyid-i-Khal-Dar leaped upon the steed and, escorted by four of his chosen brethren, rode out through the market and pealed out, in accents of compelling majesty, the warning he had been commissioned to proclaim.

Not content with the message with which he had been entrusted, he ventured to add, in his own inimitable manner, a few words by which he sought to heighten the effect which the proclamation had produced. 'Beware,' he thundered, 'if you despise our plea.

My lifted voice, I warn you, will prove sufficient to cause the very walls of your fort to tremble, and the strength of my arm will be capable of breaking down the resistance of its gates!' His stentorian voice rang out like a trumpet, and diffused consternation in the hearts of those who heard it.

With one voice, the affrighted population declared their intention to

lay down their swords and cease to molest Vahid, whose lineage they said they would henceforth recognize and respect.(18) Shortly after this, in another incident, great numbers surrounded the house of Vahid intending to attack him and his companions who had recently embraced the new Faith of God.

Concerning this Nabil writes:

The enemy followed him [a certain believer by the name of Muhammad-'Abdu'llah] to that house, fully determined to seize and slay him.

The clamour of the people that had massed around his house compelled Vahid to order Mulla Muhammad-Riday-i-Manshadi, one of the most enlightened ulamas of Manshad, who had discarded his turban and offered himself as his doorkeeper, to sally forth and, with the <p258> aid of six companions, whom he would choose, to scatter their forces. 'Let each one of you raise his voice,' he commanded them 'and repeat seven times the words "Allah-u-Akbar",[1] and on your seventh invocation spring forward at one and the same moment into the midst of your assailants.' [1 'God is the Most Great'.] Mulla Muhammad-Rida, whom Baha'u'llah had named Rada'r-Ruh,[1] sprang to his feet and, with his companions, straightway proceeded to fulfil the instructions he had received.

Those who accompanied him, though frail of form and inexperienced in the art of swordsmanship, were fired with a faith that made them the terror of their adversaries.

Seven of the most redoubtable among the enemy perished that day, which was the twenty-seventh of the month of Jamadiyu'th-Thani [10 May A.D.

1850]. 'No sooner had we routed the enemy,' Mulla Muhammad-Rida related, 'and returned to the house of Vahid, than we found Muhammad-'Abdu'llah lying wounded before us.'(19) [1 See vol.

I and p.

99 above. (A.T.)] It is interesting to note that the Babis throughout their short and eventful history resorted to force in defending themselves against the enemy.[1] In these defensive battles, they often sent out a few men to attack the great armies which surrounded them, and in almost every case inflicted humiliating defeats upon their adversaries. [1 Baha'u'llah has forbidden His followers to follow this practice which was current among the Babis.

Although Baha'u'llah has counselled His followers not to resort to force in the face of persecution, this does not mean that they should stand idly by and make no defence of themselves when personally attacked.

For further details see vol.

I, pp.278-9.] At the time that the enemies of Baha'u'llah in Iraq were

plotting to take His life and destroy the Cause of God, a number of the divines in that country were contemplating waging holy war against the Babis.[1] One day, a number of friends were standing in the presence of Baha'u'llah as He paced the reception quarters of His house.

Among them were two <p259> seditious men who were closely allied with these divines, but pretended to be friends of the Faith.

Baha'u'llah was talking to the believers and is reported to have said: 'The divines have called upon some crusaders to come from Najaf and Karbila to wage holy war against us.' Then turning to the two mischief-makers, He stated, 'I swear by the Almighty God, that I need not send more than two of My people to put them to rout and pursue them as far as Kazimayn.'[2](20) [1 See vol.

I, p.

144.] [2 Kazimiyyah, near Baghdad.] These few examples demonstrate the power which true faith in God can engender in the believers.

This power which animated the disciples of the Bab and Baha'u'llah is the same as that to which Christ refers: ...For verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.[2l] Baha'u'llah promises in a Tablet(22) that if a believer becomes steadfast in the love of his Lord and detaches himself from this world, God will enable him to influence the realities of all created things in such wise that through the power of the Almighty he can do anything he desires.

When a person achieves this stage of maturity, he will utter no word except for the sake of God, will not move except towards Him and will not see anything but His Beauty.

Such a person will never be afraid of anyone even if all humanity should rise up against him.

Lawh-i-Khalil The news of Baha'u'llah's Declaration on the one hand and Mirza Yahya's rebellion on the other, as already stated, caused confusion and doubt in the minds of some believers in Persia.

Among those who wrote to Baha'u'llah for clarification and enlightenment was Haji Muhammad-Ibrahim-i-Qazvini, whom <p260> Baha'u'llah addressed as 'Khalil'.[1]This believer was further confused when he received some Arabic verses composed by Mirza Muhammad-'Ali,[2](a son of Baha'u'llah and in his teens), which he claimed were the verses of God, and like those of his Father, sent down by divine Revelation.

In these writings he refers to himself as the revealer of the word of God, he who has ushered in the most great revelation, and through whose words all creation had come into being! [1 Literally 'Friend', a designation by which Abraham is known in Islam.] [2 He later became the arch-enemy of Abdu'l-Baha and the arch-breaker of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.] Mirza Muhammad-'Ali had

sent his writings from Adrianople secretly to Qazvin.

Three believers in particular had become influenced by his claims and were his principal supporters.

They were Mirza Abdu'llah, Haji Hasan and his brother Aqa Ali.[1] As a result, a great controversy erupted in Qazvin.

The few supporters of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, who regarded their youthful contender as having a station co-equal with his Father, clashed with other believers in Qazvin.

There were heated arguments in the community and Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar emphatically declared that the writings of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali consisted of a string of Arabic sentences and had no relationship to the Words of God.

It was mainly because of this controversy that Khalil sent a letter to Baha'u'llah begging Him to clarify His own station and the station of His sons.

This was possibly around the time that Baha'u'llah moved into the house of Rida Big, because He alludes to Khalil's questions in the Lawh-i-Ruh.[2] [1 Baha'u'llah especially sent for these two brothers to come from Persia.

They attained His presence and recognized their own folly and misjudgment.] [2 See p.

181.] Baha'u'llah severely rebuked Mirza Muhammad-'Ali for his preposterous claims and chastised him with His own hand.

He revealed a Tablet(23) in answer to Khalil, declared His own station and explained the position of His sons.

The uncertainties <p261> agitating the mind of Khalil were resolved.

He became a steadfast believer and the recipient of other Tablets.[1] [1 Some excerpts from his Tablets are translated and included in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, sections XXXIII, XXXVIII, LXXVII, CXXVII.] Baha'u'llah states that as long as His sons believed in Him, observed the commandments of God, did not deviate from the Faith and did not create divisions in the Cause, they might be regarded as the leaves and branches of His Tree and the members of His Holy Family.

Through them the mercy of God would be revealed, and His light diffused.

Muhammad-'Ali did not live up to these standards.

Apart from his absurd claim, he inflicted other injuries upon the Cause of God during Baha'u'llah's lifetime, and after His ascension he broke His Covenant and rebelled against Abdu'l-Baha.[1] [1 For more details of the life and rebellion of Muhammad-'Ali see God Passes By and The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.I.] In the Tablet of Khalil, Baha'u'llah alludes to Abdu'l-Baha in terms which immensely distinguish Him from others.

He refers to Him as the One among His sons 'from Whose tongue God will cause

the signs of His power to stream forth' and as the One Whom 'God hath specially chosen for His Cause'.(24) And yet during Baha'u'llah's lifetime, Abdu'l-Baha was so reluctant to write[1] anything that at one stage the believers complained.

In reply He told them that when the shrill voice of the Pen of the Most High could be heard on every side, it was not appropriate for others to write. [1 From time to time Baha'u'llah instructed Abdu'l-Baha to write on certain subjects.] In a Tablet(25) addressed to the Ismu'llah, Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji, Baha'u'llah rebukes some of the believers for having foolishly designated His son as a partner with Him in Divine Revelation.

Referring to Muhammad-'Ali by name, Baha'u'llah in this Tablet states that He, verily, is but one of My servants...

Should he for a moment pass out from under the shadow of the Cause, he surely shall be brought to naught'.(26) In unequivocal language Baha'u'llah affirms that the Manifestation <p262> of God is exalted above all humanity and cannot join partners with anyone.

He asserts in His Writings that God bestows infallibility upon His Manifestations.

He refers to this as the Most Great Infallibility which is the prerogative only of the Prophet and no one else.

This should not be confused with conferred infallibility which Baha'u'llah bestowed upon Abdu'l-Baha.

Lawh-i-Siraj Another person who wrote to Baha'u'llah and posed certain questions concerning the position of Mirza Yahya was Mulla Ali-Muhammad-i-Siraj, a native of Isfahan.

He had become a Babi in the early days of the Faith and attained the presence of the Bab in that city.

It was his sister Fatimih[1] whom the Bab, after much insistence by Manuchihr Khan, the Governor of Isfahan, took as His second wife.

Mulla Ali-Muhammad-i-Siraj became a follower of Mirza Yahya, and although Baha'u'llah in this Tablet explained all that was necessary concerning the Cause of God, he remained defiant, and together with his brother, Mulla Rajab-'Aliy-i-Qahir, continued to support the evil activities of Mirza Yahya. [1 See vol.

I, p.

249.] The Tablet revealed for Siraj is very lengthy,[1] and like many other Tablets in this period refutes the misrepresentations of Mirza Yahya and those of his supporters.

Baha'u'llah declares in moving and tender language that His motive for revealing this Tablet has been to teach the Faith of God, so that perchance a

few souls may recognize Him and arise for the triumph of His Cause.

He states that there can be no greater injustice in the world than that the Blessed Beauty should need to adduce proofs to establish the truth of His own Mission, in spite of the fact that He is as manifest as the sun, and the outpourings of His <p263> Revelation have encompassed the world.

He affirms that the Cause of God is exalted above proofs and may never be judged by any standard except its own.

Yet He has consented, for the sake of the guidance of a few souls, to demonstrate the verities enshrined in His Faith. [1 Small portions of this Tablet are translated into English by Shoghi Effendi and included in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, sections L and XCVII.] The basic question posed by Siraj concerned the exalted titles and position which the Bab had conferred upon Mirza Yahya.

He wanted to know how such a person could be denounced by Baha'u'llah as the embodiment of Satan and the focal point of negation.

Baha'u'llah's elucidations are both profound and simple, and are mainly based on the Writings of the Bab.

To describe them in the absence of a translation is not an easy task.

Furthermore, in order to understand them, one would need to become familiar with Islamic and Babi terminology.

However, Baha'u'llah's basic explanation is that as long as man remains under the shadow of the Cause of God, his virtues and qualities are praiseworthy, but when he withholds himself from this bounty and opposes the Faith, his virtues turn into vices and his light into darkness.

In many Tablets Baha'u'llah dwells on this theme.

For instance, in His Tablet to Shaykh Salman[1] which was revealed in Adrianople, He states that a believer who is truly faithful to the Cause of God manifests divine virtues.

Because of his devotion to God, the Sun of Truth sheds its radiance upon his soul and consequently these virtues come to light.

As long as he remains in this state, his praiseworthy attributes, which originate from God, are evident and undeniable. [1 See chapter 13.] Should the same individual at a later time repudiate the Cause of God, all his virtues will return to their origin and his achievements become void.

Shorn of divine qualities, he may no longer be regarded as the same person.

Baha'u'llah states that even the clothes he wears, though physically the same as before, are different in reality.

For, as long as a person is a true believer, though he may wear the coarsest of cotton, in the sight <p264> of God his clothes are as lustrous as the silk of

paradise, while after his denial they are fit only to burn in hell-fire.[1]To illustrate this point Baha'u'llah cites the example of a candle.

As long as the candle is lighted, it sheds its radiance around.

But if the wind blows it out, the light will be extinguished. [1 Baha'u'llah teaches that heaven and hell are not places but conditions.

Nearness to God is a state of being in heaven, while remoteness from Him is hell-fire.] There are many people who have rendered notable services to the Faith and their names are recorded in its annals, yet when the winds of tests blew they were unable to subdue their self and ego.

These individuals not only lost their faith, but also their goodness and virtues.

They fell from the heights of glory into the abyss of degradation and ignominy.

Jamal-i-Burujirdi, to whom reference has been made previously,[1]is a telling example.

During the ministry of Baha'u'llah, he was one of the leading teachers of His Cause.

Wherever he went the believers flocked around him in order to partake of his knowledge. [1 See pp.

118-19.] Although Jamal was a deceitful man who lusted for leadership and longed for glory, the great majority of the believers did not realize this.

They considered him a man of God and treated him with great respect.

In Islamic communities, men of learning were revered by the people.

Baha'u'llah has also exhorted His followers to honour the truly learned in the Faith, those whose knowledge and learning have not become the cause of pride and self-glorification.

A person who is truly learned in the Faith is one who reaches such heights of detachment that he sincerely regards his learning as utter nothingness compared with the truths of the Cause of God.

He becomes the embodiment of humility and self-effacement.

The best example is Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, to whom a brief reference was made previously.[1] Before embracing the Faith, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl often asserted his own knowledge <p265> and accomplishments.

After his recognition of the Faith, however, he became so humble that in all his Baha'i career he never sought to elevate himself above anybody and he never used the word 'I' to point out, or even allude to, his own achievements.

His greatness is not merely in that he did not use the word 'I', but in his genuine belief that he did not have the merit to use the word 'I'. [1 See p.

45.] No doubt it is concerning such men that Baha'u'llah reveals in the

Kitab-i-Aqdas:

Happy are ye, O ye the learned ones in Baha.

By the Lord!

Ye are the billows of the Most Mighty Ocean, the stars of the firmament of Glory, the standards of triumph waving betwixt earth and heaven.

Ye are the manifestations of steadfastness amidst men and the daysprings of Divine Utterance to all that dwell on earth.

Well is it with him that turneth unto you and woe betide the froward.(27)

In the earlier days of the Faith, those individuals like Jamal, who considered themselves superior to others in knowledge and exalted in station, and who pretended to be the most distinguished, always proved to be the source of strife and contention.

Baha'u'llah has seized power and authority from such men and has dismissed as unauthoritative interpretations the assertions of all individuals even though they may be regarded as the most learned in the Faith.

He has instead ordained that all matters be referred to the elected institutions of the Faith whose supreme body -- the Universal House of Justice -- is under His own guidance.

Jamal-i-Burujirdi was for almost forty years one of the foremost teachers of the Faith.

During this period he managed to hide his true colours from the eyes of the faithful.

But, as we have stated, there were some with insight who found him to be a master of hypocrisy and deceit.

One such person was Ustad Muhammad Aliy-i-Salmani[1] who met Jamal in Adrianople when the latter had gone to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah.

In his memoirs Salmani recounts the following story: [1 See pp.

155-61 for an account of his life.] <p266> One day I brought water into the outer apartment of the house of Baha'u'llah where I learnt that Aqa Jamal-i-Burujirdi had arrived.

I went into the reception room and found him seated in a corner, clad in an aba [cloak] and wearing a large turban.[1] He held his hands in such a way that if anyone was so inclined he could kiss them![2] He had not yet attained the presence of Baha'u'llah.

That creature was a peculiar looking priest. [1 Muslim priests wore turbans; the greater the turban, the more important the priest.

Jamal during his Baha'i career did not discard his turban and priestly attire.] [2 Muslims showed great respect towards the priests who used to display their hands for the public to kiss.

Baha'u'llah has forbidden the kissing of hands.] I used to consider myself to be a schemer and a man of cunning.

So I walked in, uttered a casual greeting of 'Allah'-u-'Abha,' and without paying any attention to him sat at the other end of the room.

Then I lay down on the floor and after some time arose and sat down again.

I did all this to hurt his vanity for he was a pompous man who was seated in the reception room of the Blessed Beauty with an air of superiority and a greatly inflated ego.

After having treated him disrespectfully in this manner, I looked at him for a while and then said 'How are you?' He merely shook his head at me.

I then left him there and went about my own duties until the afternoon when they brought the news that he was summoned to the presence of Baha'u'llah.

I went in and called him to follow me.

I took him to the inner apartments of the house; we went up the stairs into Baha'u'llah's room.

The Purest Branch[1] was standing in the presence of the Blessed Beauty.
[1 Mirza Mihdi, the youngest brother of Abdu'l-Baha who later died in Akka.

His death is regarded by Baha'u'llah as His own sacrifice.

We shall refer later to this illustrious son in the next volume.] I stood at the entrance to the room.

Jamal went in pretending to be trembling all over and then fell on the ground; this was a mere act.

The Blessed Beauty was seated; the Purest Branch went forward to help Jamal to his feet.

But Baha'u'llah stopped him, saying 'Leave him alone, he will get up himself.'<p267> After a while he arose; he sat at first and then stood up.

Baha'u'llah afterwards dismissed him from his presence and did not say anything.

Jamal ... stayed for a few days, then Baha'u'llah sent him back to Persia.

This man was corrupt from the beginning, his aim was nothing but leadership...(28) It was this insatiable passion for leadership that destroyed Jamal in the end.

For the Faith of Baha'u'llah does not allow such unwholesome elements to remain

within its fold.

It intrinsically repels vain and egotistical people.

It is like an ocean: when the tide comes in it throws on the shore dead bodies and cleanses itself from their pollution.

In the early years of the ministry of Abdu'l-Baha, before the rebellion of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali became public, Jamal created a disturbing situation in the community in Tihran by seeking leadership there.

Although he had allied himself with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, nevertheless for some time he appeared as one who was loyal to Abdu'l-Baha.

During this period he confused the minds of many people and openly contended with the Hands of the Cause of God[1] in his struggle to gain a position for himself in the Faith.

When Mirza Muhammad-'Ali's rebellion came into the open, Jamal became one of his lieutenants.

He was cast out of the Faith by the power of the Covenant.

Abdu'l-Baha has said that Jamal was a poison to the community and his expulsion from the Faith cleansed it from his pollution.

The fall of Jamal was as dramatic as his rise.

When he rebelled against Abdu'l-Baha, the appointed Centre of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, he became spiritually dead and soon perished.

His latter days were spent in remorse and destitution.

The crowds who once gathered around with enthusiasm to hear his words were disbanded, for the spirit of faith had departed from his soul.

Even one of his sons, Mirza Lutfu'llah, who remained steadfast in the Covenant, dissociated himself from him.

Mirza Lutfu'llah, who later took the family name of Mawhibat, was an artist of outstanding <p268> talent.

He rendered a unique service to the Cause of illuminating a great many Tablets which are preserved in the archives of the Faith.

These beautiful illuminations stand as a testimony to his artistic genius as well as to his devotion to the Cause of God. [1 The functions of the Hands of the Cause, as defined in the Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha, are mainly the protection and propagation of the Faith.

Those now living were appointed by the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi.] In His Tablet to Siraj, Baha'u'llah states that the followers of Mirza Yahya in Adrianople had been asserting that just as gold cannot be transmuted into baser metal, so a soul who attains an exalted station (i.e.

Mirza Yahya) can never lose it.

In answer to this Baha'u'llah has revealed these words:

Consider the doubts which they who have joined partners with God have instilled into the hearts of the people of this land. 'Is it ever possible,' they ask, 'for copper to be transmuted into gold?' Say, Yes, by my Lord, it is possible.

Its secret, however, lieth hidden in Our Knowledge.

We will reveal it unto whom We will.

Whoso doubteth Our power, let him ask the Lord his God, that He may disclose unto him the secret, and assure him of its truth.

That copper can be turned into gold is in itself sufficient proof that gold can, in like manner, be transmuted into copper, if they be of them that can apprehend this truth.

Every mineral can be made to acquire the density, form, and substance of each and every other mineral.

The knowledge thereof is with Us in the Hidden Book.(29) The question of alchemy has occupied the minds of people for centuries.

During Baha'u'llah's ministry it was a live issue and several believers were involved in it.

Baha'u'llah urged them not to seek to achieve it at that time.

However, He confirmed that transmuting baser metal into gold, the dream of the alchemist, was possible.

He promised that it would be realized, and asserted that its realization would constitute one of the signs of the coming of age of humanity.

He also prophesied that after its discovery a great calamity would await the world unless mankind came under the shelter of the Cause of God.(30) Present-day physicists, through special nuclear processes, are able to transmute various elements into others. <p269> In the Lawh-i-Siraj Baha'u'llah dwells at length upon the misdeeds of Mirza Yahya, refers to Himself as Joseph, and describes His own sufferings at the hand of His brother whom He lovingly counsels to repent and return to his God.

Concerning the Revelation of His Word, Baha'u'llah informs Siraj that the Word of God has been sent down with an intensity and profusion such as 'secretaries are incapable of transcribing.

It has, therefore, remained for the most part untranscribed.'[3l] He affirms that although a large part of His Writings were cast into the river in Baghdad by His own instruction,[1]there yet existed the equivalent of one hundred thousand verses in Adrianople, none of which had so far been transcribed.

He states that several people had requested to be allowed to compile those of His Tablets which were available into books for circulation among the

believers, but He had not permitted this.

Instead, He had assured them that God would raise up exalted men in the future who would gather His Writings together and compile them in the best possible form.

He states that Revelation of the Word is the function of the Manifestation of God, while its promulgation rests with man.

He gives the example of the Qur'an, which was compiled after Muhammad, as the Gospels after Christ. [1 See vol.

I, p.

69.] Today, the followers of Baha'u'llah are witnessing the fulfilment of these words.

Several volumes of the Tablets of Baha'u'llah have so far been compiled in the original Persian and Arabic languages and a few in other languages.

This process is now gathering momentum and as time goes on, more will become available.

Apart from this, the Universal House of Justice, the supreme body of the Faith, since the early days of its establishment[1] has set itself the task of collating the Holy Writings, a task which by virtue of its paramount importance plays a significant role in the unfoldment of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah. [2 The Universal House of Justice was first elected by the National Spiritual Assemblies of the world on 21 April 1963, the centenary of the Declaration of Baha'u'llah.] <p270> 12 Tests of Faith The Falling Stars In November 1866 when Baha'u'llah was residing in the house of Rida Big, a spectacular meteoric shower took place.

Thousands of shooting-stars lit up the sky as they blazed their way through the atmosphere.

This event, which has been called the 'star-fall' of 1866, was watched by millions in the East and West and for many the experience was terrifying.[1] [1 See Appendix I.] According to the Gospels, one of the signs of the coming of Christ in the glory of the Father is the falling of stars.[1] Baha'u'llah, in one of His Tablets cited in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, refers to this: [1 See Matthew 24:29.] O thou who hast set thy face towards the splendours of My Countenance!

Vague fancies have encompassed the dwellers of the earth and debarred them from turning towards the Horizon of Certitude, and its brightness, and its manifestations and its lights.

Vain imaginings have withheld them from Him Who is the Self-Subsisting.

They speak as prompted by their own caprices, and understand not.

Among them are those who have said: ...'Have the stars fallen?' Say: 'Yea, when He Who is the Self-Subsisting dwelt in the Land of

Mystery (Adrianople).

Take heed, ye who are endued with discernment!' All the signs appeared when We drew forth the Hand of Power from the bosom of majesty and might.(l) Although this fascinating display of falling-stars was a literal fulfilment of the prophecies of old, its real significance is to be <p271> found in the Writings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha where the words of the Gospels are interpreted.

Baha'u'llah explains that by the falling of stars is meant the fall of religious leaders who, because they denied the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, are losing their influence over mankind.

Addressing the Christian ecclesiastics, Baha'u'llah in one of His Tablets proclaims:

O concourse of bishops!

Ye are the stars of the heaven of My knowledge.

My mercy desireth not that ye should fall upon the earth.

My justice, however, declareth: 'This is that which the Son (Jesus) hath decreed.' And whatsoever hath proceeded out of His blameless, His truth-speaking, trustworthy mouth, can never be altered.(2) And again:

The stars of the heaven of knowledge have fallen, they that adduce the proofs they possess in order to demonstrate the truth of My Cause, and who make mention of God in My name.

When I came unto them, in My majesty, however, they turned aside from Me.

They, verily, are of the fallen.(3) As far as recorded history shows, every religion has had its leaders.

In past Dispensations, the clergy played a major part in conducting the affairs of religion.

They became the most vital element in the fabric of human society, and exerted a powerful influence in the life of the community.

They gained a great deal of authority which never waned until the coming of Baha'u'llah, when by one stroke of His exalted Pen, he stripped them of a power they had enjoyed since the beginning of time.

He wrote in one of His Tablets:

From two ranks amongst men power hath been seized: kings and ecclesiastics.(4) The creative influence of the words of Baha'u'llah in this and similar pronouncements has set in motion the process of the <p272> disintegration of religious institutions and the progressive downfall of their leaders, who are increasingly becoming aware of their impotence to exercise a meaningful influence upon their communities.[1] [1 For a fuller treatment of this subject see The Promised Day is Come.] In this Dispensation Baha'u'llah

has abolished priesthood.

He has entrusted the administration of His Faith to the institutions designated by Him as the 'Houses of Justice.'[1] [1 Apart from the Universal House of Justice, the supreme body of the Faith, Baha'u'llah has ordained the establishment of local Houses of Justice in every town or village.

These bodies are functioning today in their embryonic form -- the Local Spiritual Assemblies.] Suriy-i-'Ibad The Suriy-i-'Ibad (Surih of the Servants) was revealed in Arabic in Adrianople in honour of Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji.

Siyyid Mihdi, to whom reference was made in a previous chapter,[1] was entitled by Baha'u'llah Ismu'llahu'l-Mihdi (The Name of God, He Who is Guided).

He was one of the famous teachers of the Cause during Baha'u'llah's ministry, but like Jamal-i-Burujirdi, who was also entitled 'Ismu'llah', was a proud and ambitious man who in the end broke the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and rebelled against Abdu'l-Baha. [1 See pp.

118-19.] Siyyid Mihdi was a native of Dahaj in the province of Yazd.

He attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad, Adrianople and Akka and received His unfailing bounties.

Like Jamal, he travelled widely throughout Persia and was much honoured by the believers.

Yet people who were endowed with discernment found him to be insincere, egotistical and deeply attached to the things of this world.

Notable among those who have written their impressions of him is Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, who also wrote about Jamal-i-Burujirdi.

A perusal of his narratives makes it clear that these two men had at least one thing in common, namely an insatiable lust for leadership.

Siyyid Mihdi <p273> always entered Baha'i gatherings with an air of superiority.

He loved to see a retinue of the faithful walk behind him, and at nights he was preceded by a number of believers who carried lanterns for him.[1] This made a spectacular scene in those days; for normally one servant or friend with a lantern accompanied a person at night.

But in his case some believers vied with each other to perform this service, and Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali recalls an evening when no less than fourteen men, with lanterns in hand, escorted him to a meeting! [1 As there was no public lighting in those days, people carried lanterns at night.

Important men had their servants carry a lantern in front of them.] Men such as these always fall.

The Faith of Baha'u'llah does not harbour people who are egotistical and seek

to glorify themselves.

Its hallmark is servitude, and the standard it demands is purity of motive and sincerity.

It is not therefore surprising to find that Siyyid Mihdi and Jamal-i-Burujirdi were toppled to the ground when the winds of tests began to blow.

They both broke the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, and in the hope of becoming the undisputed leaders of the Faith in Persia, joined hands with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali[1] and rebelled against the appointed Centre of the Cause of God.[2] When this became known in Persia, the believers left them to their own devices, and soon their glory was turned into abasement.

At first they made a great deal of clamour and noise within the community.

They agitated the minds of many, but the power of the Covenant swept them into the abyss of ignominy and cleansed the Faith from their pollution. [1 See vol.

I and p.

260 above.] [2 Abdu'l-Baha.] During His ministry, Baha'u'llah concealed the faults and wrongdoings of Siyyid Mihdi.

In His Tablets He showered His loving-kindness upon him and exhorted him to sincerity, purity and detachment.

There is scarcely a Tablet revealed in his honour in which these points are not emphasized.

When Baha'u'llah left Baghdad for Constantinople, He bade <p274> Siyyid Mihdi move into His house[1]and become its caretaker.

While residing in this house a small incident happened which reveals the weakness of his faith and demonstrates his attachment to material things.

Some thieves broke into the house and stole some of his personal belongings.

The loss of these few small items caused Siyyid Mihdi so much grief that he complained to Baha'u'llah.

In reply, a Tablet was revealed in which Baha'u'llah counsels him to be detached from the things of this world and reminds him that his grievances are as utter nothingness when compared to the sufferings that Baha'u'llah Himself had endured in the path of God. [1 This house in Baghdad is known as the 'Most Great House'.

See vol.

I, pp.

211-12.] The Suriy-i-'Ibad was revealed by Baha'u'llah in the early days of His sojourn in Adrianople while Siyyid Mihdi was still caretaker of the Most Great House in Baghdad.

In it He urges him to live a pious life, to cleanse his heart from the

defilement of the world, and to become detached from his own self and all created things.

Baha'u'llah extols His own Essence, and states that for many years He had revealed the Words of God in great profusion while hiding His glory behind many veils of concealment.

When the appointed hour had struck, however, He unveiled His exalted station and shed an infinitesimal measure of the light of His countenance upon all created things.

As a result of this outpouring, the Concourse on high[1] and the chosen ones of God were awestruck and dumbfounded. [1 The gathering of holy souls in the Kingdom of God.] A considerable part of this Tablet recounts the events of the journey from Baghdad to Adrianople.

It also serves as a channel of communication between Baha'u'llah and the believers in Iraq, for in it He addresses the believers in general and a few in particular.

He exhorts them to rectitude of conduct, steadfastness in His love and unity among themselves.

Although Siyyid Mihdi's Baha'i career ended in shame and he perished spiritually, he had a nephew, Haji Siyyid Ali-Akbar-i-Dahaji <p275> an embodiment of faith and servitude and very much loved by Baha'u'llah.

Concerning this believer, Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri writes in his unpublished 'History of the Faith in the Province of Yazd':

The late Haji Siyyid Ali-Akbar-i-Dahaji was one of the early believers.

Seldom has there been a soul so distinguished and pious as he.

He was a nephew of Siyyid Mihdi, the Ismu'llah ...Physically he was very handsome and had a sweet melodious voice.

One might say that whenever he chanted the Words of God, even the Concourse on high and the Denizens of the Kingdom of Abha were exhilarated by his voice...

I have never heard anyone chant so beautifully as he did.

He attained the presence of the Blessed Beauty several times and became the recipient of Baha'u'llah's infinite favours and bounties.

His relationship with Him was truly that of a lover and the Beloved.

There are many Tablets revealed in his honour.

Notable among them is the Tablet of Ihtiraq.[1] ...Haji Siyyid Ali-Akbar passed away in Tihran on his way back from the Holy Land after having attained the presence of Baha'u'llah for the last time.

After his death, Baha'u'llah indicated that He was so attached to Haji

Siyyid Ali-Akbar that He wished the name of this believer mentioned in His presence.

He thereafter instructed that henceforth his uncle Siyyid Mihdi, the Ismu'llah, be called Siyyid Ali-Akbar.(5) [1 This Tablet is also known by its opening verse as Qad-Ihtaraqa'l-Mukhlisun.

It has become known among the English-speaking believers as the Fire Tablet.

We shall refer to it in the next volume.] Another person who may be regarded in the same light as Siyyid Mihdi and Jamal-i-Burujirdi is Muhammad-Javad-i-Qazvini; although the third did not have the learning of the first two.

Baha'u'llah conferred upon him the title Ismu'llahu'l-Javad (The Name of God, the All-Bountiful).

He also became a Covenant-breaker and one who inflicted great sufferings upon the person of Abdu'l-Baha.

Javad, as a youth, attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad.

In 1867 he went to <p276> Adrianople in the company of Nabil-i-'Azam and was among those who were permitted to accompany Baha'u'llah to Akka.

During the ministry of Baha'u'llah, Javad enjoyed nearness to Him and in spite of his many shortcomings, Baha'u'llah conferred His favours upon him and concealed his faults.

But after the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Javad, driven by his ambitions and aspirations, joined hands with Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the arch-breaker of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, caused much anguish and pain to Abdu'l-Baha, and severely attacked Him in his venomous writings which contained many inaccuracies, falsehoods and calumnies.

Thus ended in tragedy the career of one whom Baha'u'llah had exalted through His loving-kindness.

It did not take very long before his plans and aspirations were frustrated and, like Jamal and Siyyid Mihdi, he perished ingloriously.

The Test of Gold Having referred to the downfall of Javad-i-Qazvini, it is interesting to recount the story of his eldest brother, Haji Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qazvini who had an unusual Baha'i career; he was one who fell from grace, but was saved towards the end of his life.

Haji Muhammad-Baqir attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad.

While there he requested Baha'u'llah to bestow wealth upon him.

Baha'u'llah acceded to his plea and assured him that God would grant his wish.

Soon afterwards he became very rich, but as a result grew heedless of the Cause of God.

In the course of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali's account of what appears to be his first audience with Baha'u'llah in Adrianople, we find the following story of Haji Muhammad-Baqir.

Having explained that he cannot express in words the excitement, awe and wonder of what he felt in his heart whenever he attained the presence of Baha'u'llah, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes: <p277> Because it was the early days of the rise of the Day-Star of the World,[1] Baha'u'llah asked me to give Him an account of the state of the believers in Tihran, Qazvin, Zanjan and Tabriz, the towns I had passed through.

He enquired of their faith, and their love for the Cause.

I did not reply.[2] After we [Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and his two companions] were dismissed from His presence, we were taken to a place where it was arranged for us to stay.

There, Baha'u'llah sent someone to whom I could recount the conditions of the believers.

I reported all I knew about each person, including the late Haji Muhammad-Baqir who was at that time a well-known merchant, foremost among the believers in faith, certitude and enthusiasm, and was serving the Cause with devotion and self-sacrifice. [1 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)] [2 It was not unusual for the believers who were in the presence of Baha'u'llah not to reply to His questions.

In the first place, they were so carried away that they could not utter a word.

Secondly, to speak was regarded by many as being contrary to the spirit of utter self-effacement in His presence.] The messenger left and after some minutes returned with an exalted Tablet which had been revealed in honour of the Haji.

He stated [on behalf of Baha'u'llah]: 'This man attained the presence of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad.

There He wrote a letter to Him and begged for wealth and prosperity.

In answer, this exalted and wonderful Tablet was revealed for him.

In it Baha'u'llah stated that his request would be granted and that the doors of prosperity and wealth would be opened for him from every direction.

He warned him, however, to be on his guard and not to allow riches to become a barrier and make him heedless.

Now you are here to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah and in the future you will witness that this man [Haji Muhammad-Baqir] will be overtaken with fear to such an extent that he will renounce God and His Cause.

Not long after, he will make substantial losses, following which he will write a letter to Baha'u'llah and repent.

God will then turn his losses into profit and he will become again highly successful in his business and will emerge as the foremost merchant in Constantinople <p278> and Tabriz.

However, this time he will wax prouder than before, more heedless and deprived...

This time he will lose all his possessions, will be unable to continue trading and will become helpless in arranging his affairs.

It is then that he will repent and return, and will be content to live as a poor man.

He will spend the days of his life in the service of the Cause of God.

His end will be blessed and he will receive great confirmations from God.' He then said to me: 'Remember all these things, for they will come to pass, and you shall witness them.' We were in Adrianople when news came that Javad, the younger brother of the Haji, had been arrested and cast into prison.

Haji Muhammad-Baqir had paid one thousand tumans[1] for the release of his brother and had left Tabriz for Constantinople in great haste.

Upon arrival he had gone to visit the late Mushiru'd-Dawlih, the Persian Ambassador, and there in his presence had recanted his Faith.

Baha'u'llah affirmed that this was the beginning of his tests and instructed that believers passing through Constantinople should not associate with him. [1 A very large sum of money in those days. (A.T.)]

Later, I left Adrianople for Constantinople where I stayed for fourteen months.

There I heard that the Haji had bought enormous quantities of cotton and because the prices had suddenly fallen drastically, not only had he lost all his possessions, but he was also unable to pay his creditors...

When this happened he wrote a letter supplicating Baha'u'llah and repenting.

A holy and blessed Tablet was revealed in his honour.

In it Baha'u'llah gave him the glad-tidings that he would soon make enormous profits.

When I went to Egypt, I heard that the price of cotton had risen considerably and the Haji's wealth as a result increased tenfold.(6)

This time Haji Muhammad-Baqir became very rich and influential.

He emerged foremost among the merchants of Constantinople and acquired great fame.

However, his wealth again became a barrier between him and God.

Again he forsook the Cause, and completely cut off his relationship with

Baha'u'llah.

After some years Baha'u'llah asked Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Amin[1] <p279> to establish contact with him and find out how he was.

Haji Amin went to see him in Constantinople.

He found him to be utterly heedless and forgetful of Baha'u'llah and the Cause.

The world and its attractions had so possessed him that at one point in the interview, Haji Muhammad-Baqir pointed to a coffer in his office and said, 'My god is in this box!' [1 The Trustee of Baha'u'llah.

For further information see vol.

III.] Haji Amin has stated that when he reported this to Baha'u'llah, He became very sad.

As He was pacing up and down, He stopped, held out His hand, palm open, and said 'With this hand We conferred upon him riches.' Then with a sudden movement, He withdrew, closed His hand, and said, 'Now with the same hand We take it back from him.' Soon Haji Muhammad-Baqir lost all his possessions.

He again became repentant and wrote to Baha'u'llah.

This time a Tablet was revealed for him in which Baha'u'llah clearly stated that God took away his wealth so that he might return to Him and become steadfast in His love.

He directed Haji Muhammad-Baqir to leave Constantinople and occupy himself with transcribing the holy Writings.

After this incident, Haji Muhammad-Baqir lived the remainder of his life in the uttermost poverty.

He grew strong in his faith and devoted his time to the service of the Cause.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, who met him after this event, writes: ...I met him [Haji Muhammad-Baqir] in Tabriz.

He said 'After the revelation of the Tablet of Baha'u'llah, it was as if the nails in the wall, the curtains in the room, and everything else had ears to hear and were carrying out the command of Baha'u'llah.

I lost everything that I had earned.

The house I live in now is owned by my wife and the clothes I wear are tailored by my children.'(7) Haji Muhammad-Baqir was not the only one who had asked Baha'u'llah to bestow upon him riches through the power of God.

There were others, some of whom became utterly heedless of the Cause after their success in life.

It is man's nature to <p280> become attracted to material things.

However, if he allows worldly riches to possess him and rule over his soul,

then he will be deprived of the bounties of God, and will perish spiritually.

Wealth and attachment to material things are some of the greatest tests for the soul of man.

Baha'u'llah states in The Hidden Words:

O Son of Being!

Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants.(8) As we have previously stated,[1] there is nothing in the Writings of Baha'u'llah to condemn wealth as long as it does not become a barrier between man and God.

On the contrary He glorifies the station of a rich person whose riches have not prevented him from recognizing His Cause and serving Him with devotion.

The view that one must be poor in order to become godly and spiritual is not necessarily correct.

The criterion for nearness to God is detachment, and although it is more difficult for the rich to attain to this lofty station, a poor person often has to fight many battles within himself before he becomes detached from this world. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

75-7.] Abdu'l-Baha in one of His Tablets(9)explains that it is a basic requirement for the order of creation to have both rich and poor in human society.[1] If all were equal the balance in this world would be upset, and human progress would halt. [1 It is important to note that while the Baha'i teachings maintain that human society should consist of many levels, they advocate the abolition of extreme poverty and wealth.] Nature also confirms Abdu'l-Baha's explanation and demonstrates the falsity and impracticability of those ideologies which seek to establish equality in human society.

That all human beings have equal rights and privileges is one of the basic teachings of Baha'u'llah.

But it is also made clear that people are not equal in their capacity, intelligence and accomplishments. <p281> Therefore society must comprise within itself men of all ranks and position who are related to each other in their various functions.

Abdu'l-Baha states, in the fore-mentioned Tablet, that poverty is meritorious in the sight of God if it comes about in His path.

He gives the example of those who were persecuted and lost all their possessions because they followed the Cause of God.

There are many Tablets in which Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha have exhorted the believers to be patient and content in poverty and generous in prosperity.

In The Hidden Words Baha'u'llah reveals:

O Son of My Handmaid!

Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty.

Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof, for in the end it will make thee rich in God, and thus thou shalt know the meaning of the utterance, 'In truth ye are the poor,' and the holy words, 'God is the all-possessing,' shall even as the true morn break forth gloriously resplendent upon the horizon of the lover's heart, and abide secure on the throne of wealth.(10) In the course of one of His talks to His companions(11) Abdu'l-Baha states that a poor man who is patient and forbearing is better than a rich man who is thankful.

However, a poor man who is thankful is more praiseworthy than the one who is patient, while more meritorious than all is the rich man who expends his wealth for others.

It is clear from the teachings of Baha'u'llah that man must earn his living in this life by engaging in some form of work, trade or profession.

In The Hidden Words Baha'u'llah says:

O My Servants!

Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom.

Thus it is incumbent on every one to engage in <p282> crafts and professions, for therein lies the secret of wealth, O men of understanding!

For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you.

Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire.

O My Servant!

The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.(12) However, one of the most important attributes for one who earns his living is to be content and resigned to whatever God has ordained for him.[1] 'The source of all good,' Baha'u'llah states, 'is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment in His holy will and pleasure.'(13) [1 It is important to clarify the question of poverty and wealth.

The teachings of Baha'u'llah advocate the abolition of the extremes of poverty and wealth in human society.] <p283> 13 Lawh-i-Salman A Tablet which in its profundity and wealth of knowledge stands out as one of the most significant among Baha'u'llah's Writings is the Lawh-i-Salman (Tablet of Salman),[1] revealed in Adrianople in honour of Shaykh Salman.

We have referred to part of this Tablet previously.[2] Shaykh Salman, whose life story is given in the first volume,[3]was a devoted servant of Baha'u'llah and dedicated his life to travelling for Him.

He carried His Writings to the believers in Persia and brought back their letters and news to Him.

He rendered this service with such care that none of Baha'u'llah's Tablets ever fell into the hands of the enemy.

It is recorded that on one occasion when he realized that he was about to be searched by the authorities in a Persian town, he ate the few Tablets he was carrying in order to protect the Cause and the believers for whom they were intended! [1 In the list 'Baha'u'llah's best known Works' prepared by Shoghi Effendi, in volumes of The Baha'i World, this Tablet is described as Lawh-i-Salman I.

It is mainly in Persian and parts of it are translated by Shoghi Effendi and included in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, sections XXI, CXLVIII, CLIV.] [2 See pp.

263-4.] [3 See vol.

I, pp.

1O9-13.] Salman was pure-hearted and very simple.

The believers always enjoyed his company but there were some friends in high positions who were embarrassed and sometimes afraid to meet him because of his simplicity and frankness.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes of this in his Bihjatu's-Sudur:

I spent some time in Shiraz where I used to attain the presence <p284> of the celebrated Salman ...

I was filled with infinite joy by associating with him.

He was truly a brilliant lamp.

Outwardly he was an illiterate person and very simple, but inwardly he was the essence of wisdom and knowledge who could solve difficult problems and explain abstruse questions in simple language.

Salman was the essence of selflessness, he had no ego whatsoever.

He was in no way able to flatter people or to deal deceitfully with them.

It was for this reason that the pure in heart among the believers were truly devoted to him.

But those who were sophisticated and conventional were not keen to associate with him.

For they feared that he might ruin their prestige in the gatherings of the friends.

It is commonly known and is true, that once the Ancient Beauty told Salman to show respect towards important people in the meetings, and not to speak unkindly about them.

Salman replied, 'I do not consider anybody great except the Ancient Beauty and the Master.

The so-called great are nothing but pompous men.' This remark amused Baha'u'llah.(l) In the Tablet of Salman Baha'u'llah bids him to journey throughout the land with feet of steadfastness, wings of detachment and a heart ablaze with the fire of the love of God, so that the forces of evil may be powerless to prevent him from carrying out his mission.

Revealed at the time when Mirza Yahya had openly arisen against Baha'u'llah, this Tablet also contains many passages concerning the unfaithfulness, the treachery, the ungodliness of Mirza Yahya and his shameful activities including his plans to take the life of Baha'u'llah.

In moving language, He pours out His heart to Salman and speaks of the anguish of His own heart, of His pains and sufferings which were inflicted by one whom He had brought up with such loving-kindness, care and consideration.

He recalls the times when Mirza Yahya was in constant attendance by day and night.

He would stand humbly in His presence and listen to the Words of God which were revealed with great power and majesty.

But as the Cause began to grow, he was enticed by the prospect of his own fame.

His <p285> whole being was so filled with the love of leadership that he left his Lord and rebelled against Him.

Baha'u'llah in this Tablet intimates to Shaykh Salman that He is so encompassed by grief and sorrow that His Pen is prevented from bestowing the knowledge of God upon people and revealing some of the mysteries of His Cause.

A great part of the Tablet of Salman is in answer to a question concerning the meaning of a line from a poem by Mawlavi.[1] In order to appreciate Baha'u'llah's profound explanations, one must be well versed in Islamic philosophy and the meaning of mystical terms.

Otherwise it is not an easy task to understand this part of the Tablet.

Furthermore, Baha'u'llah states that He is reluctant to expound the works of the mystics and sages of the past.

For, He proclaims, the Sun of Truth has risen and oceans of knowledge have surged forth through His Revelation.

Therefore there is no need to dwell on the words and teachings of old.

Gnostics and men of learning must needs turn to Him as the source of knowledge and receive enlightenment from Him. [1 Jalali'd-Dln-i-Rumi, the author of the

Mathnavi.] Baha'u'llah calls on Salman to meet the servants of God and counsel them on His behalf.

They should cleanse their hearts so that they may be enabled to recognize the Beauty of His countenance, walk in His ways, meditate upon His Words, and know that if the worlds of God were limited to this one, the Bab would never have allowed Himself to fall into the hands of His enemy, nor would He have sacrificed His life in the path of God.

In another Tablet(2)Baha'u'llah states that if there were any merit in this mortal world, He Himself would have occupied its highest thrones and owned all its treasures.

The fact that the Creator of this world has not set His own affection upon it is a proof that there are spiritual worlds far more glorious than this one.

It is to these worlds that the soul of the believer repairs after its separation from the body.[1] [1 There are many Tablets concerning life after death.

Some of these will feature in the next volumes.] Baha'u'llah in the Tablet of Salman promises that through the <p286> influence of His Revelation, some souls will arise who, renouncing the world, will turn fully to Him with the utmost devotion, and regard the sacrifice of life in His path as the easiest of all things.

He affirms that God has chosen these souls for His own Self, and that the dwellers of the realms on high long to attain their presence.

The history of the Cause records with pride many episodes in the lives of such believers, who have shed a great lustre upon the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

The tree of the Cause of God in this day has grown and flourished mainly as a result of two factors: one, the outpouring of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah which, like the rays of the sun, has imparted to it a measure of its vivifying energies; the other, the blood of the martyrs who willingly gave their lives in order to nourish and water it.

Baha'u'llah in this Tablet confers an exalted station upon the soul of the believer.

He states that if the glory of such a station be revealed in this world, even to the extent of a needle's eye, every soul will expire through ecstasy.

Because of this, the station of the true believer is kept hidden in this life.

In another Tablet revealed in Akka Baha'u'llah makes a similar statement:

Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world.

Such a soul liveth and moveth in accordance with the Will of its Creator...

If any man be told that which hath been ordained for such a soul in the worlds of God, the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, his whole being will instantly blaze out in his great longing to attain that most exalted, that sanctified and resplendent station...(3) In the Tablet of Salman Baha'u'llah explains one of the most interesting mysteries in the Qur'an, a mystery which had hitherto remained unnoticed.

He refers to the well-known phrase, 'There is no God but Him'.

This is the cardinal statement of faith which every Muslim must make, and which is the basis of the Islamic religion. <p287> As we have previously written,[1] the Word of God has many significances which are beyond the ken of men.

There are inner meanings enshrined in the Word of God which only His Manifestation and those whom He guides understand.

Baha'u'llah explains that in this phrase 'There is no God but Him', the letter of negation precedes that of affirmation.

Therefore as a result of the creative influence of this phrase, ever since it was revealed, the violators of the Cause of God, representing the letter of negation, dominated over the faithful in the past.

All the sufferings which the hands of the breakers of the Covenant of God inflicted upon the steadfast Muslims and their apparent superiority, were the fulfilment of the Words uttered by Muhammad.

God had, through His wisdom, so destined that those who were impure and rebellious should dominate those who were true and sincere. [1 See vol.

I, chapter 3.] It is a Baha'i belief that those who usurped the right of Imam Ali, the lawful successor of Muhammad and the interpreter of His Word, were acting against the expressed wishes of their Prophet.

They disregarded the injunctions of Muhammad concerning His successor, became the primary cause of division within the Faith of Islam, brought about the death of the holy Imams and persecuted their followers.

They were the letters of negation and till the end of the Dispensation of Muhammad, dominated His faithful followers.[1] [1 For a more detailed account of these events, see vol.

I, pp.

126-8.] History demonstrates that great differences arose among the followers of each religion soon after the death of its Founder.

These differences led to schisms and divisions which have increased with the passage of time.

This process, however, must not be so misunderstood as to lead us to believe that the Founders of the world's great religions in the past were incapable of establishing ways and means of uniting their followers, or of staying the hands of the unfaithful from corrupting the religion of God.

That religions have divided into sects is not due to the teachings <p288> of their Founders, but rather to the immaturity of their followers.

Just as children are too young to be held responsible for keeping their clothes clean as they play outside, so humanity in past dispensations had not acquired sufficient maturity to protect the religion of God from disunity and discord.

Even in Islam, the most recent of the older religions, men were not sufficiently mature to receive from Muhammad a firm Covenant, similar to that established by Baha'u'llah, a Covenant which would require His followers strictly to follow His Faith without creating division within it.

On the contrary, as we have already observed from the fore-mentioned phrase in the Qur'an, Muhammad knew that His followers would not be capable of maintaining their unity after Him.

He knew that if He were to establish an irrevocable covenant in writing, the people of Islam would not have had the maturity and capacity at that time to observe its provisions strictly.

But this is not to be regarded as a failure on the part of Islam, or of older religions which became similarly divided.

It was only natural for humanity, which had not come of age, to neglect its duty and conduct itself irresponsibly.

However, through God's forbearance and justice, the followers of past religions received their spiritual sustenance regardless of the sects they created.

For example, the primacy of Peter is acknowledged in the Gospels.

However, differences arose and the followers of Christ became divided.

Nevertheless each sect received a measure of the bounties of Christ.

The tree of Christianity blossomed even after acquiring several branches, and each one remained verdant and flourishing until the advent of Islam when the Dispensation of Christ was closed.

Similarly, the two major branches of Islam remained part of that religion.

Even those who violated the wishes of the Prophet were not cut off from the Tree of Islam; all received their sustenance from it until the advent of the Bab when the Dispensation of Islam came to an end.

However, the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah has ushered in a new day.

Through the potency of His Revelation mankind is <p289> destined to come of age and Baha'u'llah has given it responsibility.

He established an irrefutable Covenant with His followers, appointed its Centre, Abdu'l-Baha, exhorted the believers to follow Him and made it clear that in this Dispensation there would be no room for disunity and division.

The Cause of God is one and indivisible, and man, having left behind the stages

of childhood and adolescence, must now play a responsible part in maintaining its unity, in consolidating its world-wide structure and in protecting its nascent institutions from the unfaithful.

Referring to the fore-mentioned phrase 'There is no God but Him', Baha'u'llah, in the Tablet of Salman, proclaims in majestic and powerful language that He has removed the letter of negation which had been placed before that of affirmation.

This phrase, which the Prophet of Islam, through His all-encompassing wisdom, regarded to be the cornerstone of His Faith, is now, in the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, symbolically replaced by the affirmative phrase 'He is God', signifying that the Revealer of the Cause of God holds within His hands the reins of authority, and, unlike the Dispensations of the past, no one has the power to wrest it from Him.

The violators and the breakers of Baha'u'llah's Covenant, as history has shown, have been utterly impotent to introduce divisions within His Faith, to arrest its onward march or influence its glorious destiny.

How striking are the evidences of the creative power of the words of Baha'u'llah, that through but a movement of His Pen He reversed a process which had persisted for centuries, which had created schisms within religions and placed the true exponents of the Faith of God under the domination of the unfaithful.

After the ascension of Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha was opposed by no less a person than His brother Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

This son of Baha'u'llah tried, against the provisions of the Will and Testament of His Father and in company with a number of outstanding teachers of the Faith, to undermine the exalted position which Baha'u'llah had conferred upon Abdu'l-Baha.

In the end, the power of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah swept <p290> Mirza Muhammad-'Ali into the abyss of ignominy and he perished ingloriously.

Through the same power, the breakers of the Covenant during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi were also struck down.

It is important to note that those who rebelled against Abdu'l-Baha and broke the Covenant were not of a foolish and senseless type.

On the contrary, most of them were intelligent and capable men; some were highly knowledgeable teachers and immensely respected by the community.

Jamal-i-Burujirdi was a distinguished mujtahid with a keen mind, Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji was an erudite person and a powerful speaker.

There were several others like them who were once outstanding followers of Baha'u'llah, who served the Faith with distinction but whose ego destroyed them in the end.

Covenant-breaking is a deadly spiritual disease.

It existed in the Dispensations of the past, but as already explained, it resulted in schisms and divisions.

This disease is contagious and, if not checked, can destroy the very foundations of religion.

It is for this reason that Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha have warned the believers not to associate with those who break the Covenant.

Through this vital commandment, which is entirely new in the history of religion, the Cause of God, which since its inception has been betrayed many times by proud and vainglorious men, and whose appointed Centres were ruthlessly opposed by bands of egotistical followers, has emerged triumphant from these most severe crises, its unity unimpaired and its solidarity further enhanced.

Bearing in mind the turmoil of the age in which we live and the spirit of rebellion which agitates human society today, we realize that the Cause of Baha'u'llah would have been divided by now into hundreds of sects had it not been for the power of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and the creative influence of His Words in which we find the assurance that this is 'the Day which shall not be followed by night'.[1](4) [1 For a further discussion of this subject, see vol.

I, pp.

129-37, and pp.

240-42.] <p291> 14 Confrontation with Mirza Yahya Foremost among the 'letters of negation' referred to by Baha'u'llah in the Tablet of Salman was Mirza Yahya, who was swiftly struck down by the hand of power and might.

During the one-year period that Baha'u'llah stayed in the house of Rida Big and His subsequent return to the house of Amru'llah, He never met Mirza Yahya or Siyyid Muhammad whom He had expelled from His presence.

Mirza Yahya with his family now lived in a separate house, and Siyyid Muhammad was living among the Muslims in the city.

After a stay of about three months in the house of Amru'llah, Baha'u'llah moved His residence to the house of Izzat Aqa which was situated in the same quarter of the city.

He remained there till the end of His stay in Adrianople.

Soon after transferring His residence to this house, an event of the utmost significance occurred which toppled Mirza Yahya to his doom and degraded him in the eyes of his supporters as well as the authorities in Adrianople.

This was in the month of Jamadiyu'l-Avval, 1284 A.H. (September 1867).

Having for years observed the exemplary patience with which Baha'u'llah had

endured all the calumnies and falsehoods which Mirza Yahya had heaped upon Him while counting on His forbearance, knowing that He did not generally seek to appear in public and assuming that He would never consider meeting His unfaithful brother face to face, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, in order to strengthen his own position, expressed to a few Persians of Muslim faith in Adrianople that, whereas he and Mirza Yahya were ready to confront Baha'u'llah in public he was sure that Baha'u'llah would not respond to the challenge. <p292> This form of confrontation, known as mubahilih, had taken place in Islam.

For instance, when a deputation of the Christians of Najran in Medina were talking of offering a challenge to the Prophet Muhammad, it was to be a confrontation in the form of mubahilih.

This is a challenge between truth and falsehood; the two parties come together, each one invoking God to annihilate the other, and calling on His wrath to strike down the faithless.

It is expected in these circumstances that the power of Truth will destroy the forces of falsehood.

The person who became instrumental in bringing this matter to its conclusion was Mir Muhammad-i-Mukari from Shiraz, a caravan-driver who had accompanied the Bab on His pilgrimage to Mecca, and later Baha'u'llah from Baghdad to Constantinople.[1]Although he was uneducated, Mir Muhammad was a man of great discernment, wisdom and courage.

He was a Babi and, being confused with the differences which had arisen in the Faith, he travelled especially to Adrianople in order to investigate the truth for himself.

While in that city, he moved freely among the companions of Baha'u'llah and the supporters of Mirza Yahya alike. [1 See p.

409.] Soon after his arrival he heard Siyyid Muhammad's propaganda about a confrontation with Baha'u'llah.

This created great interest in Mir Muhammad who urged Siyyid Muhammad to induce Mirza Yahya to meet Baha'u'llah in a public place for a mubahilih.

He in turn promised personally to invite Baha'u'llah to accept the challenge.

This is how Shoghi Effendi describes this important event:

A certain Mir Muhammad, a Babi of Shiraz, greatly resenting alike the claims and the cowardly seclusion of Mirza Yahya, succeeded in forcing Siyyid Muhammad to induce him to meet Baha'u'llah face to face, so that a discrimination might be publicly effected between the true and the false.

Foolishly assuming that his illustrious Brother would never countenance such a proposition, Mirza Yahya appointed the mosque <p293> of Sultan Salim as the place for their encounter.

No sooner had Baha'u'llah been informed of this arrangement than He set forth, on foot, in the heat of midday, and accompanied by this same Mir Muhammad, for the aforementioned mosque, which was situated in a distant part of the city, reciting, as He walked, through the streets and markets, verses, in a voice and in a manner that greatly astonished those who saw and heard Him. 'O Muhammad!', are some of the words He uttered on that memorable occasion, as testified by Himself in a Tablet, 'He Who is the Spirit hath, verily, issued from His habitation, and with Him have come forth the souls of God's chosen ones and the realities of His Messengers.

Behold, then, the dwellers of the realms on high above Mine head, and all the testimonies of the Prophets in My grasp.

Say:

Were all the divines, all the wise men, all the kings and rulers on earth to gather together, I, in very truth, would confront them, and would proclaim the verses of God, the Sovereign, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

I am He Who feareth no one, though all who are in heaven and all who are on earth rise up against me...

This is Mine hand which God hath turned white for all the worlds to behold.

This is My staff; were We to cast it down, it would, of a truth, swallow up all created things.'[1] Mir Muhammad, who had been sent ahead to announce Baha'u'llah's arrival, soon returned, and informed Him that he who had challenged His authority wished, owing to unforeseen circumstances, to postpone for a day or two the interview.

Upon His return to His house Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet, wherein He recounted what had happened, fixed the time for the postponed interview, sealed the Tablet with His seal, entrusted it to Nabil, and instructed him to deliver it to one of the new believers, Mulla Muhammad-i-Tabrizi, for the information of Siyyid Muhammad, who was in the habit of frequenting that believer's shop.

It was arranged to demand from Siyyid Muhammad, ere the delivery of that Tablet, a sealed note pledging Mirza Yahya, in the event of failing to appear at the trysting-place, to affirm in writing that <p294> his claims were false.

Siyyid Muhammad promised that he would produce the next day the document required, and though Nabil, for three successive days, waited in that shop for the reply, neither did the Siyyid appear, nor was such a note sent by him.

That undelivered Tablet, Nabil, recording twenty-three years later this historic episode in his chronicle, affirms was still in his possession,

'as fresh as the day on Which the Most Great Branch had penned it, and the seal of the Ancient Beauty had sealed and adorned it,' a tangible and irrefutable testimony to Baha'u'llah's ascendancy over a routed opponent.(1) [1 Part of the Tablet of Mubahilih, addressed to Mulla Sidiq-i-Khurasani.

See vol.

I and Memorials of the Faithful. (A.T.)] Mirza Aqa Jan mentions(2)that when Baha'u'llah left for the mosque with Mir Muhammad, he himself was not in the house, as he had gone to attend to some business in town.

He heard the news and hastened back.

On his way he saw a large crowd on both sides of the street and they told him that Baha'u'llah had just gone to the mosque of Sultan Salim.

Mirza Aqa Jan immediately went to the mosque, where he found Baha'u'llah uttering the verses of God in majestic tone and in great profusion.

None of the companions of Baha'u'llah was permitted by Him to accompany Him except Mir Muhammad and Mirza Aqa Jan who followed.

Those members of the public who were in the mosque were amazed by what they saw.

So powerful were the words of Baha'u'llah that a Persian man who heard them was awestruck; he was trembling all over and tears flowed from his eyes.

Baha'u'llah at one point ordered Mir Muhammad to go and call Mirza Yahya to come with all his sins and transgressions and face his Lord.(3) Baha'u'llah remained in the mosque till near sunset, while Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad stayed at home and gave some excuses to Mir Muhammad for not attending.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, who was in Adrianople at the time, has written the account of that day.

This is a translation of some of his reminiscences:

The meeting was to be on Friday at the mosque of Sultan Salim at the time of the congregational prayer when the <p295> Muslims gather inside in great numbers...

Mir Muhammad-i-Mukari from Shiraz who was a Babi ... could not imagine that Azal had broken the Covenant.

So he begged the Blessed Beauty to enlighten him.

Baha'u'llah said to him that if ever Azal came face to face with Him at a meeting place, then he could consider Azal's claims to be true.

Mir Muhammad accepted this statement as a criterion for distinguishing between truth and falsehood, and he endeavoured to bring this meeting about.

The news and date of the confrontation became known among the peoples of Muslim, Christian and Jewish religions in the city.

All of them had heard of the miracles of Moses and the story of His confrontation with Pharaoh.

And now they were expecting the meeting face to face in the mosque between His Holiness the Shaykh Effendi (a designation by which the people called Baha'u'llah to express their reverence for Him) and Mirza Ali who had denied Him. (For fear of being recognized, Azal had called himself by this name.) Therefore, from the morning of Friday until before noon, a large multitude drawn from the followers of these three religions had thronged the area between the house of Amru'llah ... and the entrance to the mosque.

The crowd was so large that it was difficult to move about.[1] Baha'u'llah, the Day-Star of Glory, emerged from His home ... and as He passed through the crowd, people showed such reverence as is difficult to describe.

They greeted Him with salutations, bowed and opened the way for Him to pass.

Many of them <p296> prostrated themselves at His feet and kissed them.

Baha'u'llah, the Countenance of majesty and omnipotence, in acknowledgement greeted the crowd by raising His hands (as was customary among the Ottomans), and expressed His good wishes.

This continued all the way to the mosque.

As soon as He entered the mosque, the preacher, who was delivering his discourse, became speechless or perhaps he forgot his words.

Baha'u'llah went forward, seated Himself and then gave permission to the preacher to continue.

Eventually the preaching and prayers came to an end.

But Azal did not turn up.

We heard that he had feigned illness and asked to be excused. [1 The statement by Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali that the public had gathered in the streets to watch Baha'u'llah going to the mosque need not be viewed as contrary to Shoghi Effendi's statement that Baha'u'llah set off for the mosque as soon as he was informed of the arrangement.

We must bear in mind that for some time Siyyid Muhammad had been telling some of the Muslims about Mirza Yahya's readiness for a mubahilih.

Baha'u'llah obviously knew about this propaganda.

When Mirza Yahya appointed the mosque of Sultan Salim, the sensational news spread very rapidly among the people.

It appears that Mir Muhammad, who had acted all along as a focal point for this confrontation, went to the house of Baha'u'llah on Friday and informed Him of the arrangements; Bahá'u'lláh then readily set off for the mosque with him. (A.T.)] In every city in the Ottoman Empire, there are Mawlavis, who are dervishes and followers of Mawlavi,[1] the author of Mathnavi.

Every Friday they hold their services in their takyihs (centres of congregation) when they whirl around their master and chant certain words in unison.

Inside its chambers some play music and sing delightful melodies.

When Baha'u'llah was about to leave the mosque He said: 'We owe a visit to the Mawlavis.

We had better go to their takyih.' As He rose to go, the Governor of Adrianople and other dignitaries, together with the divines, availed themselves of the opportunity to be in His presence and so they accompanied Him.

As a token of their humility and courtesy, the Governor, the Shaykhu'l-Islam,[2] the Ulama[3] and other dignitaries walked four or five steps behind Baha'u'llah while the stream of His utterance was flowing.[4] Sometimes, through His grace and loving-kindness, Baha'u'llah would stop and beckon the Governor and the others to walk in front.

But they would refuse to do so.

In this way, with <p297> majesty and glory born of God, Baha'u'llah arrived in the takyih.

At that time the Shaykh of the Mawlavis was standing in the centre and the dervishes were circling around and chanting.

As soon as their eyes beheld Him, they all stopped their service without any reason.

They bowed and showed their respect for Him and became absolutely silent.

Baha'u'llah then seated Himself, permitted others who were with Him to be seated.

He then gave permission to the Shaykh to resume his service again. [1 Jalali'd-Din-i-Rumi.] [2 The head of the Muslim ecclesiastical institution in the city.] [3 Divines and men of learning.] [4 When an important person walked it was considered discourteous if his subordinates walked in front of, or abreast of him except at night when someone carried a lantern before him.

In order to show their humility they always walked a few steps behind.

This is how, for example, the oriental believers conducted themselves when they were walking with Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha or Shoghi Effendi.] The news was widely circulated in Adrianople that when Shaykh Effendi[1] had

entered the mosque the preacher was unable to deliver his sermon and when he went to the taykih, the dervishes and their leader forgot their words and stopped their service.

The following evening some believers attained His presence and I was among them...

Baha'u'llah made these remarks: 'When We entered the crowded mosque, the preacher forgot the words of his sermon, and when We arrived inside the takyih, the dervishes were suddenly filled with such awe and wonder that they became speechless and silent.

However, since people are brought up in vain imaginings, they foolishly consider such events as supernatural acts and regard them as miracles!'[2]4) [1 Baha'u'llah.] [2 These are not the exact words of Baha'u'llah, but convey their import. (A.T.)] Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali then describes how much he was touched by these words of Baha'u'llah.

Through these words he clearly saw the difference between the ways of God and those of man.

He recalls his meetings with men of eminence, leaders of religion and outstanding personalities who, without exception, were eager to publicize their slightest achievements and to exploit every opportunity through which they could enhance their fame and consolidate their positions.

But this is not so with the Manifestations of God.

Baha'u'llah, in this instance, by refuting the claims of the people who attributed miracles to Him, demonstrated that His glory does not depend upon the <p298> praise of men and their actions.

He stands far above the human world and is its Ruler.

The detailed news of the mubahilih and Mirza Yahya's failure to appear before Baha'u'llah was communicated to the believers in Persia by a certain Aqa Mirza Hadiy-i-Shirazi.

He wrote a full account of this event and quoted those Tablets which Baha'u'llah had revealed for this particular occasion.

His account was widely circulated among the believers.

This event, which established Baha'u'llah's ascendancy in the eyes of the public over one who is stigmatized by Him as the 'source of perversion', removed the veil from the eyes of many among the followers of the Bab and enabled them to embrace the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

It may interest the student of the Bible to note that, according to Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, the rise and fall of Mirza Yahya was clearly foretold by St.

Paul in the following passages:

Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God...

And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming...(5) Mirza Yahya's dramatic fall was accompanied by an unprecedented outpouring of revelation by Baha'u'llah which soon afterwards resulted in the proclamation of His Message to the kings and rulers of the world.

Shoghi Effendi, in his masterly writings, has described the momentous upsurge of Baha'u'llah's Revelation in these words:

The 'Most Great Idol,'[1] had at the bidding and through the <p299> power of Him Who is the Fountain-head of the Most Great Justice been cast out of the community of the Most Great Name, confounded, abhorred and broken.

Cleansed from this pollution, delivered from this horrible possession, God's infant Faith could now forge ahead, and, despite the turmoil that had convulsed it, demonstrate its capacity to fight further battles, capture loftier heights, and win mightier victories. [1 Mirza Yahya. (A.T.)] A temporary breach had admittedly been made in the ranks of its supporters.

Its glory had been eclipsed, and its annals stained forever.

Its name, however, could not be obliterated, its spirit was far from broken, nor could this so called schism tear its fabric asunder.

The Covenant of the Bab, to which reference has already been made, with its immutable truths, incontrovertible prophecies, and repeated warnings, stood guard over that Faith, insuring its integrity, demonstrating its incorruptibility, and perpetuating its influence.

Though He Himself was bent with sorrow, and still suffered from the effects of the attempt on His life, and though He was well aware a further banishment was probably impending, yet, undaunted by the blow which His Cause had sustained, and the perils with which it was encompassed, Baha'u'llah arose with matchless power, even before the ordeal was overpast, to proclaim the Mission with which He had been entrusted to those who, in East and West, had the reins of supreme temporal authority in their grasp.

The day-star of His Revelation was, through this very Proclamation, destined to shine in its meridian glory, and His Faith manifest the plenitude of its divine power.

A period of prodigious activity ensued which, in its repercussions, outshone the vernal years of Baha'u'llah's ministry. 'Day and night,' an

eye-witness has written, 'the Divine verses were raining down in such number that it was impossible to record them.

Mirza Aqa Jan wrote them as they were dictated, while the Most Great Branch was continually occupied in transcribing them.

There was not a moment to spare.' 'A number of secretaries,' Nabil has testified, 'were busy day and night and yet they were unable to cope with the task.

Among them was Mirza Baqir-i-Shirazi...

He alone <p300> transcribed no less than two thousand verses every day.

He laboured during six or seven months.

Every month the equivalent of several volumes would be transcribed by him and sent to Persia.

About twenty volumes, in his fine penmanship, he left behind as a remembrance for Mirza Aqa Jan.' Baha'u'llah, Himself, referring to the verses revealed by Him, has written: 'Such are the outpourings ... from the clouds of Divine Bounty that within the space of an hour the equivalent of a thousand verses hath been revealed.' 'So great is the grace vouchsafed in this day that in a single day and night, were an amanuensis capable of accomplishing it to be found, the equivalent of the Persian Bayan would be sent down from the heaven of Divine holiness.' 'I swear by God!' He, in another connection has affirmed, 'In those days the equivalent of all that hath been sent down aforetime unto the Prophets hath been revealed.' 'That which hath already been revealed in this land (Adrianople),' He, furthermore, referring to the copiousness of His writings, has declared, 'secretaries are incapable of transcribing.

It has, therefore, remained for the most part untranscribed.'(6) <p301> 15 Suriy-i-Muluk The unprecedented outpouring of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah which took place immediately after the downfall of Mirza Yahya reached its climax with the revelation of the Suriy-i-Muluk (Surih of Kings).

This most momentous of the Tablets of Baha'u'llah is chiefly addressed to the kings of the world collectively.

Revealed in Arabic, it proclaims in unequivocal terms the claims of its Author and His station in language of might and power.[1] To a sincere and unbiased observer, the opening paragraph alone portrays the authority and majesty of the One who announces Himself as the Vicegerent of God on earth and summons the kings and rulers of the world to renounce their possessions and embrace His Cause: [1 Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, has translated parts of this Tablet into English.

They are found mainly in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, sections LXV, LXVI, CXIII, CXIV, CXVI, CXVIII and The Promised Day is Come, pp.

20-21.] O Kings of the earth!

Give ear unto the Voice of God, calling from this sublime, this fruit-laden Tree, that hath sprung out of the Crimson Hill, upon the holy Plain, intoning the words: 'There is none other God but He, the Mighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise.'...

Fear God, O concourse of kings, and suffer not yourselves to be deprived of this most sublime grace.

Fling away, then, the things ye possess, and take fast hold on the Handle of God, the Exalted, the Great.

Set your hearts towards the Face of God, and abandon that which your desires have bidden you to follow, and be not of those who perish.(l)

Baha'u'llah unveiled His station gradually and in stages.

His <p302> Declaration took place in the Garden of Ridvan in 1863.[1] On that historic occasion, which may be regarded as the initial stage of His announcement of the advent of the Day of God, He revealed the transcendent glory of His station to only a few of His Companions.

Many of the Babis who were assembled in that Garden to pay their last homage to Him on the day of His departure for Constantinople, had no knowledge of this declaration; they learnt of it months later.

Mirza Asadu'llah-i-Kashani in his spoken chronicle mentions this fact.

He was a self-appointed guard of Baha'u'llah in Baghdad, a devoted servant who against Baha'u'llah's advice and in spite of his very short stature, carried a dagger under his clothes and walked behind Him in public.

This is how he describes Baha'u'llah's departure from the Garden of Ridvan and the state of the believers left behind in Baghdad: [1 See vol.

I, chapter 16.] Although Baha'u'llah had commanded the friends not to follow them, I was so loath to let Him go out of my sight, that I ran after them for three hours.

He saw me, and getting down from His horse, waited for me, telling me with His beautiful voice, full of love and kindness, to go back to Baghdad, and, with the friends, to set about our work, not slothfully, but with energy: 'Be not overcome with sorrow -- I am leaving friends I love in Baghdad.

I will surely send to them tidings of our welfare.

Be steadfast in your service to God, who doeth whatsoever He willeth.

Live in such peace as will be permitted to you.'[1] [1 These are not the exact words of Baha'u'llah, but convey the sense of what He said. (A.T.)]

We watched them disappear into the darkness with sinking hearts, for their enemies were powerful and cruel!

And we knew not where they were being taken.

An unknown destination!

Weeping bitterly, we turned our faces towards Bagdad, determining to live according to His command.

We had not been, at that time, informed of the great event <p303> of the 'Declaration', that our revered and beloved Baha'u'llah was He Who should come -- 'He Whom God shall make Manifest' -- but we again felt that unspeakable joy, which surged within us, overcoming our bitter sorrow with a great and mysterious radiancy.(2) Mirza Asadu'llah then describes how after some time, one of the believers brought a Tablet from Adrianople and through it the friends in Iraq learnt of Baha'u'llah's well-being, His Declaration in the Garden of Ridvan and His public proclamation in Adrianople.

The second stage in the revealing of the station of Baha'u'llah was its announcement mainly to the members of the Babi community, through the revelation of innumerable Tablets from Adrianople as well as the teaching exploits of some of His outstanding disciples.

And now, the final stage was this majestic proclamation to the world at large through the kings and leaders who at that time wielded great power and, together with the ecclesiastical authorities, dominated the minds of their subjects.

Centuries before, Muhammad had sent emissaries to rulers of some neighbouring lands announcing His mission and inviting them to embrace His Faith.

Those whom Muslim historians have recorded as being addressed by Muhammad were the Shah of Persia, the Negus of Ethiopia, the Emperor of Byzantium, the ruler of Egypt, the Governor of Damascus, and the Imam of Yamamah.[1] [1 The name of these rulers are respectively as follows:

Khusraw Parviz (Crosroes II), Adjamih Abjur, Heraclius, Maqawqis, al-Harith Ibn Abi-Shimr, and Hawdhah Ibn Ali.] The Bab, who had addressed the 'concourse of kings and sons of kings' in His Qayyumu'l-Asma', and summoned them to deliver His Message to the peoples of the world, sent Tablets to only two monarchs of His day -- Muhammad Shah of Persia and Sultan Abdu'l-Majid of Turkey.

Baha'u'llah, the Supreme Manifestation of God whose <p304> mission was to unite the human race under one universal Faith, issued His clarion call to the kings of the world collectively, proclaimed His Message, summoned them to embrace His Cause, urged them to carry out His counsels and warned them of the dire consequences of disobeying His exhortations.

The study of the Suriy-i-Muluk and of His subsequent Tablets to individual crowned heads of the world, brings to light remarkable features of Baha'u'llah's indomitable spirit, His courage and His uncompromising attitude in revealing the Truth enshrined within His Revelation.

Any man who, over a century ago, addressed the potentates and monarchs of the world, especially such despots as Nasirid-Din Shah of Persia and Sultan

Abdu'l-'Aziz of Turkey, needed to be a master in the art of diplomacy and to couch his words in such terms as to represent himself as a humble servant at their threshold.

The pomp and majesty of the kings were so awesome that in most cases a stout-hearted man would feel inhibited to approach them or express his opinions, especially if they were not in conformity with those of the kings.

No man of sound mind would have attempted, a hundred years ago, to address the kings in a language ringing with authority and command, especially if he were a prisoner captive in the hands of a despotic ruler.

Who else but the Vicegerent of God on earth could have had such power and authority as to address the kings in the manner that Baha'u'llah would address them from Akka in the Kitab-i-Aqdas:

O kings of the earth!

He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is come.

The Kingdom is God's, the omnipotent Protector, the Self-Subsisting.

Worship none but God, and, with radiant hearts, lift up your faces unto your Lord, the Lord of all names.

This is a Revelation to which whatever ye possess can never be compared, could ye but know it...

Ye are but vassals, O kings of the earth!

He Who is the King of Kings hath appeared, arrayed in His most wondrous glory, and is summoning you unto Himself, the Help in <p305> Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

Take heed lest pride deter you from recognizing the Source of Revelation, lest the things of this world shut you out as by a veil from Him Who is the Creator of heaven.

Arise, and serve Him Who is the Desire of all nations, Who hath created you through a word from Him, and ordained you to be, for all time, the emblems of His sovereignty.(3) Some Important Themes of the Suriy-i-Muluk The responsibility of the kings In the Suriy-i-Muluk, Baha'u'llah admonishes the kings for their failure to heed the Message of the Bab.

He addresses them in these words:

Relate unto them, O Servant,[1] the story of Ali (the Bab), when He came unto them with truth, bearing His glorious and weighty Book, and holding in His hands a testimony and proof from God, and holy and blessed tokens from Him.

Ye, however, O kings, have failed to heed the Remembrance of God in His days and to be guided by the lights which arose and shone forth above

the horizon of a resplendent Heaven.

Ye examined not His Cause when so to do would have been better for you than all that the sun shineth upon, could ye but perceive it.

Ye remained careless until the divines of Persia -- those cruel ones -- pronounced judgement against Him, and unjustly slew Him.

His spirit ascended unto God, and the eyes of the inmates of Paradise and the angels that are nigh unto Him wept sore by reason of this cruelty.

Beware that ye be not careless henceforth as ye have been careless aforetime.

Return, then, unto God, your Maker, and be not of the heedless...(4) [1 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)] These words give us new insight into the fact that Baha'u'llah expected the kings, many of whom were uninformed of the Message of the Bab, to have investigated His claims and embraced His Cause.

He does not entertain the thought that <p306> most of them might have been unaware of His coming or unfamiliar with His claims.

On the contrary, He rebukes them for their ignorance and reveals for them the verses of God regardless of the fact that most of them were unfamiliar with His terminology.

In summoning them to His Cause, He did not alter His usual style and mode of expression to suit the understanding of His readers.

Thus He wrote: 'Relate unto them, O servant, the story of Ali when He came unto them with truth...' The kings ought to have known who Ali was.

It is the duty of man to follow the Word of God, to understand it, and to educate himself through it.

Since the disciples of Baha'u'llah achieved this, it is expected that all men, regardless of their background and knowledge -- and this includes the kings -- are capable of grasping the utterances of Baha'u'llah which constitute the Word of God for this age.

Baha'u'llah further rebukes the kings for not having recognized His own Revelation.

He admonishes them to turn to Him in these words:

My face hath come forth from the veils, and shed its radiance upon all that is in heaven and on earth; and yet, ye turned not towards Him, notwithstanding that ye were created for Him, O concourse of kings!

Follow, therefore, that which I speak unto you, and hearken unto it with your hearts, and be not of such as have turned aside.(5) In another passage, Baha'u'llah reminds the kings of their failure to prevent the enemy from persecuting Him and His followers.

He thus rebukes them:

Twenty years have passed, O kings, during which We have, each day, tasted the agony of a fresh tribulation.

No one of them that were before Us hath endured the things We have endured.

Would that ye could perceive it!

They that rose up against Us have put us to death, have shed our blood, have plundered our property, and violated our honour.

Though aware of most of our afflictions, ye, nevertheless, <p307> have failed to stay the hand of the aggressor.

For is it not your clear duty to restrain the tyranny of the oppressor, and to deal equitably with your subjects, that your high sense of justice may be fully demonstrated to all mankind?

God hath committed into your hands the reins of the government of the people, that ye may rule with justice over them, safeguard the rights of the down-trodden, and punish the wrong-doers.

If ye neglect the duty prescribed unto you by God in His Book, your names shall be numbered with those of the unjust in His sight.

Grievous, indeed, will be your error.

Cleave ye to that which your imaginations have devised, and cast behind your backs the commandments of God, the Most Exalted, the Inaccessible, the All-Compelling, the Almighty?

Cast away the things ye possess, and cling to that which God hath bidden you observe.

Seek ye His grace, for he that seeketh it treadeth His straight Path.(6)

And again:

If ye stay not the hand of the oppressor, if ye fail to safeguard the rights of the downtrodden, what right have ye then to vaunt yourselves among men?

What is it of which ye can rightly boast?

Is it on your food and your drink that ye pride yourselves, on the riches ye lay up in your treasuries, on the diversity and the cost of the ornaments with which ye deck yourselves?

If true glory were to consist in the possession of such perishable things, then the earth on which ye walk must needs vaunt itself over you, because it supplieth you, and bestoweth upon you, these very things, by the decree of the Almighty.

In its bowels are contained, according to what God hath ordained, all that ye possess.

From it, as a sign of His mercy, ye derive your riches.

Behold then your state, the thing in which ye glory!

Would that ye could perceive it!

Nay!

By Him Who holdeth in His grasp the kingdom of the entire creation!

Nowhere doth your true and abiding glory reside except in your firm adherence unto the precepts of God, your whole-hearted observance of His laws, your resolution to see that they do not remain unenforced, and to pursue steadfastly the right course.(7) <p308> General counsels to the kings Some outstanding features of the Suriy-i-Muluk are Baha'u'llah's counsels to the kings.

He outlines for them those qualities which must adorn every crowned head.

These are some of His exhortations:

Lay not aside the fear of God, O kings of the earth, and beware that ye transgress not the bounds which the Almighty hath fixed.

Observe the injunctions laid upon you in His Book, and take good heed not to overstep their limits.

Be vigilant, that ye may not do injustice to anyone, be it to the extent of a grain of mustard seed.

Tread ye the path of justice, for this, verily, is the straight path.

Compose your differences, and reduce your armaments, that the burden of your expenditures may be lightened, and that your minds and hearts may be tranquillized.

Heal the dissensions that divide you, and ye will no longer be in need of any armaments except what the protection of your cities and territories demandeth.

Fear ye God, and take heed not to outstrip the bounds of moderation, and be numbered among the extravagant.

We have learned that you are increasing your outlay every year, and are laying the burden thereof on your subjects.

This, verily, is more than they can bear, and is a grievous injustice.

Decide justly between men, and be ye the emblems of justice amongst them.

This, if ye judge fairly, is the thing that behoveth you, and beseemeth your station.

Beware not to deal unjustly with any one that appealeth to you, and entereth beneath rom shadow.

Walk ye in the fear of God, and be ye of them that lead a godly life.

Rest not on your power, your armies and your treasures.

Put your whole trust and confidence in God, Who hath created you, and seek ye His help in all your affairs.

Succour cometh from Him alone.

He succoureth whom He willeth with the hosts of the heavens and of the earth.

Know ye that the poor are the trust of God in your midst.

Watch that ye betray not His trust, that ye deal not unjustly with them and that ye walk not in the ways of the treacherous. <p309> Ye will most certainly be called upon to answer for His trust on the day when the Balance of Justice shall be set, the day when unto every one shall be rendered his due, when the doings of all men, be they rich or poor, shall be weighed.(8) The consequences of rejection Having counselled the rulers of the world, Baha'u'llah then issued an ominous warning:

If ye pay no heed unto the counsels which, in peerless and unequivocal language, We have revealed in this Tablet, Divine chastisement shall assail you from every direction, and the sentence of His justice shall be pronounced against you.

On that day ye shall have no power to resist Him, and shall recognize your own impotence.

Have mercy on yourselves and on those beneath you.(9) The call of Baha'u'llah and his summons to the kings fell on deaf ears.

Consequently, mankind has increasingly experienced harrowing afflictions of war and the breakdown of order everywhere.

The world has been plunged into such chaos and conflict that none may be found among its leaders, whether political or religious, who have the ability to rescue it from its doom and downfall.

The sufferings and tribulations which have descended upon man, as foreshadowed by Baha'u'llah, are increasing day by day, and the process of the collapse of the old order is accelerating with the passage of time.

Grievous as is the plight of humanity, more grievous still is the fact that the generality of mankind, its leaders and its wise men, have not been able to discover the cause of their sufferings and the reason for such conflict and disorder in the world.

Only those who have recognized the station of Baha'u'llah and embraced His Faith know that these calamities are the direct consequence of the rejection of the call of Baha'u'llah by mankind in general and by the kings and leaders of the world in particular.

They firmly believe that there is no refuge for man <p310> today unless and until he comes under the shadow of the Cause of God.

Not only in the Suriy-i-Muluk has Baha'u'llah warned mankind of the consequences of rejecting His call, but also in numerous Tablets revealed later He has clearly foreshadowed the torment and trials which would afflict an unbelieving humanity which turned away from its God and rejected His supreme Manifestation.

These passages gleaned from the Writings of Baha'u'llah portray the spectacle awaiting a world steeped in perversity and heedlessness: 'The time for the destruction of the world and its people hath arrived.' 'The hour is approaching when the most great convulsion will have appeared.' 'The promised day is come, the day when tormenting trials will have surged above your heads, and beneath your feet, saying: "Taste ye what your hands have wrought!"' 'Soon shall the blasts of His chastisement beat upon you, and the dust of hell enshroud you.' 'And when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake.' 'The day is approaching when its [civilization's] flame will devour the cities, when the Tongue of Grandeur will proclaim: "The Kingdom is God's, the Almighty, the All-Praised!"'(10) Although the present day and the immediate future, as foretold by Baha'u'llah, are calamitous and very dark, we are reassured by His promise that the distant future is so glorious that no man can as yet visualize it.

He states:

After a time, all the governments on earth will change.

Oppression will envelop the world.

And following a universal convulsion, the sun of justice will rise from the horizon of the unseen realm.[ll] And again:

The whole earth is now in a state of pregnancy.

The day is approaching when it will have yielded its noblest fruits, <p311> when from it will have sprung forth the loftiest trees, the most enchanting blossoms, the most heavenly blessings.(12) Having familiarized the kings with His Message in the Suriy-i-Muluk and having warned them of the terrible consequences which would follow if they paid no heed to it, the Tongue of Grandeur[1] addresses Baha'u'llah in these words: [1 The voice of God speaking to Baha'u'llah.] Warn and acquaint the people O Servant, with the things We have sent down unto Thee, and let the fear of no one dismay Thee, and be Thou not of them that waver.

The day is approaching when God will have exalted His Cause and magnified His testimony in the eyes of all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth.

Place, in all circumstances, Thy whole trust in Thy Lord, and fix Thy gaze upon Him, and turn away from all them that repudiate His truth.

Let God, Thy Lord, be Thy sufficing succourer and helper.

We have pledged Ourselves to secure Thy triumph upon earth and to exalt Our Cause above all men, though no king be found who would turn his face towards Thee.[l3] To the Christians A challenging call awaits the 'kings of Christendom' in the Suriy-i-Muluk:

O kings of Christendom!

Heard ye not the saying of Jesus, the Spirit of God, 'I go away, and come again unto you'?

Wherefore, then, did ye fail, when He did come again unto you in the clouds of heaven, to draw nigh unto Him, that ye might behold His face, and be of them that attained His Presence?

In another passage He saith: 'When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.' And yet, behold how, when He did bring the truth, ye refused to turn your faces towards Him, and persisted in disporting yourselves with your pastimes and fancies.

Ye welcomed Him not, neither did ye seek His Presence, that ye might hear <p312> the verses of God from His own mouth, and partake of the manifold wisdom of the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

Ye have, by reason of your failure, hindered the breath of God from being wafted over you, and have withheld from your souls the sweetness of its fragrance.

Ye continue roving with delight in the valley of your corrupt desires.

Ye, and all ye possess, shall pass away.

Ye shall, most certainly, return to God, and shall be called to account for your doings in the presence of Him Who shall gather together the entire creation...(14) To the Sultan of Turkey The only monarch addressed individually in the Suriy-i-Muluk is Sultan Abdu'l-'Aziz of Turkey, whose royal edicts had caused Baha'u'llah to be confined in the city of Adrianople, designated by Him as the 'remote prison', and later in the city of Akka, the 'Most Great Prison'.

A great part of His address is translated into English.[1] The opening passage alone demonstrates the majesty of Baha'u'llah.

His words, uttered with divine authority, portray the King as a mere vassal: [1 Gleanings, section CXIV.] Hearken, O King (Sultan Abdu'l-'Aziz), to the speech of Him that speaketh the truth, Him that doth not ask thee to recompense Him with the things God hath chosen to bestow upon thee, Him Who unerringly treadeth the straight Path.

He it is Who summoneth thee unto God, thy Lord, Who showeth thee the right course, the way that leadeth to true felicity, that haply thou mayest be of them with whom it shall be well.[l5] Baha'u'llah reproves the King for having entrusted his affairs to ministers who are not trustworthy

and God-fearing.

The corruption which existed in the court of the Sultan, coupled with an oppressive regime, had caused unbearable sufferings for Baha'u'llah and His companions.

Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizir, and Fu'ad Pasha, the Foreign Minister, in company <p313> with other men, had been the source of oppression and tyranny in that land.

No wonder that Baha'u'llah, the Judge and the Counsellor for mankind, should have devoted a considerable part of His address to the Sultan admonishing him in these words:

Beware, O King, that thou gather not around thee such ministers as follow the desires of a corrupt inclination, as have cast behind their backs that which hath been committed into their hands and manifestly betrayed their trust.

Be bounteous to others as God hath been bounteous to thee, and abandon not the interests of thy people to the mercy of such ministers as these.

Lay not aside the fear of God, and be thou of them that act uprightly.

Gather around thee those ministers from whom thou canst perceive the fragrance of faith and of justice, and take thou counsel with them, and choose whatever is best in thy sight, and be of them that act generously...

Take heed that thou resign not the reins of the affairs of thy state into the hands of others, and repose not thy confidence in ministers unworthy of thy trust, and be not of them that live in heedlessness.

Shun them whose hearts are turned away from thee, and place not thy confidence in them, and entrust them not with thine affairs and the affairs of such as profess thy faith.

Beware that thou allow not the wolf to become the shepherd of God's flock, and surrender not the fate of His loved ones to the mercy of the malicious.

Expect not that they who violate the ordinances of God will be trustworthy or sincere in the faith they profess.

Avoid them, and preserve strict guard over thyself, lest their devices and mischief hurt thee.

Turn away from them, and fix thy gaze upon God, thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful.[l6] In addressing the Sultan, Baha'u'llah makes one of the most thought-provoking statements in this Tablet.

He affirms:

Know thou for a certainty that whoso disbelieveth in God is neither trustworthy nor truthful.

This, indeed, is the truth, the undoubted truth.

He that acteth treacherously towards <p314> God will, also, act treacherously towards his king.

Nothing whatever can deter such a man from evil, nothing can hinder him from betraying his neighbour, nothing can induce him to walk uprightly.[l7] In order to appreciate this statement let us remember that many people whoso believe in God may be truthful and honest in a normal situation.

But the real criterion of a man's truthfulness and honesty is his attitude at the time of temptation.

When severe tests and trials descend upon man, the only thing which keeps him truthful is his faith in God.

If he does not believe in God, there is no motivation within him to resist temptation.

Baha'u'llah continues to offer His counsels to the Sultan with great mercy and compassion.

These few passages gleaned from His exhortations amply demonstrate Baha'u'llah's loving-kindness, as well as His authority.

Wert thou to incline thine ear unto My speech and observe My counsel, God would exalt thee to so eminent a position that the designs of no man on the whole earth can ever touch or hurt thee.

Observe, O King, with thine inmost heart and with thy whole being, the precepts of God, and walk not in the paths of the oppressor...

Place not thy reliance on thy treasures.

Put thy whole confidence in the grace of God, thy Lord.

Let Him be thy trust in whatever thou doest, and be of them that have submitted themselves to His Will.

Let Him be thy helper and enrich thyself with His treasures, for with Him are the treasuries of the heavens and of the earth...

Overstep not the bounds of moderation, and deal justly with them that serve thee.

Bestow upon them according to their needs, and not to the extent that will enable them to lay up riches for themselves, to deck their persons, to embellish their homes, to acquire the things that are of no benefit unto them, and to be numbered with the extravagant.

Deal with them with undeviating justice, so that none among them may

either suffer want, or be pampered with luxuries.

This is but manifest justice. <p315> Allow not the abject to rule over and dominate them who are noble and worthy of honour, and suffer not the highminded to be at the mercy of the contemptible and worthless, for this is what We observed upon Our arrival in the City (Constantinople), and to it We bear witness.

We found among its inhabitants some who were possessed of an affluent fortune and lived in the midst of excessive riches, whilst others were in dire want and abject poverty.

This ill beseemeth thy sovereignty, and is unworthy of thy rank...

Set before thine eyes God's unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life.

Bring thyself to account ere thou art summoned to a reckoning, on the Day when no man shall have strength to stand for fear of God, the Day when the hearts of the heedless ones shall be made to tremble.

It behoveth every king to be as bountiful as the sun, which fostereth the growth of all beings, and giveth to each its due, whose benefits are not inherent in itself, but are ordained by Him Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty.

The King should be as generous, as liberal in his mercy as the clouds, the outpourings of whose bounty are showered upon every land, by the behest of Him Who is the Supreme Ordainer, the All-Knowing...

Thou art God's shadow on earth.

Strive, therefore, to act in such a manner as befitteth so eminent, so august a station.

If thou dost depart from following the things We have caused to descend upon thee and taught thee, thou wilt, assuredly, be derogating from that great and priceless honour.

Return, then, and cleave wholly unto God, and cleanse thine heart from the world and all its vanities, and suffer not the love of any stranger to enter and dwell therein...

Let thine ear be attentive, O King, to the words We have addressed to thee.

Let the oppressor desist from his tyranny, and cut off the perpetrators of injustice from among them that profess thy faith.(18) <p316> To the ministers of the Sultan In the Suriy-i-Muluk Baha'u'llah addresses the ministers of the Sultan, and reproaches them for their actions.

These are a few passages:

Say:

It behoveth you, O Ministers of State, to keep the precepts of God, and to forsake your own laws and regulations, and to be of them who are guided aright.

Better is this for you than all ye possess, did ye but know it.

If ye transgress the commandment of God, not one jot or tittle of all your works shall be acceptable in His sight.

Ye shall, erelong, discover the consequences of that which ye shall have done in this vain life, and shall be repaid for them.

This verily, is the truth, the undoubted truth...

Say:

What!

Cleave ye to your own devices, and cast behind your backs the precepts of God?

Ye, indeed, have wronged your own selves and others.

Would that ye could perceive it!

Say:

If your rules and principles be founded on justice, why is it, then, that ye follow those which accord with your corrupt inclinations and reject such as conflict with your desires?

By what right claim ye, then, to judge fairly between men?

Are your rules and principles such as to justify your persecution of Him Who, at your bidding, hath presented Himself before you, your rejection of Him, and your infliction on Him every day of grievous injury?

Hath He ever, though it be for one short moment, disobeyed you?

All the inhabitants of Iraq, and beyond them every discerning observer, will bear witness to the truth of My words.(19) Baha'u'llah assures the ministers that His Mission is not to lay His hands on their treasures and earthly goods.

He affirms His detachment from all else save God and states that all the treasures of the world appear as a handful of dust in His estimation and in the estimation of His loved ones.

For everything shall perish except the splendours of the Cause of God.

He warns the ministers of their fate:

Know ye that the world and its vanities and its embellishments <p317> shall pass away.

Nothing will endure except God's Kingdom which pertaineth to none but Him, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Help in Peril, the All-Glorious, the Almighty.

The days of your life shall roll away, and all the things with which ye are occupied and of which ye boast yourselves shall perish, and ye shall, most certainly, be summoned by a company of His angels to appear at the spot where the limbs of the entire creation shall be made to tremble, and the flesh of every oppressor to creep.

Ye shall be asked of the things your hands have wrought in this, your vain life, and shall be repaid for your doings.

This is the day that shall inevitably come upon you, the hour that none can put back.

To this the Tongue of Him that speaketh the truth and is the Knower of all things hath testified.(20) To the citizens of Constantinople To the inhabitants of Constantinople Baha'u'llah also directs His admonitions and counsels.

He exorts them to fear God, to incline their ears to His call, to rid themselves of pride, and to detach themselves from this world.

These are some of His exhortations:

Fear God, ye inhabitants of the City (Constantinople), and sow not the seeds of dissension amongst men.

Walk not in the paths of the Evil One.

Walk ye, during the few remaining days of your life, in the ways of the one true God.

Your days shall pass away as have the days of them who were before you.

To dust shall ye return, even as your fathers of old did return...

Incline your ears to the counsels which this Servant giveth you for the sake of God.

He, verily, asketh no recompense from you and is resigned to what God hath ordained for Him, and is entirely submissive to God's Will.

The days of your life are far spent, O people, and your end is fast approaching.

Put away, therefore, the things ye have devised and to which ye cleave, and take firm hold on the precepts of God, that haply ye may attain that which He hath <p318> purposed for you, and be of them that pursue a right course...

Beware that ye swell not with pride before God, and disdainfully reject His loved ones.

Defer ye humbly to the faithful, they that have believed in God and in His signs, whose hearts witness to His unity, whose tongues proclaim His oneness, and who speak not except by His leave.

Thus do We exhort you with justice, and warn you with truth, lest perchance ye may be awakened.

Lay not on any soul a load which ye would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for any one the things ye would not desire for yourselves.

This is My best counsel unto you, did ye but observe it.(21) In addressing the people of Constantinople Baha'u'llah makes His own position clear to them:

Know ye that I am afraid of none except God.

In none but Him have I placed My trust; to none will I cleave but Him, and wish for naught except the thing He hath wished for Me.

This, indeed, is My heart's desire, did ye but know it.

I have offered up My soul and My body as a sacrifice for God, the Lord of all worlds.

Whoso hath known God shall know none but Him, and he that feareth God shall be afraid of no one except Him, though the powers of the whole earth rise up and be arrayed against him.

I speak naught except at His bidding, and follow not, through the power of God and His might, except His truth.

He, verily, shall recompense the truthful...

The day is approaching when God will have raised up a people who will call to remembrance Our days, who will tell the tale of Our trials, who will demand the restitution of Our rights from them that, without a tittle of evidence, have treated Us with manifest injustice.(22) It is interesting to note that in His exhortations to the inhabitants of Constantinople, most of whom were Sunnis, Baha'u'llah extols in glowing terms the virtues and exalted station of <p319> Imam Husayn, describes his sacrifice, and prays that He Himself may similarly lay down His life in the path of God.

To the divines and philosophers The ecclesiastical leaders of Constantinople are denounced in the Suriy-i-Muluk for their waywardness and negligence in that they did not seek to attain His presence and did not investigate His Cause.

Baha'u'llah rebukes them for being worshippers of 'names', and lovers of leadership.

He grieves that they failed to recognize Him as their Lord and reckons them as being spiritually dead.

Baha'u'llah addresses the 'wise men' of Constantinople and the philosophers of the world.

He warns them not to become proud of their learning, for the essence of wisdom and knowledge is the fear of God and the recognition of His Manifestation.

He rebukes them for their failure to seek enlightenment from Him, and counsels them not to violate the laws of God, nor to pay attention to the ways of men and their habits.

To the French Ambassador Baha'u'llah reproaches the French Ambassador in Constantinople for having combined with the Persian Ambassador in acting against Him without enquiring into His case.

He tells the French Ambassador that he has neglected the exhortations of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels, otherwise he would not have united himself with the Persian Ambassador.

He warns him that soon his glory will pass away and he will have to answer for his doings in the presence of his Lord.

He counsels him, and those like him, to tread the path of justice and not to follow the promptings of the evil within their own selves. <p320> To the Persian Ambassador A considerable portion of the Suriy-i-Muluk is addressed to Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, the Persian Ambassador in Constantinople.[1] We have already referred to his activities against Baha'u'llah.[2]He was a native of Qazvin, one of the ablest statesmen of Persia, who remained in his post as Persian Ambassador in Constantinople for about fifteen years from 1270-85 A.H. (1853-68).

In 1288 A.H. (1871) he was promoted to the post of Foreign Minister.

Later he was dismissed.

Having incurred the Shah's displeasure he was installed as the custodian of the Shrine of Imam Rida in Mashhad[3] and there he died suddenly in 1298 A.H. (1881) at the age of fifty-seven.

It is commonly believed that he was offered a cup of poisoned coffee by the order of the Shah. [1 The full text of this particular part of the Suriy-i-Muluk is translated into English and included in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, section CXIII.] [2 See chapter 3.] [3 Meshed.] In the Suriy-i-Muluk, Baha'u'llah addresses him in these challenging words:

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 <p321> 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.

Cast away, therefore, the mere conceit thou dost follow, for mere conceit can never take the place of truth.

Be thou of them that have truly repented and returned to God, the God Who hath created thee, Who hath nourished thee, and made thee a minister among them that profess thy faith...

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.(23) Baha'u'llah sternly rebukes the Ambassador, as a representative of his country, for the persecutions and sufferings which had been heaped upon the believers in Persia and especially for the supreme crime of the execution of the Bab.

These are a few passages: ...How many those who every year, and every month, have because of you been put to death!

How manifold the injustices ye have perpetrated -- injustices the like of which the eye of creation hath not seen, which no chronicler hath ever recorded!

How numerous the babes and sucklings who were made orphans, and the fathers who lost their sons, because of your cruelty, O ye unjust doers!

How oft hath a sister pined away and mourned over her brother, and how oft hath a wife lamented after her husband and sole sustainer!

Your iniquity waxed greater and greater until ye slew Him[1] Who had never taken His eyes away from the face of God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great.

Would that ye had put Him to death after the manner men are wont to put one another to death!

Ye slew Him, however, in such circumstances as no man hath ever witnessed.

The heavens wept sore over Him, and the souls of them who are nigh unto God cried out for <p322> His affliction.

Was He not a Scion of your Prophet's ancient House?

Had not His fame as a direct descendant of the Apostle been spread abroad amongst you?

Why, then, did ye inflict upon Him what no man, however far ye may look back, hath inflicted upon another?

By God!

The eye of creation hath never beheld your like.

Ye slay Him Who is a Scion of your Prophet's House, and rejoice and make merry while seated on your seats of honour!...(24) [1 The Bab. (A.T.)] Baha'u'llah continues in this vein and states:

Ye have persisted in your waywardness until ye rose up against Us, though We had committed nothing to justify your enmity.

Fear ye not God who hath created you, and fashioned you, and caused you to attain your strength, and joined you with them that have resigned themselves to Him (Muslims)?

How long will ye persist in your waywardness?

How long will ye refuse to reflect?

How long ere ye shake off your slumber and are roused from your heedlessness?

How long will ye remain unaware of the truth?...

Ye perpetrate every day a fresh injustice, and treat Me as ye treated Me in times past, though I never attempted to meddle with your affairs.

At no time have I opposed you, neither have I rebelled against your laws.

Behold how ye have, at the last, made Me a prisoner in this far-off land!

Know for a certainty, however, that whatever your hands or the hands of the infidels have wrought will never, as they never did of old, change the Cause of God or alter His ways.

Give heed to My warning, ye people of Persia!

If I be slain at your hands, God will assuredly raise up one who will fill the seat made vacant through My death, for such is God's method carried into effect of old, and no change can ye find in God's method of dealing.

Seek ye to put out God's light that shineth upon His earth?

Averse is God from what ye desire.

He shall perfect His light, albeit ye abhor it in the secret of your hearts.(25) Having rebuked the Ambassador for the injustices inflicted on the Cause of God, Baha'u'llah addressed him in these words: <p323> Despite what thou hast done I entertain -- and to this God is My witness -- no ill-will against thee, nor against any one, though from thee and others We receive such hurt as no believer in the unity of God can sustain.

My cause is in the hand of none except God, and My trust is in no one else but Him.

Erelong shall your days pass away, as shall pass away the days of those who now, with flagrant pride, vaunt themselves over their neighbour.

Soon shall ye be gathered together in the presence of God, and shall be asked of your doings, and shall be repaid for what your hands have wrought, and wretched is the abode of the wicked doers!

By God!

Wert thou to realize what thou hast done, thou wouldst surely weep sore over thyself, and wouldst flee for refuge to God, and wouldst pine away and mourn all the days of thy life, till God will have forgiven thee, for He, verily, is the Most Generous, the All-Bountiful...

I know not the path ye have chosen and which ye tread, O congregation of My ill-wishers!

We summon you to God, We remind you of His Day, We announce unto you tidings of your reunion with Him, We draw you nigh unto His court, and send down upon you tokens of His wondrous wisdom, and yet lo, behold how ye reject Us, how ye condemn Us, through the things which your lying mouths have uttered, as an infidel, how ye devise your devices against Us!...(26) In this part of the Suriy-i-Muluk Baha'u'llah alludes to Mirza Buzurg Khan,[1] the Persian Consul-General in Baghdad who was His implacable enemy and who had played a major part in His exile to Constantinople.

He refers to him as the Minister whose name His pen was loth to mention.

He denounces this haughty and arrogant man in the following passage: [1 For more details see vol.

I, pp.

143-7, passim.] For eleven years We dwelt in that land,[1] until the Minister representing thy movement arrived, whose name Our pen is loth to mention, who was given to wine, who followed his <p324> lusts, and committed wickedness, and was corrupt and corrupted Iraq.

To this will bear witness most of the inhabitants of Baghdad, wert thou to inquire of them, and be of such as seek the truth.

He it was who wrongfully seized the substance of his fellow-men, who

forsook all the commandments of God, and perpetrated whatever God had forbidden.

Eventually, he, following his desires, rose up against Us, and walked in the ways of the unjust.

He accused Us, in his letter to thee, and thou didst believe him and followed in his way, without seeking any proof or trustworthy evidence from him.

Thou didst ask for no explanation, nor didst thou attempt either to investigate or ascertain the matter, that the truth might be distinguished from falsehood in thy sight, and that thou mightest be clear in thy discernment.

Find out for thyself the sort of man he was by asking those Ministers who were, at that time, in Iraq, as well as the Governor of the City (Baghdad) and its high Counsellor, that the truth may be revealed to thee, and that thou mayest be of the well-informed.(27) [1 Iraq. (A.T.)] And finally, the closing passages of His address to the Ambassador reveal Baha'u'llah's loving-kindness as He exhorts him to piety, justice, and humility before God and His loved ones:

It is not Our purpose in addressing thee these words to lighten the burden of Our woe, or to induce thee to intercede for Us with any one.

No, by Him Who is the Lord of all worlds!

We have set forth the whole matter before thee, if perchance thou might realize what thou hast done, might desist from inflicting on others the hurt thou hast inflicted on Us, and might be of them that have truly repented to God, Who created thee and created all things, and might act with discernment in the future.

Better is this for thee than all thou dost possess, than thy ministry whose days are numbered.

Beware lest thou be led to connive at injustice.

Set thy heart firmly upon justice, and alter not the Cause of God, and be of them whose eyes are directed towards the things that have been revealed in His Book.

Follow not, under any <p325> condition, the promptings of they evil desires.

Keep thou the law of God, thy Lord, the Beneficient, the Ancient of Days.

Thou shalt most certainly return to dust, and shalt perish like all the things in which thou takest delight.

This is what the Tongue of truth and glory hath spoken.

Rememberest thou not God's warning uttered in times past, that thou

mayest be of them that heed His warning?

He said, and He, verily, speaketh the truth: 'From it (earth) have We created you, and unto it will We return you, and out of it will We bring you forth a second time.' This is what God ordained unto all them that dwell on earth, be they high or low.

It behoveth not, therefore, him who was created from dust, who will return unto it, and will again be brought forth out of it, to swell with pride before God, and before His loved ones, to proudly scorn them, and be filled with disdainful arrogance.

Nay, rather it behoveth thee and those like thee to submit yourselves to them Who are the Manifestations of unity of God, and to defer humbly to the faithful, who have forsaken their all for the sake of God, and have detached themselves from the things which engross men's attention, and lead them astray from the path of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised.

Thus do We send down upon you that which shall profit you and profit them that have placed their whole trust and confidence in their Lord.(28)

Moves Towards a Further Banishment This Persian Ambassador, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, who had already succeeded in his efforts to induce the Turkish Government to banish Baha'u'llah twice, played an important part also in bringing about His exile to Akka.

Soon after the 'Most Great Separation' had begun, when the followers of Baha'u'llah dissociated themselves from Mirza Yahya and his supporters, Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani began to intensify his campaign of misrepresentations against Baha'u'llah.

He went to Constantinople and met several times with the Persian Ambassador.

In the course of these interviews he complained about Baha'u'llah and poisoned the mind of the Ambassador <p326> with so much falsehood and calumny that some of the authorities, who had previously been impressed by Baha'u'llah's uprightness and dignity, became disillusioned.

And at last he succeeded, through misrepresentations and exaggerated statements, in arousing the fears and suspicion of the Ambassador.

Siyyid Muhammad also contacted high officials in the Sublime Porte and spoke to them about Mirza Yahya in highly complimentary terms, while referring to Baha'u'llah's activities as subversive and aimed at overthrowing the Ottoman Government.

In these shameful representations, Siyyid Muhammad was ably aided by his accomplice, a certain Aqa Jan[1] known as Taj Kulah (Skew-cap), a retired artillery officer in the Turkish army.

This man, who created many troubles for Baha'u'llah and His companions both in Adrianople and Akka, was a native of Salmas in Adhirbayjan.

He was originally an officer in the Persian army, then defected to the Ottomans, was installed in the Turkish army, promoted to the rank of Colonel and after some years retired in 1283 A.H. (1866).

He came in contact with Siyyid Muhammad in Constantinople and became influenced by his satanic spirit.

So potent was this influence that Aqa Jan became a faithful ally and followed in the footsteps of his master till the end.

When interrogated by the authorities on 1 April 1868, in Constantinople, after his arrest in that city, he testified that he had never met Mirza Yahya, but had been in communication with him through Siyyid Muhammad.

He admitted that he did not understand the writings of Mirza Yahya, nor had he seen any miracles from him.

His motive for following him had been to serve the Ottoman Government.

To prove this, Aqa Jan made an utterly fantastic statement.

He claimed that the great majority of the people of Persia, including the wives of Nasiri'd-Din Shah, were the followers of Mirza Yahya!

He expressed his belief that if the Ottoman Government were to support the cause of Mirza Yahya, the Persian people would relinquish their Government and come under the rule of the Ottomans.

Aqa Jan pleaded that he had prepared a written <p327> statement on this subject to convince the authorities, but had not yet been able to release it. [1 Not to be confused with Mirza Aqa Jan, Baha'u'llah's amanuensis.] In the course of this interrogation, Aqa Jan explained his relationship with Siyyid Muhammad.

He gave testimony that he had accompanied Siyyid Muhammad in 1867 to the Foreign Office where they had had an interview with a certain high-ranking official.

The purpose of this visit, according to him, had been to convince the Government that Mirza Yahya ought to be the recipient of the monthly allowance[1]and not Baha'u'llah.

Aqa Jan affirmed that he had twice visited the Sublime Porte and delivered a petition by Mirza Yahya to the Prime Minister concerning this allowance. [1 See p.

57.] It is important to note at this juncture that when the news of Mirza Yahya's misrepresentation concerning the monthly allowance reached Baha'u'llah, He declined to draw this allowance any more.

According to the testimony of Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi, who was arrested in Constantinople and interrogated on 7 April 1868, Baha'u'llah's refusal to receive the allowance dated from about August 1867.

From that time onwards, Baha'u'llah had to sell some of His belongings in order to provide the barest necessities for Himself and those who were dependent on Him.

As to Siyyid Muhammad and Aqa Jan, those two men of evil exerted every effort for a long time to discredit Baha'u'llah in the eyes of the authorities, while representing Mirza Yahya as a man of God endowed with great qualities.

A few Turkish government officials were misled by their propaganda.

Among them were a certain Ismat Effendi and Haji Muhammad Nuri.

Siyyid Muhammad, master of deception and hypocrisy, had managed to win them over by promising great favours when Mirza Yahya had established his ascendancy.

One of the tricks was that he and Mirza Yahya inscribed a few words within a circle, added their numerical values and claimed that the result indicated that the conquest of Constantinople would take place in the year 1286 A.H. (1869).

This circle is referred to by <p328> Baha'u'llah, in one of His letters to the Governor of Adrianople, as a circle which was designed to stir up sedition.

It was circulated among certain people and a copy of it reached the authorities in Adrianople and Constantinople.

Mirza Yahya promised his Turkish supporters in government circles that he would emerge victorious in the struggle and would richly reward them for their help.

He conferred upon Aqa Jan the title of Sayfu'l-Haq (The Sword of Truth) and promised him that he would achieve the conquest of Iraq, while to the amusement of many, the evil-minded Siyyid Muhammad was designated as Quddus (Holy), an appellation which was widely used in official circles.

At the same time that this propaganda was going on, Siyyid Muhammad succeeded in creating fear in the minds of the authorities by stating that Baha'u'llah, with the help of His followers -- many of whom were visiting Adrianople -- and assisted by the Bulgarian leaders, was preparing to launch an attack on Constantinople!

These false reports alarmed the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister and resulted in the formulation of new policies which eventually led to Baha'u'llah's imprisonment in the fortress of Akka.

Interrogations in Constantinople In order to allay the fears and clear the misgivings which Siyyid Muhammad had instilled in the mind of the Persian Ambassador, Baha'u'llah sent to Constantinople from Adrianople two of His faithful disciples, Mishkin-Qalam[1] and Aliy-i-Sayyah.[2] A third believer, Jamshid-i-Gurji, was sent with them, mainly to help and serve them while in that city.

Mishkin-Qalam and Sayyah had some interviews with the Ambassador, but the calumnies and misrepresentations of Siyyid Muhammad and Aqa Jan had already

made an abiding impression upon his mind.

Soon their machinations resulted in the arrest and <p329> imprisonment of Baha'u'llah's emissaries.

Mishkin-Qalam, Sayyah and Jamshid-i-Gurji were taken into custody in Constantinople. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

26-8.] [2 See above pp.

209-13.] Some months before this, a devoted believer from Baghdad, Haji Mirza Musay-i-Javahiri,[1] entitled Harf-i-Baqa, had sent three exquisite Arab horses as a gift to Baha'u'llah.

And now in this period, when He and His companions were living in great austerity, there was no alternative but to sell these horses.

Baha'u'llah therefore instructed three of His servants, Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani, Darvish Sidq-'Ali, and Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi, to take the horses to Constantinople and sell them there with the help of Abdu'l-Ghaffar.[2] Not knowing that Mishkin Qalam and Sayyah had been taken to prison, these men went straight to a certain inn known as Kahrabarji Khan where the former three had stayed.

Upon their arrival, however, they were arrested by the soldiers who were posted in the Khan, and conducted to prison.

Abdu'l-Ghaffar was also taken into custody.

Apart from these seven Baha'is, the Government also arrested Aqa Jan and they were all interrogated by a commission which later submitted its findings to the Sublime Porte. [1 See vol.

I, p.

211.] [2 1 See p.

411.] In these interrogations, which began in April 1868 and lasted several weeks, Aqa Jan tried very hard to disentangle himself from Mirza Yahya.

He claimed that his own activities were aimed at gaining great political power for the Ottoman Government.

But the prosecutors clearly were not impressed by his devious claims, for he was later condemned to life imprisonment in Akka.

Each of the seven Baha'i prisoners was interrogated according to the same general pattern.

The questions they were asked were similar in every case.

One of the main questions concerned the claims of Baha'u'llah.

The Baha'i prisoners were very discreet in their statements, for they did not

wish to say anything which might play into the hands of Baha'u'llah's enemies.

When one reads the account of the <p330> interrogations,(29) one marvels at their wisdom.

Although some of them were uneducated, their recognition of the Faith and their understanding of the need for its protection were very profound.

One of these men was Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi.

He had been occupied day and night with domestic work in the household of Baha'u'llah.

His main task was making tea for the visitors and pilgrims.

Yet he spoke with truth and wisdom.

When asked about the claims of Baha'u'llah and whether he had heard Him claim to be the Mihdi (The Promised One of Islam), Muhammad-Baqir stated that he had never heard Him say that.

The prosecutor, however, was anxious to find out who had claimed to be the Mihdi.

Muhammad-Baqir told him that it was the Bab and then spoke about His Revelation and martyrdom.

At this juncture it is important to remember that Baha'u'llah had advised His followers not to teach the Faith among the Ottomans.

Among the many wise considerations in this injunction was the protection of the Faith.

This counsel was uppermost in the minds of these prisoners when being interrogated.

Darvish Sidq-'Ali was another servant of Baha'u'llah whose heart overflowed with His love.

He spoke about the Bab and His Revelation, and when asked whether Baha'u'llah had claimed to be the Mihdi, he replied that he never heard Him make such a claim.

Further to this question, the prosecutor wanted to know if Baha'u'llah had made any other claim.

The Darvish replied that Baha'u'llah counselled His followers to pray and fast, to observe the commandments of God and to be loving towards each other.

When questioned about his own beliefs, he affirmed that he was only a servant of Baha'u'llah and believed in the words of His Master.

He was asked what would be his attitude if Baha'u'llah claimed to be a Prophet of God.

The Darvish stated that he would believe in Him.

Ustad Muhammad Aliy-i-Salmani was asked similar questions about Baha'u'llah's claims and he also responded in the <p331> same way.

When Ustad Muhammad-'Ali denied that Baha'u'llah had claimed to be the Mihdi, he was pressed to say what his reaction would be if Baha'u'llah did make such a claim?

He responded by saying that obviously he would have to make his decision if and when this happened.

One of the important questions which the authorities were anxious to investigate was the nature of Baha'u'llah's activities in Adrianople.

There were many wild rumours circulating at the time, all originating from Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad.

As we have already stated, Baha'u'llah did not associate with the people of Adrianople in general, nor did He involve any of them in the Faith.

Yet many dignitaries of the city, including its former governors and especially Khurshid Pasha, the Governor at the time, were attracted to Him and were among His admirers.

On several occasions, Khurshid Pasha called on Baha'u'llah and humbly sat at His feet.

One of the most cherished yearnings of his heart was fulfilled when Baha'u'llah, after much pleading and insistence by the Governor, accepted his invitation and was entertained by him one evening during the month of fasting.

In the course of these interrogations the followers of Baha'u'llah stated that Baha'u'llah did not associate with people of the city, and that He met only with His own companions who would gather in His presence.

When asked, one of the Baha'i prisoners described the nature of such gatherings, and said that they met together, recited the words of God, and listened to Baha'u'llah's exhortations -- which were to follow the teachings of God and to live in unity and peace with their fellow men.

Another important question was the relationship between Baha'u'llah and Mirza Yahya.

They wanted to know who Mirza Yahya was, and what was the extent of his knowledge and his following.

Every one of the Baha'i prisoners testified that he did not associate with him and was not therefore in a position to know much about him.

Most of them, however, said that Mirza Yahya was as a drop compared with the ocean of Baha'u'llah's knowledge.

Here we can see again their wisdom <p332> in dealing with this controversial subject.

They did not speak of Mirza Yahya's activities.

They only made it clear that Baha'u'llah was as the light and that light and darkness cannot come together.

When Darvish Sidq-'Ali was asked 'How many of Baha'u'llah's brothers were in Adrianople?', he replied that there were only two, Mirza Musa and Mirza Muhammad-Quli!

When asked who then Mirza Yahya was, he replied that he was no longer a brother of Baha'u'llah and was cut off from Him.[1] [1 See p.

408 for the fate of these seven prisoners.] Persecution in Egypt and Iraq At the same time that the Turkish authorities had begun to put pressure upon the followers of Baha'u'llah and persecute them, Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Persian Ambassador, informed Mirza Hasan Khan-i-Khu'i and Mirza Buzurg Khan, the Persian Consuls in Egypt and Iraq respectively, that the Ottomans had withdrawn their protection from the Babis.

Emboldened by this news, these two men embarked upon a campaign of persecution against the believers in these countries.

Through the instigations of Mirza Hasan Khan the authorities in Cairo arrested Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and six other believers,[1] and sent them as prisoners to the Sudan, where they endured almost unbearable hardships for many years. [1 See Appendix III.] In Iraq the fore-mentioned Mirza Buzurg Khan, assisted by Shaykh Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Iraqi,[1] a diabolical Muslim divine and an inveterate enemy of Baha'u'llah since His days in Baghdad, stirred up mischief and brought about a wave of persecutions against the defenceless community of Baha'u'llah's followers in that land. [1 Incidental with Shaykh Abdu'l-Husayn-i-Tihrani.

See vol.

I, pp.

142-7 passim.

It is interesting to note that a grandson of the Shaykh embraced the Faith of Baha'u'llah and became one of its active teachers.] At the instigation of these two men, who incited the people to rise up against the followers of Baha'u'llah, Aqa Abdu'r-Rasul-i-Qumi <p333> was stabbed to death in Baghdad.

He was a devoted believer on whom Baha'u'llah conferred the honour of being the Saqqa[1] (water supplier) of His Most Great House in that city.

For five years he served in this capacity with exemplary faithfulness and dedication.

Before him, it was Mirza Aqa Jan, Baha'u'llah's amanuensis, who carried out this function.

Aqa Abdu'r-Rasul and his brother Aqa Husayn had embraced the Cause of the Bab in the early days of the Faith in their native city of Qum.

Upon becoming Babis they were taken to Tihran and imprisoned there.

The hardships in the dungeon were so severe that after two years Aqa Husayn passed away.

But Aqa Abdu'r-Rasul endured his great sufferings for seven years of imprisonment.

When he was released he went to Baghdad where he attained the presence of Baha'u'llah and became filled with the spirit of faith. [1 Since there was no running water in the houses, there were men whose occupation it was to carry skins full of water for household use and sometimes gardening.] One day, towards the end of Baha'u'llah's stay in Adrianople, as Aqa Abdu'r-Rasul was carrying the skin of water to the House of Baha'u'llah, two men approached and stabbed him fatally.

He managed to drag himself to that House where he expired.

Later a crowd of people gathered at the Muslim graveyard to prevent his burial there.

Eventually the authorities intervened and he was buried by their order.

Baha'u'llah, in some of His Tablets, has mentioned Abdu'r-Rasul, recounted his sufferings and remembered him with much tenderness and affection.

After his martyrdom He revealed a Tablet of Visitation for him and showered His bounties upon his soul.

The martyrdom of Abdu'r-Rasul was only a signal for other atrocities which were committed against the members of the community in Iraq.

Mirza Buzurg Khan, following the advice of Shaykh Abdu'l-Husayn, decided to exile all the believers from Baghdad and neighbouring cities.

His initial move was to arrest three believers in Karbila and escort them to Baghdad in chains.

They were the fore-mentioned Shaykh Hasan-i-Zunuzi, <p334> Mulla Muhammad-Hasan-i-Qazvani and Askar-i-Sahib.

These three were to be sent to Persia and handed over to the authorities in Kirmanshah.

The hardships of the journey, and the weight of chains and fetters, brought about the death of Mulla Muhammad-Hasan in Baghdad, while Shaykh Hasan passed away in Kirmanshah.

But Askar-i-Sahib, who was a survivor of this torturous journey, was taken to the dungeon in Tihran.

However, the sufferings and privations which were inflicted upon him were so severe that after one week his soul also took its flight to the abode of the Beloved and joined its two illustrious companions in the realms of the spirit.

After these tragic events, the Consul-General continued to plot against the community in Baghdad.

He tried very hard until the Governor of Baghdad agreed to banish them to Mosul.

Consequently about seventy men, women and children were exiled from Baghdad amidst scenes of public derision.

The Governor did everything in his power to protect the company of exiles from the onslaught of the enemy.

He provided a military escort to protect them on the way to Mosul.

These refugees were subjected to severe hardships in Mosul.

When they arrived, some of the inhabitants crowded on to the rooftops and threw stones at them.

The shopkeepers refused to sell them food and no one would give them shelter.

It took a long time for them to settle in Mosul.

After much privation and difficulties most of them managed to engage in some work, sharing their modest income with each other.

They remained in Mosul for about twenty years.

During this period Baha'i pilgrims going to Akka and returning to Persia often travelled via Mosul, bringing much joy and spiritual upliftment to the refugees.

They also delivered gifts such as clothing and other goods from Baha'u'llah who wished to alleviate some of the hardship of their lives.

Notable among those who sent generous contributions were the two illustrious disciples of Baha'u'llah, designated by Him the 'King of the Martyrs' and the 'Beloved of the Martyrs'.[1] <p335> Their financial aid played an important part in bringing relief to the community.

The pilgrims became carriers of divine love and bounty from Baha'u'llah.

Through receiving many Tablets which He revealed for them, and through the visits of the pilgrims, the believers in Mosul remained faithful to Baha'u'llah and steadfast in His Cause. [1 A more detailed story of their lives will appear in a future volume.] One who rendered unique and valued services to the community was Mulla Zaynu'l-'Abidin, surnamed by Baha'u'llah Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin[1] (The Ornament of Those Who are Nigh).

He was one of the exiles to Mosul.

For about eighteen years he acted as a shepherd to the community.

Under his supervision a 'charity fund' was established -- the first fund of that kind in any Baha'i community.

His knowledge and learning, his understanding of the Faith, his intelligent and well-balanced personality, together with a delightful sense of humour, endeared him to the believers and made him the focal point of the community.

Baha'u'llah had also instructed him in His Tablets to gather the friends together, exhort them to unity and love, encourage them to deepen in the Faith, and help them to attain heavenly qualities.

He spent most of his time transcribing the Writings of Baha'u'llah and making them available to the friends.

In particular he had to make several copies of those Tablets which were addressed to some or all of the believers in Mosul, and give each one a copy. [1 For a brief account of his life, see vol.

1, pp.

25-6.] In the course of one of his journeys, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali visited Mosul.

These few lines extracted and translated from his narrative describe the state of the community there. ...I attained the presence of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin and other loved ones of God in Mosul including Aqa Mirza Muhamrnad-i-Vakil.[1] The latter, owing to destitution, had to work as a cobbler in spite of old age...

The friends in Mosul, together with the person of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin, made one remember the days spent in Baha'u'llah's holy presence in the <p336> holy city of Akka.

These believers were living in the utmost unity and harmony.

They vied with each other in their efforts and their services.

They had no desire except first, to gain the good pleasure of the Blessed Beauty, and secondly, to attain His presence.(30) [1 See Memorials of the Faithful for a brief account of his life. (A.T.)] Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin carried the weight of the community on his shoulders with great zeal and devotion until in 1885 Baha'u'llah advised him in a Tablet to proceed to Akka provided such a move did not jeopardize the state of the community.

Responding to this call, he left Mosul in 1303 A.H. (1886), and with great joy entered the presence of his Beloved.

He spent the rest of his life in that holy spot.

About the same time that Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin left, Baha'u'llah advised the friends in Mosul to proceed towards Persia or other parts of Iraq; He particularly stipulated that they should not go to the Holy Land.

They were to be cautious and leave gradually and in small numbers.

So the believers left Mosul and it ceased to be a Baha'i centre. <p337> 16 Two Kings are Summoned The Suriy-i-Muluk was not the only Tablet addressed to the kings.

Baha'u'llah also revealed a number of Tablets to certain kings, rulers and religious leaders individually.

Two of them were revealed in Adrianople: the Lawh-i-Sultan (Tablet to Nasiri'd-Din Shah) and the first tablet to Napoleon III.

Themes of the Lawh-i-Sultan Nasiri'd-Din Shah was the only monarch to have been closely involved with the Faith of the Bab from the first.

He had been informed of its birth soon after the disciples of the Bab began to spread His Faith and he had witnessed its meteoric rise.

His was the privilege as Crown Prince of meeting its Author face to face and hearing Him declare in ringing tones to an assembled gathering of the divines and dignitaries of Adhirbayjan, these majestic words: 'I am, I am, I am the Promised One!

I am the One Whose name you have for a thousand years invoked, at Whose mention you have risen, Whose advent you have longed to witness, and the hour of Whose Revelation you have prayed God to hasten.

Verily, I say, it is incumbent upon the peoples of both the East and the West to obey My word, and to pledge allegiance to My person.'(1) Having observed the overpowering zeal and enthusiasm of the Babis, and having watched with fear and dismay the humiliating defeats they had inflicted on his army,[1] he arose <p338> with the aid of his ministers and at the instigation of the clergy to wipe out the newly-born community from the land of Persia.

The execution of the Bab, the martyrdom of thousands of His followers, the imprisonment of Baha'u'llah and His exile to Iraq, together with many atrocities which were committed against an oppressed community, all took place during his reign. [1 In the days of the Bab, the believers defended themselves against their enemies.

This resulted in many bloody struggles in which the Babis triumphed over their adversaries.

Baha'u'llah has enjoined on His followers not to resort to force when attacked in the path of God.

For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see vol.

I, pp.

278-9, and above, p.

258.] It is for this reason that Baha'u'llah in one of His Tablets denounces Nasiri'd-Din Shah in these words:

Among them (kings of the earth) is the King of Persia, who suspended Him Who is the Temple of the Cause (the Bab) in the air, and put Him to death with such cruelty that all created things, and the inmates of Paradise, and the Concourse on high wept for Him.

He slew, moreover, some of Our kindred, and plundered Our property, and made Our family captives in the hands of the oppressors.

Once and again he imprisoned Me.

By God, the True One!

None can reckon the things which befell Me in prison, save God, the Reckoner, the Omniscient, the Almighty.

Subsequently he banished Me and My family from My country, whereupon We arrived in Iraq in evident sorrow.

We tarried there until the time when the King of Rum (Sultan of Turkey) arose against Us, and summoned Us unto the seat of his sovereignty.

When We reached it there flowed over Us that whereat the King of Persia rejoiced.

Later We entered this Prison, wherein the hands of Our loved ones were torn from the hem of Our robe.

In such a manner hath he dealt with Us!(2) In the light of these statements, the Tablet of Baha'u'llah addressed to Nasiri'd-Din Shah assumes a special significance.

Not only was he familiar with Baha'u'llah Himself, whose followers he was persecuting, but because of his religious background he could follow Baha'u'llah's reasoning and <p339> terminology.

However, it appears that in revealing this Tablet Baha'u'llah chose, in certain parts, to use unusually difficult Arabic words and phrases, so that the monarch might be forced to seek the help of the divines in reading it.

And this is exactly what the King did.

He passed it on to the divines and requested them to write an answer to it -- a task which they did not fulfil.

The Lawh-i-Sultan is the lengthiest Tablet revealed to any monarch.

It is partly in Arabic and partly in Persian and is composed with beauty and eloquence.

A small portion of it is translated into English by Shoghi Effendi.[1] Although revealed in Adrianople, this Tablet was sent from Akka.

A youth of seventeen, Badi', accepting martyrdom, took it to Tihran and personally handed it to the Shah.

We shall record the life and sacrifice of this youth, 'The Pride of the Martyrs', in the next volume. [1 Cited in The Promised Day Is Come, pp.

40-43, 46 and 75.] In this Tablet Baha'u'llah invites the monarch to look upon his people with the eyes of loving-kindness and to rule them with justice.

He states that both the pomp and grandeur of this world and its abasement shall pass away.

He demonstrates its transitory nature by remarking that should one open the grave of a king and that of a pauper, it would be impossible to distinguish the remains of one from the other.

In that state there is no difference between rich and poor, between ruler and subject.

He teaches that distinction for man lies in his deeds of righteousness and piety.

In several passages Baha'u'llah exhorts the King not to fix his attention on this mortal life, reminds him that there were many eminent rulers before him who have departed from this world and that no one remembers them today: their palaces lie in ruins, their treasures are dissipated, and their glory has vanished.

Men of learning, scholars, and noblemen, have come in countless numbers and have gone, leaving no trace behind.

Their power and influence have been obliterated and their names forgotten. <p340> More than once Baha'u'llah urges the King to be just, and invites him to judge between Him and His enemies.

These are His own words:

Look upon this Youth, O King, with the eyes of justice; judge thou, then, with truth concerning what hath befallen Him.

Of a verity, God hath made thee His shadow amongst men, and the sign of His power unto all that dwell on earth.

Judge thou between Us and them that have wronged Us without proof and without an enlightening Book.

They that surround thee love thee for their own sakes, whereas this Youth loveth thee for thine own sake, and hath had no desire except to draw thee nigh unto the seat of grace, and to turn thee toward the right-hand of justice.

Thy Lord beareth witness unto that which I declare.(3) Persecution of the Babis There is another passage in the Tablet concerning those officials who serve the King 'for their own sakes'.

Baha'u'llah condemns the activities of these men and states that instead of working for the prosperity of the nation, their service to the King consists mainly in denouncing a few souls as Babis, and then engaging in killing them and plundering their properties.

The history of the Faith clearly demonstrates this fact.

In Persia for many decades, the authorities acquired fame and popularity among the people by persecuting the followers of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

The best way to destroy one's enemy was to accuse him of becoming a Babi.

The onslaught against such a man would be almost instantaneous and often fatal.

Before the victim could prove his innocence, he would be faced with the most serious persecution, including death.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali has written the comical story of a Siyyid in Isfahan which illustrates this point.

He says that in the early days of the Faith in Isfahan, he came in contact with a Siyyid who was a theological student.

They became friends and Haji spoke to him about the Babi Faith.

Soon he accepted the <p341> Faith and was introduced to a few of the friends and was given some of the Writings of the Bab to read.

Later, Haji heard from an authoritative source that the Siyyid was not a sincere person, but that he was an informer and his real purpose was to find out the identity of the believers so as to pass this information to the enemies.

Haji knew that danger was looming ahead and that the believers would become a target for persecution and martyrdom.

He hit on an idea which demonstrates his vigilance as well as his resourcefulness.

He decided that the best way to get rid of the Siyyid was to denounce him as a Babi.

Such an accusation was sufficient to drive him out of the city.

Concerning this he writes:

I knew that the Siyyid was lodging in the school of Bidabad ...

I went to the school and informed its head ... that the Siyyid was a Babi and that he had in his possession some of the Babi writings.

At the same time, at my instigation, some one frightened the Siyyid and advised him to be on the alert.

The Siyyid was so scared that he left all his books and belongings behind, fled the city and did not return!(4) Another story which demonstrates the dangers of being labelled as a Babi is that of Mulla Muhammad-i-Qa'ini, surnamed Nabil-i-Akbar.[1] It is extracted from his spoken chronicle as recorded by his illustrious nephew Shaykh Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Qa'ini.

The story took place when Baha'u'llah was imprisoned in the Siyah-Chal of Tihran and a great campaign to exterminate the Babis had been mounted by the Government.

Nabil-i-Akbar, a very learned and erudite divine, was not a Babi at that time.

He had arrived in Tihran at the height of persecutions against the Babis and was on his way to the cities of Karbila and Najaf in Iraq.

While in Tihran he took up residence in a theological school headed by a certain Shaykh Abdu'l-Husayn.

This is how he describes his days in Tihran: [1 For more information about Nabil-i-Akbar, see vol.

I, pp.

9l-5.] <p342> Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn [the head of the school] was not informed of divine philosophy and metaphysics.[1] But being interested in these subjects he used to invite me to dinner in the evenings in order to find out my views and those of other learned philosophers. [1 Nabil-i-Akbar, in his earlier days, had mastered the subjects of divine philosophy and metaphysics.

It was later in his life that he went to Iraq, became a renowned mujtahid and acquired great fame.] It was during this period that one of the Babis made an attempt on the life of the Shah.[1] Consequently the fire of the King's anger spread and the order to exterminate the Babis was issued by him.

In Tihran two officers were made responsible for carrying out this order.

They were Aziz Khan-i-Sardar and Mahmud Khan-i-Kalantar.

Each day a number of people were captured and executed.

The situation was so serious that any person who was falsely accused of being a Babi would suffer the same fate and had no way of escape. [1 See God Passes By.] It happened that some of the students who were against my involvement in philosophy and disliked philosophers altogether ... had gone to Mahmud Khan to vilify me and had accused me of being a Babi.

I was spending the night in the district of Sangilaj in the home of a physician who was a friend and well-wisher.

While I was there some soldiers arrived in the early morning and took me to the home of Mahmud Khan-i-Kalantar.

However, I managed to write a few lines to Shaykh Abdu'l-Husayn and apprise him of my situation.

In the house of the Kalantar, I was taken to the upstairs quarters where I met an old man ... who was arrested for the same reason.

He became very sad when he saw me, expressed sympathy for me and with tears in his eyes begged God for my deliverance.

Then a strange commotion started elsewhere in the house.

We heard the cries and groaning of people and realized that some others who had been arrested were being tortured and beaten by the Kalantar.

Afterwards, the Kalantar came upstairs to a room opposite ours.

A few minutes later, without seeking his permission I walked up to him, and <p343> uttered words of salutation.

He did not reciprocate my greetings; instead he became angry and ignored me.

I asked, 'What is the reason for summoning me here?' He said, 'To carry out the orders of the Shah.' 'What am I guilty of?' I enquired. 'Is there a greater crime', he replied, 'than being a Babi, an enemy of religion and government?' 'This is a false accusation against me', I pleaded, 'whoever has reported me as a Babi is my enemy and had no intention other than harming me.' I saw that my words did not make any impression upon him.

Therefore I did not pursue the matter any further and submitted myself to my fate.

In the midst of all this, the secretary of Shaykh Abdu'l-Husayn arrived and handed him a letter.

After reading it, he became relaxed and happy, and began to apologize.

He said 'The Shaykh wants to see you.

You had better go at once.' As I rose to go, he also arose and accompanied me to the door and several times expressed his apologies.

I went to the school.

The Shaykh and others were waiting for me.

He was delighted to see me arrive.

Curious about my arrest, he wanted to know what had caused the incident.

I said, 'Ask this question from your arrogant students who wrongfully made false accusations and, without any justification, vilified me.' On hearing this, Shaykh Abdu'l-Husayn became very angry.

Addressing his pupils sternly, he rebuked them and promised severe punishment and expulsion for the culprit.

However, this incident, though without foundation, resulted in my becoming known as a Babi among the divines and the theological students.

In the end they came to the conclusion that I was a Babi and had been arrested, but had been released as a result of intervention by Shaykh 'Abdu'l-Husayn.

I became so well known as a Babi that the people in the streets and bazaars were pointing at me.

Some of the theological students shunned me in the streets and kept their distance so that their cloaks would not touch mine.[1] [1 The clergy had introduced this practice.

They taught that if a Muslim touched a Babi, he would be defiled.]
One evening, after I had become known as a Babi, a certain Siyyid Ya'qub, a native Qa'in, who was living in <p344> the same school, came to visit me.

Later it became apparent that he was a Babi who had been hiding his faith.

Jokingly, he said to me, 'Do you realize that you have become known in this city as a Babi?

The divines and the students call you by the name Babi, and consider you a member of that community.' I replied, 'But these rumours are without foundation.

I know nothing about this community except a mere name, have not read even one line of their writings, and have not met with any of them.' He said, 'In any case you have now become known as a Babi.

People's opinion about you is not going to change whether you read the Writings of the Bab or not.

I have come across some of these Writings, but I don't understand them.

Since I have found you to be without prejudice and a trustworthy person, endowed with discernment and good taste, I have brought them here with me so that you may read them.

I would be grateful if you would tell me your findings and conclusions.' He then took some papers from his pocket, handed them to me and left.

I glanced through the papers carelessly and only for amusement.

Because my mind was full of the words of philosophers and accustomed to their terminology, these Writings did not impress me in the least.

I found them weak and devoid of any truth or wisdom.

Therefore I hid them underneath my books.

Siyyid Ya'qub came the following evening to enquire about my findings.

I said, 'I had a cursory glance at the Writings, but did not find any subject worthy of attention.

These poor people [i.e. the Babis] place themselves in perilous situations in vain, and sacrifice their lives in the path of error.

The common people may be excused, for they are unable to distinguish between right and wrong.

But why should some men of learning tread this path and become the cause of misleading the common people?

It is clear and evident that the claims of the Bab are false, and there

is no need to prove that the Babis have erred.' Siyyid Ya'qub became disturbed by hearing these words.

For some time he remained silent and did not look at me ... then as he arose to go he recited this poem: <p345> How often knowledge and intelligence Turn into a monstrous thief and rob the wayfarer.

He then addressed me in these words: '...Turn thy gaze upon the inner significances and truth of these Writings so that you may see what no eye has seen, and hear what no ear has heard and feel what no heart has felt.' Then looking disappointed, Siyyid Ya'qub left the room.

For a while I meditated upon the state of the Siyyid and his thoughts.

I became perturbed by his disappointment.

I suspected that he was a Babi and was aiming to mislead me...

In order to demonstrate to the Siyyid the falsity of the claims of the Bab and to save him from following the path of error, I took out the Writings of the Bab and began to read them carefully in order to prove the invalidity of His claims from His Own Writings.

Although this was my reason for reading these Writings, nevertheless my inner being was overtaken with fear and trembling and I was disturbed.

I found myself to be placed on the Sirat[1] at the crossroads between death and deliverance.

However, this time as I read them, to my amazement I found that each line opened a new door of knowledge before my face and a new world appeared in front of my eyes.

I could not sleep that night.

My astonishment increased every moment as I read and re-read these Writings.

I immersed myself in that billowing sea, and like a diver acquired gems of great value.

It came to pass that the truth of the Cause of the Primal Point[2] became as dear to me as the sun in its midmost point in the sky.

I found myself possessed of a new heart, a new eye, a new soul and a new strength.

All the knowledge and philosophy that I had previously learned and which were a source of pride to me, appeared as utter nothingness... [1 See p.

74, f.n. (A.T.)] [2 The Bab.] The following evening Siyyid Ya'qub arrived.

He became so filled with ecstasy and rapture when he heard my story that he prostrated himself on the ground.

He was captivated and stunned by the news.

Tears flowed down his cheeks <p346> and his laughter resounded through the room.

After that he kept bringing more Writings to me...(5) The Station of Baha'u'llah Returning to the Lawh-i-Sultan, there is a celebrated passage in which Baha'u'llah describes His own Revelation in language of beauty and power:

O king!

I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been.

This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing.

And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow.

The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not.

Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely.

This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred.

Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing?

Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and attributes!

They move it as they list.

The evanescent is as nothing before Him Who is the Ever-Abiding.

His all-compelling summons hath reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people.

I was indeed as one dead when His behest was uttered.

The hand of the will of thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful, transformed Me.

Can any one 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...(6) These words attest the sublimity of the station of Baha'u'llah.

For He attributes His Revelation to God alone, proclaims His knowledge to be

innate and not acquired, describes His own utter submissiveness to the command of the Almighty <p347> and indicates that every act of His is that of God.

Any unbiased observer who has spiritual insight may readily discover, from the above quoted passages, the truth of the Cause of Baha'u'llah.

For no human being of sound mind and self-motivated, can make such a staggering claim, announce it to the kings, be persecuted as a result and stand by it till the end.

Only a Manifestation of God can speak as Baha'u'llah did.

There is an interesting comment made by Abdu'l-Baha in connection with the fore-mentioned passage: 'I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been.' He explains:

This is the state of manifestation ... it is an intellectual reality, exempt and freed from time, from past, present, and future; it is an explanation, a simile, a metaphor, and is not to be accepted literally; it is not a state that can be comprehended by man.

Sleeping and waking is passing from one state to another.

Sleeping is the condition of repose, and wakefulness is the condition of movement; sleeping is the state of silence, wakefulness is the state of speech; sleeping is the state of mystery, wakefulness is the state of manifestation.

For example, it is a Persian and Arabic expression to say that the earth was asleep, and the spring came and it awoke; or the earth was dead, and the spring came and it revived.

These expressions are metaphors, allegories, mystic explanations in the world of signification.

Briefly, the Holy Manifestations have ever been, and ever will be, Luminous Realities; no change or variation takes place in Their essence.

Before declaring Their manifestation, They are silent and quiet like a sleeper, and after Their manifestation, They speak and are illuminated, like one who is awake.(7) We have previously referred to Abdu'l-Baha's explanation[1] that a Manifestation of God is always a Manifestation and that <p348> He has within Him all the divine attributes long before He receives the call of Prophethood.

In one of His Tablets Baha'u'llah gives us a glimpse of the stirrings of God's Revelation within Him in His early life.

Although we shall never be able to understand fully the reality and all the implications of what took place, nevertheless the story is awe-inspiring.

Baha'u'llah states(8)that once during His childhood, He read[2] the story of the bloodshed which resulted from the massacre of the tribe of Qurayzah,[3] as

narrated by Mulla Muhammad Baqir-i-Majlisi.[4]He relates how He was overtaken by feelings of intense sadness and grief as a result of reading this episode.

At that time He beheld the limitless ocean of God's forgiveness and mercy surging before Him.

Then he beseeched God to vouchsafe unto all the peoples of the world that which would establish unity and love among them.

He then describes how suddenly on a certain day before dawn, He was overcome by a condition which completely affected His manners, His thoughts and His words.

It was a transfiguration which gave Him the tidings of ascendancy and exaltation, and which continued for twelve days.

After this He testifies that the ocean of His utterance began to surge,[5] and the Sun of Assurance shone forth and He continued in this state until He manifested Himself to man.

He further testifies in the same Tablet that in this Dispensation, He has, on the one hand, removed from religion anything which could become the cause of suffering and disunity and, on the other, ordained <p349> those teachings which would bring about the unity of the human race. [1 See vol.

I, p.

208.] [2 In the days of Baha'u'llah, one of the first books children learnt to read was the Qur'an, followed by other books on the Islamic religion and poetry.] [3 The details are well known in the history of Islam.] [4 A famous divine, the author of a series of books known as Biharu'l-Anvar containing traditions of Islam and other accounts.

The Shi'ah cherish this series as an encyclopedia of Shi'ah religious knowledge.] [5 God bestows upon His Manifestation the power of His Words.

Those who have attained the presence of Baha'u'llah testified that when He spoke it was as if an ocean had rushed forth.

His words were at once tender and powerful.] In the Lawh-i-Sultan Baha'u'llah informs the King of the exalted station which awaits him should he recognize the Source of Divine Revelation in this day.

He addresses him in these words:

O King!

Wert thou to incline thine ear unto the shrill of the Pen of Glory and the cooing of the Dove of Eternity which, on the branches of the Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing, uttereth praises to God, the Maker of all names and Creator of earth and heaven, thou wouldst attain unto a station from which thou wouldst behold in the world of being naught save the effulgence of the Adored One, and wouldst regard thy sovereignty as the most contemptible of thy possessions, abandoning it to whosoever might desire it, and setting thy face toward the Horizon aglow

with the light of His countenance.

Neither wouldst thou ever be willing to bear the burden of dominion save for the purpose of helping thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High.

Then would the Concourse on high bless thee.

O how excellent is this most sublime station, couldst thou ascend thereunto through the power of a sovereignty recognized as derived from the Name of God!...(9) The Challenge to the Divines In this Tablet to the Shah, Baha'u'llah has made a proposition of the utmost significance, a proposition which no Manifestation of God in earliest days had ever produced.

He states:

Would that the world-adorning wish of His Majesty might decree that this Servant be brought face to face with the divines of the age, and produce proofs and testimonies in the presence of His Majesty the Shah!

This Servant is ready, and taketh hope in God, that such a gathering may be <p350> convened in order that the truth of the matter may be made clear and manifest before His Majesty the Shah.

It is then for thee to command, and I stand ready before the throne of thy sovereignty.

Decide, then, for Me or against Me.(10) With this challenging statement Baha'u'llah has not fallen short of His duty to establish the truth of His Cause among the peoples of the world.

In this Tablet He speaks of the divines, points out their insincerity and lack of understanding, quotes certain traditions of Islam which foreshadow the wickedness of the divines in the latter days, and states that the following passages revealed by Him in The Hidden Words are addressed to such people who are outwardly noted for their learning and piety, but who are inwardly subservient to their passions and lust: 'O ye that are foolish, yet have a name to be wise!

Wherefore do ye wear the guise of the shepherd, when inwardly ye have become wolves, intent upon My flock?

Ye are even as the star, which riseth ere the dawn, and which, though it seem radiant and luminous, leadeth the wayfarers of My city astray into the paths of perdition.' And likewise He saith: 'O ye seeming fair yet inwardly foul!

Ye are like clear but bitter water, which to outward seeming is crystal pure but of which, when tested by the Divine Assayer, not a drop is accepted.

Yea, the sunbeam falls alike upon the dust and the mirror, yet differ they in reflection even as doth the star from the earth: nay, immeasurable is the difference!' And also He saith: 'O

essence of desire!

At many a dawn have I turned from the realms of the Placeless unto thine abode, and found thee on the bed of ease busied with others than Myself.

Thereupon, even as the flash of the spirit, I returned to the realms of celestial glory, and breathed it not in My retreats above unto the hosts of holiness.' And again He saith: 'O bond slave of the world!

Many a dawn hath the breeze of My loving-kindness wafted over thee and found thee upon the bed of heedlessness fast asleep.

Bewailing then thy plight it returned whence it came.'(11) <p351> The 'Sword of Wisdom and Utterance' In the Lawh-i-Sultan Baha'u'llah tries to dispel some of the doubts and misgivings in the mind of the Shah concerning the activities of the believers.

We must recall that since the birth of the Babi Faith, the authorities in Persia had been fearful of the influence of the Babi community.

The manner in which the followers of the Bab defended themselves against the onslaught of their adversaries had earned them the reputation of being men of fierce courage and immense self-sacrifice.

At the same time the majority of the people were apprehensive of their intentions in furthering the interests of their Faith.

The Government had accused the believers of being men of violence ever since a few irresponsible Babis had made an attempt on the life of the Shah in 1850.

Baha'u'llah assures the King in convincing terms that since His arrival in Iraq, He has exhorted the members of the community to abandon fighting and strife, to lay down the sword, and to conquer the cities of the hearts of men with the sword of wisdom and of utterance.

Baha'u'llah quotes passages from one of His Tablets in which He counsels the friends that it is better for them to be slain in the path of God than to slay.

He states that people have misunderstood the meaning of the word 'victory' which appears in heavenly Books.

Victory is not won by fighting; it is achieved by good deeds and a stainless life.

In this connection it is important to note that the followers of the Bab who defended themselves against the onslaught of the enemy, did so because of the special circumstances under which the Faith of the Bab was born and His Message propagated.

To appreciate this, we must become familiar with the conditions prevailing at that time in Persia within the Shi'ah community, and the nature of the Revelation of the Bab.

Let us recall that all the Manifestations of God prior to the Revelation of the Bab appeared within the cycle of prophecy <p352> which began with Adam,[1] as the first Manifestation of God of that cycle and culminated with the Dispensation of Muhammad who was the Seal of the Prophets.

They, one and all, prophesied the advent of the Day of God and recounted their visions of the 'Glory of God' manifesting Himself to mankind. [1 According to Baha'i belief the Biblical story of Adam is allegorical and He was the first Manifestation of God in recorded history (see Some Answered Questions by Abdu'l-Baha).] The main objects of the Bab in revealing Himself were to herald the Revelation of Baha'u'llah and prepare the people for His coming, to close the cycle of prophecy and to open the cycle of fulfilment when the 'Glory of God' would be manifested as foretold in the heavenly Books.[1] Islam, the last Dispensation in the chain of the Prophetic Cycle, was therefore more closely involved with the Revelation of the Bab than any other religion. [1 See pp.

16-18.] The Bab appeared among the people of Islam.

His Message was eagerly anticipated by them, as both Shi'ah and Sunni expected the appearance of the Qa'im or Mihdi respectively.

This expectation was based on the prophecies of Muhammad and the Imams, especially the latter who had left thousands of traditions concerning the appearance of the Qa'im.[1] To the Islamic community, the coming of the Promised One was real and had been explicitly foretold.

The Shi'ah among whom the Bab appeared lauded the glory of the Qa'im in their meetings, fervently prayed for His advent and rose to their feet at the mention of His name.

That the Bab had a special link with Islam is not due merely to the fact that He was born a Muslim and was Himself a Siyyid, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, but lies in His special Mission to terminate the Dispensation of Muhammad and abrogate its laws.

So tremendous was this function that its mere contemplation cast terror into the hearts and souls of men in Persia.

Even some of the followers of the Bab, those who had not fully appreciated the significance <p353> and potency of His Revelation, lost their faith when they heard the annulment of Qur'anic Law being proclaimed at the conference of Badasht[2] by a distinguished band of His disciples a little more than four years after the Declaration of the Bab.

To abrogate the twelve-hundred-years old law of Islam was not a light matter.

People had cherished it for centuries and had shaped their lives and conduct in accord with its provisions.

To annul these by a stroke of the Pen needed not only divine power, but also divine wisdom and mercy. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

193-4.] [2 For more information see The Dawn-Breakers.] The Manifestations of God do not change the laws of old suddenly or prematurely, nor do they reveal new laws until their followers are ready and able to carry them out.

Baha'u'llah explains:

Know of a certainty that in every Dispensation the light of Divine Revelation has been vouchsafed to men in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity.

Consider the sun.

How feeble its rays the moment it appeareth above the horizon.

How gradually its warmth and potency increase as it approacheth its zenith, enabling meanwhile all created things to adapt themselves to the growing intensity of its light.

How steadily it declines until it reacheth its setting point.

Were it all of a sudden to manifest the energies latent within it, it would no doubt cause injury to all created things...

In like manner, if the Sun of Truth were suddenly to reveal, at the earliest stages of its manifestation, the full measure of the potencies which the providence of the Almighty hath bestowed upon it, the earth of human understanding would waste away and be consumed; for men's hearts would neither sustain the intensity of its revelation, nor be able to mirror forth the radiance of its light.

Dismayed and overpowered, they would cease to exist.[l2] Through His mercy, the Manifestation of God introduces new laws and ordinances gradually, and leads His followers from one world into another, stage by stage, knowing too <p354> well that they are attached to their age-long traditions and habits.

For instance, when Muhammad appeared, the Arabs consumed intoxicating drinks to excess.

But the Prophet did not forbid drinking at once.

At first, He merely remarked that it had advantages and disadvantages but stated that the harm such drinks inflicted on them was far greater than the good.

Later in His ministry He forbade those who were drunk to take part in congregational prayer and, later still, when His followers had acquired maturity, He denounced drinking categorically and enjoined on them to abstain.[1] [1 See Qur'an ii.

219, iv.

43 and v.

93-4.] The Bab and Baha'u'llah have likewise revealed the laws of religion at those times in Their ministries when Their followers were ready to receive

them.

The Bab did not reveal the bulk of His laws until half-way through His ministry.

Baha'u'llah also revealed the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Book of His Laws, when His ministry had run half its course, and even then, it was some years before He released a copy of this Book to His followers.

Another feature of the Revelation of the Bab, relating to this subject, is the fact that His Dispensation was destined to be very short in duration and was to be superseded by the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

This meant that the Bab formulated only those laws and teachings which were vital to the progress of His Cause during a short space of time.

Knowing that His Revelation was only a stepping-stone to a universal Revelation, He deliberately refrained from touching upon those teachings which were premature and which were ordained later by Baha'u'llah as His followers acquired capacity for them.

One such teaching practised in Islam and which the Bab did not alter because of the conditions prevailing at the time, was that of taking up arms and defending oneself for the sake of one's religion.

That is why the Babis took part in many battles which were defensive in nature.

They were seldom involved in an offensive whether individually or collectively.

The struggles of Mazindaran, Zanjan and Nayriz are clear examples.[1] [1 See The Dawn-Breakers.]<p355> From the early days of His ministry, Baha'u'llah on numerous occasions counselled the Babis to abandon this age-old practice of fighting for one's religion.

But it was some years before the believers realized that a new day had dawned and that they were to sheathe their swords for good.

Eventually Baha'u'llah, in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, prohibited the carrying of arms by individuals unless it was essential.

The Sufferings of Baha'u'llah In the following passages in the Lawh-i-Sultan Baha'u'llah dwells on the sufferings which He had endured in the path of God:

I have seen, O Shah, in the path of God what eye hath not seen nor ear heard...

How numerous the tribulations which have rained, and will soon rain, upon Me!

I advance with My face set towards Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Bounteous, whilst behind Me glideth the serpent.

Mine eyes have rained down tears until My bed is drenched.

I sorrow not for Myself, however.

By God!

Mine head yearneth for the spear out of love for its Lord.

I never passed a tree, but Mine heart addressed it saying: 'O would that thou wert cut down in My name, and My body crucified upon thee, in the path of My Lord!'...

By God!

Though weariness lay Me low, and hunger consume Me, and the bare rock be My bed, and My fellows the beasts of the field, I will not complain, but will endure patiently as those endued with constancy and firmness have endured patiently, through the power of God, the Eternal King and Creator of the nations, and will render thanks unto God under all conditions.

We pray that, out of His bounty -- exalted be He -- He may release, through this imprisonment, the necks of men from chains and fetters, and cause them to turn, with sincere faces, towards His Face, Who is the Mighty, the Bounteous.

Ready is He to answer whosoever calleth upon Him, and high is He unto such as commune with Him.(13) Baha'u'llah also reminds the King that all the Prophets and <p356> Messengers of God have suffered at the hands of their own people, and yet no one reflects on the cause of such behaviour.

He speaks of Muhammad and names some of His enemies who strenuously opposed and denounced Him.

He also tells the story of Jesus and the cruel judgement passed on Him by religious leaders.

In the Lawh-i-Sultan, Baha'u'llah dwells on the trials and persecutions which He Himself has endured in the path of God.

He speaks about His imprisonment in the Siyah-Chal, recounts the sufferings which were inflicted upon Him in that dark and pestilential subterranean dungeon, recalls His deliverance from that prison through the power of God, and His exile to Iraq by the order of the King, after His innocence had been estalished.

He further acquaints the Shah with conditions in Iraq: the opposition of the Shi'ah clergy, their plotting and vicious attacks which resulted in His advising some of His companions to seek the protection of the Governor of Iraq.[1] He describes His arrival in Constantinople, and foretells His future exile to and imprisonment in Akka, a city described by Him in these words: [1 This is a reference to those companions whom Baha'u'llah advised to enrol themselves as subjects of the Ottoman Government.] According to what they say, it is the most desolate of the cities of the world, the most unsightly of them in appearance, the most detestable in climate, and the foulest in water.

It is as though it were the metropolis of the owl.[l4] In a passage in the Lawh-i-Sultan written with great eloquence and power, Baha'u'llah prophesies in unequivocal language the triumph of His Cause when people will enter it in troops.

He declares that in past Dispensations, God established the ascendancy of His Cause through afflictions and sufferings.

He prays that in this day these calamities may also act as a buckler to protect His Faith, and makes the following statement concerning trials and tribulations suffered in the path of God: <p357> By Him Who is the Truth!

I fear no tribulation in His path, nor any affliction in My love for Him.

Verily God hath made adversity as a morning dew upon His green pasture, and a wick for His lamp which lighteth earth and heaven.(15) The Story of a Martyr Concerning the believers in this Dispensation, Baha'u'llah states that they regard their religion to be the true Faith of God and therefore have renounced their lives in His path and for His sake.

He affirms that this act alone is evidence of the truth of their Cause.

For no person will normally renounce his life unless he is insane.

Baha'u'llah, however, dismisses the charge of insanity on the grounds that it cannot be brought against countless men of distinguished conduct and virtuous character who have sacrificed their lives in the path of God.

He describes some of the persecutions which were, for twenty years, inflicted upon the community by order of the King.

So fierce had been the onslaught that there was no land which had not been dyed with their blood!

How many children had been made fatherless, how many fathers had lost their children, and how many mothers had not dared, through fear and dread, to mourn over their slaughtered children!

Yet, He testifies, the fire of divine love which burned within the hearts of these people was so bright that even if they were to be hewn in pieces, they would not forswear the love of their Lord.

The history of the Faith depicts the lives and martyrdom of thousands of believers throughout Persia, and amply testifies to their faith and detachment, their heroism and self-sacrifice.

It also vividly portrays the harrowing circumstances in which the families of martyrs suffered, and recounts the excruciating afflictions which assailed them from every direction.

The stories of the martyrs in various parts of Persia have been written in detail and some have been published.

A great wave of sadness descends upon the heart when one reads them.

For instance, the accounts of the suffering and persecution heaped upon the <p358> martyrs and their families, as portrayed in the History of the Martyrs of Yazd, are so heart-rending that seldom can one read even a few pages without being overcome with deep sorrow and agonizing grief.

The martyrdom of Haji Mirzay-i-Halabi-Saz (tinsmith), one of the most devoted followers of Baha'u'llah in Yazd, is an episode from that history.

It happened during one of the most grievous upheavals in Yazd in the summer of 1903 when a great number of Baha'is were savagely martyred within a few days:

On the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad [17 Rabi'u'l-Avval], a religious festival, a group of men gathered outside the house of Haji Mirza.

For a considerable time they viciously pelted the door of the house with stones and broke all the windows.

They behaved with such vulgarity that eventually Haji Mirza appeared on the roof of the house[1] above the porch and demanded an explanation.

Some of the men felt embarrassed as soon as they saw Haji Mirza; they bowed their heads in shame and left.

Some of the younger ones continued their acts of violence but were eventually calmed by Haji Mirza's words and left also ...However they returned again after sunset and continued throwing stones into the courtyard for about three hours. [1 Houses in Yazd have flat roofs easily accessible by a staircase from inside. (A.T.)] Following his usual practice, Haji Mirza left in the early hours of the morning for the home of Haji Mirza Mahmud-i-Afnan[1] where the friends gathered to pray at the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar.[2] He stayed there until the prayers ended just before sunrise.

As everybody was about to go, Haji Mirza expressed a desire to bid farewell to them all, as he thought that he might never see them again.[3] He embraced everyone and said farewell to them.

Haji Mirza Mahmud advised Haji Mirza not to go home for a while but to wait and see what would transpire during the day.

But he went home saying 'Whatever is God's will, will happen.' [1 Son of the illustrious Haji Muhammad-Taqi, the Vakilu'd-Dawlih, a cousin of the Bab. (A.T.)] [2 Literally, 'The Dawning-Place of the mention of God', a Baha'i House of Worship.

Although there were not 'Houses of Worship' in Yazd, the believers gathered at someone's home and referred to it as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar.

Baha'u'llah has particularly indicated the merits of attending the service before dawn; prayers said at that time have a special potency. (A.T.)] <p359> [3 The upheaval in Yazd, although it lasted only a few days, witnessed the martyrdom of many people.

Every Baha'i family was engulfed in its fury and no one felt safe. (A.T.)]

Haji Mirza was busy working at home during the morning when a number of men appeared outside his door, headed by a certain Hasan-i-Mihrizi, an unusually strong and well-built person.

He kicked the door open and the crowd poured in.

Haji Mirza was cutting a piece of glass at the time, while his wife and three young children sat beside him.

Hasan-i-Mihrizi, who was at the front of the crowd and carried a heavy chain,[1] took Haji Mirza by the hand, violently dragged him out of the house and beat him savagely with the chain.

The crowd surged forward and everybody began beating the victim.

They attacked him fiercely, some with sticks or stones, others with chains, yet others with bare hands.

They beat him so much that he fell on the ground dazed and bleeding all over. [1 Violent men in those days carried a large steel chain as a weapon.

A few lashings of the chain often caused serious injuries. (A.T.)]

The wife of Haji Mirza, in desperation, pushed her way through the crowd and threw herself on the wounded body of her husband.[1] But the crowd beat her with sticks and chains, and wounded her badly.

They tried hard to push her away from the body of her beloved, but she clung on top of him for some time.

The children, near the crowd, were <p360> screaming and frightened to death.

God knows what the children went through.

The eldest son, Inayatu'llah, was eleven, the eldest daughter, Ridvan, was nine and the youngest, Tuba, was six years old.

After a while, the attackers succeeded in separating husband and wife.

Although his body was battered and covered with blood from head to toe, Haji Mirza was dragged towards the home of the Imam-Jum'ih,[2] accompanied by a crowd which by now numbered about two hundred.

No sooner did they drag him a few steps then his wife managed to throw herself on his body again, but the crowd removed her.

Nevertheless she managed to cling to him yet again.

This time they beat her harder than before until she fell unconscious in the street.

Then they took Haji Mirza away.

In the meantime a number of people had entered the house and were busy

plundering everything they could find... [1 Women in those days did not usually become involved in public affairs.

They led a sheltered life and in public wore a chadur (a large piece of cloth which covers the head and all other clothing and reaches almost to the ground).

It was against the laws of religion for a man who was not married to a woman, or not a close relative, to see her face, how much more shocking to touch her body.

The fact that Haji Mirza's wife, wearing her chadur, pushed her away through a crowd of men, is indicative of her utter desperation and distress. (A.T.)] [2 The religious dignitary of the city who leads men in prayer in the mosque.

It was the practice to bring any one accused of being a Baha'i to the presence of a mujtahid, where he would be required to recant his faith if he wished to be set free.

The mujtahids would pass the death sentence on those who refused to recant.

But quite often in that upheaval in Yazd, the attackers killed their victims before going through this procedure. (A.T.)] As to the children of that glorious martyr, they were wailing and weeping beside their beloved mother who had fallen on the ground unconscious...

Then a few women arrived and took away a scarf which had covered her head.[1] Her body had been so badly beaten by chains and sticks, and kicked by so many, that her thin dress was torn and she lay almost naked on the ground.

At last a certain woman by the name of Rubabih, who was known to be a prostitute, showed a truly magnanimous spirit.

She went to her home, which was close to the house of Haji Mirza, brought an old chadur, spread it over the injured woman and tried in vain to revive her.

In the meantime the children were sobbing unceasingly; their grief knew no bounds.

Rubabih did all <p361> she could to comfort them, and carried their mother on her back to her home.[2] There she prepared a herbal infusion, gave some to the children and administered some to their mother, who regained consciousness after about two hours.

But the children had cried so much that they were exhausted. [1 This act was designed to further humiliate the wife of Haji Mirza, as it was considered grossly unchaste if a woman displayed her hair in public. (A.T.)] [2 In this incident Rubabih showed great courage in going to help the victim.

Normally in such circumstances, no one dared to extend assistance to a Baha'i, for he himself would then be accused of being one.

In this case, it appears that Rubabih, herself an outcast because she was a

prostitute, did not fear retaliation from the public. (A.T.)] As soon as she was able, Haji Mirza's wife ... asked for news of her husband and was told that he was taken to the Castle [Government headquarters] and that the Prince[1] was treating him with the utmost kindness...

On hearing this she broke down in tears.

Rubabih consoled her, saying, 'Thanks to God, Haji is safe, you should try not to weep in front of the children as they have suffered greatly'...

She helped Haji Mirza's wife ... to her feet and carried her home with the children.

The house was thoroughly plundered.

The furniture, carpets, clothes, even doors of the rooms were taken away.

Nothing of any value was left.

They could not close the door of the house as it had been broken and thrown on the ground. [1 Prince Mahmud Mirza, the Jalalu'd-Dawlih, a son of Prince Mas'ud Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan.

He tried to stop the massacre of Baha'is but failed.

For three days he lost effective control and during this time many lost their lives.

Some years later he was in London at the time when Abdu'l-Baha visited that city.

He went especially to attain the presence of Abdu'l-Baha, threw himself at His feet and asked for forgiveness. (A.T.)] The mother, covered all over with wounds, and the grief-stricken children, took refuge in the house and were sobbing most bitterly until about midday, when a woman[1] brought tidings from Haji Mirza Mahmud-i-Afnan that Haji Mirza had walked unaided to the Castle and was well.

She conveyed further words of comfort from Afnan, assuring <p362> her that Haji Mirza was now in a safe place and would return home in the evening.

This news brought some relief.

Rubabih although fearful that she might be attacked, managed to bring some food for the children and their mother.

In the meantime, since the house had no door, women and children[2] came in frequently to see if there was anything left to take away. [1 In the massacre of 1903 in Yazd, it was mainly Baha'i women who acted as news carriers and messengers.

It was not easy for the public to detect their identity, because they wore veils. (A.T.)] [2 It was against the principle of chastity if men went into someone's house without giving ample warning to allow the women to retire to

the inner apartments, or to wear their veils.

But women could walk freely. (A.T.)] The mother and her children had taken refuge in the corner of a room waiting for darkness and Haji Mirza's arrival ... with the help of Rubabih they cooked a simple broth to be served to Haji Mirza when he should return.

But he did not come.

As to Haji Mirza, the crowd were taking him to the home of the Imam-Jum'ih.

When they reached the entrance of Musalla,[1] however, a certain man by the name of Hasan the son of Rasul-i-Mu'ayyidi stepped forward and called on Haji Mirza to utter imprecations against the Baha'i Faith.

Haji Mirza only gazed at him and did not respond.

Hasan repeated his demand.

Haji said 'You are neither a judge of religious law nor of common law.

It is none of your business.

When they take me to the proper authority I shall answer questions.' On hearing this, Hasan went to the nearby butcher's shop, took a cleaver, and with a powerful stroke slashed Haji Mirza's skull open.

With another stroke he hacked off his arm... [1 A mosque in Yazd. (A.T.)] In the meantime two or three government officials arrived at the scene and took the injured man to the Government house at the Castle.

Haji Mirza possessed such spiritual strength that in spite of his severe injuries he managed to walk to the Castle.

Only upon arrival inside the corridor did he fall to the ground, but regained consciousness a few minutes later...

The crowd went as far as the Castle and then dispersed...

Haji Mirza took out his American watch which was adorned with the picture of the Master on the <p363> back and gave it to a certain Aqa Mulla Muhammad-'Ali[1] to deliver it to his wife and children...

In the meantime the executioner had tied his own apron on Haji's head, but blood was pouring out and he was becoming weaker ... until he expired.

Thus he attained to the exalted station of martyrdom.

The executioner unwound the apron from Haji Mirza's head and placed it on his face... [1 He was one of the believers who were taken into custody by order of the Imam-Jum'ih.

These men were there when Haji Mirza arrived and watched him die. (A.T.)]

After dark the Governor ... sent for Haji Mirza Mahmud-i-Afnan and asked him to send someone to remove the body about two hours after sunset and bury it.

Accordingly ... the custodian of the Buq'atu'l-Khadra[1] called at the Castle.

He carried the body of Haji Mirza on his back to the Buq'atu'l-Khadra and buried it there.

Haji Mirza was thirty-eight years old when martyred. [1 The Afnan family in Yazd built a private cemetery not far from the Castle.

This was later offered for use as a Baha'i burial ground.

Baha'u'llah designated it the Buq'atu'l-Khadra (The Verdant Spot).

Several of the Afnans, Baha'i martyrs, and eminent Baha'is are buried there.

The cemetery is no longer in use. (A.T.)] The family of Haji Mirza remained unaware of his martyrdom that night.

They stayed awake till morning, anxious and expectant of his safe arrival home.

The children were tense and continually asked about their father.

The mother did her best to assure them that he would come soon.

But time passed, and when it was four hours after sunset the night curfew guards went on duty around the city.

Thus any hope of Haji Mirza's arrival faded.

The children could not sleep.

The mother, in pain from her many wounds and injuries, was highly distressed and could not sleep either.

She waited till the dawn and when her husband did not return, she went, in spite of her condition, to the home of Haji Mirza Mahmud-i-Afnan to enquire about him.

As soon as his eyes fell on her, Haji Mirza Mahmud could not contain his grief and began to weep.

This was how Haji Mirza's wife learned of the martyrdom of her husband.

God alone knows the state of her mind at that time and the agony that <p364> she went through!

She wept ceaselessly, and returned home broken and shattered.

The children, on the other hand, were waiting for their mother to bring their father back.

But when they saw her alone and in such a state of anguish, they

realized what had happened.

Their heart-rending cries and wails of lamentation could be heard in all directions.

We can feel the agony of their hearts when we reflect on their condition.

The house was completely empty, the father had been killed, the mother wounded and the people had arisen against them.

Two days later, a woman maliciously spread rumours that Haji Mirza's wife had been putting poison in public cisterns[1] in the town.

This gross accusation was an excuse for some ... women to make an attempt on her life.

As she was sitting with her children in a corner of the house lamenting her bereavement and praying to God, suddenly a group of women, sixty or seventy strong, entered the house, pushed her down on the ground and began to beat her with the intention of taking her life.

The children were thrown about by that cruel and bloodthirsty mob, which created a great commotion in the house.

However, the Kad-Khuda[2] and his men were speedily informed.

They rushed to the spot, forced their way through the crowd and found that Haji Mirza's wife had been unconscious on the ground for about half an hour and the attackers were still beating her...

These savage women were convinced that she was dead when the Kad-Khuda and his men drove them out. [1 Public cisterns with cooling towers built in each district of the city used to supply drinking water to the public.

People filled jugs of water at the cistern and took them home. (A.T.)] [2 The chief officer of a district.] Haji Mirza's wife lay on the ground, her clothes torn, her body naked and her flesh covered in blood and dust.

Pieces of her torn clothing could be seen scattered around her.

The Kad-Khuda, overcome by feelings of shame, was embarrassed to look at her exposed body and therefore left.

The children who had been brutally handled for a long time, found themselves standing around the battered body of their <p365> mother.

There was no one to look after them except an old grandmother who was herself an invalid.

But God demonstrated His might and power that day.

His mercy and compassion descended upon the children.

After an hour, the lifeless body of their mother began to move.

Soon she regained consciousness.

Rubabih brought some clothes and put them on her.

On hearing that Haji Mirza's wife was alive, the group of women were determined to go back and put an end to her life.

But in spite of the fact that she was unable to move, the Kad-Khuda managed to carry her out of the house.

She was taken to the Government house in the Castle...

Shaykh Muhammad-Ja'far-i-Sabzivari, who was a mujtahid, undertook to protect her...

He sent for a certain woman, Bibi Bagum ... and asked her to keep the unfortunate woman in her home and to look after her until the situation improved.

For twenty days, Haji Mirza's wife was kept in the home of Bibi Bagum.

During this period the innocent young children, wronged and oppressed, their parents taken from them, stayed in the ruins of their plundered home with an old sick grandmother.

They merely existed, in a state of perpetual fear and expectation, -- they feared for their lives, thinking they would be killed too, while their hearts were in a state of expectation of their mother's return.

The children suffered so much that after twenty days their bodies looked like mere skeletons, and their faces had the colour of a corpse.

Many people who passed by threw stones into the house, reviled them and used foul language.[1] Each time they heard the shouts of cursing and execration, the children thought the people were coming to kill them and would be frightened to death.

They would run towards the frail body of their grandmother and throw themselves on her bosom.

The agony of bereavement so tortured the eldest son, <p366> Inayatu'llah, that he became seriously ill and lay in the corner of a room.

The other children suffered so much that they came very close to death.

They often asked their grandmother 'What have we done that people kill us?' No pen can bear to write the agony which the children went through... [1 In many cities, especially in Yazd, the enemies of the Faith often gathered outside the houses of the believers where they shouted curses and execrated the names of the Founders of the Faith.

These fanatical and savage outbursts throughout the years, and especially during the massacre of 1903, cast terror into the hearts of the inhabitants of these houses. (A.T.)] Eventually, after twenty days, when the situation had become somewhat more peaceful, the mother came back

with much fear and trepidation.(16) Haji Muhammad-Tahir-i-Malmiri, the author of the History of the Martyrs of Yazd, concludes the account of Haji Mirza's martyrdom with the following words of his widow.

She recounted to him the agony of her heart when she returned home and found her children almost lifeless. 'God is my witness, when I arrived home, I saw three children whom I could not recognize as my own.

I wanted to know where my children were; my mother said to me: "These are your children!"

When I was assured that they were indeed my children, I was plunged into such a state of agony and distress that all my sufferings of the past paled into insignificance.' She said to me, 'Even now as I recount the story after all these years, my whole body is seized with fear and trembling.'[l7] The same author, in his unpublished 'History of the Faith in the Province of Yazd', has written the following account giving us another glimpse of the sufferings inflicted upon the children of Haji Mirza while their mother was kept in custody:

Zaynal-i-'Arab was a neighbour of Haji Mirza.

The roof of his house was joined to that of Haji Mirza's house.

One evening during the upheaval of Yazd, Zaynal was told by some violent men in Mir-Chaqmaq[1] that, since he was a neighbour of Haji Mirza's, they suspected him of being a <p367> Baha'i.

The fact however was that Zaynal, far from being a Baha'i, was a vile man and foremost among the trouble-makers of Yazd.

When such an accusation was levelled against him, he became so angry that he decided to go and kill the wife of Haji Mirza and her three children.

He went home immediately, took up his revolver, tied a cartridge belt around his waist and went up the stairs onto the roof[2] of his own house.

From there he crossed to the roof of Haji Mirza's house and began to shout abuse and utter curses.

He loaded the gun and announced in a loud voice in vulgar terms his intention of going down the steps to kill the ... children of Haji Mirza.

At that time the children were sitting in a corner around their old grandmother.

The ugly figure of Zaynal, shouting abuse and standing on the roof with a revolver in his hand, frightened the innocent children terribly.

They cried, screamed and begged. [1 An important square in Yazd with a famous mosque and minaret.

In those days it was a centre of religious festivities.] [2 See p.

358, f.n.] While Zaynal was on his way down the steps to the courtyard of the house, another neighbour, Aqa Husayn, a son of Aqa Rida, who had heard the commotion, appeared on the roof just in time to avert a tragedy.

He ran towards Zaynal and tried to stop him.

He asked 'Why do you want to kill these children?' 'This evening,' Zaynal replied, 'a number of people in Mir-Chaqmaq accused me of being a Baha'i, because I am a neighbour of Haji Mirza's.

I am therefore determined to wipe out this family.

No one can stop me from carrying out my intention.' Aqa Husayn counselled Zaynal to calm down and began to explain that the children were innocent.

He said 'Their father, who was a Baha'i, has been put to death, and no one knows the fate of their mother.

These children have been orphaned; their father was assaulted in front of their eyes and later died, their mother was beaten so much that it is not yet known whether she is dead or alive.

The children now live in a ruined house; they don't get enough food.

Look at their pitiful condition.

They are reduced to mere skeletons.

How can your conscience allow you to carry out your design?

The Prophet of Islam exhorted His followers to honour their neighbours even if they were infidels.

You <p368> are a follower of the Prophet, how can you do such a thing to these innocent children?' These words of Aqa Husayn, however, had no effect on Zaynal.

Eventually Aqa Husayn urged him to postpone the intended murder, to go to his house instead for a smoke, have a cup of tea and relax for a while...

And at last Aqa Husayn managed to take Zaynal to his home.

Through loving-kindness and much exhortation he succeeded in changing Zaynal's mind.

As to the children, God alone knows the measure of their anguish and fear that night!...

One of them said to me: 'We sat all night in the dark and were literally trembling with fear.

Our eyes were fixed in the direction of the stairs expecting Zaynal to come down at any time.

The slightest noise would scare us to death for we thought that he was coming downstairs.

We shall never forget the horrors and the dread of that night.(18) Baha'u'llah's First Tablet to Napoleon III This Tablet was revealed by Baha'u'llah in Adrianople and forwarded to the Emperor through one of his ministers.

Shoghi Effendi writes concerning it:

In His first Tablet Baha'u'llah, wishing to test the sincerity of the Emperor's motives, and deliberately assuming a meek and unprovocative tone, had, after expatiating on the sufferings He had endured, addressed him the following words: 'Two statements graciously uttered by the king of the age have reached the ears of these wronged ones.

These pronouncements are, in truth, the king of all pronouncements, the like of which have never been heard from any sovereign.

The first was the answer given the Russian Government when it inquired why the war (Crimean) was waged against it.

Thou didst reply: "The cry of the oppressed who, without guilt or blame, were drowned in the Black Sea wakened me at dawn.

Wherefore, I took up arms against thee."

These oppressed ones, however, have suffered a greater wrong, and are in greater distress.

Whereas <p369> the trials inflicted upon those people lasted but one day, the troubles borne by these servants have continued for twenty and five years, every moment of which has held for us a grievous affliction.

The other weighty statement, which was indeed a wondrous statement manifested to the world, was this: "Ours is the responsibility to avenge the oppressed and succour the helpless."

The fame of the Emperor's justice and fairness hath brought hope to a great many souls.

It beseemeth the king of the age to inquire into the condition of such as have been wronged, and it behooveth him to extend his care to the weak.

Verily, there hath not been, nor is there now, on earth any one as oppressed as we are, or as helpless as these wanderers.[l9] In another passage Shoghi Effendi writes:

Baha'u'llah's previous Message, forwarded through one of the French ministers to the Emperor, had been accorded a welcome the nature of which can be conjectured from the words recorded in the 'Epistle to the Son of the Wolf': 'To this (first Tablet), however, he did not reply.

After Our arrival in the Most Great Prison there reached Us a letter from his minister, the first part of which was in Persian, and the latter in his own handwriting.

In it he was cordial, and wrote the following: "I have, as requested by you, delivered your letter, and until now have received no answer.

We have, however, issued the necessary recommendations to our Minister in Constantinople and our consuls in those regions.

If there be anything you wish done, inform us, and we will carry it out."

From his words it became apparent that he understood the purpose of this Servant to have been a request for material assistance.'(20) It is reported that upon reading it the Emperor flung down the Tablet of Baha'u'llah and stated 'If this man is God, I am two Gods!' Soon after His arrival in Akka, Baha'u'llah despatched a most challenging Tablet to Napoleon.

We shall write about this Tablet in the next volume. <p370> 17 The Kitab-i-Badi' The Kitab-i-Badi' is Baha'u'llah's apologia written in defence of His Faith and to demonstrate the validity and the truth of His Own Mission.

It is mainly in Persian, but also contains many passages in Arabic.

This book may be regarded in the same light as the Kitab-i-Iqan, in which Baha'u'llah establishes the authenticity and truth of the Message of the Bab.

A contrasting feature of these two books is that, whereas the Kitab-i-Iqan was addressed to the Bab's illustrious uncle[1] who as a result of reading it became illumined by the light of faith and acknowledged the truth of the Cause of God, the Kitab-i-Badi' was addressed to the notorious Mirza Mihdiy-i-Gilani, a so-called Babi and a man of perfidy and hypocrisy.

It was revealed in response to several venomous comments which he had made in a letter to one of the companions of Baha'u'llah.

In the early days of the Faith, Mirza Mihdi had entered the fold of the Babi community in Tihran and was a close friend of Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Tambaku-Furush.

Mirza Mihdi, however, was known among the Babis as a man who lived an impious life and whose deeds were contrary to the teachings of God. [1 See vol.

I, chapter 10.] When Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was preparing to go to Adrianople, Mirza Mihdi decided to accompany him.

They were both in Tihran at the time.

The former at first agreed, but then refused to travel with him when he observed Mirza Mihdi's reprehensible conduct and attitude.

They parted company and Mirza Mihdi went on his own to Constantinople, but not to Adrianople.

Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, the Persian <p371> Ambassador in Constantinople, was

impressed by Mirza Mihdi and appointed him as the judge of the Persian Shi'ah community in the capital.

It was at this juncture in his life that he came in contact with Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani who had gone to Constantinople to stir up trouble for Baha'u'llah and His companions.

As a result of this association a new chapter opened in the life of Mirza Mihdi.

As a corrupt and arrogant mischief-maker himself, he discovered in Siyyid Muhammad an affinity and likeness which soon resulted in his becoming an ardent follower and a willing tool.

Under the guidance of his new-found teacher, he learned new lessons in intrigue, became acquainted with those misrepresentations and lies which characterized the activities of Siyyid Muhammad, and arose in enmity and opposition to Baha'u'llah.

At the instigation of Siyyid Muhammad, Mirza Mihdi wrote a letter to his old friend Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Tambaku-Furush who was one of Baha'u'llah's companions in Adrianople.

This venomous letter, loaded with calumnies against Baha'u'llah, was obviously written with the help of Siyyid Muhammad, and probably composed by him.

Most of its arguments were aimed at proving the falseness of the claims of Baha'u'llah to be 'He Whom God shall make manifest', the One promised by the Bab.

Not only were his objections utterly false themselves, but some of them were couched in discourteous language and were disrespectful to Baha'u'llah.

Aqa Muhammad-'Ali, to whom this letter was addressed, was a devoted companion of Baha'u'llah.

We have already stated[1] that he had accompanied Baha'u'llah from Baghdad to Constantinople and Adrianople, and he was also among those who later journeyed with Him to Akka.

He was a man who enjoyed a good life in spite of the hardships and privations suffered during these banishments.

Of him Abdu'l-Baha writes: [1 See vol.

I, p.

287.] <p372> ...he had little to live on, but was happy and content.

A man of excellent disposition, he was congenial to believers and others alike...

In Adrianople as well, his days passed happily, under the protection of Baha'u'llah.

He would carry on some business which, however trifling, would bring in surprisingly abundant returns...

He spent his days in utter bliss.

Here,[1] too, he carried on a small business, which occupied him from morning till noon.

In the afternoons he would take his samovar, wrap it in a dark-coloured pouch made from a saddle-bag, and go off somewhere to a garden or meadow, or out in a field, and have his tea.

Sometimes he would be found at the farm of Mazra'ih, or again in the Ridvan Garden; or, at the Mansion, he would have the honour of attending upon Baha'u'llah. [1 Akka. (A.T.)] Muhammad-'Ali would carefully consider every blessing that came his way. 'How delicious my tea is today,' he would comment. 'What perfume, what colour!

How lovely this meadow is, and the flowers so bright!' He used to say that everything, even air and water, had its own special fragrance.

For him the days passed in indescribable delight.

Even kings were not so happy as this old man, the people said. 'He is completely free of the world,' they would declare. 'He lives in joy.' It also happened that his food was of the very best, and that his home was situated in the very best part of Akka.

Gracious God!

Here he was, a prisoner, and yet experiencing comfort, peace and joy.(1) Aqa Muhammad-'Ali had a great sense of humour and was a delightful companion to Baha'u'llah.

Once in Akka Baha'u'llah attended a memorial meeting for one of the believers who had died.

Aqa Muhammad-'Ali was present.

He noticed how the bounties of Baha'u'llah and His loving-kindness were being showered upon the soul of the deceased.

Longing for the same treatment, he is reported to have said to Him, 'I shall be honoured if you would presume that I am dead also, and give me the privilege of inviting you to attend a memorial meeting <p373> for me!' Thereupon he gave a lavish feast in which he entertained Baha'u'llah and the believers in Akka.

As soon as he read Mirza Mihdi's distasteful letter, Aqa Muhammad-'Ali took it to Baha'u'llah.

The Kitab-i-Badi' was written to refute the accusations of Mirza Mihdi.

Baha'u'llah revealed this book on three successive days.

Each day He dictated for about two hours and Aqa Muhammad-'Ali took the words

down.

We have stated previously+F1 that while some of Baha'u'llah's Writings appear to have been composed by his amanuensis Mirza Aqa Jan, yet every word was dictated by Baha'u'llah Himself.

The Kitab-i-Badi' is a similar case.

Although it is written in the words of Aqa Muhammad-'Ali, in fact it is revealed by Baha'u'llah from beginning to end.

This book, almost twice the size of the Kitab-i-Iqan and written in defence of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, occupies a significant position among His Writings.

It gives the reader remarkable insight into the prophecies of the Bab concerning 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', and clearly demonstrates that the advent of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah was the ultimate aim of the Bab and the fulfilment of all that He had cherished in His heart.

The book exerted a great influence upon the members of the Babi community, especially those who were confused and vacillating.

It resolved many of their doubts and perplexities and enabled them to recognize the exalted station of Baha'u'llah as 'He Whom God shall make manifest'.

For those who are well versed in the Writings of the Bab, this book may be regarded as a key to many of the mysteries which are to be found in the Revelations of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

It is one of the most challenging works of Baha'u'llah, written with forcefulness and clarity.

It also gives an account of some of Baha'u'llah's teachings as well as some aspects of the history of His Cause.

One of its outstanding features is the way in which Baha'u'llah refutes the objections and accusations of Mirza Mihdi with such convincing proofs <p374> that the reader becomes utterly overwhelmed by the irrefutable power of His reasoning. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

40-42.] There is no doubt that the Kitab-i-Badi' shattered the idle fancies of the breakers of the Covenant of the Bab who had sought assiduously to undermine the Faith of Baha'u'llah through the dissemination of misleading and untrue reports.

The arguments put forward by Mirza Mihdi were feeble and misguided.

They contained many false statements, misrepresentations and lies which originated from Siyyid Muhammad.

The manner in which the Kitab-i-Badi' is revealed is such that Baha'u'llah quotes a few lines from the letter of Mirza Mihdi and then reveals pages in reply.

He continues in this way until all points and accusations embodied in the letter are fully answered.

A remarkable feature of these answers is the compelling vigour of Baha'u'llah's pronouncements.

So powerful are His words that Mirza Mihdi seems like a puny bird held in the claws of a mighty falcon and reduced to utter nothingness.

The force of Baha'u'llah's arguments, the clarity of His explanations, the profundity of His utterances, are matched only by His all-encompassing knowledge of the Writings of the Bab which He quotes profusely in support of His theme.

And this in spite of the fact that, as He Himself attests,[1] He had not read everything from the Writings of the Bab, including the Bayan!

This is an evidence of His divine knowledge. [1 See Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp.

165, 167.] In the Kitab-i-Badi', Baha'u'llah at times uses very strong language in condemning the actions of Mirza Mihdi and his master, Siyyid Muhammad.

Mirza Mihdi is denounced as the 'wicked one', 'the evil plotter', 'the impious', 'the impudent', 'the outcast', 'the faithless soul', 'the froward', 'he who contends with God', 'one from whose pen had flowed what caused the Bab to lament in the Kingdom and with Him the souls of all the chosen ones of God'.

Repeatedly, Baha'u'llah calls on him to withhold his pen and warns him that God, through His wrath, will soon strike him down.

Indeed, it was not long before Mirza Mihdi died.

Baha'u'llah refers to this in the <p375> Lawh-i-Fu'ad[1] where He describes the tormenting agony of his soul when the wrathful vengeance of God descended upon him.

There are also many passages in the Kitab-i-Badi' in which Siyyid Muhammad is stigmatized in such terms as the 'one who joined partners with God', 'the prime mover of mischief', 'the embodiment of wickedness and impiety', and 'one accursed of God'.

That Baha'u'llah addressed these men in such strong language is indicative of His supreme authority as the Judge and Ruler of mankind.

Let us ponder upon the power of the Manifestation of God.

He, and He alone, can reveal all the attributes of God to man, and one of God's attributes is His wrath.

It is through the operation of this attribute that God casts out those who rise up to oppose Him. [1 This Tablet was revealed in 1869 in Akka.] From the study of the Writings of Baha'u'llah it becomes clear that God's mercy and

forgiveness overshadow the whole of creation.

Through these attributes God has vouchsafed His protection to humanity.

If it were not for His mercy and grace, no man could survive the operation of His justice.

The loving and forgiving God overlooks the sins and shortcomings of man, immerses him in the ocean of His mercy and, without his deserving, bestows upon him everlasting life.

But when a person breaks His Covenant and consciously rebels against the One who manifests Him, then His wrath is invoked and the soul of that individual becomes deprived of the bounties of God.

Siyyid Muhammad and Mirza Mihdi were of this category, and Baha'u'llah, in denouncing them, is doing no more than revealing the true condition of their souls.

An important point to bear in mind, however, is that no man has the vision or the authority to condemn another soul.

It is solely the function of the Manifestation of God and those upon whom He confers infallibility and authority. <p376> Condemnation of the Covenant-breakers The Kitab-i-Badi' is also replete with passages in condemnation of the centre of rebellion, Mirza Yahya.

Baha'u'llah refutes his claims to be the appointed successor of the Bab and quotes numerous passages from the Writings of the Bab in support of His arguments.

He makes it very clear that the only thing which the Bab promised to His followers was the advent of the Revelation of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

Since Mirza Yahya was one of the 'Mirrors' of the Babi Dispensation[1] -- and he used to employ this title to impress the followers of the Bab -- Baha'u'llah clarifies the position of the 'Mirrors'.

He quotes many statements of the Bab that the 'Mirrors' had no light of their own, that their radiance depended upon their turning to the source of light, 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

The Bab reveals: [1 The Bab had bestowed the title 'Mirror' upon several of His followers.] He[1] -- glorified be His mention -- resembleth the sun.

Were unnumbered mirrors to be placed before it, each would, according to its capacity, reflect the splendour of that sun, and were none to be placed before it, it would still continue to rise and set, and the mirrors alone would be veiled from its light.

I, verily, have not fallen short of My duty to admonish that people, and to devise means whereby they may turn towards God, their Lord, and

believe in God, their Creator.

If, on the day of His Revelation, all that are on earth bear Him allegiance, Mine inmost being will rejoice, inasmuch as all will have attained the summit of their existence, and will have been brought face to face with their Beloved, and will have recognized, to the fullest extent attainable in the world of being, the splendour of Him Who is the Desire of their hearts.

If not, My soul will indeed be saddened.

I truly have nurtured all things for this purpose.

How, then, can anyone be veiled from Him?

For this have I called upon God, and will continue to call upon Him.

He, verily, is nigh, ready to answer.(2) [1 He Whom God shall make manifest. (A.T.)] <p377> Even in one of His Own Writings, the Bab, addressing Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i, complains that the Mirrors have not detached themselves from the things of this world and have turned to Him with sullied hearts.

These are His words:

I complain unto thee, O Mirror of My generosity,[1] against all the other Mirrors.

All look upon Me through their own colours.(3) [1 Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i. (A.T.)] And again:

O Sun-like Mirrors!

Look ye upon the Sun of Truth.

Ye, verily, depend upon it, were ye to perceive it.

Ye are all as fishes, moving in the waters of the sea, veiling yourselves therefrom, and yet asking what it is on which ye depend.(4) In the Kitab-i-Badi' Baha'u'llah stigmatizes Mirza Yahya as the idol of the Babi community, states that all his accomplishments were in the field of deceit and lies, discloses the extent of his shallowness and ignorance, declares that his words contained the essence of falsehood, any truth found in them having been borrowed from Baha'u'llah, refers to the fact that with the help of Siyyid Muhammad he had disseminated some of Baha'u'llah's Writings among the believers in his own name, explains that He did not expel Mirza Yahya from His presence until he publicly rose up against the Cause of God, denounces him for his malicious and slanderous letters, and portrays, in a number of lengthy passages and in moving and dramatic language, the lamentations of a pen held between the fingers of Mirza Yahya pleading to its God for deliverance from such a vile and perfidious master!

Writings of the Bab concerning 'Him Whom God shall make Manifest' A

considerable part of the Kitab-i-Badi' relates to the circumstances of the rebellion of Mirza Yahya and Siyyid Muhammad. <p378> But the major part of the book is devoted to the exalted theme of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', Baha'u'llah, the Promised One of the Bayan.

Baha'u'llah quotes numerous passages from the Writings of the Bab in which He extols the station, the glory, the transcendental majesty and the authority of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

It suffices to quote only a few passages from the Writings of the Bab all of which Baha'u'llah quotes in the Kitab-i-Badi'.

It should be noted that the Bab's Writings are replete with similar statements about Baha'u'llah:

I have written down in My mention of Him[1] these gem-like words: 'No allusion of Mine can allude unto Him, neither anything mentioned in the Bayan.'...

Exalted and glorified is He above the power of any one to reveal Him except Himself, or the description of any of His creatures.

I Myself am but the first servant to believe in Him and in His signs, and to partake of the sweet savours of His words from the first-fruits of the Paradise of His knowledge.

Yea, by His glory!

He is the Truth.

There is none other God but Him.

All have arisen at His bidding.(5) [1 Him Whom God shall make manifest. (A.T.)] The study of the Kitab-i-Badi' makes it clear that the purpose of the Bab in revealing Himself was none other than to prepare His followers for the coming of Baha'u'llah.

There are many passages in the Writings of the Bab in which He makes a firm covenant with His followers concerning 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

In one of these He states:

Glorified art Thou, O My God!

Bear Thou witness that, through this Book, I have covenanted with all created things concerning the Mission of Him Whom Thou shalt make manifest, ere the covenant concerning Mine own Mission had been established.

Sufficient witness art Thou and they that have believed in Thy signs.

Thou, verily sufficest Me.

In Thee have I placed My trust, and Thou, verily, taketh count of all things.(6) <p379> There are also many quotations concerning the Bayan, the

Mother Book of the Babi Dispensation, and its relationship to 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

The Bab states:

The whole of the Bayan is only a leaf amongst the leaves of His Paradise.E7 And again:

The Bayan is, from beginning to end, the repository of all His[1] attributes, and the treasury of both His fire and His light.(8) [1 Baha'u'llah. (A.T.)] The Bab warned His followers not to allow anything in this world, including the Bayan, to become a barrier between them and Baha'u'llah.

He states:

Suffer not the Bayan and all that hath been revealed therein to withhold you from that Essence of Being and Lord of the visible and invisible.(9) In another passage He affirms:

Suffer not yourselves to be shut out as by a veil from God after He hath revealed Himself.

For all that hath been exalted in the Bayan is but as a ring upon My hand, and I Myself am, verily, but a ring upon the hand of Him Whom God shall make manifest -- glorified be His mention!

He turneth it as He pleaseth, for whatsoever He pleaseth, and through whatsoever He pleaseth.

He, verily, is the Help in Peril, the Most High.(10) The Bab declares that one line from the Writings of Baha'u'llah is more meritorious in the sight of God than all that has been revealed by the Manifestations of the past.

In another instance the Bab reveals: <p380> Better is it for thee to recite but one of the verses of Him Whom God shall make manifest than to set down the whole of the Bayan, for on that Day that one verse can save thee, whereas the entire Bayan cannot save thee.[ll] He testifies to the exalted station of Baha'u'llah by the pronouncement that He, Baha'u'llah, can bestow the station of prophethood upon whomsoever He wishes.

These are the words of the Bab:

Were He to make of every one on earth a Prophet, all would, in very truth, be accounted as Prophets in the sight of God...

In the day of the revelation of Him Whom God shall make manifest all that dwell on earth will be equal in His estimation.

Whomsoever He ordaineth as a Prophet, he, verily, hath been a Prophet from the beginning that hath no beginning, and will thus remain until the end that hath no end, inasmuch as this is an act of God.

And whosoever is made a Viceregent by Him, shall be a Viceregent in

all the worlds, for this is an act of God.

For the will of God can in no wise be revealed except through His will, nor His wish be manifested save through His wish.

He, verily, is the All-Conquering, the All-Powerful, the All-Highest.[l2] The Bab states that no one can recognize 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' except by His own standard.

He affirms:

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.

Shouldst thou seek God and His Presence, seek thou Him and gaze upon Him.[l3] In one of His Writings, the Bab declares that at the time of the coming of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest', all those who dwell in the Sinai of God's Revelation will be found awestruck at His glory.

He urges the learned among His followers <p381> to withhold their pens from writing epistles and books when 'Him Whom God shall make manifest' has revealed Himself.

He further urges His followers to recognize and acknowledge Baha'u'llah with no hesitation or delay and warns them:

Recognize Him by His verses.

The greater your neglect in seeking to know Him, the more grievously will ye be veiled in fire.[l4] These, and many more tributes which the Bab paid to Baha'u'llah, are recorded in the Kitab-i-Badi'.

We have already quoted some of these passages in the former volume and devoted an entire chapter to this subject.[1] [1 See vol. I, chapter 18: 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.] In the Kitab-i-Badi', Baha'u'llah demonstrates the validity of His Cause, glorifies His own Revelation, proclaims His mission and re-affirms the statement He had made in the Garden of Ridvan -- that no other Manifestation of God would appear before a thousand years had passed.[1] He describes the outpouring of the verses of God from His Pen and invites Mirza Mihdi to attain His presence so that he may witness the rapidity with which the Words of God are revealed in this day.

He also recounts many outstanding events which took place during His sojourn in Baghdad and Adrianople, describes the devotion and self-sacrifice of some of His followers, dwells on the sufferings which were inflicted on Him by the hand of Mirza Yahya and which culminated in the 'Most Great Separation', and enumerates some of the grievous transgressions committed by him, such as his orders to kill some of the outstanding Babis, and his most flagrant crime, the repugnant violation of the honour of the Bab.[2] [1 See vol. I, pp.

279-80.] [2 See vol.

I, p.

249.] <p382> Kadijih-Bagum In the Kitab-i-Badi' Baha'u'llah extols the virtues and exalted station of Fatimih-Bagum, the mother of the Bab,[1] and His wife Khadijih-Bagum, designates them both as the Khayru'n Nisa' (The Most Virtuous among Women) and enjoins on His loved ones to venerate and honour them. [1 For a brief outline of her distinguished career, see vol.

I, pp.

154-5.] Khadijih-Bagum was of noble lineage.

She was a paternal cousin of the mother of the Bab.

Her marriage with the Bab took place almost two years before His declaration.

Through the purity of her heart, Khadijih-Bagum recognized the station of her beloved Husband and acknowledged the truth of His Cause in the early days of His ministry.

She was an eye-witness to that transforming power which emanated from the person of the Bab, a power which revolutionized the lives and conduct of His early disciples and the heroes of the Babi Faith.

Concerning Khadijih-Bagum, Nabil-i-A'zam writes in his narrative:

The wife of the Bab, unlike His mother, perceived at the earliest dawn of His Revelation the glory and uniqueness of His Mission, and felt from the very beginning the intensity of its force.

No one except Tahirih, among the women of her generation, surpassed her in the spontaneous character of her devotion nor excelled the fervour of her faith.

To her the Bab confided the secret of His future sufferings, and unfolded to her eyes the significance of the events that were to transpire in His Day.

He bade her not to divulge this secret to His mother and counselled her to be patient and resigned to the will of God.

He entrusted her with a special prayer, revealed and written by Himself, the reading of which, He assured her, would remove her difficulties and lighten the burden of her woes. 'In the hour of your perplexity,' He directed her, 'recite this prayer ere you go to sleep.

I Myself will appear to you and will banish your anxiety.' Faithful to His advice, every time she turned to Him in prayer, the <p383> light of His unfailing guidance illumined her path and resolved her problems.[l5] Khadijih-Bagum recognized the station of Baha'u'llah from the early days in Baghdad and remained one of His most devoted followers.

In his narratives, the late Haji Mirza Habibu'llah-i-Afnan[1] writes the

following account concerning the wife of the Bab. [1 A devoted follower of Baha'u'llah who for some time was custodian of the House of the Bab in Shiraz.] ...The Blessed Beauty after His arrival in Baghdad sent many Tablets, with His own signature, 152,[1] (which signifies Baha) to various parts of Persia.

These were taken to their intended destinations by some trustworthy individuals.

Among these was a Tablet revealed in honour of the Exalted Leaf,[2]the wife of the Bab.

At that time no one among the family of the Afnan[3]had embraced the Faith, and therefore the wife of the Bab had no close friend in whom she could confide.

For this reason, she entered into conversation about the Faith with the father of the writer, Jinab-i-Afnan, Aqa Mirza Aqa,[4] who was her nephew (her sister's son), and was then thirteen years of age. ...Because of the purity of her heart, Aqa Mirza Aqa was deeply attracted to the Cause of God, recognized its truth and was filled with such enthusiasm that he was unable to withhold himself from teaching it, and proceeded to do so with courage and steadfastness.

First he succeeded in teaching his own father ... and then his own mother, the sister of the Bab's wife.[l6] [1The numerical values of the letters B, H, A, which constitute the word Baha, are 2, 5 and 1 respectively.

Some Tablets of Baha'u'llah are signed in this way by Him.] [2 In some of His Tablets Baha'u'llah has addressed Khadijih-Bagum as the Exalted Leaf.] [3 Descendants of the maternal uncles of the Bab and those of the two brothers and the sister of the wife of the Bab are known as the Afnan (The Twigs).] [4 Aqa Mirza Aqa was one of the outstanding members of the Afnan family.

He was instrumental in encouraging Haji Siyyid Muhammad, the uncle of the Bab, to proceed to Baghdad and attain the presence of Baha'u'llah.

He rendered distinguished services to the Faith.

Baha'u'llah has granted him and his descendants the custodianship of the House of the Bab in Shiraz.

We shall refer to him again in future volumes. (A.T.)] <p384> When Baha'u'llah summoned Munirih Khanum[1] to Akka He instructed Shaykh Salman to accompany her.

The party started from Isfahan for Bushihr via Shiraz.

Arrangements were made for her to stay a short while in Shiraz in the home of Haji Mirza Siyyid Muhammad, the uncle of the Bab.

She arrived in the month of Dhi'l-Q'adih 1288 A.H. (January-February 1872) and

had the privilege of meeting the wife of the Bab several times.

The following is taken from Munirih Khanum's memoirs concerning one of her interviews with Khadijih-Bagum: [1 Munirih Khanum became the wife of Abdu'l-Baha.

See pp.

205-9.] ...I asked the wife of the Bab to recount for me some reminiscences of her association with the Bab, of attaining His presence and of her marriage with Him.

She said, 'I do not remember every detail but will tell you what I can remember...

We were three sisters.[1] One night I dreamt that Fatimih [the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, the holiest woman in Islam] came to our house as a suitor to propose[2] marriage.

With great joy and ecstasy my sisters and I went to her.

She then came forward to me and kissed my forehead.

I understood in the dream that she had chosen me.

When I woke up in the morning I felt very happy and joyous, but I felt too shy to share my dream with anybody.

In the afternoon of the same day, the mother of the Bab came to our house.

My <p385> sister and I went to her.

Exactly as I had dreamt, she came forward, kissed my forehead and embraced me.

She then left.

My eldest sister said to me, 'The mother of the Bab came to propose and has asked for your hand in marriage [with her son].' I replied, 'This is a great felicity for me.' I recounted my dream and expressed the happiness of my heart because of its implications. [1 One of the three sisters was a half-sister who married Haji Mirza Siyyid Ali, the uncle of the Bab who was martyred in Tihran. (A.T.)] [2 In those days it was the custom for mothers, sisters or close female relatives of a man who wished to get married to propose to the parents of a girl.

Once the agreement was reached, the girl would be informed and later married. (A.T.)] After a few days ... they sent some gifts as a token of engagement,[1] and the Bab went to Bushihr on business in company with His uncle.

Although the mother of the Bab and I were cousins, yet, because of my dream every time I met her, I showed great courtesy and respect towards her.

I cannot recall the duration of the Bab's journey. [1 Engagement was a family affair.

It was improper for a man engaged to a woman to associate with her until married.

In any case it was not permitted even to see the face of his fiancée until after marriage.

Of course a couple who were close relatives would have seen each other before. (A.T.)] When He was in Bushihr, I dreamt one night that I was sitting in the presence of the Bab.

It appeared as though it was the evening of our wedding.

The Bab was dressed in a green cloak around the borders of which were inscribed the verses of the Qur'an ... and light was emanating from Him.

Seeing Him in this way, I was filled with such joy and gladness that I woke up.

After this dream I was assured in my heart that the Bab was a distinguished personage.

I cherished a love for Him in my heart, but did not disclose my feelings to anybody.

Eventually He returned from Bushihr and His uncle arranged the wedding.

After the wedding, I entertained no thought of earthly things in my mind.

My heart was entirely attracted to the person of the Bab.

From His words and conduct, His magnanimity and solemnity, it became clear to me that He was a distinguished person.

But the thought never occurred to me that He could be the Qa'im, the Promised One.

Most of the time He was engaged in praying and reading verses...

As was customary among merchants, He would ask in the evenings for His business papers and account books.

But I noticed that they were not business papers.

Sometimes I used to ask Him what the papers were.

He once said 'It is <p386> the Book of the accounts of all the peoples of the world.' Should any visitor suddenly arrive, He would spread a handkerchief over the papers.

All close relatives such as His uncles and aunts were fully conscious of His exalted personality.

They revered Him and showed the utmost respect towards Him, until the

fateful night of the 5th of Jamadi'ul-Avval 1260 A.H. (22 May 1844) arrived.

It was the night that Jinab-i-Babu'l-Bab, Mulla Husayn-i-Bushru'i[1] attained the presence of the Bab and acknowledged the truth of His Cause.

That was indeed a memorable evening.

The Bab intimated that we were having a guest who was dear to Him.

He was as if on fire and in the utmost excitement.

I was very eager to hear His blessed words, but He bade me go to bed.

Although I was lying awake the whole night, I remained in bed as I did not wish to disobey Him.

I could hear His voice until morning as He conversed with Jinab-i-Babu'l-Bab.

He was reading the verses of God and adducing proofs.

Later I observed that every day a strange guest would arrive and the Bab would engage in similar talks. [1 The first believer of the Babi Dispensation. (A.T.)] If I attempt to describe the sufferings and persecutions of those days, I will not be able to endure talking about them, neither will you have the fortitude to listen to them...

One night, I woke up about midnight to find that the ...

Chief Constable Abdu'l-Hamid had entered the house from the roof with his men and, without giving any reasons, took the Bab with him.[1] I never attained His presence again...(17) [1 For more information, see The Dawn-Breakers. (A.T.)] Munirih Khanum describes in her memoirs how eager the wife of the Bab was for her to prolong the visit, but Shaykh Salman had instructions from Baha'u'llah to proceed to Akka in company with the caravan which was taking the Muslim pilgrims to Mecca and time was running out.

After we bade farewell to her, the wife of the Bab said, 'Please supplicate the Blessed Perfection to grant two wishes of mine.

One, that one of the exalted Leaves of the blessed <p387> Family[1] may be permitted to join in wedlock with a member of the family of the Bab, so that the two holy trees may be outwardly knit together.

The other, to grant me permission to attain His presence.' I conveyed this message when I attained the presence of Baha'u'llah; He readily assented to both her requests.(18) [1 Female member of Baha'u'llah's family; here a daughter of Baha'u'llah was intended. (A.T.)] The person whom the wife of the Bab had in mind for this marriage was Haji Siyyid Aliy-i-Afnan, a son of her brother, the 'Great Afnan', Haji Mirza Siyyid Hasan.

Baha'u'llah granted the wish of the wife of the Bab, and Haji Siyyid Ali was joined in wedlock with Furughiyyih Khanum, a daughter of Baha'u'llah.[2] [1 They both became Covenant-breakers during the ministry of Abdu'l-Baha.

But the wishes of the wife of the Bab were fulfilled in the marriage of Mirza Hadiy-i-Afnan with Diya'iyyih Khanum, a daughter of Abdu'l-Baha.

They were the parents of Shoghi Effendi.] As to the second wish, however, circumstances prevented the wife of the Bab from attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah.[1] This was a grievous blow to her and she could not be consoled.

It is reported that she wept so much that her health was seriously impaired.

Grief-stricken, she passed away a few months afterwards, on the evening of the 29th day of Dhi'l-Qa'dih 1299 A.H (11 November 1882).

Strangely on the same evening her maid (Fiddih) who had served her since the days of the Bab also passed away. [1 Knowing that he had no chance of securing this marriage on his own, and knowing also how eager the wife of the Bab was to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah, Haji Siyyid Ali promised that he would accompany her to Akka if she arranged this marriage for him.

But he did not fulfil his promise.] The news of the passing of the wife of the Bab brought sadness to Baha'u'llah.

He revealed a special Tablet of Visitation for her and later He composed a verse to be inscribed on her tombstone.

During her lifetime too, Baha'u'llah had revealed many Tablets in her honour. <p388> 18 Suriy-i-Ghusn An important Tablet revealed in Adrianople is the Suriy-i-Ghusn (Surih of the Branch).

It is in Arabic and addressed to Mirza Ali-Riday-i-Mustawfi, a native of Khurasan.

This believer was a titled person -- the Mustasharu'd-Dawlih.

He had a prominent position in government circles in the district of Khurasan and was a man of great influence there.

His teacher was no less a person than Mulla Husayn[1] who taught him the Faith in Mashhad. [1 The first of the Bab's disciples.] Mirza Ali-Rida became a dedicated believer who in spite of his rank and position never hesitated to assist the friends whenever they faced difficulties; he always helped the poor and downtrodden among them.

He was the one mainly responsible for providing the horses and finance for Mulla Husayn and his companions when they were leaving Mashhad for Mazindaran on a mission of great importance.[1] With the help of Mulla Sadiq-i-Khurasani, the renowned teacher of the Faith, he succeeded in converting his younger brother Mirza Muhammad-Rida, the Mu'taminu's-Saltanih, who became a devoted believer.

When Mirza Ali-Rida retired, it was this same brother who succeeded him in

office.

It is interesting to note that in a Tablet, Baha'u'llah comments on a photograph of Mu'taminu's-Saltanih, saying that it bears a striking resemblance to Himself. [1 See The Dawn-Breakers.] The main theme of the Suriy-i-Ghusun is the unveiling of the station of Abdu'l-Baha.

In it Abdu'l-Baha is referred to as 'the Trust of God', 'this sacred and glorious Being', 'this Branch of <p389> Holiness', 'the Limb of the Law of God', 'this sublime, this blessed, this mighty, this exalted Handiwork', 'the most great Favour', 'the most perfect bounty'.[l] Baha'u'llah also makes this significant statement about Abdu'l-Baha:

Well is it with him that hath sought His [Abdu'l-Baha's] shelter and abideth beneath His shadow...

They who deprive themselves of the shadow of the Branch, are lost in the wilderness of error, ... and are of those who will assuredly perish.[1](2) [1 Part of this Tablet is translated into English and cited in The World Order of Baha'u'llah, p.

135.

See also The Revelation of Baha'u'llah, vol.

I, p.

135.] These lofty attributes revealing the station of the Master heralded His appointment, later in Akka, as the Centre of Baha'u'llah's Covenant and the Interpreter of His words -- an appointment announced in the Kitab-i-Aqdas and the Kitab-i-'Ahdi (The Book of My Covenant).

The praise and glorification of Abdu'l-Baha did not surprise any of Baha'u'llah's followers.

Even Baha'u'llah's enemies confessed the exalted character and greatness of Abdu'l-Baha.

For instance, Mirza Ahmad-i-Kirmani, an inveterate enemy of the Cause stigmatized by Baha'u'llah as a 'foreboder of evil', and to whose reprehensible deeds He has alluded in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, once announced from the pulpit that if there was one proof by which Baha'u'llah could substantiate His claims, it would be that He had reared a son such as Abbas Effendi.[1] [1 Abdu'l-Baha.] From His childhood, Abdu'l-Baha displayed outstanding qualities of faith and virtue.

He did not attend any school except for a short period in Tihran.

As a child of nine, He not only recognized the station of His Father,[1] but manifested such understanding and knowledge that He excelled the learned and erudite.

In Baghdad, while He was in His early teens, Abdu'l-Baha attended a gathering of those divines who were friendly. <p390> They always enjoyed Abdu'l-Baha's

company and listened when he spoke.

In the course of discussion someone mentioned that in one of his writings Haji Mirza Karim Khan[2] had used a certain Persian word as Arabic.

All the divines agreed that he had made a mistake.

However, Abdu'l-Baha stated that although Haji Mirza Karim Khan was an enemy of the Faith of the Bab, He had to say that in this particular instance he had not erred.

The word in question, although used in the Persian language, was originally an Arabic word.

The divines still maintained their view, until Abdu'l-Baha asked them to look up the word in the dictionary.

To their amazement they discovered that it was indeed Arabic. [1 See p.

14.] [2 See vol.

I, Appendix IV.] It was in Baghdad that Ali Shawkat Pasha, one of the dignitaries of Iraq, requested Baha'u'llah to elucidate for him the inner significances of a certain tradition of Islam which brings to light the relationship between God and man and reveals the purpose of creation.

The voice of God proclaims in this tradition: 'I was a hidden treasure, I loved to be known therefore I created beings to know [Me].' Baha'u'llah instructed Abdu'l-Baha, who was then in his adolescence, to write a commentary on this tradition.

Abdu'l-Baha wrote a most profound and lengthy commentary which astounded the Pasha and opened before his eyes the vistas of knowledge and understanding.

He thereupon became an ardent admirer of the Master.

Not only was Ali Shawkat Pasha deeply impressed by Abdu'l-Baha's elucidations, but generally, every person who read this illuminating commentary was deeply moved and became aware of His extraordinary knowledge and wisdom.

Once the renowned Haji Siyyid Javad-i-Karbila'i, to whom we have referred previously, said in reply to a person who demanded proofs of the authenticity of the Mission of Baha'u'llah, that one unmistakable token of the truth of His Cause was that His son Abdu'l-Baha, during His adolescence, had written such a superb treatise shedding so much light on this subject. <p391> Among many people of note who became particularly attracted to Abdu'l-Baha and recognized His greatness was Khurshid Pasha, the Governor of Adrianople.

Shoghi Effendi writes:

It was His [Abdu'l-Baha's] discussions and discourses with the learned doctors with whom He came in contact in Baghdad that first aroused that general admiration for Him and for His knowledge which was steadily to increase as the circle of His acquaintances was widened, at a later date,

first in Adrianople and then in Akka.

It was to Him that the highly accomplished Khurshid Pasha, the governor of Adrianople, had been moved to pay a public and glowing tribute when, in the presence of a number of distinguished divines of that city, his youthful Guest had, briefly and amazingly, resolved the intricacies of a problem that had baffled the minds of the assembled company -- an achievement that affected so deeply the Pasha that from that time onwards he could hardly reconcile himself to that Youth's absence from such gatherings.(3) Abdu'l-Baha shouldered many responsibilities from childhood.

He was ten years of age when His Father withdrew to the mountains of Sulaymaniyyih.

During the years of Baha'u'llah's absence, He took upon Himself, at this tender age, and while disconsolate in His separation from His Father, the burden of managing the affairs of the family.

Later He intimated to Nabil that He felt that He had grown old while Still in His childhood.

He endured His share of the sufferings and privations which were heaped upon His Father during forty years of His ministry, and beyond that during His own ministry.

One aspect of the life of Abdu'l-Baha becomes clear from the statements He made about His own health.

For instance, once in Paris in 1913 when He became ill, He spoke to His companions about this.

He testified that His life was sustained not through physical laws, but through the decree of Providence.

He stated that there was a wisdom in His becoming ill in Paris.

Had it not been for this illness He would not have stayed more <p392> than one month.

Yet He remained there for well-nigh four months.

When we survey His work in Paris we realize that one important aspect of it was that during His stay several prominent statesmen and influential personalities from the East attained His presence, felt the radiance of His spirit and were humbled by the power of His words and the charm of His character.

Among them was the haughty Prince Masu'd Mirza, the Zillu's-Sultan, the eldest son of Nasirid-Din Shah, once the Governor of Isfahan during whose rule the two illustrious brothers, the 'King of the Martyrs' and the 'Beloved of the Martyrs', were put to death.

Speaking about His illness, Abdu'l-Baha told His companions in Paris that His life was not governed by the laws of nature.

This illness was not due to physical causes, but to the will of God.

He recounted the story of His illness at the age of seven, when He was afflicted with consumption and His case was thought hopeless.

But the hand of God was behind this illness.

Its wisdom became clear later.

For had He been healthy, He would have been sent to live in the ancestral home of Baha'u'llah in Mazindaran, whereas because of His illness He had to remain in Tihran up to the time of Baha'u'llah's imprisonment, witness the birth of His Revelation, and then proceed to Baghdad in His company.

Then suddenly and against the verdict of the doctors who had pronounced Him incurable, He recovered perfect health.

The relationship between Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha is one of the most fascinating features of their lives.

Abdu'l-Baha had so fully recognized the station of His Father, that throughout His life He showed the utmost humility and reverence to Him.

He never allowed the family relationship of father and son to interfere.

No one else in this Dispensation has had the capacity and vision to recognize the true station of His Lord as Abdu'l-Baha did, and it is for this reason that He was able to manifest the most profound measure of self-effacement towards Baha'u'llah and consider Himself as utter nothingness in relation to Him. <p393> To cite one example: when Abdu'l-Baha went to attain the presence of His Father in the Mansion of Bahji outside Akka, He often rode a donkey.

But as soon as He could see the Mansion from a distance, He would dismount as a sign of humility.

He was a true servant of Baha'u'llah and a servant does not ride into the presence of his Lord.

Not only did Abdu'l-Baha show humility towards Baha'u'llah, but by example He taught the companions of Baha'u'llah and His disciples lessons in self-effacement and servitude at the threshold of His Father.

When pilgrims arrived, it was Abdu'l-Baha who prepared them in every way for that glorious moment when they were to enter the presence of their Lord.

He even arranged their attire and helped them to become selfless when in His presence.

Baha'u'llah, on the other hand, always showered His special love and affection upon Abdu'l-Baha.

He extolled and glorified the person of Abdu'l-Baha, and conferred upon Him exalted titles.

Baha'u'llah's adoration for Abdu'l-Baha knew no bounds.

For example, when Abdu'l-Baha was to visit the Mansion of Bahji, Baha'u'llah evinced great joy and yearning to meet His beloved Son.

He would often send His other sons and male members of the family some distance from the Mansion to await the coming of the Master, to act as a welcoming party and to escort Him to the Mansion; while sometimes Baha'u'llah Himself would stand on the balcony to see Him arrive, and as Abdu'l-Baha walked, He often pointed to His majesty and praised the beauty of His countenance and the strength of His character.

But alas, at times this great adoration for the Master had to be suppressed by Baha'u'llah, so that Abdu'l-Baha's brothers and other members of the family who did not have spiritual qualities would not become upset through jealousy.

Abdu'l-Baha's life was distinguished by His virtues and perfections.

There is no need to dwell on this aspect which is universally acknowledged.

Many writers, both oriental and occidental, have extolled in glowing terms the nobility of His character and testified to His divine qualities.

The Revelation of <p394> Baha'u'llah, of which He was the recipient, had so filled His soul that He became its perfect mirror reflecting the light of His Father's Faith upon the whole of mankind and manifesting to their eyes the resplendent characteristics of a perfect Baha'i.

It is one of the unique bounties of God that in this age Baha'u'llah vouchsafed to humanity not only His Revelation, but a priceless gift in the person of Abdu'l-Baha who occupies a unique position in His Dispensation.

Though not invested with the rank of the Manifestation of God, the authority which Baha'u'llah has conferred on Him is such that His words have the same validity as those of Baha'u'llah and the Bab.

Soon after the ascension of Baha'u'llah there were differences among the believers concerning the station of Abdu'l-Baha.

Some regarded Him as having the same identity as Baha'u'llah -- a belief which runs counter to the basic verities enshrined within the Faith.

In several Tablets Abdu'l-Baha clarified His own position.

He explained that although He was the Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and the Interpreter of His words, He was nevertheless a lowly servant at the threshold of Baha'u'llah.

In one of His Tablets Abdu'l-Baha writes:

This is my firm, my unshakable conviction, the essence of my unconcealed and explicit belief -- a conviction and belief which the denizens of the Abha Kingdom fully share:

The Blessed Beauty is the Sun of Truth, and His light the light of truth.

The Bab is likewise the Sun of Truth, and His light the light of truth...

My station is the station of servitude -- a servitude which is complete, pure and real, firmly established, enduring, obvious, explicitly revealed and subject to no interpretation whatever...

I am the Interpreter of the Word of God; such is my interpretation.(4)

At one time Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, to whom we have referred previously, wrote a letter to Abdu'l-Baha and asked Him to explain the significance of Baha'u'llah's utterances in the Suriy-i-Ghusn and other Tablets including certain verses in the Mathnavi concerning the exalted station of the Branch.

In <p395> reply, Abdu'l-Baha wrote a Tablet in which He announced most eloquently His station of servitude and besought the Almighty to immerse Him in the ocean of servitude.

He then made the following statement:

I am according to the explicit texts of the Kitab-i-Aqdas and the Kitab-i-'Ahd the manifest Interpreter of the Word of God...

Whoso deviates from my interpretation is a victim of his own fancy...

I affirm that the true meaning, the real significance, the innermost secret of these verses,[1] of these very words, is my own servitude to the sacred Threshold of the Abha Beauty, my complete self-effacement, my utter nothingness before Him.

This is my resplendent crown, my most precious adorning.

On this I pride myself in the kingdom of earth and heaven.

Therein I glory among the company of the well-favoured!(5) [1 Verses of the Suriy-i-Ghusn and the Mathnavi which glorify the station of Abdu'l-Baha. (A.T.)]

Concerning the station of the Master, Shoghi Effendi writes:

...Though moving in a sphere of His own and holding a rank radically different from that of the Author and the Forerunner of the Baha'i Revelation, He, by virtue of the station ordained for Him through the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, forms together with them what may be termed the Three Central Figures of a Faith that stands unapproached in the world's spiritual history.

He towers, in conjunction with them, above the destinies of this infant Faith of God from a level to which no individual or body ministering to its needs after Him, and for no less a period than a full thousand years, can ever hope to rise.(6) He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Centre and Pivot of Baha'u'llah's peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most exalted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring Interpreter of His Word, the embodiment of every Baha'i ideal, the incarnation of every Baha'i <p396> virtue, the Most Mighty Branch sprung from the Ancient Root, the Limb of the Law of God, the

Being 'round Whom all names revolve', the Mainspring of the Oneness of Humanity, the Ensign of the Most Great Peace, the Moon of the Central Orb of this most holy Dispensation -- styles and titles that are implicit and find their truest, their highest and fairest expression in the magic name Abdu'l-Baha.

He is, above and beyond these appellations, the 'Mystery of God' -- an expression by which Baha'u'llah Himself has chosen to designate Him, and which, while it does not by any means justify us to assign to him the station of Prophethood, indicates how in the person of Abdu'l-Baha the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.(7) <p397> 19 Baha'u'llah's Departure from Adrianople The activities of Baha'u'llah's enemies, who intended to impose upon Him the strictest of confinements, gathered momentum in the early part of the year 1868.

The most glorious, yet the most turbulent period in Baha'u'llah's ministry -- a period of almost five years -- was drawing to a close.

It had been a time notable for its dynamism, its tests and trials, its challenging events, its unfaithful who turned to evil and its heroes who stood steadfast against the unfaithful; and above all it had seen the mighty Revelation of God poured out and His Message proclaimed to the rulers of the world collectively.

The Tablets revealed by Baha'u'llah in this period are so vast in number that their mere volume is bound to astonish the unbiased observer.

If we were to write in detail even about the best-known Tablets revealed in Adrianople, this book would assume such impossible proportions as to necessitate several volumes.

All we can do in the circumstances is to list a few of the more well-known Tablets:

Suriy-i-Bayan, Munajathay-i-Siyam (prayers for fasting), Lawh-i-Tuqa, Lawh-i-Ridvan, Lawh-i-Nuqtih, Suriy-i-Vidad, Suriy-i-Hijr, Suiry-i-Qalam, Suriy-i-Qamis, Suriy-i-Ahzan, Ridvanu'l-Iqrar.

The revelation of so many important Tablets, and the proclamation of Baha'u'llah's Message to the kings and rulers of the world, had endowed the Faith with such ascendancy that by the summer of 1868 the authorities in Constantinople had become apprehensive of its rising prestige and power.

The exaggerated reports and calumnies of Siyyid Muhammad and his accomplice Aqa Jan together with further representations <p398> by the Mushfru'd-Dawlih, the Persian Ambassador, to the Sublime Porte, induced the Ottoman Government to remove the Author of such a dynamic Faith from the mainland and sentence Him to solitary confinement in a far-off prison.

The authorities in Constantinople were alarmed by the news that several

outstanding personalities, including Khurshid Pasha, the Governor of Adrianople, were among the fervent admirers of Baha'u'llah, were frequenting His house and showing Him veneration worthy of a king.

They knew that the consuls of foreign governments had also been attracted to Him and often spoke about His greatness.

The movement of many pilgrims in and out of Adrianople further aggravated the situation.

Fu'ad Pasha, the Turkish Foreign Minister, passed through Adrianople, made a tour of inspection and submitted exaggerated reports about the status and activities of the community.

Furthermore, a few among the authorities had come across some of Baha'u'llah's Writings and become aware of His stupendous claims.

All these were important factors in deciding the fate of Baha'u'llah and His companions.

Those mainly responsible for Baha'u'llah's final banishment were the Prime Minister, Ali Pasha, the Foreign Minister, Fu'ad Pasha and the Persian Ambassador, Haji Mirza Husayn Khan (the Mushiru'd-Dawlih).

These three worked together closely until they succeeded in their efforts to banish Baha'u'llah to Akka and to impose on Him life imprisonment within the walls of that prison city.

Baha'u'llah prophesied that Ali Pasha and Fu'ad Pasha would be struck down by the hand of God as a punishment for their action; we shall refer to their fate in the next volume.

As to the Mushiru'd-Dawlih, Baha'u'llah had at one time sent him a strong message through Haji Mirza Hasan-i-Safa,[1] saying that if the Ambassador's aim in opposing Him was to destroy His person, there was nothing to stop him from carrying out his intentions against a Prisoner in the land.

However, if he was <p399> trying to exterminate the Cause of God, then he should know that no power on earth could quench this Fire which God had kindled on the earth.

Its flame would soon encompass the whole world. [1 See p.

55.] However, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih did everything in his power to enforce Baha'u'llah's imprisonment in Akka.

The following is a translation of a letter he wrote to his Government a little over a year after Baha'u'llah's arrival in Akka.

I have issued telegraphic and written instructions, forbidding that He (Baha'u'llah) associate with any one except His wives and children, or leave under any circumstances, the house wherein He is imprisoned.

Abbas-Quli Khan, the Consul-General in Damascus ...

I have, three days ago, sent back, instructing him to proceed direct to Akka ... confer with its governor regarding all necessary measures for the strict maintenance of their imprisonment ... and appoint, before his return to Damascus, a representative on the spot to insure that the orders issued by the Sublime Porte will, in no wise, be disobeyed.

I have, likewise, instructed him that once every three months he should proceed from Damascus to Akka, and personally watch over them, and submit his report to the Legation.(1) As the years went by however, the Mushiru'd-Dawlih began to realize that the accusations made against Baha'u'llah by His enemies were unfounded.

He saw in Him divine attributes and was impressed by His integrity and loftiness of purpose.

After leaving his post in Constantinople, he spoke highly in Government circles in Persia of Baha'u'llah's uprightness and dignity.

In Tihran he is reported to have said that the only person outside Persia who had brought honour to the nation was Baha'u'llah, and later he assured Nasirid-Din Shah that the followers of Baha'u'llah were not, as alleged, working against the interests of the country.

In the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf Baha'u'llah has commended him in these words: <p400> His Excellency, the late Mirza Husayn Khan, Mushiru'd-Dawlih -- may God forgive him -- hath known this Wronged One, and he, no doubt, must have given to the Authorities a circumstantial account of the arrival of this Wronged One at the Sublime Porte, and of the things which He said and did...

That which was done by his late Excellency -- may God exalt his station -- was not actuated by his friendship towards this Wronged One, but rather was prompted by his own sagacious judgment, and by his desire to accomplish the service he secretly contemplated rendering his Government.

I testify that he was so faithful in his service to his Government that dishonesty played no part, and was held in contempt, in the domain of his activities.

It was he who was responsible for the arrival of these wronged ones in the Most Great Prison (Akka).

As he was faithful, however, in the discharge of his duty, he deserveth Our commendation...(2) Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar, to whom we have referred previously, has recorded the following account in his narratives:

Once Shaykh Salman was arrested and imprisoned in Aleppo by the Persian Consul because he was carrying a number of letters and some goods from the believers to Baha'u'llah.

Haji Mirza Husayn Khan-i-Qazvini was the Ambassador in those days.

He happened to be passing through Aleppo at that time and therefore he carefully read all the letters, which numbered about three hundred.

He noticed that none of them contained any political or worldly subjects.

They were all supplications and questions on spiritual matters.

He therefore ordered that all the letters and goods be returned to their owner.

He then called Shaykh Salman to his office and asked him to convey his greetings to Baha'u'llah.

When this servant, the writer, was in the presence of the Blessed Beauty in the year 1291 A.H. (1874-5), He asked me once about the attitude and behaviour of Haji Mirza Husayn Khan who was then the most outstanding personality in Persia.

In the course of His talks Baha'u'llah stated that Haji Mirza Husayn Khan was more prudent than the rest of the authorities in Persia, and had eventually mended his attitude towards Him.(3) <p401> Speaking about Haji Mirza Husayn Khan, Baha'u'llah in one of His Tablets has said that since he had changed his attitude and because he was related to a believer, God might through His bounty, forgive his misdeeds.

The believer to whom the Mushiru'd-Dawlih was related was Mirza Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Kad-Khuda, a native of Qazvin.

He was a devoted follower of Baha'u'llah described by Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar as 'a man adorned with spiritual qualities and human virtues, knowledgeable and sincere in faith, one who manifested these qualities to the full in his associations with people and in business circles'.(4) The statement that God may forgive a soul because of kinship to a believer is explicit in the writings of Baha'u'llah.

In one of His Tablets(5)He states that one of the special bounties of God in this Dispensation is that in the next world His forgiveness and mercy will surround the souls of those who although bearing no allegiance to His Cause, are related to a believer, provided they have done no disservice to the Faith of Baha'u'llah, nor caused any harm to His loved ones during their lives.

This bounty is especially true of parents who do not embrace the Faith.

In a Tablet(6)Baha'u'llah states that in this Revelation God has vouchsafed a special bounty to those believers whose parents are untouched by the light of the Faith.

He affirms that in the next life God will illumine the souls of the parents through His favours and mercy.

In one of His Tablets(7)Abdu'l-Baha writes that the believers should earnestly pray for the souls of their departed non-Baha'i parents.

They should tearfully supplicate God for His forgiveness and carry out acts of

beneficence on their behalf so that God may, through His grace, enable their souls to progress in His spiritual worlds.

While the authorities in Constantinople were actively engaged in their campaign of opposition to Baha'u'llah, Khurshid Pasha, the Governor of Adrianople, did everything in his power to change their course of action but failed in his efforts.

At last Ali Pasha, the Prime Minister, succeeded in securing from Sultan Abdu'l-'Aziz an imperial edict dated 5th Rabi'u'l-Akhir <p402> 1285 A.H. (26 July 1868) ordering Baha'u'llah's exile to the Fortress of Akka and His life imprisonment within the walls of that prison-city.

In the same edict five others, mentioned by name, were to be exiled with Him.

They were: the two faithful brothers of Baha'u'llah, Aqay-i-Kalim and Mirza Muhammad-Quli, His faithful servant Darvish Sidq-'Ali, the Antichrist of the Baha'i Revelation Siyyid Muhammad-i-Isfahani, and his accomplice Aqa Jan Big.

Mirza Yahya was condemned to life imprisonment in Famagusta along with four of Baha'u'llah's followers:

Mirza Husayn entitled Mishkin Qalam, Aliy-i-Sayyah, Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi and Abdu'l-Ghaffar.

Strict orders were issued in the edict to the authorities in Akka directing them to accommodate the prisoners inside a house in the Fortress, to guard it most effectively and to ensure that the exiles did not associate with anyone.

When Khurshid Pasha was informed of the edict and learnt of Baha'u'llah's immediate banishment he knew that he could not bring himself to notify Baha'u'llah of the contents of the Sultan's order.

He was so embarrassed that he absented himself from his office and left the task to the registrar.

Mirza Aqa Jan, Baha'u'llah's amanuensis, has described(8)the events leading to Baha'u'llah's departure from Adrianople.

He states that one evening late at night Baha'u'llah instructed Jamal-i-Burujirdi and two believers from Persia who had come for the purpose of attaining His presence, to leave the city immediately and return to Persia.

No one understood the wisdom of this action at the time, but it became evident on the following morning, when some Government officials called to ask Jamal's whereabouts, and were told that he had left the city a few hours earlier. (At this juncture it is appropriate to mention that before going to Adrianople Jamal-i-Burujirdi had rendered an important service to the Faith in Persia.

He and Mulla Ali-Akbar-i-Shahmirzadi, known as Haji Akhund,[1] whom Baha'u'llah later appointed a Hand of the Cause of God, <p403> had been instructed by Him in 1284 A.H. (1867-8) to transfer the remains of the Bab

which were concealed within the Shrine of Imam-Zadih Ma'sum to another place of safety.

The details of this and subsequent transfers until the remains were laid to rest for ever in the bosom of God's holy mountain, Mount Carmel, constitute one of the most interesting episodes in the annals of the Faith.)[2] [1 A brief account of his life will appear in a future volume.] [2 Shoghi Effendi has written a brief account of it in God Passes By, pp.

273-6.] Mirza Aqa Jan states that the day after Jamal left Adrianople, the members of the community were rounded up early in the morning, and brought to Government headquarters.

They were kept in custody while soldiers surrounded the house of Baha'u'llah and posted sentinels at its gates.

An officer representing the Sublime Porte called and informed Abdu'l-Baha that Baha'u'llah and His family were to proceed to Gallipoli.[1] According to Mirza Aqa Jan's testimony, the officers had indicated that only those twelve companions who had accompanied Baha'u'llah to Adrianople were to travel with Him to Gallipoli.

But the rest of the believers were extremely agitated by this proposition.

They all wanted to accompany their Lord.

Several of them who owned trading establishments in the city gave up their businesses, sold up what they could at very low prices and left many of their goods behind. [1 It appears that not until the exiles arrived at Gallipoli were they informed of their ultimate destination as set out in the Royal edict.] Aqa Riday-i-Shirazi,[1] known as Aqa Riday-i-Qannad (candy maker), one of the companions of Baha'u'llah, who had come with him from Baghdad, has written about the reaction of the people of Adrianople to these developments: [1 See vol.

I, pp.

288-9, and Memorials of the Faithful.] A great tumult seized the people.

All were perplexed and full of regret...

Some expressed their sympathy, others consoled us, and wept over us...

Most of our possessions were auctioned at half their value.'(9) <p404>
Another believer, Husayn-i-Ashchi,[1] who served Baha'u'llah as a cook for many years, has left the following account[2] concerning the events leading to Baha'u'llah's departure for Gallipoli: [1 See pp.

169-70.] [2 This account is edited by the present writer.] Orders were issued from Constantinople for Baha'u'llah's exile to Syria.

Since Khurshid Pasha failed in his efforts to alter the course of events he felt ashamed to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah and therefore he

announced his departure for another city.

He left Adrianople leaving the affairs of the Government in the hands of an officer.

However, he did not travel to another city; he merely retired to a summer residence on the outskirts of Adrianople.

One afternoon after working in the kitchen I went to the bazaar.

I visited Aqa Riday-i-Shirazi and Mirza Mahmud-i-Kashani[1] at their shop.

I had been there only a few minutes when two soldiers called and summoned the two of them to the Government headquarters.

I attempted to leave the shop but the soldiers caught me and took me with them.

I noticed that all the friends who had shops in the bazaar had been taken to the headquarters.

We were all counted,[2] then each one's particulars were recorded.

When they realized that I was a cook in Baha'u'llah's household, a soldier was called in and instructed to escort me to the house of Baha'u'llah... [1 See vol.

I, pp.

288-9.] [2 Several times before this the members of the community had been taken to Government headquarters and counted.] When we came near the house, I noticed that a number of soldiers were on duty and sentinels had been placed outside the gate.

I was frightened by what I saw.

I was stopped as I attempted to enter the house, even though the soldier who had escorted me had explained the circumstances.

I was told that only the officer in charge could issue permission for entry, and he was in the outer apartment conversing with Abdu'l-Baha...

Eventually I was allowed in and was ushered straight into the presence of Baha'u'llah.

He <p405> enquired about the situation in town, but I was so frightened[1] that I could hardly speak.

My mouth dried up with fear.

I came out of the room and asked for water to drink.

Then I felt better and went again to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah.

He looked at me, smiled, and jokingly said, 'Was the Kashi frightened?'[2] [1 We should note that Husayn-i-Ashchi at that time was a

youth who for some years had enjoyed a sheltered life in Baha'u'llah's household protected from persecution.] [2 A native of Kashan is referred to as Kashi or Kashani.

Persians often make fun of the Kashis alleging them to be faint-hearted and timid.

This of course is purely fictitious.] I told him the whole story.

He then sent me to the house of Aqay-i-Kalim with a message to come at once...

I accompanied Aqay-i-Kalim to the gate of Baha'u'llah's house.

I was allowed in, but the soldiers stopped Aqay-i-Kalim who sent a message to Baha'u'llah saying that since he was free to move in the city, was there anything he could do to help?

When I conveyed this to Him, He said, 'Tell Aqay-i-Kalim to come in.

We seek help from no one, our affairs are not in the hands of anyone, they are in the hands of God.'[1] I went to Abdu'l-Baha and told Him this, and He asked the officer to let Aqay-i-Kalim in and he did.

It was this officer who had conveyed to Abdu'l-Baha the news that the Governor, Khurshid Pasha, was not available and that he was deputized to notify Him of the orders from Constantinople requiring Baha'u'llah's departure to Syria within two days... [1 These are not the exact words of Baha'u'llah, but they convey the +F3 import of what He said.] Baha'u'llah, however, told the authorities that two days were not adequate time to prepare for the journey.

He informed them that His household steward owed money to some suppliers in the bazaar.

He required the authorities to free his men who were imprisoned in Constantinople and to allow them to sell the three horses[1] so that every creditor in the bazaar might be paid.

Then it would become possible to leave...

Each day officers would arrive in the outer apartment and meet Abdu'l-Baha.

The soldiers had surrounded <p406> the house and were on duty day and night.

This situation lasted for eight days... [1 See pp.

329.] Several consuls of foreign powers arrived to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah and the soldiers did not prevent them from entering.

They one and all showed genuine respect and humility towards Baha'u'llah

and offered Him the protection of their respective governments.

But Baha'u'llah clearly stated that He would not seek help from any government.

His sole refuge was God...

The consuls came several times, and no matter how much they persisted, Baha'u'llah rejected their offers and reaffirmed that He put His trust in God and turned to Him at all times...

On one occasion Baha'u'llah counselled some of the friends who had recently arrived to stay away and not to become part of the community of exiles.

He spoke to them words of consolation, and told them that His destination was unknown...

Among those whom Baha'u'llah counselled to stay away were two brothers, Haji Ja'far-i-Tabrizi and Karbila'i Taqi ... who had come to Adrianople to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah.

They were men of courage, tan in stature, enthusiastic and full of excitement.

After hearing Baha'u'llah's advice that they should not think of accompanying Him, Haji Ja'far privately decided that he preferred to die than to live away from His Lord.

He took a razor with him to the outer apartment of the house which was crowded with military officers and government officials, put his head out of a window which opened onto the street and cut his own throat.[1] Standing nearby in the room was Aqa Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Tambaku-Furush who heard a terrifying shout coming from Haji Ja'far.

He pulled him into the room and found his throat cut.

Immediately they called Abdu'l-Baha.

Everyone was appalled at the sight.

At that moment I arrived in the outer apartment to count the number of people so that I could bring supper for everybody.

The Greatest Holy Leaf was in the kitchen waiting for me to tell her the number.

But when I saw Haji Ja'far in that state staggering <p407> all over the place with blood pouring out I was riveted to the scene before me, dazed and in a state of shock.

The soldiers were telling Haji Ja'far that a surgeon would be coming to attend to his wounds, but although he could not speak, he made it clear to them by sign language that even if the surgeon was able to stitch his wounds he would cut his throat again... [1 We have briefly

referred to this incident in vol.

I, pp.

97-8.

It should be noted that the surgeon who attended to him later found that the carotid artery had not been cut.] As I did not return to the kitchen the Greatest Holy Leaf sent the widow of Mirza Mustafa[1] to come and fetch me at once.

But when she saw Haji Ja'far in that frightful state she fainted and fell unconscious on the ground.

Then from the kitchen they sent another person -- a Christian maid -- to come and see what was the cause of delay.

She also fainted and dropped beside the widow of Mirza Mustafa! [1 He had been martyred in Persia, see pp.

60-61.] In the meantime Abdu'l-Baha sent me into the inner apartments of the house to bring some of His own clothes so that He could change Haji Ja'far's clothes.

On my way I found the two women fallen unconscious at the gate; I sprinkled water on their faces and massaged them until they regained consciousness.

The three of us entered the kitchen together.

When the holy family saw us in such a state, frightened and trembling, they wanted to know what had happened, especially when I asked for the Master's clothes.

I said the Master had perspired a lot in the crowd and wished to change!

But the Greatest Holy Leaf did not believe me.

She said, 'Tell me the truth, what is the matter?

Why are you all so frightened?' I still tried to hide the news from her, but she lovingly urged me to tell the truth pointing out that my hiding it would cause distress to everybody in the household.

So I told the story ... and suggested that the news be kept from Baha'u'llah until after He had had supper.

The Greatest Holy Leaf dismissed my idea as a feeble one and admonished me saying that this was not the first time that such a thing had happened; already thousands of lovers had shed their blood in the path of the Blessed Beauty...

As to Haji Ja'far, Abdu'l-Baha urged him to co-operate with the surgeon when he came and promised him that he would be allowed to join

Baha'u'llah.

They placed some <p408> cotton over his wound until a competent surgeon by the name of Muhammad arrived.

But Haji Ja'far was unwilling for his throat to be stitched up.

He kept on saying 'Away from my Beloved this life is useless to me...' Eventually the Ancient Beauty came to his bedside ... and with His hands touched Haji Ja'far's head and face, and assured him that He would summon him to His new place of exile as soon as his wounds were healed.

He urged him to remain in Adrianople until he was completely recovered.[1] When Baha'u'llah returned to His room the surgeon started to stitch the wound, but the thread kept breaking.

He had to repeat the operation several times.

During this ordeal Haji Ja'far remained motionless.

He endured the pain with such strength that he did not even screw up his face once! [1 Haji Ja'far and his brother were able to proceed to Akka soon after Baha'u'llah's departure to that city.

See Memorials of the Faithful.] As to Baha'u'llah's departure for Gallipoli, the authorities responded favourably to His demand concerning the release of the prisoners in Constantinople ... and forwarded a sum of money towards the value of the horses.

Then preparations began for the journey and the standard of bereavement was hoisted in the city.

The souls of many people burnt in the fire of separation from their Beloved and their hearts cried out in their remoteness from Him...

All the furniture was auctioned at a very low price.

It took eight days before everything was ready.

Then they brought about fifty carriages for all of us.

Many people, Muslims, Christians and Jews crowded around the carriages, sobbing and grief-stricken...

The scenes of lamentation were more heart-rending than those of a few years before at the time of Baha'u'llah's departure from Baghdad...

Baha'u'llah spoke words of comfort to all and bade them farewell...

At Gallipoli we housed all our belongings in a caravanserai while we stayed in a house.

Baha'u'llah, the holy family and the females among the party stayed upstairs and the rest of us downstairs.'(10) Among those who arrived in Gallipoli from the prison in Constantinople were Mishkin-Qalam, Aliy-i-Sayyah, Abdu'l-Ghaffar and Muhammad-Baqir-i-Qahvih-chi, all of whom were <p409>

condemned to accompany Mirza Yahya to Cyprus, while Darvish Sidq-'Ali, whose name was recorded in the Royal edict, was to accompany Baha'u'llah to Akka.

The other two prisoners, Ustad Muhammad-'Aliy-i-Salmani and Jamshid-i-Gurji, were deported to the borders of Persia.

It appears that these two were released from prison partly through the prompt intervention of Mir Muhammad-i-Mukari,[1]who, on learning that these two had not been freed, went to the Sublime Porte and vehemently demanded their immediate release.

Salmani and Jamshid-i-Gurji were taken as prisoners to one of the border towns and handed over to the Kurdish authorities for transfer to Persia.

The Kurds, finding the prisoners to be men of integrity, and innocent of any crime, set them free, and the two of them managed to find their way to the Prison of Akka where they were reunited with their Lord. [1 See chapter 14.] Shoghi Effendi has briefly described Baha'u'llah's departure from Adrianople:

On the twenty-second of the month of Rabi'u'th-Thani 1285 A.H. (12 August 1868) Baha'u'llah and His family, escorted by a Turkish captain, Hasan Effendi by name, and other soldiers appointed by the local government, set out on their four-day journey to Gallipoli, riding in carriages and stopping on their way at Uzun-Kupru and Kashanih, at which latter place the Suriy-i-Ra'is was revealed. 'The inhabitants of the quarter in which Baha'u'llah had been living, and the neighbours who had gathered to bid Him farewell, came one after the other,' writes an eye-witness, 'with the utmost sadness and regret to kiss His hands and the hem of His robe, expressing meanwhile their sorrow at His departure.

That day, too, was a strange day.

Methinks the city, its walls and its gates bemoaned their imminent separation from Him.' 'On that day,' writes another eye-witness, 'there was a wonderful concourse of Muslims and Christians at the door of our Master's house.

The hour of departure was a memorable one.

Most of those present were weeping and wailing, <p410> especially the Christians.' 'Say,' Baha'u'llah Himself declares in the Suriy-i-Ra'is, 'this Youth hath departed out of this country and deposited beneath every tree and every stone a trust, which God will erelong bring forth through the power or truth.' Several of the companions who had been brought from Constantinople were awaiting them in Gallipoli.

On his arrival Baha'u'llah made the following pronouncement to Hasan Effendi, who, his duty discharged, was taking his leave: 'Tell the king that this territory will pass out of his hands, and his affairs will be thrown into confusion.' 'To this,' Aqa Rida, the recorder of that scene has written, 'Baha'u'llah furthermore added: "Not I speak these

words, but God speaketh them."

In those moments He was uttering verses which we, who were downstairs, could overhear.

They were spoken with such vehemence and power that, methinks, the foundations of the house itself trembled.' Even in Gallipoli, where three nights were spent, no one knew what Baha'u'llah's destination would be.

Some believed that He and His brothers would be banished to one place, and the remainder dispersed, and sent into exile.

Others thought that His companions would be sent back to Persia, while still others expected their immediate extermination.

The Government's original order was to banish Baha'u'llah, Aqay-i-Kalim and Mirza Muhammad-Quli, with a servant to Akka, while the rest were to proceed to Constantinople.

This order, which provoked scenes of indescribable distress, was, however, at the insistence of Baha'u'llah, and by the instrumentality of Umar Effendi, a major appointed to accompany the exiles, revoked.

It was eventually decided that all the exiles, numbering about seventy, should be banished to Akka.

Instructions were, moreover, issued that a certain number of the adherents of Mirza Yahya, among whom were Siyyid Muhammad and Aqa Jan, should accompany these exiles, whilst four of the companions of Baha'u'llah were ordered to depart with the Azalis for Cyprus.

So grievous were the dangers and trials confronting Baha'u'llah at the hour of His departure from Gallipoli that He warned His companions that 'this journey will be unlike any <p411> of the previous journeys', and that whoever did not feel himself 'man enough to face the future' had best 'depart to whatever place he pleaseth, and be preserved from tests, for hereafter he will find himself unable to leave -- a warning which His companions unanimously chose to disregard.

On the morning of the 2nd of Jamadiyu'l-Avval 1285 A.H. (21 August 1868) they all embarked in an Austrian-Lloyd steamer for Alexandria, touching at Madelli, and stopping for two days at Smyrna, where Jinab-i-Munir, surnamed Ismu'llahu'l-Munib, became gravely ill, and had, to his great distress, to be left behind in a hospital where he soon after died.

In Alexandria[1] they transhipped into a steamer of the same company, bound for Haifa, where, after brief stops at Port Said and Jaffa, they landed, setting out, a few hours later, in a sailing vessel, for Akka, where they disembarked, in the course of the afternoon of the 12th of Jamadiyu'l-Avval 1285 A.H. (31 August 1868).

It was at the moment when Baha'u'llah had stepped into the boat which was

to carry Him to the landing-stage in Haifa that Abdu'l-Ghaffar, one of the four companions condemned to share the exile of Mirza Yahya, and whose 'detachment, love and trust in God' Baha'u'llah had greatly praised, cast himself, in his despair, into the sea, shouting 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha', and was subsequently rescued and resuscitated with the greatest difficulty, only to be forced by adamant officials to continue his voyage, with Mirza Yahya's party, to the destination originally appointed for him.[2](11) [1 See vol.

I, p.

204. (A.T.)] [2 See vol.

I, pp.

287-8. (A.T.)] Suriy-i-Ra'is The Suriy-i-Ra'is was revealed in honour of Haji Muhammad Isma'il-i-Kashani, entitled Dhabih (Sacrifice) and Anis (Companion) by Baha'u'llah.

It is in Arabic[1]and is addressed to Ali Pasha, the Grand Vizir of Turkey.

Dhabih, unlike his half-brother <p412> Haji Mirza Ahmad,[2] was a faithful believer and a man of piety.

He arrived in Adrianople during the time that the House of Baha'u'llah was surrounded by soldiers.

He therefore could not attain the presence of Baha'u'llah and was advised by Him to proceed to Gallipoli.

Dhabih wrote a letter to Baha'u'llah and this Tablet was revealed in his honour.

It was after the revelation of the Suriy-i-Ra'is and with Baha'u'llah's permission that he attained His presence in the public bath in Gallipoli. [1 Not to be confused with the Lawh-i-Ra'is in Persian, revealed in Akka and also addressed to Ali Pasha.] [2 See p.

137.] The following is a brief account of the life and activities of Dhabih as outlined by Shaykh Kazim-i-Samandar in his memoirs: ...Haji Muhammad Isma'il-i-Dhabih of Kashan was a brother of the late Haji Mirza Jani.

When the Bab was on His way to Tihran, ...

He honoured these brothers by staying in their home[1]...

In the early days of the Faith these two brothers worked together in the promotion of the Cause of God, until Haji Mirza Jani was martyred.[2] After the declaration of Baha'u'llah and as a result of much investigation and endeavour on his part, Dhabih became an ardent follower of Baha'u'llah.

Since that time he engaged in teaching the Faith and transcribing the

Writings.

He travelled to Adrianople, but his journey coincided with the time of troubles and persecution in that land, a time when the house of Baha'u'llah and those of the believers were guarded by troops and no one was admitted.

Dhabih and those who were with him proceeded to Gallipoli.

The Suriy-i-Ra'is was revealed in those days... [1 See p.

110.] [2 See The Dawn-Breakers.] After returning from this journey he devoted his time to teaching the Cause and diffusing the fragrances of God with the utmost vigour and steadfastness.

He exerted such an influence in Tihran that the Nayibu's-Saltanih[1] arrested and imprisoned him.

During the interrogations which ensued, Dhabih openly taught the Faith.

The authorities took a <p413> photograph of him for presentation to the Shah and copies of it are available from some of the friends.

Lately he went via Qazvin to Tabriz where he passed away[2] to the realms of eternity...(12) [1 Prince Kamran Mirza, a son of Nasiri'd-Din Shah.

He was Governor of Tihran for some years.] [2 This was around 1297/8 A.H. (1880-81).] In one of His Tablets[l3] addressed to Dhabih, Baha'u'llah urges him to arise and teach His Cause, as God has created him for this purpose.

In another Tablet addressed to Dhabih's son Ghulam-'Ali, Baha'u'llah states that Dhabih wished to lay down his life in the path of God and affirms that he had the station of a martyr in the sight of God and was honoured with the appellation Dhabih (Sacrifice) by the Pen of the Most High.

The revelation of the Suriy-i-Ra'is began soon after Baha'u'llah left Adrianople in the village of Kashanih and was completed at Gyawur-Kyuy on His way to Gallipoli.

The first part of this Surih is addressed to Ali Pasha, whom Baha'u'llah calls Ra'is (Chief).

This is one of the most challenging Tablets of Baha'u'llah, in which the Prime Minister is reprimanded by the Tongue of power and might.

In its opening passage Baha'u'llah bids Ali Pasha hearken to the voice of God, calling throughout earth and heaven and summoning mankind to Himself.

He states that no power on earth can frustrate Him from proclaiming His Message, and in strong language He unequivocally declares that neither Ali Pasha's opposition nor that of his associates can hinder Him from carrying out His purpose.

He rebukes Ali Pasha for having united with the Persian ambassador in committing that which had caused Muhammad, the Prophet of God, to lament in the

most exalted paradise.

He proclaims the greatness of His Revelation and the exalted station of its Author, affirms that should He unveil His glory which is kept hidden because of the weakness of man, the whole of creation would sacrifice itself in His path.

In this Tablet Baha'u'llah identifies Ali Pasha with those who denied the Manifestations of the past Dispensations and rose up against them.

He recalls the arrogance of the Persian Emperor <p414> in the days of Muhammad, the transgressions of Pharaoh against Moses and the wicked acts perpetrated by Nimrod against Abraham.

Addressing Ali Pasha directly, Baha'u'llah asserts that his efforts to extinguish the fire of the Cause which the hands of God have ignited will be of no consequence; on the contrary they will help to fan it into flame.

He prophesies that ere long it will encompass the whole world and that His Revelation will quicken the souls of all mankind.

The Suriy-i-Ra'is was revealed at a time when Baha'u'llah and His companions were outwardly afflicted with tribulations and indignities on the eve of their banishment to Akka, yet from the Pen of the Most High these ominous warnings were issued to one who was the head of the Turkish Government at the time and the main perpetrator of the cruel injustices against Baha'u'llah.

The day is approaching when the Land of Mystery (Adrianople), and what is beside it shall be changed, and shall pass out of the hands of the king, and commotions shall appear, and the voice of lamentation shall be raised, and the evidences of mischief shall be revealed on all sides, and confusion shall spread by reason of that which hath befallen these captives at the hands of the hosts of oppression.

The course of things shall be altered, and conditions shall wax so grievous, that the very sands on the desolate hills will moan, and the trees on the mountain will weep, and blood will flow out of all things.

Then wilt thou behold the people in sore distress.[1](14) [1 These prophecies, and others which were uttered by Baha'u'llah in Akka, foreshadowing the downfall of Sultan Abdu'l-'Aziz, Ali Pasha and Fu'ad Pasha were remarkably fulfilled.

The Russian troops occupied Adrianople, Serbia, Montenegro and Rumania and announced their independence; Cyprus and Egypt were occupied; Eastern Rumelia was ceded to Bulgaria which became a self-governing state.

In brief the Ottoman Empire was dismembered.

We shall refer to these events in more detail in a future volume.] At one point in the Suriy-i-Ra'is, Baha'u'llah turns His attention away from Ali Pasha and addresses Dhabih in words of <p415> loving-kindness and appreciation.

He states that as the soldiers were keeping guard, He found Himself in a state

of immense joy and gladness, for nothing would be more meritorious in His sight than martyrdom in the path of God.

He recounts the tragic actions of the Government authorities when they sent troops to surround His residence and those of His loved ones, and states that the believers and His family were left without food on the first night of the siege, and in the following words, depicts the scenes of lamentation by the inhabitants of Adrianople on the day of His departure from the city:

The people surrounded the house, and Muslims and Christians wept over Us...

We perceived that the weeping of the people of the Son (Christians) exceeded the weeping of others -- a sign for such as ponder.(15) He describes the attempt by Haji Ja'far-i-Tabrizi to take his own life because of the love he cherished for his Lord, testifies that such an act was 'unheard of in bygone centuries'; it was an act that 'God hath set apart for this Revelation, as an evidence of the power of His might'.[l6] He recalls a similar incident in Baghdad when Siyyid Isma'il of Zavarih had been so carried away by the ocean of love which surged within his heart as to take his own life by cutting his throat.[1] Baha'u'llah declares that these souls were so magnetized by His love that they were driven by an uncontrollable urge to sacrifice their lives, and affirms that in spite of the fact that in so doing, they acted against His commandments, they are immersed in the ocean of His forgiveness and have attained an exalted station in the realms of God. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

101-3.] In the Suriy-i-Ra'is Baha'u'llah affirms that tribulations and sufferings inflicted upon the believers will act as oil for the lamp of the Cause of God and add to its radiance and glory.

He states that the Cause is immeasurably great, that nothing can undermine its rise and establishment even though all the forces of <p416> earth and heaven league against it and the kings and rulers rise up to oppose it.

He further prophesies:

Ere long will God raise up from among the kings one who will aid His loved ones.

He, verily, encompasseth all things.

He will instill in the hearts the love of His loved ones.

This, indeed, is irrevocably decreed by One Who is the Almighty, the Beneficent.[l7] So great is this Revelation that Baha'u'llah proclaims in the Suriy-i-Ra'is:

Had Muhammad, the Apostle of God, attained this Day, He would have exclaimed: 'I have truly recognized Thee, O Thou the Desire of the Divine Messengers!' Had Abraham attained it, He too, falling prostrate upon the ground, and in the utmost lowliness before the Lord thy God,

would have cried: 'Mine heart is filled with peace, O Thou Lord of all that is in heaven and on earth!

I testify that Thou hast unveiled before mine eyes all the glory of Thy power and the full majesty of Thy law!'...

Had Moses Himself attained it, He, likewise, would have raised His voice saying: 'All praise be to Thee for having lifted upon me the light of Thy countenance and enrolled me among them that have been privileged to behold Thy face!'(18) One of the unique features of the Manifestation of God is that, unlike the human being, His thoughts and actions are not necessarily directed to the immediate issue of the time no matter how vital and pressing the situation may be.

He can never be absorbed in one particular problem to the exclusion of others.+F1 For He does not abide in the world of limitations.

Although He dwells on earth, He is animated by the Spirit of God and, as stated in Islam, 'Nothing whatsoever keepeth Him from being occupied with any other thing.'(19) [1 For a further discussion see vol.

I, pp.

262-3.] This characteristic of the Manifestation of God is clearly <p417> demonstrated in the person of Baha'u'llah as He revealed the Suriy-i-Ra'is in the midst of calamities and afflictions which even threatened His life and that of His family and companions.

For in response to a question by Dhabih,, He describes the nature of the rational soul, and elucidates the conditions under which it can acquire different qualities.

He explains that the soul may progress in two different directions.

If it moves towards God it will acquire spiritual qualities, and after its separation from the body it will abide in the realms of God adorned with divine attributes.

If it turns away from Him, however, it will become satanic and devoid of spiritual characteristics.

Baha'u'llah dwells on this subject at great length; a detailed study of His explanations is beyond the scope of this volume.[1] [1 The subject of the soul and its immortality are explained by Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha in many Tablets.

They will be discussed in the next volume.] Concerning the significance of the Suriy-i-Ra'is, Baha'u'llah in one of His Tablets revealed in Akka states:

So blind hath become the human heart that neither the disruption of the city, nor the reduction of the mountain in dust, nor even the cleaving of the earth, can shake off its torpor.

The allusions made in the Scriptures have been unfolded, and the signs

recorded therein have been revealed, and the prophetic cry is continually being raised.

And yet all, except such as God was pleased to guide, are bewildered in the drunkenness of their heedlessness!

Witness how the world is being afflicted with a fresh calamity every day.

Its tribulation is continually deepening.

From the moment the Suriy-i-Ra'is (Tablet to Ra'is) was revealed until the present day, neither hath the world been tranquillized, nor have the hearts of its peoples been at rest.

At one time it hath been agitated by contentions and disputes, at another it hath been convulsed by wars, and fallen a victim to inveterate diseases.

Its sickness is approaching the stage of utter hopelessness, inasmuch as the true Physician is debarred from administering the remedy, whilst unskilled practitioners <p418> are regarded with favour, and are accorded full freedom to act...

The dust of sedition hath clouded the hearts of men, and blinded their eyes.

Erelong, they will perceive the consequences of what their hands have wrought in the Day of God.

Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Informed, as bidden by One Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty.(20) These warnings uttered by Baha'u'llah over a century ago and soon after His clarion call to the kings and rulers of the world in the Suriy-i-Muluk, in which similar warnings were issued, have set in motion an immense cataclysmic process, breaking up the old order and destroying the foundations of human society everywhere on the planet.

Helpless and agonized, mankind is held in the clutches of its devastating fury not knowing where to turn and how to stem the tide of its catastrophic course.

And yet we live at a time when man's knowledge and material achievements, compared with the past, are phenomenal.

To the followers of Baha'u'llah the cause of these calamitous trends is clear and simple.

The plight of man today is similar to that of a gardener who toils and labours in vain because he has planted his seeds in fertile soil but in a dark pit far away from the rays of the sun.

Man has turned his back on the Sun of Truth.

Not until he recognizes Him and turns to Him will he find peace on this earth and tranquillity in his heart.

Almost four decades ago, in the midst of the Second World War, Shoghi Effendi

wrote a most illuminating analysis[1] of the world-engulfing calamities afflicting the human race, delineated their origin, and depicted their outcome.

In this masterly work he describes on the one hand the inevitability of the breaking up of the old order and the suffering that it entails, and on the other the glorious vistas of the distant future when the Golden Age of the Faith of Baha'u'llah will usher in an era of unsurpassed blissfulness and unity for the whole human race. [1 The Promised Day is Come.] Enumerating the manifold persecutions and sufferings which <p419> the human race, for almost eight decades, inflicted upon Baha'u'llah, the Bab and Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi writes:(21) ...Alas, a thousand times alas, that a Revelation so incomparably great, so infinitely precious, so mightily potent, so manifestly innocent, should have received, at the hands of a generation so blind and so perverse, so infamous a treatment! 'O My servants!' Baha'u'llah Himself testifies, 'The one true God is My witness!

This most great, this fathomless and surging ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you.

Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein!

Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favour, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty.' After a revolution of well nigh one hundred years what is it that the eye encounters as one surveys the international scene and looks back upon the early beginnings of Baha'i history?

A world convulsed by the agonies of contending systems, races and nations, entangled in the mesh of its accumulated falsities, receding farther and farther from Him Who is the sole Author of its destinies, and sinking deeper and deeper into a suicidal carnage which its neglect and persecution of Him Who is its Redeemer have precipitated.

A Faith, still proscribed, yet bursting through its chrysalis, emerging from the obscurity of a century-old repression, face to face with the awful evidences of God's wrathful anger, and destined to arise above the ruins of a smitten civilization.

A world spiritually destitute, morally bankrupt, politically disrupted, socially convulsed, economically paralyzed, writhing, bleeding and breaking up beneath the avenging rod of God.

A Faith Whose call remained unanswered, Whose claims were rejected, Whose warnings were brushed aside, Whose followers were mowed down, Whose aims and purposes were maligned, Whose summons to the rulers of the earth were ignored, Whose Herald drained the cup of martyrdom, over the head of Whose Author swept a sea of unheard-of tribulations, and Whose Exemplar sank beneath the weight of life-long sorrows and dire misfortunes.

A <p420> world that has lost its bearings, in which the bright flame of religion is fast dying out, in which the forces of a blatant nationalism and racialism have usurped the rights and prerogatives of God Himself, in which a flagrant secularism -- the direct offspring of irreligion -- has raised its triumphant head and is protruding its ugly features, ... and in which the virus of prejudice and corruption is eating into the vitals of an already gravely disordered society...

We are indeed living in an age which, if we would correctly appraise it, should be regarded as one which is witnessing a dual phenomenon.

The first signalizes the death-pangs of an order, effete and godless, that has stubbornly refused, despite the signs and portents of a century-old Revelation, to attune its processes to the precepts and ideals which that Heaven-sent Faith proffered it.

The second proclaims the birth-pangs of an Order, divine and redemptive, that will inevitably supplant the former, and within whose administrative structure an embryonic civilization, incomparable and world-embracing, is imperceptibly maturing.

The one is being rolled up, and is crashing in oppression, bloodshed, and ruin.

The other opens up vistas of a justice, a unity, a peace, a culture, such as no age has ever seen.

The former has spent its force, demonstrated its falsity and barrenness, lost irretrievably its opportunity, and is hurrying to its doom.

The latter, virile and unconquerable, is plucking asunder its chains, and is vindicating its title to be the one refuge within which a sore-tried humanity, purged from its dross, can attain its destiny.
'Soon,' Baha'u'llah Himself has prophesied, 'will the present day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.' And again 'By Myself!

The day is approaching when We will have rolled up the world and all that is therein, and spread out a new Order in its stead.'...
'The whole earth,' He, moreover, has stated, 'is now in a state of pregnancy.

The day is approaching when it will have yielded its noblest fruits, when from it will have sprung forth the loftiest trees, the most enchanting blossoms, the most heavenly blessings.' 'All nations and kindreds,' Abdu'l-Baha likewise has written, '...will become a single nation. <p421> Religious and sectarian antagonism, the hostility of races and peoples, and differences among nations, will be eliminated.

All men will adhere to one religion, will have one common faith, will be blended into one race, and become a single people.

All will dwell in one common fatherland, which is the planet itself.' <p422> APPENDIX I The Star-fall of 1866[1] [1 For its significance see p. 270] The spectacular shower of meteors in the early hours of the morning of 14 November 1866 was observed all over Europe.

It was an extraordinary event exciting comment from professional astronomers and laymen alike.

The following accounts have been chosen from the many reports and letters in contemporary newspapers.

The Times Saturday, 17 November 1866.

The Rev.

Robert Main, the Radcliffe Observer at Oxford, gives the following account of the meteorological phenomenon of Tuesday night last: -- '...This great display began about 13h. (or 1 o'clock in the morning), and reached its maximum at about 13h.24m., after which time it gradually began to slacken.

The watch, however, was kept up till 18h., though after 15h., there were not many meteors seen.

In all there were observed not fewer than 3,000 during the night, of which about 2,000 fell between 13h. and 14h., or between 1 a.m. and 2 a.m.

As to the general appearance of the meteors, it was noticed that the majority of them were of a whitish or yellowish colour.

Some, however, were reddish or orange-coloured, and one meteor was noticed to be bluish.

The brightest left generally a train behind them, which was to be seen for a few seconds after the meteor disappeared.' <p423> The Times Thursday, 15 November 1866.

Sir: -- The predicted display of shooting stars was observed here on a magnificent scale during the early hours of this morning, and, as the sky may have possibly been in few places so clear as here, the notes I made may perhaps be interesting to some of your numerous readers.

During the half-hour preceding midnight about 66 were observed.

From midnight to 12.30 about 200 were observed.

From 12.30 to 12.50 about 201 were observed.

From 12.50 to 12.58 about 190 were observed.

From 12.58 to 1.2 about 201 were observed in 4 minutes.

From 1.2 to 1.5 about 206 were observed in 3 minutes.

From 1.5 to 1.10 about 214 were observed in 5 minutes.

From 1.10 to 1.11 about 100 were observed in 1 minute.

From 1.11 to 1.13 about 206 were observed in 2 minutes.

The falls now became so incessant that it was impossible to count numbers fast enough...

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant M.

Cowes, Isle of Wight, Nov.

14.

The Times Thursday, 15 November 1866.

Sir: -- The following observations of last night's phenomena were made near Corley, the highest point of Warwickshire, by myself and a friend...

The meteors took a direction from E. to W., with but very few exceptions.

They may be divided into three classes.

The most numerous were the ordinary shooting stars interspersed with some very large ones, which left a long blue (and sometimes green) streak of light varying in width.

At the moment of extinction there was nothing extraordinary but the intense brilliance of the head.

Another class occurred at intervals of a few minutes, <p424> and seemed to be balls of copper-coloured fire, which left no path, nor varied in brightness before vanishing.

The most remarkable series were also infrequent.

The path they took was an irregular curve, short, but well defined, and which remained in view two or three minutes.

Some of the largest meteors appeared to burst, and then reappear, leaving two nodes of light connected by a luminous line.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the grandeur of the heavens between 1 and 3 o'clock...

I am, Sir, yours and c., W.

W.

TYLER Coventry, Nov.

14.

The Times Thursday, 15 November 1866.

Sir: -- The predicted shower of meteors has been witnessed here

during the past night under very favourable atmospheric circumstances...

From midnight to 1 o'clock a.m., Greenwich time, one thousand one hundred and twenty meteors were noted, the number gradually increasing.

From 1 a.m. to 1h.7m.5s. no less than five hundred and fourteen were counted, and we were conscious of having missed very many, owing to the rapidity of their succession.

At the latter moment there was a rather sudden increase to an extent which rendered it impossible to count the number, but after a hundred and twenty a decline became perceptible.

The maximum was judged to have taken place about l.10, and at this time the appearance of the whole heavens was very beautiful, not to say magnificent ... while the meteors in the opposite corners of the sky traversed arks of many degrees, in the vicinity of the diverging point they shone out for a few seconds without appreciable motion, and might have been momentarily mistaken for stars by anyone to whom the configuration of the heavens in that direction was not familiar...

I am, Sir, your obedient servant, J.

R.

HIND.

Mr.

Bishop's Observatory, Twickenham, Nov.

14. <p425> The Times Saturday, 17 November 1866.

Sir: -- Last night, the 14th of November, I witnessed a very extraordinary display of 'falling stars', and as I think I have understood that this particular night of the year is remarkable for the appearance of these meteors, a short account of their occurrence on the occasion may not be without interest to some of your readers.

For several weeks past the sky in this part of Spain has been without a cloud, and consequently the display of last night was seen under circumstances which could only very rarely occur in England.

My attention was first directed to the falling stars at about 12 o'clock at night, by observing groups of people in the narrow streets of Saragossa conversing together with a certain degree of excitement. 'Mirza Usted es como si fue en el tiempo del sito' ('Look, it is just as if it were in the time of the siege') was the reply to my question as to what was the matter, and on looking up the appearance certainly was as if the city was being shelled.

Showers of meteors seemed to be pouring into the place, a score or more at a time, exploding with a brilliant flame at different points, and

leaving long luminous trains behind them, some of which lasted as streaks in the sky several instants after the explosion of the meteor.

I hastened to an open space, and I much regret that the sight I witnessed did not fall to the lot of a scientific observer.

The meteors seemed to be more abundant towards the north and northwest, and I noticed a particular stream of them not far from the constellation of the Great Bear.

The direction of their flight was mostly from right to left downwards at various angles of inclination; but on arriving at my own room afterwards I observed from the window, which commanded a somewhat different view, a succession of meteors, which seemed to fall nearly in a vertical direction from about the same point in the sky.

I may notice that the luminous tracks at this point were occasionally seen crossing at acute angles those which were projected from right to left, but I did not observe a single instance of the tracks crossing in other <p426> directions, or, in other words, of meteors projected from the opposite side.

It was evident to me that the stars were being projected in one or more fixed lines of flight.

Those which fell in a nearly vertical direction appeared to be much more brilliant than the others; they all left a well defined trail or track of sparks of a pale bluish colour, and they finally exploded with a brilliant white or yellow flame; in some instances the flame appeared tinged on the edges with a vivid emerald green colour, and others exhibited tints of pink or crimson and blue.

Some idea may be formed of their number and brilliancy from the fact that when I went to bed, though the field of sky visible through my window as I lay was very small, it was being continually crossed by the meteors, and a looking-glass which hung on the wall was every moment brilliantly lit up with the reflection of the explosions which occurred.

During the short time I observed them many hundreds of meteors fell, and, as there was no perceptible diminution in their number, I have no doubt during the night the number must have been tens of thousands.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant.

J.

C.

ROBINSON.

Saragossa, Nov.

15. <p427> APPENDIX II A Visit to Adrianople from an article by Martha L.

Root(1) ...We know He [Baha'u'llah] arrived with His family and friends on Saturday, 12 December 1863, and remained until Wednesday, 12 August 1868; He was forty-six years old when He came and His son, Abbas Effendi known as Abdu'l-Baha, was a youth of nineteen years while His daughter, Bahiyyih Khanum, was a girl seventeen years old.

How different was their journey from Constantinople to the present luxurious Oriental Express trip when the train speeds swiftly over the distance in exactly six hours' time!

Their journey to Adrianople, evidently hurried and enforced, for they were not prepared and were only thinly clad, took twelve days and was full of hardships as the weather was bitterly cold.

Bahiyyih Khanum said long years after that she was a strong, well girl before those terrible exile journeys.

Their first lodging in Adrianople was in the Khan-i-'Arab Caravanserai where they stayed three nights.

All one knew about it was that it was near the house of Izzat Aqa.

Then they lived for one week in a house in the Muradiyyih quarter near the Takyiy-i-Mawlavi and then changed to a winter house close by.

Twice Baha'u'llah lived in the house of Amru'llah Big, which has been spoken of by Aqa Rida in his early account as a three-storey house to the North of Sultan Salim Mosque.

Another house in which He lived was the home of Rida Big.

Then He returned to the residence of Amru'llah Big, but the last eleven months of His stay were spent in the home of Izzat Aqa.

We know, too, that He was sometimes in the <p428> Muradiyyih Mosque and very often in the Sultan Salim Mosque where He met and spoke with thinkers...

Miss Marion E.

Jack, a Baha'i who is a painter from Canada and the writer, a Baha'i who is a journalist and magazine writer from the United States, came to Adrianople, on 17 October 1933, to look for 'traces of the Traceless Friend'.

Their quest was 'to seek, to find and not to fail' to portray Adrianople to the Baha'i world...

Miss Jack through her brush and the writer through her pen...

The beautiful road lighted by the moon was lined on each side with great poplar, plane and willow trees mystic with shadows, and as we came over the fine Maritza bridge the lights of the city gleamed a welcome in this 'Land of Mystery'...

This Adrianople, which the Turks call Edirne, was a city of two hundred thousand inhabitants before the Balkan wars and the world war.

Now it numbers only forty thousand.

It is on the direct Oriental Express route from Constantinople to Paris, and is also on the main motoring way from Central Asia to Western Europe.

One remembers, too, that in 1360 Adrianople was made the capital of the great Turkish Empire and became the centre from which radiated the light of Islam to a Western world.

Its mosque architecture is extraordinarily beautiful.

Adrianople is interesting, too, because it is so typically Turkish, much more so than is Constantinople, which is now considerably westernized...

The first morning it rained.

Down through the stone-cobbled streets the water poured in little torrents.

Standing at our window, we saw the people of Adrianople trying to cross these fiercely flowing rivulets but none could do it without immersing their feet far down in the pools.

However, after mid-day dinner the skies suddenly cleared, the streams disappeared leaving the cobble stones clean and white.

The sun came out in glory, shedding its warmth generously, and we took a horse and carriage driven by a kind Turk whose name was Mustafa.

We rode through Government Street, the principal thoroughfare, picturesque with its vistas of bazaars and its brightly <p429> coloured rugs hanging outside the shops, but most interesting of all we passed some of the most beautiful mosques to be found anywhere in the world.

We drove over the cobbled stones of some extremely narrow streets till we came into a more open road which led to the Muradiyyih district.

Leaving Mustafa and the carriage at the foot of the hill, we walked up the steep, needle-eye road lined on each side with little shops and a mill where a horse goes round and round turning wheels to grind the olive into oil.

The Muradiyyih Mosque crowns the slope and, just as we were coming, the muezzin came out on a parapet of the slender, graceful minaret and using his hand as funnel loud-speaker chanted the call to prayer.

When we reached the historic mosque we did not go in at once because a Haji and some others were engrossed in their daily devotions.

We walked about looking at this noble mass of splendid architecture, but most of all scanning the horizon to see where Baha'u'llah might have lived.

Muradiyyih section in Baha'u'llah's day was one of the most fashionable residential summer districts of Adrianople, even the Sultan had a summer palace in that quarter.

The air is most pure and fresh on this mountain slope and the grapes there were

world renowned.

The route to Bulgaria and on to Central and Western Europe and the road to Constantinople wind like broad white ribbons through the plains below stretching on and on until out of sight.

We found the Takyiy-i-Mawlavi, a building for dervishes in the last century, it is just in front of the mosque -- and we knew that Baha'u'llah's houses, one at least, was very near to that.

Miss Jack took her pencil and sketch book to draw this Takyiy-i-Mawlavi and the fountain in front of it where women were carrying away heavy pails of water hung on poles balanced over their shoulders.

What Water of Life the women of Baha'u'llah's time could have carried away when He was at that well!

I went into the mosque, for now it was quite empty except for the kindly old caretaker whose eyes were filled with peace.

It is <p430> a beautiful interior, high and lofty and the blue faience, of various hues from the delicate Chinese green-blue of the East to the deep rich Sevres' blue of the West, is marvellously colourful although now it is more than five hundred years old.

No wonder a man from Poland famous in tile designing has just come to make a study of these tiles and that many come from the United States just to see this faience work.

It was made by a Persian whom the Turks invited to come and decorate this mosque.

Quotations from the holy Qur'an illumined the walls.

All colours were soft and harmonious, such rich old tones are seldom seen in our modern churches; but the outer things were almost as if I did not see them, so absorbed was I in the consciousness that this was a place where He had prayed and where God had spoken to Him as of old He had spoken to Moses in the Burning Bush!

I was impressed how in all His exiles, Baha'u'llah seemed always to live close to the mosques -- the symbols of the divine in the earth-plane.

In His hours of prayer in these terrestrial edifices God certainly revealed to Him how the dead world was to be revivified.

What wonderful Works were written by Baha'u'llah in Adrianople!

There were fourteen that we know of, and among these were the Tablets to the Kings, the Prayers on Fasting, the first Tablet to Napoleon III, and the great Tablet to the Shah of Persia which have been translated into our Western languages.

Kneeling with forehead to the rugs in this memorable mosque, the writer felt

with a throb of wonder how far Baha'u'llah had come to meet our Western world!

Adrianople was His closest approach -- in the outer plane -- to our Occident: but all these thoughts dropped into subconsciousness as one bowed in silent love in His Living presence.

He was there in that mosque!

And the one listening heard anew that His Teachings, the Logos, carry in Themselves the Power that will make of this world of earth a high paradise.

The moments there were sublime, not to be described but experienced!

Later when the writer lifted her eyes from devotion, she glanced once more about the mosque before arising from her <p431> knees.

As she saw the Verses from the Qur'an upon the walls, she thought of Abdu'l-Baha's Words when He was asked what we in the United States and Canada should do with the Tablets He revealed to the United States and Canada and sent to us in 1919.

He replied to put them into the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar in Chicago, not into the vaults but upon the walls.

Our new Baha'i temple in the West and probably other Mashriqu'l-Adhkars in various parts of the globe will become renowned later as the great new architecture and the new ideal of spiritual edifices conceived in the twentieth century.

The Baha'i architecture will reflect the essential traits of our Baha'i believers -- universality, spiritual solidarity, spiritual refinement, beauty, joyousness, sincerity and light.

More than any other edifice in the world, the new Mashriqu'l-Adhkar in Chicago presents in concrete, in bronze, in quartz a gleaming reflection of all these inner qualities.

How little we realize that we, too, are building for the centuries ahead in our new architecture, and that the name of our Louis Bourgeois, who designed this first Mashriqu'-Adhkar in the Americas, will be much more known and praised five hundred years from now even than it is today in the West.

Sometimes it is good to see the famous mosques of Sinan and other Muhammadan architects who lived in the epoch of a former World Teacher; it quickens in us a realization of the stupendous spiritual age in which we ourselves are living.

As the days went by we kept coming back to this Muradiyyih section so often, that Mustafa, our driver, said to the neighbours gathered about us to see the sketches, that we seemed to love Muradiyyih the best of all the places in Adrianople.

Then after nearly two-weeks' time we found the sites of the two houses where Baha'u'llah had lived, how we found all the sites is as interesting as a novel, but space does not permit its telling.

An old man, Muhammad Hilmi Big, a fine type of Turk, told us that he had been a neighbour, that his boyhood home had been just across the roadway from Baha'u'llah's house and he showed us the old structure of his place.

He explained that there <p432> had been two 'Baha'i Bigs'[1] -- one great Persian, who lived in the mansion just adjoining the entrance gate to the Muradiyyih Mosque, seldom went out, but the other one, Abbas Big, used to go everywhere and used to treat the boys with much friendliness; but the great Baha'i Big, too, was good to the boys.

He had pilau given to them.

This man told us too, and showed us what an immense house had been the mansion of Baha'u'llah; it had eighteen rooms and a Turkish bath -- one can see from the site that it had been a very great mansion.

The house was demolished in the Russian war fifty years ago; a cheap house had been built twenty-five years ago on the part of the lot nearest to the entrance gate, but most of that, too, had been razed in the last Balkan war.

Muhammad Hilmi Big showed us that just beyond the wall of Baha'u'llah's house was a stretch of land through which runs a brook, and the Baha'is also had that entire place which extended down to the river in that time.

There were several different buildings including stables and a large, long garden.

He told us that these Persians had beautiful Arabian horses and two donkeys.

There had been a house rather larger than the others in this garden enclosure, situated at the lower bend of the grounds and several people told us that Baha'u'llah had also lived there for a short time.

That house overlooked the summer palace of the Sultan which stood lower on an opposite slope still in the Muradiyyih section.

Now there is only the site of Baha'u'llah's house, all his houses were demolished in the wars.

We think that Baha'u'llah might have lived in this lower house the first week as it was close to the Takyiy-i-Mawlavi, just as an early historian relates.

It could be reached from Takyiy-i-Mawlavi and Muradiyyih Mosque by going down a steep, narrow pathway part of which is stone steps, or one could have approached it through the garden. [1 'Big' is a Turkish title meaning a person of high rank, a Lord. (A.T.)] Muhammad Hilmi Big told us there were more than fifty Persians living in these places and that very many visitors came; they, too, were entertained there.

This genial man explained <p433> that one of the members of Baha'u'llah's family gave Persian lessons to the head of the Mevlevi Cherleri dervishes.[1]
[1 Dervishes no longer hold their services in these buildings at Takyiy-i-Mawlavi, but one man there who used to be dervish told us that

Baha'u'llah had lived in this lower house and then later in the one up by the entrance gate.

He said that Baha'is had used the kitchen, the dining-room and the bathroom of the Takyiy-i-Mawlavi and showed us these rooms -- and probably they did in those first few days until they could get established.

The dervishes then were a large and flourishing group, they had four buildings right beside the mosque.

Some of the photographs of earlier meetings show that they all wore the high taj headdress.] Our kind Adrianople friend, Muhammad Hilmi Bey, at the end of our visit said very softly that perhaps we knew they were exiles because they changed religion, but he added most sincerely and with love straight from the heart: 'They were very, very kind, they didn't harm anybody and they did good to everybody!' Then he said good-bye to us and with a questioning smile -- before he started cane in hand to stride slowly down the hill to his house -- this brave, true man who has seen three Balkan wars and the world war despoil Adrianople said to us: 'How have you liked us Turks?

Do you find Turkish folks don't eat people from other countries!' Beloved Turkish brother whose boyhood home was close beside the house of Baha'u'llah, if only we could express to you how lovely we found you and how kind we found the citizens of Adrianople!

And to learn from you and others that your citizens here were good to Baha'u'llah endears us forever to your historic city!

The home of Amru'llah Big was the third residence where Baha'u'llah lived in Adrianople; this site was the easiest to find and was verified by the greatest number of citizens.

This great house stood just near the main entrance to the magnificent Sultan Salim Mosque,...

Also, a man in public life showed us this place -- and walked with us on through two or three other streets and pointed out the sites of the houses of Rida Big and Izzat Aqa and the Khan-i-'Arab Caravanserai site very near the grounds of Izzat Aqa.

We could see from the ruins that the <p434> three residences were all remarkably large mansions and we heard that all three hosts were distinguished men of Adrianople at that time.

Now this Amru'llah Big lot, which is like one whole block -- and the house covered all of it -- is only a place of ruins; the ground is covered with crumbled stones, flowering thistles and weeds.

Part of the old wall still stands and a large portion of an enormous old fireplace which the Turks call the 'kitchen'.

We heard of an old man, Mustafa Big, eighty-five years old, who had seen Baha'u'llah.

When he met him he told us that he had been a neighbour living near the house of Amru'llah Big and that he had carried yogurt to 'Baha'i Big' (Baha'u'llah), and the latter always had pilau given to him to carry home.

His eyes shone as he spoke of Baha'u'llah, and he tried to show us how noble He was; this kindly, sincere old man, a Turk, stood up and tried to make us understand how Baha'i Big walked with such a dignity and power, and how He bowed to people who saluted Him -- he told us that all people saluted Baha'u'llah, that every one loved and revered Him.

We were informed that Baha'u'llah had a kitchen for the poor.

This man told us, too, that Baha'u'llah had a great vineyard -- from his description we think it was like a garden with an arbour in the centre.

He said that Baha'u'llah went there often, sometimes alone to spend the day, sometimes He went there with His friends and they walked up and down.

When He would return at night with his cortege, this man told us, that Baha'u'llah's twenty servants (followers) would all stand together outside the house to salute Him and He always returned their greeting so lovingly.

We took this good friend with us and went out to the vineyard site.

He measured off the distances and showed us where the entrance gate had been.

The grounds would cover in area about three city blocks; the land is on an elevation and the place is only about seven minutes' walk from Sultan Salim Mosque.

This vineyard was between the Muradiyyih Mosque slope and <p435> Sultan Salim Mosque; one could walk to it easily from either location.

Mustafa Big said to us: 'Oh, how many grapes did we receive from the hand of Baha'i Big!

He gave us so many grapes always!' I heard that the grapes of Adrianople were very celebrated then; later in the wars the grapevines were all destroyed.

I was very impressed how in every place Baha'u'llah lived in His exiles, He had a garden.

One day when Miss Jack and I went again to the vacant lot where the house of Amru'llah Big had stood, Mustafa Big came over to us, cane in hand, with the firm eager tread of one who knows and wishes us to know all the history of the place.

He showed how one part was the quarter for the women, another the suites for the men and he pointed to the great fireplace in the rear where the cooking was done.

However, he pointed to a two-storey house with the middle portion three stories just across the street but a little further down, and he said that some of Baha'u'llah's followers lived in that house, that most of the cooking was done

over there.

He said that generally the food was prepared and brought to Baha'u'llah at the Amru'llah mansion -- though I did understand him to say sometimes the cooking would all be done in the Amru'llah 'kitchen' fireplace and carried over to the green house where most of the Persian friends ate their meals.

He told us that this old house, which was green in colour in Baha'u'llah's time, has now been remodelled and is painted pink.

He made it very clear that Baha'u'llah Himself never lived there. (A pretty Turkish girl came out from the pink house when we took a photograph and a sketch; she asked about the great Man whose friends had eaten in her home!) This much at least we learned, that Baha'u'llah lived for a long time in the home of Amru'llah Big; the old man told us He lived in Adrianople nearly five years.

We know that when the Prince of Peace lived and walked in Adrianople He was an honoured member in three of the great Turkish families, He lived in some splendid mansions of that great former metropolis, and He was loved and reverenced by those who <p436> knew Him.

Is it not significant that the one man in Adrianople who said: 'I saw Baha'u'llah!' tells us that he received pilau and grapes and that Baha'u'llah loved the poor and had a kitchen for them!

It seems to me that it must have been in this house of Amru'llah Big or in the house adjacent that Subh-i-Azal poisoned the food of Baha'u'llah, for he was living there in the latter time of His stay, and then left this house and went to live in the home of Izzat Aqa for the last eleven months of His sojourn in Adrianople...

There is not very much to be said about the ruins of the houses of Rida Big and Izzat Aqa except that one can see from the old stone walls and baths and fireplaces what extraordinarily large mansions they were.

Certainly from them one would have a glorious view of the Sultan Salim Mosque.

We were told that the house of Izzat Aqa had a very large library 'where the Baha'is studied' -- perhaps they meant where Baha'u'llah wrote or received the thinkers and seekers.

It was the room where the three fireplaces are,..

The fact that Baha'u'llah was living in the homes of these three great citizens of Adrianople proves in itself that He was loved and honoured in their midst.

We hope that others coming after us will find out more about these two houses.

Concerning the Khan-i-'Arab Caravanserai, we searched for that for nearly three weeks; in going to the old caravansaries we saw what luxurious hostelries they must have been in that epoch, but we were told later that the Khan-i-'Arab Caravanserai was not one of the great fashionable ones but was for the Arab

middle and poorer classes.

Probably Baha'u'llah and His followers were taken there by the Turkish officials from Constantinople who brought them to Roumelia.

There were said to be two Khan-i-'Arab caravansaries -- or some persons said that one was called Arab-i-Khan, or simply Arab Caravanserai -- there were great differences of opinion but both sites are now used for large schools.

We took a photograph of the one they said was Khan-i-'Arab Caravanserai near to the house of Izzat <p437> Aqa, and a sketch of the other one which is not far from the Sultan Salim Mosque.

Sultan Salim Mosque, where Baha'u'llah often went, is considered to be the most beautiful mosque in Turkey and was designed by Sinan, the great Turkish architect.

Certainly its wide cloisters would be ideal as a place to sit and speak of matters divine, and its interior is full of beauty.

Miss Jack and I were each asked to write our impressions of this mosque to be used in a Turkish book and we did so. ...I feel happy that we could meet the man who had seen Abbas Big and knew the Muradiyyih house well, and that we had explained to us the Amru'llah Big house and the Vineyard by a man who was a neighbour and who saw Baha'u'llah. [Note: the Persian names in this article have been transliterated in accordance with the system used in this book.] <p438> APPENDIX III Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali of Isfahan Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was one of the outstanding disciples of Baha'u'llah and foremost among His trusted teachers who travelled extensively throughout Persia.

He is to be forever regarded as one of the most able defenders of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, one who championed the Cause of God during the Ministry of Abdu'l-Baha, helped to protect it from the onslaught of the Covenant-breakers and rallied the believers around the Centre of the Covenant.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was born into a Shaykhi family in Isfahan.

He spent his youth in Kirman in the service of Haji Mirza Karim Khan,[1] the arch-enemy of the Faith of the Bab.

But soon he discovered that the man he was serving was devoid of spiritual qualities.

Disillusioned, he returned to his native town of Isfahan.

In that city, a few years after the martyrdom of the Bab, he came across one of the Bab's followers who familiarized him with the Faith.

Through study of the Writings and especially through the steadfastness of the believers in the face of persecution and martyrdom, he recognized the truth of the new-born Faith of God. [1 See vol.

I, Appendix IV.] Soon after his recognition of the Faith, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was introduced to other believers including Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin.[1]

But meeting the friends demanded the utmost caution, otherwise their lives would be endangered.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali himself recounts the story of how he used to go at the dead of night to the house of one of the Babi friends.

To ensure that no one would see him leave his house, he had to <p439> climb out through a window and return the same way.

At the home of his friend, they used to hide their lamp in a hole inside a room, then hold the Writings of the Bab beside the hole, read the verses of God and receive spiritual sustenance through them. [1 See vol.

I, pp.

25-6.] Soon Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali became confirmed in his faith and conversant with the Writings of the Bab.

One thing which above all captured his imagination and overwhelmed his mind was the glad-tidings of the coming of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

To recognize Him when He revealed Himself, and to attain His presence, was Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali's ardent desire and the sole object of his life.

Through the purity of his heart he also realized that Mirza Yahya, although the nominee of the Bab, had none of the requisite spiritual qualities.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali travelled around Persia, visited the believers and spoke to them about the advent of 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'.

In the course of these visits he suffered persecution from the enemies and sometimes opposition from those friends who had set their affections upon Mirza Yahya.

From the early days, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali became attracted to Baha'u'llah, especially when he read the Kitab-i-Iqan.

Then he acquired new vision and was further confirmed in his faith.

He regarded Baha'u'llah as the source of Divine Revelation and championed His cause after His declaration.

He travelled to Adrianople, attained His presence and as a result became a new creation and a spiritual giant of this age.

We have already referred to some of his experiences in Adrianople and Constantinople.

After spending about fourteen months in the capital of the Ottoman Empire, where he served the Faith acting as a channel of communication between Baha'u'llah and the friends, he was directed by Baha'u'llah to proceed to Egypt to teach His cause.

He was particularly advised to be very discreet and cautious in his teaching work and not to arouse the antagonism of fanatics.

In a Tablet to him Baha'u'llah had prophesied that he would be <p440> afflicted by ordeals and persecutions, had counselled him to be thankful and joyous when sufferings were inflicted upon him in the path of God, had exhorted him to remain steadfast and immovable as a mountain in His Cause and had assured him of ultimate deliverance and protection.

Baha'u'llah had also promised Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, both in person and in writing, that his eyes would once again behold the beauty of His Lord and that he would attain His presence.

These prophetic words were fulfilled.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali went through the most harrowing afflictions during his life in Egypt and the Sudan, afflictions that lasted almost ten years.

He succeeded in teaching the Faith to a number of Persians resident in Egypt, but soon news of his activities spread among that community.

Mirza Hasan Khan-i-Khu'i, the Consul General and a vicious enemy of the Cause, disguised himself as a seeker of truth and invited Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali to his home.

After several meetings at which Haji spoke openly about the Faith, the Consul arrested him along with two other friends and imprisoned them in the Consulate.

Their feet were placed in stocks and chains put on their necks.

Later the number of prisoners was increased to seven Persians who were charged with being followers of the new Faith and one Egyptian who had befriended Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, but was not a believer.

In the meantime the Consul succeeded in arousing the anxiety of the Egyptian authorities by introducing the prisoners as subversive elements teaching a new religion and working against the security of the state.

He managed to secure an order condemning them to an indefinite period of imprisonment in the Sudan.

The story of the ordeal of this journey to the Sudan and their imprisonment there is recorded in detail by Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and is one of the most heart-rending episodes in the history of the Faith.

The prisoners, chained and fettered, endured many hardships in the Consulate.

Their daily food consisted of a slice of bread each and a small cup of water.

The Consul did everything <p441> possible to humiliate them in the eyes of the public.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes:

During the forty-five days we spent in the home of the Consul we suffered as in hell because of his staff and servants, but the soul was in the utmost joy beyond description.(1) Eventually they were handed over to the Egyptian authorities and placed in a government jail.

Later they were transferred to another jail, and were tied together with a chain and placed inside a dark cell.

Into this locked cell no light could enter, nor was there a lamp.

The end of the chain was brought out through a hole in the door and was held by a guard.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali decided that this was an occasion for rejoicing.

He taught his companions to chant the Lawh-i-Naqus.

The voice of the prisoners chanting this aloud and in unison echoed through the building.

The guards who heard those soul-stirring verses were attracted by them and soon they realized that the prisoners were men of God and not criminals.

They opened the cell, took the chains away, gave them a light and would only lock the door when an officer was coming.

The prisoners stayed in this prison for about fifty days during which time their bodies recovered from the effects of malnutrition and their souls were in the utmost joy.

Haji writes:

We were very happy because we were freed from this world and willing to lay down our lives in His path.(2) However, they were then transferred to yet another jail where they faced the hardest ordeal of their life.

One day, the authorities called blacksmiths and carpenters to the jail to chain the prisoners permanently for their journey to the Sudan.

Four of the prisoners each had their right foot inserted in a huge iron collar and the other four their left foot.

Each collar had a large iron loop attached to it.

Then they were tied in pairs by joining the two loops with a heavy chain of about two yards long.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes: <p442> The fastening of the iron collars and their connecting chains was such a painful operation that we could not control ourselves.

We yelled, screamed and also laughed.

The guards, officers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and all the others who were present wept over us and condemned their own jobs and professions for forcing them to torment the servants of God.(3) Then came the turn of the carpenters.

They were to make stocks for the prisoners' hands.

A heavy piece of timber about one yard in length and very thick was constructed

having two grooves in which the right and left hands of the same couple were placed.

Then another piece of timber was securely nailed on the top thus closing the grooves.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes:

The stocks caused greater hardship than the chain and the collar upon our feet.

For we might have been able to lighten the burden on our feet by lifting the chain with our hands when walking.

But the stocks had tied each pair so inflexibly that our movements became extremely restricted and difficult.

The placing of chains and stocks took a long time to complete.

It started about two hours before noon and ended soon after sunset.(4)
Immediately after this, the prisoners were moved to a ship and were accommodated in an enclosed quarter which served as a store.

The Persian Consul had so wickedly misrepresented the prisoners to the Egyptian authorities that the Government had become alarmed.

They had been led to believe that these men were the most vicious criminals, whose aim was to wipe out the religion of Islam, assassinate the king and overthrow the Government.

Therefore orders were issued that the prisoners must be kept in chains, and guarded all the time.

The journey, which involved travelling by ship and crossing the desert, sometimes on foot and sometimes by camel, lasted about five months.
<p443> Until the prisoners arrived in the Khartoum prison where the chains and stocks were removed and replaced with smaller chains, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and his companions bore the weight of these gruesome tools of torture.

They suffered agony and hardship beyond description.

Tied in pairs in this appalling fashion, they sat, slept, and were forced to walk for miles together.

During this period the rigours of the journey, the agony of being in chains and fetters, the effects of starvation, malnutrition and gross ill-treatment, the pains of associating with the vilest of men, criminals and murderers, and the crushing force of many other unspeakable sufferings which were inflicted upon them, reduced them to such physical frailty that several times they were brought to the verge of death.

But because of the spiritual powers of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali the prisoners were content and happy.

It was also through the influence of his radiant personality that the

authorities were charmed by his character and recognized his greatness.

It so happened that as the prisoners were travelling to the Sudan, Ja'far Pasha, the Governor of the Sudan was on his way to Khartoum.

He met Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali at Aswan and was so struck by his spirituality and greatness that he ordered the officers to extend more consideration towards the prisoners.

Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes:

He [Ja'far Pasha] assured us that he would see that we were more comfortable, and he instructed the guards to show as much kindness as was in their power.

The Pasha left us and we stayed in that spot for three days.

On the day that we were to resume the journey we were handed to new soldiers who brought camels for us to ride.

But as we were tied together, it was difficult to mount...

They placed both tied feet and hands of each couple on the saddle, one person hanging on one side of the camel, the other on the other side, and tied the hanging bodies to the camel with the help of cotton sheets.

Remaining in this position was extremely difficult.

One cannot think of a torture more agonizing than this.

But the fact is that there was no alternative.

This journey took five or <p444> six hours, during which time they halted five or six times.

They untied us, and helped us to dismount to have a rest.

The guards expressed their sympathy and apologized, saying that previously they had escorted thieves and murderers to the Sudan similarly chained, but they had to walk.

In our case, however, Ja'far Pasha had ordered that we ride and they could not think of a better way...

Although we were in great pain and torture, nevertheless as we watched each other hanging, we used to laugh very heartily, and managed to reach the Nile alive...(5) After these and many more grievous experiences, the prisoners arrived in Berber in the Sudan and were transferred to a prison which was so overcrowded with thieves and murderers that it was difficult to find a place to sit without being attacked by the inmates or stung by the scorpions.

For about forty-five days they stayed in that area until they embarked in a sailing ship on the last leg of their journey.

This lasted no less than thirty-six days, during which they endured many more

afflictions.

At last they arrived in Khartoum and were placed in a prison which was more crowded than the one in Berber.

Later, by the orders of Ja'far Pasha, mentioned above, the prison authorities removed the ghastly chains and stocks and replaced them with a lighter chain.

They were also allowed to sleep in a small hut made of reed and timber which was especially erected for them.

For about nine months the prisoners remained in the Khartoum jail, but soon people recognized the heavenly qualities and spiritual gifts of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali.

He wrote a letter to the Shaykhu'l-Islam of Khartoum, proclaimed the mission of the Bab and Baha'u'llah to him, described their sufferings, expatiated on Baha'u'llah's glory and majesty, His loftiness and grandeur, extolled in glowing terms the qualities of Abdu'l-Baha, explained all the circumstances of his own imprisonment and that of his companions and demanded the intervention of the Shaykhu'l-Islam in order to secure the release of the prisoners.

The Shaykhu'l-Islam shared the letter with Ja'far <p445> Pasha who was moved by the story.

He went to the prison and issued orders to remove the chains from the prisoners, to issue wheat flour to them instead of corn and to supply them with meat and other necessities to which they were not entitled.

He permitted them to leave the prison during the day and return at night.

He also requested the authorities in Egypt to relax their restrictions and allow the prisoners to live freely in Khartoum.

Two of the prisoners engaged in work as engravers, one practised medicine, and Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was asked by the Governor to become a scribe.

Soon many of the inhabitants of Khartoum became aware of the wonderful character and qualities of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali.

Some even attributed miracles to him.

Many officials flocked to see him in the evenings in the prison where he spent all his earnings and entertained them.

His prison chamber became the centre of attraction for the learned and wise who sat at his feet and enjoyed his company.

Then Ja'far Pasha's term of office came to an end and a new Governor arrived.

It was during the latter's reign that the Egyptian authorities agreed to the request by the former Governor to allow the prisoners to leave the jail and live freely in the city.

At this time so great was the prestige of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali that the new

Governor would turn to him for guidance and enlightenment when in serious difficulties about personal matters affecting his career.

Another Governor who admired Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was Isma'il Pasha.

He had known him since his early days of imprisonment, and had a greater appreciation of Haji's wisdom and spiritual gifts than his predecessors had done.

He often used to call on Haji for companionship and visit him in his home.

From the early days of his arrival in Khartoum, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali kept on writing to Baha'u'llah.

For some time, not knowing that Baha'u'llah had been exiled to Akka about the same time that he was imprisoned in Egypt, Haji continued to send his letters to Adrianople and these never reached Baha'u'llah.

However, soon after His arrival in the prison of Akka, <p446> Baha'u'llah established contact with the believers.

He sent a special messenger to the Sudan to find Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and the other prisoners and assure them of His bounties and confirmations.

The messenger was Haji Jasim-i-Baghdadi who disguised himself as a dervish, travelled on foot to Khartoum and succeeded in contacting Haji during the period that the latter was still a prisoner but free to move about.

The arrival of Baha'u'llah's special messenger brought indescribable joy and assurance to the prisoners in general and to Haji in particular.

For forty days, Haji heard everything about Baha'u'llah's whereabouts, His imprisonment and other afflictions from Haji Jasim.

Later a Tablet of Baha'u'llah reached Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali and over this he rejoiced more than over his meeting with Baha'u'llah's messenger.

After this initial Tablet about four to five Tablets a year would be revealed for the prisoners and sent to them in the Sudan.

It was also arranged that copies of Tablets and various Writings of Baha'u'llah would be sent from Alexandria to them, and some years later Baha'u'llah sent another messenger to meet the believers in Khartoum.

Concerning his release from the Sudan, Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali writes:

When Baha'u'llah sent me away from His presence in the land of mystery [Adrianople], He promised that I should attain His presence again.

Similarly, in His holy and blessed Tablets which through His bounty were despatched to Constantinople, Egypt and the Sudan, He clearly gave the joyous tidings of attaining His presence.

Therefore, I was assured and confident of my deliverance.(6) The release of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali from the Sudan was due to the recommendations

and influence of General Gordon, known as Gordon Pasha, the British Governor of the Sudan who succeeded Isma'il Pasha.

When Gordon Pasha arrived, Haji presented him with a beautiful gift which was made under his supervision and with his help.

It was a large mirror (about <p447> two and a half metres by one and a half) on which a complimentary phrase was inscribed in gold in English.

This pleased the General so much that he sent him an order to make a similar one for his sister in England.

Haji complied and one day brought the mirror to Gordon Pasha.

This is how Haji describes the story:

He [Gordon Pasha] thanked me for the article and said 'It is so beautiful that I cannot pay enough for this gift.

You yourself fix the price.' I knew this was the opportunity to say something about freedom, so I told him that I did not want anything except to be released and allowed to leave the Sudan.

He said 'Write a letter [addressed to the Khedive of Egypt] and plead that you have been imprisoned here without your case being investigated, that you are far from being guilty of the crime they ascribe to you, and that matters relating to one's conscience are not within the jurisdiction of kings.

They are concerned with God, the King of Kings.

Then beg him to set you free so that you may return to your home and be thankful.(7) Six of Haji's companions, including the Egyptian, decided to remain in the Sudan.

Only Haji Mirza Haydar 'Ali and Mirza Husayn-i-Shirazi,[1] made this application.

The text of the letter was cabled to the Khedive.

Gordon Pasha described this imprisonment and exile as unlawful and recommended the release of the prisoners.

Soon orders arrived for their freedom, but they were not allowed to enter Egypt. [1 Known as Khartumi, he was also promised by Baha'u'llah that he would attain His presence.

It should be noted that Mirza Husayn's deeds in Khartoum and later in India were unworthy of a true Baha'i.

After the passing of Baha'u'llah, he became a Covenant-breaker.] Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali, accompanied by Mirza Husayn, set off on the journey to Akka via Mecca and Beirut.

This was in the year 1877.

Concerning their departure from Khartoum Haji writes:

On the day of our departure from Khartoum, the dignitaries <p448> and authorities of the city, along with great multitudes, came to the ship to bid us farewell.

The signs of affection and faithfulness were manifest in the faces of all.

A few Muslims and Christians escorted us all the way to Berber.

Thus the meekness and abasement of our entry into that city were turned into glory and honour ... whereas Mirza Hasan Khan, the cruel Consul, was swiftly punished by God.

We had not yet arrived in the Sudan when the Persians resident in Egypt complained to the Shah about his acts of cruelty and injustice...

Strangely, orders were given to investigate the allegations.

The result was that his wickedness and evil character were exposed.

He was forced to pay everything he had acquired through extortion ... and co-incidentally he was taken to Tihran in chains and fetters where he tasted the fruits of his actions.(8) After all these sufferings the most rewarding moment was when Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was ushered into the presence of His Lord in Akka.

The ecstasy and contentment that he evinced on those memorable occasions when he sat in the presence of Baha'u'llah are indescribable.

We hope to share some of his reminiscences in future volumes.

After a stay of about three months in Akka, he left at the behest of Baha'u'llah for Persia via Iraq.

As a result of his attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah, he had become like a flame burning with His love, which he radiated to friend and foe alike.

For several years he journeyed throughout the length and breadth of Persia strengthening the believers in their faith and imparting to them a measure of the glory of the Cause and the majesty of its Author.

Then he returned to Akka once again and basked in the sunshine of Baha'u'llah's presence.

On his second pilgrimage to Akka, as on earlier ones, Haji was so enamoured of the glory of Baha'u'llah that he was utterly unaware of his own self and it seemed as though he lived in the realms of the spirit, oblivious to the world and all who dwelt in it.

However, this pilgrimage was short-lived and lasted only about two months.

Baha'u'llah sent him again to Persia, where he continued with unflinching <p449> loyalty and zeal to invigorate the faith of the believers and teach the

Cause to those who were ready to embrace it.

An outstanding feature of the life of Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali was his awareness of the station of Abdu'l-Baha.

From the first time that he came in contact with Him in Adrianople, he realized that Abdu'l-Baha was endowed by Baha'u'llah with supernatural powers and divine attributes far beyond the ken of men.

After the passing of Baha'u'llah, and in accordance with the provisions of His Will, Haji, like the great majority of the believers, followed Abdu'l-Baha.

He turned towards Abdu'l-Baha with the same dedication and self-effacement that he had shown towards Baha'u'llah.

His passionate love for and devotion to the Centre of the Covenant may be regarded as the distinguishing features of his life after the ascension of Baha'u'llah, qualities through which he shed great lustre on one of the most turbulent periods in the Heroic Age of the Faith.

His long record of service to the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, spanning almost the full period of the Ministry of Abdu'l-Baha, may be regarded as the fruit and glory of a life wholly dedicated to the Cause of God.

To recount the stories of his many activities in this period is beyond the scope of this book.

Suffice it to say that he defended the Covenant with such faith and vigour that in his confrontations with the Covenant-breakers and especially their leaders such as Jamal-i-Burujirdi and Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji who arose to divide the Faith, he demonstrated, with characteristic resourcefulness, the ascendancy of the Cause of God, and the invincibility of the Covenant.

He exposed the evil designs of the Covenant-breakers, pointed to their folly, warned them of the consequences of their actions and urged them to save their souls from ultimate extinction by turning to the Centre of the Covenant.

He also helped and inspired thousands of believers throughout Persia and the neighbouring countries to remain steadfast in the Covenant when the Faith of Baha'u'llah was plunged into a severe crisis reminiscent of the rebellion of Mirza Yahya.

Next to attaining the presence of Baha'u'llah, the crowning <p450> glory of his life was the inestimable privilege of spending his latter years in the Holy Land under the loving care of the Master whom he served with the utmost devotion and love.

For many years he was a trusted companion to Abdu'l-Baha and a true counsellor to the pilgrims and resident believers.

He passed away in Haifa at a great age in December 1920, and is buried on Mount Carmel. <p451> BIBLIOGRAPHY ABDU'L-BAHA.

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57, Persian.

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175-6.

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65.

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CONFRONTATION WITH MIRZA YAHYA 1.

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