

ISLÁM

THE ROAD AHEAD



Reflections of a Bahá'í on Islamic topics

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This publication is available in book-form from
Bahá'í Publishing Trust – India
www.bahaindia.org/bpt/bptbookstt.html

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Thomas Roberts and Gamal Hassan for their help and suggestions, Riadh 'Alí for his encouragement and suggestions and special gratitude to Dr. Jimmy Seou who specifically asked that this book be prepared.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to our two sons, Olinga and Balsam for their dedication to render service to all who are around them, as well as to all those who are consecrating their efforts for the betterment of the world.

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FOREWORD

Islám: The Road Ahead

In a recent publication in French, I addressed the Muslims of North Africa living in Europe, who are finding difficulty to live their ritual life the way they would like. The changes brought about by modernity, not only affect the older generation that migrated from North Africa, but indeed totally perplexes the younger generation born in migration.

A thought that has both crossed my mind and found echo with some friends from Asia, was that English speaking Muslims and Muslims residing in English speaking countries may be confronted with difficulties similar to what we in North Africa and our immigrant brethren in Europe are experiencing, with regard to the practicing of their Faith. These difficulties are mainly due to the on-rolling modernity, because of language requirements in international relations and because of the perplexity created by the diverse teachings that emanate from different schools of Islám.

Ever since my junior years, I have had the opportunity to discuss the relationship between Islám and the Bahá'í Faith, with young and old. Today, though advanced in age (85), I still think it is a duty to add my suggestions to the understanding of certain questions that most Muslims may have thought about, and may wish to consider from a different perspective – that of a Bahá'í.

A fact that everyone would agree to, is that during all those years since my junior age, changes have come about worldwide, at an ever accelerating pace, modifying all aspects of human life. These changes that came in rapid succession principally by the evolution of science and technology, have irresistibly affected our lifestyle, our habits and our way of thinking.

A subject that is worth considering is the impact of these changes on our understanding of religion and of living a ritual life as dictated by the Law of God. Modern life does not sustain the possibility of practicing the Muslim Faith the way practiced less than 100 years ago. The changes that came about since the mid 19th century, nay, of recent decades, have replaced centuries of an almost unchanged life-style. The difficulty of sustaining the practice of religion is yet more acute with the young generation: our youth, our future.

The future: How can we conceive the future? No one denies the value of the past contribution of the Islámic civilizations to philosophy, arithmetic, medicine and other fields of human endeavour. That was in the past. Today the Muslim nations are unable to contribute any fair share to innovations in the sciences and technology or social sciences. Life today renders the application of Shari'a Law very difficult, if not impossible. Again, many of its elements are not in harmony with today's universally acknowledged human rights. One or two Muslim nations have adopted civil personal and social codes of law, whilst the remaining countries, those that continue to adhere to Shari'a Law, are slowly phasing its application out. Intermittent enforcement of certain Laws in some societies gave rise to opposition and degenerated into conflict. All of which did not help to maintain stability of their societies.

Most Muslims feel unhappy with their condition and with the way in which non-Muslims regard Islám. Muslim youth are at a loss for direction, and the family ties either have loosened completely or are quickly loosening, a disease that has become a worldwide phenomenon.

Some, or maybe many, believe that Islám will be revived and the Shari'a Law will pervade all humankind when the Mihdí or Qa'im appears on earth. In other words, and according to this prevailing understanding, after the Resurrection, when all people would have perished, brought out from their graves, judged and separated into "the wicked" who will be sent to Hell, and "the good" whose destination will be Paradise. Such is the prevailing impression of what

will take place. Yet many are in doubt that such a scenario could happen as such, and end up abandoning all thought on the matter.

The subject of the finality of religion is one of the most important concepts upheld by Muslims, in the same way as it is upheld by all other religious communities - notably the Christians and the Jews. This belief gives rise to a number of baffling questions: Will Islám remain as it is until the Day of The Resurrection? What is this day of The Resurrection? What will happen on the Day of The Resurrection?

This is not the end of such questions, as others like the following would be also waiting for an answer: What will happen to Muslims who belong to sects other than "mine", on the Day of Judgement? The returns of Jesus preceded by The Mihdí on the Day of the last Judgement — what would these two Holy Figures do on Earth? What will be left there on earth at "The End of Time" آخر الزمان? Or consider The Balance! What is "The Balance"? And this one most important question: Why did the peoples of other religions refuse to accept Muhammad the Messenger of God?

To contribute to the pursuit of finding acceptable answers to the foregoing and other questions, I chose some concepts that are on the minds today, and will discuss them briefly according to a new understanding of some relevant verses in the Qur'án, in the light of the Bahá'í Teachings: what is the Resurrection, life and death, the Hour? What will happen on that Day? How will the Divine Revelation of Islám attain its divinely ordained fulfilment?

In Part I of this book, we shall reflect on these questions in the light of the verses that God revealed in the Qur'án. It is my hope that when considered objectively, the explanation given to these concepts may bring joy and happiness to the Reader, Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

Part II of this book introduces a new understanding of various subjects that reconciles religions together and concludes that the Hour has in fact struck and the promised Messiah has come.

Part III briefly introduces the Bahá'í Faith, with a glimmer from the life of Its Author, Bahá'u'lláh, His Forerunner the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá the authorized Interpreter and Expounder of the Bahá'í Faith, as well as a glimpse into the Bahá'í Teachings and Principles.

The Reader will notice that I have included the original Arabic Text for the Qur'ánic verses that have been cited. The Arabic speaking Readers will find this as both helpful and satisfying at the same time.

My only hope and sole desire from this book is to encourage the reflection upon the above mentioned questions with my brethren in the Faith of the One True Almighty God, fervently praying that the dear Readers will find increasing happiness and satisfaction as they go through it.

Part I
The future of Islám in the Qur'án

Part I

The future of Islám in the Qur'án

Consequences of the Literal Interpretation of the Word of God

The literal interpretation of the Word of God in the Holy Scripture: The Qur'án, The Bible and the Old Testament, has not only given rise to schism, sectarian misunderstanding and conflict between the religious communities and within the same religious community, but indeed created erroneous concepts that became dogmas. These dogmas quickly acted as a veil over the minds and hearts of man prohibiting him from accepting any other vision than that which he has in his mind.

Look at the attitude of the nation of Moses. They were waiting for the appearance of the Messiah. When Jesus Christ the Messiah came, the Jews refused Him. Their attitude was such as to say to Him, *"You are not the One that our Prophets had promised us. Our Messiah should confirm the Torah and the Commandments. You have abolished the law of divorce and the respect for the Sabbath day. The Messiah we are waiting for must render the Law of the Torah, the Law for the whole of humanity"*. With that idea spread as a "veil" on their minds and hearts, the Jews refused to accept Jesus Christ.

The Christians did not fare any better when Muhammad, the Messenger of God was sent to them and invited them to believe in the Qur'án. Here again, they seemed to express the opinion: *"He whom we are waiting for is different to what we see. Our learned Leaders, our Ulamá, who are well versed in the scriptures, forbid us from recognizing you"*. They would further say: *"Our learned Leaders know everything. He whom we are waiting for will establish the reign of the Evangel and no other book"*. This idea acted as a "veil" before their eyes and prevented them from seeing the Light that rose above the horizon of Hijaz.

Why, one may ask, did the Jews refuse Jesus Christ, and why did the Jews and the Christians refuse to accept Muhammad the Messenger of God? Is it because they did not understand their Sacred Writings, or is it because they were led astray by their Religious Leaders? Is it not true that their Religious Heads had "interpreted" the Sacred Scriptures in a manner that excluded all possibility that God may send Jesus Christ followed by Muhammad as His Messengers?

The Warning of God regarding the Interpretation of the Qur'án

God warned the Muslims in the Qur'án against interpreting the Qur'án. In the *Súrih of the Family of 'Imrán* (III v. 7) it is very clearly stated:

He it is who hath sent down to thee the Book. Some of its signs (verses) are of themselves perspicuous; -- these are the basis of the Book -- and others are figurative. But they whose hearts are given to err, follow its figures, craving discord, craving an interpretation; yet none knoweth its interpretation but God. And the stable in knowledge say "We believe in it; all is from our Lord." But none will bear this in mind, save men endued with understanding.

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ
وَأُخَرٌ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا
تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا
يُذَكِّرُ إِلَّا الْأَلْبَابُ.

(آل عمران ٧)

Some very important points in this verse of the Qur'án require reflection on our behalf:

- The Qur'án is called "the Book".

- The Qur’án contains verses that are perspicuous: محكمات, these are the basis of the Book.
- The Qur’án also contains verses that are figurative متشابهات, these are generally followed by those whose hearts are given to err, and by so doing create discord when they seek to interpret these figurative verses. Yet God alone knows the interpretation of these figurative verses.
- The “*stable in knowledge*” – the true Learned amongst the Muslims, will not interpret the figurative verses, but indeed they will confirm that they “*believe in it; all is from our Lord*”. They know that they do not have the permission to reveal the interpretation despite their knowledge. They also know that the figurative verses of the Qur’án should not and cannot be authoritatively interpreted by mortal minds.

The verses that “*are of themselves perspicuous*” محكمات are the ones that are easy to understand, and that need no interpretation. They are at the origin of the Laws and Ordinances of the Faith, and as such distinguish the Muslims as an independent community – they are the basis of the Book أم الكتاب or, if literally translated, “*mother of the Book*”, that which gives birth to a new Law. The “*stable in knowledge*” may well explain and interpret these verses and deduct applications wherefrom to the individual and to the community.

The “*figurative*” verses, however, definitely require interpretation, and Muslims are warned not to interpret these verses, because “*none knoweth its interpretation but God*”.

Unfortunately, the Ulamá (that is the Learned or Religious Leaders) have disobeyed this injunction and acted contrary to what was required of them. In interpreting the figurative verses, in accordance with their own, and naturally different understanding, they created schism that gave rise to various sects. Sectarianism in turn favoured the incubation and propagation of hatred and conflict, even war and death.

The question that should immediately come to mind here is this: How and eventually when, shall we understand the “*figurative*” verses the interpretation of which God alone knows?

In the *Súrih of Resurrection*, we find the confirmation that we have to follow the teachings of the Word of God and not interpret it because God promised to send to us the interpretation. Here is how God addresses Muhammad the Apostle of God on the subject:

Move not thy tongue in haste to follow and master this revelation;

For we will see to the collecting and the recital of it {Qur’ánahu};

But when we have recited it, then follow thou the recital,

And verily, afterwards it shall be ours to make it clear {bayanahu or interpret it} to thee.

(*Súrih LXXV, The Resurrection*, vv. 16 – 19)

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ إِنَّا عَلَيْنَا جَمْعُهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ

(القيامة ١٦-١٩)

It is evident from these verses that God called on Muhammad the Messenger of God, and thereby the Muslims who are His followers, not to hasten to understand the Revelation sent down upon Him, but rather to follow and apply the precepts revealed. God then promised that the clarification, the explanation, indeed the interpretation will be sent by Him.

A further consideration of the above-mentioned verses, revealed under the *Súrih of Resurrection*, might well lead us to ask, “Is there any connection between the title ‘Resurrection’ of the *Súrih* and the promised ‘interpretation’?” Will the “interpretation” be revealed only on the Day of Resurrection?

In the *Súrih of The Heights* we read:

And now have We brought them the Book: with knowledge have We explained it; a guidance and a mercy to them that believe. What have they to wait for now but its interpretation? When its interpretation shall come, they who aforetime were oblivious of it shall say, "The Apostles of our Lord did indeed bring the truth; shall we have any intercessors to intercede for us? Or could we not be sent back? Then would we act otherwise than we have acted." But they have ruined themselves; and the deities of their own devising have fled from them!

(Súrih VII, The Heights, vv. 52-3)

وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَاهُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ
يُؤْمِنُونَ هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا تَأْوِيلَهُ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي تَأْوِيلَهُ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ
نَسُوهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ فَهَلْ لَنَا مِنْ شَفْعَاءَ
فَيُشْفَعُوا لَنَا أَوْ نُرَدُّ فَنَعْمَلَ غَيْرَ الَّذِي كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ قَدْ خَسِرُوا
أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ.

(الأعراف ٥٢-٥٣)

The "interpretation" that "*none knoweth... but God*" shall come, Almighty God has promised. "*What have they to wait for now but its interpretation?*" implies that we should look for "*its interpretation*" with expectation. And when "*its interpretation*" does come, God further tells us, it shall be rejected, and the forgetful and oblivious will say: "*The Apostles of our Lord did indeed bring the truth...*". In other words, the forgetful and the oblivious will say to Him whom God will entrust with the duty of revealing the "interpretation": "We do not need this new 'Truth' of yours"...

Muhammad the Messenger of God, did not leave an interpretation of the Qur'án. Neither did any of the successors nor the Imáms leave behind them an interpretation. Interpreters of later centuries who attempted interpretation of the Qur'án, did not claim authenticity or divine origin for their interpretations.

The verses of the Qur'án were written down at the moment of revelation or soon after, on palm leaves, leather, stone or shoulder-blades of sheep; while with their fine capacity of memorizing, the Arabs at the time quickly memorized the verses.

"Soon after the ascension of Muhammad, many reciters of the Qur'án were killed in battle; it was therefore thought necessary to compile the entire Qur'án into one; this task was given to the amanuensis of the Apostle Muhammad, Zayd ibn Thábit... Zayd searched out the entire Qur'án and compiled it, simply putting the long Súrihs first, regardless of chronology... Zayd's text continued to be standard during 'Umar's caliphate, but it was found that various variations had crept into many copies; the men of Syria and 'Iráq had different readings, and the caliph 'Uthmán therefore had all the versions compared with Zayd's original, Zayd and three coadjutors being appointed to do the work. Transcripts of this recension were sent out to all the cities, all other copies were burnt... Zayd's original compilation was made within two or three years of the ascension of Muhammad the Messenger of God, and there is no question as to its accuracy; 'Ali the Imám, was there, and many of the devout who knew Qur'án by heart, and besides the transcripts of the separate portions were in daily use." (From Six Lessons on Islám by Marzieh Gail).

Neither Muhammad the Messenger of God, nor the Caliphs, nor the Imáms, had left any interpretation of the Qur'án. This is not astonishing, since *"none knoweth its interpretation but God"*. However, God promised to send the *"interpretation"*, and we know that all divine revelations are accomplished through His Messengers. It is clear then, that we should expect a Messenger to come to us and reveal the interpretation of these verses as the Almighty had promised, and that that Revelation shall come to mankind on the Day of Resurrection.

Muhammad the Seal of the Prophets

The finality of Divine Revelation is a subject that has taken its toll on all the religious communities throughout the ages. Each community claimed that its Faith is the final religion and that no other revelation will come until the end of time.

Let us see what the Holy Words of God tell us on this subject:

In the *Súrih of the Confederates* God tells us:

*Muhammad is not the father of any man among you,
but he is the Apostle of God, and the seal of the
prophets: and God knoweth all things.*

(Súrih XXXIII, The Confederates, 40)

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ
النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

(سورة الأحزاب ٤٠)

In this verse it is precisely stated that Muhammad is “*the seal of the Prophets*”. God did not say that Muhammad is the seal of the Apostles, or the Messengers, of God. The fact that God says that Muhammad “*is the Apostle (رَسُول) of God, and the seal of the prophets (النَّبِيِّين)*” implies that there is a difference between Prophet (نَبِيّ) and Apostle or Messenger (رَسُول). This also implies that Muhammad is “*the seal of the Prophets*” only, because nowhere in the Qur’án is there mention that Muhammad is the seal of the Messengers of God.

The argument that all Messengers are also Prophets, and that the sealing of Prophethood entails the sealing of Apostleship, and consequently after Muhammad there can be neither Prophet nor Messenger because He is the “*the seal of the Prophets*” is an argument that God did not mention in the Qur’án. God never mentioned that either, neither in the Bible for Jesus Christ nor in the Torah for Moses. On the contrary, there is the confirmation, the promise, or better still

a “Covenant” that God Almighty has established with the “Children of Adam” whereby He will continually send His Messengers unto mankind as we shall see later in these chapters.

Did not the Leaders from amongst the Jews and the Christians – who are both called “the people of the Book” (أهل الكتاب), level the argument that there could not come another Messenger nor another religion from God after their own, in order to divert their respective congregations from accepting Muhammad the Messenger of God? Were they right? Certainly not!

Did not the Religious Leaders of the Jews say at the time of the Apostle Muhammad: “*The hand of God is chained up.*” And in answer to this claim the wrath of God fell on them: “*Their own hands shall be chained up--and for that which they have said shall they be cursed...*” And God to confirm: “*Nay! Outstretched are both His hands!*” (5:67).

Were not the Christians advised that in the Evangel mention is made of the Apostle Muhammad: “... *the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet — whom they shall find described with them in the Law and Evangel...*”- (Súrih VII v. 157) yet their Religious Leaders assured their congregations that no mention is there of an Apostle nor Prophet after Jesus?

Messenger and Prophet

The Qur’án was revealed in Arabic, and thus many common religious terms are better defined, when compared to the previous Books, the Bible and the Old Testament that were revealed in languages not in use today. However, the defining element is not due to language alone, but indeed to the information now available and the knowledge we have today. Amongst these terms are the words “Prophet” and “Messenger”. The Bible calls Jesus Christ, Moses and Abraham, Prophets. In the same time Aaron, Daniel and David are called Prophets. In the Qur’án, however, Jesus, Moses and Abraham are Messengers and Prophets, while Aaron was designated by God a

Prophet. In the English translations of رَسُول the word Apostle is used. Apostle and Messenger both designate the same رَسُول.

In the Súrih of “Mary” we read:

And commemorate Moses in “the Book;” for he was a man of purity: moreover he was an Apostle, a Prophet: From the right side of the mountain we called to him, and caused him to draw nigh to us for secret converse: And we bestowed on him in our mercy his brother Aaron, a Prophet.

(Súrih XIX, “Mary”, vv. 51-53)

وَإِذْكَرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا
وَنَدَيْنَاهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ
رَحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا
(سورة مريم ٥١ - ٥٣)

From these verses it is clear that while Moses was identified by God to be an Apostle and a Prophet simultaneously, His brother Aaron was a Prophet only.

Two notions are, therefore, important to consider when discussing this subject: the rank of Prophet and the rank of Apostle or Messenger. Both receive their inspiration and their revelation from God.

The term Apostle or Messenger is attributed to a Manifestation of God unto whom a Book with Law and Jurisprudence was given. Moses and Jesus were identified in the Qur’án to be Messengers because each was the founder of a Revelation with a Book containing Law and Jurisprudence.

Aaron was designated a Prophet only, because although inspired by God, He did not have a Book revealed unto Him. His was the task of following the Law and protecting the Faith established by Moses.

Moses was identified as a Prophet also, because He Himself followed, promoted and protected the new Law that was established.

In like manner, Jesus and Abraham were identified as Prophets and Messengers.

This is the distinction made in the Qur'án between an Apostle of God and a Prophet of God. The argument that because Muhammad was the seal of the Prophets, and as all Apostles are also Prophets, God will not send other Messengers of His Power and Glory after Muhammad, is one that has no basis in the Qur'án.

Muhammad, however, further explained this matter in very clear words in a tradition recorded in the Qastalání Comments of the Bukhári:

The children of Israel were governed by Prophets. Whenever a Prophet passed away, another succeeded Him. But there shall be no Prophets to succeed me; rather there will be Caliphs (or Imáms).

In another Tradition Muhammad further explains the station of the Caliphs or the Imáms mentioned in the Tradition above:

Verily the 'Ulamá of My people are more exalted than the Prophets of Israel.

The Imám Shaf'í, a reference in Islámic Jurisprudence, comments on the subject of the difference between Apostles and Prophets in the following statement:

We should believe in the Prophets and the Apostles of God, each and all. The distinction characterizing the two categories lies in this: that the Apostle of God is He Who brings the Law, while the Prophets are reared under the Law brought by the Apostles of God. Hence each Apostle is simultaneously a Prophet, whereas a Prophet is not endowed with the same characteristics of the Apostle.

In the Súrih of the Pilgrimage a further proof of the difference that exists between Apostles and Prophets could be understood. The verse reads as follows:

We have not sent any apostle or prophet before thee, among whose desires Satan injected not some wrong desire, but God shall bring to naught that which Satan had suggested. Thus shall God affirm His revelations, for God is Knowing, Wise!

(Súrih of the Pilgrimage (XXII, v. 52)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكُمُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ.

(الحج ٥٢)

The renowned Al Nasafí comments on this verse as follows:

And this is evident proof of the established difference between an Apostle and a Prophet contrary to what they say that they are the same... The difference between them is that an Apostle is One Who brings a Book in addition to the miracle with which He is supported. As to the Prophet, He does not bring a Book, but rather follows and promotes the then existing Law. It is also said that an Apostle is the Founder of the Law, whereas the Prophet is the Promulgator and Guardian of the Law.

In his book “Bahá’u’lláh – The Great Announcement of the Qur’án”, Muhammad Mustafá Soleiman gives the following further explanation:

... it becomes evident that the “sealing” of Prophethood was intended primarily to announce a change in the administrative structure of the future Muslim Community, as compared to the system that was in practice within the Jewish Community during the period between the ministry of His Holiness Moses and the appearance of Jesus Christ. Nowhere in the Qur’án or in

the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad is there mention of the “sealing” of Apostleship, precluding further Divine Revelation.

Muhammad had no male children and He adopted a young slave of Christian origin named Zayd Ibn Al-Hárithih as His son after freeing him from slavery and receiving his voluntary request to remain in the household of the Prophet. The Jews at the time, being highly opposed to the new Revelation, saw an unprecedented opportunity in Muhammad’s adoption of a son as a means of sowing seeds of doubt concerning His Prophethood. They claimed, among other things, that because Muhammad knew the history of the Children of Israel who were governed by Prophets after the ascension of Moses, He intended to adopt and copy the same system. They concentrated their efforts on the event not only to defame Muhammad, but also to arouse the tribes, and stir others against Him and uproot His Movement.

To refute these machinations, the verse “Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Apostle of God,” was revealed, followed by what was an affirmation that there would not be Prophet heirs in the Islámic Dispensation, that is He was “the seal of the prophets”. In this manner, God refuted the assumptions of the enemies of His Faith, causing their ill will to be turned against them.

Islám: The only Divine Religion

The consideration of three verses in the Qur’án that deal with the word Islám, may interest the reader. What does Islám mean? What does it mean to be Muslim? Did Almighty God create through successive Revelation diverse religions? Is not Divine Religion one, since God the creator of the heavens and of the earth is One?

Before studying the three verses in question, it may be useful to remember that the word “Islám” literally means “submissiveness”. A Muslim, therefore, is a person who is totally submissive unto God.

However, the word “Islám” is also the name of the Faith revealed unto Muhammad the Apostle of God. Consequently, a Muslim is a person who believes in the Islám revealed to the Messenger of God, Muhammad.

Yet, these verses are among the few that were interpreted in a manner that excludes the possibility for a Divine Revelation to come after Islám. This is exactly what Religious Heads of the Jews and Christians did with respect to Islám. The Religious Heads of the Jews and Christians interpreted certain verses in the Torah and the Evangel in a manner that caused the Jews and the Christians to refuse Muhammad, the Apostle of God.

The first verse to consider reads as follows:

This day I have perfected your religion for you, and have filled up the measure of my favours upon you: and it is my pleasure that Islám be your religion...

(Súrih V, “The Table”, v. 5)

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضَيْتُ لَكُمُ
الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

(المائدة ٥)

The second verse to consider is as follows:

The True religion with God is Islám...

(Súrih III, “The Family of Imrán”, v. 19)

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

(آل عمران ١٩)

The third verse related to this subject reads as follows:

Who so desireth any other religion than Islám, that religion shall never be accepted from him, and in the next world he shall be among the lost.

(Súrih III, "The Family of Imrán", v. 85)

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ
الْخَاسِرِينَ

(آل عمران ٨٥)

In the first citation from the Súrih of the Table, it is clear that what is meant by the word "*Islám*" is the specific religion revealed unto Muhammad, the Apostle of God.

However, the word "*Islám*" cited in the two verses of the Súrih of the Family of Imrán seem to refer to religion in general as well as to the specific religion revealed unto Muhammad, the Apostle of God.

In his commentary on verse 85 of the *Súrih of the Family of Imrán*, which is the third citation above, A. Yusuf 'Ali writes the following in his "The Holy Qur'án – Text, Translation and Commentary" – (note 418):

The Muslim position is clear. The Muslim does not have a religion peculiar to himself. Islám is not a sect or ethnic religion. In its view all religion is one, for the Truth is one. It was the religion preached by all the earlier Prophets. It was the truth taught by all the inspired Books. In essence it amounts to a consciousness of the Will and Plan of God and a joyful submission to that Will and Plan. If anyone wants a religion other than that, he is false to his own nature, as he is false to God's Will and Plan. Such a one cannot expect guidance, for he has deliberately renounced guidance.

This general meaning of Islám is confirmed in the following verses that concern nations before the specific Islám of the Qur'án:

Noah was a Muslim in virtue of the following verses:

Recite to them the history of Noah, when he said to his people, If, O my people! My abode with you, and my reminding you of the signs of God, be grievous to you, yet in God is my trust. Get ye then an agreement about your plan and among your partners, so your plan be not to you dark and dubious. Then pass your sentence on me, and give me no respite.

And if ye turn your backs on me, yet ask I no reward from you: my reward is with God alone, and I am commanded to be of the Muslims.

(Súrih X, "Jonah, Peace be upon Him!" vv. 71-72)

وَأَتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِن كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ
مَقَامِي وَتَذِكْرِي بآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَعَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ فَأَجْمَعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ
وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرُكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا
تَنْظُرُونَ فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَمَا سَأَلْتُكُمْ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنِّي أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى
اللَّهِ وَأَمَرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

(يونس ٧١-٧٢)

Abraham and Ismaël were Muslims as the following verses confirm:

And when Abraham, with Ismaël, raised the foundations of the House, they said, "O our Lord! Accept it from us; for thou art the Hearer, the Knower.

O our Lord! Make us also Muslims and our posterity a Muslim people; and teach us our holy rites, and be turned towards us, for Thou art He who turneth, the Merciful.

(Súrih II, "The Cow", vv. 127-128)

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ
مِنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ
رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا
مَنْسَكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

(البقرة ١٢٧-١٢٨)

Jacob was Muslim as attested by the following verse:

*Were ye present when Jacob was at the point of death?
When he said to his sons, "Whom will ye worship when I
am gone?" They said, "We will worship thy God and the
God of thy fathers Abraham and Ismaël and Isaac, one
God, and to Him are we Muslims".*

(Súrih II, "The Cow", v. 133)

أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا
تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ
(البقرة ١٣٣)

Moses and those who believed in Him asked God to die Muslims:

They said, "Verily to our Lord do we return
And thou takest vengeance on us only because we have
believed on the signs of our Lord when they came to us.
Lord! Pour out constancy upon us, and cause us to die
Muslims."*

(Súrih VII, "The Heights", vv. 125-126)

*The followers of Moses.

قَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ وَمَا نَتَّقِمُ مِمَّا أَنْ آمَنَّا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا لَمَّا
جَاءَنَا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوْفَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ
(الأعراف ١٢٥-١٢٦)

The Disciples of Jesus Christ were Muslims as seen from the following verse:

*And when I revealed unto the Disciples, "Believe on me
and on my Sent One," they said, "We believe; and bear
thou witness that we are Muslims." (Súrih V, "The Table", v. 114)*

وَإِذْ أُوحِيتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِي وَبِرَسُولِي قَالُوا آمَنَّا
وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّنَا مُسْلِمُونَ
(المائدة ١١٤)

God tells us in the Qur'án, that Noah, Abraham, Ismaël, Jacob, Moses and His followers and the Disciples of Jesus were Muslims and some

wished to die Muslims. We know, however, that they all lived centuries before the Qur'án was revealed. We have to conclude, therefore that Islám in the general meaning of the word is indeed the religion of God at all times. This is the Islám that God calls "*The True religion with God is Islám*", and specifies as "*Who so desireth any other religion than Islám, that religion shall never be accepted from him...*"

However, the Islám mentioned in the Súrih V "The Table", v. 5: "*This day I have perfected your religion for you, and have filled up the measure of my favours upon you: and it is my pleasure that Islám be your religion...*" is the specific Islám for the community to which the Prophet Muhammad was sent.

Islám, therefore, is the religion revealed unto Muhammad the Messenger of God and revealed unto Jesus, Moses and Abraham and unto all His Messengers. Muslim is one who accepts the most recent Messenger of God:

Say ye: "We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismaël, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to all the Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between any of them, and unto Him we are Muslims

So if they believe as you believe, they are indeed on the right path; but if they turn back, it is they who are in schism, but God will suffice Thee as against them, and He is the all-Hearing the All-Knowing.

(Súrih II, "The Cow", vv. 136-137)

قولوا آمنا بالله وما أنزل إلينا وما أنزل إلى إبراهيم وإسماعيل وإسحاق ويعقوب والأسباط وما أوتي موسى وعيسى وما أوتي النبيون من ربهم لا نفرق بين أحد منهم ونحن له مسلمون. فإن آمنوا بمثل ما آمنتم به فقد اهتدوا وإن تولوا فإنما هم في شقاقٍ فسيكفيكم الله وهو السميع العليم
(البقرة ٧ - ١٣٦)

God will always send His Messengers

O children of Adam! There shall come to you Apostles from among yourselves, rehearsing My signs to you; and who so shall fear God and do good works, no fear shall be upon them, neither shall they be put to grief.

(Súrih VII, "The Heights", v. 35)

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِنْكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي فَمَنْ
اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ
(الأعراف ٣٥)

The above-mentioned verse confirms that God will continue to send Apostles رُسُلٌ to humanity. God here addresses directly the children of Adam — all children of Adam, and tells them that Apostles from among themselves shall come to them in future. These words were addressed to mankind — children of Adam, through Muhammad the Apostle of God. This means that God will send Apostles to mankind after Muhammad. Is this not a promise from God that Apostles will always come, one following the other in accordance with God's All-Encompassing Wisdom? Does that not mean that our belief in the finality of our Messenger, whether we are Muslims or Christians or other, is unfounded, since the promise: *"There shall come to you Apostles from among yourselves"* was addressed to the *"children of Adam"* in general? Does not: *"There shall come to you Apostles from among Yourselves"* include the Muslims, since it was revealed to Muhammad, the Apostle of God? Is not: *"There shall come to you Apostles from among yourselves"* a Covenant that God established with humanity as a whole — the children of Adam?

How then can any nation أمة pretend that theirs is the last Apostle and their Religion the last religion ever?

The verse, however, makes no mention of further Prophets. This is because Muhammad is *"the seal of the Prophets"*. However, in His

infinite mercy and love for His creation, God tells us here, that He will never leave us without Divine Guidance and that being by sending His Apostles at all times.

A further proof that God will send His Messengers after Muhammad may be deduced from the fact that God tells us in the Qur'án that His Words shall never be exhausted.

Say: Should the sea become ink, to write the words of my Lord, the sea would surely fail ere the words of my Lord would fail, though we brought its like in aid.

(Súrih XVIII, The Cave, v. 109)

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَاداً لِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنْفُذَ
كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا

(الكهف ١٠٩)

The verse tells us if the sea were ink and other similar seas brought to help in order to write down the Words of God, they would all be dried up and yet the Words of God will not be exhausted.

If all the trees that are upon the earth were to become pens, and if God should after that swell the sea into seven seas of ink, His words would not be exhausted: for God is Mighty, Wise.

(Súrih XXXI, Loqman, v. 27)

وَلَوْ إِنَّمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ مَا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

(لقمان ٢٧)

Here again, God confirms that His Words are inexhaustible and thus God will always send His “Words” to humanity. Humanity has always received the “Word” of God through His Messengers. Why do we, His creatures, decide that He will change His method of advising us of His

Word when there is no indication at all in His Books that He will change His method after the Revelation of the Qur'án?

A Central or Intermediary Nation

The notion that says: since Muhammad the Apostle of God is “*the seal of the Prophets*”, implies also that the Islámic Nation is the last religious nation or people as well, is not at all what God tells us in the Qur'án. The following verse explains the subject clearly:

Thus have we made you a central people, that ye may be witnesses in regard to mankind, and that the Apostle may be a witness in regard to you...

(Súrih II, “The Cow”, v. 143)

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ
الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

(البقرة ١٤٣)

A “*central people*” or “*intermediary people*” أُمَّةً وَسَطًا cannot be the last. There need be nations before and a nation or nations after; otherwise, for what will that nation be witness.

Every Nation has its Set Term

A further illustration of the continuity of religious revelation through successive Manifestations of the Will of God is found in the verses of the Qur'án setting a term for every nation and accompanying every term with a Book:

Every nation has its set term. And when their term is come, they shall not retard an hour; and they shall not advance it.

(Súrih VII, “The Heights”, v. 34)

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا
يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ

(الأعراف ٣٤)

Neither too soon, nor too late, shall a people reach its appointed term

(Súrih XXIII, "The Believers", v. 43)

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ

(المؤمنون ٤٣)

... To each term a Book, what He pleaseth will God abrogate or confirm: for with Him is the Mother Book.

(Súrih XIII, "Thunder", vv. 38-39)

... لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ يَمْحُوا اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُثَبِّتُ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ
الْكِتَابِ

(الزّعد ٣٨-٣٩)

This is the "universal principle": "every nation *أُمَّة* has its set term", and with that term comes a Book. A Book means a Revelation with Laws and Ordinances. A Revelation with Laws and Ordinances must necessarily be brought to mankind by an Apostle – a Manifestation of God's Will. This was true for the Nation of Moses and the Nation of Jesus. It is also true for the Nation of Muhammad the Apostle of God. As times go by and changes come about, God the All-Merciful leaves not His creatures without Divine Guidance that takes into consideration the changes brought about by the lapse of time: "what He pleaseth will God abrogate or confirm".

*Term used by Mr. 'Ali Nakhjavani in his:

"Some notes on Bahá'í proofs based on the Qur'án".

The set term of the Muslim Nation

We have seen that "Every nation has its set term" and that "To each term a Book".

How do these conditions apply to the Muslim nation? What will the name of the coming nation be and what will the name of the forthcoming “Book” be?

Let us review the verses of the *Súrih* of Resurrection (v. 16-19) mentioned above, once more:

Move not thy tongue in haste to follow and master this revelation;

For we will see to the collecting and the recital of it {qur’ánuhu};

But when we have recited it, then follow thou the recital, And verily, afterwards it shall be ours to make it clear {bayánuhu or interpret it} to thee.

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ إِنَّا عَلَيْنَا جَمْعُهُ وَقُرْآنُهُ فَإِذَا
قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ

(القيامة ١٦ - ١٩)

The reader would have certainly remarked two words between brackets that are transliterations of the Arabic words. The word (*qur’ánuhu*) is a derivative of the word “*qur’án*” which means “*recital of it*”, and the word “*bayánuhu*”, is a derivative of the word “*bayán*” which means “*make it clear*” or “*interpret it*”.

Arabic does not have capital letters and small letters. It does not have vowels either. Meanwhile, all names have a meaning. The Book revealed unto Muhammad, the Apostle of God, is called *Qur’án*, yet the word *qur’án* (with small “q”) means “*recital*”. By the same token, *Bayán* indicates a Book entitled *Bayán*, while *bayán* (with small “b”) means “*make clear*” or “*explanation*” or “*eloquence*”.

The first four verses of the *Súrih of the Merciful* (LV, vv. 1-4) were translated by four different translators: Rodwell, Arberry, Pickthall and Yusuf “Alí respectively as follows:

The God of Mercy

Hath taught the Qur’án

*Hath created man
Hath taught him articulate speech (Bayán or
bayan)*

*The All-Merciful
Has taught the Qur'án
He created man
And he has taught him the Explanation
(Bayán or bayan)*

*The Beneficent
Hath made known the Qur'án
He hath created man
He hath taught him utterance (Bayán or
bayan)*

*(God) Most Gracious
It is He who hath taught the Qur'án
He has created man
He has taught him speech
(Bayán or bayan)*

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ
(الرحمن ١ - ٤)

The four translators are in agreement to interpret the Arabic word الْقُرْآنَ by “The Qur’án” which is a Book that was revealed unto the Apostle Muhammad, but gave different interpretations to the word “The Bayán” الْبَيَانَ. This can only mean that the interpreters of the Qur’án presented the translators of the English version with a meaning for the word “the bayan” rather than it being the name of a Book “The Bayán.”

A correct translation of these verses should apply the same principle for the two words in question, especially so because in the two cases it is God Who “taught” both The Qur’án and The Bayán. In fact, the

rules of Arabic tradition in writing and in speech make such an assumption imperative, and thus the verses should have been translated as “*the Qur’án*” and “*the Bayán*” – two Books.

The reader may find it interesting to note that in the sequence of the events decreed in those four verses there is a wisdom of major importance that is hidden in the fact that according to the chronology of these verses “*man*” was “*created*” after being “*taught the Qur’án*”. It is no secret, however, that man was there when the Qur’án was revealed. We know that the Words of God are perfect and the sequence of the events decreed by those verses must be true, although chronologically they are in conflict. Could it not be that God wishes man to understand that the spiritual creation of man is in his knowledge of the Word of God: the Qur’án, and that in fact, this same man was not spiritually *created* until he was taught the Qur’án?

After having been created through his learning of the Qur’án, man is now ready to be taught the Book: The Bayán. This indeed is scheduled for the Day of Resurrection and the term of the Muslim nation, as we shall see later on.

As to the “*set term*” of the Muslim nation, God tells us in the following verse:

*From the Heaven to the Earth He conceiveth the Cause**
 الْأَمْرُ: hereafter all shall they return to Him on a Day the
 duration of which shall be a thousand of such years as ye
 reckon.

(Súrih XXXII, “Adoration”, v. 5)

* “*governeth all affairs*” in Rodwell’s translation.

يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يَعْرُجُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ
 كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ

(السجدة ٥)

The verse explains that there are two periods for the Muslim nation: the second is 1000 lunar years “*as ye reckon*.”

The first, which consists of the period wherein the Cause of God was conceived, must include the period of the ministry of Muhammad the Apostle of God, and His descendents who are the twelve Imáms, in keeping with the well accepted Tradition:

I leave amongst you two weighty legacies, the Book of God and My Descendents

The first period ends in the year 260 of the Hegira when the last Imám passed away. The two periods then are 1000 plus 260, that is to say 1260 years. This corresponds to the year 1260 of the Hegira, or to the year 1844 Christian era.

The Advent of Two Messengers

In all the Holy Scriptures, and specifically in the Holy Qur'án, the advent of two Messengers of God is clearly foretold. The Muslims expect the advent of "*The Imám Al-Mahdi*" and the return of "*Jesus son of Mary*".

The general belief, however, is that Al-Mahdi or Mihdi and Jesus will not bring to mankind a Book, nor will there be a new Law; but rather They will cause the revival of the Law of the Qur'án, and render Islám the Faith of all who are in the whole world. This was the explanation given by the Ulamá, and this is what all Muslims believe today. The explanation, however, closes all doors to further Divine Revelation, in very much the same belief as that of the Jews at the time of the Revelation of Muhammad, the Apostle of God, when they said to Him that no Apostle can come after Moses because "*The hand of God is chained up...*" (Súrih V "*The Table*" v. 69)

A great number of the verses of the Qur'án, however, deal specifically with the question of the attitude of the different peoples unto whom God had sent His Messengers, and the events that will accompany the advent of the Mahdi and of Jesus.

The return of Yahyá (John) son of Zachariah And 'Ísá (Jesus) son of Mary

God has revealed the return of Yahyá son of Zachariah in the following verses:

*We said: "O John! Take the Book with purpose of heart"
and We bestowed on him wisdom while yet a child
And mercifulness from Ourselves, and purity, and pious was he
And dutious to his parents and not proud, rebellious
And peace was on him on the day he was born, and the
day of his death, and shall be on the day when he shall be
raised to life!*

(Súrih XIX, "Mary", vv. 12-15)

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا وَحَنَانًا مِّن لَّدُنَّا
وَزَكَاةً وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا وَبَارَأ بَوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا وَسَلَامٌ
عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُنْعَثُ حَيًّا
(مريم ١٢ - ١٥)

Following these verses and in the same Súrih XIX "Mary", we read the following with regard to the return of Jesus Christ:

*Verily I am the servant of God, He hath given me the Book,
and He hath made me a Prophet,
And He hath made me blessed wherever I may be, and
hath enjoined me prayer and almsgiving so long as I shall
live;
And to be dutious to her that bare me: and He hath not
made me proud, depraved.
And the peace of God was on me the day I was born, and
will be the day I shall die, and the day I shall be raised to
life.
This is Jesus, the son of Mary; this is a statement of truth
concerning which they doubt.*

(Súrih XIX "Mary", vv. 30-35)

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ أَتَانِي الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا
 أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا وَبَرًّا
 بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لِي جَبْرًا شَقِيًّا وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ
 وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ذَلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ
 الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ (مريم ٣٠-٣٥)

The above verses announce without doubt the return of Yahyá son of Zachariah and of 'Ísá son of Mary, and the verses further indicate the chronological order of their return, when the return of Jesus will be preceded by Yahyá; the same order of their first appearance.

When, one may ask, will Yahyá son of Zachariah and 'Ísá son of Mary return? Again, what will the purpose of their return be? Will they have the same names: Yahyá and 'Ísá, or will they be called differently? What will be the interval between the re-appearance of Yahyá and that of 'Ísá? We know from history that Yahyá son of Zachariah and of 'Ísá son of Mary were contemporary. Will they be together in their return, even though for as short a time as in their first apparition?

We know that God tells us that we should find answers to all our questions in the Qur'án. Shall we move together, dear Reader, and find the answers to the above questions?

Two Events on the Day of Resurrection

Throughout the Qur'án we find reference to two events on the Day of Resurrection, that seem to take place very near to one another. So near to one another these two events are to take place that they should be considered as one single event. In fact, one can say that they may be considered Twin events.

Here is one instance where the Twin Events are mentioned:
 In the 79th Súrih we find one of these references:

One day, the disturbing trumpet-blast shall disturb it,

Which the second blast shall follow:
 Men's hearts on that day shall quake
 Their looks be downcast.
 The infidels will say, "shall we indeed be restored as at first?
 What! When we have become rotten bones?
 "This then," say they "will be a return to loss."
 Verily, it will be but a single blast,
 And lo! They are on the surface of the earth.

(Súrih LXXIX, "Those Who Drag Forth", vv. 6-14)

يَوْمَ تَرْجَفُ الرَّاجِفَةُ تَتَّبِعُهَا الرَّايِفَةُ قُلُوبٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاجِفَةٌ
 أَبْصَارُهَا خَاشِعَةٌ يَقُولُونَ أَيْنَا لِمَرْدُودُونَ فِي الْحَافِرَةِ أَيْنَا
 كُنَّا عِظْمًا نَخْرَةً قَالُوا تِلْكَ إِذْكَ كَرَّةٌ خَاسِرَةٌ فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ
 وَاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَا هُمْ بِالسَّاهِرَةِ

(النازعات ٦-١٤)

In some translations, the words "trumpet-blast" and "blast" are replaced by the word "commotion". Whether the event is called "blast" or "commotion", the result is the same: it is a two-step event that is destined to create a terrible disturbance that will cause "Men's hearts on that day" to "quake" and "Their looks" to "be downcast".

The "One day" on which these two *blasts* or *commotions* will take place, is the Day of Judgement, the Resurrection. In addition, these "two blasts" will be so close one after the other in time that "verily" they may be considered "but a single blast".

Thus will be the twin events of the Resurrection.

Two Consecutive Trumpet Blasts On **The Day of Resurrection**

And there shall be a blast on the trumpet, and all who are in the Heavens and all who are in the Earth shall expire, save those whom God shall vouchsafe to live. Then shall there be another blast on it, and lo! Arising they shall gaze around them:

And the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord, and the Book shall be set...

(Súrih XXXIX, "The Troops", vv. 68-69)

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصُيِّعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ
وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ...

(الزمر ٦٨-٦٩)

These two verses announce the forthcoming of two trumpet blasts or two events.

An analogy for the "*blast on the trumpet*" may be the manner in which messages from the ruler to the people was announced in past ages. When the king or ruler wished to make an announcement to his people, a "messenger of the king or ruler" was sent into the main square of the town and blew a trumpet to attract the attention of all who were within hearing distance. These in turn immediately understood that the king or ruler had a "message" for them.

God tells us in the above-mentioned verses that there shall be two trumpet blasts. In other words, two Messengers shall come forth. Could not these two blasts be the coming of Al-Mahdi and the return of Jesus?

We also read in these verses, "*the Book shall be set*"! That "*Book*", furthermore, shall be set following the second "*blast*". That Book

could neither be the Qur'án nor the Bible, because the Qur'án and the Bible were already "set" before the two trumpet blasts! That "Book" therefore must be a new Book and as such it follows that it will have to be brought to mankind through the appearance of a Messenger from God.

A further consideration of these verses, may give rise to two questions: What does "*and all who are in the Heavens and all who are in the Earth shall expire, save those whom God shall vouchsafe to live*" mean? Again, how is it that after the expiration of almost "*all who are in the Heavens and all who are in the Earth*", these same people who had expired will experience resuscitation: "*and lo! Arising they shall gaze around them*" following the second blast?

Could not the first of these two events signal the Day when the "*Hour shall come to pass*", while the second is indeed the Resurrection? However we were told in the verses mentioned earlier, that the two events, or "*blasts*" or "*commotions*" will be so near one to the other, that they may well be considered "but a single blast".

In Súrîh XXXVI, Ya Sin we read:

And the trumpet shall be blown, and, lo! They shall speed out of their sepulchres to their Lord: They shall say, "Oh! Woe to us! Who had mused us from our sleeping place?" This is what the God of Mercy promised, and the Apostles speak the truth. But one blast shall there be, and, lo! They shall be assembled before Us all together.

(Surîh XXX VI, Ya Sin, w. 51-53)

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَإِذَا هُمْ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَنْسِلُونَ قَالُوا
يَا وَيْلَنَا مَن بَعَثَنَا مِن مَّرْجَفِنَا هَذَا مَا وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَصَدَقَ
الْمُرْسَلُونَ إِنْ كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ جَمِيعٌ لَّدِنَا
مُحْضَرُونَ

(سورة يس ٥١-٥٣)

The next Revelation

Some of the Súrihs of the Qur'án recount the history of Religious Dispensations that preceded Islám, and the manner with which the peoples of old had argued with the Apostle of God sent to them and ended up refusing to accept them is explained. The veil of their imaginations blinded those peoples. Rather than searching after the truth themselves, they listened to their Leaders.

These Súrihs tell of the suffering endured by the Messengers of God, themselves victims of the people to whom they were sent by God. Finally, we read of the wrath of God and the sorrowful destiny of those obstinate peoples.

The Súrih of Húd contains an exhaustive list of the history of these peoples:

Noah and His people:

We sent Noah of old unto his people—"Verily I come to you a plain admonisher, that ye worship none but God. Verily I fear for you the punishment of a grievous day. " Then said the chiefs of his people who believed not, "We see in thee but a man like ourselves; and we see not who have followed thee except our meanest ones of hasty judgement nor see we excellence in you above ourselves: nay we deem you liars. "

(Surih XI, "Hud", vv 25-27)

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا نَرَاكَ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَادُوا بِآدَائِنَا بَادِيَ الرَّأْيِ وَمَا نَرَىٰ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِن فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ

(هود ٢٥ - ٢٧)

Noah, the Apostle of God invited his people to "worship none but God", but the "chiefs of his people who believed not" called Him a liar. The "chiefs" hindered the people from recognizing Noah the Apostle of God, and in so doing led themselves and the people to total perdition and the wrath of God.

The people of 'Ad, to whom God sent Húd, fared no better and were struck with a severe punishment for disobeying the exhortations of the Messenger of God.

In like manner, the people of Thamúd unto whom God sent Śálih were chastised with a bitter punishment for refusing to accept Him whom God had sent to them.

The peoples of Lot towards Abraham, those of Midian towards Shoëb, the Pharaohs towards Moses, the Jews towards Jesus and the people of Quraysh towards Muhammad — all those people, God tells us in the Qur'án, took the same attitude towards their Messengers, and all were punished for their obstinacy and disobedience.

A very significant prophecy that is relevant to the subject being discussed under the present heading may be found in the *Súrih of Clear Evidence*. Here is what was revealed in the first four verses of it:

The unbelievers among the people of the Book, and the polytheists, shall not waver until the Clear Evidence shall come to them, an Apostle from God, reciting pure pages wherein are valuable Books. Nor were the people of the Book divided until after the Clear Evidence came to them

(Súrih of Clear Evidence XCVIII, vv. 1-4)

لَمْ يَكُنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ مُنْفَكِّينَ حَتَّى
تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ رَسُولٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُطَهَّرَةً فِيهَا كُتِبَ
قَيِّمَةٌ وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ
الْبَيِّنَةُ

(البينة ١-٤)

Let us now see what these verses tell us, and in order to think together, dear reader, may we agree on the meanings of certain words and phrases:

We often meet with the word "*Book*" in the Qur'án. "*Book*" invariably means a Divine Revelation. We have seen in previous pages that the Qur'án is called the "*Book*": "*And now have We brought them the Book...*" (*Súrih of The Heights VII*).

Similarly, Moses was given a "*Book*" which is the Torah: *Then gave We the Book to Moses...* (*Súrih VI, "The Cattle" v. 154*). Unto Jesus God gave a "*Book*" which is the Evangel: *He said: "I am indeed a servant of God: He hath given me the Book and made me a prophet."* (*Súrih XIX, Mary, v. 30*).

However, in the four verses above we are told that there shall be "*pure pages wherein are valuable Books...*" in plural.

We can also perceive that the verses tell us of a "*Clear Evidence*" that "*shall come...*" and a "*Clear Evidence*" that "*came...*" — thus the verses advise of two Clear Evidences.

The verses also confirm that a Clear Evidence is none other but "*an Apostle from God*": "*the Clear Evidence shall come to them, an Apostle from God, reciting...*"

The '*People of the Book*' are the Jews and the Christians, while the polytheists are those who have taken idols for gods.

Now going back once more to the 4 verses, we perceive that God makes mention of the infidels from among the people of the Book, that is, the infidels from among the Christians and the Jews. However, we know that the Jews and Christians are "*believers*": the ones are followers of Moses and the others are followers of Jesus Christ; why then are they considered in these verses as infidels: non-believers?

Because they did not "believe" in the Revelation of the Qur'án they were considered infidels. Once they believe in the Qur'án they would cease to be considered infidels.

In like manner, once the polytheists believe in the Qur'án, they cease to be polytheists because the Qur'án teaches belief in the One True God.

However, God tells us that these infidels and the polytheists "*shall not waiver*" —that is will continue to be infidels and polytheists, "*until the Clear Evidence shall come to them*", that is to say "*until*" the predestined coming to them of an Apostle from God. Then the infidels will cease to be infidels and the polytheists will cease to believe in more than the One God, because they will have recognized the Divine Mission of Muhammad and believed in the Qur'án. The Apostle Who will come after Muhammad, will confirm the truth of the Qur'án unto all those who had not yet accepted the Qur'án: Infidels and Polytheists!

The four verses further explain that the people of the Book were divided after the coming to them of the "*Clear Evidence*", which in this case is the Apostle Muhammad Himself. The division came about when some of the Jews and some of the Christians at the time, believed in the Revelation of Muhammad and some did not — hence they were divided.

A further point of interest that deserves full consideration is the fact that the Apostle – The Clear Evidence, Who will come, "*shall recite pure pages wherein are valuable Books*" — in plural. This differs from the Apostles Moses, Jesus Christ and Muhammad who each were given one Book.

The Crier “المنادي Al Munadi”

Prophet, Messenger and Apostle are names given to the Receivers of Divine Revelation. The Qur'an, however, has added other names to these same Divine Messengers. One of these is "The Crier" as per the following verse:

O our Lord! We have indeed heard the voice of a Crier, He cried out calling us to faith — "Believe on your Lord" · and we have believed...

(Súrih III, The Family of 'Imrán, v.193)

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلإِيمَانِ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا...
(آل عمران ١٩٣)

God called the Apostle Muhammad in this verse “a Crier” in Arabic: منادي.

However, in the Súrih “Qaf” mentioned hereafter, God requests the Apostle Muhammad to listen to the cry out of the Crier Who will utter a shout of truth on a future day which will be the Day of Resurrection, thus:

And listen for the day whereon the Crier will cry out from a place quite near: The day on which men shall hear that shout of truth that will be the day of their coming forth from the grave.

(Surih L, Qaf, vv. 41-42)

وَاسْتَمِعْ يَوْمَ يُنَادِي الْمُنَادِي مِنْ مَكَانٍ قَرِيبٍ يَوْمَ يَسْمَعُونَ
الصَّيْحَةَ بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ يَوْمُ الْخُرُوجِ
(سورة ق ٤١-٤٢)

From these sacred verses, we are able to see clearly, that God had requested Muhammad to listen to a future “Crier” to come after Muhammad. But since Muhammad the Apostle of God was given the title of “Crier”, it follows that the future “Crier” unto whom Muhammad was requested to listen to, is indeed an Apostle also.

Muhammad, however will not physically be there when the future "*Crier will cry out the shout of truth*". It shall devolve then, upon the Muslims to "*listen*" to the Apostle – "*the Crier*" -- Who "*will cry out from a place quite near*".

A further point of paramount importance is the fact that "*the Crier*" whom the Apostle Muhammad is requested to "*listen*" to, "*will cry out... the Day of their coming forth from the grave.*" This is the Day of Resurrection. The "*Crier*" therefore will be an Apostle of God Who will come forth on the Day of Resurrection and deliver unto mankind a "*shout of truth.*"

A question may be asked as to where could the "*place quite near*" from which the "*Crier will cry out*" be? An answer may be found in the following verse:

Glory be to Him who carried his servant by night from the sacred temple of Mecca to the temple that is most remote (Jerusalem), the precincts of which we have blessed, that we might show him of our signs! For He is the Hearer, the Seer.

(Súrih XVII, *The Night Journey*, v. 1)

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

(الإسراء ١)

The most notable "*precincts*" of Jerusalem mentioned in the Holy Books and in the traditions are those of 'Akká and Baghdád. The traditions regarding 'Akká are accepted by both Shi'íhs and the Sunnis, and quite a few are included in pages 107-109 in the book entitled Bahá'u'lláh: The Great Announcement of the Qur'án*. I shall quote just one of these here:

"'Akká is a city in Syria to which God hath shown His special mercy"

*by Muhammad Mustafá Soliman, Bahá'í Publishing Trust ~ Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Summoner "الداعي Al Da'I"

Another name mentioned in the Qur'án for the Apostles of God is "The Summoner" as the following verse indicates:

O ye faithful! Make answer to God and his Apostle when he summoneth you to that which giveth you life. Know that God cometh in between a man and his own heart, and that to Him shall ye be gathered.

(Súrih VIII - The Spoils of War, v. 24)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

(الأنفال ٢٤)

In this verse, God asks the faithful to respond to His Apostle when His Apostle "summoneth." Thus the Apostle is the Summoner. The Apostle Muhammad is called: he who summoneth, or The Summoner.

However, in the *Súrih of The Moon*, God addresses the Apostle Muhammad as follows:

Turn away from them the Day when the Summoner will summon to a horrendous affair.

(Súrih LIV- The Moon, v. 6)

فَقَوْلَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ يَدْعُ الدَّاعِ إِلَى شَيْءٍ نُّكْرٍ

(القمر ٦)

The verse clearly indicates that there is "the Summoner" Who will come on the Day of Judgement to summon to something that will seem terrible to those who are doubtful of the Words of God.

But we have seen from verse 24 of the *Súrih of the Spoils of War* that the Apostle Muhammad was also a Summoner. It follows then that the Summoner to come, mentioned in the *Súrih of the Moon*, is also an

Apostle of God, not the Apostle Muhammad, since the Apostle Muhammad was told to: *“Turn away from them the Day when the Summoner will summon...”* in the future tense.

Although God’s command to: *“Turn away from them...”* is directed to the Apostle Muhammad, in truth it is directed to the followers of the Apostle Muhammad who will be present on: *“the Day when the Summoner will summon...”*

Names given to The Messengers of God

A cursory survey of the Holy Qur’an would reveal many names given to The Messengers of God.

The names of Apostle or Messenger, and of Prophet are of course evident, but we can also see that “The Clear Evidence”, “The Glad-Tidings”, “The Redeemer”, “The Word of God ” “The Caller”, “The Summoner”, “The Witness”, “The Spirit”, “The Trumpet-Blast” and “The Great Announcement” are mentioned in the Qur’an. With these names in mind the understanding of certain verses of the Qur’an becomes deeper and more fascinating.

The Day of the End that has no End

Most, if not all, the peoples of the world expect the advent of a Day, or what is called a Day, known as the Day of the End. A Day whereon no one really seems to know what will exactly happen, yet all fear. Again a cursory survey of the Holy Qur’an will show that reference to that Day has been made in various names of which the following may be mentioned:

The Great Day	Al-'Azim	Ex : 7 :59, 10 :15
The Resurrection	Al-Qyama	Ex : 2 :85, 2 :174
The Day of Decision	Al-Fasl	Ex: 44 :40,77:13
The Hour	Al-sa'a	Ex: 30 :13,30 :34
The Day of Judgement	Al-Din	Ex . 1 .12,
The Day of Disillusion	Al-Taghébun	Ex 7: 64 39,
The Day of Reckoning	Al-Hisab	Ex: 38 :16,26:53
The event that must inevitably come to pass	Al-Waqi'a	Ex : 69 :15,
The stunning calamity	Al-Qari'a	Ex: 101 :1-3,
Hell fire guarded by 19 Angel Guardian	Saqar	Ex : 74 :26-30
The overwhelming event	Al-Qhasjgiya	Ex : 88 :1

Whatever the name given to that Day, the great question remains: what will happen on that Day?

The prevailing idea is that there shall come to pass a geological and astrological upheaval. The mountains shall be blown flat, the sun shall cease to rise leaving the universe in total darkness, the moon shall be split, the stars shall fall, and in general earth and heaven shall be destroyed.

Meanwhile, all human beings shall die. Once this is over God Almighty shall sit on the Throne, surrounded by the Prophets and Angels, and the Balance shall be set up. What follows then, is that everyone will

be resuscitated from the grave and shall pass through a process of judgement. The non-believers shall go to hell to remain there for evermore, and the Muslims, being the only people who could hope to go to paradise, will be sent there to remain there for evermore; nay, the Muslims of my sect only.

This is the image given by the Ulamá, each preaching the same scenario to his congregation, whether he be a Jew, a Christian or a Muslim. This image of course, finds justification in the outward or literal meaning of the verses on the subject of that Day in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and in the Holy Qur'án. The modern mind, however, finds great difficulty to reconcile belief in this imagery that was taught to him or to her from childhood, with reason.

Who will enter Paradise?

God has made clear in the Qur'án who will enter paradise. The following are amongst the verses that should clarify this

point:

And they say, "None but Jews and Christians shall enter paradise". This is their wish. Say: Give your proofs if ye speak the truth. But they who set their faces with resignation towards God, and do what is right, their reward is with their Lord; no fear shall come on them, neither shall they be grieved. `

(Súrih II, The Cow, vv. 111-112)

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَن كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تِلْكَ
أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ بَلْ مَن أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ
لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِندَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ
يَحْزَنُونَ

(البقرة ١١١-١١٢)

The idea that entry to paradise is limited to those following one or other of the religions is not correct, God tells us it is “*they who set their faces with resignation towards God, and do what is right,*” who will go to Paradise. The Jews were told by their Learned, their Ulamá, that only the Jews should enter paradise. In like manner, their Leaders, their Ulamá, assured the Christians that only the Christians should enter paradise. Is the Muslim nation being led to fall into the same error?

The Hour

God refers to the Resurrection as “the Hour”. Here are some verses wherein reference is made to “the Hour”:

They will ask thee of the Hour, for what time is its coming fixed? Say: The knowledge of it is only with my Lord: none shall manifest it in its time but He: it is the burden of the Heavens and of the Earth: Not otherwise but on a sudden will it come on you. They will ask thee as if thou wast privy to it: Say: The knowledge of it is with none but God. But most men know not this.

(Súrih VII, Al-A’raf, v. 187)

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مَرْسَاهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا تَأْتِيكُمُ إِلَّا بَغْثَةً يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

(الأعراف ١٨٧)

They will ask thee of the Hour. Say: The knowledge of it is with God alone: and who can tell thee whether haply the Hour be not nigh at hand?

(Súrih XXXIII, The Confederates, v. 63)

يَسْأَلُكَ النَّاسُ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ تَكُونُ قَرِيبًا

*They will ask thee of the Hour, when will be its fixed time?
But what knowledge hast thou of it? its period is known
only to thy Lord; and thou art only charged with the
warning of those who fear it.*

(Súrih LXXIX, Those Who Drag Forth, vv. 42-45)

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا فِيمَا أَنْتَ مِنْ ذِكْرَاهَا
إِلَى رَبِّكَ مُنْتَهَاهَا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْذِرُ مَنِ يَخْشَاهَا
(النازعات ٤٢ - ٤٥)

*And We have sent thee to mankind at large, to announce
and to threaten. But most men understand not. And they
say, "When will this threat come to pass? Tell us if ye be
men of truth." Say: Ye are menaced with a day, which not
for an hour shall retard or hasten on.*

(Súrih XXXIV Saba, vv. 28-30)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ قُلْ
لَكُمْ مِيعَادُ يَوْمٍ لَا تَسْتَأْخِرُونَ عَنْهُ سَاعَةً وَلَا تَسْتَقْدِمُونَ
(سبا ٢٨ - ٣٠)

*"Never", say the unbelievers, "will the Hour come upon
us!" Say: Yea, by my Lord Who knoweth the unseen; it will
surely come upon you! Not the weight of a mote either in
the Heavens or in the Earth escapeth Him; nor is there
ought less than this or ought greater, which is not in the
clear Book...*

(Súrih XXXV Saba, v. 3)

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَ كُنَّ
عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا فِي
الْأَرْضِ
(سبا ٣)

For what do the infidels wait, but that the Hour come suddenly on them? Already are its signs come, and when it hath come on them indeed, how can they be warned then ?

(Súrih XLVII, Muhammad, v. 18)

فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا السَّاعَةَ أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَقَدْ جَاءَ أَشْرَاطُهَا
فَأَنَّى لَهُمْ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ ذِكْرَاهُمْ

(محمد ١٨)

But the Infidels will not cease to doubt concerning it, until the Hour come suddenly upon them, or until the chastisement of a day of desolation come upon them. On that day the Kingdom shall be God's: He shall judge between them: And they who shall have believed and done the things that are right, shall be in gardens of delight: But they who were infidels and treated our signs as lies, these then, theirs a shameful chastisement.

(Súrih XXII, The Pilgrimage, vv. 55-57)

وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي مَرِيَّةٍ مِنْهُ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً
أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمٍ عَقِيمٍ الْمَلِكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فَالَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ

(الحج ٥٥ - ٥٧)

As we read these weighty verses, we are struck by their insistence on certain points:

The “*Hour*” is an event that shall certainly come about. The “*Hour*” shall come “*at a fixed time known unto God alone.*” It shall be “*the burden of the Heavens and of the Earth*”, and it is a “*threat*” that God announced to mankind at large by Muhammad the Apostle of God.

The “*Hour*” shall come “*suddenly upon*” the infidels who are in doubt. It will be a blessing to the believers and a shameful chastisement to

the infidels. On the day of the “Hour” God will judge between them. The “Hour” is a day of chastisement and of desolation.

God further confirms that “*already are*” the “*signs*” of the “Hour” have come. Moreover, “*when it hath come on them indeed, how can they be warned then?*”

The fact that God confirms that the signs of the Hour are already there gives rise to an obvious question: What are those signs? Indeed, it is also obvious that God, in His all-encompassing mercy and justness, would certainly send out signs to attract the attention of His creatures to the Hour of judgement, and the responsibility remains with us, His creatures, to recognize His signs and avoid being taken by surprise. Again, God tells us: “*aught less than this or aught greater, which is not in the clear Book,*” that is to say, we should find the answer to our questions in the Qur’án — *the clear Book*.

The above-mentioned verses concern the “Hour” of judgement of the whole world. However, every nation in the past has had its “Hour”. Referring to the history of these nations will give us an indication of the signs of the “Hour” in the past, which will in turn help in the recognition of the signs of the “Hour” of today.

One can refer to the first 24 verses of the Súrih of Húd and discover what happened to the nations of the past which had not recognized the signs of their “Hour”, when God Almighty sent His Messenger to them, they were taken by surprise and failed to accept that Messenger.

Life and Death as mentioned in the Qur’án

One of the beautiful aspects of the Holy Qur’án lies in its imagery language making use of the characteristic richness of Arabic in conveying spiritual themes. Its unique style in stating spiritual truths in metaphors is a source of inspiration to the reader with insight.

To take one important example, we may consider the theme of "Life and Death" as mentioned in the Qur'án. While in some verses these words have the same meaning that are in use by the common of mortals, in many instances they have a spiritual meaning: Life meaning "belief" while death means "denial" — belief or denial in the Message from God unto mankind.

An obvious case that confirms such an interpretation is that of Hamza the uncle of Muhammad the Apostle of God. For some time, Hamza opposed the new Revelation, and then accepted it. The following verse was revealed concerning this event:

Can he who was dead, to whom we gave life, and a light whereby he can walk amongst men, be like him who is in the depths of darkness, from which he can never come out? Thus to the unbelievers do their own deeds seem pleasing.

(Súrih VI, the Cattle, v. 122)

أَوْ مَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ
كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ
مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

(الأنعام ١٢٢)

The comparison here is between Hamza — “*he who was dead to whom we gave life*”, and Hamza’s contemporary, Abu-Jahl, another important figure at the time of the Apostle Muhammad and avowed opponent to Him and to Islám — “*him who is in the depths of darkness*.” Hamza was not physically dead, yet he was considered dead because he was a “denier”, in other words, spiritually dead. Hamza was inspired to "believe" in Islám and was given life.

Abu-Jahl refused to accept Islám and was not adorned with “belief”. Abu-Jahl was in the depths of darkness, from which he can never come out, or in other words spiritually in darkness and remained in darkness, because he refused to "believe" in the new Message. Yet

physically, Abu-Jahl was conducting a normal life like Hamza. However, he was not given the light whereby he can walk amongst men.

Again in the following verse the words "dead" and "lifeless" are used metaphorically to indicate the spiritual death of invoking help of idols and not of the One true God:

While the gods whom they call on beside God, create nothing, but are themselves created: dead are they, lifeless. And they know not when they shall be raised.

(Súrih XVI, The Bee, vv. 20-21)

وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئاً وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ
أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَاءٍ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ
(النحل ٢٠-٢١)

Thus it is that the meaning of life and death in the holy Scriptures is indeed the spiritual condition of life and death, the condition of being a believer and spiritually alive, or dead and in spiritual darkness wrapped in the winding sheets of false tradition and wrong imagination.

In like manner the Qur'án gives us another deep meaning for life and death. In the *Súrih of the Family of 'Imrán* we read:

*Think not of those who are slain in God's way as dead.
Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of
their Lord.*

(Súrih III, The Family of 'Imrán, 169)

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتاً بَلْ أحيَاءٌ عِنْدَ
رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

(آل عمران ١٦٩)

Besides life and death, the Qur'an gives spiritual meanings to other words amongst which are: blindness and sight, darkness and light, those who are in their graves... as in the following verses:

And the blind and the seeing are not alike; neither darkness and light; nor the shade and the hot wind; nor are the living and the dead the same! God indeed shall make whom He will to hearken, but thou shall not make those who are in their graves to hearken; for only with warning art thou charged.

(Súrih XXXV The Creator, vv.19—23)

وما يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ وَلَا الظُّلُمَاتُ وَلَا النُّورُ وَلَا
الظُّلُ وَلَا الْحَرُورُ وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَحْيَاءُ وَلَا الْأَمْوَاتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
يُسْمِعُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ إِنْ أَنْتَ إِلَّا
نَذِيرٌ

(فاطر ١٩ - ٢١)

These words were addressed to the Apostle Muhammad, and it is clear that the words: *blind and seeing, darkness and light, shade and hot wind, the living and the dead*, have a deeper significance than their literal meaning indicates. If considered in their literal meaning alone, the verses will not make good sense. This fact is further confirmed by the sentence: "*thou shall not make those who are in their graves to hearken.*" Those who are physically in the graves are physically dead and cannot be those mentioned in the sentence. It follows that what is intended by "*those who are in their graves to hearken*" are indeed living individuals who are in the graves of ignorance, spiritually dead. The same applies to *the blind and seeing, darkness and light, shade and hot wind, living and the dead*; which are not meant to indicate a physical condition of human beings or of nature, otherwise why would God mention that which is clearly evident.

These words explain the difference between those who did not see the truth of the Message sent to them by the Apostle Muhammad — those who are "*blind*", from those who have seen and embraced His Cause — the "*seeing*".

The Resurrection

The Resurrection, the Hour, the End that has no End, the Day of Judgement and other titles, all are synonymous of the same event. People were told that the event is: A total upheaval of the earth and what is on it, a complete annihilation of mankind, and a whole disturbance and imbalance of what is in the sky. The scene then develops when all the people who were by then in their graves, will be made to rise from their graves, be judged, and graded into "the good" and the "wicked". "The good" will take the road to paradise, and "the wicked" will go to hell.

We spoke about this earlier in this book under the title of "The Hour". The reason why I am repeating this here is because we shall continue to discuss the subject of Resurrection in more detail. We have understood the meaning of "*life*", "*death*", "*the grave*", "*the blind and seeing*", "*darkness and light*"..., Now we need to realise even more, that these imagery words of the Qur'an are not to be understood on their dictionary meaning, but rather that they intend to convey the spiritual attitudes of the human being.

A review of the verses in the Qur'an that concern the Resurrection give more than one image to what will happen on that Day. In fact it would not be difficult to realise that there are four distinct images for the resurrection.

The First image

In the **First Image**, our attention is drawn to the terrifying end to which earth and heaven are destined:

When the earth shall be shaken with a shock and the mountains shall be crumbled with a crumbling, and shall become scattered dust...

(Súrih LVI, The Inevitable, vv. 4-6)

إِذَا رُجَّتِ الْأَرْضُ رَجًا وَبُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ بَسًّا فَكَانَتْ هَبَاءً مُنْبَثًا
(الواقعة ٤ - ٦)

When the sun shall be folded up. And when the stars shall fall. And when the mountains shall be set in motion...

(Súrih LXXXI, The folded Up, vv. 1-3)

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ
(التكوير ١ - ٣)

When the heaven shall cleave asunder. And when the stars shall disperse. And when the seas shall be made to burst forth. And when the graves shall be scattered".

(Súrih LXXXII, The Cleaving, vv. 1-4)

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انتَثَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فَجَرَتْ
وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعْثِرَتْ
(الانفطار ١ - ٤)

When the heaven shall have split asunder. And duteously obeyed its Lord. And when the earth shall have been stretched out as a plain. And shall have cast off what is in her and become empty.

(Súrih LXXXIV, The Splitting Asunder, vv. 1-4)

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ
وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ
(الانشقاق ١ - ٤)

When the earth with her quaking shall quake. And the earth shall cast off her burdens".

(Súrih XCIX, The Earthquake, vv. 1—2)

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا وَأُخْرِجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا
(الزلزلة ١ - ٢)

These verses present an image of complete desolation of earth and heaven:

...the earth shall be shaken... the earth shall quake... the earth shall cast off her burdens... the earth shall have been stretched out as a plain... the earth will become empty...

...the graves shall be scattered...

...the mountains shall be crumbled...

...the seas shall be made to burst forth...

...the heaven shall have split asunder...

...the sun shall be folded up...

...the stars shall disperse... the stars shall fall...

Now let us consider these verses and ask ourselves whether these events could take place literally? How can *the heaven split asunder dutiously obey its Lord*? What burdens will *the stretched, shaken, quaked earth cast off*? *Where will the stars fall*?

We know today that some of the stars we see at night in a clear sky are bigger than our earth, many times. How can it be that not one star, but stars, that are a myriad times heavier than our earth, shall fall on our shaking quaking earth?

Yet we know that every word pronounced by the Holy Mouthpiece of God's Will must be true, and that there can be no contradiction in His Words.

Science and knowledge are also attributes of the Almighty unto mankind. Taken, therefore, at their literal meaning these events are unacceptable to the human mind of today, and are not in harmony with science and knowledge.

If, however, we consider that these verses fall under the category of the "*figurative*" verses that have an interpretation, then it will become clear that these events should not be figured out in their literal meaning, because what these verses call earth, heaven, mountain,

sun, seas and stars, are not the natural ones we see and know of, but are figurative to more profound meanings.

What will be the condition of mankind when these events take place?

O Mankind, fear your Lord. Verily, the earthquake of the last Hour will be a tremendous thing. On the day that ye shall behold it, every suckling woman shall forsake her suckling babe and every woman that hath a burden in her womb shall cast her burden and thou shalt see men drunken, yet are they not drunken: but it is the mighty chastisement of God.

(Súrih XXII, The Pilgrimage, vv. 1-2)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ
تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ
حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَىٰ وَلَٰكِنَّ
عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ

(الحج ١ - ٢)

But when the stunning blast shall arrive, on that day shall a man fly from his brother, and his mother and his father, and his wife and his children...

(Súrih LXXX, He Frowned, vv. 33-36)

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاعَةُ يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ
وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ

(عَبَسَ ٣٣ - ٣٦)

Here we see mankind in a state of total loss, when the quake of the last Hour shall strike: *man shall fly from his brother, and his mother and his father, and his wife and his children. Every bearing woman shall cast her burden... And men shall seem to be drunken, yet are they not drunken...*

Here again we are confronted with the problem of reconciling reason with the literal state in which men and women will be when

*drunken and fleeing,
abandoning the suckling and dropping the burden...
and when the earth will be quaking and flattened,
and the graves scattered,
and the mountains crumbling,
and the seas bursting,
and heaven split,
and the sun folded
and the stars dispersed...*

Will such an image make sense if considered literally?

Yet these are all the Words of God. We must strive to understand them, using as an unerring instrument the very Words of God.

The Second Image

The Second Image that the Holy Qur'án presents for the Resurrection is one that unfolds new insight into the meaning of events presented in the first image:

*What! Are they sure that the overwhelming chastisement
of God shall not come upon them, or that that Hour shall
not come upon them suddenly, while they are unaware?*

(Súrih XII, Joseph, v. 107)

أَفَأَمِنُوا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ غَشِيَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ أَوْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

(يوسف ١٠٧)

*Warn them of the day of sighing when the decree shall be
accomplished, while they are sunk in heedlessness and
while they believe not...*

(Súrih XIX, Mary, v. 39)

وَأَنذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ إِذْ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ فِي غَفْلَةٍ وَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
(مريم ٣٩)

But on the day of Resurrection some of you shall deny the others, and some of you shall curse the others; and your abode shall be the fire, and ye shall have none to help.

(Súrih XXIX, The Spider, v. 25)

يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُم بِبَعْضٍ وَيَلْعَنُ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا
وَمَا أُولَئِكَ إِلَّا فِي شَرٍّ مِمَّا لَكُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

(العنكبوت ٢٥)

Now what the second image tells us is quite clear, that on the Day of Resurrection people will not be unaware of it being there, that they shall be sunk in heedlessness and they shall believe not...

Further still: some shall deny the others, and some shall curse the others.

Considering the upheaval that would have struck earth and heaven, the mountains and the seas, the sun and the stars on the Day of Resurrection, how can it be possible, were the upheaval to happen literally, that the people then will be unaware, sunk in heedlessness? And how can it be possible for the people under such conditions to be in a state of mind, that some shall deny the others, and some shall curse the others? Is that not a further proof that the upheaval of earth and heaven, the mountains and the seas, the sun and the stars should not be understood literally?

Another question may also be pertinent to this second image of events: Who are they who shall be unaware, sunk in heedlessness?

Here is what God tells us:

And on that day whereon the Hour shall arrive, the wicked will swear that not above one hour have they waited: even so did they utter lies on earth. But they to whom knowledge and faith have been given will say, "ye have waited, in accordance with the book of God, till the Day

of Resurrection: for this is the Day of Resurrection but ye were not aware."

(Súrih XXX, The Greeks, vv. 55-56)

وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُقْسِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ مَا لَبِثُوا غَيْرَ سَاعَةٍ كَذَلِكَ
كَانُوا يُؤْفِكُونَ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَالْإِيمَانَ لَقَدْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي
كِتَابِ اللَّهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْبَعْثِ فَهَذَا يَوْمُ الْبَعْثِ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ لَا
تَعْلَمُونَ.

(الروم ٥٥-٥٦)

Those who are unaware are the wicked that watched the events of The Day of Resurrection but did not understand their import. Those to whom knowledge and faith was given, understand the meaning of the events, and will tell the wicked "You have understood the Day of Resurrection literally from the book of God, and consequently did not understand that this is The Day of Resurrection."

The Third Image

The **Third Image** of the Day of Resurrection may be seen in the following verses:

And there shall be a blast on the trumpet, and all who are in the Heavens and all who are in the Earth shall expire, save those whom God shall vouchsafe to live. Then there shall be another blast on it, and lo! Arising they shall gaze around them:

And the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord, and the Book shall be set, and the prophets shall be brought up, and the witnesses; and judgement shall be given between them with equity; and none shall be wronged.

(Súrih XXXIX, The troops, vv. 68-69)

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصُيْعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ
وَأُشْرِقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ وَجِيءَ بِالنَّبِيِّينَ

وَالشَّهَدَاءِ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ
(الزمر ٦٩ و ٧٣)

We discussed the first verse of this gleaning under the heading "Two Consecutive Trumpet Blasts the Day of Resurrection" in previous pages of this book, and we see now that these two "Trumpet Blasts" are to be followed by *"the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord"* and the setting of the "Book".

We have also seen in a previous page that the Qur'án is called "*The Book*" (Súrih III, v. 7), and that the Bible is called "*The Book*" as in "*the people of the Book*" (Súrih XCVIII, *The Clear Evidence*, vv. 1-4)

However, "*The Book*" that shall be set after the second Trumpet Blast and following *"the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord"*, cannot be the Qur'án . Neither can it be the Bible. It is a "Book" that shall be set on earth after the Qur'án, after the second Trumpet blast and after the shining of the earth *"with the light of her Lord."*

In effect, this is a clear forecast of the appearance of a Messenger from God — the second Trumpet Blast — Who will promulgate a Book of God-given laws and ordinances of Divine origin as was the case for the Qur'án and the Bible.

This will cause the earth to *"shine with the light of her Lord."*

This is a clear announcement that a new world will be established on earth once it is swept clean of the mountains of vain imitations. When once a new sense of faith is promoted. When the heaven of belief will be cleared of the clouds of false imaginings that shrouded the rays of the Sun of Truth; and when the stars of knowledge that once guided the people have become a source of misguidance to err, thus fell down and were dispersed.

What will the condition of mankind be then?

Here is truly a sign for him who feareth the punishment of the latter day. That shall be a day unto which mankind

shall be gathered together; that will be a day witnessed by all creatures. Nor do we delay it but until a time appointed.

When that day shall come no one shall speak a word but by His leave, and some shall be miserable and some shall be blessed. And as for those who shall be consigned to misery, their place the Fire! Therein shall they sigh and bemoan them.

Therein shall they abide while the Heavens and the Earth shall last, unless thy Lord shall will it otherwise; verily the Lord doth what He chooseth.

And as for the blessed ones, their place Paradise! Therein shall they abide while the Heavens and the Earth endure, with whatever imperishable boon thy Lord may please to add.

{Súrih Xi, Houd, vv. 103-108}

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ الْآخِرَةِ ذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّجْمُوعٌ
لَهُ النَّاسُ وَذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّشْهُودٌ وَمَا نُؤَخِّرُهُ إِلَّا لِأَجَلٍ مَّعْدُودٍ يَوْمٌ
يَأْتِ لَا تَكَلِّمُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ وَسَعِيدٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ
شَقُوا فِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتْ
السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَّالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ
وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ سُعِدُوا فِي الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ
وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ عَطَاءٌ غَيْرَ مَجْذُودٍ
(هود ١٠٣-١٠٨)

But those who feared their Lord shall be driven on by troops to Paradise, until when they reach it, its gates shall be opened, and its keepers shall say to them, "All hail! Virtuous have ye been: enter then in, to abide herein forever."

And they shall say, "Praise be to God, who hath made good to us His promise, and hath given to us the earth as our heritage, that we may dwell in Paradise wherever we please!"

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءُوهَا
وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا
خَالِدِينَ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ
نَتَّبِعُوا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ
(الزمر ٧٣-٧٤)

At this stage, we see clearly the fulfilment of the promise of the establishment of Paradise on earth: *"Praise be to God, who hath made good to us his promise, and hath given to us the earth as our heritage, that we may dwell in Paradise wherever we please!"*

Moreover, Paradise and hell Fire will continue after that Day as long as: *the Heavens and the Earth endure* and while: *the Heavens and the Earth shall last.*

The Fourth Image

The **Forth Image** of the Day of Resurrection is one in which mankind will have attained the utter felicity of fellowship and unity, when the world would be immersed in the Bounty and Grace of the Almighty:
...And the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord...

(Súrih XXXIX, The troops, v. 69)

...وَأَشْرَقَتِ الْأَرْضُ بِنُورِ رَبِّهَا...

(الزمر ٦٩)

What have they to wait for now but that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds, and the angels also, and the question be settled? And to God shall all things return.

(Súrih II, The Cow, v.210)

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي ظُلَلٍ مِنَ الْغَمَامِ
وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَفُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ
(البقرة ٢١٠)

*And thy Lord shall come and the angels rank on rank,
(Súrih LXXXIX, v. 22)*

وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا
(الفجر ٢٢)

*On the day whereon the Spirit and the Angels shall be
ranged in order, they shall not speak: save he whom the
God of Mercy shall permit, and who shall say that which
is right.*

(Súrih LXXVIII, The Announcement, v. 38)

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الرُّوحُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ
الرَّحْمَنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا
(النبي ٣٨)

*All on the earth shall pass away, but the face of thy Lord
shall abide resplendent with majesty and glory
(Súrih LV, vv. 26-27)*

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ
(الرحمن ٢٦ - ٢٧)

*And thou shalt see the Angels circling around the Throne
with praises of their Lord: and judgment shall be
pronounced between them with equity: and it shall be
said, "Glory be to God the Lord of the Worlds."
(Súrih XXXIX, The Troops, v. 75)*

وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ
وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
(الزمر ٧٥)

What a marvellous world will there be on earth after the second Trumpet blast! ...*"the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord..."*, and God *"should come down... and the angels also..."*, and the Lord *"shall come and the angels rank on rank..."*, and Jesus the Spirit and the Angels shall be ranged in order... and *"All"* false doctrines and vain imaginations that are dominating the thought and heart of mankind *"on the earth shall pass away, but the face of thy Lord shall abide resplendent with majesty and glory"*: and the Throne will be set and the *"Angels circling around it"*, and from every corner of the earth will rise the praise *"Glory be to God the Lord of the Worlds."*

On that Day:

... thou shalt see the believers, men and women, with their light running before them, and on their right hand. The angels shall say to them, "Good tidings for you this day of gardens beneath whose shades the rivers flow, in which ye shall abide for ever!" This the great bliss!

(Súrih LVII, Iron, v. 12)

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ
وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرَاكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

(الحديد ١٢)

The Great Announcement

النبأ العظيم

Of what ask they of one another?

Of the great Announcement

The theme of their disputes.

Nay! they shall certainly know its truth!

Again. Nay! they shall certainly know it.

عَمَّ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ
عَنِ النَّبَأِ الْعَظِيمِ
الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْتَلِفُونَ
كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ
ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ

(النَّبَأُ الْعَظِيمُ ١ - ٥)

The word "Announcement" refers to a Message or Messenger. However, the verses here speak of a "*great Announcement*". They further confirm that the truth about it shall be made known. However, because the Announcement is great and because its exact date is unknown, God warns the believers not to underestimate any news about it in the following warning:

O Believers! if any bad man come to you with an announcement, clear it up at once, lest through ignorance ye harm others, and speedily have to repent of what ye have done.

(Súrih XLIX, The Apartments, v. 6)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا
قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ

(الحجرات ٦)

Should a bad man or wicked person come to a believer with an announcement, that is to say with news of the sounding of a Trumpet, the matter should be verified immediately, lest the "announcement" be one of truth, and in ignorance the "announcement" is denied and repentance shall be the fate of the believer.

In fact, Almighty God wants us to be fair, to have no prejudice and to consider all matters with a fair mind. Should some news be presented unto us, even were this to be by someone we know to be "bad", we should still give it full consideration, because that news may just be

the appearance of The Great Announcement, the return of Jesus Christ.

A GENERAL REVIEW

Dear Reader,

At this crucial point of our discussion at distance, it may be useful to review the subjects discussed in the above pages and gather our thoughts through a prism of perspective reasoning.

We have seen what the Qur'án teaches regarding very important subjects that engage the thoughts and minds of Muslims around the world today.

At present the state of the world, devised and conflicting as it is, reminds us most vividly of the events we have just read about the Resurrection, when viewed in the light of rational perception, rather than under the influence of traditional thought and imagination.

Humanity has made gigantic steps in the fields of research in sciences, technology, communication, health-care, agriculture, education and generally in all the endeavours of life. In the meantime, however, moral values have degraded to most shameful levels and continue in their downfall; people are at a loss for direction — they seem to be *drunken, yet are they not drunken*.

Mankind is unhappy, in depressive anxiety, enveloped in gloom. A feeling of oppression pervades, and the source of it is a mystery. The political and economic structures of mankind are continually breaking down in spite of the continuous effort to restore them.

Yet God tells us that *“the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord...”* How then can what is happening today in the world be understood?

Let us summarize what we have gleaned from the Word of God!

We have taken knowledge of the warning issued by God to refrain from “interpreting” the “figurative” verses of the Qur'án, because the

"interpretation" is known to God, and infringing on this limit would be conducive to the creation of schism amongst the believers. The believers were enjoined to follow *"the reading"* of the Qur'án as it was revealed, and God promised saying *"...verily, afterwards it shall be ours to make it clear (or send the interpretation thereof)..."* And furthermore, *"...its interpretation shall come."*

We have also understood that the *"interpretation"* of the Qur'án is known to God alone, and that it will have to come to us from God through a Messenger after Muhammad the Apostle.

As regards the sealing of prophethood, we understood the difference between a Prophet and an Apostle or Messenger, and that the sealing of prophethood does not mean that no more Manifestations of God's Will, that is Apostles, will follow.

The meaning of *"Islám"* was further understood to mean both the specific Religion sent upon Muhammad the Apostle of God, and in general, all Divine Messages that came to mankind through Noah, Abraham, Ismaël, Jacob, Moses and His followers, as well as the Disciples of Jesus.

In fact, God addressed the *"children of Adam..."* that is humanity in general, we included, and for ever after, that *"There shall come... Apostles"* to us *"rehearsing"* His *"signs,"* and this was not limited, neither in time nor in place. The continuity with which God will send His Apostles, is further confirmed by the fact that the Muslim nation was designated a *"central"* or *"intermediary"* nation, which necessarily implies that other nations need must follow.

We have also learned that the Muslim Nation, like all nations, *"has a set term;"* and we understood that the year 1260 of the Hegira or 1844 of the Christian era, could well be its term year. The Qur'án also states that for every *"term"* there must come a *"Book"*, and that the name of that *"Book"* may well be the *"Bayán."*

Promised in the Qur'án is the advent of two Messengers, of two Manifestations of God's Will, representing the return of Yahyá (John) son of Zachariah and of 'Ísá (Jesus) son of Mary on the Day of Resurrection. Their advent, we are told, would cause two terrible commotions in the world, and that these two events will be so near to one another in time that they will seem to be one. The two events were also signalled by two Trumpet blasts, the first: *"a blast on the Trumpet and all who are in the Heavens and all who are in the earth shall expire..."* while the second: *"There shall be another blast on it, and lo! Arising they shall gaze around them..."*

Again, reference is made in Súrih XXXVI of a *"blast on the Trumpet"* signalling the speeding of the people *"out of their sepulchres... But one blast shall there be, and, lo! They shall be assembled before us all together."*

Regarding the forthcoming of a Messenger of God, we have noted that the *"Clear Evidence... An Apostle from God reciting Pure Pages wherein valuable Books..."* shall follow after the *"Clear Evidence..."* who is the Apostle Muhammad, in order to render *"the unbelievers among the people of the Book (the Christians and the Jews)"* as well as the *"polytheists"* – render them believers in Islám and Muhammad as the Apostle of God.

We have also noted that God enjoins the Muslims to *"listen for the day whereon the Crier shall cry out from a place quite near..."* and we have noted that given Muhammad was called a *"Crier"*, it follows that the *"Crier"* unto who we are enjoined to *"listen"* to, is indeed an Apostle of God also.

The *"Crier"* was to *"cry out from a place quite near..."* and we have understood that that *"place quite near"* may well be 'Akká which is in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

The same *"Crier"* that will follow Muhammad, we have seen, is called *"The Summoner"* Who will come on the Day of Judgement.

We have noted the various names by which the Apostles of God are called in the Qur'án: *"The Clear Evidence"*, *"The Great Announcement..."* etc. as well as those attributed to the Day of the End of Time: *"The Great Day"*, *"The Day of Resurrection"*, *"The Hour..."* etc.

As to *"The Hour"*, we noted that it will take most people, especially the unbelievers, unawares. And we have also understood that *"Life"* and *"Death"* in the meaning of the Words of God are in truth indications of spiritual livelihood and death. In like manner must we understand *"blind"* and *"seeing"*, *"darkness"* and *"light"*, *"shade"* and *"hot wind"* ... to indicate spiritual conditions.

Now we come to the most important subject: The Resurrection.

We have noted the four images and the succession of events of that Day. It is evident that by calling the events The Day of Resurrection, its duration will not be a 24 hour day of our reckoning. Indeed God tells us in the Qur'án: *"Verily a Day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning."* (Súrih XXII, *The Pilgrimage*, v. 47). The Day of Resurrection is a divine process by which a total change will be brought about in human society whereby the shining of *"the light of her Lord"* will assemble *"all together before"* God, in other words unify all the people on earth. The Lord of all the Heavens and of the Earth is One. His light when it pervades the earth will render all those who are on earth a One people.

Finally we have seen that God will make a *Great Announcement* which will be recognized by all on earth even though it may be a cause of dispute in the beginning. God further warns the believers to investigate immediately any announcement they hear of, even were *"any bad man"* bring it to their attention.

Part II

**The Great Announcement, the Clear Evidence,
the Crier and the Summoner promised in the Qur'án.**

Part II

The Great Announcement, the Clear Evidence, the Crier and the Summoner promised in the Qur'án.

Dear Reader,

At this stage, I would suggest that together we look into the conditions of the world today and compare them with the images you have read in the previous pages. However, I do also suggest that we consider together the understanding of some concepts that are relevant to our subject, albeit very briefly.

The station of mankind:

As is probably known to all people, the world of existence is composed of four kingdoms, namely the mineral kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, the animal kingdom and the kingdom of humankind. Man is the most sublime creation in the world of existence. The spirit of man is a breath from the spiritual realms of God. The station of man is, therefore, very great. God endowed man with intellect and conscience that allow him to be the recipient of the heavenly bounties and give him perception to explore the phenomena of nature.

In spite of his power of perception, man is in need of education. If left without education, man will degenerate towards the animal kingdom. Animals share with mankind the senses of sight, hearing, taste and odour. In many cases, these senses are more acute in animals than they are in mankind. The life of an animal is conditioned by nature. Animals are totally at home in nature and do not need to be educated or that much trained. However, man is in need of education and training. If man be left without education and training, he will become worse than the animal.

The Education of man

Besides body and physical training, the education of the human being is of two kinds: the education and training in sciences and technology, and the spiritual education. The first is the human education, conceived and applied by the intellectual capability of human beings such as the philosophers, the scientists and the education teachers; while the second – the spiritual education, must come from the Creator Who ennobled man's physical body with the human spirit.

The spiritual Educators of humanity are the Messengers and Prophets sent by God. They tell us how the Almighty wishes us to conduct our social and earthly life and empower us through the effulgence of The Word of God to attain the heavenly attributes of love, mercy, truthfulness, honesty and such as are of heavenly nature.

The people unto whom God sent His Messenger Muhammad were ignorant. Their sole education was that which they developed from their tribal systems. Hence, there was no cohesion between the different tribes and conflict was always present amongst them. Their ignorance was such as to consider the birth of a girl a dishonour to the father, and some went as far as to bury their girl child alive.

However, when the Divine Educator, Muhammad the Messenger of God, came to them and inspired their spirits with the Words of God, they became another people to the extent that these nomad tribes became united and brought many nations under the banner of Islám. They established civilizations, developed philosophy and sciences and were the ornament of history over many centuries.

Similarly Jesus Christ, Moses, and Abraham were the Divine Educators of humankind of prior ages. Through their Divine Teachings, nations and peoples were united and great civilizations were established.

The Unity of the Messengers of God

We read in the Qur'án of many Messengers and Prophets sent by God to humanity, and yet God tells us that of these:

...we have already sent apostles before thee: of some we have told thee, and of others we have told thee nothing...

(Súrih XL – The Believer, v. 78)

ولقد أرسلنا رسلا من قبلك منهم من قصصنا عليك ومنهم من لم نقصص عليك...

(غافر ٧٨)

This means that there are Messengers of God whose names were not mentioned in the Qur'án. However, God tells us in the following verse, that we should “...make no distinction between any of His Apostles”.

The Apostle believeth in that which hath been sent down from his Lord, as do the faithful also. Each one believeth in God, and His Angels, and His Books, and His Apostles: we make no distinction between any of His Apostles. And they say, "We have heard and we obey. Thy mercy, Lord! for unto thee must we return."

(Súrih II The Cow, v. 285)

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

(البقرة ٢٨٥)

All the Messengers of God are the same Sun that rises in the same Heaven and radiates the same Light upon mankind. We should beware to think for one moment that one Messenger of God is better or different to another. God is One, His Messengers are One, though they differ in Name.

Religion is One

We have seen in the pages above under the heading “Islám: The Only Divine Religion”, that all the Messengers of God taught “Islám”. Yet we see that there are different religions in the world. There is the Hebrew Religion, the Christian religion, the Buddhist Religion, the Zoroastrian Religion and the Muslim Religion, to mention but the few well known from amongst the religions present today.

Are these religions different?

Can we say that any one religion is better than the others are?

Unfortunately, many people believe that their religion is the best, and by so doing consider the followers of the other religions as having swayed from the true path.

All religions come from the One True God. He reveals them to us through His Messengers, and He warns us to “*make no distinction between any of His Apostles*”,¹ how can we say then that there are different religions or that the one is better than another or better than all the other religions? Do we allow ourselves to judge the work of God? This indeed would be pure error.

Progressive Revelation

The truth is that religion is one. It is a progressive process, whereby the All-Merciful has elevated humanity through the ages and prepared it for its coming of age by Divine Revelation through successive Messengers.

The spiritual teachings of all religions are the same. Judaism, Christianity and Islám teach the Oneness of God, love and harmony

¹ Súrih II The Cow, v. 285

amongst the people. The followers of all these and other religions are enjoined to adorn themselves with truthfulness, honesty, love for humankind, mercifulness, fairness and justice. For the spiritual attributes of man, all religions teach the same principles. Therefore, the basis of all religion is the same.

The differences between the Revelations lie in the laws and ordinances governing the social and personal relations of their followers. Different peoples at different times need specific laws and ordinances, and the All-Merciful God ordains, what is in His All-Encompassing Wisdom, that which is best for the people. God tells us in the Qur'án:

Whatever verses we cancel, or cause thee to forget, we bring a better or its like. Knowest thou not that God hath power over all things?

(Súrih II, The Cow v.106)

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ
أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

(البقرة ١٠٦)

Thus, we see that certain foods are prohibited in one Revelation and not prohibited in another, and while the rituals of daily prayer are different, daily prayers itself remains as one of the obligations in all Revelations. The same applies to fasting. Followers of all religions are enjoined to fast during a certain period every year, yet the manner, the date and the duration of fasting may be different.

Such differences should not be considered on a preferential basis, but rather be attributed to the needs and condition of the different peoples to which the Revelations came. The peoples unto whom the Law of the Evangel was revealed, were different to that of Arabia, where the Qur'án was taught. When the Torah was revealed, the condition of the Children of Israel was different to the condition of the peoples of the two Revelations that followed.

One of the most striking examples of progressive revelation can be found in the status of women. Prior to Islám, women had no clear status in society in Arabia. Christianity and the Jews were part of society there too. Women had no status. In the Qur'án women were elevated from total absence of rights to a status whereby they enjoyed half the rights of men in matters of inheritance, and testimony. Men were ordained to care for their wives and treat them with kindness and respect. Considering that these changes took place in the nomad tribal societies of Arabia in their age of ignorance, it becomes clear that these changes were tantamount to a revolution in the habits and behaviour of the Arabs of those times. Of course, no one thinks of these changes as revolutionary anymore today, now that over 14 centuries have passed since.

Why people deny the Messengers of God

The Christians refuse to accept Muhammad as a Messenger of God because their Leaders told them there is no trace in the Evangel that can be understood to foreshadow the coming of a Messenger of God after Christ. For centuries, the common Christian had no direct access to the Evangel. The Priests alone read and studied the Book, and the Church alone detained the authority to say what is in the Book, and what is not. Those who questioned the Priests or the Church were cast away as infidels and possibly suffered persecution.

Such was the condition of the Jews also when Christ announced His Mission to them. The Scribes and Pharisees controlled the consciousness of the Jews, and detained them from accepting Christ - the Spirit sent to them from God, to remove them from hellfire of ignorance and imitation and make them enter the paradise of knowledge and redemption.

The Muslims say, in the Evangel it is written that a Messenger named Ahmed shall come after Christ, and this is confirmed in the Qur'án. The Christians say there is no mention of Ahmed in our Book. The Muslims

conclude that the text of the Evangel was tampered with, and the word Ahmed was removed by the Church.

Confronted with this issue, the Muslims and the Christians have never really thought of trying independently to find an explanation to it. They simply listened to the Ulamá for the ones and the Priests for the others and went into headlong confrontation, not only for this, but also for many other issues.

A person of goodwill who wishes to establish harmony among the differing peoples will have to put aside all the inherited ideas and opinions old or present on the subject of issue, in order to be able to see things in an unbiased state of mind. The balance of justice cannot weigh matters fairly if it were tilting in one sense or the other.

Now we know that the Qur'án and the Evangel were revealed by God unto His Messengers, Mohammad and Christ. These books therefore, contain the Words of God. The Words of God can be neither contradicting nor erroneous. When God says that the name "Ahmed" exists in the Evangel, then this must be so. Nobody on earth can tamper with the Text of the Words of God. God Himself tells us that He will not allow this to happen, because He Himself will guard over the integrity of the Messages that he sends:

We have without doubt, sent down the Message; and we will assuredly guard it

(Súrih xv, Al-Hijr, v. 9)

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

(الحجر ٩)

Now let us consider the following verse:

And to thee we have sent down the Book (The Qur'án) with truth, confirming that which is in his two hands of the Book (previously revealed) and guarding it in safety...

(Súrih v, The Table, v. 51)

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ
وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ...

(المائدة 51)

In this verse we notice that there is mention of "*the Book* " meaning the Qur'án, and "*the Book* " that was previously revealed, meaning the Bible. The words "*that which is in his two hands* " refer to the Bible that was available at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an and which Muhammad had "*in his two hands*", or simply available unto Muhammad.

We, therefore, see that the Evangel, which is part of the Book revealed before the Qur'án, was true at the time when the Qur'án was revealed. No word of the Evangel was removed, replaced, or added, at the time the Qur'án was revealed.

The Qur'án was revealed in Arabic, and the word "Ahmed" is an Arabic word. The Evangel's original language was not Arabic. Christ spoke in Aramaic. It is natural then, that the word "Ahmed" will not be found as such, in the translated Evangel. However, we find that a word of Greek origin corresponds to "Ahmed" in meaning, and that word is "Paraclete".²

Jesus Christ pronounced the word "Paraclete" in four instances in the Gospel according to St. John. The word "Paraclete" was replaced by the word "Comforter" in the English translation. In the Arabic version of the Gospel, the word "Paraclete" is translated into "معين" - "Helper" and in some versions it is translated into "المعزّي" - "Redeemer". All these translations are correct, and in addition, the word "Paraclete" means "Defender" or "Intercessor".

Paraclete means Ahmed, which when translated from the original language of Revelation became Comforter or Redeemer or Helper.

² Refer to Appendix I for further explanation and prophecies

Sun, Heaven(s), Earth, Stars, Mountains, Seas...

Sun, Heaven(s), Earth, Stars, Mountains and Seas... have much deeper meanings when mentioned in the Qur'án than their outward meaning. Under the heading of "The Resurrection" in the preceding pages of Part I, the Reader would have noticed that these nouns did have a deeper significance. Taken on their dictionary meaning simply did not make good sense to the verses in which these nouns are mentioned.

Among the events that will take place during the Resurrection we have read the following signs wherein are included Sun, Heaven(s), Earth, Stars, Mountains, Seas... We understood that these signs were figurative and should be understood in that light:

"and thou shalt see men drunken, yet are they not drunken..."

...the earth shall be shaken... the earth shall quake... the earth shall cast off her burdens... the earth shall have been stretched out as a plain... the earth will become empty...

...the graves shall be scattered...

...the mountains shall be crumbled...

...the seas shall be made to burst forth...

...the heaven shall have split asunder...

...the sun shall be folded up...

...the stars shall disperse... the stars shall fall...

Bearing in mind that these signs are figurative and thus have much deeper significance than a literal interpretation could impart, we shall try to understand them, in the context of the present world situation in the following paragraphs. We shall consider one meaning only of these signs other than the apparent literal meaning and ask the question: has the *Hour* Struck?

Present world situation: has the *Hour Struck*?

Has the Hour struck?

Many ask this question as they view the terrible situation in which the world is today. True there is no world war at present, but the feeling of oppression is omnipresent in every soul. Most people try to find an explanation to this feeling of oppression and some would say it is due to the moral decadence around us that is eroding the vitals of humankind. Others would say that this feeling of oppression is due to the economic depreciation, or the widespread poverty, or the deterioration of the climate. There are many reasons to which the feeling of oppression may be attributed, but none seems to be a satisfactory or convincing explanation.

The reason for this feeling of oppression is, to my understanding, due to a loss for direction. To whatever theory we attach ourselves today; we find it not satisfying tomorrow. Ideas and ideologies thought to be the solution to some crisis or problem adopted and propagated today, are found to be no solution at all tomorrow. At times, they may even aggravate the crisis or problem. Darwinism, The Holy Alliance, Communism, The League of Nations are amongst the most conspicuous examples. Where, we may ask, can we seek advice and be sure to obtain a wise remedy? Are we not at a loss? Is not this an explanation of: *"and thou shalt see men drunken, yet are they not drunken..."*³ Is this not one of the events of the Resurrection?

Is this not a sign that the *Hour* struck?

Many are the turbaned heads of religion today, Muslim, Christian, Jewish and others. During the centuries of florescence of the Religion's era - Islám, Christianity or Judaism - the respective Ulamá were the

³ Súrih XXII, The Pilgrimage, v. 2

source of guidance for the community. They were the guiding *stars* in the *heaven* of Religion, much the same way as the stars we see in the sky

helped the travelling caravan or navigating ship find direction by night in old times. Today the number of Ulamá has multiplied enormously, they issue a multitude of different and often conflicting fatwas – religious rulings, and instead of guiding the believers to harmony and unity they have become a source of division and contention amongst them. Did not God tell us in the Qur’án: “...and when the stars shall fall?”⁴ And again: “...And when the stars shall disperse?”⁵ Did not the Ulamá of all religions *fall* from their heights of old? Have they not *dispersed*? Is this not one of the events of the Resurrection?

Is this not a sign that the *Hour* struck?

Heaven and *Heavens* are mentioned in many verses in the Qur’án. *Heaven* may mean the actual sky that is over our heads in the daytime, but in many verses, it is impossible to understand *heaven* and *heavens* to mean sky or skies. While in English we find "heaven", which refers to a supernatural world and "sky", which refers to physical atmosphere above us or the interstellar space, there is only one word in Arabic "samaa سماء" which refers to both meanings, hence comes the need to understand the context in which "samaa" is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures and find out which of the two meanings is intended.

One meaning of *heaven* is Divine Revelation. Just as the *sun* rises and sets in the sky, so does the *Sun* of the Manifestation of the Will of God rise in the *Heaven* of Divine Revelation and sets after firmly establishing The Message.

Consider Jesus Christ, whose life and spiritual teachings can be considered as a *Sun* that rose in the *Heaven* of Christianity and

⁴ Súrih LXXXI, The folded Up, v. 2

⁵ Súrih LXXXII, The Cleaving, v. 2

illuminated the world. From that *Heaven*, life-giving *rains* of spiritual teachings quickened the *earth* – the hearts of men, and raised them to life. Figuratively people were spiritually dead, but the Word of God gave them life. People were in the graves of imitation and superstition, but the inspiration of the new Faith brought them out of their graves and gave them knowledge and wisdom. Following the departure of Christ from this earthly life, *Stars* appeared in the *Heaven* of Christendom. Then the *Heaven* of Christendom did *cleave and split asunder* and the *Stars fell*, and the Hour of the coming of Muhammad the Messenger of God struck!

Today the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims and all the religious communities in the world, one and all, are divided into many sects. The *Heavens* of all the religions of the world have *cleaved and split asunder*, and their *Stars* have *fallen and dispersed*. Is this not one of the events of the Resurrection?

Is this not a sign that the *Hour* struck?

Where are the great religious institutions that were once *mountains* of knowledge and guidance, *mountains* that people climbed to take refuge in time of catastrophe in past ages? Have these *mountains* not *crumbled* and flattened down? Where has gone the majesty and glory of the institutions of religion? Is this not one of the events of the Resurrection?

Is this not a sign that the *Hour* struck?

The multimillions of publications – that have become predominantly the *seas* of spiritless words and phrases and immoral art, have *surged forth* only to mislead and confuse the minds of mankind, trouble the souls of man and debase human behaviour. Is this not one of the events of the Resurrection?

Is this not a sign that the *Hour* struck?

The Reader may agree with me, however that the real proof that the *Hour* is indeed upon us, lies in the appearance of the *Great Announcement*, the coming of the *Clear Evidence*, of the *Crier*, of the *Summoner* and the sounding of the *Twin Trumpet Blasts*!

He has Come

O Believers! if any bad man come to you with an announcement, clear it up at once, lest through ignorance ye harm others, and speedily have to repent of what ye have done.

(Súrih XLIX, *The Apartments*, v. 6)

يا أيُّها الذين آمنوا إن جاءكم فاسقٌ بنبأ فتبينوا أن تصيبوا
قوماً بجهالة فتصبحوا على ما فعلتم نادمين
(الحجرات ٦)

Dear Reader,

The writer of the book you are reading now cannot be worse than “*any bad man*” and here I come to you with an *announcement*. Would you like to “*clear it up at once*”?

In the year 1260 of Hegira corresponding to the year 1844 CE, the first *Trumpet Blast* was sounded and Sayyid ‘Alí Muhammad “The Báb”, a descendent of Muhammad the Messenger of God, announced His Mission: that of herald to a greater Manifestation than Himself.

Nine years later in 1268 of the Hegira, early 1853 CE the second Trumpet Blast was sounded. Mírzá Husayn ‘Alí “Bahá’u’lláh” while in chains in a dungeon, was spiritually informed that He is the Manifestation announced by the Báb and the promise of all ages, the

Great Announcement, the Clear Evidence, the Crier and the Summoner promised in the Qur'án.

The Faith revealed by Bahá'u'lláh is called the Bahá'í Faith.

In the following pages, we shall consider very briefly some of the concepts and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. A short history of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh will also be included.

Part III
The Fulfilment
The Bahá'í Faith – A Brief Presentation

Part III
The Fulfilment
The Bahá'í Faith – A Brief Presentation

The Promised One

We have studied in Part I a few of the verses in the Holy Qur'án forecasting the coming of the “Great Announcement”, the “Crier” and the “Summoner”, an event that will trigger the process for all the peoples of the world to be gathered together. The Christians were also told in the Evangel, that the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, would return in order to establish the reign of the Kingdom of God on earth. The Jews were promised the return of Jehovah to free them from the yoke of servitude.

All the religions of the world, each according to the interpretation of their leaders, are expecting their “Promised One”, and while each people have their own idea and image of how their “Promised One” must be, the truth is that the “Promised One” of all the nations is the same.

Bahá'u'lláh claimed that He is the Promised one. Here is what He said in one of His Tablets regarding Himself:

*He it is, Who in the Old Testament hath been named
Jehovah, Who in the Gospel as the Spirit of Truth, and in
the Qur'án acclaimed as the Great Announcement.⁶*

إِنَّهُ هُوَ الَّذِي سُمِّيَ فِي التَّوْرَةِ بِجَهْوَهَ وَفِي الْإِنْجِيلِ بِرُوحِ
الْحَقِّ وَفِي الْفُرْقَانِ بِالنَّبَأِ الْعَظِيمِ

(ورد في نظم بهاء الله العالمي)

⁶ Cited in World Order of Bahá'u'lláh p.104

A Divine Mission

Bahá'u'lláh announced that His is a Divine Mission. This is what He said in His Tablet to Násiri'd-Din Sháh the Sháh of Persia:

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...⁷

يَا سُلْطَانُ إِنِّي كُنْتُ كَأَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ وَرَاقِدًا عَلَى الْمِهَادِ
مَرَّتْ عَلَيَّ نَسَائِمُ السُّبْحَانِ وَعَلَّمَنِي عِلْمَ مَا كَانَ لَيْسَ هَذَا
مِنْ عِنْدِي بَلْ مِنْ لَدُنْ عَزِيزٍ عَلِيمٍ، وَأَمَرَنِي بِالنَّدَاءِ بَيْنَ
الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاءِ...

(اللوحة الموجهة إلى ناصر الدين شاه)

Bahá'u'lláh further confirmed that he received no formal education:

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.⁸

مَا قَرَأْتُ مَا عِنْدَ النَّاسِ مِنَ الْعُلُومِ وَمَا دَخَلْتُ الْمَدَارِسَ
فَاسْأَلِ الْمَدِينَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتُ فِيهَا لِتُؤَقِّنَ بَأَنِّي لَسْتُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ
(اللوحة الموجهة إلى ناصر الدين شاه ص ٨)

⁷ Tablet to Násiri'd-Din Sháh

⁸ Tablet to Násiri'd-Din Sháh

Our Relation with God

One of the subjects that is very dear to the Bahá'ís (followers of Bahá'u'lláh) is that of our relation, we the mortal beings, with our Creator.

God Almighty is the Creator of the Universe. God created man. God created all that is on earth, whether mineral, vegetable or animal, for man. God is far above our finite comprehension. We, the mortal beings are limited, and as such can never understand the Unlimited. We cannot know God. Bahá'u'lláh expresses the greatness of God in one of His Tablets in the following words:

*"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."*⁹

فسبحانك سبحانك من أن تشير بذكر أو توصف بثناء أو
بإشارة لأن كل ذلك لم يكن إلا وصف خلقك وبُعْثَ بأمرك
واختراعك

(من لوح إلى آقا محمد حسن ورد في منتخبات من آثار بهاء الله رقم ١)

Whatever be the language with which we may wish to describe God, it can only be part of our limitations as living creatures in the material world.

"Far, far from Thy glory" says Bahá'u'lláh, "be what mortal man can affirm of Thee, or attribute unto Thee, or the praise with which he can glorify Thee... There is

⁹ Bahá'u'lláh – Tablet to Agha Muhammad Hassan – Gleanings I.

none other God but Thee, the Inaccessible, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Holy of Holies”¹⁰

فسبحانك سبحانك من أن تُذكَر بذكر أو توصف بوصفٍ
أو تُننى بثناءٍ... لا إله إلا أنتَ المتعالى المقدر المقدس
العليم.

(من لوح إلى آقا محمد حسن ورد في منتخبات من آثار بهاء الله رقم ١)

Through His limitless mercy and love, God created man. In the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh called the “*The Hidden Words*”, God addresses mankind as follows:

*“O Son of man! Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty”*¹¹

يا ابنَ الإنسان كُنْتُ فِي قَدَمِ ذَاتِي وَأَزَلِيَّةً كُنُونَتِي عَرَفْتُ
حُبِّي فِيكَ خَلَقْتُكَ وَالْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مِثَالِي وَأَظْهَرْتُ لَكَ جَمَالِي
(الكلمات المكنونة رقم ٣)

How then can we envisage our relation with our Creator, given that we can never attain knowing Him?

God the All-Merciful has promised to send to us, we His creatures, Manifestations of His Will at all times to guide us to that which is best for us. They are the Messengers and Prophets Whom humanity has known over the ages. This is the Eternal Covenant that God has taken with mankind.¹² Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are all Manifestations of God.

¹⁰ Idem.

¹¹ Bahá'u'lláh - The Hidden Words # 3.

¹² See also Part I under the heading “God will always send His Messengers”.

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that the Messengers and Prophets of God – the Manifestations of God, are like sanctified and pure mirrors that reflect in the holiest, most perfect and most adequate manner the knowledge, the power and sovereignty of God unto mankind. It is by knowing the Manifestations of God that we, the created human beings, have come to know God, because They taught us the existence of God and the love of God.

The Oneness of God

The Oneness of God is the basis of Bahá'í belief in the same manner as it is for Islám, Christianity and all the Divine Religions. Here is one of the declarations of Bahá'u'lláh on the Oneness of God:

...every member of My body testifieth that there is none other God but Him... We testify that there is none other God but Him, that from everlasting He was alone with none else besides Him, and that He shall be unto everlasting what He hath ever been.¹³

...يَشْهَدُ كُلُّ جَوَاحِرِي بِأَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ... نَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَمْ يَزَلْ كَانَ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ مَعَهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَا يَزَالُ يَكُونُ بِمِثْلِ مَا قَدْ كَانَ...

(اللوحة الموجّهة إلى ناصر الدين شاه ص ٩)

The Oneness of the Messengers of God

Bahá'ís firmly believe in the oneness of all the Messengers of God – the Manifestations of God. Bahá'u'lláh warns His followers that differentiating between the Manifestations of God would be an act of disbelief in God. Here is one instance where Bahá'u'lláh confirms this principle:

Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the

¹³ Tablet to Násiri'd-Din Sháh – “Summons of the Lord of Hosts” p. 99

Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth. Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Whoso maketh the slightest possible difference between their persons, their words, their messages, their acts and manners, hath indeed disbelieved in God, hath repudiated His signs, and betrayed the Cause of His Messengers.¹⁴

إِيَّاكُمْ يَا مَلَأَ التَّوْحِيدِ لَا تُفَرِّقُوا فِي مَظَاهِرِ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ وَلَا
فِيمَا نَزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَ هَذَا حَقُّ التَّوْحِيدِ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ لَمَنْ
الْمُوقِنِينَ وَكَذَلِكَ فِي أَعْمَالِهِمْ وَأَعْمَالِهِمْ وَكُلَّمَا ظَهَرَ مِنْ
عِنْدِهِمْ وَيُظْهِرُ مِنْ لَدُنْهِمْ كُلُّ مَنْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَكُلُّ بِأَمْرِهِ عَامِلِينَ
وَمَنْ فَرَّقَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَ بَيْنَ كَلِمَاتِهِمْ وَمَا نَزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ فِي
أَحْوَالِهِمْ وَأَعْمَالِهِمْ فِي أَقْلٍ مِمَّا يُحْصَى لَقَدْ أَشْرَكَ بِاللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ
وَبِرُسُلِهِ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ...

(لوح مدينة التوحيد ورد في منتخبات من آثار بهاء الله الفقرة ٢٤)

The Life of Bahá'u'lláh

Before discussing the Teachings and Principles that Bahá'u'lláh has brought in the Bahá'í Faith, and before presenting His overarching goal of establishing “World Unity”, the reader may wish to know some facts about His sacred life.

¹⁴ Gleanings xxiv, p. 58

On 12 November 1817 a child named Husayn-‘Alí later known as Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí, was born in Tihrán the capital of Persia. His father was a nobleman and a favoured minister of Fath-‘Alí Sháh the ruler of the country. Though Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí received little formal education, He showed signs in childhood of innate knowledge and unusual nobility of character – signs that foreshadowed the divinely ordained role He would later assume as Bahá’u’lláh – which is the Arabic for “*Glory of God*.”

He derived His descent, on the one hand, from Abraham (the Father of the Faithful) through Abraham’s wife Katurah, and on the other from Zoroaster, as well as from Yazdigird, the last king of the Sásáníyán dynasty. He belonged through His father, Mírzá ‘Abbás, to one of the most ancient and renowned families of Mázindarán.

In His youth, Bahá’u’lláh’s extraordinary abilities were widely recognized, and He was expected to succeed His father and rise to a position of prominence. His lack of interest in pursuing a career as a minister of the Sháh was the cause of much surprise.

In 1844, when Bahá’u’lláh was almost twenty-seven years old, Sayyid ‘Alí-Muhammad announced in Shiráz that He was the Báb, or Gate – the forerunner of the bearer of an even greater revelation, Whose advent was close at hand. He also announced that He was a Messenger of God promised in the Qur’án. In fact, the Báb’s declaration represents the first “*Trumpet blast*”¹⁵ announced in the Qur’án.

Upon receiving a message from the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh immediately embraced the Bábi Faith and arose to consecrate His life to its service, fearlessly identified himself with its teachings, and distinguished Himself by the exemplary part He played in its diffusion. The rapid increase in the number of the Báb’s followers and the intensity of their

¹⁵ Súrih xxxix, The Troops, v. 68.

activities was so remarkable, that a tumult spread all over Persia that aroused the animosity of the clergy. The clergy incited the people against the Bábis and mobilized the support of the government in the persecution of the Bábi leaders and followers everywhere.

The systematic campaign waged against the Báb and His followers by the religious and civil authorities of Persia had succeeded in depriving the newborn Faith of its protagonists and had culminated in the execution of the Báb Himself. These tragic events were followed in the ensuing years by the extermination of thousands of Bábis including virtually all of the leading supporters of the Báb, except One – Bahá'u'lláh, Who was providentially spared such a fate, and Who was destined to an inestimably great Mission, that would also redeem the Cause of the Báb.

Following a false accusation that Bahá'u'lláh was instrumental in an attempt on the life of the Sháh by three Bábi youth driven by their despair to avenge the martyrdom of The Báb, Bahá'u'lláh was arrested and taken to the notorious Sýáh-Chál, the “Black Pit” that is located in Tihrán not far from the then Palace of the Sháh. Sýáh-Chál is no more than a subterranean dungeon with a sole opening to the outside, by which the prisoners enter. Here Bahá'u'lláh and a few fellow believers were incarcerated. Bahá'u'lláh spent four months in that pit. Along the way to it, He was stoned, insulted, ridiculed, and stripped of His outer garment.

The dungeon in which Bahá'u'lláh and the few fellow believers were imprisoned was a dark, foul-smelling, and gloomy pit where thieves, assassins and highwaymen were put in wait for their execution.

Nevertheless, it was in this dungeon that Bahá'u'lláh received the first intimation of the Mission with which He was to be entrusted.

Bahá'u'lláh was released from that pit prison only to be stripped of all His wealth. His home and possessions were pillaged. Less than one month was given to Him to prepare for exile to a land of His choice. He

chose to go to Baghdád in Iraq, which at the time was part of the Ottoman Empire. Within less than two weeks in 1853, Bahá'u'lláh and His family, escorted by an officer of the Imperial bodyguard, travelled on horseback over the snow-covered mountains of western Persia, poorly equipped for the bitter cold of winter and the hardships of such a demanding journey that took a few days short of three months.

Bahá'u'lláh spent 10 years in Baghdád and His presence caused the revival of the Bábi Community. It also attracted the love and admiration of many people from all strata of society both of Iraq and from Persia. This quickly aroused the antagonism of the divines, Ulamá, in both countries. Their antagonism failed to check the rise of Bahá'u'lláh's fame. Finally The Sháh of Persia persuaded the Sultán of Turkey to banish Bahá'u'lláh from Baghdád. Bahá'u'lláh was requested to transfer His residence to Constantinople.

Public Declaration of His Mission

Bahá'u'lláh's enemies intended that His banishment from Baghdád would result in His humiliation. The opposite occurred. The news of His departure caused a tumult in the city. Friends and strangers, young and old, officials and merchants, the poor, the downcast and the orphans came to catch a last glimpse of the departing Exile whom they loved and admired for His wisdom and sublime example.

In April 1863, Bahá'u'lláh left His home and entered a garden that came to be known as the Garden of Ridván where He resided for twelve days while preparations were made for the Journey to Constantinople. These twelve days of April 1863 have since that year come to be recognized as the holiest and most significant of all Bahá'í Festivals. Bahá'u'lláh chose to announce publicly His prophetic Mission during those twelve days – a Mission, the first intimations of which He had received in the gloomy prison pit of Síyáh-Chál.

The second Trumpet blast was thus sounded: *“Then shall there be another blast on it, and lo! Arising they shall gaze around them...”*¹⁶

Exile to Adrianople

In Constantinople, the avowed opponents of Bahá'u'lláh had expected to lure Him into a world of favour searching and consequently of intrigue. This was very apparent from the very first days of His arrival in Constantinople. But Bahá'u'lláh remained aloof above the habits and motives of the divines and ministers of that metropolis and was immune to such abasement. Recognizing His refusal to participate, within four months of His arrival in that city an edict banishing Him to Adrianople (now Edirne – lying in European Turkey) was issued by Sultán ‘Abdu’l-‘Azíz – the Sultán of Turkey at the time. On the same day Bahá'u'lláh revealed a Tablet to the Sultán admonishing him for his unjustness towards his subjects. This Tablet opened the initial phase of Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation to the Kings and Rulers of the world, which continued during His exile in Adrianople and later in ‘Akká.

In Adrianople Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Súratu'l Mulúk or Tablet of the Kings.

*“O Kings of the Earth!” Bahá'u'lláh invited them, “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’...”*¹⁷

أَنْ يَا مُلُوكَ الْأَرْضِ اسْمَعُوا نِدَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ الْمُثْمِرَةِ
الْمَرْفُوعَةِ الَّتِي نَبَتَتْ عَلَى أَرْضِ كَثِيبِ الْحَمْرَاءِ بَرِّيَةِ الْقُدْسِ
وَتَعْنُ بِأَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْمُقْتَدِرُ الْحَكِيمُ...
(سورة الملوك ص ١٠٧)

¹⁶ Súrih xxxix, “The Troops”, vv. 68-6

¹⁷ Summons of the Lord of Hosts p. 185

In that same Tablet Bahá'u'lláh addressed the kings of the East and of the West, the Sultán of Turkey and his ministers, the kings of Christendom, the French and Persian ambassadors, the Muslim leaders and the people of Constantinople, the people of Persia, and the philosophers of the world. Other weighty Tablets were revealed later to individual monarchs and leaders.

Exile to 'Akká

As the new religion developed, the citizens of Adrianople showed growing acclaim and increasing veneration for Bahá'u'lláh. The foreign consuls of the city demonstrated similar high esteem for Him. Among those who venerated Bahá'u'lláh were three successive governors posted in Adrianople.

Soon, envious individuals raised false allegations and erroneous reports, which were sent to the Sultán. The Sultán finally decided to exile Bahá'u'lláh to distant 'Akká in Palestine in an attempt to destroy the Faith Bahá'u'lláh was promoting. Foreign consuls, deeply impressed by Bahá'u'lláh and His Teachings, and alarmed by the decision of the government, offered to intervene, but Bahá'u'lláh declined all assistance.

On 12 August 1868, Bahá'u'lláh and His family together with some seventy exiles left Adrianople forced to reside in the Ottoman prison city of 'Akká, where they arrived on the 31st. August 1868.

Having been led to believe that Bahá'u'lláh and those who were with Him were criminals of the worst sort, the citizens and officials of 'Akká received them with jeers and curses. Bahá'u'lláh was put in a barren filthy room, while the others were crowded into another, the floor of which was covered with mud.

With Bahá'u'lláh's arrival in 'Akká, began a period of bitter suffering worse than the agonies of the prison in Tíhrán. For two years and more, Bahá'u'lláh was incarcerated in that barren filthy room. So bad were His sufferings there, that He called the prison in 'Akká "*The Most Great Prison*", much worse than Síyáh-Chál subterranean dungeon of Tíhrán.

Towards the end of 1870, the prison barracks were reclaimed for military purposes. Bahá'u'lláh and His family were moved and were settled for the following seven years in a house known as the House of 'Abbúd. From this House Bahá'u'lláh issued the Epistles and Tablets to the kings and rulers of the world as well as to the religious heads. It was also here that in 1873 Al Kitabu'l Aqdas – "*The Most Holy Book*" the principle repository of Bahá'í Law – the Mother Book of the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, was revealed.

As of June 1877 and until His passing on May 29, 1892, Bahá'u'lláh transferred His residence outside 'Akká proper, to the near countryside which He loved, and where He was able to lead a somewhat easier life, albeit simple and modest.

**Why was it that Bahá'u'lláh had to suffer so much?
Why must the Manifestations of God suffer so much?**

Of the tribulations of the Apostle of God Muhammad, Bahá'u'lláh says:

"What woeful sufferings did the hand of the infidel and erring, the divines of that age and their associates, inflict upon that spiritual Essence, that most pure and holy Being! How abundant the thorns and briars which they have strewn over His path! It is evident that that wretched generation, in their wicked and satanic fancy, regarded every injury to that immortal Being as a means to the attainment of an abiding felicity; inasmuch as the recognized divines of that age, such as Abdu'llah-i-Ubayy, Abu'Amir, the hermit, Ka'b-ibn-i-Ashraf, and Nadr-ibn-i-Harith, all treated Him as an impostor, and

*pronounced Him a lunatic and a calumniator... These malicious imputations provoked the people to arise and torment Him. And how fierce that torment, if the divines of the age be its chief instigators, if they denounce Him to their followers, cast Him out from their midst, and declare Him a miscreant!"*¹⁸

In the above verses Bahá'u'lláh laments the terrible sufferings of Muhammad the Messenger of God at the hands of divines of that age. In His love for Muhammad, Bahá'u'lláh attributes to Him such profound names as *spiritual Essence, most pure and holy Being and immortal Being* – three of many other names that are mentioned in other Tablets. Bahá'u'lláh then asks the question:

*"Hath not the same befallen this Servant, and been witnessed by all?"*¹⁹

Have not the divines in Persia provoked the torments that befell *this Servant*, that is Bahá'u'lláh, as those that befell the Prophet Muhammad by the divines of Arabia?

And Bahá'u'lláh further states:

*For this reason did Muhammad cry out: "No Prophet of God hath suffered such harm as I have suffered." And in the Qur'án are recorded all the calumnies and reproaches uttered against Him, as well as all the afflictions which He suffered. Refer ye thereunto, that haply ye may be informed of that which hath befallen His Revelation. So grievous was His plight, that for a time all ceased to hold intercourse with Him and His companions. Whoever associated with Him fell a victim to the relentless cruelty of His enemies...."*²⁰

¹⁸ Bahá'u'lláh – Kitáb-i-Iqán p. 33. Translated from the original Persian.

¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh – Kitáb-i-Iqán p. 106-107. Translated from the original Persian.

²⁰ Bahá'u'lláh – Kitáb-i-Iqán p. 107. Translated from the original Persian.

In an expression of deep emotion, Bahá'u'lláh then draws the following beautiful conclusion of the triumph of the fair name of Muhammad, the Messenger of God:

*“Consider, how great is the change today! Behold, how many are the Sovereigns who bow the knee before His name... Behold how the sovereignty of Muhammad, the Messenger of God, is today apparent and manifest amongst the people.”*²¹

In spite of all the opposition, the false accusations, the torments and malignity that were heaped upon Muhammad, the Prophet and Messenger of God, today His sovereignty is unquestionable.

Bahá'u'lláh suffered similar torments as those that befell Muhammad, the Messenger of God. In addition, Bahá'u'lláh suffered exile from Tihrán to Baghdád, then to Adrianople and finally to the Holy Land, as well as the diverse imprisonments culminating in the Most Great Prison of 'Akká. Throughout these long and cruel exiles and imprisonment there were also attempts on His life; tortures and other untold afflictions. *“More grievous became our plight from day to day, nay, from hour to hour...”* was His outcry. And yet Bahá'u'lláh declares unto all the peoples of the world:

*The Ancient Beauty*²² *hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the people of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye may prosper and*

²¹ Bahá'u'lláh – Kitáb-i-Iqán p. 108. Translated from the original Persian.

²² One of the Titles of Bahá'u'lláh.

*flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they that have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities!*²³

قَدْ فُيِدَ جَمَالُ الْقَدَمِ لِإِطْلَاقِ الْعَالَمِ وَحُبْسَ فِي الْحِصْنِ الْأَعْظَمِ
لِعَنْقِ الْعَالَمِينَ وَأَخْتَارَ لِنَفْسِهِ الْأَحْزَانَ لِسُرُورِ مَنْ فِي الْأَكْوَانِ
هَذَا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ قَدْ قَبَّلْنَا الذَّلَّةَ لِعِزِّكُمْ
وَالشَّدَائِدَ لِرَخَائِكُمْ يَا مَلَأَ الْمُوَحِّدِينَ إِنَّ الَّذِي جَاءَ لِتَعْمِيرِ الْعَالَمِ
قَدْ أَسْكَنَهُ الْمُسْرِكُونَ فِي أَخْرَابِ الْبِلَادِ...
(بهاء الله - لوح إلى محمد رضا ورد في "منتخبات" ٤٥)

Moreover, in one of His prayers of meditation Bahá'u'lláh raises His Voice saying:

"Glory to Thee, O my God! But for the tribulations which are sustained in Thy path, how could Thy true lovers be recognized; and were it not for the trials which are borne for love of Thee, how could the station of such as yearn for Thee be revealed?"

سُبْحَانَكَ يَا إِلَهِي، لَوْلَا الْبَلَايَا فِي سَبِيلِكَ مِنْ أَيْنَ تَظْهَرُ مَقَامَاتُ
عَاشِقِيكَ، وَلَوْلَا الرِّزَايَا فِي حُبِّكَ بَأَيِّ شَيْءٍ تَبَيَّنُ شُؤُونَ
مُتَشَاقِقِيكَ.

(كتاب المناجاة "نسائم الرحمن" ص ٣٢)

The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh are no less than the equivalent of a hundred volumes. He wrote in Arabic and in Persian. Many of His Writings including Al Kitabu'l Aqdas – The Most Holy Book – the depository of the Laws and Ordinances, were translated to English and hundreds of other languages.

²³ Bahá'u'lláh – from a Tablet addressed to Muhammad Ridha cited in Gleanings xlv.

There is no Hadith – tradition or sayings in the Bahá'í Faith. The authentic Writings are the only reference. The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh whether in the first person or attributed to God are both considered the Words of God.

The Herald – The Báb

It would be important at this point to include some information regarding the history of the life of Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad Who became known by the name of The Báb. The Báb had a dual mission: proclaiming an independent Revelation, and announcing the imminent forthcoming of another Revelation of more far reaching implications, the Bahá'í Revelation.

In many parts of the world, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, theologians had the conviction that the year 1260 of the hegira or 1844 of the Christian era, was to witness the appearance of the long waited for Divine Manifestation: The Messiah for some, the return of Jesus for others. Still some were expecting the appearance of the Mihdi or the Absent Imám.

Mírzá 'Alí Muhammad was born in Shíráz, in the south of Persia, on the 20th of October 1819 A.D. He was a Sayyid, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. His father, a well-known merchant, died soon after His birth, and He was then placed under the care of a maternal uncle, a merchant of Shíráz, who brought Him up. In childhood, He learned to read, and received the elementary education customary for children. At the age of fifteen, He went into business, at first with His guardian, and afterward with another uncle who lived in Búshíhr a town in the South of Persia.

As a youth, He was noted for great personal beauty and charm of manner, and for exceptional piety, and nobility of character. He was unfailing in His observance of the prayers, fasts and other ordinances

of the Muslim religion, and not only obeyed the letter, but also lived in the spirit of the Prophet's teachings. He married when about twenty-two years of age. Of this marriage one son was born, who died while still an infant, in the first year of the Báb's public ministry.

On reaching His twenty-fifth year and in response to divine command, He declared, "*God the Exalted had elected Him to the station of Bábhood*". The meaning of *Bábhood* is that he was the herald to some great Person still behind the veil of glory, who was the Promised One of all the ages. The word *Báb* means Gate.

Eighteen individuals including one woman were the first spontaneous believers in the Mission of the Báb. They became His disciples whom He sent to different parts of Persia and Turkistán to spread the news of His advent. Meantime He Himself set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca and there openly declared His mission. On His return to Persia, He found that His announcement had caused great excitement. The fire of His eloquence, the wonder of His rapid and inspired writings, His extraordinary wisdom and knowledge, His courage and zeal as a reformer, aroused the greatest enthusiasm among His followers, but excited a corresponding degree of alarm and enmity among the orthodox Muslims. The Shi'is clergy vehemently denounced Him, and persuaded the Governor of Fárs to undertake the suppression of the new Faith which they, the clergy, considered a heresy. A long series of imprisonments, deportations, of examinations before tribunals, scourging and indignities for the Báb followed, ending with His martyrdom in 1850.

When the Báb declared that He was the awaited Mihdí, and with the increasing rapidity with which people of all classes eagerly responded to His teachings, the hostility that already existed was doubled. Clergy and Government in Persia rose to quench the Movement. Houses were pillaged and destroyed. Women were seized and carried off. In Tihrán, Fárs, Mázindarán, and other places great numbers of the believers were put to death. Many Bábis were beheaded, hanged, blown from the mouths of cannon and burnt or chopped to pieces.

Despite all attempts at repression, however, the movement progressed. Nay, through this very oppression the assurance of the believers increased, for thereby many of the prophecies concerning the coming of the Mihdí were literally fulfilled.

On the 9th of July, 1850, the Báb Himself, Who was then in His thirty-first year, fell a victim to the fanatical fury of His persecutors. With a devoted young follower named Áqá Muhammad 'Alí, who had passionately begged to be allowed to share His martyrdom, He was led to the old barrack square of Tabríz. About two hours before noon the two were suspended by ropes from the barrack wall. A regiment of Armenian soldiers was drawn up and received the order to fire. Promptly the volleys rang out, but when the smoke cleared, it was found that the Báb and His companion were still alive. The bullets had but severed the ropes by which they were suspended, so that they dropped to the ground unhurt. After searching, the Báb was found in a room nearby finishing certain work with one of His disciples. About noon they were suspended by ropes as before. The Armenian soldiers, who considered it a miracle that the Báb had not died from their volley of bullets, were unwilling to shoot again. Another regiment of soldiers was brought in on the scene and ordered to fire upon the Báb and His companion. This time the volleys took effect. The bodies of both victims were riddled by bullets and horribly mutilated, although their faces were almost untouched.

The Writings of the Báb were voluminous. His rapidity in composing elaborate commentaries, profound expositions or eloquent prayers was regarded as one of the proofs of His divine inspiration.

The Báb has been compared to *Yahyá (John) son of Zachariah* Who was the herald to Jesus Christ, but the station of the Báb is not only that of the herald or forerunner. The Báb was a Manifestation of God, the Founder of an independent religion, even though that religion was limited in time to a brief number of years.

The Báb counted Himself happy in enduring any affliction, if by so doing He could smooth the path, be it ever so little, for “*Him Whom God shall make manifest,*” – meaning Bahá’u’lláh, Who was, He declared, the sole source of His inspiration as well as the sole object of His love.

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Unity of Religion

When white man explored the unknown regions of the Americas, of Africa and of Asia and Australasia, he found the people there in deep ignorance compared with the European or the Middle Eastern. Yet, these people had ancient beliefs and traditions which when cleaned of the moss that time had enveloped them with, could be traced back to some form of religion. Astonishing as this may be, they all seemed to believe in a supreme unattainable entity that will manifest itself sometime in future.

God sent His Messengers to every nation. From Adam to the Báb, the Messages had two purposes: The first was to elevate the spiritual, social, moral and consequently material standards of the people to whom the Messenger was sent, and the second was to prepare those same people for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh.

Moses brought forth the nation of Israel from bondage to a great civilization, and in His Message we find reference to the forthcoming of the Messiah, of the Prophet Muhammad, and of the second coming of the Messiah, meaning Bahá'u'lláh.

The Faith that Jesus established on earth closed the chapter of paganism in Europe and parts of western Asia and replaced it by a moral civilisation based on love and fellowship. Jesus declared that He was the Messiah Whom the Children of Israel were expecting, and foretold of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad – Ahmed, the Paraclete or Redeemer, and of His return – the return of Jesus, in the Name of the Father, meaning Bahá'u'lláh.

The Message of the Prophet Muhammad gave rise to a most important civilization out of the backward nomad tribes of Arabia, and announced the imminent sounding of two trumpet blasts so close to

one another – “Verily, it will be but a single blast...”²⁴ meaning : The Báb and Bahá’u’lláh.

The consecutive appearance of the Manifestations of God and the wisdom of the changes in the Laws and Ordinances from one Revelation to another are due to the fact that every age has its own problems. What would be a remedy today may quite be inadequate for the afflictions of a coming age. In one of His Tablets, Bahá’u’lláh tells us:

Contemplate with thine inward eye the chain of successive Revelations that hath linked the Manifestation of Adam with that of the Báb. I testify before God that each one of these Manifestations hath been sent down through the operation of the Divine Will and Purpose, that each hath been the bearer of a specific Message, that each hath been entrusted with a divinely-revealed Book and been commissioned to unravel the mysteries of a mighty Tablet. The measure of the Revelation with which every one of them hath been identified had been definitely fore-ordained. This, verily, is a token of Our favour unto them, if ye be of those that comprehend this truth..²⁵

فانظر بطرف البدء فيما نظرت إلى آدم الأولى ثم من بعده
إلى أن يصل الأمر إلى على قبل نبيل قل تالله كلهم قد جاءوا
عن مشرق الأمر بكتاب و صحيفة و لوح عظيم و أوتوا كل
واحد منهم على ما قدر لهم و هذا من فضلنا عليهم إن انتم
من العارفين ...

(سورة العباد وردت في منتخبات من آثار بهاء الله ٣١)

²⁴ Súrih LXXIX, “Those Who Drag Forth”, vv. 6-14.

²⁵ Bahá’u’lláh – Súrih Al-‘ibad, Gleanings XXXI.

Thus it is seen that the Unity of religion has been vouchsafed by Almighty God. Continuity and unity of purpose is the proof of their common truth. Each Messenger testified to the Manifestations of God before Him, and heralded the Ones after Him. This took place in what is known as the Adamic Cycle of the spiritual history of mankind, which is the cycle initiated by Adam and “sealed” with the Prophet Muhammad.

Bahá'u'lláh tells us that all the Manifestations of God of the past and of the future, Himself included, should be regarded as One. However much the followers of any of the existing Faiths may extol their Messenger or the measure of Divine Revelation bestowed unto mankind through Him, the principal of the unity of the messengers of God remains inalterable. Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, affirms:

“Any variations in the splendor which each of these Manifestations of the Light of God has shed upon the world should be ascribed not to any inherent superiority involved in the essential character of any one of them, but rather to the progressive capacity, the ever-increasing spiritual receptiveness, which mankind, in its progress towards maturity, has invariably manifested.”²⁶

Bahá'u'lláh confirms that God All-Mighty will continue to send His Manifestations in future.

The Everlasting Covenant

God has established a Covenant with mankind. The primary condition within this Covenant is that God in His love and mercy will send to us the Manifestations of His Will at all times, to guide us.

²⁶ Shoghi Effendi – “World Order of Bahá'u'lláh” p. 166.

Our primary obligation within the context of The Covenant, Bahá'u'lláh tells us in the opening verses of His Most Holy Book – Al Kitab'u'l Aqdas, is this:

*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.*²⁷

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْعِبَادِ عِرْفَانَ مَشْرِقِ وَحْيِهِ وَ مَطْلَعِ
أَمْرِهِ الَّذِي كَانَ مَقَامَ نَفْسِهِ فِي عَالَمِ الْأَمْرِ وَالْخَلْقِ...
(بهاء الله - الكتاب الأقدس الفقرة ١)

In another Text we read:

*The beginning of all things is the knowledge of God, and the end of all things is strict observance of whatsoever hath been sent down from the empyrean of the Divine Will that pervadeth all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth.*²⁸

... أَوَّلُ الْأَمْرِ عِرْفَانُ اللَّهِ وَآخِرُهُ هُوَ التَّاسُّكُ بِمَا نَزَلَ مِنْ
سَمَاءِ مَشْيَيْتِهِ الْمَهِيْمَةِ عَلَى مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِينَ...
(بهاء الله - من لوح ورد في منتخبات من آثار بهاء الله ٢)

The first duty we the servants of God, are called upon to observe is the knowledge of God. This is only possible through the recognition of the Manifestation of God – *the Dayspring of the Revelation and the Fountain of the laws of God.*

Once we have attained this most sublime station, we are asked to strictly observe *whatsoever hath been sent down from the empyrean of the Divine Will.* The condition of acceptance of one's faith is

²⁷ Bahá'u'lláh – Al Kitab'u'l Aqdas ¶1

²⁸ Bahá'u'lláh – Gleanings 2

recognition and observance: recognition of the Manifestation of God and observance of the Laws and Ordinances of the Revelation.

The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh

One of the ordinances of the Bahá'í Faith is attachment to the Covenant which Bahá'u'lláh established.

Bahá'u'lláh established a Covenant with His followers in the form of a Will written and sealed by His own hand, whereby He appointed His Son 'Abdu'l-Bahá the Centre of His Covenant after His death. This Covenant safeguarded the unity amongst the Bahá'ís after His passing and will continue to maintain unity and eventually unite the whole world. It is this Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh that eliminated all possibility for the Bahá'í Community to be plagued with schism created by unauthorized interpretations.

As Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá assumed the responsibility of Head of the Bahá'í Community unto Whom all the Bahá'ís must turn, and the sole authorized interpreter of the Words of God.

In turn, 'Abdu'l-Bahá left what is known as His Will and Testament, again written and sealed by His hand. In that all-important document, 'Abdu'l-Bahá appointed His eldest grandson Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Faith unto whom all the Bahá'ís must turn after 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the sole interpreter of the Writings after Him. The Will and Testament further outlined the functions of the constituent institutions of the Bahá'í Administrative Order that in turn, and amongst its multiple aims and purposes, ensured the unity of the Bahá'ís world wide, and will continue to do so for no less a period than that of the Dispensation of the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that the next messenger from God will come after 1,000 years.

'Abdu'l-Bahá – The Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant

He is the eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh, named 'Abdu'l-Bahá, born the same night that the Báb first declared His Mission to Mullá Husayn Bushru'i, May 23rd 1844. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was hardly nine years old when he witnessed His Father emerge from the Síyáh-Chál dungeon in chains during a one hour recreation. Within weeks He was part of the exiled Family to Iraq, and again to Constantinople, Adrianople and finally to 'Akká. The sufferings and tribulations that Bahá'u'lláh endured, were shared by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and when Bahá'u'lláh passed away in 1892, 'Abdu'l-Bahá remained imprisoned within the Ottoman Empire in the city of 'Akká. Not until 1908, following the uprising of the Young Turks who freed all the political and religious prisoners throughout the Empire was 'Abdu'l-Bahá able to breathe freedom.

No sooner had Abdu'l-Bahá obtained His freedom than he entrusted the remains of the Báb to a tomb inside a shrine on Mount Carmel, in Haifa (Palestine at the time). He then undertook a more than three-year travelling enterprise that took Him to Egypt, to Europe and to North America, promulgating the teachings of the Faith established by His august Father in a great number of metropolis, cities, Temples, Churches, amongst associations and circles of thought and communities of different origins. *"Unity of Mankind"* was His clarion call. For the first time in history, the truth of the Revelation of the Prophet Muhammad was clearly expounded to Jewish and Christian congregations in their respective houses of worship wherever 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke.

Unity of Mankind

The pivot principle around which revolve the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that of the Oneness of mankind. Here is one instance where Bahá'u'lláh speaks about the Unity of Mankind:

*The Tabernacle of Unity has been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers... Ye are the fruit of one tree and the leaves of one branch...*²⁹

قَدْ ارْتَفَعَتْ خَيْمَةُ الْاِتِّحَادِ لَا يَنْظُرُ بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ كَنْظَرَةِ
غَرِيبٍ إِلَى غَرِيبٍ. كُلُّكُمْ أَثْمَارُ شَجَرَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَأُورَاقُ غُصْنٍ
وَاحِدٍ.

(بهاء الله - لوح مقصود)

This means that while the fruits of one tree may differ from one another in, say, size, looks or colour they still belong, one and all, to that one tree. In like manner, the leaves of one mighty branch are each different from one another, yet they all belong to the same origin: the mighty branch. Humanity is also composed of different people: different in emotion, physical aspect, talents, capacities, yet they all belong to one root, which is the human family.

*O children of men!" Bahá'u'lláh calls to our attention a warning from God, "Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul..."*³⁰

يَا أَبْنَاءَ الْإِنْسَانِ هَلْ عَرَفْتُمْ لِمَ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ وَاحِدٍ؛ لِيَلَّا
يَفْتَخَرَ أَحَدٌ عَلَى أَحَدٍ. وَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي كُلِّ حِينٍ فِي خَلْقِ أَنْفُسِكُمْ؛
إِذَا يَنْبَغِي كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَاحِدٍ أَنْ تَكُونُوا كَنَفْسٍ
وَاحِدَةٍ...

(بهاء الله - من الكلمات المكنونة عربي رقم ٦٨)

Unity of mankind, Bahá'ís are fully conscious, does not mean ignoring or attempting to suppress the diversity that exists among the people

²⁹ Bahá'u'lláh – Tablet of Maqṣud.

³⁰ Bahá'u'lláh – “The Hidden Words” # 68.

of the world. People are different in ethnic origins. They may have different thoughts and habits, and certainly different languages and traditions. Rather than considering these differences as a cause of estrangement, they should be looked upon as the beautifying touches to the spirit, enhancing unity in diversity and a source of enrichment amongst the different communities. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the son of Bahá’u’lláh, explains this phenomenon in the following inspiring words:

*Consider the flowers of a garden. Though differing in kind, colour, form and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm and addeth unto their beauty... In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas and convictions of the children of men.*³¹

The concept of the Oneness of Mankind was not excluded from the previous Revelations, but Bahá’u’lláh has made it the central purpose of His Teachings. This is why Bahá’ís today believe that world unity is not only possible but imperative and even inevitable to establish.

Here is what Bahá’u’lláh proclaimed:

“O ye children of men, the fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race... This is the straight path, the fixed and immovable foundation. Whatsoever is raised on this

³¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá - cited by Shoghi Effendi – “World Order of Bahá’u’lláh” p. 42.

foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength, nor will the revolution of countless centuries undermine its structure.”³²

يَا أَبْنَاءَ الْإِنْسَانِ إِنَّ دِينَ اللَّهِ وَمَذْهَبَهُ لِأَجَلٍ حَفِظَ الْعَالَمَ وَاتَّحَادِهِ
وَاتِّفَاقِهِ وَمَحَبَّتِهِ وَأَلْفَتِهِ... هَذَا هُوَ الصِّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيمُ وَالْأَسْ
الْمُحْكَمُ الْمَتِينُ. كُلُّ مَا يُشَادُّ عَلَى هَذَا الْأَسَاسِ لَا تَزْعُرُهُ
حَوَادِثُ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يُقَوِّضُ أَرْكَانَهُ مَدَى الزَّمَانِ...
(بِهَاءِ اللَّهِ - لوح مقصود)

The implications of the principle of Oneness of Mankind are not limited to individual conviction. In fact, individual conviction leads unrelentingly to the complete reversal of the present social consciousness. This in turn, will change the present unstable relationships between different peoples, between states and nations and ultimately the world consciousness itself, giving rise to an organically unified world.

It may certainly be no exaggeration to say that today, the only people amongst whom Oneness of Mankind is a reality are the Bahá'ís. There are Bahá'ís in every land of the five continents and islands of the seven seas, from over 2000 ethnic origins, of all social, material and educational strata, of different religious backgrounds, of all ages and of both sexes. Yet, notwithstanding this huge diversity, they are the only worldwide community that is united and assiduously labouring for the betterment of the whole world through a systematic program, unselfish action and high morality. Bahá'ís in every country today cooperate to bring moral education to children, empowerment programs for junior youth, and capacity building for adults. Again, this is being done universally and following the same principle whether it be in Alaska or New-Zealand, the Philippines or Martinique, north or south Africa.

³² Bahá'u'lláh – Lawh Maqṣud – Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh p. 167.

To raise the standard of Oneness of Mankind worldwide is no simple task. The Bahá'ís therefore are hopeful to see many more good intentioned souls join them in their efforts.

*"That one indeed is a man who today dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race"*³³

are the words revealed by the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh.

*"Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth."*³⁴

*"He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful," Bahá'u'lláh further wrote, "cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. Haste ye to win your share of God's good grace and mercy in this Day that eclipseth all other created days."*³⁵

فَالْإِنْسَانُ الْيَوْمَ هُوَ الَّذِي قَامَ عَلَى خِدْمَةِ جَمِيعِ مَنْ عَلَى
الْأَرْضِ.^{٣٦}
طُوبَى لِمَنْ أَصْبَحَ قَائِمًا عَلَى خِدْمَةِ الْأُمَمِ.

(بهاء الله - لوح مقصود، مجموعة ألواح ص ١٥٤)

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ الرَّحْمَنُ يُحِبُّ أَنْ يَرَى مِنْ فِي الْأَكْوَانِ كُنْفَسَ وَاحِدَةٍ
وهيكل واحد أن اغتنموا فضل الله ورحمته في تلك الأيام
التي ما رأت عين الإبداع شبهها...

(بهاء الله - من لوح إلى ملك باريس، كتاب مبين ص ٥٦)

³³ Bahá'u'lláh – Lawh Maqṣud – Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh p. 167

³⁴ Bahá'u'lláh – Lawh Maqṣud – Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh p. 166

³⁵ Bahá'u'lláh – Tablet to Napoleon III

³⁶ This excerpt is a translation from the original Persian

World Unity

*So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth*³⁷

Bahá'u'lláh declared that a new spirit is pervading the world through His Revelation. This new spirit is that of Unity. Bahá'u'lláh confirmed that there will be radical changes on earth in order to establish this Unity.

A cursory look at the history of mankind, and specifically since the nineteenth century, cannot miss recognizing the inexorable onward march of humanity towards “World Unity” - the ultimate stage of its evolution.

And Shoghi Effendi Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith explains:

*“Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching... Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end...”*³⁸

Having gone through the stages of unity of family, of tribe, of city-state and nation, the next stage that human society is bound to go to is world unity. Human society is not static, and change – that omnipresent constant, is bound to make it move forward to its next stage of evolution.

Shoghi Effendi provides the following explanation to this development.

³⁷ Bahá'u'lláh – Epistle to Sheikh Muhammad Taqi Mujtahed, p. 14

³⁸ Shoghi Effendi – “World Order of Bahá'u'lláh” p. 202.

“That mystic, all-pervasive, yet indefinable change, which we associate with the stage of maturity inevitable in the life of the individual and the development of the fruit must... have its counterpart in the evolution of the organization of human society. A similar stage must sooner or later be attained in the collective life of mankind...”³⁹

What the above citation implies is that in as much as the human being goes through different stages of growth from childhood to maturity so it is with *the evolution of the organization of human society or collective life of mankind.*

Human society, being a living organism, will necessarily go through the same changes in its development, as does a fruit or an individual, and is bound to get to the stage of maturity.

The present turmoil that is seen afflicting every aspect of human life worldwide finds its explained in this excerpt of Shoghi Effendi:

“The long ages of infancy and childhood, through which the human race had to pass, have receded into the background. Humanity is now experiencing the commotions invariably associated with the most turbulent stage of its evolution, the stage of adolescence, when the impetuosity of youth and its vehemence reach their climax, and must gradually be superseded by the calmness, the wisdom, and the maturity that characterize the stage of manhood. Then will the human race reach that stature of ripeness which will enable it to acquire all the powers and capacities upon which its ultimate development must depend.”⁴⁰

This sublime notion – World Unity, is probably one of the most controversial subjects under discussion today. How on earth, the

³⁹ Shoghi Effendi – “World Order of Bahá’u’lláh” p. 163.

⁴⁰ Shoghi Effendi – “World Order of Bahá’u’lláh” p. 202.

doubters may ask, could anyone expect to see unity of the world emerge from the welter of the present condition of the world?

When the atom bomb was dropped on two towns in Japan in 1945, a terrible sense of horror struck every soul on earth, and the notion of “the time of the end of the world is come” was on most peoples’ mind and tongue. As a young Bahá’í at the time, I found it very difficult to explain to my schoolmates that according to the Bahá’í Teachings peace and unity will be established on earth.

Today, not far from three quarters of a century later, the changes that took place have brought the peoples and countries of the world much nearer to each other and much more concerned, whether in a brotherly or in a competitive spirit, about one another. When I tell my friends today that according to the Bahá’í Teachings peace and unity will be established on earth, their reaction is that of hope, though they harbour some doubt as to the realization of what they call, a dream.

It is unlikely today that a world war can break out, although local or regional conflicts seem to multiply and continue to exist. I do not pretend to say that world conditions are changing to the better. There is no way one can fathom what will happen tomorrow. Future catastrophes may be worse than any we are able to imagine.

A Commonwealth has replaced the greatest empire in history, the British Empire. Countries that once formed a vast stretch of colonies of one European nation, France, have nurtured a social relationship under the language influence as “Francophone Countries”. Europe, where wars raged for hundreds of years amongst its nations, has set up the European Union.

These three examples show clearly the direction in which the world as a whole is moving. We shall have to take a holistic view of the world in order to appreciate the fact that we are moving towards world unity.

Let us imagine what the world will look like when a federation of the countries of the American continent unite with the European Union countries of Europe. Then in a further stage, the South East Asia countries join the American European union, and so on until all countries join hands to form a united One World.

The gathering together of nations in a manner as simulated above, is not simply wishful thinking, it is a fact that has its foundation in the current process of history. Things may not develop exactly as in the simulation given above, but the ultimate gathering together of nations is inevitable, and peace and prosperity on earth cannot but follow.

The “*most turbulent stage*” of humanity’s evolution that we are living in today will soon be over, and mankind will experience a new age when “*the latent energies with which*” the Word revealed by Bahá’u’lláh “*had been endowed*” will have “*manifested themselves in the plenitude of their glory.*” The new age that mankind is due to experience will fulfil the promise of the Qur’án, the Evangel and the Old Testament.

The need for a New World Order

*The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing Order appeareth to be lamentably defective.*⁴¹

Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation is destined to establish a world civilization where peace, unity and justice will reign. This, as I understand it, is Bahá’u’lláh’s claim. Some 160 years ago, however, Bahá’u’lláh warned of signs of *impending convulsions and chaos* that were already there at the time of His announcement. Bahá’u’lláh further explained that the *prevailing Order* in the world was *defective*.

⁴¹ Bahá’u’lláh – cited in World Order of Bahá’u’lláh p. 162

Since that announcement, the *convulsions and chaos* have been increasing in intensity worldwide and have covered all aspects of human life and almost all domains of human endeavour.

The 19th century was a remarkable century, which I believe, will be hailed in future as the turning point in the known history of mankind.

The first Trumpet blast, the Announcement of The Báb, was sounded in the year 1260 Hegira or 1844 CE in the 19th Century. The second Trumpet blast, the Great Announcement of Bahá'u'lláh took place in 1863 CE in the 19th Century.

The principle of Unity of mankind as being the Will of All-Mighty God for this age, was announced by Bahá'u'lláh in the 19th Century; equality of men and women was declared and established for the first time in history in the 19th Century. Slavery was first abolished in the 19th Century. Inventions tending to mechanize transport including the bicycle, the 4-wheeled automobile, the propeller, the internal combustion and diesel engines, the steam locomotive, the navigation canals, the steamship and manned glider, came into existence in the 19th Century. Gas lighting, the electric light bulb, traffic lights and the miner's lamp provided light at demand to humanity in the 19th Century. Communications at a distance by Morse, by phone and by facsimile were also invented in the 19th Century. These were not all the inventions of the 19th Century, but these were the first inventions that brought human beings nearer to each other more rapidly than ever before.

Negative changes have also started to take place in the 19th Century, in all the institutions of the world, whether it be in the collapse and deterioration of religious institutions, the failure of political and economic structures, the tottering grapple with the onslaught of moral downfall and the thwarting of many a step taken to ensure collective security. The 19th Century saw the birth of many social and economic theories and principles that played leading roles in changing society, not least of these the theory of materialism.

People are bewildered today, and are at a loss for direction. Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, describes what is going on in the world today: *"Universal Fermentation."* This Universal Fermentation is a series of historical, political, social and spiritual processes that are: *purging and reshaping humanity in anticipation of the Day when the wholeness of the human race will have been recognized and its unity established.*"⁴²

Dramatic changes in governance have also taken place. Following the setbacks and upheavals that caused the elimination of autocracy, aristocracy and theocracy; after the contumelious downfall of communism and the tottering of what is left of socialism; a consensus seemed to have gathered worldwide around democracy as the best possible governing system. Many, if not most, people consider democracy as the best available system that man developed until now in the field of governance.

However, democracy has failed to check the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the spread of crime, the cancer of money in politics, the ongoing world climate disaster, the border squabbles and generally the inability to address complex problems. Politicians typically don't plan beyond the next election, let alone planning today for years to come. For how long, one may justly ask, will the world support democracy's institutionalisation of its spirit of competitiveness and egoism in society? The upholders of democracy had experienced ease in convincing people of its efficacy sometime ago, but find it very difficult to convince its doubters of today.

Of course, the failure of democracy is not the only reason for all the woes of humanity. In spite of all this, the writer of these lines confirms his conviction that democracy is the best that man has conceived in the matter of governance.

⁴² Shoghi Effendi – "World Order of Bahá'u'lláh" p. 170.

If that is the sombre present condition of democracy, what shall we say of currency speculation, transnational capital flight, the rising and unregulated power of multinational corporations, the irresponsible attitude of global financial institutions and trade unions, to number a few of the most conspicuous ills of society?

The religious and social orders in the world today are not faring any better than the order of governance, and suffer from disunity and decay. Conflicts and plotting between orders is predominant. Conflict and plotting within the same order is common.

This is why Bahá'u'lláh warned the people of the world more than one and half century ago, that *convulsions and chaos* will increase in the world because the *prevailing order is defective*.

That is why a new world Order is necessary to replace the *defective prevailing order*, which includes all governance, religious and social orders.

“Soon,” Bahá'u'lláh's own words proclaim... “*will the present day Order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth and is the Knower of things unseen.*” “By Myself,” He solemnly asserts, “*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. He, verily, is powerful over all things.*”

عن قريب سوف يُطَوَّى بساط العالم ويبسط بساط آخر^{٤٣}؛ إنّ
ربّك لهو الحقّ علّام الغيوب

(بهاء الله - لوح إلى غلام حسين)

لعمري سوف نطوي الدّنيا وما فيها ونبسط بساطاً آخر إنّّه
كان على كلّ شيء قديرًا

(كتاب مبين ص ٦٠٣)

⁴³ End of section translated from Persian.

The New World Order

This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendours of the Light that shineth from the face of thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful. 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.”⁴⁴

هَذَا يَوْمٌ لَا يُرَى فِيهِ إِلَّا الْأَنْوَارُ الَّتِي أَشْرَقَتْ وَلَا حَتُّ مِنْ أَفُقٍ
وَجْهِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْكَرِيمِ قَدْ قَبَضْنَا الْأَرْوَاحَ بِسُلْطَانِ الْقُدْرَةِ
وَالْإِقْتِدَارِ وَشَرَعْنَا فِي خَلْقٍ بَدِيعٍ فَضْلاً مِنْ عِنْدِنَا وَأَنَا الْفَضْلُ
الْقَدِيمُ

(بهاء الله - لوح الرضوان)

The present convulsions and chaos will dissipate. The turmoil that is accompanying humanity during its period of “adolescence” – of transition, will soon give way to “humanity’s coming of age” and The New World Order will be established.

Here is how the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith envisioned the world organization once this period of transition is over:

The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá’u’lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded. This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members

⁴⁴ Bahá’u’lláh – Tablet of Ridván.

will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity. A world metropolis will act as the nerve center of a world civilization, the focus towards which the unifying forces of life will converge and from which its energizing influences will radiate. A world language will either be invented or chosen from among the existing languages and will be taught in the schools of all the federated nations as an auxiliary to their mother tongue. A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind. In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will cooperate, and will harmoniously develop. The press will, under such a system, while giving full scope to the expression of the diversified views and convictions of mankind, cease to be mischievously manipulated by vested interests, whether private or public, and will be liberated from the influence of contending governments and peoples. The economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated.

National rivalries, hatreds, and intrigues will cease, and racial animosity and prejudice will be replaced by racial amity, understanding and cooperation. The causes of religious strife will be permanently removed, economic barriers and restrictions will be completely abolished, and the inordinate distinction between classes will be obliterated. Destitution on the one hand, and gross accumulation of ownership on the other, will disappear. The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race.

A world federal system, ruling the whole earth and exercising unchallengeable authority over its unimaginably vast resources, blending and embodying the ideals of both the East and the West, liberated from the curse of war and its miseries, and bent on the exploitation of all the available sources of energy on the surface of the planet, a system in which Force is made the servant of Justice, whose life is sustained by its universal recognition of one God and by its allegiance to one common Revelation—such is the goal towards which humanity, impelled by the unifying forces of life, is moving.

How, one may question, will such a sublime concept as announced by Bahá'u'lláh, of a world where all its peoples are united in a universal recognition of one God and allegiance to one common Revelation come around and be established?

(Question # 1)

Where can we see that sublime concept developing in practice in order to dissipate some of the doubt: is there an example?

(Question # 2)

I would like to share with you, dear Reader, what I understand from some Bahá'í literature to be an answer to the first question.

Uncontrollable events are taking place in the world, catastrophic in aspect and in impact, yet they serve to tear down the barriers that stand in the way of unity of the nations. These events which are found everywhere on earth are beyond the control of man.

Let us take an example or two from history.

Following the upheaval of the Napoleonic wars in the 19th Century, the European Empires at that time obstructed the efforts to establish some sort of security alliance for Europe. It took one of the most grievous catastrophes the world had known up till then, that which took place in the second decade of the twentieth century - the devastating World War I, to set up The League of Nations. The League was the first permanent international security organization the world had ever known. *"For the first time in the history of humanity",* wrote Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith regarding the establishment of the League of Nations, *"the system of collective security, foreshadowed by Bahá'u'lláh and explained by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, has been seriously envisaged, discussed and tested."*⁴⁵

An organisation for international security is the basis for world peace, which in turn is indispensable for a new world order. Simply put, the catastrophic World War I tore down one of the most important

⁴⁵ Shoghi Effendi – "World Order of Bahá'u'lláh" p. 192.

barriers that obstructed the way towards the eventual establishment of the New World Order.

World War II, many times more catastrophic, brought down the barriers of colonization, of resistance to freedom of peoples and to the promulgation of human rights. It gave the world an international United Nations Organization that is promising and growing. It gave the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All this and much more, is paving the way for the New World Order.

If one looks perceptively into each of the catastrophic events with far destructive effects the world has experienced over the past 150 years, one would see that each one of them has in some way or other, either brought down a barrier between people, or brought peoples nearer to one another. The forces of destruction are driving mankind with increasing momentum towards its coming together. It is unfortunate, though, that the world has to pay a high price in suffering in order to attain its salvation.

Next to the destructive forces that, with steel and fire, are tearing down the barriers, are the forces resulting from the activities of the civil society associations and forums that advocate principles in harmony with the spirit of world unity. Timid both in number and in action only a few decades ago, they are capable today of provoking demonstrations with millions of citizens turning up. Civil society movements will eventually gather enough force that will conspicuously help in obliging the rulers of the world to sit together and for the *"Cause of Universal Peace... conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite."*⁴⁶

Parallel to the action of these two forces there is the spiritual force resulting from the action of the Bahá'ís. Bahá'ís conduct their activity on a completely different plain, and worldwide as no association or forum are anywhere near to attain. The Bahá'ís are occupied with the transformation of society and the building of a new civilization.

⁴⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – “The Secret of Divine Civilization” p. 64.

Humanity is *impelled* towards its ultimate goal by these three *unifying forces of life*⁴⁷ – one destructive, the second objective and the third integrative.

The following excerpt from a Message from the Universal House of Justice, the Supreme Governing Body of the Bahá'í Faith, may explain in what spirit we should serve our fellow beings:

*The Bahá'í Faith, like all other Divine Religions, is fundamentally mystic in character. Its chief goal is the development of the individual and society, through acquisition of spiritual virtues and powers. It is the soul of man that has first to be fed. And this spiritual nourishment prayer can best provide. Laws and institutions, as viewed by Bahá'u'lláh, can become really effective only when our inner spiritual life has been perfected and transformed. Otherwise religion will degenerate into a mere organization, and become a dead thing.*⁴⁸

As to question # 2, I feel that the answer may be found in the following excerpt of The Universal House of Justice, The Supreme Governing Body of the Bahá'í Faith:

Central to Bahá'u'lláh's mission, therefore, has been the creation of a global community that would reflect the oneness of humankind. The ultimate testimony that the Bahá'í community can summon in vindication of His mission is the example of unity that His teachings have produced. As it enters the twenty-first century, the Bahá'í Cause is a phenomenon unlike anything else the world has seen. After decades of effort... the Bahá'í community comprises several million people representative of virtually every ethnic, cultural, social and religious background on earth, administering their collective affairs without the intervention of a clergy, through democratically elected institutions. The many thousands of localities in which it has put down its roots are to be found in every country, territory and significant

island group, from the Arctic to Tierra del Fuego, from Africa to the Pacific. The assertion that this community may today already constitute the most diverse and geographically widespread of any similarly organized body of people on the planet is unlikely to be challenged by one familiar with the evidence.

The achievement calls out for understanding. Conventional explanations -- access to wealth, the patronage of powerful political interests, invocations of the occult or aggressive programmes of proselytism that instil fear of Divine wrath -- none have played any role in the events involved. Adherents of the Faith have achieved a sense of identity as members of a single human race, an identity that shapes the purpose of their lives and that, clearly, is not the expression of any intrinsic moral superiority on their own part... A fair-minded observer is compelled to entertain at least the possibility that the phenomenon may represent the operation of influences entirely different in nature from the familiar ones -- influences that can properly be described only as spiritual -- capable of eliciting extraordinary feats of sacrifice and understanding from ordinary people of every background.⁴⁹

The Building of World Civilization

As we enter the third millennium with a world contracted through technology to the like of a village, we need a civilization that is adaptable to the present day, a new civilization that involves everyone on earth. A new spiritual consciousness of the Oneness of Mankind needs to be awakened in every heart.

⁴⁷ See page 141 and 143

⁴⁸ Universal House of Justice – To an Individual Believer dated 12 June 1984 ¶397.2c

⁴⁹ Universal House of Justice – One Common Faith pp. 56-58.

This is a huge task. Huge or minor, someone or some persons will have to take to heart the accomplishment of any task. The Bahá'ís believe that this is one task they have to actively participate in accomplishing, as they may just be the ones capable of doing so, and are actually doing so.

Since the beginning, the early believers in the Bahá'í Faith set the example in spreading the spirit of Oneness of Mankind, and thousands upon thousands gave their lives or all their belongings or both for this Cause.

Today, the Bahá'ís are embarked on a worldwide enterprise, destined to enhance action for the betterment of the world and the establishment of a hitherto never dreamt of world civilization. Bahá'ís the world over are engaged in a systematic process of moral education for children, empowerment program for junior youth, and capacity and capability building for adults. This activity is being conducted in the family, amongst neighbours, friends and colleagues; in the neighbourhood, in the cluster where they live, the town and the country. This all-encompassing activity is undertaken by the Bahá'ís whether they be individual Bahá'ís, or Bahá'í Community or Bahá'í Institution. Not only have their efforts produced breathtaking results, but also many people from other creeds and affiliations have, and increasingly so, joined the Bahá'ís in their benevolent campaign.

“Humanity’s crying needs”, wrote on 24 May 2001 The Universal House of Justice, the supreme body the Bahá'í Administrative Order, “will not be met by a struggle among competing ambitions or by protest against one or another of the countless wrongs afflicting a desperate age. It calls rather, for a fundamental change of consciousness, for a wholehearted embrace of Bahá'u'lláh’s teaching that the time has come when each human being on earth must learn to accept responsibility for the welfare of the entire human family.”

It is unto this call specifically, that this humble servant of humanity wrote this book for his English speaking Muslim brethren.

The Bahá'í Administrative Order

For the governance of the collective affairs of the Bahá'í Community world-wide, Bahá'u'lláh included in His Writings the principles of an Administrative Order. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave further authoritative explanations and additions to that Order, and Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, developed and applied its practice in the Community. Bahá'ís believe that the present Bahá'í Administrative Order is *the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind.*"⁵⁰

The Bahá'í Administrative Order comprises institutions on three levels: local, national and international.

There are no parties within the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh calls upon the members of the Bahá'í Administrative Assemblies when gathered for a meeting to:

*...consider themselves as entering the Court of the presence of God, the Exalted, the Most High... regard themselves as guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth... to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly.*⁵¹

...ويرون كأنهم يدخلون محضر الله العليّ الأعلى ويرون
مَنْ لَا يُرَى وَيَنْبَغِي لَهُمْ أَنْ يَكُونُوا أَمْنَاءَ الرَّحْمَنِ بَيْنَ الْإِمْكَانِ
ووكلاء الله لمن على الأرض كلّها ويشاوروا في مصالح

⁵⁰ Shoghi Effendi – "World Order of Bahá'u'lláh" p. 144.

⁵¹ Bahá'u'lláh – Al Kitabu'l Aqdas – The Most Holy Book # 30.

العباد لوجه الله كما يشاورون في أمورهم ويختاروا ما هو
المختار.

(بهاء الله - الكتاب الأقدس، ق ٣٠)

The members of Bahá'í Institutions are thus asked to consider the welfare of mankind as a whole, to do so for the sake of God, and to consult together with regard for the interests of others as though they were considering their own interests. This is selflessness and altruism, very different from the competitiveness and egoism we see today in governance and government.

The Bahá'í electoral system is different to that which is practiced in democracy. The absence of parties obliterates competition. Every adult member of the community is eligible to being elected and in the same time eligible to vote. Once elected the member accepts to serve in a spirit of duty towards the community. Nominations, campaigning, lobbying, and all notions of publicity or solicitation are prohibited. Voters decide to vote for those from among the community who best combine the qualities of ability, mature experience, and selfless service, relying totally on their conscious and in total freedom of choice. No one seeks election, it follows that election is not a means for any power or privilege. In fact membership in Bahá'í Institutions generally entails sacrifice in time and effort, and at times career aspirations. Alone the Assemblies take decisions, after due consultation, either unanimously or by majority vote. There are neither preconceived positions nor platforms.

Some Beliefs, Laws and Ordinances of the Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'ís believe in the One true God Who has no partner to Him. They believe that all the Prophets and Messengers of God are the same, that religion is basically one and that religion follows the rule of progressive Revelation so that no one religion can claim finality of

Divine Revelation. Bahá'ís believe that Divine Revelations shall be revealed in future.

Bahá'ís uphold, in belief and in practice, the principle of Oneness of mankind and labour to establish world unity and peace on earth. While they believe in the truth of all the previous religions, they understand that the laws and ordinances change from one religion to the other and that the laws and ordinances that were sent unto Bahá'u'lláh are the ones that God wants us to obey in this Dispensation.

The Bahá'í Laws and Ordinances are recorded in “The Most Holy Book” of Bahá'u'lláh. In obeying them, Bahá'ís do so because Bahá'u'lláh told them in The Most Holy Book:

*“Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty”*⁵²

أَنْ أَعْمَلُوا حَدُودِي حُبًّا لِّجَمَالِي

(بهاء الله - الكتاب الأقدس الفقرة ٤)

and because they believe that these Laws and Ordinances are what Bahá'u'lláh designated as *“the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures.”*⁵³

يَا مَلَأِ الْأَرْضَ أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ أَوْامِرِي سِرَجُ عَنَائِتِي
بَيْنَ عِبَادِي وَمِفَاتِيحِ رَحْمَتِي لِبَرِيَّتِي

(بهاء الله - الكتاب الأقدس الفقرة ٣)

Love is the basis of obedience and of the conviction that in doing so one is rendering a service to oneself and consequently to mankind.

⁵² Bahá'u'lláh – Al Kitabu'l Aqdas – The Most Holy Book # 4.

⁵³ Bahá'u'lláh – Al Kitabu'l Aqdas – The Most Holy Book # 3.

Prayer and fasting are prescribed from the beginning of maturity (15 years of age). Exemption is accorded *“those who are weak from illness or age (70 or more)...*

Daily obligatory prayers to be offered individually are three in number, any one of the three may be offered. The short prayer may be recited anytime between noon and before sunset. The medium prayer is to be recited three times a day in the morning, at noon and after sunset; while the long prayer may be recited anytime during the 24 hour day from sunset to sunset. Any one of the three prayers is sufficient for the day.

The Qiblih to which Bahá'ís turn during obligatory prayers is the direction of 'Akká, the resting place of Bahá'u'lláh.

Ablutions must precede the obligatory prayer.

In countries where the duration of days and nights vary considerably, clocks should be used without reference to sunset and sunrise.

Congregational prayer is forbidden except for the prayer for the dead.

The Bahá'í Law of Fasting is abstention from food and drinks from sunrise to sunset during the nineteen days that form the Bahá'í month of “Loftiness” that falls every year between the 2nd and the 20th March. The Bahá'í Calendar is a solar calendar of 19 months with 19 days in every month. An intercalary period of 4 or 5 days begins on the 26th of February every year.

Polygamy is proscribed in the Bahá'í Faith, while marriage is enjoined but not obligatory. Bahá'u'lláh counsels:

“Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is

My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves”⁵⁴

تَزَوَّجُوا يَا قَوْمَ لِيُظْهَرَ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ يَذْكُرُنِي بَيْنَ عِبَادِي هَذَا مِنْ
أَمْرِي عَلَيْكُمْ اتَّخَذُوهُ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مَعِينًا

(بهاء الله - الكتاب الأقدس الفقرة ٦٣)

Bahá'u'lláh thus ennobled the goal of marriage to that of procreation. Bahá'u'lláh further conditioned marriage with the consent of both parties as well as that of all living parents.

“Marriage is conditioned upon both parties having attained the age of maturity which is fixed at 15.”

Divorce is possible, but *“is strongly condemned.”*

Pilgrimage to the House of Bahá'u'lláh in Bagdad or to the House of the Báb in Shiráz is ordained once for those who can undertake it. This obligation was not made binding on women in order to spare them the rigours of travel.

Inheritance falls into seven categories: Children; husband or wife; father; mother; brother; sister and teacher. The “will” of the defunct, however, is to be respected.

Amongst the most important prohibitions are: Slave trading; asceticism; monasticism; priesthood; confession of sins; partaking of intoxicating drinks and the use of narcotics; gambling; arson; adultery; murder; theft; homosexuality; contention and conflict; backbiting; calumny...

Amongst the exhortations are: to associate with the followers of all religions with fellowship, to honour one's parents; to be truthful, trustworthy and faithful; to be courteous, hospitable and persevering; to be submissive to the Will of God; to be the essence of cleanliness...

⁵⁴ Bahá'u'lláh – Al Kitabu'l Aqdas – The Most Holy Book # 63.

Education of children:

An important commandment of Bahá'u'lláh is the education of children. Every father is asked to see to the instruction of his children, son and daughter. 'Abdu'l-Bahá in calling attention to this responsibility of parents to educate their children further specifies that the education of daughters is more necessary than that of sons since girls will be one day the mothers and therefore the first educators of the coming generation.

Some Principles and Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith

'Abdu'l-Bahá enumerated in many of His Tablets the main Principles and Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. Here is what I feel is a brief presentation of some of them:

Amongst the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith is the proclamation of universal peace, whereby peoples of all creeds and faiths may associate together in utmost harmony and fellowship.

The independent search after truth is one of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. This calls for freeing oneself of the limitations of imitation and the removal of the veil of false traditions. Truth is one and by independently seeking truth, divided mankind would soon find itself united in one thought.

One of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is Unity of Mankind

whereby all will feel part of the sheep of God and God their Shepherd.

Another of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh concerns religion: Religion should be the cause of unity and harmony amongst the peoples of the world.

Another of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is this: religion must be in agreement with science and reason, otherwise it will have no effect on the human heart, and it will become no more than words of tradition and imitation.

One of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh concerns prejudice: religious prejudice, racial prejudice, political prejudice, economic prejudice and national prejudice one and all are the cause of destruction of the structure of mankind. As long as prejudice exists in human society, its well-being will remain inexistent. For thousands of years of its history, humanity has seen wars. Some wars were due to religious prejudice, others due to racial prejudice or political prejudice or national prejudice. This cause of destruction of human society has to be totally abandoned.

One of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is for mankind to promulgate a universal language with which all people may be able to communicate. Such a universal language, new or from the available languages, will eliminate misunderstanding amongst the peoples of the world.

Equality of men and women is one of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Men and women may be seen as the two wings of the bird of humanity. Should one wing be weaker than the other, the bird will not be able to fly. Unless women be equal to men in acquiring the benefits of education and perfection, success and well-being of humanity will be impossible to attain.

Amongst the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is freedom, whereby humankind will cease to be the prisoner of the world of nature, where contention for existence which is the source of all affliction and disaster, will be replaced by harmony and goodwill.

One of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is this: religion is like an impregnable citadel. Should the structure of religion be unstable or weak, chaos will ensue and matters will be in disorder. Law and the punishments that come with it for misconduct and crime, is a deterrent for the visible offence, but the true moral deterrent is that of the Religion of God, for it is the deterrent of both the visible and the invisible offence.

Bahá'u'lláh extols material civilization as a source of advancement of the world of humanity, but it should be adherent to a divine civilization. Material civilization alone has produced war machinery amongst other things. When adhered to divine civilization, material civilization will be the source of all that is good. Material civilization is like the lamp and divine civilization is its light. Material civilization is like a beautiful body, while divine civilization is the spirit. Should the spirit leave the body, a corpse will be the result.

Amongst the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the need for the reign of justice and equity. Should justice and equity be wanting, world affairs will be obstructed and deficient.

A Final Word

As you read this final word, I beg to assure you, dear Reader, that I know you have a loving heart: love of God and love for humanity. All through this book, I have tried to convey the spirit of Love of God. Love of God can only be in our love for the Messengers and Prophets of God: the Manifestations of His will, and love for all mankind – His supreme creation, and in our service to humanity.

A loving heart must necessarily be good willing towards the whole world. Now as never before is the world in need of sincere well-wishers for its betterment. Maybe you will consider joining the efforts of the Bahá'ís for the betterment of the world. Wherever you may be, a Bahá'í community or individual will probably not be far away.

Sincerely,
R. Mustapha.

APPENDIX

Muhammad the Apostle of God Ahmed in the prophecy The Paraclete as announced by Christ

The word **“Paraclete”**, which is originally Greek, was pronounced by Jesus Christ in 4 instances in the Gospel according to St. John, and once by St. John in his first Epistle. However, the word **“Paraclete”** itself has been replaced in the bible by its translation in English as **“Advocate”** or **“Comforter”**. In the Arabic version of the Gospel the word **“Paraclete”** is translated into **“معين”** or **“Helper”** and in some versions it is translated into **“المُعْزِي”** or **“Redeemer”**. All these translations are correct, and in addition the word **“Paraclete”** also means **“Defender”** or **“Intercessor”**.

The meaning of the word **Ahmed**, amongst other meanings, is **“He whose actions are laudable”**, which is in the same spirit of all the other translations of the word **“Paraclete”**.

In 1John 2; 1, the word **“Paraclete”** is translated by the word **“advocate”**, and it clearly refers to Jesus Christ:

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate (‘Paraclete’) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

In the following verses of the Gospel of St. John, the word **“Paraclete”** is translated by the word **Comforter**:

John 14:16

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

In this verse it is clear that Christ is announcing the coming of **“another Comforter – ‘Paraclete’”** than himself, in other words someone who is

sent by God the Father unto humanity, who will be similar to Him an Apostle of God.

John 14:26.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

In this verse Jesus announces the forthcoming of the Holy Ghost – **Comforter** or “**Paraclete**” from God Who will remind the world of the words of Jesus Christ.

John 15:26.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

Here again Jesus confirms that the **Comforter** - “**Paraclete**” to come will testify of Him. In other words confirms the Truth of the Message of Jesus Christ.

John 16:7.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you.

This is clear in that a **Comforter** - “**Paraclete**” or Apostle is to come after Jesus.

The Revelations of John the Divine

In the Revelations 19: verses 11 – 16 we read the following:

11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True (أَمِينًا وَصَادِقًا), and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12. *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*

13. *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God (كلمة الله).*

14. *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*

15. *And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

16. *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.*

This prediction applies in all respects to Muhammad the Messenger of God. The name: **“The Word of God (كلمة الله)”** is the term used in the different Scriptures to indicate a One sent by God.

The prophecy indicates that the One to come will ride on a white horse and will be called: **“Faithful and True (الصادق الأمين)”** and history tells us that Muhammad was known amongst the Arabs by the **“Faithful and True (الصادق الأمين)”** even before He proclaimed His Mission.

The prophecy also forecasts that Muhammad will judge: **“in righteousness”**. Muhammad established a state and He governed that state, and made war to maintain the state. As for the phrase: **“and on his head were many crowns”** – this is an indication to the many countries that will fall under Islám, such as the Persians and the Byzantines and others...

The prophecy goes on to indicate some characteristics of the Messenger – **“Word of God”**, Who is to come.

The Revelation referring to Muhammad and the Báb

In the book of Revelation we read:

11:1 *And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.*

11:2 *But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.*

11:3 *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*

11:4 *These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.*

Now considering the words ***“a reed like unto a rod”***, one may notice that a **reed** (in Arabic **قصبَة**) can be transformed into a flute that a musician can play music upon when purified of its interior. The Arabs used the flute as their instrument of music. The pronouncements of Muhammad the Apostle of God, which indeed are the verses of the Holy Quran, was the music that came out of Him who was totally purified.

The statement: ***“for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months”***, means that Jerusalem will be invaded and occupied by the Followers of Muhammad – called the Gentiles, during forty two months or 1260 days – (42 x 30 = 1260).

“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth”: The “two witnesses” are The Prophet Muhammad and ‘Alí

Ibn Abi Taleb, and they shall propagate the Faith that is the music of that purified reed, for 1260 years – for every day a year. In the year 1260 of the Hegira, the Báb, the Herald to Bahá'u'lláh, declared His Mission.

The “**day**” in the above verses indicates a year as mentioned in the definition given in the following two verses in the Old Testament (In the Qur’án a day is 1000 years “... **a Day the duration of which shall be a thousand of such years as ye reckon**”. Súrih XXXII, “Adoration”, v. 5):

Ezekiel 4:6

And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.

Numbers 14:33

And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcases be wasted in the wilderness. 14:34 After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

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