

The 'Irfán Colloquia, started in 1993, have since been held annually in North America and Europe and conducted in English, Persian and German. The aim and purpose of the 'Irfán activities are to foster systematic studies of the scriptures and theology of the world religions from a Bahá'í perspective and to promote scholarly studies in the sacred writings, verities, and fundamental principles of the belief system of the Bahá'í Faith.

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LIGHTS OF 'IRFÁN

Book Fourteen



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Papers Presented at the 'Irfán
Colloquia and Seminars

Book Fourteen



Lights of 'Irfán

Studies in the Principal Bahá'í Beliefs

*Papers Presented at the
'Irfán Colloquia and Seminars*



Book Fourteen



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My holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing luster. It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been pre-ordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets. If no one be willing to direct his steps towards its shores, if every one should fail to arise and find Him, can such a failure be said to have robbed this ocean of its power or to have lessened, to any degree, its treasures? How vain, how contemptible, are the imaginations which your hearts have devised, and are still devising! O My servants! The one true God is My witness! This most great, this fathomless and surging Ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you. Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein! Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favor, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty.

— Bahá'u'lláh

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh CLIII

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Preface

Encouraging, promoting, and supporting deeper and systematic studies in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and the fundamental principles of the belief system of the Bahá'í Faith are the main aim and objective of the 'Irfán Colloquium and its publications. According to the exhortation of Bahá'u'lláh such studies are the duty of every seeker.

Know thou that he is truly learned who hath acknowledged My Revelation, and drunk from the Ocean of My knowledge. [TAB 207-208]

My holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing luster. It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been pre-ordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets. [GWB CLIII]

'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to such studies and research as divine blessing:

All blessings are divine in origin, but none can be compared with this power of intellectual investigation and research, which is an eternal gift producing fruits of unending delight. Man is ever partaking of these fruits. All other blessings are temporary; this is an everlasting possession. [PUP 50]

The 'Irfán Colloquium is also an attempt to encourage and support studies aimed at correlating Bahá'í teachings with intellectual schools of thought, the scientific perspective,

various religious traditions and current challenges in human society, as advised and strongly recommended by Shoghi Effendi:

The Cause [the Bahá'í Faith] needs more Bahá'í scholars, people who not only are devoted to it and believe in it and are anxious to tell others about it, but also who have a deep grasp of the Teachings and their significance, and who can correlate its beliefs with the current thoughts and problems of the people of the world.¹

and again:

We need Bahá'í scholars, not only people far, far more deeply aware of what our teachings really are, but also well-read and well-educated people, capable of correlating our teachings to the current thoughts of the leaders of society. We Bahá'ís should, in other words, arm our minds with knowledge in order to better demonstrate to, especially, the educated classes, the truths enshrined in our Faith. We Bahá'ís should, in other words, arm our minds with knowledge in order to better demonstrate to, especially, the educated classes, the truths enshrined in our Faith.²

'Irfán Colloquia are annually held in English, Persian and German languages in North America and Europe. *Lights of 'Irfán* is an annual publication containing a selection of the papers presented at the 'Irfán Colloquia conducted in English or articles contributed for publication.

The present volume includes an exegesis of certain concepts, terminologies, or texts, as well as presentation of new approaches in the studies of the Bahá'í Writings and the fundamental belief system of the Faith.

“Yín-yáng Cosmology and the Bahá'í Faith” is a presentation focusing on a pivotal theory in traditional Chinese thought, influencing many aspects of Chinese worldview (Weltanschauung³). The ever-increasing and expansion of the occasions of the encounter between the Chinese culture and the

Bahá'í Faith calls for better understanding of the fundamental principles or framework of the ideas dominating Chinese worldview and correlating it with the Bahá'í worldview. It is an attempt to discuss the impact of the similarities in the modern encounter between the Chinese culture and the Bahá'í Faith.

“Reason and the Bahá'í Writings” is an exploration of one of the fundamental teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. “If religion were contrary to logical reason,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says, “then it would cease to be a religion and be merely a tradition” [SAQ 7]. The paper explains what the Writings say about reason, its proper uses, and limitations. It also strives to resolve an apparent contradiction in what the Writings assert about reason. This investigation considers new concepts used in the Bahá'í Writings such as “rational God” and “rational soul.” In addition, it discusses some controversies surrounding the topic of reason in the Writings, among them cultural differences and logic and the resulting cultural politics.

“Role of Principles in the Bahá'í Faith: Principles and Fashion” is an attempt to systematically explore and answer the following questions: Are moral laws and values relative or absolute? Is living according to long-established moral values old-fashioned? How did past religions fall into ritualistic imitations? Should we be more conservative or progressive? And more generally, what do we believe in? Why do we believe in it? Should our beliefs change over time? It presents a hierarchical or tree-like model of the world including two tree structures each having nodes and links defining multiple levels of organization: a system tree (specific to general) and a type tree (general to specific).

“Celestial Fire: Bahá'u'lláh as the Messianic Theophany of the Divine Fire in Zoroastrianism” examines the mystico-messianic hermeneutics of Bahá'u'lláh in which He enunciates Himself to be the theophanic appearance of the Zoroastrian Divine Fire (*átar*) in person in light of some of the relevant material from the Gatha (the earliest Zoroastrian texts which are considered to be the Prophet's own words), and other Zoroastrian sources that point to this eschatological expectation. Also, it briefly outlines some of the relevant history of the transference of this motif of the Zoroastrian Fire

into early Greek philosophy, Judaism, Christianity, Arabic Hermetical Alchemy and Islamic philosophy.

“These Four States Conferred Upon Thee”⁴: Tetrarchic Thinking in Philosophy, Theology and Psychology” is discussed in relation to frequent references to four-fold relationships such as *“Firstness and Lastness – Inwardness and Outwardness”* [SVFV 27]; *“Motion and Stillness – Will and Purpose”* [GWB 164] and several others in Bahá'u'lláh's Writings. It attempts to show how these fourfold principles we call “tetrarchies” are a new way of thinking about humankind and the entire universe. It is significant that all these statements originated during the early periods of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation which means that they are to be understood in a mystical context. It should be noted that the word “Tetrarchy” is not mentioned, as such, in any enumeration of Bahá'u'lláh's principles, yet, it is the writer's opinion that this idea presents a new way of thinking. This concept describes a new pattern of thought, a new basic hermeneutical and ontological principle permeating the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

“Commentary on a Passage in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*” presents a brief account of the historical background of Bahá'u'lláh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* and the two external references mentioned in that passage, namely the Báb's *Qayyumu'l-Asmá'* and the Islamic prayer of Ramadan. It explores the meanings and connotations of certain expressions or terminologies in the two references such as “Crimson Arc,” “people of Bahá” as companions of that Arc, “Ism Alláh-Al-A`zam” or “Bahá” (Splendor), “Bahíyyih,” and “Abhá.”

On the occasion of the centenary of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's history-making and extensive visit to North America, and His numerous public talks there, a number of presentations made at the 'Irfán Colloquia during 2012 were related to that visit and those talks. Three articles in this volume are related to those events and some of the concepts promoted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during that visit.

“'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt: early September 1910 – 5 December 1913” is an extensive and well documented chronicle of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discontinuous sojourns in Egypt

from early September 1910 to 5 December 1913. It presents a historical and political background for His time there, provides brief descriptions of Egyptian cities and towns visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, mentions the members of the Holy Family who visited Him in Egypt, outlines public opinion reaction and the press coverage, and lists several important personages who met Him.

“Abdu'l-Bahá's Elucidation of the Concept of the Oneness of Humanity, During His Western Travels” looks at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's explanation of the central teaching of the Bahá'í Faith, (the principle of the oneness of humankind) in His talks in the West, primarily in the United States, and through His own actions.

“Collective Security: An Indispensable Requisite for A Lasting Peace” discusses the principle of collective security as adumbrated by Bahá'u'lláh and elaborated upon by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a prerequisite for a lasting peace. It explores the principles of such a collective security and the range of steps that the international community needs to take for its establishment. It also makes concrete recommendations for the application of these broad principles in a manner that is actionable and politically palatable in today's world.

Although 'Irfán Colloquium programs and publications do not include historical research and studies, as an exception and due to the unique personal connection of the author, an article related to the historical memoirs, **“Eyewitness Account of the Massacre of Bahá'ís in Nayriz – Naw Ruz 1909,”** is published in this volume.

The Elucidations section in the *Lights of 'Irfán* includes letters written by or on behalf of the Universal House of Justice or documents that have been issued by the Bahá'í World Centre concerning clarification or elaboration of specific subjects related to the aims and purposes of the 'Irfán Colloquium and its publications. In this volume, the Elucidations section includes the message of the Universal House of Justice dated 29 December 1988 on **“Individual Rights and Freedom”** addressed to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the United States of America. This message includes guidance on a number of topics of concern to Bahá'í scholars.

Appendix I is the “Bibliography of Bahá’í Writings and Their Abbreviated titles” used in the text of the papers published in this book, to facilitate referring to the sources of the quoted statements. Appendix II, “Contents of Previous Volumes of *Lights of 'Irfán*,” provides a list of the contents of previous volumes. It also shows the range, types, methodological approaches and scope of the papers that are presented and are welcome to be presented at the 'Irfán Colloquia. In addition to the papers presented at the 'Irfán Colloquia, research papers related to the main goals of the 'Irfán Colloquium are welcome to be directly submitted for publication in the *Lights of 'Irfán*.

Starting with Book Six we have made two changes to the 'Irfán Colloquia's style guide. All “authoritative” publications are cited by an abbreviation; see Appendix II, “Bibliography of the Bahá’í Writings and Their Abbreviations Used in This Book.” Words of Prophets/Manifestations, i.e. quotations from Sacred Writings, (not including statements by Shoghi Effendi or the Universal House of Justice), are italicized.

All papers published in this book, present the views and understanding of their authors. The texts of the papers are published as provided by the authors. Their writing styles and scholarly approaches are therefore different. Articles are published in this volume according to the alphabetical order of the author's surnames.

Iraj Ayman

Chicago, March 2013

¹ From the letter of 21 October 1943 to an individual believer

² From the letter of 5 July 1949 to an individual believer

³ *Weltanschauung* is a German word composed of *Welt* ('world') and *Anschaung* ('view' or 'outlook'). It is a concept fundamental to German philosophy and epistemology and refers to a *wide world perception*. Additionally, it refers to the framework of ideas and beliefs through which an individual, group or culture interprets the world and interacts with it.

⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys and Four Valleys*.

Yínyáng Cosmology and the Bahá'í Faith¹

Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew

Abstract

The yín-yáng concepts are a pivotal theory in traditional Chinese thought, influencing many aspects of Chinese civilization, government, architecture, personal relationships and ethics. The literacies of this paradigm has astounding similarities with the literacies of the Bahá'í faith, especially with regards to the origin of matter, historical perspective, gender relationships and practices related to health and healing. This paper will set out to discuss the impact of these similarities in the modern encounter between the Chinese culture and the Bahá'í Faith.

Introduction

From its earliest expression in myth, legend and verse over 3,000 years ago, the *yínyáng* (阴阳) *cosmology* has remained central to the Chinese way of viewing things and can be said to be the primal polarity in Chinese thought. Cosmology here refers to a framework of ideas and beliefs through which an individual, group or culture interprets the world and interacts with it. It is defined in this paper as a “worldview” or a network of presuppositions which may or may not be verified by the procedures of natural science but in terms of which every believer’s experience is interpreted and understood. *Yínyáng* is able to account for many natural phenomena and while the cosmic individual, Chinese or otherwise, does not “control” nature, his or her knowledge of how to “align” the human with the natural will immeasurably enlarge the ability to control his or her life processes.

Yínyáng cosmology is essentially “Chinese” as it is a concept which informs many branches of classical Chinese science and philosophy and has penetrated deeply into the popular culture and dominated the language of medicine, geomancy, and other accepted “sciences” without major challenge. The earliest Chinese characters for *yín* and *yáng* are found in inscriptions made on “oracle bones,” which are skeletal remains of various animals used in ancient Chinese divination practices as early as the 14th century BCE. Its origin is not linked to the vision of any single individual or to any single text and remains a matter of great dispute. Its earliest literary reference is in the *Yi Jíng* (Book of Changes c.700 BCE), which is constructed around sixty-four hexagrams (*gua* 卦 word), each of which is made of six parallel broken or unbroken line segments (*yao* 爻).² Here, *yín* and *yáng* are represented by broken and solid lines. Some tri-grams are more *yáng*: ☰ is heavily *yáng*, while ☷ is heavily *yín*.

Yín and *yáng*, which literally means the polar opposites of “shadow” and “light,” is often symbolized by the following symbol: *Yáng* is the white side with the black dot on it, and *yín* is the black side with the white dot on it.



The *Yín-Yáng* symbol

Like its cosmology, no one knows the person who created this symbol. What is important is to understand the textual and visual history behind this symbol. Here, a circle is drawn to uphold the idea of a timeless creation with no beginning and end. The curve of *yín* and *yáng* is a little like a kaleidoscope and therefore implies that they are mutually arising, interdependent and continuously transforming one into the other. Notice too that there are smaller circles nested within each half of the symbol and this is a reminder once again of the interdependent nature of the black/white opposites and the fact that relative existence is in constant flux and change. The smaller circles also symbolize the possibility that *yínyáng* can be divided into further *yínyáng* ad infinitum. In other words, within each *yín* and *yáng* category, another *yín* and *yáng* category can be distinguished.

The next section will further elaborate on the ideas behind this symbol though four conceptual lenses, namely, relativity, unity, complementarity, and balance.

Relativity

The first notion of *yínyáng* is its relativity, which in essence, expresses a relationship that one notion is the opposite of the other. For example, the son is both *yín* and *yáng*; *yín* because he is believed to be inferior to his father and *yáng* because he is believed to be superior as male. In other words, nothing is absolute – only more *yín* compared to something, or more *yáng* compared to something else. The *Chang Huang T'u-shu pien* (图书编), an encyclopedia edited by Zhang Huang 章潢 (1527-1608) in Ming Dynasty (Forke, *The World Conception* 214-15), describes it in the following manner:

Heaven and the sun, spring and summer, east and south are *yáng*, the earth and the moon, autumn and winter, west and north are *yín*. But during the day heaven and earth are both *yáng*, and at night they are both *yín*. In spring and summer, heaven and earth, the sun and the moon are all *yáng*, in autumn and winter they are all *yín*. In the east and the south the four seasons are

always yáng, in the west and the north they are always yín. The left hand is yáng, the right one yín, in this no change is possible, but raise both hands, then they are both yáng, and put them down, and they are both yín, and no matter whether you raise them or put them down, when they are hot they are both yáng, and when they are cold they are both yín.

Therefore, although it is possible to distinguish yín and yáng, it is impossible to separate them since they depend on each other for definition. For example, one cannot speak of temperature apart from its yín and yáng aspects – for example, dark and light, female and male, low and high, cold and hot, hotness and coldness, water and fire, etc. They are complementary forces (hidden, feminine) and seen (manifest, masculine), that combine to form a greater whole as part of a dynamic system. Each side always contains the others just as night contains day, or a mother “contains” the infant that she will, in time, give birth to. They give rise to each and in turn affect each other.

This notion of relativity as suggested throughout the *Dao-te ching* (c. 450 BC), a small (about 5,000 characters) but extraordinary work on Chinese life and culture written by one called Lao-tze (“old man” or “teacher”):

For what is and what is not beget each other;
 Difficult and easy complete each other;
 Long and short show each other;
 High and low place each other;
 Noise and sound harmonize each other;
 Before and behind follow each other.

– *Dao-te ching*, (Maurer) ch. 2.

Su Shih (苏轼 960–1279 CE), a scholar from the Sung dynasty indicates the importance of perspectives. When there is a shift in our position, the objects appear to change. Therefore, we can no longer be so naive as to assume that what we see constitutes

all there is to see. As in much Chinese classical poetry, the notion of relativity is subtly emphasized:

From the side, a whole range; from the end, a single peak:

Far, near, high, low no two parts alike. Why can't I tell the true shape of Lu Shan?

Because I myself am in the mountain.

– Watson, *Selection from a Sung Dynasty*, 101

This principle of perspective or relativity is remarkably in tune with modern science and explains why Yínyáng cosmology continues to hold relevance today.

Unity

The second characteristic to note in the discussion of the yínyáng correlates is their essential unity. Yínyáng is a “completing” rather than a “competing” theory. For example, “heads” and “tails” are different sides of the coin. The circle is like the coin and the coin contains the two halves and it is what the two sides have in common that makes them the same. In order to get heads or tails, one may flip the coin but whether the coin lands on its head or tail, in terms of the essence of the coin, the answer will always be the same. Hence, instead of the principle of duality and opposition so common in western philosophy, there are instead the theories of succession, e.g., day follows night, night follows day, small becomes big, big becomes small, slow changes to fast, fast slackens to slow, what goes up comes down and vice versa. No entity can ever be isolated from its relationship to the center of our metaphorical “coin,” and if it is detached from the center, it will cease to exist.

This center which it originates from is commonly known as the Dao (道), the life-giving power or principle. It is called *Brahman* in Hinduism, *Dharmakaya* in Buddhism, and *Dao* in Daoism. Because it transcends all concepts and categories, the Buddhist also calls it *Tathata* or Suchness. This idea may also have been borrowed by the Greek philosophers of the Ionian

School (c. 585-540 BCE) e.g., Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, who argued that orderliness could only be explained through the existence of a single unifying substance which were in control of all the parts. This also bears some similarity to the Bahá'í idea of the “first will” or what the ancient philosophers termed the “First Mind.” According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the first will is an emanation which is “not limited by time or place; it is without beginning or end – beginning and end in relation to God are one” [SAQ 203].

Zhuangzi (庄子), an influential Chinese philosopher in the 4th century BCE explains that the manifestation of this first principle in each created being is called *te* (virtue 德) and that Dao and *te* are actually of one essence, the former being the universal essence, and the latter the share of the former deposited in every individual being, what in most world religions is referred to as “God” and “the soul.” In short, Daoist philosophy is to “return to Dao,” namely to align or balance oneself to the “Primeval One,” the “Divine Intelligence,” or the “Source” of all things, which most religions call “heaven” or “the afterlife.” As Zhuangzi puts it:

In the beginning there was non-being. It had neither being nor name. The One originates from it: it has oneness but not yet physical form. When things obtain it and come into existence, that is called virtue (德) (which gives their individual character). That which is formless is divided into yín and yáng and from the beginning going on without interruption is called destiny (*ming* 命). Through movement and rest, it produces all things. When things are produced in accordance with the principle (*li* 理) there is a physical form, and when these follow their own specific principles, that is what we call “nature”. By cultivating one's nature one will return to virtue. When virtue is perfect, one will be one with the beginning. Being one with the beginning, one becomes vacuous (thus, receptive to all) and being vacuous, one becomes great. One will then be united with the sound and breath of

things. When one is united with the breath of things, one is then united with the universe. (Chan, *Sourcebook* 202)

Similarly, in Bahá'í cosmology, form and substance arise simultaneously and they are interdependent:

They have said that the potentialities (*qábiliyyát*) and the recipients of the potentialities (*maqbúlát*) came into being and were created simultaneously. For example, it has been stated that all things are composed of two elements: the “Fashioner” (*qábíl*) and the “Fashioned” (*maqbúl*). By “Fashioned” is meant substance (*mádda*) and primary matter (*huyúlá*), and by Fashioner is meant form and shape, which confines and limits the primary matter from its state of indefiniteness and freedom to the courtyard of limitation and definite form. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Makátíb* 2:35; provisional translation by Moojan Momen and quoted in Brown 26)

This “life-giving force” is given the actual name of “God” or “Creator” in prophetic religions such as Islam and Christianity. In the Bahá'í faith, it is stated that “the Word of God ... is the Cause of the entire creation, while all else besides His Word are but the creatures and the effects thereof” [TB 140]. For Zhuangzi, the Dao is the all-pervading principle that exists prior to the existence of the universe, and it is to be found in everything, no matter how trivial or base (Chuang-tzu, chapter 2).

Complementarity

Complementarity refers to the phenomena that in any yín phenomenon there is a little yáng; and in every yáng phenomenon there is a little yín. In other words, the night is never completely dark because there is always some yáng light (from the moon, stars, fireflies), and the yáng day has some darkness (shadows for instance). Yín and yáng transform each other: like an undertow in the ocean, every advance is complemented by a retreat, and every rise transforms into a fall. It is an irretrievable inter-relatedness. Thus, a seed will sprout from the earth and grow upwards towards the sky — an

intrinsically yáng movement. Then, when it reaches its full potential height, it will fall.

We see this same idea illustrated from the Ts'an-t'ung-chi³ (参同契) a classic by Wei Boyang 魏伯阳 from the Eastern Han Dynasty (147-167 AD):

Within light there is darkness, but do not try to understand that darkness.

Within darkness there is light, but do not look for that light.

Light and darkness are a pair, like the foot before and the foot behind in walking.

Each thing has its own intrinsic value and is related to everything else in function and position.

This intricate complementarity embodies a belief that everything, however small, in some sense reflects it. Just as the cells of the body imply the whole, so every part of creation implies the cosmos.

In reference to animals and vegetables, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes: "... the animal, as to its body, is made up of the same constituent elements as man" [SWAB 153]. "All the elements that are combined in man exist also in vegetables" [SAQ 258]. In addition, quoting Imam Ali, Bahá'u'lláh writes "Dost thou reckon thyself only a puny form/When within thee the universe is folded?" [SVFV 34].

The essence of this inter-relatedness reinforces once again the idea of the cosmic whole as interdependent and inseparable. A famous poem by *Zháng Zǎi* (张载, 1020-77 CE), a Neo-Confucian philosopher and cosmologist, writes:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I find an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions. (Chan, *Sourcebook* 497)

Similarly, the Bahá'í scriptures points to the significance of complementarity. Members and elements are interconnected and influence one another spiritually and materially:

This limitless universe is like the human body, all the members of which are connected and linked with one another with the greatest strength.... In the same way, the parts of this infinite universe have their members and elements connected with one another, and influence one another spiritually and materially. [SAQ 245-46]

Balance

Balance is needed if complementary opposites are to interact elegantly. A deficiency of one aspect implies an excess of the other. Thus, if yín is excessive, the yáng will be too weak. For example, summer is considered as yáng and isolated as such; it may seem “excessive,” but not so if the whole of the four seasons are taken into account. Another example is that if it is too hot, then there is not enough coolness and vice versa. If the temperature is neither too cold nor too hot, then both cold and hot aspects are mutually controlled and held in check. In human relationships as in a marriage, one can say that here the extent to which one partner can be aggressive depends on the extent to which the other is passive. They exert mutual control over each other. Thus, in a relationship in which yín and yáng are unbalanced for a long periods of time, the resulting transformation may be drastic.

Western philosophies have tended to be lopsided by glorifying one pole at the expense of the other, e.g., the mind is considered to be better than the body, and logic preferable to intuition, the yín-yáng paradigm emphasizes the equality of proportions. When Confucius (551-479 BCE) wrote *The Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸), he meant that both excess and inadequacy were extremes and that only by understanding the “Mean” and holding on to it could harmony be achieved [Doctrine of the Mean, ch. 27]. Hence for Confucius, “To go beyond is as wrong as to fall short” [Analects, 11:15]. Likewise, Bahá'u'lláh said that “In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil” [TB 69].

This notion of “balance” has significant implications on moral values and has been used to explain the relationship between good and evil. For Zhuangzi, nothing can be said to be absolutely right (e.g., the notions of right and wrong do not exist, since right is right only because of the existence of wrong).⁴ Zhuangzi believes that conflict arises when a person departs from Dao and tries to act contrary to nature. This concept of balancing both yín and yáng forces and of being at one with Dao has been used to teach morality throughout Chinese history. Lao-tzu illustrates this paradox within a set of correspondences:

On tiptoe you don't stand.
 Astride you don't walk.
 Showing yourself, you don't shine,
 Asserting yourself, you don't show,
 Boasting yourself won't get you credit.
 Vaunting yourself won't let you endure.
 In Dao, these things are called
 Tumors and dregs, which all things abhor.
 Whoever has Dao does not dwell on them.

– *Dao-te ching*, ch. 24

There is, however, a distinct difference between the concept of balance in the Chinese psyche and that of other prophetic religions with a holy book. While keeping to the mean is imperative for harmony, what exactly is the mean with regards to moral and social behavior is not made explicit, since it is the theoretical mean which is referred to. For other religionists such as the Bahá'ís, the book itself is “the unerring Balance established amongst men” [KA 22].

With these four essential characteristics of Yinyáng cosmology in hand, I will now proceed to a preliminary exploration of four areas, namely, the origin of creation, historical perspective, the relationship of man and woman, and

health and healing, and examine their remarkable relationship across time and space with the Bahá'í Faith.

The Dao of Creation

The idea of causation so central to Western thinking is almost entirely absent in Chinese thought. Indeed, no Chinese thinker who discusses the subject admits the possibility of an initial conscious act of creation since in Yínyáng cosmology things were connected, rather than caused, and things influence each other not mechanically but by a kind of induction. Hence, unlike the ancient Greeks who believed that the essence of knowledge is to grasp the “why” or to prove the existence of the primary cause, the Chinese were most interested in understanding the interrelationships. As Ronan and Needham argues:

The fundamental difference was that in Europe, there was a need to think of God as the creator or the prime mover behind the machine. Not the Chinese. To them the parts of a living body as the universe could account for the observed phenomena by a kind of will: co-operation of the component part was spontaneous, even involuntary and this alone was sufficient. There were thus two traditions of the universe and each went their separate ways. [Ronan and Needham 163]

The word “cause” implies a direct dependency with the effects in much the same way that attributes of knowledge requires the existence of objects of knowledge. Similarly, the term “Creator” assumes its counterpart, the created, in order to be comprehensible. There was therefore no reason to debate on cause and effect since this was already implied or understood. As the first chapter of the Dao-te ching reiterates:

If Dao can be Daoed, it is not Dao.

If its name can be named, it is not its name.

Has no name: precedes heaven and earth;

Has a name: mother of ten thousand things

The First Cause or the Creator is not the focus here and only a description rather than an exploration will suffice. There is an implied acceptance that it exists, and no effort is made to postulate the “hows” or “whys” of its existence. Like other world religions, the Bahá'í Faith, explicitly indicates that while God is the creator of all things, but unlike them, it elaborates that God exists, only outside the order of His creation and like the Dao, is completely unknowable:

Lauded by Thy Name, O Lord my God! I testify that Thou wast a hidden Treasure wrapped within Thine immemorial Being and an impenetrable Mystery enshrined in Thine own Essence. Wishing to reveal Thyself, Thou didst call into being the Greater and the Lesser Worlds. [PM 48-49]

In the above, the Greater and Lesser world may be interpreted as the hereafter and this world. It follows then in Bahá'í cosmology that without the limiting constraints of time and space, “the latter world hath neither beginning nor end” [TB 187], something not incomparable with Zhuangzi's notion of heaven as “one of ceaseless revolution, without beginning or end” [Fung 133].

Nevertheless, while not embroiled in the “who's who” of creation, China's ancient philosophers were keen to understand the hows. They postulated the origin of the cosmos as a series of progressions from the T'ai Chi (太极” the one great ultimate”) to the two principles Yinyáng ; the three sources; heaven, earth and humankind; and the five elements represented symbolically by wood 木, fire 火, earth 土, metal 金, and water 水.⁵ The Wu Xing (五行 “five phases”) is a fivefold conceptual scheme used in many fields of Chinese thought both past and present such as feng shui (风水, astrology, traditional Chinese medicine, music, military strategy and martial arts. While the ancient Greeks had recognized the five elements as early as the 6th century BCE, they looked on them as substances or natural qualities, unlike the Chinese which viewed them as “process” or “change.”

Interestingly, Bahá'u'lláh [TB 140] also explains the cause of creation through “two poles” — the active force and its

recipient or the “even” and the “odd,” which by their interaction generates a “heat” or life-giving energy that creates and orders the innumerable beings in the universe:

The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different.”

Bahá'u'lláh calls that which first results from the active force and its recipient prior to the generation of the world, *al-failayn*, the twin active agents, and *al-munfa'il*, the twin passive agents, and affirms that they “are indeed created through the irresistible Word of God” [TB 140]. In other tablets, He identifies them with the four elements of “fire,” “air,” “water,” and “earth,” [Brown 28, 35-36], two of which are identified as active while the other two as passive, something not quite unlike the Chinese “five phases.”

These four elements are described in the Lawh-i-Ayyi-i-Nur in the following manner:

Know ye that the first tokens that emanated from the pre-existent Cause in the worlds of creation are the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth... Then the natures (*ustuqusat*) of these four appeared: heat, moisture, cold and dryness – those same qualities that ye both reckon and know. When the elements interacted and joined with one another, two pillars became evident for each one: for fire, heat and dryness, and likewise for the remaining three in accordance with these rules, as ye are aware. By them God created all that there is in the worlds of creation, whether of the higher or lower realms. In whatsoever things these natures came into equilibrium that thing endured the passage of time, as ye behold with the sun and the moon; and in whatsoever thing these natures came not into balance, that thing passed quickly into extinction, even as ye observe to be the case with the creatures of the lower worlds. [Brown 35-36]

This quotation suggests, in synchrony with Chinese beliefs, the gradual development of life on earth.⁶ The *Yi Jing* 易经, for instance, views civilization as a systematic and progressive development from simple undifferentiated beginnings towards a complex structure, and the development of the individual as following a parallel course from ignorance to enlightenment and from an unwitting identity with Dao to knowing the Dao. There is a traditional story accounting for the gradual creation of the universe and although caution must be exercised in putting implicit faith in such traditional stories, I am including the following for its popular anecdotal value:

A period of 2,267,000 years was computed to have intervened from the beginning of heaven and earth to the year 480 BC. This period was divided into great sections, each with its own characteristics. Proceeding that period were countless ages of one unbroken black night and the profoundest gloom. The universe consisted of Breath or Gas which was a homogeneous unit without form. Out of this limitless chaos came the Great Limit, or Beginning. Then the grosser particles of the universal gas fell down and became Earth, the finer ascended and became heaven. This was the beginning of heaven and earth. These two in the course of many thousands of years produced the four great Bodies – sun, moon, planets and constellation; and the four less Bodies – water, fire, earth and stone. Then was the eternal stillness terminated. The interactions of these various bodies produced transformations, first of a simple then of a more complex kind till they finally culminated in the reproduction of man.

Though man was the most intelligent of all beings, many ages elapsed before the earliest rudiments of civilization appeared. Some of the remote ancestors of the Chinese dwelt in caves, and wandered without fixed abode till one of their numbers devised a kind of dwelling, which put an end to cave homes. People of another tribe were naked, except for a small covering of plants before and another behind. One of them was a sage who cut wood into slices so thin that they could

cover the body like fish scales and protect it from the winds and the frosts. He taught them to plait their hair so that the heaviest rain would drop off their head... [Ross 1-3]⁷

Such a mythological foundation enabled the Chinese to align relatively easily with later scientific theories such as Darwin's theory of evolution or current concept of cosmology such as those expounded by Stephen Hawking (*A Brief History of Time*) where the universe was formed from the dust of space after a "Big Bang." Abdu'l Bahá himself suggests that creation unfolds in a sequential gradual manner, tending towards higher and more complex forms:

That it is clear that original matter, which is in the embryonic state, and the mingled and composed elements which were its earliest forms, gradually grew and developed during many ages and cycles, passing from one shape and form to another, until they appeared in this perfection, this system, this organization and this establishment, though the supreme wisdom of God. [SAQ 182-83, 199]

The Dao of Historical Perspective

With relativity as a key embedded principle, it is not surprising that religious conflict has been less of an issue in Chinese culture.⁸ According to a Chinese saying, "同源共流" – the presence of great religious teachers at different periods of history may be likened to tributaries branching out from the same river – they may start off at different sites and carry different names but the water which each receives is the same. Another Chinese four-word collocation, "殊途同归," visualizes different paths towards the same destination. So too the classical quotation "致化归一，分教斯五." written by 刘勰 (Liu Xie) in c.501-502 CE indicates that while the teaching is from the same source and for the same purpose, it may develop into different branches.⁹ In addition, The Chinese language shows that "religion" has been treated synonymously as "education," and "religious personnel" as "teachers" of

particular schools. Religion is called *Chiao* (教) or “teaching” or “Education,” (育), and the founders of religions as *Chiao Tsu* (主) or “Teaching Master.”

Although there were occasional polemics and religious persecution in China's long history, the traditional attitude was generally one of tolerance rather than dogmatic discrimination and ideological opposition, as the existence of strong Buddhist and Daoist elements in Neo-Confucianism make plain. If there was persecution, it was more often a result of a struggle for power rather than a denial of the essential truth of the other's philosophical view.¹⁰ This relative tolerance is also a likely result of the perspective of time as relative, a sharp contrast to religions such as Christianity and Islam, where time “stops” around one revelatory event: the appearance of Christ and the revelation of the Quran. In other words, Chinese and Bahá'í cosmology adopts the “Eastern” view that time is cyclical with no beginning and end, a sharp contrast to “Western” dualist concept of time as historical with a start and end-point.

This sense of wholeness has always led the Chinese mind towards the sense of relativity of particulars within the universal totality, and it was not surprising that the Chinese were among of the first to envisage a future society of world brotherhood and unity. Arnold Toynbee, a philosopher of history, included Chinese civilization among the five survivors of a number of ancient and medieval civilizations that once existed.¹¹ Toynbee found that the Chinese civilization was the only one that aimed to eliminate war by establishing a world government of Great Unity (or Great Harmony) guided by the humanistic precepts of Confucius. While the search for an ideal Commonwealth has been a feature of other civilizations,¹² it was only in China that it formed part of the psyche, not just of the scholar class but also of the common people.

As early as 5th century BCE, the Chinese people have entertained the lofty thought of the “pacification of the world” (Ta-tung 天下大同), bringing to mind 'Abdu'l-Bahá's point that “[t]he most important principle of divine philosophy is the oneness of the world of humanity, the unity of mankind” [PUP 31]. Throughout the history of Chinese religion, such calls have

come from its charismatic leaders and visionary prophets. Confucius dreamt of a united world, which he termed “the Great Unity” (大同 or *ta t'ung*). He urged his disciples to strive to produce a paradise covering the whole world. His ideas have been a motivating force to many Chinese legislators, scholars, and authors, especially to reformers and revolutionaries such as Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founder of the Chinese Republic in 1912. Another influential philosopher who was fascinated with the utopian idea of the Great Unity was Mozi (墨子, 479-381 BCE), who developed a concept called “all-embracing love” (*Chien-ai* 兼爱), which emphasized a love of all humankind rather than just the love of the family. Then there was Mao Zedong, the founder-president of the Peoples' Republic of China whose aim it was to establish the “Great Harmony” (世界大同). Although Mao was much influenced by Marx and Lenin early in life, much of his philosophy is interestingly, often in tune with the principles of traditional Chinese philosophy.¹³

While this ideal, a united world characterized by world solidarity, has not been in keeping with actual practice, as reported in historical accounts of European traders and diplomats who were more often regarded as “barbarians” rather than as co-equals in the “middle kingdom,” such isolated individual accounts, most of which occurring in the time of Western imperial expansion, should be better interpreted in the context of the existing political-social situation and do not represent the essential spirit of Chinese thought.

The Dao of Man and Woman

Yín is normally characterized as slow, soft, yielding, diffuse, cold, wet, and passive; and is associated with water, earth, the moon, femininity and the night. Yáng, by contrast, is fast, hard, solid, focused, hot, dry, and aggressive; and is associated with fire, sky, the sun, masculinity and daytime. In the *Yi Jing*, there are many references to male-female relations in both verbal and nonverbal symbols. It begins with the two hexagrams, Ch'ien and K'un, which stand for heaven and earth, yáng and yín, as well as male and female. In particular, Hexagram 31, *Hsien*, (咸) with the lake above the mountain, refers to the mutual

influence and attraction between the two natural forces.¹⁴ In addition, Part II of the *Yi Jíng* also begins with reference to male and female.

Interestingly, in one of his tablets, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains the story of Adam and Eve as a metaphor for one being the "active" force and the other its "recipient." This might be said to be related to the two principles inherent in the Primal Will mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh as *al-fa'il*, the active force, and *al-munfa'il*, its recipient:

Adam signifieth that reality which is pervasive, effulgent and active, that is the manifestation of God's names and attributes, and the evidences of His mercy. Whereas Eve is that reality which is the seeker and the recipient of the force, the grace, the message and the influence – that reality which receiveth the impact of all God's Names and Attributes. [Nakhjavani 72]

In Chinese cosmology, while heaven may be spoken in some social-political interpretations as the "powerful male force" and earth as "the weak female force," the two are theoretically equal since Heaven can accomplish nothing unless Earth responds. Both men and women go through *yín* and *yáng* phases, and the personality of each man and woman is not a static entity but a dynamic phenomenon resulting from the play within masculine and feminine phenomena. *Yinyáng* are correlates which may also serve to delineate different stages in life, for example, the first half of life, led by *yáng*, is a time of differentiation, during which we understand ourselves and the world by dividing it into pieces. The second half is characterized by *yín* or the tendency to make whole, to see and experience the connections between things, to replace separateness with harmony.

However, with time this concept was modified to establish a rigid order in which men were supposed to be masculine and women feminine. The patriarchal bias of succeeding dynasties also saw *yín* and *yáng* become associated with moral values, and the correlates were subsequently used to explain the polarity of light and darkness, and good and bad. Good deeds, for instance, stemmed from the principle of *yáng*, which through the patriarchal eyeglass represented principles such as benevolence,

righteousness, propriety, wisdom and faith, and which added to the spiritual bank of merit. Conversely, bad deeds stemmed from the principles of yín and such principles as passion, anger, sorrow, likes, dislikes, desires, and violence and anything that caused punishment in the afterlife in the other world. Such an interpretation was later symbolized into script so that the character for yín (阴) meant the shady side of a slope and is associated with qualities such as cold, rest, responsiveness, passivity, darkness, interiority, downwardness and inwardness. On the other hand, the character of yáng (阳) stood for the sunny side of a slope and all that was bright and creative.

Yinyáng cosmology was also utilized to portray prototypes of the human social order e.g., “The ruler is yáng, the subject yín; the father is yáng, the son yín; the husband is yáng, the wife yín.” Later writers such as Tung Chung-shu (179-104 BCE), a major representative of the New Text School,¹⁵ taught that “Heaven has trust in the yáng but not in the yín” (Bodde 619). The patrilineal bias in Chinese culture therefore transformed the original theory by elevating the yáng principle at the expense of the yín. Not surprisingly, practices such as female infanticide and foot-binding, and sale of daughters, have shown the status of women in traditional Chinese societies to be unenviable.

The patriarchal bias to equate yín with passivity and yáng with activity is also evident in Western culture. The attempt to portray women as passive and receptive and men as active and creative goes back to Aristotle's theory of sexuality and has been used throughout the centuries as a “scientific” rationale for keeping women in a subordinate role, subservient to men. It should be noted that the symbolism of yín as passivity is not a problem; the problem is when passivity comes to be viewed as undesirable.

Interestingly, in Bahá'í scripture the feminine principle is depicted both as a passive and an active one, which creates, empowers, rears, and nourishes. It is not a fixed condition of sexuality applied to objects in the created world. Mothering images, for example, are used to suggest the divine creative principle of the word of God:

Every single letter proceeding out of the mouth of God is indeed a mother letter, and every word uttered by Him Who is the Well Spring of Divine Revelation is a mother word, and His Tablet a Mother Tablet. [GWB 142]

The mothering images are used to suggest the divine creative principle of the Word of God. Bahá'u'lláh himself identifies the feminine powers of God with the word "Fashioner":

No sooner is this resplendent word uttered, than its animating energies, stirring within all created things, give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfected. All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequences of the revelation of His name. [GWB 142]

The theme of masculine-feminine complementarity and interaction is manifested in the Tablet of Carmel.¹⁶ Drewek (1992) refers to this tablet as an instance of the divine dramatization of two forces coming together, the Ancient of Days as the Manifestation and a feminine personification of the Mountain of God, the Queen of Carmel, the site of the Manifestation's holy seat or throne. She describes a kind of courtship dance with feelings of separation and longing for reunion followed by a kind of consummation between heaven and earth. This consummation results in the appearance of "the people of Bahá." In a long-awaited reunion, the feminine principle is now ready to shift from a competitive to a complementary opposite.

Unity or harmony does not mean a merging of the two in which one is subordinated or sacrificed but rather the complementary combination of the two to produce a more aesthetically satisfying whole. It also does not mean a blurring of differences to become an undifferentiated one. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has explained the concept of complementarity in a manner reminiscent of the yín-yáng principle:

The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore if one is defective, the other will necessarily be

incomplete and perfection cannot be attained.... Just as physical accomplishment is complete with two hands, so man and woman, the two parts of the social body, must be perfect. It is not natural that either should remain undeveloped; and until both are perfected, the happiness of the human world will not be realized. [PUP 134]

This is reminiscent of Lao-tzu's teachings 2,500 years ago:

Know the masculine;
 Keep to the feminine.
 Be beneath-heaven's ravine
 To be beneath-heaven's ravine
 Is to stay with unceasing virtue
 And return to infancy

Know the white; (yáng)
 Keep to the black (yín)
 Be beneath-heaven's model.
 To be beneath-heaven's model
 Is to stay with unerring virtue
 And return to the limitless.

— *Dao-te ching*, ch. 28

It is impossible to read the above without realizing where Lao-tzu, living in a patriarchal age, placed his true priorities. Replete with yín symbols, it teaches that the sage should adopt the yín qualities. Balance is once again stressed as the essential condition for harmony. If so, the equality of status between men and women is subtly raised.¹⁷

The Dao of Health and Healing

Influenced by Yínyáng cosmology, Chinese medicine is based on the premise that the part can only be understood in relation to the whole. Unlike Western medicine where cause and effect is paramount, for the Chinese physician, it is not so much what x is causing to y but rather the relationship of x to y. A symptom therefore is not traced back to a cause but is looked at as part of a totality. If a person has a symptom, Chinese medicine wishes to discover how the symptom fits into the patient's entire bodily pattern. A person who is well or "in harmony" has no distressing symptoms and expresses mental, physical, and spiritual balance. When the person is ill, the symptom is only one part of a complete bodily imbalance that can be seen in other aspects of his or her life and behavior. Interestingly, Hippocrates (ca 460-600 BCE) also viewed the body as a balanced system, able to heal its disorders from within. This idea is also embodied in the concept of the Hindu-Buddhist karma where the effects of spirit and matter acts on one another.

In contrast, Western medicine is concerned with disease categories or agents of disease, which it isolates and tries to change, control, or destroy. The Western physician usually starts with a symptom and then searches for an underlying mechanism that may be a possible cause for a disease. There appears to be a foundational belief that a disease is a relatively well-defined self-contained phenomenon, although it may affect different parts of the body. Hence, there is a penchant for precise diagnostic frames of narrow areas so the cause may be isolated (Edward & Bouchier, *Davidson's Principles and Practice of Medicine*).

However, the basic premise for Chinese medicine rests in its orientation in finding imbalances and "righting" it. Balance or moderation is the key to the preservation of life. This makes it a more likely candidate for "the medicine of the future," as outlined by Abdu'l-Bahá:

The outer, physical causal factor in disease, however, is a disturbance in the balance, the proportionate equi-

librium of all those elements of which the human body is composed. To illustrate: the body of man is a compound of many constituent substances, each component being present in a prescribed amount, contributing to the essential equilibrium of the whole. So long as these constituents remain in their due proportion, according to the natural balance of the whole — that is, no component suffereth a change in its natural proportionate degree and balance, no component being augmented or decreased — there will be no physical cause for the incursion of disease. [Compilation 1: 465-67]

Biological rhythms go out of synchronization when there has been some violation of natural law, such as the practice of harmful habits, repression of emotions, or incorrect diet. Unbalance will result in cessation of the *ch'i* (气), a force or energy which may be equivalent to what 'Abdu'l-Bahá calls the "mind force":

The mind force — whether we call it pre-existent or contingent — doth direct and coordinate all the members of the human body, seeing to it that each part or member duly performeth its own special function. If however, there be some interruption in the power of the mind, all the members will fail to carry out their essential functions, deficiencies will appear in the body and the functioning of its members, and the power will prove ineffective. [SWAB 48]

In addition, ill health is not only a result of imbalance within parts of the body or of disharmony between the mind and the body but also something that can be brought about by an imbalance between the individual and the environment. The Yellow Emperor's Classic (黄帝内经 300 and 100 BCE), the Chinese equivalent of the Hippocratic corpus, taught that the winds and seasons have marked effects on the human body, certain physical conditions being the response to terrestrial forces. It was therefore crucial for human beings to act in accordance with the seasons so as to avoid disharmony, for each person breathes the breath of the universe, tastes its

atmosphere, and reflects its rhythm. Interestingly, modern medicine is now beginning to investigate the effect of atmospheric and meteorological conditions on the human organism, and it has been shown that the number of breaths each person draws varies according to the time of the year. Much like animals and insects, human beings also respond to a circadian rhythm of sunlight. Humans also experience annual rhythms, and these have been observed in regular changes of bodyweight as well as in seasonal hair loss.

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains this inter-dependency:

For all beings are connected together like a chain; and reciprocal help, assistance and interaction belonging to the properties of things are the causes of the existence, development and growth of created beings. It is confirmed through evidences and proofs that every being universally acts upon other beings, either absolutely or through association. [SAQ 178-79]

Since the primary objective of Chinese medicine is to restore the balance in the body and since each body is different, individualized treatment, therefore, becomes one of its distinguishing features. As in the Ayurvedic tradition, treatment is tailored to the needs of the individual so as to maximize immunity to diseases and to achieve balance. Chinese diagnostic technique does not turn up a specific disease entity or a precise cause, but, rather, renders an almost poetic, yet workable, description of the whole person. The therapy then attempts to bring the configuration into balance, to restore harmony to the individual. In an attempt to discover a pattern of imbalance or disharmony in a patient's body, all relevant information, including the symptoms as well as the patient's other general characteristics, are gathered and woven together.

The validity of individualized treatment of a patient, rather than the uniform treatment of a disease, is acknowledged by 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

The skillful physician does not give the same medicine to cure each disease and each malady, but he changes

remedies and medicines according to the different necessities of the disease and constitution. [SAQ 94]

While the Yellow Emperor's Classic dealt with acupuncture, moxibustion, and surgery as a means of restoring balance, one major way in which much healing is done is through herbal medicine or food. The Chinese have thus developed a complex classification of foods which range from cold, cooling and neutral, to warming and hot.¹⁸ Things are also classified not only directly as a yín or yáng in nature but also relative to each other. Seaweeds, for example, are yín because they are passive plants that grow in the sea. Fish might also be considered yín because they live in the sea, but compared to seaweed, they are classified as yáng because they are active animals.

The importance of food as a means of curing illnesses is verified in the Bahá'í scriptures:

When highly-skilled physicians shall fully examine this thoroughly and perseveringly, it will be clearly seen that the incursion of disease is due to a disturbance in the relative amounts of the body's component substances, and that treatment consisteth in adjusting these relative amounts, and that this can be apprehended and made possible by means of foods. [Abdu'l Baha, *Compilation* 1:465-67]

Because "medical science appears to be in its infancy" [Abdu'l Baha, *Compilation* 1:473-74], not least because many major diseases are treated by invasive surgery, Bahá'ís are meanwhile encouraged to "develop the science of medicine to such a high degree that they will heal illnesses by means of foods" [Abdu'l Baha, *Compilation* 1:468]. The Faith, however, advises their adherents to refer to qualified doctors and mainstream practices since an alternative medical paradigm is not yet in place.

Despite some promising similarities between Chinese and Bahá'í perceptions on health and healing, there is one essential difference: for the Bahá'í, while medical treatment and a skilled doctor may cure a patient, the actual healer, in reality, is God [Abdul Baha, *Compilation* 1:468]. For the Chinese, as long as the patient is healed, this is not a relevant consideration. In Chinese

medicine, there is therefore little or less emphasis on the spiritual or prayerful aspect of healing, since the existence of God is not considered a worthwhile debatable subject. The Chinese philosophers have traditionally played down the importance of metaphysics and Confucius has gone as far as to refuse to answer such questions. Their focus has been to emphasize processes, relationships and ethics, rather than the concept of the Absolute.

Conclusion

The four principles inherent in yín-yáng cosmology – relativity, unity, complementarity, and balance – have gone a long way in influencing Chinese ideas where the origin of creation, historical perspective, gender relationships, and that of health and healing are concerned. There is a striking similarity of Yínyáng principles with the tenets of the Bahá'í Faith despite its separation in time and place. In both the Chinese cosmological worldview and the Bahá'í Faith, the idea of the unknowability of the Creator and the evolutionary development of life on earth is unfolded. Yín-yáng concepts have also endowed the Chinese with a capacity to interpret events in a larger historical or geographical perspective in terms of comparative religion and world unity. Again in both worldviews, gender relationships are represented symbolically as creative forces which, when in complete balance, results in harmony and prosperity. Last but not least, yín-yáng cosmology has left its mark on Chinese medicinal theory which, corresponding to Bahá'í beliefs, is based on the premise of righting imbalances. Perhaps the most profound discovery is the fact that Yínyáng has enabled the Chinese to be focused on the processes and the relationships rather than an Absolute or a single revelatory event. This perspective is propelled by the Chinese language which does not differentiate between education and religion. In this way, both education and religion are foregrounded as the bedrock of civilization since they are indivisible. The stress on relationships or ethics puts it in profound similarity with Bahai literature which has centrally emphasize deeds over words and the fact that actions and

intentions must and should match, irrespective of our affiliations to any religious teacher.

Meanwhile, the yín-yáng paradigm remains a useful one to explain socio-political, cultural, and economic imbalances at the beginning of the new millennium. In the past, yáng has been favored over yín, and the present world seems to have reached a point of great social, ecological, moral, and spiritual imbalance. It has, for instance, favored self-assertion rather than integration, rational knowledge rather than intuitive wisdom, analysis rather than synthesis, science rather than religion, competition rather than cooperation and expansion rather than conservation. Despite being the parent of Yínyáng cosmology, present day China has not been spared from a currently disjointed view of human life, which has attempted to divorce faith from reason and which has departed from the traditional attitude of tolerance to one of dogmatic discrimination and ideological opposition. Since the last 30 years, China has shown a preference for materialism over spirituality and for individualism over the common good, an extremely yáng condition.

Nevertheless, we may take heart in the fact that yáng, having reached its peak, will eventually retreat since among the laws governing change and nature for the Chinese, the most fundamental is the one which states that “When a thing reaches one extreme, it reverts from it” (物极必反).¹⁹

“New age” ideas are gaining popularity, and there is, for instance, the rising concern with ecology, the strong interest in mysticism, the growing feminine awareness, and the rediscovery of holistic approaches to health and healing. This phenomenon was elucidated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the beginning of the 20th century, when he explained that the “new age” will be “an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more properly balanced” [*Compilations* II:99]. In other words, “while the world in the past has been ruled by force, the balance has already begun to shift and force appears to be losing its dominance to mental alertness, intuition, and service” [*ibid.*]. It is, prophetically, a new age where Yínyáng is once again in balance.

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 NOTES

- ¹ This paper was presented at the Irfan Colloquium at the Centre for Bahai Studies, Acuto Italy, July 2012.
- ² The oldest manuscript that has been found, although incomplete, dates back to the Warring States period (circa 475–221 BC) (Balkin 2002).
- ³ Harmony of difference and sameness by Ts'an-t'ung chi, as translated by Ch'an Master Shih-t'ou Hsi-ch'ien (石头希迁禅师) Retrieved on 10 October 2012 from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/zen/sandokai.htm>
- ⁴ Fung, *Chuang Tzu* 50. See also Magill, *Masterpieces of World Philosophy* 187.
- ⁵ Within Chinese medicine texts the Wu Xing are also referred to as Wu Yun (五运 wǔ yùn) or a combination of the two characters (Wu Xing-Yun) (五行) these emphasize the correspondence of five elements to five 'seasons' (four seasons plus one). Another tradition refers to the *wu xing* as *wu de* 五德, the Five Virtues (:五德始终说 五德終始說).
- ⁶ This contrasts with the literal interpretations of the Bible that the earth is only around 6,000 years old. Bahá'u'lláh states: "The learned men, that have fixed at several thousand years the life of this earth, have failed, throughout the long period of their observation, to consider either the number or the age of the other planets" (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 163).
- ⁷ See also Girardot, *Myth and Meaning*, and the *Huai-nan Tzu* (淮南子 180–122 BCE).
- ⁸ See Chew, *Brothers and Sisters*.
- ⁹ This quotation is taken from the book 《文心雕龙·宗经》. 文心雕龙 (Wenxindiaolong) is a great book on literary critique theories. 宗经 (Zongjing) is one volume of it talking about ideas of ancient saints (confucius and others).
- ¹⁰ There was a persecution in 845 AD where more than 4,600 monasteries and 40,000 smaller ones were destroyed. The issues were basically political and economic e.g. not too many able-bodied men had joined monasteries and thus became unavailable for agricultural production and army or labour conscription, or too much land belonged to Buddhist church and thus became tax exempt. Significantly, confiscated images of bronze were made into currency, those of iron into agricultural implements, those of gold and silver turned to the Treasury and images of wood, clay and stone left untouched. Hence, we may argue that the persecution was not quite anti-religious. See Chew, *Brothers and Sisters*, p. 17.
- ¹¹ The other four are the Indian civilization of Asia the Islamic civilization, the Greek Orthodox in Greece, Russia, etc. and Western Christianity in Western Europe and America. See Toynbee, *A Study of History*.

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- ¹² Plato's *Republic* is for example, a model for many. A utopian island also occurs in the Sacred History of Eluthemerus (c 300 BC).
- ¹³ See Chew, *Chinese Religion*, Chapter 7.
- ¹⁴ See Rosemont, *Explorations*. Also the *Yi Jíng*.
- ¹⁵ The New Text School is the Han Dynasty form of Confucianism which were heavily influenced by the five phases and yínyáng theory.
- ¹⁶ See Drewek, "Feminine Forms of the Divine" 18.
- ¹⁷ Similarly, while Confucius did not have much to say directly about women relationships, it must be remembered that he placed great emphasis on being humane and contributed to basic human rights with his depiction of the superior person, the development of the original concept of *jen*, ("every man can cultivate his nature into loving man and embracing all men with benevolence"), his belief in the original goodness of human beings, his teachings on love and the golden rule. Women are included in the Chinese concept of *jen* or "person."
- ¹⁸ In general, foods which grow or live in ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, seas and oceans are colder or more cooling than those which grow on land. Watercress, seaweeds, fish and all kinds of seafood, e.g. have cold or cooling natures, while carrots, leeks, eggs, chicken and red meats have warm or hot natures. The natures of all foods can be changed by the way they are cooked. If watercress is stir-fried for example, it is less cooling than when it is boiled in a soup. And when chicken is steamed it is less "heating" than when it is grilled.
- ¹⁹ See Rene Wadlow, "Are we on the threshold of a New Age?" *Light Voices*, 4, 2, 1999, 7-8. In addition, there is a common Chinese saying, which may probably be derived from Lao-tzu "returning is the motion of Dao" and "to be far is to return." The idea is that if anything develops certain extreme qualities, those qualities invariably change into their opposites.

Collective Security

An Indispensable Requisite for a Lasting Peace

Sovaida Ma'ani Ewing

Introduction

Collective security is a term that can mean different things to different people. For the purposes of this article, the term encompasses the idea of an international agreement whose sole purpose is to ensure the peace and security of all people. This agreement is to be reached by a core group of world leaders who are, in Abdu'l-Bahá's words, "high-minded" and "distinguished," "shining exemplars of devotion and determination," who arise "with firm resolve and clear vision," with the sole motive and purpose of acting for "the good and happiness of all mankind" and for the establishment of "Universal Peace" [SDC 64]. Once agreement is reached, the core group will seek to have it ratified by all nations resulting in an International covenant in which all countries universally participate. A core provision of this Covenant is that if a nation violates any of its terms thereby disturbing the peace, all the other nations will arise as one, to bring it to heel. This united response is to be carried out applying pre-determined criteria and rules arrived at and implemented collectively.

The need for this this kind of an International Covenant that is collectively enforceable is evident when we consider the state of the world today in which nations often engage in egregious acts that break the peace and do so with impunity. We need only consider the examples of nations that have illicit nuclear weapons programs in direct contravention of international laws, such as North Korea and Iran, or nations that engage in gross human rights abuses of their populations like Sudan and

Syria, or nations that openly sponsor terrorism, like Iran. The fact that these examples are allowed to continue year after year demonstrates the bankruptcy of the international security system and the reality that the international community has abdicated responsibility to do what is necessary to preserve peace in this world for too long. Unfortunately, it is the common people who have suffered as a result. Their suffering has been widespread and prolonged. It is high time for all nations to act in unity to create a system of collective security that is both strong and flexible to meet the needs of our time.

Key Elements of a Viable System of Collective Security

The most effective system of collective security is one that is able to deter nations from breaching the peace and also to effectively and swiftly restore the peace in those few instances in which it is breached.

What We Need to Minimize the Risk of a Breach of International Peace And Security

In order to forestall and prevent conflict and maintain the peace, several requirements should be met. They are as follows:

Limit the Amount and Type of Arms Every Nation Can Have

To minimize the risk that any nation will be tempted to breach the peace, the amount [SDC 64] and type of arms each nation may possess must be restricted. First, all nations must agree, as matter of principle, to limit the amount of arms each of them can have to that which they need to maintain internal order and security within their borders [GWB CXVII, p. 249]. This agreement must be embodied within the International Covenant. Thereafter an International Commission should be appointed to study the circumstances of each country and determine what that amount should reasonably be for each country. The Commission should undertake an investigation to determine the amount of arms each nation actually possesses. A

plan should then be made for the destruction of that quantity of arms that exceeds the amount deemed sufficient to maintain internal order. Lastly, the process of arms' destruction must be supervised by an internationally appointed body so as to ensure transparency and avoid arousing suspicion.

For this scheme to work, such agreement to limit the possession of arms must apply to all countries without exception. No country can be allowed to rely on a security exclusion to opt out nor can any country be allowed to withdraw from the agreement. Should a country be tempted to do either, its action should be regarded as a threat to the peace triggering collective enforcement action, a topic that is discussed further on in this article.

Second, the international covenant must include a provision to eliminate all nuclear weapons. There is no good reason for any nation to possess nuclear weapons. Using them is unthinkable and it is both unfair and ultimately impossible, as humanity has discovered the hard way, to confine them to a few countries. As long as even one nation has nuclear weapons, others will want them for a host of reasons including at best the insecurity they engender or at worst a desire to wield more power and influence in the world. In addition to the elimination of existing arsenals of nuclear weapons, all nations must agree to stop developing and producing new weapons of mass destruction as well as fissile material such as highly enriched uranium and separated plutonium that can be used to produce such weapons. Finally, countries must agree to put all facilities and nuclear material needed for the creation of nuclear energy under the management and control of a supranational body that will ensure that they are used solely for the legitimate end of making electricity to meet the energy demands of the planet. By doing this, the risks of a nation secretly diverting an otherwise legitimate energy-producing nuclear program for military purposes will be eliminated.

Strengthen the International Court to Make it More Effective and Trusted

Nations will inevitably have disputes, which must be resolved. Our goal should be to ensure that they are resolved peacefully, without resort to force and without degenerating into destabilizing conflicts. In order for this to happen, nations must be required to take their disputes to the International Court Of Justice (also known as the “World Court”). In other words, the World Court must be granted compulsory jurisdiction over all disputes between countries to which all nations must submit without exceptions and opt-outs. Moreover, the judgments of the World Court must be binding upon the parties to any conflict or dispute and capable of enforcement by an international force. Without this, nations may choose to ignore the World Court’s verdicts with impunity, thereby undermining its credibility and increasing the chances of conflict.

In order for nations to agree to the strengthening of the World Court in this way, the Court must command both the respect and trust of all nations. This will only happen if it is viewed as adequately representing all nations and its judges are seen to be acting fairly and in the collective interest of the community of nations. These judges must be unbiased and beyond moral reproach. The key to creating this type of confidence lies in the manner in which judges are elected to the World Court. As an initial matter, it is important that they be elected rather than appointed. The question then arises as to how the international community might conduct an election that ensures broad representation. The author of this article believes that Bahá’í scholars can offer some useful ideas and principles to the international community based on an examination of the method Abdu’l-Bahá has proposed for the eventual election of the “Supreme Tribunal.” Abdu’l-Bahá has proposed a two-stage election of judges: the first step requires the parliament of each country to elect two or three national representative in direct proportion to the size of its population. The election of these representatives is to be confirmed by the legislature, the executive branch and head of state of each country. Abdu’l-Bahá then goes on to suggest a second step in which the members of the “Supreme Tribunal” are to be elected

from among these representatives, without specifying who the electorate will be at this second stage [SWAB 306-307]. Although we do not know when this “Supreme Tribunal” as envisioned by Bahá’u’lláh and Abdu’l-Bahá will come into being, there is no reason why we cannot use Abdu’l-Bahá’s proposed method for electing its members as a blueprint from which we can derive ideas and principles to share with the international community which in turn can use them as it sees fit in order to bolster the credibility and perceived trustworthiness of the World Court in the eyes of the peoples of the world by making it increasingly representative of all peoples and governments.

Once elected, the judges of the World Court must act independently and free of political pressure or other. Their appointments should be for a fixed term and they should be banned from seeking future governmental appointments.

In the Event of a Breach of the Peace, What Is Needed to Restore Peace Quickly and Effectively

Regardless of how strong and effective a well-crafted a system of collective security is, it is unlikely to forestall all conflict. There will probably be instances – hopefully rare – in which a country will be tempted to act in ways that disrupt international or regional peace. In those instances an effective collective security system must be capable of swiftly bringing the country to heel and restoring the peace for which it needs a strong enforcement mechanism ideally in the form of a standing international force.

Establish an International Standing Force

In the event that a nation violates one of the provisions of the Covenant, thereby breaching the peace, or engages in behavior that threatens peace such as sponsoring terrorist groups, engaging in gross and widespread human rights abuses or illegally producing and acquiring nuclear weapons, the Security Council must have at its immediate disposal troops and equipment ready to deploy rapidly and effectively to maintain or restore the peace. Without such enforcement capability, the

Covenant is a dead letter and the Security Council loses its authority, effectiveness and credibility. Recent history is replete with examples of an ineffectual and weak Security Council. A few of these were mentioned above including the genocide in Darfur, illegal nuclear weapons programs in North Korea and Iran, and large-scale massacres and human rights abuses in Syria.

Many people and nations oppose the creation of an international standing force because they fear it may run amok and become a menace in the hands of a totalitarian world government. In order to convince these skeptics that an international standing force is vital to humanity's well-being and redounds to the best interests of all nations, they must first be persuaded to embrace three foundational principles articulated in the Writings.

The first principle is that force still has a role to play in international relations with the caveats that it be used collectively, in accordance with clear and pre-determined guidelines and by collective institutions that truly represent all the peoples of the world. In addition such force is to be used solely in the service of justice. Abdu'l-Bahá speaks to this point when He says that sometimes war is a "powerful basis of peace" and "ruin the very means of reconstruction" [SDC 70]. He goes on to say that if war is waged for a righteous purpose then "this apparent tyranny [is] the very substance of justice and this warfare the cornerstone of peace" [SDC 71].

An analogy that comes to mind in conveying the necessity for the occasional collective use of force is that of chemotherapy – a remedy consisting of harsh chemicals – that is nevertheless used to rid the body of cancer. Although many healthy cells are destroyed along with the cancerous ones, the alternative strategy of doing nothing is not a viable one. The sacrifice of some healthy cells is necessary for the greater goal of saving the patient. If we focus on ensuring that all cells stay intact, we are likely to lose the patient altogether.

The second principle is that national sovereignty must be curtailed. This principle [WOB 40] was implicitly recognized in the context of the use of force when the UN Charter was crafted. The framers recognized there would be instances where

the use of force was necessary. They therefore made provision for nations to enter into agreements with the Security Council to contribute armed forces, assistance and facilities to the Council for use in the event that the peace was threatened or broken.¹ Unfortunately, because of the unwillingness of nations to forego their hold on absolute sovereignty especially in the area of military power and more particularly in relation to the composition, maintenance and location of forces, the relevant provisions of the Charter were never implemented, thereby severely weakening the effectiveness and authority of the Security Council from its birth.

The third principle is that the good of the part can best be reached by assuring the good of the whole [WOB 198]. In other words, a nation can effectively guarantee its well-being, if it assures the good of the community of nations as a whole. This means that when there is a threat to the peace or a breach thereof, the response must be a collective one, undertaken by collective institutions such as a revamped Security Council and a standing force that represent all the nations. Moreover, the response must be in accordance with rules that have been determined collectively in advance.

Once nations embrace these principles, they will more readily accept the need for a standing force that is independent of the whim of any one nation or group of nations and free of the bane of expediency, as it unabashedly enforces the International Covenant and upholds international law.

Determine the Criteria and Conditions for Use of a Standing Force

In addition to creating an international standing force, it is imperative that the criteria by which it can act to enforce the peace be pre-determined by all nations collectively. Currently, under the terms of the UN Charter, the Security Council may use force in order to restore or maintain peace where there is a threat to that peace, a breach of the peace or an act of aggression.² However, these terms are not defined. This is a flaw that needs to be remedied. The definition should identify the triggering circumstances under which a standing force can act

and should include the following: gross human rights abuses such as genocide, the illicit production, acquisition or sale of nuclear capabilities in contravention of international laws, state sponsorship of terrorism, a build-up of arms, territorial aggression, failure to implement a judgment of the World Court (especially where this is likely to give rise to conflict), and breach of any provisions of the International Covenant.³

Gradual Steps Towards The Creation of A Standing Force

As mentioned above, states are likely to be resistant to the establishment of an international standing force. Therefore, they might find it more palatable if this is done in incremental steps. The first step proposed here would involve creating regional security organizations each with their own standing force. In this first stage all these regional standing forces would coordinate their activities as part of a loose network encompassing the planet. It will be easier for a nation to embrace this step, as experience has demonstrated that it is easier for nations to cede sovereignty over national security to a regional organization than to an international one.⁴ This is so for a number of reasons including the fact that language and culture are often shared in a region creating more trust and understanding. Also, a decentralized regional organization tends not to raise the same feared specter as a distant centralized authority making decisions from afar without an adequate understanding of the facts on the ground and the potentially adverse ramifications of its decisions. Moreover, there is a stronger incentive for a nation to collaborate in preserving regional security because it is more keenly and directly impacted by things that go awry in its backyard and it is therefore in its self-interest to engage in efforts to keep its region secure.

Once this loosely integrated network of regional security organizations and attendant standing forces is established and functioning for some time, the second step can be taken. This step requires these regional security organizations to formalize their relationship with the Security Council and make their forces available for its use. This step has the added benefit that the Security Council, with its finger on the security pulse of the

planet, can allocate primary responsibility for the security of each region to the relevant regional security organization. The operating principle would be that a threat to any one nation is to be viewed as a threat to all in the region. However, before using regional force in any given situation, the regional security organization would first need to seek the approval of the Security Council, as is currently required under the terms of the UN Charter⁵ except in a dire emergency in which it could be allowed to act first and seek ratification later. Finally, an additional benefit in having the Security Council coordinate security activities world-wide, is that it can specify a time frame within which the regional force must solve the regional problem. Then, in the event that the regional force is unable to meet the deadline, the Security Council can call upon other regional forces to lend their assistance. This kind of incremental solidarity in solving problems will slowly create trust and teach regions of the world to work together for the common cause of peace.

Eventually, the world would be ready for the third and final step which would require consolidating and integrating the various regional forces so that they function as permanent units of a truly independent standing army each stationed in their regional locations. Such an arrangement makes operational sense in that the forces are physically close to conflicts that may arise in their region and can therefore act more swiftly. It is also makes more fiscal sense as it eliminates the costs of transporting them over vast distances and setting up new regional quarters every time there is a new conflict. At this stage, these units will operate solely at the behest of the Security Council and completely independently of the individual nations or regional groups of nations. They will, however, engage in regular joint training exercises, and have integrated communications systems, compatible equipment and a shared language so that they can work together in unity in a seamless and effective fashion if needed.⁶

The Benefits of an International Standing Force

The creation of an international standing force will yield many benefits. Among them is deterrence: nations are likely to consider the consequences of collective action against them

before they flout international laws with impunity. Another benefit is that the authority of international laws and institutions will be upheld, not just in word, but also in practice. In addition, having pre-agreed rules that determine when the standing force can be used means that international agencies like the Security Council, tasked with preserving the peace of the planet can act quickly, decisively and effectively without vacillating and nip a problem in the bud without allowing it to fester and mushroom into a full-blown war. There is also the added bonus that no one nation's military is overstretched nor does it have to bear an unfair and disproportionate burden either financially or in human resources. Last, but not least, such a collective system will ensure that the rules are applied equally across the board to all violators of the peace.

Conclusion

The world is in desperate need of an effective system of collective security that will deter nations from entering into conflicts and restore the peace in the rare event that it is breached. The creation of such a system is not only possible but inevitable. It requires that a handful of enlightened and visionary leaders motivated solely by a desire for peace, enter into an agreement to create such a system. To be effective, this collective security system must at the very least, limit the amount of arms each nation can have, eliminate all nuclear weapons, strengthen the World Court and create an incrementally integrated international standing force.

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NOTES

¹ UN Charter, Articles 43-46.

² UN Charter, Article 42.

³ Sovaida Ma'ani Ewing, *Collective Security Within Reach*, pp. 121-122.

⁴ The African Standby Force and the European Rapid Reaction Force are good examples.

⁵ UN Charter, Chapter VIII.

⁶ For a more detailed analysis, see Ewing, *Collective Security*, pp. 159-168.

Celestial Fire

Bahá'u'lláh as the Messianic Theophany of the Divine Fire (*átar, ádar, átash*) in Zoroastrianism¹

Farshid Kazemi

Open your inner eye, that ye may behold the celestial
Fire (*'átash-i yazdan*).²

– Bahá'u'lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity*, 68

Introduction

The French Islamo-Iranologist and philosopher Henry Corbin (d. 1978), in his four-volume magnum opus *En Islam Iranian* (In Iranian Islam) whilst discussing the Zoroastrian motif of the divine Fire in the works of the Persian philosopher Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi (d. 1191), called al-Maqtul (the Slain) and the Shaykh al-Ishráq (the Master of Illumination), wrote:

Just as each species is the theurgy and image of a Light among the victorial Lights, a Light from which they emanate and which governs them, so also Fire, the luminous Fire (*nar dhat al-nur*), not the infernal Fire, is the theurgy of the Archangel Ordibehest (one of the seven amahraspands, Avestan Arta-Vahishta). Movement and heat ... are the manifestational form (*mazhar*) of the Light: they have no other cause than the Light. However, they reach their highest degree in the Fire.³

In the last portion of this terse passage, Corbin observes that it is “movement and heat,” that “are the manifestational forms of Light,” and that “they have no other cause than the Light,” but that “they reach their highest degree in the Fire.” This insight of Corbin provides an ideal framework for our discussion of the motif of the Mazdean celestial Fire (and other Zoroastrian motifs) in the Bahá’í scriptural corpus, as it precisely maps the complex coordinates of the various components of this topos, namely the dialectic of movement and heat, light and fire.

One of the foundational philosophical premises at the heart of Bahá’í ontology is that the structure of *being* and *existence* (*wujud*) is one of *process* and *becoming* rather than static and fixed.⁴ Thus ‘being’ as such is ‘becoming’, and is manifested in history in a dialectical relationship, of existence and essence, matter and form. This foundational vision of a dynamic and dialectical ontological *process*,⁵ in the writings of the Iranian prophet Mirzá Husayn-‘Alí Núrí, Bahá’u’lláh (d. 1892) – the founder of the Bahá’í Faith – is often typified by the symbolism of Fire (New Persian *atash*), which via its attribute/quality ‘heat’ (*hararat*), is the cause of motion or movement (*harakat*) and hence the very foundation of the world of existence. Among the various symbolic imaginaries, Fire, due to its dynamic nature, is one of the symbols of the Primal Will (*mashiyyat awaliyya*) in the Bahá’í writings, the active and dynamic agent (*fa’íl*) through which all things/beings come into existence in a perpetual or processual creation.⁶ Indeed, the greatest mytho-symbol at the heart of Bahá’í metaphysics *par excellence* is none other than this Primal Will – which is the pre-existential reality of the prophets, termed Manifestation(s) of God (*mazhar iláhî*) in Bahá’í lexicon, (also variously called in the texts as the Command (*amr*) or Word of God (*kalimat allah*, Greek *logos*) – who is at once both the perpetual motive force behind the genesis of the cosmos (cosmogony) and the unfoldment of sacred history or hierohistory (termed in Bahá’í lexicon as *progressive revelation*) as such.⁷

In many of his significant tablets to Zoroastrians, Bahá’u’lláh makes a startling and profound eschatological enunciation, namely that he is the messianic theophany of the divine Fire (*atash*) foretold in the Mazdean scriptures.⁸ This Fire which is at

once the symbol and theurgy of Truth (*asha/arta*) in Zoroastrianism, is according to Bahá'u'lláh, manifested (*mazhar*) in his person; thus effectively enunciating that he is the messianic theophany or the locus of the manifestation (*mazhar*) of the primordial divine Fire in Mazdeanism. This enunciation, however profound, forms only the first layer of his spiritual and divine hermeneutics (*ta'wil iláhi*) (see below), as Bahá'u'lláh in one hermeneutical turn deploys both a cosmogonic and messianico-eschatological register to the Mazdean Fire, by equating the Primal Will (*mashiyyat awaliyya*) with the celestial Fire in Zoroastrianism. In other words, the Primal Will whose symbol is this celestial Fire in Zoroastrianism has appeared in the 'person' of Bahá'u'lláh.

In Zoroastrianism, this divine Fire (*átar*) is personified as a primordial being or divinity in the oldest portion of the Avesta (Zoroastrian scriptures), namely the *Gáthás*. It is in the Avesta that this Fire is endowed with the profoundly theophanic epithet entitled, "the Son of Ahura Mazda," which is at once co-extensive with the divine Truth (*asha*) (there is one instance in which they are co-terminus) and forms with it a *syzygy*, a twin, or dualitude. This Fire is also intimately connected to another profoundly sublime concept in Mazdaism, namely to the luminous light of *Khvarnah* (literally 'Glory'), the Light of Glory or Divine Glory. It is precisely this *Khvarnah*, as we shall see, which is linked to the very name of Baha'(-Allah), apropos his claim to be the theophanic locus or manifestation (*mazhar*) of the Mazdean Fire, and the very embodiment of the *farr iláhi* or the "Divine Glory." This is precisely the same *Khvarnah* that shone resplendent in the prophet Zarathustra himself, and it is the *Araeo Glorea* of the Mazdean messianic figure *par excellence*, the savior called in the texts – Saoshyant (He who will bring benefit), who is at times referred to as, "He who hath the appearance of the Sun." It is the Saoshyant, possessed of the fiery *Khvarnah*, who will usher in the renovation, the transformation and transfiguration of the world at the end of time, "the making brilliant of Creation" or *farshokart / farshigard* (Avestan *frasho-kereti*, Pahlavi *frashegird*). Thus according to Zoroastrian apocalyptic imaginary, it is precisely the divine Fire (*atar*) and Truth (*asha*) that shall be 'embodied' or "made flesh" as it were, in a 'person' at 'the end of time', and who shall judge

the world by means of his luminous and spiritual radiance, symbolized at once as the Fire and the *Khvarnah*, and shall be victorious (*Vahram/Bahram*) over the forces of darkness or the Lie (*druj*), through the forces of light or the Truth (*asha*).

While Bahá'í scholarly literature on the Zoroastrian apocalyptic imaginary have largely focused on Bahá'u'lláh as the appearance of the messianic figure called Shah Bahram Varjivand in some Pahlavi texts,⁹ yet the apocalyptic expectation of the coming of the luminous and divine Fire (*atar*) in the *Gáthás* and later Zoroastrian sources (such as the Pahlavi texts), and their relation to Bahá'u'lláh's messianic claims have effectively gone unnoticed and remain a virtual *terra incognita* (See Below).¹⁰ Indeed, in light of the tremendous importance that this theme has upon the study of Bahá'u'lláh's messianic self-conception and its relation to Zoroastrian apocalyptic imaginary, it is surprising that no studies have as yet appeared in elaborating the significance of this motif (and other constellation of motifs) and its deployment in Bahá'u'lláh's *oeuvre*.¹¹ In this study, I will rely on a number of translated and previously untranslated Persianate tablets of Bahá'u'lláh to Zoroastrians, where he deploys a mystico-messianic hermeneutics (*ta'wil*) of the Zoroastrian scriptures, in which he proclaims at once to be the cosmogonic primal Fire (who is the cause of creation), and the messianic epiphany of the Mazdean apocalyptic or eschatological Fire (*atar*) in *person*. I will undertake my analysis in light of some of the relevant material from the *Gáthás*, the Younger Avesta, and later Zoroastrian scriptural corpora, such as the Pahlavi texts, that point to this eschatological expectation and cosmogonic function of the Zoroastrian divine Fire.

Bahá'u'lláh as the Theophany of the Divine Fire (*átar*) in Zoroastrianism

Last night, from the cypress branch, the nightingale sang, in Pahlavi notes, the lesson of spiritual stations.¹²

– Hafiz (d. 1389/90)

In a collection of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Zoroastrians called *Yárán-i Pársí* (Zoroastrian or Persian Friends), we find a few of the many tablets Bahá'u'lláh wrote to Zoroastrians and believers of Zoroastrian heritage, throughout his ministry. Such tablets as the tablet to the Zoroastrian notable Mánakjí Saḥib (*Lawh-i-Mánakjí Saḥib*) and the Tablet of the Seven Questions (*Lawh-i-Haft Pursish*),¹³ – which were composed mostly in the so-called “pure Persian” or *pársí-ye sáreh* – are perhaps among the outstanding examples of the Persianate tablets of Bahá'u'lláh.¹⁴ Indeed, there is an evident intertextuality between these works of Bahá'u'lláh and Zoroastrian sacred texts, though they are more phenomenological in scope, rather than citations and references to specific scriptural texts. It is within the larger cycle of these Zoroastrian tablets, that we often encounter Bahá'u'lláh alluding to himself with characteristic Zoroastrian symbols and motifs, such as the celestial or heavenly Fire (*atash, nar*), Light (*roshanaee, nur*), Radiance (*partow*) and Solar imagery (*khorsheed, aftar, shams*), among other symbols of divine luminosity, illumination, and radiance, so often encountered in Zoroastrian and Manichean (the so-called ‘Religion of Light’) texts. Indeed, it is at the beginnings of many of these tablets that there is an extended doxology or doxophany, in which the reality of the Word of God (*kalimat allah*), or the Primal Will of God (*mashiyyat awaliyya*) – the pre-existent reality of the Manifestation – is alluded to symbolically as the Primal Light, the Primal Fire, the pre-eternal Sun.

In many of these Zoroastrian tablets, Bahá'u'lláh explicitly identifies himself with the Mazdean sacred Fire and its apocalyptic or messianic advent. Bahá'u'lláh states “open your inner eye, that ye may behold the celestial Fire (*‘atash-i yazdan*, literally the ‘Fire of God’) [i.e., himself].”¹⁵ Indicating that organs of spiritual apperception are required, rather than sense perception, to behold this celestial Fire hypostasized and personified as his-*self*. In another emblematic passage Bahá'u'lláh writes:

Today the Sun of the Word of God (*goftar-i yazdan*) is resplendent above the horizon of Utterance (*bayan*) and with an emanation (*tajallí*) from its divine emanations,

the heart of the people of the world are made refulgent and luminous. The Fire which imparteth Love (*'átash-i mohabat afrooz*), is today manifest and resplendent in the world [i.e., himself].¹⁶

Here Bahá'u'lláh deploys Solar symbolism whilst alluding to the pre-existential Word of God (*goftar-i yazdan*), evoking the centrality of the Sun and its imagery in Zoroastrian as well as Manichean literary corpora, and states that the Fire (*atash*) from which love emanates or which is the source of love, is today made manifest and shines resplendent in the world through his being. In another hermeneutical turn, Bahá'u'lláh whilst deploying the motifs of light and darkness, emblematic of Zoroastrianism, refers to himself as the messianic appearance of the Mazdean Light. In *Lawh-i-Mánakjí Sahib* he writes, "At a time when darkness had encompassed the world, the ocean of divine favor surged and His Light was made manifest, that the doings of men might be laid bare. This, verily, is that Light which hath been foretold in the heavenly scriptures [i.e., Zoroastrian scriptures]."¹⁷ Indeed, here Bahá'u'lláh by referring to himself as the Light that became manifest whilst darkness reigned, at once evokes Zoroastrian symbolisms of light and darkness, which simultaneously recalls the imagery of the Johannian Logos, "In him [λόγος, logos] was life and the life was the light [φως, phos] of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1: 4-6, 9-10). The Logos of John itself has been influenced by the logos doctrine of Philo and Heraclitus, whose conception of Logos as Fire has clear Zoroastrian influences. (For further relations of the relation of the logos to fire and light, see below.)

Perhaps one of the most significant hermeneutics of Mazdean Fire found in the Bahá'í textual corpus that must be mentioned here, and which as we shall see profoundly corresponds to one of the symbolic registers of Fire in the Zoroastrian scriptures (see below), is that the Holy Spirit (*ruh al-quds*), also termed the Most Great Spirit (*ruh al-'azam*), is identified with the Zoroastrian Sacred Fire. What is of profound interest for our theme is that in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh the visionary logic and symbolic imagery of the Holy Spirit, is personified in a feminine figure called, the "Maid of Heaven" (*huriyya* or

huriyyat al-firdows). It is this heavenly Maiden, symbolized at once with the Mazdean Fire, who appeared to Bahá'u'lláh in an oneiric encounter whilst in prison, in the so-called Black Pit (*siyah chal*), which according to Bahá'í liturgical calendar, is the moment of the birth of his divine revelation and mission. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith (*wali amrullah*) writes, "the "Most Great Spirit," as designated by Himself [Bahá'u'lláh], and symbolized in the *Zoroastrian*, the *Mosaic*, the *Christian*, and *Muhammadan Dispensations* by the *Sacred Fire*, the *Burning Bush*, the *Dove* and the *Angel Gabriel* respectively, descended upon, and revealed itself, personated by a "Maiden," to the agonized soul of Bahá'u'lláh (emphasis added)" [GPB 238-239]. In another similar passage Shoghi Effendi notes that the Most Great Spirit (*ruh al-'azam*) is, "that same Spirit which, in the *Zoroastrian*, the *Mosaic*, the *Christian*, and *Muhammadan Dispensations* had been symbolized by the '*Sacred Fire*', the '*Burning Bush*, the '*Dove*', and the '*Angel Gabriel*'" (emphasis added) [CF 100]. It is precisely this sacred fire, which in *Zoroastrianism* is the Holy Spirit, and is personified in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh as a Maiden, a luminous being of light, the heavenly 'Twin' or *alter ego* of Bahá'u'lláh. Thus the Mazdean Fire and the Maid of Heaven are co-terminous and refer to the same phenomenon, or more precisely *noumenon*, in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, namely to the Holy Spirit (*ruh al-quds*), and the Most Great Spirit (*ruh al-'azam*). Indeed, it is this "Sacred Fire," which in *Zoroastrianism* is identified as the Holy Spirit, and who is personified in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh as a Maiden, and typified by the feminine figure of *Daena* in *Mazdaism*, and as the Maiden of Light in *Manichaeism* (see below).¹⁸

Perhaps an early precedent to Bahá'u'lláh's self-identification with the *Zoroastrian* sacred Fire may be found in *Manichaeism*, the religion of the Iranian Gnostic-prophet Mani (d. 277), the so-called "Apostle of Light."¹⁹ Indeed, there is a profound resemblance and correspondence between Bahá'u'lláh's own multi-messianic claims and Mani's prophetic claims:

Wisdom and deeds have always from time to time been brought to mankind by the messengers of God. So in one age they have been brought by the messenger called

Buddha to India, in another by Zardusht [Zarathustra] to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon this revelation has come down and this prophecy has appeared in the form of myself, Mani, the envoy of the true God in the Land of Babylon.²⁰

In the religious literature of Manicheism, which was composed in several languages, including Middle Persian, we find an interesting identification of the Living Self/Soul (Middle Persian *griv zindag*) to the Zoroastrian sacred Fire. In a Manichean text called the Recitation of the Living Self (*Gwysn 'yg Gryw Zyndg*), the Living Self states:

I am the fire that Zarathustra kindled
 And he bade the righteous to kindle.
 From the seven consecrated, sweet smelling fires
 Bring to me, the Fire, purified fuel.²¹

Concerning this hymn Klimkeit states that, "it interprets the sacred water and sacred fire of the Zoroastrian cult in a Gnostic sense."²² Here the Living Self identifies itself with the Zoroastrian fire, and proclaims to be the appearance of the sacred Fire consecrated by Zarathustra. In one of the Hymns to the Living Soul, Mani himself is identified with the Living Soul/Self, "Praise to you, Living Soul, holy, holy, Lord Mar Mani!"²³ Indeed, Mani is often given a lofty and theophanic status in the Manichean writings. In the Bema hymns, Mani is addressed as the (beautiful) "form that was created by the Word" (of the Father of Light)... as the divine Word that has assumed visible, incarnate form."²⁴ This same Living Soul/Self in Manichean myth is also referred to in various ways as the Cross of Light, the Five Elements or Limbs, the Soul, the Youth, and the Suffering Jesus (*Jesus Pitiblis*). There are three figures of Jesus in the Manichaen writings, they are, Jesus the Splendour, the Suffering Jesus (*Jesus Pitiblis*), and Jesus the Messiah, or the prophet of history. The relationship of the three figures of Jesus in Manichean writings, are not always clear, and at times, they are interchangeable with each other. Mary Boyce notes that, "the three concepts of Jesus are not always kept

wholly distinct.”²⁵ Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh in his vast corpus of writings often refers to himself as the “Youth.” In the Arabic *Lawh Mallah al-Quds* or Tablet of the Holy Mariner, in which the Maiden figures prominently, Bahá'u'lláh refers to himself as *al-fata al-'iraqi* or the “Iraqi Youth” (“the Arabian Youth,” in Shoghi Effendi’s rendering), and in the Persian tablet of the same name, this title is given its full force in terms of the Persian character of the “Youth,” by the opening words of the tablet, “He is the non-Arab, the Persian, the Iraqi” (*huwwa al-'ajami al-farsi al-'iraqi*) (see below).²⁶

In the Manichaen writings, the Maiden of Light, the Suffering Jesus, the heavenly Twin, the Light/Great Nous, and the divine Glory (*farrah*), namely the Zoroastrian Khvarnah, all symbolize and designate the same reality, namely Mani’s angelic Twin, his heavenly self or *alter ego*. In a Hymn of Praise to Mani it is written:

We bend our knees in deep veneration, we worship and praise the mighty God, the praised King and Lord of the Worlds of Light, worthy of honor, according to whose wish and will you (Mani), our exalted God, did come to us.

We worship Jesus, the Lord, the Son of Greatness, who has sent you, blessed one, to us. We worshipt the exalted Maiden (of Light), the bright Twin, who was your comrade and companion in every battle.

We worship your great Glory (*farrah*), our Father, Apostle of Light, oh Mani, oh Lord!²⁷

In this hymn the Maiden of Light, the Twin, and the divine Glory (*farrah*) are identified with Mani, the “Apostle of Light.” Indeed we encounter this Maiden of Light again and again, as the heavenly Self or ‘Twin’ (*syzygos*) of Mani. In a Parthian prayer to Mani, we read:

... Great Maitreya, noble Messenger of the gods, interpreter of the religion, ... Jesus – Maiden of Light, Mar Mani, Jesus – Maiden of Light – Mar Mani, have [mercy] upon me, oh merciful Bringer of Light!²⁸

The imagery of the “Maid of Heaven” (*huriyya al-firdows*) the personification of the Holy Spirit in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh is also often filled with images of light (*nur*), splendor (*munawar*) and illumination (*ishraq*). Indeed, the Maiden of Light, which is Mani's heavenly Twin, and the Mazdean Fire, are identical to the Maid of Heaven in Bahá'u'lláh's oeuvre and acts as a signifier for his heavenly Twin or *alter ego*. Bahá'u'lláh recounts the moment of divine revelation and the epiphany of the Holy Spirit, personified as a “Maiden” in this manner:

While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden – the embodiment of the remembrance of [the name of] My Lord – suspended in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good-pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the brightness of the All-Merciful. Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both my inward and outward being tidings which rejoiced my soul, and the souls of God's honored servants. Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying “By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand... [SLH 185]

Thus, it may be said that the Manichean Maiden of Light, and the Mazdean celestial Fire, are therefore conceptually co-extensive with the ‘Maid of Heaven’ in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh,²⁹ a reality designated in his oeuvre by various symbolic imaginaries such as *inter alia*, the Primal Will (*mashiyat awaliyya*), First Intellect (*aql al-awwal*), Word of God (*kalimat allah*), Command of God (*amr allah*) and the Holy Spirit (*ruh al-quds*), all designating the same divine reality and sublime entity. Indeed, the source of Mani's revelation is designated as his ‘Twin’ or heavenly self, but has also been referred to as the “Living Paraclete” who appeared to him and gave him the knowledge of all things, as it states in the *Kephalaia*, “Thus did

the Paraclete disclose to me all that has been and all that will be.” As there seems to be an apparent discrepancy between these figures, namely the twin, and the Living Paraclete, Widengern states, “here the celestial Messenger is called the ‘Living Paraclete.’ Western sources say that Mani described himself as the Paraclete Predicated by Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. On the basis of the foregoing, this assertion cannot be impugned. But, how can it be then that it is the so-called ‘twin’ who comes to Mani as his higher self? Precisely because the Living Paraclete, who is the Holy Ghost [Spirit], is the same as the ‘twin.’”³⁰ Here again the Living Paraclete, the Twin, and the Holy Spirit, are identified with Mani’s own higher self.³¹ The appearance of the Living Paraclete which revealed the knowledge of all that has been and all that will be also recalls a description of the revelatory source of Bahá’u’lláh’s knowledge of all things, which he states appears to him “in the form of a tablet”:

Thou knowest full well that We perused not the books which men possess and We acquired not the learning current amongst them, and yet whenever We desire to quote the sayings of the learned and of the wise, presently there will appear before the face of thy Lord in the form of a tablet all that which hath appeared in the world and is revealed in the Holy Books and Scriptures. Thus do We set down in writing that which the eye perceiveth. Verily His knowledge encompasseth the earth and the heavens.³²

Indeed, this passage recalls the Irano-gnostic heritage discussed above, and this description in Bahá’u’lláh’s oeuvre is another symbolic epithet of the Maid of Heaven, the Primal Fire, the Holy Spirit, all designating his heavenly self, his twin, or *alter ego*. In an important passage the convergence of all these symbolic imaginaries for the same spiritual reality are further illuminated by Bahá’u’lláh:

Whenever I chose to hold My peace and be still, lo, the Voice of the Holy Spirit, standing on My right hand, aroused Me, and the Most Great Spirit appeared before My face, and Gabriel overshadowed Me, and the Spirit

of Glory stirred within My bosom, bidding Me arise and
break My silence. [GPB 100]

The motif of the appearance of a 'suspended' written tablet also figures in the celebrated Syriac or Coptic Gnostic fable, the *Hymn* or *Song of the Pearl*, composed sometime in the 3rd century CE. The *Song* recounts the life of a Parthian Prince, designated as the "Youth" (like Mani and Bahá'u'lláh)³³ who 'descends' to Egypt, at the request of his royal parents, to acquire the pearl which is guarded by a fierce dragon. He strives in vein to keep his identity a secret from the dwellers of this foreign land. Whilst in the inn where he stays, he is given an extremely rich meal after which he falls into a deep slumber. Soon the tidings of his son's predicament, reaches his father and the King calls the magistrates and princes to compose a tablet with a sign and seal by the feduatories, the Queen and the King. The tablet, inscribed on fine silk assumes the form of a marvelous bird, an eagle/falcon³⁴ whose melodious voice awakens the Prince from his sleep:³⁵

And serving as messenger,
the letter was a letter sealed by the king with his right
hand
against the evil children of Babylon and the savage
demons of the Sarbug labyrinth.
It rose up in the form of an eagle, the king of all winged
fowl;
it flew and alighted beside me and became speech.
At its voice and the sound of its rustling
I awoke and rose from my sleep.
I took it, and kissed it, broke its seal, and read.
And the words written on my heart were the letter for
me to read.³⁶

Here the letter/tablet, which symbolically appeared as an eagle, is the very words written in the heart of the Prince. The letter/tablet is the Princes' own self or twin. Towards the end

of the *Song*, when the Princely “youth” sets out upon his return voyage to his heavenly homeland, the letter accompanies him much like the Daena in Zoroastrianism:

On my way the letter that awakened me was laying like a
women on the road.

And as she awakened me with her voice so she guided
me with her light as if she were an oracle.³⁷

Indeed, the Mazdean parallels with the figure of Daena – the feminine angelic figure or “maiden,” that accompanies the soul on its post-mortem celestial voyage – are clear in this text. Thus, in a similar vein the tablet which appears to Bahá’u’lláh is his own *self* or heavenly twin, and at once signifies the Maid of Heaven, the Holy Spirit, the Most Great Spirit, the Pen (*al-qalam*), all of which act as symbolic signifiers for Bahá’u’lláh’s own self. Indeed, in an *invocatio* or prayer Bahá’u’lláh refers to his heavenly and pre-existential reality as an archetypal divine sealed book that speaks:

This, verily, is the Day wherewith Thy Scriptures, and Thy Books, and Thy Tablets, have been adorned. And He Who now speaketh is, in truth, the Well-guarded Treasure, and the Hidden Secret, and the Preserved Tablet [*al-lawh al-mahfuz*], and the Impenetrable Mystery, and the Sealed Book [*al-kitab al-mamhur*].³⁸

Thus, Bahá’u’lláh by referring to himself as the “Sealed Book,” recalls the sealed letter of the King, which appeared in the form of an eagle/falcon to the “youth,” the Parthian Prince in the *Song of the Pearl*. As we shall see the symbol of the eagle or falcon will have further hermeneutical ramifications in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh and its association with the Khvarnah in Zoroastrianism (see below).

The Angel or ‘Heavenly Twin,’ or *syzygos* of Mani, which the *Firhist* of Ibn al-Nadim (d. 995) in Arabic calls *al-Taum* (derived from the Syriac word *tauma*, meaning ‘twin’)³⁹ appeared to him twice in his life, first at the age of 12, and then at the age of 24. This topos of two, doubling, or twin revelations is precisely repeated in the prophetic career of Bahá’u’lláh. Bausani refers

to this motif of the twin revelations whilst discussing the two “revelations” of Mani, and notes that, “the ‘double’ initial revelation [is] recorded in a number of religions, including the recent Bahá’ism...”⁴⁰ Shoghi Effendi, who often deploys the term “twin” in many of his English letters and communications to the Bahá’í world, in one of his talks points out the mysteries of the appearance of *twin* or two sacred personages, structures, and events in the Babi-Bahá’í revelations and states, “In the Cause of God everything is twin.”⁴¹ Indeed, the motif of twin revelations of Bahá’u’lláh, one hidden (*batin*) and one open (*zahir*), is consonant with this symbolic register of the motif of “twins” in Irano-gnostic universe of thought. The first hidden epiphany, as we have seen, occurred in the *siyah chal* (Black Pit) dungeon in Tehran in 1853, and the second open revelation occurred in 1863 in the Garden of Ridvan outside Baghdad. The two 12 days (12+12=24) pertaining to the commencement of Bahá’u’lláh’s revelation and his open declaration at the garden of Ridvan, are significant as they fall into this same symbolic motif of the “twin.” Indeed, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the doubling of 12 from previous religious cycles to 24, signifies the “greatness” of the Bahá’í revelation, and in his exegesis of the twenty-four elders in the visionary Apocalypse of John of Patmos states that, “in this glorious manifestation there are twenty-four [elders], double the number of all the others, for the greatness of this manifestation requires it” [SAQ 57]. In this precise sense, the Bahá’í revelation may be termed the religion of the “twin” *par excellence*.

Another precedent to Bahá’u’lláh’s claim to be the theophany of the Mazdean celestial Fire may be found among the Nusayris. Indeed, among the esoteric Shi’ite sect of Nusayris (also called the Alawis), who are often considered to be part of the so-called “*ghulat*” (extreme Shi’ites) and whose doctrines display clear Zoroastrian influences, the figure of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet, and the first Shi’i Imam, is identified with the heavenly Fire in Zoroastrianism. Indeed, the Nusayris believe in seven manifestations of God from Able to ‘Ali, which is said to have taken place in seven cycles or periods, namely the cycle of Abraham, the Arab, the cycle of Muhammad and the Persian cycle in which ‘Ali manifested himself. In Persian Nusayri texts ‘Ali is entitled *Numayr*, which

means fire.⁴² In Nusayri texts such as *Risala fi al-Siaqa* by Al-Khasibi, it is written that ‘Ali had previously manifested himself to the Persians:

The Most High [‘Ali] deposited his wisdom with the Persians [i.e., Zoroastrians] and then left, being pleased with them. He promised to return to them. He is the one who said that God Almighty has deposited His mystery with you [the Arabs], manifested Himself amongst you, and destined you to receive it. But you have lost it while the Persians have preserved it even after its disappearance, by means of fire and light, in which He manifested Himself.⁴³

Here ‘Ali is associated with fire and light, through which he manifested himself among Zoroastrian Persians, and through which, namely the Mazdean fire, his mystery was preserved. Another Nusayri author al-Tabarani states:

The Persians have sanctified fire, from which they await the manifestation of the deity. This manifestation will take place among the Persians, for they never cease to keep lighted the fire from which they await this same manifestation, and the accomplishment of the promise of the deity in that event.⁴⁴

Thus, according to these Nusayri texts the manifestation of God will take place among the Persians, and it will be through the fire, which is identified with ‘Ali. This has obvious and clear resonances with Bahá’u’lláh’s own claim to be the manifestation of the Mazdean Fire, and clearly reaches back to the same Iranognostic spiritual universe. It is possible that Bahá’u’lláh, during the Istanbul/Edirne period in Ottoman Turkey (1863-1867-8), and the ‘Akka period in Palestine (1868-92), may have come into contact with members of the Nusayri community, who largely live in Syria, as well as in Turkey and Palestine. Thus, the Nusayris preserve within their doctrines elements of Iranian and Zoroastrian thought, and conceive of the eschatological promise of the manifestation of the divine Fire among the Persians – a claim perfectly exemplified in Bahá’u’lláh’s own claims to be the manifestation and theophany of the Mazdean Fire (*atash*).

Fire and its consequent light, have often symbolized the divine theophany or epiphany of God and Divine self-manifestation and self-revelation in many religions. In the Hebrew scriptures Fire is referred to in the Sinaitic episode, where God, in an Angelophany (or theophany), “appeared in a flame of fire [*esh*] out of the midst of the bush” [Ex 3:2]; in another instance God went before the Israelites, “by day in a pillar of cloud [*ammud 'anan*]... And by night in a pillar of fire [*ammud 'esh*] to give them light” [Ex 13:21].⁴⁵ Intimately linked to this concept of Cloud (Hebrew *'anan*, Arabic *'amma*)⁴⁶ and Fire is the concept of the Divine Presence or *Shekinah* with that of God’s Glory (*kevod*, also spelled *kavod*),⁴⁷ “Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, for the cloud rested [*shakhan*] upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle” [Ex 40:35]. In another instance in Ezekiel’s vision of God’s Glory (*kevod*), we read, “upon the likeness of the throne,” “was a likeness with the appearance of a man,” and “with the appearance of the fire with brightness all around,” “this was the appearance of the likeness of the Glory [*kabed*] of the Lord” [Ezk 1:26-28]. Hence in the Hebrew Bible the Glory of God or *kevod elohim*, is likened to the appearance of a man, who has the appearance and luminosity of fire. Jackson notes the striking similarity of the Persian *Khvarnah*, with the *Shekinah*, stating, “The doctrine of this flaming majesty [*khvarnah*] has an analogy in the *Shekhina* of the Jews.”⁴⁸ It must be recalled here that such texts as the Book of Ezekiel were composed in Second Temple Judaism after the Babylonian exile, and when the Jews had come into contact with Persians and had been living under Persian rule for some time.⁴⁹

In the New Testament, Jesus, also states, “I shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with Fire [*pyr*]” (Mt 3:11, Lk 3:16) and the book of Hebrews declares, “for our God is a consuming fire” [Heb 12:29], and in the visionary narrative of the Apocalypse of John of Patmos, which as we shall see has explicit Zoroastrian influences, Jesus in his parousia is envisioned with an imagery of fire not unlike Ezekiel’s vision of God’s Glory, “His eyes were as a flame of fire,” and “his name is called the Word [*logos*] of God” [Rev 19:12] and “fire came down from God out of heaven” [Rev 20:9]. Here the Logos is depicted with the imagery of Fire, characteristic of Zoroastrianism. Scholars

such as David Flusser have noted that the Apocalypse of John has explicit Zoroastrian influences, especially from a Judeo-Greek apocalyptic text or apocalypse called the *Oracle of Hystaspas*, which has its provenance in a Zoroastrian source or sources. Indeed, many references to the topos of Fire in John's Apocalypse have their origin in the apocalyptic text of the *Oracle of Hystaspes*.⁵⁰ The *Oracle of Hystaspes* is a Jewish apocalypse written in Greek, largely transmitted by the Church Father Lactantius in his *Divine Institutions*, and has been demonstrated to have a clear Zoroastrian provenance and to have influenced to a great degree the Apocalypse of John of Patmos. Indeed, there are several references in which the Fire symbolism of the *Oracle of Hystaspes* has clear parallels with the Apocalypse of John, and point to their Zoroastrian heritage. For instance the final apocalyptic end described in the *Oracle* is accompanied by fire, as it states, "Cities shall be utterly overthrown, and shall perish; not only *with fire* and the sword..."⁵¹ Also, at the apocalyptic end fire emanates from "a great prophet" (*magnus propheta*) who is sent forth from God, and "if anyone shall endeavour to injure him, *fire shall come forth out of his mouth* and shall burn that man. By these prodigies and powers he shall turn many to the worship of God."⁵² In another instance, speaking of the "coming of the King (*regis*)" – the messianic figure in the text whom the early Christians such as Lactantius considered to be Jesus – who "shall descend with a company of angels to the middle of the earth (*in medium terrae*, i.e. Jerusalem) and there shall go before him an *unquenchable fire*..."⁵³ Yet, another clear Zoroastrian parallel is the evocation of the followers of truth (*ashvan*) vs. the wicked or followers of the lie (*dregvan*) at the end of time, "When these things shall so happen, then the righteous and the followers of truth shall separate themselves from the wicked..."⁵⁴ Finally, in the book of Acts of the Apostles, we read, "And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" [Acts 1:3-5]. The "tongues of fire," act as a signifier for the illumination of the Holy Spirit descending upon the hearts of the apostles.

In the Qur'an as well, Fire and Light – which is an attribute of fire – has been employed in describing God. The famed

'Light verse' is perhaps the most emblematic example of the association of light with God.

God is the light (*nur*) of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His light is a niche within which is a lamp in glass, the glass like unto a shining star lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the East nor of the West, its oil nearly glowing though fire had touched it not. Light upon Light. God guides to His light whomsoever He wills.⁵⁵

In another passage of the Qur'an it states in one instance "the Fire of God (*nar allah*) kindled roaring over the hearts covered down upon them, in columns (*'amadin*) outstretched" [Qur'an 104:6-8]. Note again the reference to the Columns (*'amadin*) of Fire, which we saw earlier in the Hebrew Bible. In early esoteric Shi'ite traditions attributed to the Imams this imagery of light associated with the Prophet Muhammad or the *Nur Muhammadi* is extended to the whole complex of the motif of the Fourteen Pure Ones, the Prophet Muhammad, Imam 'Ali and all the Imams, as well as the daughter of the Prophet, Fatima, namely the pleroma of the Fourteen Pure Ones (*chahárdah ma'súmín*) – a complex that has such close parallels with the light imagery of Zoroastrian and Manichean texts, that their influence on these early traditions (*ahadith/akhbar*) cannot be contested. In Twelver Shi'ism the promised one, the Qa'im/Mahdi, in the hermeneutics of the Imams is interpreted as the Fire. In a Tradition attributed to Ja'far al-Şádiq, in the hermeneutics of the first part of Qur'an 74:31, {We have appointed only angels to preside over the Fire (*má ja'alná aşháb al-nár illá malá'ika*)}, the sixth Imam stated, "The Fire is the Qa'im (*fa-l-nár huwa al-qá'im*), peace be upon him, who has kindled his light and (the light of) his appearance for the peoples of the east and the west (i.e. for the whole world) (*qad anára daw'ahu wa-khurújahu li-ahl al-sharq wa-al-gharb*). The angels are they who possess the knowledge of the family of Muḥammad (*wal-malá'ika hum alladhína yamlikúna 'ilm ál Muḥammad*), may the blessings of God be upon them."⁵⁶ Here, in the hermeneutics of the Imams, the Shi'ite faithful are symbolically interpreted to represent the "angels," who have knowledge of the Imams. This esoteric hermeneutics is, as we

shall see, continued in the Bahá'í writings in relation to the Bahá'í faithful, the people of Baha' (see below).

One particular image in early esoteric Shi'ite Traditions ascribed to the Imams is the Column of Light, the *columna gloriae*, which as we saw earlier was mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an. It is this Column of Light which appears earlier in the Manichean literature and may very well have influenced them; called variously the Column of Glory (*umud al-subh*) or Pillar of Fire or Light, and which is significantly mentioned in one of the tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, in a visionary encounter with the heavenly Maiden or Maid of Heaven (see below). Indeed we encounter a Colum of Light or 'amud min naur (or 'amud al-nur) in early Shi'i cosmology and cosmogony, in which it acts as one of the sources of the gnosis of the Imams. The earliest Shi'i Traditions relate that the pre-existential reality of the Prophet and the Imams were in the form of a Column of Light, dwelling in worlds ('awálim) of light, before the creation of the world, and subsequently made its voyage from Adam to the Imams, and eventually will culminate in the Day of Resurrection. In these traditions, reference is made to 'amud min naur, or the Column of Light, which is precisely what their reality or light is derived from, in pre-existence, where Prophet Muhammad and the Imams exist as silhouettes of light (*ashbáh*) before the creation of the world. In one such tradition the Prophet states:

We were silhouettes of light until God wanted to create our form; He transformed us into a column of light (*sayyarana 'amuda nurin*) and hurled us into Adam's loins; then he made us be transmitted through the loins of fathers and wombs of mothers... and when He had us reach the loins of 'Abd al-Muttalib [the grandfather of both the Prophet and 'Ali], He divided the light into two and placed half in the loins of 'AbdAllah [the Prophet's father], and the other half in the loins of 'Abu Talib [the Prophet's uncle and the father of 'Ali], Amina [the Prophet's mother] received in her breast the half that was for me, and she brought me into the world; likewise Fatima, the daughter of Asad [the mother of 'Ali] received in her breast that half that was

for 'Ali, and he begot al-Hasan and al-Husayn... Thus this light will be transmitted from imam to imam until the Day of Resurrection.⁵⁷

This voyage of the Column of Light, the *columna gloriae*, in early esoteric Shi'ite sources is also comparable to the light of the *Khvarnah* in Zoroastrianism, in which it is transmitted as a luminous and fiery seminal fluid,⁵⁸ and is linked to the birth of the prophet Zarathustra (see below). The Manichean influence may also be witnessed in Tayyibi Isma'ilism, in which the Column of Light plays an important imamological and eschatological function. According to Tayyibi gnosis the soul of the faithful initiate (*mustajib*) is said to make a spiritual ascension or voyage from spiritual rank to rank (*hadd*) and this "ascension toward the superior hadd is caused by the magnetism of the column of light ('*amud min nur*, or *al-'amud al-nurani*), the summit of which reaches into the pleroma of the archangels and towards which the souls of the believers are drawn."⁵⁹ The great Iranian Sufi Sahl b. Abdullah at-Tustari (d. 283/896), who was one of the teachers of the famed Sufi martyr Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 309/922), also refers to the Column of Glory, and may have been influenced either by Manichean sources or more likely by such Shi'ite Traditions as noted above. Gerhard Böwering, in his excellent study of the role of the prophet Muhammad in Tustari's work writes:

God in His absolute oneness and transcendent reality, is affirmed by Tustari as the inaccessible mystery of divine light which yet articulates itself in the pre-eternal manifestation of the "likeness of His light, "*mathlau nurihi*, that is, "the likeness of the light of Muhammad," *nur Muhammad*. The origin of the *nur Muhammad* in pre-eternity is depicted as a luminous mass of primordial adoration in the presence of God which takes the shape of a transparent column, '*amud*, of divine light and constitutes Muhammad as the primal creation of God. Thus, explaining the terminology of the Light-verse, Tustari says: "When God willed to create Muhammad, He made appear a light from His light. When it reached the veil of the Majesty, *hijab al-'azamah*, it bowed in prostration before God. God

created from its prostration a mighty column like crystal glass of light that is outwardly and inwardly translucent.⁶⁰

The Manichean Column/Pillar of Light/Glory has further profound parallels in Jewish mysticism and esotericism, namely Kabbalah, and may have influenced such texts as the *Zohar*. There is a veritable list of affinities between the Manichean and the Zoharic vision of the Pillar of Glory/Light, as Moshe Idel has noted, “1. The concept of a pillar that is luminous is found in both the *Zohar* and in Manichaeism. 2. Both Manicheans and the circle of the *Zohar* share the view that a pillar of light or of glory leads souls to paradise. 3. The pillar of glory is identical to the perfect man in Manichaean sources. In the *Zohar*, ‘*amuda*’ *de-’emtza’ita*’ is related to Adam, as both are symbols of the sefirah of Tiferet.”⁶¹ This is only a few of the similarities between the Manichean and Zoharic Column of Light, but their affinity with the Shi’ite Column of Light is also evident.

In one of Bahá’u’lláh’s tablets, *Ishraqat* (Splendors: literally the radiance of the rising sun), the Maiden is personified as the embodiment of Trustworthiness standing upon a Pillar of Light (*‘amud min al-nur*):

One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island [*jazirat al-khadrá*]. Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst. Turning Our face to the right, We beheld what the pen is powerless to describe; nor can it set forth that which the eye of the Lord of Mankind witnessed in that most sanctified, that most sublime, that blest, and most exalted Spot. Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light [*‘amud min al-nur*], and calling aloud saying: ‘O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and

recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Baha, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings.' Thus have We sent down for thee that which will draw men nigh unto the Lord of creation. [TAB 122]

Since Kamran Ekbal has discussed the Manichean parallels of the Column of Glory/Light or Pillar of Fire with the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, there is no reason to cover that ground again here.⁶² However, what is seldom noted is the location or topography of this visionary encounter, referred to by Bahá'u'lláh as "Our Green Island" or *jazirat al-khadrá'*. Shoghi Effendi in his hermeneutics of the above passage states, "In one station the intent is the Garden of Ridvan [in 'Akka], and in another, it is a spiritual interpretation of the station of Trustworthiness."⁶³ It is well known that the Green Island refers to the Garden of Na'myan in the vicinity of 'Akka, which Bahá'u'lláh later suggestively (re)named the Garden of Ridvan (Paradise), but what is never mentioned is that it is also an allusion to certain Shi'ite traditions concerning the Green Island (*jazirat al-khadrá'*) beyond the White Sea, the land or earth of visions, which is associated with Paradise, and where the Twelfth Hidden Imam, the awaited Qa'im/Mahdi, is said to have resided and where the Shi'ite faithful may voyage and encounter him. Corbin sums up the symbols in a narrative concerning the Green Island, by an "Iranian shaykh, 'Ali ibn Fazel Mazandarani, toward the end of our thirteenth century, an experience recorded in the *Account of strange and marvelous things that he contemplated and saw with his own eyes on the Green Island situated in the White Sea*":

The account of the Green Island allows us an abundant harvest of symbols: (1) It is one of the islands belonging to the son of the Twelfth Imam. (2) It is that island, where the Spring of Life gushes, in the shade of the Tree of Paradise, that ensure the sustenance of the Imams followers who live far away, and that sustenance can only be a "suprasubstantial" food. (3) It is situated in

the west, as the city of Jabarsa is situated in the west of the *mundus imaginalis*, and thus it offers a strange analogy with the paradise of the East, the paradise of Amitabha in Pure Land Buddhism; similarly, the figure of the Twelfth Imam suggestive of comparison with Maitreya, the future Buddha; there is also an analogy with Tir-na'n-g, one of the worlds the Afterlife among the Celts, the land of the West and the forever ever young. (4) Like the domain of the Grail, it is an interworld that is self-sufficient. (5) It is protected against and immune to any attempt from outside. (6) only one who is summoned there can find the way. (7) A mountain rises in the center; we have noted the symbols that it conceals. (8) Like Mont-Salvat, the inviolable Green Island is the place where his followers approach the mystical *pole* of the world, the Hidden Imam, reigning invisibly over this age- the jewel of the Shi'ite faith.⁶⁴

In fact it was 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh who acquired this "Green Island" for his father, so that after forty years of consecutive imprisonment and exile from Iran, his father may find therein a measure of peace, as he well knew that Bahá'u'lláh loved the verdant beauty of nature. In one of his tablets 'Abdu'l-Bahá states, "Praise be to God who made the center of His Splendour and Dawning-place of His Lights, and the horizon of His signs and the center of His mysteries the Exalted Horizon (*ufuq-i al-'ala*) and the Kingdom of Abha (*malakut al-abha*'), and the Supreme Paradise and the Green Island (*jazirat al-khadrá*'), and the inhabitants of Jabalqa and the City of Jabarsa..."⁶⁵ Here the symbols of the earth of visions is realized messianically on the plain of history, in 'Akka⁶⁶ in the Garden of Ridvan (Paradise) which is transfigured into the visionary topography of the "Green Island," the *visio samargadina*, and can only be perceived as such with "the eyes of fire,"⁶⁷ as Corbin puts it, namely through the organ of visionary apperception activated by the Holy Spirit, whose symbol is the Fire. Already before his outward declaration in the Baghdad period, Bahá'u'lláh gestures towards a spiritual hermeneutics of the expectation of the Shi'ite Hidden Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi, the presumed son of Hassan al-Askari,

who had remained in occultation, according to Shi'ite doctrine, for at least a thousand years. Bahá'u'lláh writes in the *Gems of Divine Mysteries (Jawahir al-Asrar)*:

All that thou hast heard regarding Muḥammad the son of Ḥasan – may the souls of all that are immersed in the oceans of the spirit be offered up for His sake – is true beyond the shadow of a doubt, and we all verily bear allegiance unto Him. But the Imáms of the Faith have fixed His abode in the city of Jábulqá, which they have depicted in strange and marvellous signs. To interpret this city according to the literal meaning of the tradition would indeed prove impossible, nor can such a city ever be found. Wert thou to search the uttermost corners of the earth, nay probe its length and breadth for as long as God's eternity hath lasted and His sovereignty will endure, thou wouldst never find a city such as they have described, for the entirety of the earth could neither contain nor encompass it. If thou wouldst lead Me unto this city, I could assuredly lead thee unto this holy Being, Whom the people have conceived according to what they possess and not to that which pertaineth unto Him! Since this is not in thy power, thou hast no recourse but to interpret symbolically the accounts and traditions that have been reported from these luminous souls. And, as such an interpretation is needed for the traditions pertaining to the aforementioned city, so too is it required for this holy Being. When thou hast understood this interpretation, thou shalt no longer stand in need of "transformation" or aught else.

Know then that, inasmuch as all the Prophets are but one and the same soul, spirit, name, and attribute, thou must likewise see them all as bearing the name Muḥammad and as being the son of Ḥasan, as having appeared from the Jábulqá of God's power and from the Jábulqá of His mercy. For by Jábulqá is meant none other than the treasure-houses of eternity in the all-highest heaven and the cities of the unseen in the supernal realm. We bear witness that Muḥammad, the

son of Ḥasan, was indeed in Jábulqá and appeared therefrom. Likewise, He Whom God shall make manifest abideth in that city until such time as God will have established Him upon the seat of His sovereignty.⁶⁸

Hence Bahá'u'lláh's allusion to the Green Island in which he had a vision of the personification of Trustworthiness in the form of a luminous Maiden, at once contains multiple messianic allusions drawn from Mazdean, Manichaen, and Shi'ite sources, all of which are emblematic of the spiritual universe of Iran.

In the Mazdean liturgy of prayer, the Zoroastrian faithful pray five times during the twenty-four hour period, whilst standing in the presence of Fire, whether an actual fire, a lamp, the Sun, the Moon, or any source of light and luminosity.⁶⁹ Hence the point of adoration for the Zoroastrian faithful is the outward manifestation of the divine Fire, which is at once the *syzygy* of Asha (Truth/Order). The Báb in the Persian Bayan, as well, enjoined every believer to face the Sun on Friday and to recite a specified prayer to it and similarly to recite a monthly prayer to the Moon. The Báb writes:

While facing the sun on Friday, say this verse so that you will attain the presence of the sun of reality on the day of resurrection: "Verily, the glory (*al-Bahá'*) of God be upon your rising, O rising sun! Testify to that which God hath testified of His Own Self: Verily, there is no God but Him, the Almighty, the Best-Beloved."⁷⁰

The Zoroastrian liturgy of prayers to be recited before the presence of a source of fire such as the sun (and the moon) is clearly apparent in this liturgical enunciation of the Bab. However, these exoteric (*zahir*) supplications by the Bab, at once point to an esoteric (*batin*) and messianic dimension. Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh states that the esoteric and messianic significance of this liturgical supplication of the Bab, acts as an encoded signifier to his own name, that is *Baha'*, and to his messianic status as the promised one of the Bayan. He writes:

Someone wants to know the secret of what was revealed to him that came before me [the Bab] regarding the sun and his standing while facing it. Blessed is the one who asked this question and wanted to know what was concealed from the hearts of the worlds. Say: I swear by God that what he meant by the sun is my beauty that has shown forth from behind the clouds with great lights. Because we made the sun to be the greatest of our signs between heaven and earth, he stood facing it, submissive to my Self, the Inaccessible, the Powerful, the Most High. When he rose facing it during the first part of his day, he spoke a word for which there is no loftier or greater in God's knowledge, if you be of those who know. When he gazed upon it, he said, and his word is the truth, "Verily, The glory (*al-Bahá'*) of God be upon your rising, O rising sun! Testify to that which God hath testified of His Own Self: Verily, there is no God but Him, the Almighty, the Best-Beloved." This was so that all would attain certain knowledge of the inmost secret through the appearance of the sun and testify to that which God has testified, that there is no God but Him, the Almighty, the Best-Beloved.

...He [the Bab] disclosed the Greatest Name [*baha'*] so that everyone would bear witness on the day of revelation to what he had seen. This word is mentioned as one of the fundamentals of the divine commands revealed in the Bayan and each soul in this day must turn toward God on Friday and utter these words, calling to mind the beloved of the world.⁷¹

Here the Báb's invocation to the sun, which contains the Greatest Name *al-Bahá'*, according to the hermeneutics of Bahá'u'lláh, becomes a reference to himself, and by glorifying and supplicating the rising of the visible sun, the Báb effectively gestures towards the advent of the rising of the invisible Sun of Reality, namely the figure of Bahá'u'lláh. In many of the writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh the Sun and Moon act as symbols of the divine Light, at once typifying the pre-existential Primal Will of God, which in the lexicon of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are often referred to as the Sun of

Truth/Reality (*shams-i haqiqat, shams al-haqiqqa*), the Sun of the Word of God (*shams-i kalamey-i ellahi, shams-i kalimat allah*). Indeed, in Shi'ism the two symbols of the Sun and Moon represent respectively, the Prophet Muhammad and Imam 'Ali, exemplified in the famed Tradition, "I am the Sun and 'Ali is the Moon,"⁷² that is, the Sun signifies the station of Prophethood or the Primal Will, and the divinely ordained Guardianship or *Walaya*, reflecting the light of the Sun of Prophethood, symbolized as the Moon. This would not have escaped the early Bábí votaries, who mainly ranked among the Shaykhis, and who were long steeped in the traditions of the Imams. Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh in his commentary on the Qur'anic Surah of the Sun "Tafsír-i-Súriy-i-Wa'sh-Shams" (Surah 91) writes, "Know thou that whoso clingeth to the outward sense of the words, leaving aside their esoteric significance, is simply ignorant."⁷³ He then provides several hermeneutic registers for the term 'Sun' in that verse, which confirms that one of the meanings of the Sun is the "Primal Will," and goes on to state that by the verse, "'By the moon when it followeth it!'" The moon signifieth the station of guardianship [*walaya*], which followeth the sun of prophethood, that is, it appeareth afterward, to vindicate the cause of the prophet among God's servants."⁷⁴

In the preamble of the tablet to Mánakjí Sahib, Bahá'u'lláh identifies the pre-existent or primal Word of God, with the primal or first Light through which all things have come into being:

This dewdrop, which is the Primal Word of God (*nakhusteen guftar-i kerdegar*), is at times called the Water of Life, in as much as it quickeneth with the waters of knowledge them that have perished in the wilderness of ignorance. Again it is called the Primal Light (*roshanai-ye nakhusteen*), a light born of the Sun of divine knowledge, through whose effulgence the first stirrings of existence (*junbesh-i nakhusteen*, the primal movement) were made plain and manifest.⁷⁵

It is clear from the above that "existence" which is literally "the first movement" of creation is ascribed to the Primal Light, which is the same as the Primal Word of God. In a similar

passage Bahá'u'lláh writes, "This movement was made manifest in creation from the heat of the Word of God. Whosoever hath attained unto this heat, hastened to the path of the Friend, and whosoever remained deprived became despondent, a despondency that hath no end."⁷⁶ This primal Light or Fire, which is co-terminus with the Primal Will, is the cause of heat through which all of existence is set in motion. Abdu'l-Bahá in a short tablet to a Zoroastrian believer states, "The soul of the world and the movement of existence is from the essence of the [heavenly] Fire..."⁷⁷ It is here that the dialectic of fire and light, of heat and movement are related at once to the existentionation of the cosmos and its perpetual motion. In a profound series of theophanic utterances related to divine radiance so often encountered in Mazdean and Manichean texts, Bahá'u'lláh proclaims, "Today the Light is speaking, the Fire is conversing and the Sun of Truth is shining."⁷⁸ Here in no uncertain terms Bahá'u'lláh claims to be the personification, embodiment, and epiphany of the Mazdean Fire.

Now among these Persianate Tablets to Zoroastrians, which continue the same motif(s) of Fire, Light, Heat, and Movement, one stands out as the *locus classicus* par excellence, as it is here that Bahá'u'lláh at once unequivocally identifies himself as the appearance of the divine Fire (*atash*) foretold in the Zoroastrian scriptures; whilst simultaneously equating this Mazdean celestial Fire with the pre-existential Primal Will as the cause or motive force which has brought all creation into existence. In this Tablet called *Lawh-i Dustan-i Yazdani* (Tablet of the Divine Friends), whose recipient remains unknown, Bahá'u'lláh in one profound turn accomplishes several hermeneutical registers for the divine Fire in Zoroastrianism. Since this portion of the tablet will act as the locus for our analysis, I shall cite it here in full and begin to explore it in greater detail:

Ascent and descent, stillness and motion [*harikat*], have come into being through the Will of the Lord of all that hath been and shall be. The cause of ascent is lightness, and the cause of lightness is heat [*hararat*]. Thus hath it been decreed by God. The cause of stillness is weight and density, which in turn are caused by coldness. Thus hath it been decreed by God. And since He hath

ordained heat to be the source of motion and ascent and the cause of attainment to the desired goal, He hath therefore kindled with the mystic hand that [True] Fire [*'átash-i haqiqi*]⁷⁹ that dieth not and sent it forth into the world, that this divine Fire [*'átash-i illahiyya*] might, by the heat of the love of God, guide and attract all mankind to the abode of the incomparable Friend. This is the mystery enshrined in your Book [Avesta] [*in ast sirr-i kitáb-i shuma*] that was sent down aforetime, a mystery which hath until now remained concealed from the eyes and hearts of men. That primal Fire [*'átash-i ágház*] hath in this Day appeared with a new radiance and with immeasurable heat. This divine Fire burneth of itself, with neither fuel nor fume, that it might draw away such excess moisture and cold as are the cause of torpor and weariness, of lethargy and despondency, and lead the entire creation to the court of the presence of the All-Merciful. Whoso hath approached this Fire hath been set aflame and attained the desired goal, and whoso hath removed himself therefrom hath remained deprived.⁸⁰

There are two important hermeneutical registers or narratives to be noted in the above passage, first a more philosophical narrative, and second a more mytho-symbolic one:

1. Fire as the symbol of the Primal Will of God, who via heat is the agent or cause of motion/movement and hence of creation (cosmogony),⁸¹ and
2. This Primal Will which is symbolized as the divine Fire, is sent into the world (i.e., Bahá'u'lláh), and was foretold as a messianic expectation in Zoroastrian scriptures (messianism/eschatology).⁸²

First let us turn to the hermeneutics of Bahá'u'lláh related to his symbolic identification of himself as the fulfillment of the messianic expectation of the divine Fire in Zoroastrianism. A comparative analysis of the motif of Fire in these Zoroastrian Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh with the Zoroastrian scriptures will enable us to perceive that indeed they have their counterpart, their *syzygy* as it were, in the Zoroastrian texts themselves. In

particular, we will look at the Gathas (meaning Songs or Hymns), which are considered to be the words of the prophet Zarathustra himself. Indeed, the Gathas are unanimously considered by scholars to be the prophet Zoroaster's own words. They are couched in an ancient mantic poetry, which have caused many difficulties for scholars translating the Gathas. It is no wonder then that the translations of the Gathas are at times so varied and different from one another.⁸³ The other parts of the Avestan Yasna or the Acts of Worship, and the Yashts are called respectively the Younger Avesta.

Now, before we explore the monumental hermeneutical edifice that Bahá'u'lláh has raised round the motif of the Mazdean Fire, it is important to see what other scholars have said in their respective commentaries regarding the above passage. To our knowledge only two scholars have referenced the above text, namely Faridu'ddin Radmehr⁸⁴ and Christopher Buck. Since Radmehr refers to the first portion of this paragraph dealing with its philosophico-cosmogonic elements only, without discussing its Zoroastrian context, we shall deal with it in another section. However, Buck has referenced the above passage in its messianic and eschatological context, but only cites part of the passage, namely the portion which reads: "this is the mystery enshrined in your Book that was sent down aforetime, a mystery which hath until now remained concealed from the eyes of men."⁸⁵ Buck reads this passage in light of his discussion of the prophecy of Sháh Bahrám Varjivand, whereby this "mystery" (*sirr*) becomes a reference to Sháh Bahrám. However, it is clear from the full context of the passage cited above, that the "mystery" or "secret" (*sirr*) in this instance does not refer to Sháh Bahrám, but to the divine Fire (*atash*). Bahá'u'lláh significantly refers to this Fire as a "mystery" foretold in the Mazdean sacred texts, indicating that it has remained hidden until now. However, the expectation of Sháh Bahrám was neither a mystery nor a secret, in fact it was a widespread messianic expectation in nineteenth century Iran, as noted by Buck himself.⁸⁶ Thus the secret effectively contained in the Zoroastrian scriptures, according to Bahá'u'lláh, is a messianic secret, which is none other than the promise of the appearance of the divine Fire, which now stands revealed (i.e., himself).

In many of his tablets to Zoroastrians Bahá'u'lláh again and again alludes to that which had hitherto remained 'hidden' (*mastur*) in the Mazdean scriptures, but which has now been revealed via subtle allusions and references in his writings. In one instance, whilst speaking about the tablets which have been revealed in honor of Zoroastrians Bahá'u'lláh writes:

In these days Tablets have been revealed especially for the people of Zarathustra [i.e. Zoroastrians]. And that which has been hidden (*mastur*) up to now in their Books (*kutub*), has been mentioned therein (*madhkúr*). But unless and until that which belongs to them does not become known (*ma'lum nashavad*), no one will understand the references of the words of the Revealer of Verses [i.e., Bahá'u'lláh].⁸⁷

In the above text Bahá'u'lláh significantly indicates that all that was hidden (*mastur*) up to now in the Zoroastrian scriptures has been mentioned in his writings and that unless and until that which belongs to Zoroastrians (i.e., their sacred texts), does not become known or understood (*ma'lum nashavad*), no one can appreciate the subtle references and allusions in his writings to Zoroastrians. But, what is it that was hidden in the Zoroastrian scriptures? And what is it that must become known first, in order to properly appreciate such references? Indeed, as indicated by Bahá'u'lláh in the previous passage, one such hidden secret or *mystery* is precisely the promise of the messianic advent of the divine Fire (*atar/atash*) – a promise first alluded to in the *Gathas*, as well as other Zoroastrian texts such as the Younger Avesta, and the later Pahlavi texts. Hence, presumably it is this motif and similar constellation of motifs in Mazdean scriptures that must become more widely read and studied, that such references as alluded to by Bahá'u'lláh in his tablets to Zoroastrians, may be better appreciated and understood.

In another tablet to a Zoroastrian believer Bahá'u'lláh refers to this same secret or mystery with the significant Persian term *ráz* (secret, mystery):

The radiance of the world-conquering Sun hath illuminated the world and has bestowed freshness to this age of despondency, happy is the eye that hath seen and recognized. Ask from the self-sufficient Lord, so that He may shine upon you the mystery (*ráz*) of His Day, and may vivify you with a new life. He is the Able, the Knowing.⁸⁸

The mystery or secret (*ráz*) here is the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh, which is referred to as His Day, or the Day of God, or the divine spring-time or Naw-Ruz (New Day). It is interesting to note here that in some of the Middle Persian or Pahlavi texts in the Sassanian period (3rd-7th century CE), which received their final form sometime from the 7th to the 11th CE, the Persian term *ráz* meaning “secret,” or “mystery” (which is semantically co-terminus with *sirr* in Arabic), is used at times to signify precisely “the secret of eschatology”⁸⁹ in its broadest sense of both individual and universal. Apart from this, there is an important occurrence of *ráz* in a text, which is related to the seventh day of creation in Genesis, as it states, “for this same secret the Jews rest on the day of Sabbath even now.”⁹⁰ Shaked avers that “the ‘secret’ here is the reason that God rested on the seventh day after He had created the world,”⁹¹ but he does not elaborate as to what this secret “reason” entails.⁹² What seems to have escaped Shaked and is important to note here is that in the Zoroastrian calendar out of the seven holy days or festivals, the 7th and final holy day, is the festival called the New Day or *Naw Ruz* (the spring-equinox), “prefiguring annually the future ‘New Day’ of eternal bliss,”⁹³ that is to say of *frashgird* (the making brilliant of creation), and which is precisely associated with Truth (*asha*) and Fire (*atar*) (see below). Indeed, these seven festivals were associated with one of the seven creations and its divinity in the Pahlavi texts, as Boyce states:

The six feasts are assigned to a creation and its divinity in the order given in the Zoroastrian creation myth... the sixth being that of mankind, which was under the especial care, through his Holy Spirit, of Ahura Mazdá... The seventh [creation], that of fire, which quickens all the others, was under the guardianship of Asha ... and its feast is Nowruz itself.⁹⁴

Thus, as we have seen in both the Gathas and in the Pahlavi texts, Fire is the originating cause of creation, and acts as the cause of movement that sets existence into motion (this will be more fully developed in the section on Mazdean Fire: see below). Indeed, there are profound messianic overtones in aspects of the Zoroastrian calendar and its relation to Fire/Truth and their correspondences to the Babi-Bahá'í calendar called the Badí' (meaning New, Wondrous, Unique) calendar, and the name *Baha* (Glory, Light, Splendor, Beauty). Some scholars have noted the overall resemblance of the Badí' calendar to the Zoroastrian liturgical calendar, as Walbridge states, "The Báb's [also Bahá'u'lláh's] calendar resembles the Zoroastrian calendar much more closely than the Muslim one, being a solar calendar with non-lunar months and with months and days named after divine attributes."⁹⁵

Indeed, there is a profound homology and correspondence between the Zoroastrian calendar, with the name of divinities or angelic entities (*yazatas*, *izads*) which have their counterpart, their *syzygy*, in the Babi-Bahá'í calendar, in the divine names and attributes of God (*asma' wa sifat-i illahi*), which is effectively those of the Manifestation of God.⁹⁶ The Zoroastrian calendar may be considered therefore, as a sort of messianic cryptogram containing an allusion, a secret (*raz*), a "hierophantic sign," as Corbin puts it, heralding the coming of the New Day or Naw-Ruz, that is the appearance of the Divine Fire as the Saoshyant, which is encoded into the month and the days set aside for Fire (*atar*, *aḍar*, *azar*), which is numerically the number nine (See Figure 1 and Figure 2).⁹⁷ Indeed, nine is precisely the numerical value of the divine name *Baha'* according to the Arabic *abjad* system⁹⁸ – in which each Arabic letter of the alphabet represents a numeric value – and nine is associated with the days and months that are presided over by the divine Fire (*atar/aḍar/azar*) in the Zoroastrian liturgical calendar, and *Baha'* is the divine name presiding over the year nine in the Badí' calendar, and it is precisely the divine name

Baha' which is linked with *Naw Ruz* and linked to the element of Fire. Thus the heavenly and divine Fire as symbolized in the Zoroastrian calendar, is co-incident and co-terminus in every particular with the divine name *Baha'* in the Badí' calendar. Here again the Most Great Name or *Baha'* is co-extensive with the divine Fire in Zoroastrianism (See Figure 1⁹⁹ and Figure 2), and as we shall see, becomes the embodiment of the Mazdean divine Fire and Light of Glory or *Khvarnah* (see below).¹⁰⁰

Thus as we have seen, Bahá'u'lláh's spiritual hermeneutics locates the divine (Primal) Fire as a messianic secret or mystery foretold in the Zoroastrian scriptures. Now we must first ascertain in more detail if in fact the Zoroastrian scriptures, and the Gathas in particular, do contain an expectation of the coming of the divine Fire, namely as a messianic figure in eschatological times, and second to see if in the Gathas and other Zoroastrian sources (i.e., the Pahlavi texts) this divine Fire is the primal cause of existence or creation.

The 7 Holy Days of Obligation	The 30 Days of the Month	The 12 Months of the Year
7 th Holy Day 21 March English Name "New Day"	9 th day Avestan Atar	9 th month (November/December) Adar
Younger Avestan/ Middle Persian No Roz	Pahlavi Adar	Pahlavi Adar
Associated Amesha spenta Asha Vahishta (Best Truth)	New Persian Azar	New Persian Azar
Associated creation Fire	English Fire	English Fire

Figure 1: Zoroastrian Calendar

Name of Day and Month	Holy Days	Year Name and Number
1 st day/month 21 March Associated element: Fire Creative Word	Naw Ruz 21 March	Year 9 from the cycle of 19 years
Arabic name Bahá	Arabic name Bahá	Arabic name Bahá
English name Splendor or Glory	English name Splendor or Glory	English name Splendor or Glory
Numerical value (<i>abjad</i>) 9	Numerical value (<i>abjad</i>) 9	Numerical value (<i>abjad</i>) 9

Figure 2: Bábí/Bahá'í Calendar

Mazdean Fire: From Cosmogony to Eschatology

There is perhaps no single religion that lights the imagination with the symbol of a holy and sacred Fire, than the religion of ancient Iran, namely Zoroastrianism.¹⁰¹ The symbolism of a sacred Fire permeates all aspects of Mazdaism, from its sacred texts, to its liturgy, from its cosmology and cosmogony, to its messianism and apocalyptic-eschatology. Indeed, it cannot be gainsaid that Fire in all its manifestation is one of the quintessential symbols of Mazdaism *par excellence*. So much so, that for centuries, Zoroastrians were polemically referred to as “Fire worshipers” (*atash parast*). It was to such misconceptions that the great poet Firdowsi (d. 1020) spoke to when he wrote these lines in his Book of Kings (*Shahnameh*):

[Hushang’s] ancestors had their religion, their spiritual practice.

Worshipping Izad [God] was the way they pursued.

At that time fire with its beautiful color [was to them],
 What stone in the *mihrab* is now to Arabs [Muslims].
 Fire was placed in the heart of stones in order for
 [Divine] light to spread from *it* throughout the
 world.¹⁰²

The adoration and worship of Fire stretches into the immemorial past among the Indo-Iranians, and in all probability had its origins in the cult of the hearth fire like such divinities as the Vedic Agni (fire). Similarly Fire among the ancient Iranians was the visible manifestation of the divinity called *Atar*, and was worshiped via the hearth fire in liturgical ceremonies that made offerings to the divinity. The term used in the *Gáthás* for Fire is *átar*, (Avestan *átar*, Middle Persian *ádar* or *ádur*, New Persian *átash*) the etymology of which remains unknown.¹⁰³ Also as Skjærø notes, “In the Old Avesta, divine beings are referred to as “lords” (*ahura*, Old Indic *asura*), among them the heavenly fire, Ahura Mazda’s son...”¹⁰⁴ (12). Indeed, *Atar* is one of the many but significant divine entities or beings called *yazatas* or *izads* (The Adorable Ones) in Zoroastrianism, and which Zoroastrian tradition designates as “angels” (*fereshtegan*).¹⁰⁵

The Gathas (Songs or Hymns), which are considered to be the prophet Zoroaster’s/Zarathustra’s own words, may be dated approximately to 1500-1000 BCE and form the oldest portion of the Avesta often called the Old Avesta. They are couched in an ancient mantic poetry, which have caused many difficulties for scholars translating them. It is little wonder that the translations of the Gathas are at times so varied and different from one another.¹⁰⁶ The other parts of the Avestan Yasna or the Acts of Worship, and the Yashts are called respectively the Younger Avesta, and were formed before the Achaemenid dynasty, perhaps during the Median period around 700-550 BCE. Finally, the later Middle Persian or Pahlavi texts belong to the Sassanian period (3rd-7th century CE), and received their final form sometime from the 7th to the 11th CE.

Before examining the motif of the divine Fire in the Zoroastrian scriptures, one of the most important aspects of

Zoroastrianism that must be mentioned at the outset is its profound mytho-logic, in which, there is a simultaneous “mythical and theologico-philosophical” narrative functioning side by side. Indeed, as Alessandro Bausani notes, “Sufficient attention has not been paid to this “style” of Mazdaic Scriptures. This is true not only of the later Pahlavi books but also of Avesta itself.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Wolfson’s definition of the mythologic operative in dreams, is apropos with regard to the logic of Zoroastrian texts, as he states, “mythologic – ... should not be construed as privileging either logical or mythical patterns of discourse, rendering one subordinate to the other...”¹⁰⁸ It is precisely due to this mytho-logic operative in Mazdean imaginary, that the attributes of God or Ahura Mazda “are not (be they eternal or created) intelligible concepts; rather they are themselves ‘persons’ or ‘angels.’”¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Bausani is in agreement with Corbin when he states, “the Mazdean, instead of putting to himself the questions: “What is Time? What is Earth? What is Water?,” asks: “*Who is Time? Who is Earth? Who is Water?*”¹¹⁰ Indeed, it is precisely here that the Mazdean question becomes *Who is Fire?* rather than *What is Fire?* As Bausani notes, “The problem lies in rightly interpreting the verb *is*: in which sense *are* these images of vision what they represent? Certainly they are *not* angels in the Biblical and the Qur’anic sense of mere messengers or servants of God; Corbin compares them rightly with the *dii-angeli* of Proclus.”¹¹¹ This Fire (*atar, adar, atash*) in Mazdean texts, as we shall see, is precisely a divine “person,” an angelic primordial being, who is personified as the ‘Son’ of Ahura Mazda, and His most Holy Spirit (*amesha spenta*). In this precise sense, Fire is not conceived of as a concept or abstraction, but rather as a “person,” one of the creative “angelic” cohorts of Mazdean cosmology and cosmogony. It is crucial to bear in mind this unique mytho-logic operative in the “style” of the Mazdaic scriptures, throughout this section.

Fire (*atar*) in the *Gáthás* plays (both a cosmogonic, as well as) an important apocalyptic-eschatological role – particularly at the *eschaton* or ‘end of time.’¹¹² In Yasna 43:4, it states, “Yes, I shall (truly) realize Thee to be both brave and virtuous, Wise One, if Thou shalt help me (now) with the very hand with which Thou dost hold those rewards Thou shalt give, *through the heat of Thy truth-strong fire*, to the deceitful and to the

truthful..."¹¹³ This passage gestures towards the eschatological function of fire/atar at the end of time. Indeed, Insuler in his note to this verse relates the rewards which Ahura Mazda will give through "*the heat of Thy truth-strong fire*" to "the time of the final judgment" to the "deceitful and to the truthful,"¹¹⁴ namely to the *ashavan* and *dregvan*. This passage is profoundly significant as it links Truth/Order (*asha*) with Fire, to which we shall return to in due course.

In another significant passage of the *Gathas*, the observation noted above, namely the reversal of *What* with *Who* in Mazdean mytho-logic, becomes directly evident in relation to the Fire, "Yes I have already realized thee to be virtuous, wise lord, when he attended me with good thinking. To his question, "*whom dost thou serve?*" I then replied: "*Thy fire. As long as I shall be able, I shall respect that truth is to have a gift of reverence*" (Yasna 43:9).¹¹⁵ Indeed, it is precisely to the question of "*whom do you serve,*" that Zoroaster responds, "Thy fire," thereby personifying the fire, but also pointing to his identification with the fire and truth, a *unito mystica*, with his own heavenly counterpart or twin. Here again Fire is associated with Truth/Asha, and is considered to be its visible manifestation. In Yasna 47:6 it states, "Wise Lord together with this *virtuous spirit* [spenta mainyu] Thou shalt give the distribution of the good to both factions *through Thy fire*, by reason of the solidarity of piety and truth. For it shall convert the many who are seeking."¹¹⁶ What is important in this passage is the unmistakable link between the Fire of Ahura Mazda, and His Virtuous Spirit or Holy Spirit (*spenta mainyu*); and indeed the locution "it will convert the many who are seeking," has clear messianic overtones, as it is the Fire who will "convert the many," at the final judgment.

In the Yasna Hapniahitni (The Yasna of the Seven-Chapters) which is as old as the *Gathas* (1000-1500 BCE), the divine Fire is explicitly identified with Ahura Mazda's Holy Spirit, "As fire Thou art a joy to the Wise Lord... as the Most Holy Spirit art thou a joy to him – for this is thy most efficacious name."¹¹⁷ Another translation of the same Yasna 36:3 reads:

You are indeed the Fire of the Wise Lord.

You are indeed his most bounteous spirit.
 We approach you O Fire of the Wise Lord,
 With what is the most powerful of your names.¹¹⁸

Here we see that the Fire is identified with Ahura Mazda's most Bounteous Spirit, which is variously translated as the Virtuous Spirit or Holy Spirit (*spenta maniyu*). It is through this most powerful of God's names, Fire (*atar*), which is synonymous with the Holy Spirit that the faithful worshiper approaches God. It is of profound interest here to note that the divine Fire, which is here referred to as the "Most Powerful of Your Names," is not unlike the concept of the Greatest of all names, the *shém há mephorash* of Jewish tradition,¹¹⁹ and the Greatest Name of God (*al-ismu'llah al-a'zam*) in Islam, and may well have its Mazdean homologue in the divine Fire. The notion of God's Greatest Name or the Most Great Name has a long heritage in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions and seems to have its ancient counterpart in the Gathas of Zarathustra regarding the Fire as the most powerful name of Ahura Mazda. Indeed, it is precisely in the name *Bahá'* – termed as 'the most great name of God' by Bahá'u'lláh (*al-ismu'llah al-a'zam*) – which means at once glory/light/splendor/beauty that we shall see the very epiphany and theophany of the divine Fire in Zoroastrianism – a Fire which is at once 'the most great name of God', and the essence of the symbol of *Khvarnah* or the Light of Glory. In this precise sense, it is this Fire typified by the luminous light of the *Khvarnah* that shall accompany the Messianic figure, the Saoshyant, at the *eschaton* (see below).

In a veritable list of similar passages in the Gathas, the eschatological appearance of Fire (*Atar*) and its connection with *Asha* may be noted (*italics* are added for emphasis):

Yasna 34:4 Now, we wish *Thy fire*, Lord, *which possess strength through truth [asha]* and which is the wisest, forceful thing, to be of clear help to Thy supporter but of visible harm, with the powers in its hands, to Thy enemy, Wise One.

Yasna 31:19 This knowing world-healer has listened [Zarathustra], he who has respected the truth, Lord, being one who has mastery over his tongue at will for the true speaking of the (proper) words when the distribution in the good shall occur to both factions through *Thy bright fire*,¹²⁰ Wise One.

Yasna 46:7 *Whom hast Thou appointed as guardian for me*, Wise One, if the deceitful one shall dare to harm me? *Whom other than Thy fire* and Thy (good) thinking through whose actions one has nourished the truth, Lord?

Yasna 51:9 The satisfaction which Thou shalt give to both factions through *Thy pure fire* and molten iron, Wise One, is to be given as a sign among living beings, in order to destroy the deceitful and to save the truthful.

In the Younger Avesta, the divine Fire or Atar is personified with the sublime and theophanic title, the “Son of Ahura Mazda” (*Atars puthra Ahurahe Mazda*) (Fire, the Son of God). Thus we read:

Yasna 2. To Fire, the son of Ahura Mazda. To you, O Fire, son of Ahura Mazda. With propitiation, for worship, adoration, propitiation, and praise.

Yasna 2:12 With this libation and Baresman I desire for this Yasna you, the Asha-sanctified Atar, the Son of Ahura Mazda, the master of Asha, with all Fires.

Yasna 62: 1. I offer my sacrifice and homage to thee, the Fire, as a good offering, and an offering with our hail of salvation, even as an offering of praise with benedictions, to thee, the Fire, O Ahura Mazda's son! ...
6. And may'st thou grant me, O Fire, Ahura Mazda's Son! that whereby instructors may be (given) me, now and for evermore, (giving light to me of Heaven) the best life of the saints, brilliant, all glorious. And may I have experience of the good reward, and the good

renown, and of the long forecasting preparation of the soul.¹²¹

It is evident from the above passages that Fire (*atar*) is personified as a “being,” ‘the son of Ahura Mazda,’ who, like God, is at once the object of love and worship for the faithful. Fire, is the “most adorable of the most adorable” of the *Yazatas*, and considered the primary *way* and *intermediary*, by which the faithful are to draw near the object of their worship, namely God (Ahura Mazda). This personification of Fire as the Son of Ahura Mazda is profoundly significant, as it already adumbrates the coming of the divine Fire as a ‘being’ who is precisely manifested as Asha (Truth), the messianic figure at the *eschaton*, namely the Sayoshant, and not simply an element or an abstraction symbolizing divine judgment at the end of time.

It is worth mentioning here that the term ‘Son of God’ which is applied to the Mazdean Fire, may have influenced, early on, the theophanic title of Jesus as the ‘Son of God’ in the New Testament, which has no precise precedence in the Jewish scriptures (i.e., Hebrew Bible).¹²² Indeed it may be argued that this title in its Christian context may owe more to the Zoroastrian heritage of the “Son of God” than to Judaism, for in all of the Jewish scriptures nowhere can we discover references to a Messiah, who is at once ‘divine’ and the creator of the world and is referred to with the epithet ‘Son’ of God. The great Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (50 CE), calls the Logos the “Son of God,” and the “only begotten son of God,”¹²³ and the first manifestation of God, but Philo’s Logos doctrine does not conceive that the Logos could become ‘embodied’ in a ‘person’ or to be “made flesh.” But, this is precisely what we discover in Zoroastrianism, namely Fire personified as the ‘Son of God’ and who shall appear at the end of time, ‘embodied’ as it were, in the Zoroastrian savior.

The designation ‘Son of God’ and its relation to Fire, the Holy Spirit, and Truth/Order in Zoroastrianism lend themselves to a comparative analysis with the lexicon of the New Testament, which refer to Jesus in similar terms. For instance, Jesus was asked by Pontus Pilate as to who he was, and he states, “I am the Truth,” effectively enunciating to be the “embodiment” or incarnation of Truth, just as the Gathas

foretold the embodiment of the Truth in the eschatological final judgment. In another place, Jesus states, "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6), and in another instance turning to his disciples he states, you shall be baptized by the "Holy Spirit and by Fire," thereby equating fire with the Holy Spirit, precisely as it is found in the Zoroastrian scriptures. Indeed, the Logos of John 1:1, which appears in the "flesh," namely Jesus of Nazareth, is the "Light, which shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth not," again evokes classic Zoroastrian motifs of light and darkness. The New Testament concept of the virgin birth of Jesus is likely more related to the Zoroastrian conception of the virgin birth of the Sayoshant, than to any references or precedents in the Jewish scriptures (see below). Indeed this should be of no surprise, as the influence of Iranian motifs, especially apocalyptic and eschatological motifs, on Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam, are well known, and have received general scholarly consensus among Iranologists.

Now let us see how in the Gathas (and other Zoroastrian texts), the divine Fire (who is called the Son of God) is intimately linked with the divine Truth/Order called Asha¹²⁴ (Avestan, *Arta*, *Asha* or *Asha Vahishata*, Best Truth, Middle Persian, *Urduwahasht* or *Urdibehesht*, which can also be translated as Order, Righteousness, cosmic and moral order) and the 'Virtuous Spirit' (*Spenta Mainyu*) which may also be translated as the 'Holy Spirit,' through which all of creation comes into being.¹²⁵ Asha is one of the six Archangelic beings or Amesha Spentas (Ahura Mazda himself being the seventh – forming together a divine Heptad), which all have a corresponding element, "these six Amesha Spentas are also the archangelic emblem-personification of the primordial elements: Earth (*Spenta Armaiti*), Cattle (*Vohu Manah*), Fire (*Asha*), Metals (*Khshathra*), Water (*Haurvatat*), Plants (*Ameretat*)."¹²⁶ Indeed, as Bausani perceptively points out, these Amesha Spentas or archangelic beings "are the elements not as allegories of them, but as living personal symbols, as "Lords of the Species." The concept of Ratu, Lord of the Species, is present everywhere in Mazdaic books. The Lord of the Species "Woman" is, for instance, the mythico-historical Daena, 'religion'..."¹²⁷ Hence, Asha does not only allegorize or

symbolize Fire, but *is* the Fire, insofar as it is its Lord of the Species. Indeed, it was Suhrawardi who equated the Platonic Forms with the Zoroastrian Angelic entities (*yazatas*),¹²⁸ and who “designates them the “lords of the species” (*arbáb al-anwá’*) (see Harawi, *Anváriyyih*, pp. 41-42), an expression which Bahá’u’lláh confirms in a Tablet in which He explains the meaning of the “active force” [*fa’íl*] mentioned in the Tablet of Wisdom. In that Tablet, He says: “The intention of the active force is the lord of the species, and it hath other meanings” [*Áthár-i-Qalam A’lá*, vol. 7, p. 113].”¹²⁹

Indeed, all of the seven Amesha Spentas form together a kind of *unio mystica* which is alluded to in *Yasht* 19:16.

Who are all seven of one thought, who are all seven of one speech, who are all seven of one deed; whose thought is the same, whose speech is the same, whose deed is the same, whose father and commander is the same, namely, the Maker, Ahura Mazda.¹³⁰

It is important to note also that in the Gathas the Holy Spirit, Fire, and Asha are all linked together. As it states, “A person shall bring to realization the best... according to the single understanding: the Wise One is the Father of Truth (*aša*). Wise Lord, together with this virtuous spirit [*spenta maniyu*] Thou shalt give the distribution in the good to both factions through *thy fire*” [*Yasna* 47:2, 6]. It is precisely by the Virtuous Spirit or Holy Spirit, which is here linked with Asha/Truth, that the Wise Lord shall distribute good or justice to both factions through His Fire. This passage is precisely in the context of eschatology, when Fire will appear and act as a judge through which good or justice will be distributed to the *ashavan* or followers of truth, and to the *dregavan* or the followers of falsehood. Stanly Insler in his comments to the translation of the Gathas states, “Fire was considered to be a manifestation of truth. Therefore worship of the fire was worship of the truth.”¹³¹ Similarly Mary Boyce states: “Zoroaster ... apprehended fire as the creation of Aša Vahišta (q.v.), and ... saw fire as the instrument of God’s judgment at the Last Day.” Indeed it was to remember this fact that the prophet Zarathustra states in *Yasna* 43.9: “At the

offering made in reverence (to fire) I shall think of truth (*aša*) to the utmost of my power.”¹³²

Now let us look further into the Gathas to see if this divine Truth/Order/Asha which forms with Fire a dualitude or *syzygy*, has a conceptual parallel like that of the Primal Fire as the active agent through whom all creation comes into being (i.e., the cosmogonic cause), and who will be embodied in the world as a Saviour, the Saoshyant, in eschatological times (much like the tablet(s) of Bahá'u'lláh to Zoroastrians). In Gatha 48:6 it states, “And the Wise One shall increase the plants for her through Truth [*asha*], He who is to be Lord at the birth of the foremost existence.”¹³³ Here the pre-existence and personification of Asha is described as “He,” “who is to be Lord at the birth of the foremost existence.” This title ‘Lord of foremost existence’ may be related to both cosmogony and eschatology, namely to the notion of *Frashegird* or the making “brilliant” or “luminous” of creation at the end of time. Indeed, most scholars have noted that Asha is part of the creative/cosmogonic principle of Ahura Mazda, as Boyce puts it succinctly:

As the hypostasis of what should be in the physical sphere, i.e., order, regularity, Aša is present “in the beginning, at creation,” when Ahura Mazdá fixed the course of sun, moon and stars (Y. 44.3). It is through him that Ahura Mazdá made the plants grow (Y. 48.6), and he has the epithet “world-furthering,” *fradá t.gaétha*- [Y. 33.11].

Thus Asha is a pre-existent being that was present “in the beginning at creation,” and that it is *through* him that God set the cosmos in order (i.e., sun, moon, and stars), and that it is *through* Asha that things grow (i.e., plants and other existent things) and have their existence. Indeed, this recalls the Logos (often translated as Word, which also means Order, or Logic, and is the conceptual cognate of Asha) in John 1:1, which was there “in the beginning,” and through whom all things were created, just as it is with Asha. Furthermore, the cosmogonic epithet “world-furthering,” *fradá t.gaétha*” is further testimony to the eternal creative agency of Asha. Hultgård also in reference to the above passage in Yasna 44: 3-5 also notes that,

“the oldest Avestan texts, the Gathas, pay homage to Ahura Mazda as father and “creator” of the universe (Y. 44: 3-5; the word *datar* meaning here “one who sets [chaos] into order”).”¹³⁴ What is interesting is that the Avestan word *datar*, which is one of the masculine noun *r* stems literally meaning ‘giver’, is related to the word *atar* in the same stem – the adjectival form of nominative singular *atarsh* (*átarš*) – which is precisely the word for fire.¹³⁵ Indeed here we have an early linguistic relation of Truth/Order (*asha*) with Fire.

Now it is in the same important hymn of the Gathas, namely Yasna 43, that a link is established between Truth/Asha and the Saoshyant, meaning “He who will bring benefit,” and his ‘embodiment’ on earth at the time of the renovation or *frashgird*. Indeed, as Shakad has noted “One of the clear eschatological terms in the Gáthás is Saošyant, the future benefactor, a term which may have originally applied to Zoroaster himself (e.g., Y. 46.3; cf. Boyce, 1975, pp. 234 ff.).”¹³⁶

Yasna 43:16 Therefore, Lord, this Zarathustra chooses that very spirit of Thine which indeed is the most virtuous of all, wise one. “May *truth* [Asha] be embodied and strong with breath. May there be piety under the rule of Him who has the appearance of the sun. May He dispense through His good thinking (each reward).”¹³⁷

Here the messianic and eschatological hope of the coming of Asha is clearly stated by the prophet Zarathustra himself, that “Asha may be embodied” or become ‘flesh’ as it were, and be “strong with breath,” namely as a living and breathing human being, who is later identified with the Saoshyant or the savior in Zoroastrianism. The messianic name, Astvat-ereta, “he who embodies Asha,” was given to the Saoshyant and developed from this very last passage of Yasna 43:16. As Boyce states,

Zoroaster’s community held ardently to hope in the coming of this man [Astvat-ereta], to whom was given the title Saošyant, “He who will bring benefit,” and gradually it came to be believed that he would be born of the seed of Zoroaster himself, miraculously

preserved at the bottom of a lake, where it is watched over by the *fravašis* (see *Frawahr*) of the just. When *Frašō.kərəti* is near, it is held, a virgin will bathe in this lake and become with child, and will bear a son, the Saošyant; and a name was fashioned for him, Astvat-ereta, "He who embodies righteousness [*asha*]." This name is evidently derived, with a small dialect difference, from Zoroaster's own words in *Y.* 43.16: *astvaṭ ašəm hyáṭ* "may righteousness [*asha*] be embodied."¹³⁸

Indeed the Saoshyant, who is entitled Astvat-ereta, will radiate the luminous and fiery *Khvarnah* or Light of Glory, which does not only accompany kings, but prophetic and messianic figures, including Zoroaster himself. As Boyce further notes:

Astvat-ereta will be accompanied, as his father was before him, and as all righteous kings and heroes are, by X^varənah, Divine Grace (see *Xwarrah*), and it is in *Yašt* 19, which celebrates X^varənah, that the extant Avesta has most to tell of him. There the worshippers declare: "We sacrifice to the mighty ... kingly X^varənah ... which will accompany the victorious Saošyant ... so that he may make existence new again, not ageing, not dying, not decaying" [*Yt.* 19.88-89].¹³⁹

Now in the Middle Persian or Pahlavi texts, both cosmogonic and eschatological functions of the divine Fire are further elaborated. Indeed, the cosmogonic aspect of the divine and celestial fire becomes more pronounced in the Pahlavi text called *Bundahišn* (Creation), as J. Duchense-Guillemin states, "In Mazdean orthodoxy when Ohrmazd creates the world, he produces at first, from Infinite Light, a *form of fire, from which all things are to be born*. This form of fire is, "bright, white, round, and visible from afar.... [emphasis added]"¹⁴⁰ This is the passage of the *Bundahišn* that Duchense-Guillemin refers to, "Ohrmazd fashioned forth the form of His creatures from His own self, from the substance of light – in the form of fire, bright, white, round, visible afar."¹⁴¹ Here we have a pre-existent being in the "form of fire" through which all things are created and which has a clear cosmogonic function. It is

interesting to note that this fire is linked with Ohrmazd himself and is created from the substance of his own light. Guillemin points out that another Pahlavi text gives “the name of this giant body, or form of fire... in the *Datistan-i Danik* [it is written]... that ‘Ohrmazd, the Lord of all things, produced from Infinite Light, a form of fire whose name was that of Ohrmazd and whose light was that of fire.’”¹⁴² In his reflection on this enigmatic passage Duchense-Guillemin states: “Ohrmazd creating a body which is called Ohrmazd – what can be the meaning of this? It seems to me that everything becomes clear if we are prepared to consider the phrase as a clumsy adaptation of a Zurvinite one which said in effect: Zurvan creates Ohrmazd – not forgetting that in Manichaeism, Ohrmazd is the name of Cosmic Man, issued from the supreme god Zurvan.”¹⁴³ But, though Duchense-Guillemin is correct in his reading that there seems to be a Zurvinite influence on this otherwise orthodox Mazdean cosmogony, yet there is an ancient precedent in the Avesta, in which the “form of fire,” especially the ritual fire, is conceived symbolically as the “shape” or “body” of Ahura Mazda. In the Yasna of the Seven Chapters, in Yasna 36: “the ritual fire is addressed as Ahura Mazda’s most beautiful shape”:

We proclaim, O Wise Lord, That these lights are your most beautiful shape of shapes, since that highest of the high was called the sun.¹⁴⁴

In another Pahlavi text, the Denkard (Acts of Religion), a similar cosmogonic function of the Fire is deployed, with clear Neo-Platonic influences. As Mansour Shaki puts it, “Blending traditional tenets with Neo-Platonic doctrine, the passage recounts that the creator first fashions from the Endless Light the all-embracing form of fire (*âsrô-kerp*), which emanates two instruments of equal creative powers: the Spirit of the Power of the Soul (*mênôg î waxš nêrôg*) and the Spirit of the Power of Nature (*mênôg î chihr nêrôg*).”¹⁴⁵ Hence, even in the scheme presented in the Denkard, which is a mixture of Neo-Platonic emanationism with traditional Mazdean cosmogony, the “form of fire” is what brings the process of emanation and hence creation into being. Just as in Mazdean cosmogony the luminous divine Fire is at the origin or beginning of creation and is the means by which creation is existentiated, so also, Fire

figures as the quintessential feature of the drama of the end, at the *eschaton*, and the renovation (*frashgird*) of the world. Indeed, the Pahlavi texts speak of the eschatological appearance of the Fire at the end of time as a “person” or a human figure. In the *Zatspram* or *Zadspram* we read, “In the end, manifest and plain, there will be seen by night and in the atmosphere a form of fire, in the shape of a man, conceived by the spiritual gods, riding as it were, a fiery horse, and fearful (to behold): and they shall be freed from doubt.”¹⁴⁶ Here a similar “form of fire” which at the beginning of creation, in pre-existence, brought forth the creation of all things (cosmogony), appears in the “shape of a man,” at the end of time (eschatology), as a savior riding upon a horse. Indeed, this passage recalls the figure of Logos in the Apocalypse of John riding upon a white horse, and is evocative of the *Oracle of Hystapes*, and may have been influenced by it.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 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. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called “The Word of God.” [Rev. 19:11-13]

Indeed, the Word of God or Logos in the Apocalypse of John, whose eyes are like “flames of fire” has clear Zoroastrian overtones. It is also worth noting that this vision of Christ or the Word of God is regarding his second appearance or *parousia*. In another instance, Hultgård also paraphrases a portion of *Wizidagiha-i Zadspram*, stating that, “the great fire is likened to a huge human figure holding in his hand a tree with the branches above and the roots below. The branches will take the righteous and bring them to paradise the roots will seize the wicked and drop them in hell [WZ 35:40, 44].” Thus, the symbolism of the “great fire,” “in the shape of a man,” a *theos anthropos*, alludes to a messianic figure, a *soter* or savior, the Saoshyant, who will come at the end of the Zoroastrian *aeon* (age), and through whom the “righteous” will enter paradise and the “wicked” into hell: a classic motif attributed to Fire as

divider of the *ashavan* and *dreagvan* at the final judgement, that as we have seen, goes back to the Gathas themselves. This form or shape of fire is also mentioned in a Manichaean text in Middle Persian called *Shapuragan* in the context of eschatology and the end of the *aeon*. It describes in vivid terms the eschatological Day of Judgment, in which “the Great Fire ascends to the heavens in the *chihr* (i.e., shape) of Ohrmazd-bagh (The Primordial Man).”¹⁴⁷ Thus in Mazdaism and Manichaeism, the heavenly and celestial Fire is visualized as a sacred *person*.

In Iranian apocalyptic imaginary there is a sublime correspondence between the beginning (cosmogony) and the end (eschatology), as Hultgård has observed: “One cannot understand Persian Apocalypticism without taking into consideration its context within cosmic history. There is an inner coherence between the beginning and the end that is unique to the Iranian worldview.”¹⁴⁸ Kreyenbroek also notes this homology of the beginning with the end in Mazdean thought stating that, “in Zoroastrian eschatology as it developed since the time of the Prophet [Zarathustra], the Last Things have come to mirror the First things [Cosmogony] am lost completely, although in a compressed form.”¹⁴⁹ In his brief description of the stages of cosmogony in the Pahlavi texts he states, in the early creation “Fire brings movement” and towards the “End of Time” “Fire and Molten metal cleanse the world...”¹⁵⁰ In this precise sense, the dialectic of fire and movement is linked in Zoroastrianism to cosmogony, just as it is in Bahá’u’lláh’s Persianate tablets. In fact, Kreyenbroek observes that of the various “elements of eschatology, only the cleansing flow of molten metal, has no obvious counterpart in the cosmogony. As it plays an important role in the Gathas, it seems likely that its presence in Zoroastrian eschatology goes back directly to Zarathustra’s teaching.”¹⁵¹ It is in this Mazdean sense that Jesus in the Apocalypse of John states, “I am the First or the Beginning (*alpha*) and the Last or the End (*omega*)” [Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 22:13]. Indeed, Bahá’u’lláh in a similar manner correlates the beginning with the end, he states, “Know thou that the end is like unto the beginning. Even as thou dost consider the beginning, similarly shouldst thou consider the end, and be of them that truly perceive. Nay, rather consider the beginning as

the end itself, and so conversely, that thou mayest acquire a clear perception" [TB 183]. 'Abdu'l-Bahá' also states that in all the great spiritual cycles "the origins and ends are the same" [BWF 400] Namely that each cycle of divine revelation begins by the Manifestation of the Primal Will, symbolized here by the celestial Fire, and ends with its appearance again on the plain of history. Thus cosmogony mirrors eschatology and *vice versa*, and each cycle of the self-revelation and theophany of the Primal Will, is itself a microcosm of the process of cosmogony. As it is abundantly clear in the Mazdean context the world comes into being through the divine Fire and ends by the coming of Fire, which personified and embodied as the salvific appearance of Truth/Asha in the form of the Saoshyant, will radiate the Fire of the divine "Glory," namely the *Khvarnah*.

Bahá'u'lláh as the Fire and Light of the Divine Glory (*Khvarnah*)

There is a profound correspondence and sublime homology between Zoroastrianism and the Bahá'í faith¹⁵² – these *twin* religions of the soil of Iran, "the earth of Light" – which may be gestured at the outset of this section by an emblematic episode in the life of Bahá'u'lláh, in which he states to his prison interrogators in 'Akka, who upon insisting as to his name and native home land exclaimed: "My name is Bahá'u'lláh (Light of God), and my country is *Nur* (Light)." ¹⁵³ It is here that Bahá'u'lláh in a sublime hermeneutical turn simultaneously reveals the spiritual correspondence, the *syzygy*, between his heavenly abode, and his earthly homeland, a land which is the realm of spiritual Light(s) in the pleroma of the world of *Lahut*, and which in the sacred topography of this world, and the coordinates of the world of *Nasut* (the physical world), is the land of Iran (often referred to in our texts as *mahd-i amr'ullah* or the cradle of the Cause of God), in the province of Mazandaran called *Nur* (Light). Indeed, it is in the very name of Baha' (Allah) that we shall discover the manifestation of the divine Fire, not least typified by one of the most sublime concepts in all of Mazdeanism, namely the *Khvarnah*.

One of the aspects of the divine Fire in Zoroastrianism is the sublime concept of *Khvarnah*, the “Divine Glory” or “Light of Glory,” as Corbin calls it.¹⁵⁴ *Khvarnah*, the Avestan term for ‘Splendour’ or ‘Glory’ (Old Persian *farnah*, middle Persian *khwarr*, new Persian *khurrah* or *farr*), is derived from *khvar*, ‘to shine, to illuminate’, and was translated into Greek as *doxa* or glory. This luminous and radiant glory is not only characteristic of Yima (Jamshid), the first king in Mazdean mytho-history (and of Royal light of kingly authority and legitimacy in general), and Zarathustra as the prophet of God, but also of the future messianic savior(s), the Saoshyant(s). In iconography, it is typified by the luminous halo or *Aura Gloriar* of kings and priests (such as the relief of Kartir at *Naqsh-i Rostam* and *Naqsh-i Rajab*) in Zoroastrianism, and which influenced the iconography of Buddhism (the halo behind the head of the Buddha), Christianity (the halo represented behind Jesus Christ in paintings and icons), and Islam (represented by both a halo and flames of fire emanating from behind the head of prophet Muhammad in miniatures and paintings).

The relation of *Khvarnah* to the sacred Fire, has often been noted by various scholars, for example, Jackson states, “the essence of fire manifests itself in the form of the *huvarenah* [*khavarnah*]...”¹⁵⁵ In many of the passages of the Avesta *Khvarnah* is a “power of luminous and fiery nature.”¹⁵⁶ For instance it is in Yasht 10:127 that the “‘strong’ (*uyra-*) *xvarənah-* of the *kauui-* is identified with a “blazing fire” (*átarš yōupa.suxtō*) that precedes Mithra in his chariot.”¹⁵⁷ Indeed, all the three great sacred Zoroastrian fires of ancient Iran, namely “Farnbág, Gušnasp, and Burzén-Mihr,” were thought to be the visible manifestation of “the divine “Glory of Fire” (Av. *atarə xvarənah-*) which is the hypostasis of the power and “glory” in all fires (see Bd. 18.15).”¹⁵⁸ It is in one of the Pahlavi scriptures, the *Revayat*, that another link is established between the Fire and Daena, as it states, “the spirit of Fire itself, will be present “with the other Amešaspands” to receive the righteous soul at the Činvat Bridge.”¹⁵⁹ Here it is the Fire, like the Daena the heavenly twin of the soul, who will be the one to receive the soul of the righteous in its post-mortem heavenly voyage. As Corbin states, “that is why Daena is also Xvarnah [*Khvarnah*], personal Glory and Destiny, and as such is ‘thine Aeon, thine

Eternity.”¹⁶⁰ Thus, the soul’s archetypal counterpart, its twin, is at once Daena and *Khvarnah*, and may be linked to what ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has termed “the heavenly spirit” or the “spirit of Faith” (*ruh-i iman*), which may be linked to the concept of Daena (the Maiden) signifying at once religion, the soul’s double/twin, and a maiden.¹⁶¹ In his discussion of five types of spirit Abdu’l-Bahá states, “The fourth degree of spirit is the heavenly spirit; it is the spirit of faith and the bounty of God; it comes from the breath of the Holy Spirit, and by the divine power it becomes the cause of eternal life. It is the power which makes the earthly man heavenly...” [SAQ 144]

Indeed, as we have seen the celestial Fire is linked to the radiance of the Zoroastrian savior or Saoshyant, and the flaming majesty or glory that is *Khvarnah*, which accompanies all the Zoroastrian saviors, including Zoroaster himself, and whose being permeates and radiates the Light of Glory (*khvarnah*). The *Denkard* (Acts of Religion), one of the Pahlavi texts, describes in mytho-poetic terms the birth of the prophet Zarathustra in which three days prior to his birth, his mother, Frin, became so radiant and luminous that the whole village was immersed in light. The inhabitants thought that a great fire had been set ablaze and hurriedly evacuated the village. But, upon their return they came to find a boy full of brilliance had been born. When the mother of Zarathustra was fifteen, she irradiated light wherever she moved. The *Denkard* explains that the sublime radiance that emanated from her was due to the *Khvarnah* that dwelt in her.¹⁶² In another Pahlavi text the *Zádspram*, “Zoroaster’s *xwarrah* [*Khvarnah*] is said to have descended from heaven and become manifest “in the form of fire” (*pad átaxš éwénag*) at the moment of his birth (5.1, 8.8).”¹⁶³ The motif of this supra-natural splendor or light, which accompanied the birth of Zarathustra, is also evident in Islamic Sira narratives concerning the birth of Muhammad. According to Ibn Ishaq, when the mother of prophet Muhammad, Amina, was pregnant with him, she witnessed in a dream that a light radiated from her belly to the castles of Syria.¹⁶⁴

The dramatic setting of the revelation of prophet Zarathustra is also characterized by the supra-natural splendour of the heavenly Fire that radiated upon the mountain where the

prophet had retired. The Greek philosopher Dion Chrysostom of Prusa (d. 112), “mentions the highest peak on which Zarathustra retired in order to “live in the way that was his own,” and where a ceremony of ecstasy, invisible to the eyes of the profane, unfolds in a setting of fire and supernatural splendor.”¹⁶⁵ Indeed, this event has its similitude in Bahá’u’lláh’s own retirement to the mountains of Sulaymaniyyah in Iraqi Kurdistan (after his epiphanic encounter with the luminous Maiden (*huriyya*), the symbol of the Holy Spirit and his own self or ‘Twin’), where some of his sublime poetical outpourings such as the *qasída-i izz-i varqaiyya* or “the Ode of the Dove” were penned, at the request of Naqshbandi Sufis, among whom Bahá’u’lláh lived at the time.

Now, it is precisely in one of the poems of the Baghdad period (1853-63), penned during his two-year retirement to the Sulaymaniyyah mountains that Bahá’u’lláh states that he is the Divine Light of Glory (*farr iláhi*):

That King, through whose Command the world is
recreated,

From whose breath, Christ’s spirit came to life.

That Divine Light of Glory (*farr iláhi*), from whose
Decree, the Holy Spirit, is made a humble servant.¹⁶⁶

Here Bahá’u’lláh identifies himself, in the third person, with the Zoroastrian *farr iláhi* or Divine Light of Glory, and which is also at once personified and symbolized in his person and name, *Baha’*. This is the clearest textual basis for Bahá’u’lláh’s claim to possess the *farr iláhi* or the Divine Light of Glory. In fact, Bahá’u’lláh’s messianic claim to be the appearance of the Mazdean divine Fire is precisely co-extensive with being the manifestation of *Khvarnah*, for as we have seen, *Khvarnah* is the victorial Fire, and it is precisely this Fire which will symbolically radiate from the Zoroastrian savior. Indeed it is in the Arabic verbal noun *Baha’*, meaning at once, splendour, glory, radiant light, and beauty, that the term *Khvarnah*, *Khurrah*, *farr* itself becomes translated and transferred into Arabic as *Baha’*. This is accomplished through the mystical lexicon of Suhrawardi, the Shaykh al-Ishraq. In this respect the work of this great martyr

philosopher of Iran, acts as a spiritual bridge – a chintvat bridge as it were – between Mazdean and Islamic Iran, to the Bahá'í faith. It is worth citing an extended passage in Corbin's *In Iranian Islam*, in which he discusses the translation of *Khvarnah* as *Baha'*, in Suhrawardi's *Hikmat al-Ishraq* (the Philosophy of Illumination):

Other terms make as many allusions to these “sources of the Light of Glory” [*Khvarnah*] during the course of the book. As we have stated, the book of Oriental Theosophy [*Hikmat al-Ishraq*] begins with a radical reform of Logic and finishes with a sort of memento of ecstasy, captured in two lyrical psalms. It is a question of “wanderings that went knocking on the portal of the great halls of the Light” and an encounter towards which “Angels who draw others to the Orient” advance and pour Water that springs from the “Source of Beauty” (*Yanbû al-bahâ*). We already noted above (page 59), that *the word Xvarnah [Khvarnah] is translated exactly by the Arabic bahâ (beauty, flash, splendor)*. “Sources of Beauty,” on this page is therefore equivalent to *Yanâbî al-Khurrah*, the Sources of the Light of Glory, from the magnificent account of his personal confession. The qualification given to the Angels illustrates even better that, to Suhrawardi's mind, *Xvarnah* and *Ishrâq*, Light of Glory and Light of the Orient, Source of *Xvarnah* and Oriental Source, are mutually interchangeable terms. Water and Light¹⁶⁷ are traditionally also mutually interchangeable as sources of Life and Knowledge. We encounter the expressions “Sources of Life” and “Sources of Light and Life” on other pages. The Source is itself not an object of knowledge but that what makes it gush forth [emphasis added].¹⁶⁸

Here, as Corbin observes, the term *Khvarnah* in Suhrawardi's lexicon becomes “*translated exactly by the Arabic Baha'*,” and that the “Sources of Beauty” (*Yanbu al-Bahâ*), and the Sources of the Light of Glory, namely *Yanabi al-Khurrah*, become mutually interchangeable terms. In one of the Persianate tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, he states that by his manifestation, “...the

luminous rays of the Imperishable world are resplendent (*ishraq*) from the Dawning-place of the Will (*mashriq-i iradih*) of the Merciful.”¹⁶⁹ That is to say, that through his appearance the primal Will shines resplendent in the world. Such texts not only recall Zoroastrian motifs of celestial light and divine radiance, but at once evoke the mystical lexicon so characteristic of the school of *Ishraq*, the illuminationist philosophy of Suhrawardi. Thus here through the medium of the Suhrawardian corpus, we have a precise cognate in the translation of the term *Khvarnah* into the Arabic *Baha'*, a translation which is perfectly exemplified in the very name of Baha'(Allah), who claims to be the manifestation and theophany of the Mazdean divine Fire, and he who embodies and radiates the divine Light of Glory, the “Victorial Fire,” namely the *Khvarnah*.

In another ingenious turn Bahá'u'lláh mystically alludes to himself as the embodiment of *Khvarnah* by evoking one of the ancient symbols associated with the Light of Glory, namely the royal Falcon (*shah-baz*). In the Table to Manakji Sahib Bahá'u'lláh states:

The Tongue of Wisdom [*kherad*] proclaimeth: He that hath Me not is bereft of all things. Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. I am the Sun of Wisdom [*aftab-i binesh*] and the Ocean of Knowledge [*darya-ye danesh*]. I cheer the faint and revive the dead. I am the guiding Light [*roshanaee*] that illumineth the way. I am the royal Falcon [*shah-baz*] on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.¹⁷⁰

The obvious allusion to the art of falconry notwithstanding, in this passage to the Zoroastrian literati Manakji Sahib, Bahá'u'lláh, by referring to himself as the royal Falcon (*shah-baz*), is subtly proclaiming to his interlocutor — who presumably would know the symbolic association of the Falcon with *Khvarnah* — that he is the *Khvarnah*, the divine Light of Glory.¹⁷¹ Indeed, in Iranian textual and iconographical sources the falcon is the symbol of the *Khvarnah par excellence*. In certain Kushan coins (1-2 CE) the *Khvarnah* is represented, not only as a human figure with flames of fire radiating from it, but

also as a “bird of prey, whether eagle or falcon.”¹⁷² It was in Yasht 19:34-35 that *Khvarnah* assumed the form of a bird and abandoned Yima (Jamshid), as the Yasht states, “...*Khvarnah* was seen to depart from him [Yima] in the shape of a bird... *Khvarnah* went from shining Yima... in the shape of a hawk [*varegna*].”¹⁷³ Another iconographical source that represents the *Khvarnah* is in Persepolis, exemplified by the bird like winged-disk on the Achaemenid brick-panels, which evokes the “metamorphosis” of the *Khvarnah* into a falcon. The term *varegna* which has variously been translated as falcon, hawk, or eagle, may be best rendered into English as falcon. Sodovar examining many textual and iconographical sources of the *Khvarnah* concludes that, “these sources all tend to confirm the association of flacons – rather than eagles – with the *khvarnah*.”¹⁷⁴ Finally, in one of the iconographies of the *Khvarnah*, in which it is depicted as a falcon, the falcon is carrying in its claws two pearls (see the Song of the Pearl above). Indeed, in the Qur’an the maidens of paradise – *huriyya*, are likened “unto hidden pearls” [Qur’an 56:23], a symbol associated at once with the *Khvarnah* and the Daena (Maiden) in Zoroastrianism and with the Maid of Heaven in Bahá’u’lláh’s oeuvre. Thus, in this precise sense, Bahá’u’lláh is the royal Falcon, which is the *Khvarnah* and the embodiment of *Khvarnah*, the bearer of the *Aura Gloríae*, the Divine Fire and Light of Glory: the visible manifestation of the divine and celestial Fire. It is precisely this Divine Light or Glory that was to accompany the Saoshyant, the messianic figure of Zoroastrianism *par excellence*, who is to appear at the end of the *aeon* and shine resplendent with its light.

Incidentally, there is a profound homologue between the falcon and Símurgh, the fabulous and great “Saéna bird,” which “derives from Avestan *mərəϑō saēnō* ‘the bird Saéna’, originally a raptor, either eagle or falcon, as can be deduced from the etymologically identical Sanskrit *s,yena*,”¹⁷⁵ meaning falcon. Indeed, the Saéna is conceptualized as a colossal falcon, “which has its perch on the Tree of All Seeds or of All Healing’ (Yt. 12:17), and which by its great weight and the beating of its wings breaks the twigs of this tree and scatters its seeds, which wind and rain then carry over the earth”¹⁷⁶ Indeed, in Yasht 14.41 “Vərəθrayna [Wahram/Bahram], the deity of victory,

wraps *x^varnah* [*Khvarnah*]... round the house of the worshipper... like the great bird Saéna, and as the watery clouds cover the great mountains, which means that Saéna will bring rain.”¹⁷⁷ In this precise sense, the luminous *Khvarnah*, the royal Falcon, and the *Símurgh* are all symbolically co-extensive with one another. It is here that in a profound hermeneutical turn, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states that the mytho-poetic figure of the *Símurgh*, symbolically signifies none other than Bahá’u’lláh. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in a tablet to one of the believers who resided in Shemiran, which lies on the slopes of the Alborz mountain outside the City of Tehran, states:

But, the change of weather in Shemiran is due to the Bird of Love in the vicinity of the All-Merciful. That place is not the dwelling place of birds; it is the dwelling-place of the ‘*Anqa*’ of the East, and the nest of the *Símurgh* of Mount Qaf. For the Blessed Beauty... resided for one year during the summer season, in that pure and fragrant grove...¹⁷⁸

In this passage ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at once makes the ‘*Anqa*’ and the *Símurgh* co-terminous,¹⁷⁹ and provides a mystical interpretation of Bahá’u’lláh as the *Símurgh*, and indicates that the weather of Shemiran, which was once cold and inhospitable, has become mild and pleasant, due to Bahá’u’lláh’s presence in that region for a time. In another tablet ‘Abdu’l-Bahá provides a further hermeneutical register to the *Símurgh* and its legendary dwelling-place on the mystical Mount Qaf in Islamic literature and Sufi discourse. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to the Báb who was imprisoned in Chehriq, in Northwestern Iran in the province of Azarbaijan, and continues to state that “for a time His Holiness Zoroaster also travelled and sojourned in those regions [i.e., Azarbaijan]. And Mount Qaf, which hath been mentioned in Narrations and Traditions, is none other than Qafqaz [the Caucasus], and it is the belief of Iranians [i.e., Zoroastrians] that it is the nest of the *Símurgh*, and the dwelling place of the ‘*Anqa*’ of the East.”¹⁸⁰ Here, in a unique linguistic turn, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá equates Mount Qaf with the Qaf in the name of Qafqaz or the Caucasus in the Azarbaijan region of Iran. Indeed, another profound homologue may be found in the mystical and

visionary treatises of Suhrawardi, particularly the Persian treatise, 'The Símurgh's Shrill Cry' (*Safír-i Símurgh*):

This treatise... is called 'The Simurgh's Shrill Cry.' It would not be detrimental to recall, by way of an introductory preface, something of this bird's conditions and place of habitation. Those who have been illuminated have shown that every hoopoe that abandons his nest in springtime and plucks his feathers with his beak and sets off for Mount Qaf will fall under the shadow of Mount Qaf within the span of a thousand years of [the time referred to in the text], 'one day with thus Lord is as thousand years, of those which ye compute [Koran, 22:47]. These thousand years, in the calendar of the People of Reality, are but one dawning ray from the orient of the Divine Realm [*Mashriq-i Lahut-i Azam*]. During this the hoopoe becomes a Simurgh whose shrill cry awakens those who are asleep. The Simurgh's nest is on Mount Qaf. His cry reaches everyone, but he has few listeners; everyone is with him, but most are without him.¹⁸¹

Indeed, the description of the Símurgh by Suhrawardi is consonant with the Bahá'í concept of hiero-history or "progressive revelation," in which once about every thousand years or so, a Manifestation of God (*mazhar iláhí*), symbolized here as the Símurgh, appears and inaugurates a new religious dispensation or spiritual cycle. Now it is also noteworthy that the last sentence in which Bahá'u'lláh states, "I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight" (see above), recalls the great mystical epic of Faríd ud-Dín 'Attár (c. 1142 – c. 1220) the *Conference of the Birds* (*Manteq at-Tayr*), in which the Hoopoe (*hudhud*)¹⁸² leads the birds upon a spiritual voyage towards the King of the birds, the Símurgh, where through perhaps one of the greatest mystical puns in Persian poetics, only thirty birds remain, literally *sí* (thirty) *morgh* (bird[s]), who thereby see themselves mirrored in the Símurgh. Here the *sī*-murch (thirty birds) encounters its own heavenly double, its twin, in the Símurgh. In this precise sense, the symbolism of 'Attár's poetics may be read not as a union of the soul with the Divine *per se* (which is a characteristic reading

of the dramatic *dénouement* of the epic), but rather as a subtle gesture towards the Mazdean motif of the soul's encounter with its heavenly twin.

Now just as we have seen with the divine Fire (*atar*), the *Khvarnah* or the Light of Glory, is also endowed with cosmogonic and eschatological functions in the Zoroastrian scriptures. In Yasht 19:10 it is written that Ahura Mazda possesses the *Khvarnah* in order to “create all the creatures.”¹⁸³ Corbin refers to the sublime and luminous entity of the *Khvarnah*, as an “Energy,” which has been “operative from the initial instant of the formation of the world until the final act announced and forecast in the technical term *Frsahkart*, which designates the transfiguration to be accomplished at the end of the Aeon by the Saoshyants or Saviors...” Indeed, in Yasht 19 it states that it is through the *Khvarnah*, that “Ahura Mazda has created the many and good ... beautiful, marvelous ... creatures, full of life, resplendent.”¹⁸⁴ Thus, it is in such texts as Yasht 19, dedicated to the *Khvarnah*, that the cosmogonic function of this divine Fire of Glory is explicitly confirmed.

Although, the *Khvarnah* is often related to the sacral authority of kings and of spiritual and temporal sovereignty, it is not exclusive to prophets and kings. Human beings are also endowed with the *Khvarnah*, and “at the final, eschatological renovation (*frasha*), this supernatural light [*khvarnah*] will adorn all of them: “the great light appearing as coming forth from the body will shine continually over the earth... and this light will be their garment, resplendent, immortal, exempt from old age.”¹⁸⁵ Indeed, according to Bahá'í mystical hermeneutics, these beings of light, who will accompany the Saoshyant, and will radiate the *Khvarnah* or the Light of Glory, are the people of Baha' (*ahl-i baha*), who are the beings of Light, which is precisely the etymological meaning of *Bahá'í*: namely the followers of the Light/Glory or beings of Light/Glory. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’ states:

The Lord of Hosts [i.e., Bahá'u'lláh] hath descended with the army of lights and angels of heaven [i.e., Bahá'ís] and depressed the armies of darkness! He sent His angels to all directions, with a call of the trumpet of realities and meanings, instructions and teachings!

Therefore, O people of the earth, appreciate the opportunity, in this new century, wherein the lights have been revealed by the Glorious Lord!"¹⁸⁶

Note here the profound Zoroastrian motifs of Light and Darkness, and the association of the faithful, namely Bahá'ís, with angelic beings and the *army of light*. It is these faithful who are created from the "earth of Light," namely the earth of *Baha'*, and whose being is the ontological co-incident of their outer (*zahir*) and inner (*batin*) being. This spiritual creation, at once new and primordial, are the creatures of light foretold in the Mazdean scriptures, as Corbin sums up a portion of Yasht 19, "the creatures who are to come from the world of light and, in the form of Saoshyants, renew earthly existence, making it an existence with the nature of Fire, when all creatures will possess an incorruptible body of luminous Fire."¹⁸⁷ It is they who are referred to in the verse by Bahá'u'lláh, "Some know Us and bear witness, while the majority bear witness, yet know Us not" [TB 13]. This gnosis (*'irfán*) of Baha is what distinguishes the faithful of love, the people of Baha, from the rest who bear witness outwardly, yet inwardly do not know, for they lack the gnostic vision bestowed by the "eyes of fire". Thus it is they who are created from the radiance of the supernal Light, and from "the form of Fire made visible" on the plain of history, namely Bahá'u'lláh, the divine Light of Glory, the embodiment of the Mazdean Fire and of *Khvarnah*. In the spiritual hermeneutics of the Bahá'í textual universe, these beings of light as Saoshyants, then become symbolized as the people of Baha', who along with the savior Saoshyant (i.e., Bahá'u'lláh), will bring about the spiritual transfiguration and renovation of the cosmos, the making-brilliant or wonderful of creation (*frashgird*), which may be symbolically identified with the Order of Bahá'u'lláh (*nazm-i Baha*) and his Wondrous New Order (*nazm-i Badí*).

Thus as we have seen throughout this study, the mystico-messianic hermeneutics of Bahá'u'lláh find their correspondence and analogue in the conceptual coordinates of the celestial Fire (*atar, adar, atash*) in Mazdean scriptures, from the Gathas to the Palavi texts. The Mazdean heavenly Fire is not only equated with Truth/Order (*asha*), but forms with it a *syzygy* or dualitude, a bi-unity; and who is therefore represented in the

Zoroastrian mytho-logic as a ‘person,’ a ‘being,’ albeit a meta-physical and meta-temporal being, who is at once the cause of the existentionation of the cosmos, and who will become “embodied” or made resplendent in the world as a ‘person,’ and who is expected to appear at “the end of the millennium” as the Saoshyant, to make brilliant (*frashgird*) and radiant all of creation, precisely through the light and luminosity of his divine and primordial Fire — a Fire which is intimately and simultaneously connected to the sublime concept of *Khvarnah* or the divine Light of Glory, the Victorial Fire, and with the person and name of Baha’ (Allah).

NOTES

- ¹ The present study will form a portion of a larger project provisionally entitled, *The Primordial Fire: From Zoroastrianism to the Baha’i Faith*. The completion of this paper was interrupted in 2009, until a brief respite in the summer of 2012 allowed me the opportunity to finally complete it. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Kamaran Ekbal and Moojan Momen for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper and for their thoughtful editorial suggestions. Finally, I particularly would like to thank Dr. Iraj Ayman for his kind encouragement and generous invitation to present an earlier form of this paper at the 2009 ‘Irfan Colloquium in Santa Cruz, California.
- ² Bahá’u’lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity* (Bahá’i World Centre, 2006) 68. For the original Persian, see *Yaran-i Parsi: Majmu’ih-i-Alwah-i-Mubarakih Jamal-i ‘Aqdas Abha va Hadrat-i ‘Abdu’l-Bahá bi Iftikhar Bahá’íyan-i-Parsi* (Bahai Verlag: Germany, 1998-155 B.E.) 3. All the published tablets of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Zoroastrian believers are collected in this single volume.
- ³ Henry Corbin, *In Iranian Islam, Vol. 2: Suhrawardi and the Persian Platonists* (English translation by Hugo M. Van Woerkmon, 2003) 81. Electronically published at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/9664772/Henry-Corbins-In-Iranian-Islam-Vol2>. For a critical appraisal of the work of Corbin, see Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion After Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999); also, Vahid Brown, “A Counter-History of Islam: Ibn ‘Arabi within the Spiritual Topography of Henry Corbin,” *Journal of Ibn Arabi Society*, Volume XXXII, Autumn 2002. For a response to some of the critiques, see Maria E. Subtelny, “History and Religion: The Fallacy of Metaphysical Questions (A Review Article).” *Iranian Studies*: March 2003, 36(1): 91-101. Also, Nile Green, ‘Between Heidegger and the Hidden Imam: Reflections on Henry Corbin’s

Approaches to Mystical Islam', in M.-R. Djalili, A. Monsutti & A. Neubauer, *Le monde turco-iranien en question*, coll. Développements, Paris, Karthala; Genève, Institut de hautes études internationales et du développement, 2008, pp. 247-259.

For the significance of Corbin to Babi-Bahá'í studies see, Ismael Velasco, 'A For the significance of Corbin to Babi-Bahá'í studies see, Ismael Velasco, 'A Prolegomenon to the Study of Bábí and Baha'í Scriptures: The Importance of Henry Corbin to Bábí and Baha'í Studies,' *Baha'í Studies Review*, Vol. 12, 2004.

⁴ The notion of 'process' in Islamic philosophy may be considered to have originated with the Persian philosopher Sadr al-Din Shirazi (d. 1640), known as Mulla Sadra, and his notion of essential motion (*al-haraka fi'l-jawhar*), often translated as 'substantial motion' (*al-haraka al-jawhariyya*). This concept was later developed further into a complete process metaphysics by Shaykh 'Ahmad al-Ahsai (d.1826), whose profound works form the immediate conceptual background to Bábí and Baha'í philosophy. The Sadrian term *harakat-i jawhariyya* is also often encountered in the Baha'í writings. See, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Má'idíyi-i Asmání*, 'Abdu'l-Hamid Ishráq Khávarí. (Tehran: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 129 B.E) 5:51-2. Also, Fádíl-i-Mázindarání, *Amr va Khalq*, Vol. 1. (Tehran: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1954-55) 123-4. For a still valuable study of Sadra's philosophy, see Fazlur Rhaman, *The Philosophy of Mullá Sadrá*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975). On Shaykh 'Ahmad's dynamic metaphysics see, Idris Hamid, *The Metaphysics and Cosmology of Process According to Shaykh 'Ahmad al-Ahasa'í: Critical Edition, Translation, and Analysis of Observations of Wisdom* (PhD thesis, State University of New York, Buffalo, 1998). For a brief discussion of Shaykh Ahmad's critique of Sadra on this notion see Christain Jambet, *The Act of Being: The Philosophy of Revelation in Mulla Sadra*, translated by Jeff Fort, (New York: Zone Book, MIT Press, 2006) 191-227.

⁵ Nader Saeidi notes this *dialectic* core of Baha'í philosophy in his, "A Dialogue with Marxism," *Circle of Unity*, Anthony A. Lee, editor. (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1984) 235-256. See, also cf. *Logos and Civilization*. I shall have occasion to discuss the ancient roots of this dialectical motif of the Mazdean Fire and its influence on the great pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, whose writings influenced modern philosophers such as Hegel, Nietchze, etc. in a seprate chapter.

⁶ For a short, but useful discussion of the Primal Will, see Keven Brown, "A Brief Discussion of the Primal Will in the Baha'í Writings," *Baha'í Studies Bulletin* 4:2 (January 1990) 22-27.

⁷ For the concept of manifestation, see Juan Cole, "The Concept of Manifestation in the Bahá'í Writings," *Baha'í Studies* 9 (1982), pp. 1-38. Available online: http://bahai-library.com/cole_concept_manifestation. See also Nader Saiedi, *Maḡhariyyat* (Doctrine of Manifestation) (Canada: Persian Institute for Bahá'í Studies, 1995).

- ⁸ Interestingly, perhaps the only other precedent for this identification with the Zoroastrian sacred Fire may be found in Manicheanism (See Below).
- ⁹ Christopher Buck, “Bahá’u’lláh as Zoroastrian savior,” in *Bahá’i Studies Review* 8, 1998. Idem, “The Eschatology of Globalization: The Multiple-Messiahship of Bahá’u’lláh Revisited,” in *Studies in Modern Religions, and Religious Movements and the Bábí-Bahá’í Faiths*, ed. Moshe Sharon (Leiden: Brill, 2004).
- ¹⁰ Aside from Buck’s work, there are several works in Persian that deal with Bahá’u’lláh as the eschatological expectations of Zoroastrianism, but they do not discuss Bahá’u’lláh’s claim to be the fulfillment of the messianic and apocalyptic expectation of the Mazdean Fire. See, Neshat Anwari, “Bishárat-i Asho Zartusht dar bareh-ye do Zohur-i Akhar al-Zaman,” in *Mahbúb-i ‘Alam* [The Beloved of the World] (‘Andalíb Editorial Board, 1992–93) 103-122. See also, ‘*Andalíb* magazine number 49, pp. 26-31; and number 83, pp. 74-77.
- ¹¹ There is one general survey of the symbolism of Fire in Bahá’u’lláh’s oeuvre, but it contains no references to the Zoroastrian tablets of Bahá’u’lláh referring to this motif. See Manuchehr Salmanpour, *Mafahim-e Nar dar Athar-i Haḍrat-i Bahá’u’lláh* (The Concept of “Nár” (Fire) in the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh), *Safínihi-yi ‘Irfán* 2 (Darmstadt: Asri Jadid Publishers, 1999) 31-49. Another important Fire symbolism in Bahá’u’lláh’s oeuvre is related to the mysteries of the Sinaitic episode. See, Stephen Lambden’s excellent study, “Sinaitic Mysteries: Moses/Sinai motifs in the Babi/Bahai Writings.”
- ¹² Divan-e Hafiz, ghazal 486. See Meisami, Julie Scott (May, 1985). “Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Poetic Tradition: Nezami, Rumi, Hafez.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17(2), 229-260. It is interesting to note that Bahá’u’lláh often refers to himself in many of his writings as the ‘Nightingale’ (*Bulbul*) and the ‘Rose’ (*Goš*), evoking classic tropes and motifs of the Beloved, so often encountered in Persian mystical and classical poetry, and thereby gesturing towards the messianic appearance of the Nightingale and the Rose of the mystic lovers (i.e., himself). See Bahá’u’lláh, *Lawh-i Bulbul-i Firaq, Athar-i Qalam-i A’la* Vol. 4 (Tehran: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1968), pp. 363-367. For a provisional translation see, Juan R. Cole, Nightingale of Separation. Available here: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jrcole/bahai/nightsep/nightsep.htm>
- ¹³ For a brief discussion of these two Tablets see, Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh*, vol. 3 (London: George Ronald, 1983) 270-4.
- ¹⁴ These were composed in “pure” Persian at the request of Mánakjí Şahib, however, many of the other tablets to Zoroastrian believers also contain Arabic portions.
- ¹⁵ Bahá’u’lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi*, 3. Bahá’u’lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity* 68.
- ¹⁶ Provisional translation, Bahá’u’lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi* 1. All provisional translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.
- ¹⁷ Bahá’u’lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity* 8. Bahá’u’lláh *Yaran-i Parsi*, 21.

- ¹⁸ For an excellent study of the Zoroastrian motif of Daena and its relation to the concept of the 'Maiden' in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh see, Kamran Ekbal, "Daena-Den-Din: The Zoroastrian Heritage of the 'Maid of Heaven' in the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh," *Scripture and Revelation* (ed. Moojan Momen), Baha'i Studies Vol III, (George Ronald, Oxford: 1997) 125-169. Idem, *Angizeh-i Huriyya ya Daena va Deen va rad payi Mazdisna dar Lawh-i Mallah al-Quds* (The Maid of Heaven and the Tablet of the Holy Mariner), *Safinih-yi 'Irfán 2* (Darmstadt: Asri Jadid Publishers, 1998) 110-123. Some aspects of the motif of Light from Zoroastrian and Manichean texts related to the motif of the 'Maid of Heaven' is discussed by Ekbal in pages 142-147. We shall have occasion to discuss further the motif of the Fire and the Maid of Heaven (*huriyya*) later (See Below).
- ¹⁹ Manfred Hutter whilst discussing the motif of "progressive revelation" in the Baha'i faith states, "The idea that there is a succession of prophets and divine revelations in the history of religions, is not a phenomenon limited to the Baha'i religion. In the religious history of Iran, it was formulated by the religious founder, Mani (216 – 277). Bahá'u'lláh himself was hardly aware of Mani as a representative of a lost religion. Mani's teachings of a successive revelation only indirectly influenced Bahá'u'lláh via the mediation of Islam." See Manfred Hutter, *Handbuch Bahá'í: Geschichte-Theologie-Gesellschaftsbezug* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 2009) 119. Hutter's observations generally seem apt, but I would only add that it was an Islam tinged with Shi'ite gnosis and *bateni* elements, which were influenced by Manichaeism early on.

The term often used for Manicheans in Arabic sources is *al-Zindiq'* or dualists (and more generally has come to mean heresy), and was coined in a heresiographical context. To my knowledge there is no mention of Mani in any of the published Baha'i sacred texts. However, since only a small fraction of the vast corpus of Baha'i scriptures have been published to date, it is not impossible that such a mention may come to light in the future. In light of the variety and voluminous questions asked from Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi during their lives, it would be curious that no one would have asked about Manichaeism and its founder Mani. However, in an early anti-Bahá'i polemic one of the charges brought against Bahá'u'lláh was that his religion bore a close resemblance to that of Mani's. In Mirza Abu'l Fazl's monumental *apology* called *al-Fara'id*, this charge is mentioned and refuted in light of the fact that similar charges were levelled against the prophet Muhammad, who was similarly accused of having styled his revelation with that of Mani's. See Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Gulpaygani's *al-Fará'id* (Cairo: Matba'ah Hindiyah, 1315 A.H./1897) 432-33.

Among the Manichaean relations with Islam, the title of prophet Muhammad, the 'Seal of the Prophets or Apostles' (*khatam al-nabiyyin*) is of note (Qur'an 33:40), and is thought to have been a title espoused by Mani, especially by some "Islamic authors [that] ascribed to Mani the claim to be the Seal of the Prophets." Werner Sundermann, "Manichean

Eschatology,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 6, pp. 569-575; online at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/eschatology-ii> (accessed on 25 August 2012). See also, G. G. Stroumsa, “‘Seal of the Prophets.’ The Nature of a Manichaean Metaphor,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 7, 1986, pp. 61-74.

- ²⁰ Mani, *Shapuragan*, cited in al-Biruni, *Kitab al-athar al-baqiya* ed. C. E. Sachau (Leipzig, 1878) 207, also translated by Sachau, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations* (London, 1879) 190.
- ²¹ Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Texts from Central Asia*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 50.
- ²² Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* 50.
- ²³ Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* 44.
- ²⁴ Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* 83.
- ²⁵ Mary Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian*. (Leiden: 1977 (Acta Iranica 9a), 10.
- ²⁶ Ishraq-Khavari *Ma'idih-yi Asmani*, 4:340. For both the Arabic and Persian of this tablet, see pp. 335-341; for the translation of Shoghi Effendi, see *Bahá'í Prayers* (Wilmette, Illinois, USA: Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1985) 221-229. For other tablets that employ the motif of the “Youth” by Bahá'u'lláh, see *Lawh-i Ghulam al-Khuld* 'Abdu'l-Hamid Ishraq-Khavari, ed., *Ayyam-i Tis'ih* (Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Milli-yi Matbu'at-i Amri, 1973) 92-99; for a translation of this tablet, see John Walbridge. “Bahá'u'lláh's 'Tablet of the Deathless Youth': Text, Translation, Commentary.” *Translations of Shaykhí, Bábí and Baha'í Texts*, Vol. 1, no. 7 (October, 1997), online at http://bahai-library.com/bahauallah_lawh_ghulam_khuld. For the whole motif of the Divine Being or God as a “Youth,” see Josef van Ess, *The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam* (Tempe, Ariz., 1988) 1-20.

Also relevant is Omid Ghaemmaghami's excellent study, ‘Numinous Vision, Messianic Encounters: Typological Representations in a Version of the Prophet's *ḥadīth al-ru'yá* and in Visions and Dreams of the Hidden Imam,’ *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, Edited by Alexander D. Knysh and Özgen Felek (New York: Suny Press, 2012) 51-76. For the motif of the Youth in the Báb's oeuvre, see Omid Ghaemmaghami, “A Youth of Medium Height: The Báb's Encounter with the Hidden Imam in Tafsír Súrat al-Kawthar,” in *A Most Noble Pattern: Collected Essays on the Writings of the Báb, Alí Muhammad Shírází (1819-1850)* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2012) 175-195.

- ²⁷ Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* 137.
- ²⁸ Hans-Joachim Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* 163.
- ²⁹ For a similar discussion and observation on the Manichaean Maiden of Light and the Baha'í Maid of Heaven see, Kamran Ekbal, “Daena-Den-Din.”

- ³⁰ Geo Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism*. Hisotry of Religions Series, trs. Charles Kessler (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1965) 27.
- ³¹ The Paraclete also appears in Bahá'u'lláh's oeuvre in several hermeneutical registers, in one of which Bahá'u'lláh is the advent of the Paraclete, see Stephen Lambden, "Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse: The Advents of the Paraclete, Ah.mad, and the Comforter (*Mu'azzí*)," *Scripture and Revelation* (ed. Moojan Momen), Baha'i Studies Vol III, (George Ronald, Oxford: 1997) 69-124.
- ³² Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablet of Wisdom (Lawh-i Hikmat) in Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, 148. The words of Mani in the the *Kephalaia*, cited above, "Thus did the Paraclete disclose to me all that has been and all that will be," has a profound resonance with the words of Bahá'u'lláh in this tablet, "there will appear before the face of thy Lord in the form of a tablet all that which hath appeared in the world..." (see above).
- ³³ Widengren states, "In the *Syriac Song of the Pearl...* the Son-Redeemer is portrayed as the *youth*, the young prince. This was the model for the Manichaean Redeemer in his symbolic aspect of 'sripling' or *youth*" (emphasis added). Geo Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism* 49.
- ³⁴ We shall have occasion to discuss this motif of the eagle/falcon as related to the Mazdean *Khvarnah (farr)* the Light of Glory, and to Bahá'u'lláh's own name and his symbolic idenfication as the royal falcon (see below).
- ³⁵ Geo Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism* 12-13.
- ³⁶ Willis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer *The Gnostic Bible: Gostic Texts of Mystical Wisdom from the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*. Edited by (Boston: New Seeds, 2003) 391. Two older translations of the *Song of the Pearl*, one by G.R.S. Mead, and the other by William Wright may be found on the Gnostic Society Library. Available online: <http://gnosis.org/library/hymnpearl.htm>
- ³⁷ Barnston and Mayer, *The Gnostic Bible* 392. Mayer and Branston note that this portion is based on the Greek recension and not the Syriac, f7.
- ³⁸ Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh* 284. For the notion of the Speaking Book in Shi'ism which is an appellation of the Imams, with a similar Gnostic heritage, see M. Ayoub, 'The Speaking Qur'án and the Silent Qur'án: A Study of the Principles and Development of Imami Shi'i *tafsir*,' in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'án*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988) 177-98.
- ³⁹ Geo Widengren, *Mani and Manichaeism* 26. Regarding the motif of the twin Widengren states, "The designation 'twin' is that given to the celestial double of the deligated prophet. Through the descent of his heavenly self he is appointed to his apostleship. This line of thought, originating in Iran, was common to Gnosticism generally and was later to play a considerable part in Islamic ideas." Cf. 26.
- ⁴⁰ Alessandro Bausani, *Religion in Iran: From Zoroaster to Bahá'u'lláh* (Bibliotheca Persica, 2000) 84.

- ⁴¹ Dhikru'llah Khadem, *The Vision of Shoghi Effendi*, 117-18. For instance, the twin heralds: Shaykh Ahmad Ahsa'i (d. 1242/1826) and Sayyid Kazim Rashti (d. 1259/1843); twin Manifestations: the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh; twin individual successors: 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi; twin institution of the Administrative Order: the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice, etc.
- ⁴² Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988) 332. For an important study of Nusayris, see M. M. Bar-Asher, and A. Kofsky, *The Nuṣayrī-'Alawī Religion: an Enquiry into its Theology and Liturgy*, (Leiden: Brill, 2002).
- ⁴³ Cited in Moosa, *Extremist Shiites* 334.
- ⁴⁴ Cited in Moosa, *Extremist Shiites* 334.
- ⁴⁵ On this Pillar or Column of Fire, especially in its Manechean, Shi'i and Baha'i context see below.
- ⁴⁶ For the concept of the Cloud, see Stephen Lambden's study of 'ama in the Babi-Bahá'i writings, 'An Early Poem of Mirza Husayn 'Ali Bahá'u'lláh: The Sprinkling of the Cloud of Unknowing (Rashh-i 'ama),' *Baha'i Studies Bulletin* 3.2 (1984) 4-114.
- ⁴⁷ The Persian word *kabood* meaning 'blue' or dark or deep 'blue' is related to the Hebrew word *kavod*.
- ⁴⁸ A. V. William Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies: The Iranian Religion and Various Monographs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928) 57.
- ⁴⁹ Though there is some scholarly consensus that there are certain Zoroastrian "influences" on Judaism, it is important to note that influences were never one way, and that rather than speaking of "influences," it is better to speak of a crossfertilization or symbiosis, which would be a more accurate characterization of the relationship between Zoroastrianism and Judaism through out their long history. For an excellent series of scholarly monographs related to contacts between Iran and Judaism, see the series edited by Shaul Shaked, *Irano-Judaica* five volumes (1982- present).
- ⁵⁰ See David Flusser's excellent study, 'Hystaspes and John of Patmos,' *Irano-Judaica: Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture Throughout the Ages*, edited by Shaul Shaked, (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, 1982) 12-75.
- ⁵¹ Flusse, 'Hystaspes and John of Patmos' 24.
- ⁵² Flusse, 'Hystaspes and John of Patmos' 26.
- ⁵³ Flusse, 'Hystaspes and John of Patmos' 28.
- ⁵⁴ Flusse, 'Hystaspes and John of Patmos' 27.
- ⁵⁵ Qur'an 24:35
- ⁵⁶ The earliest surviving work to cite this hadith is Sharaf al-Dín 'Alí al-Husaynī al-Astarábadí al-Najafí (d. ca. 965/1558), *Ta'wíl al-áyát al-záhira fí faḍá'il al-'itra al-ṭáhira* (Qum: al-Madrasa lil-Imám al-Mahdí, 1407/1987), vol. 2: p. 735, hadith no. 6. The hadith is also cited in

Muḥammad b. Báqir al-Majlisí, *Biḥár al-anwár* (Beirut: Dár Iḥyá' al-Turáth al-'Arabí, 1403/1983), vol. 24, p. 326, hadith no. 41, though the particle “qad” is dropped in this version. I am grateful to Omid Ghaemmaghami for this source and translation.

⁵⁷ See Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism* (trans. David Streight, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994) 40. Amir-Moezzi does not note the Manichaen parallels of the Column of Light with the Shi'ite sources.

⁵⁸ There is a link between these concepts and motifs and the World of Particles (*'alam-i dharr*). See Farshid Kazemi, (2009), “Mysteries of Alast: The Realm of Subtle Entities (*'Alam-i dharr*) and the Primordial Covenant in the Bábí-Bahá'í Writings” *Baha'i Studies Review* 15, pp. 39-66. See also, Mirca Eliad, “Spirit, Light, and Seed,” *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976) 93-19.

⁵⁹ Farhad Daftary, *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 296. For a further discussion of the Manichaen Column of Light in Isma'ilism, see Henry Corbin, *Cyclical Time and Isma'ili Gnosis* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1983) 110-115. For a study of the relationship of Isma'ili philosophical ideas and the Bábí and Baha'i religions, see Farshid Kazemi, “Early Isma'ili Philosophy and the Bábí-Bahá'í Religions.” Paper presented at the *Irfan Colloquia* Center for Bahá'í Studies: Acuto, Italy. June 28-July 1, 2009.

⁶⁰ Cited in Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985) 125. In another instance, Böwering rightly notes Shi'i influences on these concepts of al-Tustari, “In his theology, al-Tustarí understood God under the symbol of light (*núr*) on the background of the light verse (*áyat al-núr*, XXIV, 35) and chose the phrase of “the light of Muḥammad” (*núr Muḥammad*) to designate the primal man and prototypical mystic, apparently in vague association with logos speculation and Shí'í terminology. In interretation of [Qur'an] II, 30, and LIII, 13-18, he conceived of Muḥammad as the column of light (*'amúd al-núr*) standing in primordial adoration of God, the crystal which draws the divine light upon itself, absorbs in its core (*qalb Muḥammad*) and projects it unto humanity in the Qur'án.” See, Böwering, G. “Sahl al-Tustarí, Abú Muḥammad b. 'Abd Alláh b. Yúnus b. 'Isá b. 'Abd Alláh b. Rafí'.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Brill, 2010. Brill Online. Also, see See Gerhard Böwering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980). For a discussion of the Muḥammadan Light (*nur Muḥammadi*) in Shi'ism; see Uri Rubin, ‘Pre-Existence and Light: Aspects of the Concept of Nur Muhammad,’ *Israel Oriental Studies*, 5 (1975) 62-119.

⁶¹ Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005) 124.

- ⁶² See Kamran Ekbal, “Daena-Den-Din” 130-131, 144-147. Twelver Shi’i, Isma’ili, Sufi, and Zoharic parallels of the Column of Light or Glory are not discussed in Ekbal.
- ⁶³ *Yádnámeh-yi Mesbá’-i Monír*. Edited by Vahid Rafati. (Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá’i-Verlág, 2006) 239. For similar writings on the Green Island (*Jazirat al-Khazra*) see *ibid*, 238-239.
- ⁶⁴ Henry Corbin, “Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal” in *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*. Translated by Leonard Fox. (Pennsylvania, Swedenborg Foundation, 1995) 28-29. Also available online: http://hermetic.com/bey/mundus_imaginalis.htm.
- Omid Ghaemmaghami presented a paper, “From the Jabulqa of God’s Power to the Jabulqa of Superstition: The Twelfth Imam in the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’” at the Irfan Colloquia Bosch Bahá’i School: Santa Cruz, CA, USA, May 19-23, 2010. Also Cf. “To the Land of the Promised One: The Green Isle in Akhbari, Shaykhi, Bábí and Baha’i Topography.” Paper presented at the conference “Messianism and Normativity in Late Medeivel and Modern Persianate World,” Freie Universitat, Berlin, 17-18 September 2010. I have not seen either of these papers.
- ⁶⁵ Provisional translation ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Yádnámeh-yi Mesbá’-i Monír* 239.
- ⁶⁶ Indeed, in many Islamic traditions (*ahadith*), both Sunni and Shi’i, the plain of Acre or ‘Akka (or Akko) was considered to be the site of the appearance of the messianic figure of Mahdi/Qa’im and the final apocalyptic cataclysm. In fact, in his text *Epistle of the Son of the Wolf*, Bahá’u’lláh alludes to the fulfillment of these traditions of eschatological expectation regarding ‘Akka (albeit in a mystico-spiritual manner) and ends his text with a veritable list of them. For some of the sources of these traditions see, Moojan Momen “‘Akka Traditions (hadith) in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf” in *Lights of Irfan*, Volume 4, pages 167-178. The Sufi-mystic Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 638/1240) in his monumental *Futuh al-Makkiyya* (Meccan Illuminations) states that after the apocalyptic battle in ‘Akka, none survives save one of the Mahdi’s ministers “on the plain of Acre, where Allah will set the divine table [*al-ma’ida al-ilahiyya*] for the vultures and lions.” Cited in Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam*. Translated by M. B. DeBevoise (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011) 33.
- ⁶⁷ Corbin cited in Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion After Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999). 31.
- ⁶⁸ Bahá’u’lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries* (Haifa: Baha’i World Centre, 2002) 36-37. Aside from turning the Hidden Imam into an archetypal figure in this passage, Bahá’u’lláh seems to be deploying a form of *taqiyya* (dissimulation) here in his affirmation of the existence of the eponymous twelfth Imam, the purported “son” of the 11th Imam Hassan al-Askari in Twelver Shi’ism. In the later writings of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’

there is a progressive, but categorical denial of the existence of this “son,” the so-called Muhammad al-Mahdi, the Hidden Imam; but the eschatological hope of a messianic figure who will be born in the future is not denied, as that role is said to be symbolically fulfilled by the Bab. See ‘Abdu’l-Hamid Ishraq-Khavari *Ma’idih-yi Asmani*, 8:102; 7:185. Also cf. *Muhadirat* (2 vols. in 1, Hofheim-Langenhain: Baha’i-Verlag, 1987) 813. I am indebted to Kamran Ekbal for the last reference (*Muhadirat*). On the denial of the existence of the Twelfth Imam in the writings of Bahá’u’lláh see, Stephen Lambden’s brief notes, ‘The Babi-Bahá’i Demythologization of Shi’i Messianism,’ available at <http://hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-Biblical-islam-BBst/IMAM12.HTM>.

Similarly, Armin Eschraghi presented a paper, ‘Identifying Roots and Mechanisms of Religious Prejudice: Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings on the 12th Imám,’ Presented at the *Irfan Colloquia* Session #83, Center for Bahá’i Studies: Acuto, Italy, July 3-6, 2008. Unpublished manuscript. On *taqiyya* in the writings of the Bab, see Vahid Brown, “Secrets Concealed by Secrets: *Taqiyya* as Arcanization in the Autobiographies of the Bab” in *A Most Noble Pattern: Collected Essays on the Writings of the Bab, ‘Alí Muhammad Shirazi* (1819-1850). Edited by Todd Lawson and Omid Ghaemmaghami (Oxford: George Ronald, 2011) 88-104. Also see Kamran Ekbal, “*Taqiyya* iii. Among Bábís and Baha’is,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, available at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/taqiyya-iii-among-babis-and-bahais> (accessed on 19 August 2012)

⁶⁹ Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism*, ed. and trans., (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984) 58.

⁷⁰ The Bab, *Arabic Bayan*, 7:17. Provisional translation by William McCants, *Kashkúl: An Anthology of Shaykhi, Babi, and Baha’i Scripture*. Available online: <http://www.kashkul.org/2010/09/20/sun-salutation/>

⁷¹ Bahá’u’lláh, excerpted in *Ma’idih-yi Asmani*, 8:104-5. Provisional translation by William McCants, *Kashkúl*.

⁷² Abú al-Qásim Alí b. Muḥammad b. Alí al-Khazzáz al-Qummí al-Rází, *Kifáyat al-athar fi naṣṣ alá al-a imma al-ithná ashar* (Qum: Intishárát-i Bidár, Maṭba at al-Khayyám, 1401/1980-1), p. 41. I am grateful to Omid Ghaemmaghami for locating the source of this hadith.

⁷³ “Tafsir Surat ‘Wa’sh-Shams,” in Bahá’u’lláh, *Majmu’ih*, Sabri ed., p. 11. ans. Juan R. Cole, “Bahá’u’lláh: Commentary on the Surah of the Sun.” Originally published in *Baha’i Studies Bulletin* 4:3-4 (April 1990), pp. 4-22. Available online: <http://personal.umich.edu/~jrc/cole/shams.htm>

⁷⁴ Cole, Bahá’u’lláh: Commentary on the Surah of the Sun.

⁷⁵ Bahá’u’lláh *Yaran-i Parsi*, 19; Bahá’u’lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity* 3.

⁷⁶ Provisional translation from Bahá’u’lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi*, 13.

⁷⁷ Provisional translation from *Yaran-i Parsi*, 191.

⁷⁸ Bahá’u’lláh, *Darya-ye Danish*. (NSA of the Baha’is of India, 1988) 111.

- ⁷⁹ Here I had to amend the translation in the *Tabernacle of Unity*, as it was missing the important term “True” (*haqiqi*) for the “Fire” (*atash*). This is profoundly significant for our theme, as we shall see below, “truth” and “fire,” are invariably linked in the *Gathas* (and other Zoroastrian texts), and here Bahá’u’lláh significantly links the two together. Indeed, Fire in the *Gathas* is called the “truth-strong fire” (See Below).
- ⁸⁰ Bahá’u’lláh, *Tabernacle of Unity* 71-72; Bahá’u’lláh *Yaran-i Parsi*, 5. This tablet is also translated by Juan R. Cole titled, “Tablet to the Zoroastrians,” from *Majmu’ih-i Matbu’ih-yi Alvah* (Cairo: Sa’adat, 1920/Wilmette: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1979), pp. 247-251, online at http://bahai-library.com/bahauallah_lawh_dustan_yazdani
- ⁸¹ This philosophical narrative will not be developed here, as a separate study is required to do it full justice. I shall fully develop the relevant conceptual genealogy of the transference of the motif of the Zoroastrian Fire into early Greek philosophy (pre-Socratic), Arabic Hermetica/Alchemy and Islamicate philosophy in a separate article.
- ⁸² Another hermeneutical register in this passage is the motif of the “heat of the love of God.” Bahá’u’lláh similarly writes regarding the Prophet Zarathustra/Zoroaster: “O Bahram! Thou didst ask concerning His Holiness Zoroaster. Indeed, He came from the presence of God, and He was responsible for the guidance of the people. The fire of love is set ablaze by His hand through the Fire of Divine Love, and His Book came [down] bearing Divine Commandments and Ordinances...” Provisional translation from Bahá’u’lláh, *Yarani Parsi*, 54. Bahá’u’lláh is stating that this primal fire of divine love has again appeared in the world through his manifestation “with a new radiance and with immeasurable heat.” Here Bahá’u’lláh’s spiritual hermeneutics (*ta’wil*) of Zoroaster as the purveyor of the fire of love through the fire of divine love, has a long heritage in Persian classical poetry and the so-called ‘Religion of Love’ (*mazhab-e ‘ishq*). Henry Corbin writes, “This religion of love was and remained the religion of all the minstrels of Iran and inspired them with the magnificent *ta’wil* [spiritual hermeneutics] which supplies a link between the spiritual Iran of the Sufis and Zoroastrian Iran, for according to this *ta’wil* the Prophet of Islam in person proclaims Zarathustra to be the prophet of the Lord of love; the altar of Fire becomes the symbol of the Living Flame in the temple of the heart.” See Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn ‘Arabi* trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) 100-101. Also a good collection of essays is *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry* (International Library of Iranian Studies), edited by Leonard Lewisohn (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).
- ⁸³ See, William W. Malandra, “Gathas, ii. Translations” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. X, Fasc. 3, pp. 327-330; available online at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gathas-ii-translations>
- ⁸⁴ Fariduddin Radmehr, *Arbáb-i Hikmat dar Lawh-i Hikmat*. (Ontario: Association for Baha’i Studies in Persian, 2002) 269. Radmehr does not

elaborate on this passage, but just cites it in relation to other cosmogonic passages in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, particularly those relating to the Tablet of Wisdom (*Lawh-i Hikmat*), in which Bahá'u'lláh quotes directly from portions of the Book of the Secret Creation (*Kitab-i Sirr al-Khaliqa*) attributed to Balinus or (pseudo)Appolonius of Tayna.

- ⁸⁵ See Christopher Buck, "The Eschatology of Globalization: The Multiple-Messiahship of Bahá'u'lláh Revisited," in *Studies in Modern Religions, and Religious Movements and the Bábí-Bahá'í Faiths*, ed. Moshe Sharon (Leiden: Brill, 2004) 148. Buck has dealt in detail with the issue of the identification of Bahá'u'lláh with Sháh Bahrám who is the messianic figure developed in late Pahlavi texts. In his paper, *Bahá'u'lláh as Zoroastrian Savior*, Buck strives to tackle the dilemma of how such late texts as the Pahlavi scriptures can purport to prophecy the coming of a messianic figure called Sháh-Bahrám or Kay Wahram, and then used to legitimate a prophetic or messianic claim such as that of Bahá'u'lláh's.
- ⁸⁶ See Buck, "Bahá'u'lláh as Zoroastrian savior." Idem, "The Eschatology of Globalization." For Zoroastrian conversions to the Baha'i faith, many of them based on the acceptance of Bahá'u'lláh as the Zoroastrian savior Shah Bahram, See Fereyduun Vahman, "The Conversion of Zoroastrians to the Baha'i Faith," *The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*. Edited by Dominic Parviz Brookshaw and Seena B. Fazl. Routledge Advances in Middle East and Islamic Studies, vol. 12 (London: Routledge, 2008) pp. 30-48. Also, Susan Stiles Maneck, "Early Zoroastrian conversions to the Bahá'í Faith in Yazd, Iran," from *Iran East and West: Studies in Bábí and Baha'í History*, vol. 2 (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1984).
- ⁸⁷ Provisional translation from Bahá'u'lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi* 55. Similarly in another instance we read: "Know thou, moreover, that We have addressed to the Magians [Zoroastrians] Our Tablets, and adorned them with Our Law.... We have revealed in them the essence of all the hints and allusions (*al-rumuz wa al-isharat*) contained in their Books. The Lord, verily, is the Almighty, the All-Knowing." Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 76. See the original text in Bahá'u'lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi* 56.
- ⁸⁸ Provisional translation from Bahá'u'lláh, *Yaran-i Parsi* 58.
- ⁸⁹ Shaul Shaked, "Esoteric Trends in Zoroastrianism," in *From Zoroastrian Iran to Islam: Studies in Religious History and Cultural Contacts* (Great Britain: Ashgate Publishing limited, 1995) 212.
- ⁹⁰ Shaked, "Esoteric Trends in Zoroastrianism" 212.
- ⁹¹ Shaked, "Esoteric Trends in Zoroastrianism" 212.
- ⁹² In what Sholem terms "Jewish and rabbinic Gnosticism," two books of the Hebrew Bible were particularly regarded to contain profound secrets, and were only to be taught to an initiated few: the Account of Creation (*Ma'aseh Bereshit*) in the first chapter of Genesis and the first chapter and tenth chapter of the book of Ezekiel regarding the mysteries of the Throne of Glory or the Account of the Chariot (*Ma'aseh Merkabah*). As it says in the Talmud, "the story of creation should not be expounded before two persons, nor the chapter on the Chariot before one person, unless he is a

sage and already has an independent understanding of the matter.” See, Gershom Sholem, *Kabbalah*, (New York: Meridian, 1978) 12. Interestingly the very same term ‘*raz*’ (secret, mystery) used in the Pahlavi texts, is deployed in these earliest forms of Jewish gnosis, and particularly that of the Apocalyptic genre, which was in particular related to discussions of the divine Glory (*kavod*) and the divine Throne and the mystery of the eschatological self-revelation of God at the *eschaton* or “the end times”. cf. Ibid, 13. Indeed *raz* is a significant Iranian loan word in Hebrew and Aramaic and is attested to in the Book of Daniel (Dan. 2:18; 4:9) and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. For an important study of the contacts and cross-fertilization between Judaism and Zoroastrianism in this period (3rd – 7th century CE) see, Jacob Neusner, *Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism in Talmudic Babylonia*, (Atlanta: Brown University, 1990). Eliot R. Wolfson writes, “Esotericism has informed Jewish spirituality from ancient times. One thinks of the apocalyptic notion of *raz*, which referred to a secret transmitted to select individuals of extraordinary caliber or pedigree. The secret could relate to history, *cosmology*, or *eschatology* [emphasis added].” See, Eliot R. Wolfson, “Introduction to Jewish Mysticism and Esotericism.” Available online at http://cojs.org/cojswiki/Introduction_to_Jewish_Mysticism_and_Esotericism

For Zoroasterian influences on Jewish apocalyptic, see Norman Cohn, and G. Widengren.

⁹³ Boyce, *Textual Sources* 18.

⁹⁴ See Mary Boyce, “Nowruz” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, available online at: www.iranica.com/articles/nowruz-i (accessed on 23 December 2009).

⁹⁵ John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*. Baha’i Studies Volume I. (Oxford: George Ronald 1996) 182.

⁹⁶ The names of the Badi’ calendar are drawn from the Shi’i dawn prayer (*Du’á Sahar*) for the time of the Fast (Ramadán) by the fifth Shi’i Imám, Muhammad al-Báqir.

⁹⁷ As Corbin states, “each Mazdean month, as well as the whole year, is the homologue of the Aeon, the great cycle of the Time-of-long-domination. The “date” is therefore in this case a hierophanic sign: it heralds the end of a millennium, the dawn of a new age...” Corbin, *Celestial Earth* 33.

⁹⁸ See, Azartash Azarnoosh; Rahim Gholami. “Abjad.” *Encyclopaedia Islamica*. Editors-in-Chief: Wilferd Madelung and, Farhad Daftary. Brill Online, 2013. For a relevant discussion of the abjad system and the word *Baha’*, see Franklin Lewis, ‘Overview of the Abjad numerological system,’ online at http://bahai-library.com/lewis_abjad_numerological_system

⁹⁹ For the Zoroastrian calendar see, Boyce, *Textual Sources* 18-20.

¹⁰⁰ For the Badi’ calendar see, John Walbridge, *Sacred Acts* 183-194. Nader Saiedi, *Gate of the Heart* on the Elements see pp. 67-74, on the Badi’ calendar see p. 75.

¹⁰¹ The oldest reference to the religions own self-designation is *mazdayasna* or the worship of Mazda. Throughout this paper I use Zoroastrianism,

Mazdaism, and Mazdeanism interchangeably. Please note that no effort has been made to standardize the transliteration of Avestan and Middle Persian terms that are cited from other sources. All cited Avestan and Middle Persian terms retain their original transliterated forms.

- ¹⁰² Cited in Fatemeh Keshavarz, *Recite in the Name of the Red Rose: Poetic Sacred Making in Twentieth Century Iran* (Columbia, University of California Press: 2006) 36. The interpretation of Firdowsi here is later repeated and elaborated by the founder of the Iluminasionist (Ishraqi) philosophy, Suhrawardi. See, Walbridge. For a brief notice of the so-called fire-earth controversy in this period, see Bausani 216-217.
- ¹⁰³ Mary Boyce, "Átaš". *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. New York: Mazda Pub. (2002). pp. 1-5.
- ¹⁰⁴ Prods Oktor Skjærø, *The Spirit of Zoroastrianism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011)
- ¹⁰⁵ It is worth noting that in the Yasna Hapniahitni (The Yasna of the Seven-Chapters), which is as old as the Gathas, Atar is significantly referred to as one of the Amesha Spentas or Bounteous Immortals, Y 1.2: "the Fire of Ahura Mazda, who of the Bounteous Imortals has taken his position most." See Michael Stausberg, *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004) 298.
- ¹⁰⁶ William W. Malandra, "Gathas ii: Translations." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2000. Available online: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gathas-ii-translations>
- ¹⁰⁷ Alessandro Bausani, "Pre-Islamic Thought," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Edited and Introduced by M.M. Sharif. Published by Islamic Philosophy Online: <http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/hmp/6.htm>
- ¹⁰⁸ Elliot R. Wolfson, *A Dream Interpreted Within a Dream* (New York: Zone Books, 2011) 13.
- ¹⁰⁹ Alessandro Bausani, "Pre-Islamic Thought."
- ¹¹⁰ Alessandro Bausani, "Pre-Islamic Thought." See also Bausani, *Religion in Iran* 69-70. Also, Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (tr. by Nancy Pearson, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) 5.
- ¹¹¹ Alessandro Bausani, "Pre-Islamic Thought."
- ¹¹² The question of the antiquity of Zoroastrian apocalyptic is still debated in the scholarly literature, but the tide is now turning towards accepting the antiquity of apocalyptic motifs in the later Pahlavi texts. Indeed, in the following I argue for the antiquity of the motif of the Fire, which also appears in the later Pahlavi texts, both in cosmogonic and apocalyptic contexts. See Boyce, Mary (1984). "On the Antiquity of Zoroastrian Apocalyptic". *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London: SOAS) 47/1: 57-75; Touraj Daraei, "Indo-European Elements in the Zoroastrian Apocalyptic Tradition," *Classical Bulletin*, vol. 83, no. 2, 2007, pp. 203-213.

- ¹¹³ Stanly Insler, *The Gáthás of Zarathustra*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, Atca Iranica I: 1975) 61.
- ¹¹⁴ Insler, *The Gáthás* 61.
- ¹¹⁵ Insler, *The Gáthás* 63.
- ¹¹⁶ Insler, *The Gáthás* 89.
- ¹¹⁷ Richard Charles Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*, (New York: Phenox Press, 2003) 74-75.
- ¹¹⁸ Stausberg, *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* 294.
- ¹¹⁹ Josef van Ess, *The Youthful God: Anthropomorphism in Early Islam* (Tempe, Ariz., 1988) 6.
- ¹²⁰ Insler states, “at the time of the final judgment.” Insler, *The Gáthás* 41.
- ¹²¹ Translated by L. H. Mills (from *Sacred Books of the East*, American ed. 1898). Available online: <http://www.avesta.org/yasna/yasna.htm#y54>.
- ¹²² It is interesting to note here that Bahá'u'lláh himself refers to Jesus as “the Son of God” (see Shoghi Effendi, *World Order* 105), thereby affirming the title ‘Son’ of God as applied in the New Testament to Jesus. Indeed, according to the heremenutics of the Baha’i writings, the title of ‘Son’ may equally be a reference to the divine reality wh7ich inheres in all the ‘Manifestations’ (*mazahir*) of God. Shoghi Effendi states, “It is in a sense attributable – this kind of Sonship – to all the Prophets.” (Shoghi Effendi, *Lights of Guidance*, p 372). In another similar passage Shoghi Effendi states, “As far as their spiritual nature is concerned all Prophets can be regarded as Sons of God...” (See *Lights of Guidance* 491). Thus, according to this hermeneutic the title “Son of God,” which is at once the title of the Mazdean Fire and of Jesus, in so far as it refers to the dimension of the Logos in all the Prophets, all of them, including Bahá'u'lláh, may be designated with the theophanic title the ‘Son of God.’ See *Lights of Guidance* 491).
- ¹²³ Marian Hillar, “The Logos and Its Function in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria: Greek Interpretation of the Hebrew Myth and the Foundation of Christianity,” *A Journal from The Radical Reformation. A Testimony to Biblical Unitarianism*, Vol. 7, No. 3 Spring 1998, Part I pp. 22-37; Vol. 7, No. 4 Summer 1998, Part II pp. 36-53. Available online: <http://www.socinian.org/philo.html>
- ¹²⁴ For an important study of the relation of Asha and Fire see, H. Lommel, “Symbolik der Elemente in der zoroastrischen Religion,” in *Zarathustra*, ed. B. (Schlerath, Darmstadt, 1976) 266-69.
- ¹²⁵ The Avasten word Arta is related to the word R̥ta in Vedic Sanskrit which means Order, Truth, Right, etc. In English – itself an Indo-European language – the word ‘right’ is related to the Vedic *r̥ta* and to the Avasten *arta*.
- ¹²⁶ Alessandro Bausani, “Pre-Islamic Thought.”
- ¹²⁷ Alessandro Bausani, “Pre-Islamic Thought.”

- ¹²⁸ See John Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardi and Platonic Orientalism*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001) 62-63.
- ¹²⁹ See Keven Brown. "Creation." The Bahá'í Encyclopedia. Available online: <http://users.sisqtel.net/kevenbrown/creation.html>.
- ¹³⁰ Translated by James Darmesteter (From *Sacred Books of the East*, American Edition, 1898.) Edited by Joseph H. Peterson, 1995. Available online: <http://www.avesta.org/ka/yt19sbe.htm>
- ¹³¹ Insler, *The Gáthás* 63.
- ¹³² Boyce, Mary (1987), "Ardwashišt," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2, (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul) 389-390. Available online: *Encyclopedia Iranica* at <http://www.iranica.com>
- ¹³³ Insler, *The Gáthás* 91.
- ¹³⁴ Hultgård, "Persian Apocalypticism" 44.
- ¹³⁵ Robert S. P. Beekes, *A Grammar of Gatha-Avestan*, (The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, Leiden: 1988) 122-124.
- ¹³⁶ Shaul Shakad, Eschatology Iranica.
- ¹³⁷ Insler, *The Gáthás* 65.
- ¹³⁸ Mary Boyce, "Astvat-ereta," in *Encyclopedia Iranica* 1987. Available Online: <http://www.iranica.com>
- ¹³⁹ Mary Boyce, "Astvat-ereta."
- ¹⁴⁰ J. Duchense-Guillemin, *Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 3(2), edited by Ehsan Yarshater, 899-900.
- ¹⁴¹ Boyce, *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* 47.
- ¹⁴² Duchense-Guillemin, *Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 3(2), 899-900.
- ¹⁴³ Duchense-Guillemin *Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 3(2), 900.
- ¹⁴⁴ Stausberg, *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context* 29.
- ¹⁴⁵ Mansour Shaki, "Elements, i. In Zoroastrianism." *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Vol. VIII, Fasc. 4, pp. 357-360; available online at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/elements> (accessed on 23 November 2009).
- ¹⁴⁶ R.C. Zaehner, *Zurvan: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (New York : Biblo and Tannen, 1972). 133.
- ¹⁴⁷ Abolala Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship*. Bibliotheca Iranica, Intellectual Traditions Series, No. 10. (Costa Mesa, Mazda Publishers, 2003) 44.
- ¹⁴⁸ Anders Hultgård, "Persian Apocalypticism," *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, (London: Continuum Publishing: 2000) 44.
- ¹⁴⁹ Philip G. Kreyenbroek, "Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition," in *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient*

- Middle East to Modern America*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Magnus Bernhardsson (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002) 47.
- ¹⁵⁰ Kreyenbroek, “Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition” 47.
- ¹⁵¹ Kreyenbroek, “Millennialism and Eschatology in the Zoroastrian Tradition” 47.
- ¹⁵² The relation of the Baha’i faith to the spiritual universe of Iran, particularly to Zoroastrianism, Manichaenism, and to a Gnostic mode of thought peculiar to Iran, has seldom been noted by scholars. One of the few exceptions is the excellent study by the Italian Islamicist and Iranologist Alessandro Bausani, namely his magisterial *Religion in Iran: From Zoroaster to Bahá’u’lláh*. The general historical trajectory and continuity of the spiritual universe of Iran, masterfully discussed in Bausani’s work, must be kept in mind throughout this study. Other relevant works are Kathryn Babayan’s, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs, 2002) especially the epilogue; also relevant is Patricia Crone’s, *The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- ¹⁵³ Hasan Balyuzi, *Bahá’u’lláh: the King of Glory* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1980) 330.
- ¹⁵⁴ Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 13.
- ¹⁵⁵ Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies* 157.
- ¹⁵⁶ G. Gnoli, “Farr(ah)/ x^ʷarənah,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, IX, 1999, pp. 312-19, also available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farraah. On the Khvarnah see further, Bailey, H. W. *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (1943). Oxford, 1971. 1-77. Gnoli, Gherardo. “Über das iranische hvarnah-: lautliche, morphologische und etymologische Probleme. Zum Stand der Forschung.” *Altorientalische Forschungen* 23 (1996): 171-180. Gnoli, Gherardo. “Nuove note sullo hvarnah-.” In *Oriente e Occidente. Convegno in memoria di Mario Bussagli*, edited by Chiara Silvi Antonini, Bianca Maria Alfieri and Arcangela Santoro, pp. 104-108. Rome, 2002. Cf. Duchesne-Guillemin, Jacques. “Le ‘Xarənah.’” *Annali dell’Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli, Sezione Linguistica*, 5 (1963): 19-31. Lubotsky, Alexander (1998), “Avestan x^ʷarənah-: the etymology and concept,” in Meid, W., *Sprache und Kultur. Akten der X. Fachtagung der Indogermanischen Gesellschaft Innsbruck, 22.-28. September 1996*, Innsbruck: IBS, pp. 479-488.
- ¹⁵⁷ G. Gnoli, “Farr(ah),” online at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/farraah.
- ¹⁵⁸ Mary Boyce, “dur Farnbág.” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. I, Fasc. 5, pp. 473-475; an updated version is available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org> (accessed online at 20 June 2009).
- ¹⁵⁹ Boyce, “dur Farnbág.”
- ¹⁶⁰ Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 45.

- ¹⁶¹ Bausani, *Religion in Iran* 53.
- ¹⁶² Mirca Eliad, "Spirit, Light, and Seed," *Occultism, Witchcraft, and Cultural Fashions: Essays in Comparative Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976) 103.
- ¹⁶³ G. Gnoli, "Farr(ah)/ x ar nah."
- ¹⁶⁴ Ibn Kathir, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* (The Life of the Prophet Muhammad) Vol. I. tr. Trevor Le Gassick (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing, 1998) 232. I owe this reference to Kamran Ekbal.
- ¹⁶⁵ Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 35.
- ¹⁶⁶ Provisional translation from Ishraq-Khavari, *Ma'idih* 4:191-2. No scholarly sources have as yet established a link between Khvarnah and the term Baha'. Ekbal and Lambden in their respective works have made some remarks that the name Baha is related to Khvarnah, but without establishing this link or providing any textual basis in which Bahá'u'lláh claims to be the possessor of Khvarnah or farr. They do not show for instance that Bahá'u'lláh himself has made this link, nor do they link the divine Fire with Khvarnah and thereby connect it to Bahá'u'lláh's pronouncements. See, Lambden, Stephen, 'The word Baha, Quintessence of the Greatest Name of God' in *Baha'i Studies Review* 3:1 (1993). Also, Kamran Ekbal, "Daena-Den-Din: The Zoroastrian Heritage of the 'Maid of Heaven' in the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh," *Scripture and Revelation* (ed. Moojan Momen), *Baha'i Studies Vol III*, (George Ronald, Oxford: 1997).
- ¹⁶⁷ Note also the Water and Light imagery associated with the Primal Will in Bahá'u'lláh's Zoroastrian tablets discussed above (see above).
- ¹⁶⁸ Henry Corbin, *In Iranian Islam, Vol. 2: Suhrawardi and the Persian Platonists* (English translation by Hugo M. Van Woerkmon, 2003) 65. Corbin specifically avails himself of H. W. Bailey's excellent work in this respect, on the translation of Khvarnah into Baha'. See especially, pp. 27, 48, 62, 63, 75 in H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford 1971).
- ¹⁶⁹ Another translation in *Tabernacle of Unity* 75.
- ¹⁷⁰ Yaran Parsi 31; *Tablets* 164-71; *Tabernacle of unity* 9.
- ¹⁷¹ Note here Bahá'u'lláh's self-identification with Light, which precisely precedes his symbolic proclamation to be the royal Falcon.
- ¹⁷² G. Gnoli, "Farr(ah)/ x ar nah."
- ¹⁷³ Mary Boyce, *Textual Sources* 30.
- ¹⁷⁴ Abolala Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship*. Bibliotheca Iranica, Intellectual Traditions Series, No. 10. (Costa Mesa, Mazda Publishers, 2003) 22.
- ¹⁷⁵ Hanns-Peter Schmid, "Símorg," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2012, available at: www.iranicaonline.org/articles/simorg (accessed at 15 August 2010).
- ¹⁷⁶ Boyce, *A History* 88-89.
- ¹⁷⁷ Hanns-Peter Schmid, "Símorg."

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- ¹⁷⁸ *Muntakhabati-az Makatib-i-Hadrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá'í-Verlag, 2000, vol. 4:15. There are several other hermenutical registers for the Símurgh in the Baha'í textual corpus.
- ¹⁷⁹ In an early work of the Andalusian mystic Ibn al-'Arabī, the 'Anqa - often translated as the phoenix - is symbolically associated with the messianic figure of the Mahdi, and the Seal of the Saints. See, Gerald T. Elmore, *Islamic Sainthood in the Fullness of Time: Ibn al-'Arabī's Book of the Fabulous Gryphon*, Leiden and Boston, 1999. Also, Gerald T. Elmore, The "Millennial" Motif in Ibn al-'Arabī's "Book of the Fabulous Gryphon." In *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 81, No. 3, (Jul., 2001), pp. 410-437. For a general overview of 'Anqa in Islamic sources, see Pellat, Ch. "'Anqā'." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden-London, 1960.
- ¹⁸⁰ Asadu'llah Fadil Mazandarani, *Amr va Khalq*, repr. 4 vols. in 2, Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá'í-Verlag, 1985, 2:69.
- ¹⁸¹ W.M. Thackston, *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi* (London: Octagon Press, 1982) 88; Majmú'a-yi Musannafát-i Shaykh-i Ishraq: Œuvres Philosophiques et Mystiques. ed. Nasr & Corbin . Tome III. Œuvres en Persan. Tehran & Paris, 1970, pp. 314-15.
- ¹⁸² It is worth mentioning here one of the hermeneutics of the hoopoe (*hudud*) in Qur'an 27:20-22, noted in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's verbal discourses, "The Hoopoe (*hudud*) was a person that Solomon would send as a messenger. He attained to the apex of fame. He was a lowly bird, but became a renowned and mighty Símurgh." See, Ishraq-Khavari *Ma'idih-yi Asmani*, 2:208.
- ¹⁸³ Cited in Mirca Eliad, "Spirit, Light, and Seed" 104.
- ¹⁸⁴ Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 13.
- ¹⁸⁵ *Zatspram*, cited in Mirca Eliade, "Spirit, Light, and Seed" 104.
- ¹⁸⁶ Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá* Volume II 288.
- ¹⁸⁷ Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body* 45.

“These Four States Conferred Upon Thee”¹

Tetrarchic Thinking in Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology

Wolfgang Klebel

Introduction

In this paper the attempt is made to understand reality in a new way, a way that is forward thinking and following the evolution of the human ability to understand, to reason. Consequently, the evolution of human thinking will be part of the investigation of this study, and it will start with new ideas in philosophy, will then transcend them by including theological statements and will finally apply findings of this process to studies in psychology. It is not accidental that the writer had first a complete philosophical and theological education and then became clinical psychologists, which today is still his professional practice.

How real is reality, is the first question studied here.² If reality is real, how can we understand reality, is the other question. Several things seem to be clear. Humankind was always trying to find an answer to these questions, and the answer changed from century to century, from epoch to epoch. What is intended here is not to find a final answer, but to find an answer that is valid today, or, to attempt such an answer and to get a step further in this quest for a solution. It is clear, on the other hand, that there will never be a final answer. The question remains unanswered in some sense, no matter how often an answer is found, how often the search has started again. Considering this, any answer to this final question about reality is temporary and transient, yet, the search is necessary

and all the answers found are of highest importance for human self-understanding and for the understanding of reality.

Anticipating the second theological part of this paper, it can be stated that it is a theological contention, as presented in the Bahá'í principal of progressive revelation, that every new revelation to mankind has fundamentally changed the understanding of reality, as it is predicted in the Bible in the book of Revelation that a new heaven and a new earth will appear with the return of Christ. This was interpreted in the Bahá'í Writings as the new heaven standing for the new revelation and the new earth being the new understanding of this revelation, establishing a new understanding of reality.

The next thing to consider is where such an answer can be found. Looking at the history of investigating this question, which could be called the history of ontology, it is established that answers come from different searches, from different fields of exploration. Philosophy comes first to mind; it is the discipline where ontology is usually studied. Next might be physics, considering the outside world of man; followed by psychology, exploring the inside world of humanity, and this includes epistemology since man is the one who understands. The answers given by the religions of the world is found in their theology, which seems to be the answer that reaches the farthest into the question, because it includes God; it reaches towards an understanding of the ultimate; no matter, how tangential, or even how opposing this search might necessarily appear.

Another issue of this quest is the fact that answers of such depth are never found by a single person, they usually present themselves in the work of many, of a whole generation of thinkers. Therefore, any answer searched for and found in this paper will start with some thinkers, other than this writer, and these answers are developed throughout history, mainly the history of the last two centuries. The focus on the last two centuries is taken, because the assumption can be made that the development of thinking has reached a critical phase during these centuries and might well find a conclusion, albeit a transitory one; yet, these answers could be decisive and showing the way into the future. What will be shown below is the fact

that any deficient or wrong answer to these questions can, and has had, devastating consequences for all of humankind.

Hermeneutic Circle of Understanding

This paper is presented with a concern because the terms used in this paper have a specific meaning and could be misunderstood if not placed in the right context. The idea of the hermeneutic circle³ presents us with the solution to this problem. The “Oxford Guide to Philosophy” describes the hermeneutic circle with the following words:

A term often used by philosophers in the (mainly continental) tradition running from Schleiermacher and Dilthey to Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur. It has to do with the inherent circularity of all understanding, or the fact that comprehension can only come about through a tacit foreknowledge that alerts us to salient features of the text which would otherwise escape notice.⁴

In this understanding the parts have to be understood from the whole and the whole from the parts. In other words, any word, any idea must be seen in the light of the whole presentation and not abstracted from it, which would, often enough, lead to misunderstandings, sometimes even to the opposite meaning as intended by the original writer.

Explaining this circle of understanding an example might be introduced here and it is critical for the understanding of this paper. The term “progressive” and “progress” is such a shimmering concept that can mean different things in different contexts as used by different writers, especially if the meaning expressed are based on different philosophical and sociological assumptions. In present day politics and sociological descriptions of every day events, the word progressive is usually used to contrast a forward looking attitude versus a backward looking approach to political and social actions.

Today’s Progressives claim that they present the future, yet often enough they indicate by this adjective their move from

individualism to collectivism, often enough understood as collectivism in a Marxist or socialistic fashion, where the state or the government is the solution to all problems, while individual effort and achievement is seen as a misguided and often evil intention. The historical context to this assumption is ironic. Karl Marx, in his materialistic point of view, where every progress is based on the economic structure of society, stated in the Communist Manifesto that the “free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”.⁵

Yet, in all countries where his ideas became the guiding philosophy of the government the diametrical opposite happened, the freedom of the individual was forcefully suppressed by an overpowering state that used terror tactics to enforce this ideology. The so-called progresses lead from extreme liberalism and capitalism to communism, both the extreme positions in this philosophical polarity, both causing devastation and backwardness, lack of progress and rigid social structures that eventually collapsed in the Soviet Union, or had to be drastically changed in post-Mao China.

When the word progressive is used in this paper and by this author it is used in the context of the Bahá'í Writings about Progressive Revelation, indicating a progress to an ever higher level of reality, or as stated by Bahá'u'lláh that *All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization* [GWB 214]. This advancement of civilization, directs society towards what Teilhard de Chardin called the point Omega or the Noosphere. That most of the writings of Teilhard are consonant with the Bahá'í Writings in this and other points was demonstrated by this author in a previous paper in the *Lights of Irfan*.⁶

The term progressive in this paper needs to be understood not as going from individualism to state collectivism, as modern “progressives” would have it, but from a development of the polarity between the individual and the collective, in which both poles are protected and enhanced. This will lead progressively forwards to an ever higher and advanced society. Whenever a concept is presented it has to be understood in the horizon of the writer and then placed into the horizon of the reader as Gadamer⁷ has explained.

Tetrarchic Understanding of Reality

Considering that answers reaching into the depth of being are complex, are transcending simple logic or straight forward logical thinking, the process of thinking about such answers needs to be explored as well. With this thought, we come to the special aspect of this study, the fact that answers presented in this paper are called tetrarchic. This is a Greek word from history, “*tetras*” meaning four and “*arche*” meaning beginning, principle, prince or ruler. While the historical use of this word was describing a single country governed by four rulers, who were called tetrarchs,⁸ in this writing its meaning is drawn back to the original meaning of the words *tetras* and *arche*, indicating an idea or a reality that is based on four principles, or is emerging from four beginnings. This emerging is best expressed by the German word “*Ursprung*,” meaning springing or leaping forth from the beginning, like water welling up from a spring, or emerging from a fountain.

Reality, as it is understood here, and the understanding of reality as well, emerges always from four principles, from four origins or beginnings. To see this, to perceive such a process takes a special way of understanding; it takes what we call vision, to recognize reality in this way and a whole section will be dedicated to this aspect of epistemology in order to clarify how to see reality and why it is not always seen that way.

Another thought that will be developed is the fact that these four principles are organized as two pairs of opposites, which subsequently are combined into four unified quadrants. Consequently, we understand that any tetrarchic unity is created from its parts. In a reverse way it must also be said that the whole creates the parts. The parts in the whole are assuming different functions contributing to the whole, and are doing that only because they are unified in the whole, therefore, it is a unity in the diversity of its parts. This will then be explained as the structure of reality of the cosmos, of all living beings and first and foremost of humanity. It will, as well, best describe the way of thinking about this very reality.

The central theme of this paper is dominated by the consideration that the world is changing and developing, i.e., is

in process of evolution and has to be seen in new ways in order to be understood. This has to be kept in mind, so that further changes and developments can be anticipated.

Philosophy

“Gegensatz,” or Polar Oppositeness: Romano Guardini

In this chapter, the focus is upon the philosophical issue of the reality “as it really is” and not as it can be logically described. There is, quite definitely, a difference of how we think logically about reality and how reality really is. Throughout history, as will be described later, the view of reality has changed over time, now we are concerned about today’s view, how do we have to understand, how do we have to think in order to understand our world. Every historical epoch has different paradigms to understand itself and its world; therefore, it is important to think with new understanding especially in a time as ours, where changes in thinking, changes in science and technology, changes in everyday life occur almost daily.

There are two thinkers, among many that will be focused upon, who have changed thinking about reality, who see the world not as a simplistic mechanistic structure, like a machine, but look at the world from the point of view of life and development of life, they ask the question what do we see when we look at the world, at the human condition?

Guardini’s Gegensatz or Oppositeness of Reality

The first concept we consider is the concept of “Oppositeness,” “Opposites” or “Polar Opposites.”⁹ These words are chosen to stand for the German word “Gegensatz.” This word means that something is set against some other thing, it is opposed to it, at least in some ways, and it is united with the other concept as well. It is important to see these opposites as forming a unity; in other words, the unity experienced when considering life forms, is always a unity that is build and formed from opposites, these opposites are opposites because they

form a unity and the unity is only possible as unity, because there are opposites united, consequently neither unity nor opposites can be conceived without each other. Guardini expressed this when saying (translation by this writer):

Life consists in unified opposites; in a Unity constructed from opposites. We experience life as existing and functioning in opposites and as unfolding in that way.... Everything has its Opposite in itself, so that one is in the other, or even better, one is through the other.¹⁰

When saying that in this polar relationship one is in the other or through the other, it is stated that “one” cannot be thought of without the “other”. Then the question arises of what is prior or more valuable, the whole or the parts, the unity or the opposite parts constituting the unity. If one is through the other, this question is moot: both in their special ways are first or originating the other and both are originated by the other. In other words, the whole is constituted through the parts and the parts are constituted as parts only if they are forming a whole. That thought includes the consideration that the parts, now forming a whole function different than before and the whole by being a whole of parts is different than the mere aggregation of parts, not forming a whole.

A simple example will explain that and it can be applied to all reality. In the chemical molecule water, when separated, the same atoms form gases, when combined they are a liquid at normal temperature with totally different attributes and function. When atoms form a molecule, they are still the same and when the molecules falls apart, the atoms have not changed, yet, when combined in the molecule, i.e., when these parts form a whole they will function differently and appear differently, have different manifestations and react differently with other atoms and molecules. For example a water molecule contains one oxygen and two hydrogen atoms connected by covalent bonds. Water is a liquid at ambient conditions.

Logically, this problem cannot be solved. This was known already by Plato, who in his Dialogue “Parmenides” let Parmenides talk with Socrates and they are not finding a

solution of the problem of the one and its parts. The questions are asked by Parmenides; Socrates gives the laconic answers in this dialogue.

Then the one cannot have parts, and cannot be a whole?

Why not?

Because every part is part of a whole; is it not? Yes.

And what is a whole?

Would not that of which no part is wanting be a whole?

Certainly.

Then, in either case, the one would be made up of parts; both as being a

whole, and also as having parts? To be sure.

And in either case, the one would be many, and not one?

True.

But, surely, it ought to be one and not many? It ought.

The history of philosophy since Parmenides and Plato is the story of attempting to solve this problem between the whole and its parts. Either the whole got priority like in Aristotle or the parts do not form a real whole like by Democritus. Either the world is conceived like a big machine by Newton, where the parts are not really forming a whole or the world is understood like a big organism, as in the romantic philosophy. The concept of parts combining in a whole like in a machine is the ideology that has created modern technology and science, the organic understanding is the more humanistic and spiritual understanding that is in conflict with the other. Issues like religion versus atheism, Darwinism versus intelligent Design even today exist in this conflict between the Parts and the Whole, as anticipated by Plato.

There are many examples of polar opposites; one of the oldest to be considered is the oppositeness of gender, of female and male. Here it is clear that both have humanness in common, so they are united in an essential way, yet they are opposed to each other as well, and what is even more important, they can only exist when the other opposed side exists as well, because

they are designed to complement, to support and to collaborate together, without this relationship humanity could not exist, neither could either man or woman.

This relationship was described in this mutual dependency, as the “Universal Man” in Hildegard von Bingen’s *Liber Divinorum Operum*, in the year 1165.

“Man and woman are in this way so involved with each other that one of them is the work of the other. Without woman, man could not be called man; without man, woman could not be named woman.”¹¹

What will be found is that this kind of opposite relationship is crucial in the understanding of reality, it pervades all of reality. Neglecting it is creating misunderstanding and, consequently, reality is not understood. If either the male and rarely in history the female is taken as the only and real human, it becomes clear that both lose, the supremacy of the male will in extreme destroy not only the female but will also diminish the male aspect of humanity. Modern tendencies to correct the previous one-sided view of humanity have marked the new thinking and understanding of the human reality.

The definition of the word opposite or oppositeness, with which the word “Gegensatz” is translated, was presented by Romano Guardini in his book “Der Gegensatz,” (*The Oppositeness, an attempt to a philosophy of the living-concrete,* translation by this writer).

This specific relationship, in which two elements generally exclude each other and yet are connected with each other, and in addition seem to presuppose each other, a relationship that appears in quantitative, qualitative and formal structures, we call oppositeness (“Gegensatz”).¹²

Several elements of this description need to be further explained. These opposite elements generally exclude each other, especially logically and in the way, they are usually considered by the rational mind. Yet, they show a connection with each other, in other words, they cannot only be looked at insofar as

they are in opposition, but need to be considered as well, insofar as they are always somehow connected and, as is said in the next sentence, they are not only connected but are presupposing one another. That means that one cannot exist in reality without the other, or in other words, one without the other presents an extreme situation that is not functional and destroys the unity of reality. With reality is understood the concrete individualized reality, of the thing as it is and not the abstract concept of things in our rational understanding.

This can easily be explained when we consider such opposites as rest or stillness on the one hand and action and movement on the other. These two opposites belong together like night and day, like being awake and being asleep. One cannot be totally resting, even in sleep we dream and one cannot be totally in action, we need a reserve of rest and inner stillness that makes action meaningful and productive. While they are logically opposites, we cannot think other than by separating them, these two concepts are inseparable in reality and always need to be considered together, whenever we think about the reality of both, of rest and stillness and action and movement. In life, an overactive person loses effectiveness, and an overly resting person will not act enough to make a difference. In extremis, we have the inactive couch potato who does nothing and the neurotic overactive meddler, who does too much and achieves nothing.

In concrete reality, we need both and life is a constant walking and living in this tension between rest and activity, we need periods of work and vacation, we need daytime activity and nighttime rest and sleep to be productive and effective. Especially creativity must be based on both sides of these opposites and the balance is crucial, even though every person must find her own measure and equilibrium between these opposites without falling in the extreme and destroying this living unity.

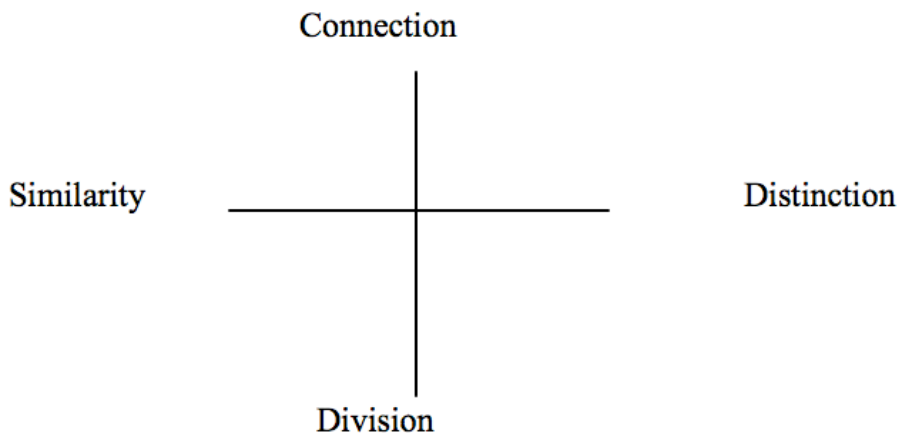
Another word of Guardini needs consideration, when he describes the *Gegensatz* (opposites):

Both sides are always given together; one is only possible and conceivable with the other. This is

oppositeness: Two moments, each one of them cannot be derived from the other, or transferred into the other, each one is unmixed in itself, nevertheless they are irremovable connected with each other, they cannot be thought of unless they are understood as existing with each other and through each other.¹³

Guardini's crossing of opposites

Romano Guardini further talks about the oppositional unities that are combined so that two pairs of opposites form a crossing where two pairs of opposites are seen together in the form of a cross forming four quadrants. He places the opposites "Act and Structure" as well as "Form and Abundance" in this structure. In another of these crossings of opposites, he places Connection and Division in opposition to Similarity and Distinction producing the following picture.



It is interesting to note that a rather similar arrangement was used by an American thinker, Ken Wilber, of whom we will talk later, and who most likely never read the book of Guardini as it was not translated into English and Wilber never mentioned Guardini in his Bibliography. While there is the possibility that some intermediate writer transferred the idea of Guardini to Wilber, from the description of Wilber that does not seem apparent. Most likely, the idea was independently found. Even

more interesting is, what we will discuss in the theological part of this paper, the same arrangement was presented in the previous century in a mystical writing of Bahá'u'lláh.

When different writers, who are separated in different continents and who speak different languages, and live in different times come independently to the very similar conclusion, we observe a phenomenon that needs to be considered. Guardini wrote his book in 1925, Wilber wrote about this idea at the end of the century, and the theological description happened a century before these writers, nevertheless, the similarity is more than a coincidence. It can be described as something that was an idea which time had come.

In order to properly describe this arrangement and give it meaning, the word Tetrarchy was applied to this structure by this writer, where two pairs of two opposites are forming the four principles of a new unity, like in a tetrarchy four rulers rule one country. Here four principles are forming a unity, describing a reality that cannot be otherwise described.

The obvious similarity of these thoughts should not make us forget their differences. While Guardini's interest is mainly in the oppositeness of the pairs, Wilber does not stress this idea and develops the pairs in four quadrants, attempting to describe the developmental aspect of life and reality. Wilber sees the connection of the pairs in the four quadrants of the crossing and develops his understanding of reality from this aspect as will be described below.

Before going forward and explaining the concept of quadrants, as Wilber has formulated it, let us recapture the important features of oppositeness as described by Guardini.

Two concepts are described as opposites, if they are logically in opposition, but must be perceived as in reality always presupposing each other, and being in existence through their oppositeness, as well as, forming through their mutual presupposition a unity, which best can be described as a unity in diversity.

This definition cannot be logically reduced, but the tension that is inherent in this opposition needs to be supported

rationally and will always require that these concepts have to be considered together. Any separation or undue emphasis on one side or the other is destroying this precarious unity on which every living being is based. In fact, this oppositeness with its tension and resolution in a unity in diversity needs to be extended to all beings, from the material to the spiritual reality. If anything is seen otherwise, the reality of it is not really brought into the understanding mind, and only part of reality is seen. This is not only unrealistic, but also destructive, when used in application it will destroy the reality that it tries to deal with.

There is a good example from politics to clarify the above statement. In any democratic process, there are parties, and the parties are most often in opposition. Nevertheless, the parties on both sides are necessary and presuppose each other in order to take care of the whole, the state. If one party takes over the whole, especially if it eliminates the other parties from functioning or even from existing, it will be destructive to the whole and not represent the whole in any meaningful way.

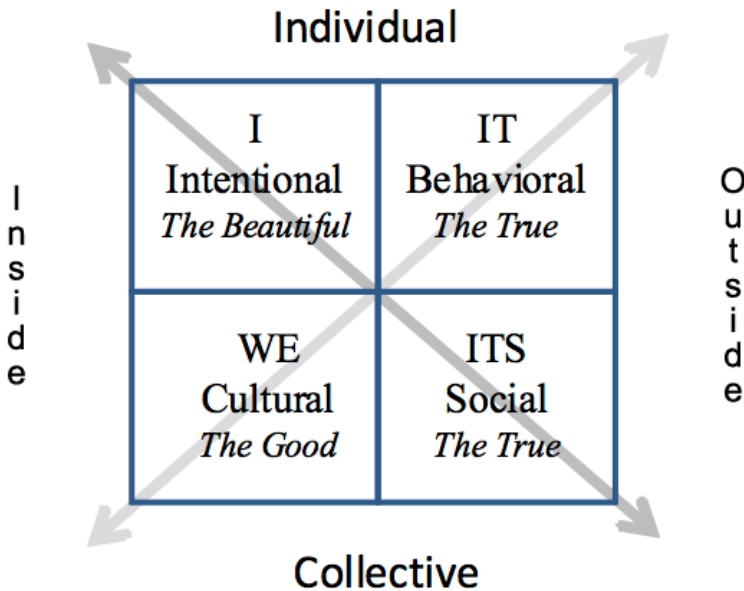
Even after all other parties have been eliminated, as for example in Hitler's Germany or Lenin's Russia, these dictatorial governments still call themselves parties, even though, they have assumed the governance of the whole and do not tolerate any opposition. That such an arrangement is dysfunctional has been proven in the last century and any party who acts as the whole is unable to produce results that benefit the whole, it becomes destructive and creates a dysfunctional society.

It is interesting to observe that these parties developed a tyrannical leader, who eventually had to "purge" the party itself, as Hitler did in the "Röhm Putsch" and Stalin did when killing two thirds of the party's first Central Committee. In this sense, it has been said during the French Revolution, that the revolution devours its own children.

The contribution of Ken Wilber: Quadrants, Levels, Holon

The integration of the inside and outside, of the individual and collective, of being and awareness is at the core of the integral philosophy of Ken Wilber, whose writings will assist in this paper's quest to understand reality¹⁴. What is reality, we need to ask again? How does the self relate to the internal and external, to the individual and to the collective? To rediscover this tradition of the self and to fortify it with modern science and the understanding of the development of the individual and of humanity Wilber's has developed his integral philosophy, which has become a new, a worldwide phenomenon as the translation of his books into 20 languages demonstrates and made him the most read thinker not only in USA, but popular also in countries such as Germany and Japan?

KEN WILBER'S FOUR QUADRANTS



Wilber's Four Quadrants

Wilber organizes the structure of reality as well as of human consciousness in four quadrants, where the left two quadrants are depicting the inside of things and the right two sides the outside of things [see graph on previous page]. The upper quadrants signify the individual aspect and the lower two quadrants the collective aspect of reality and consciousness.

This paper is concerned with a vision that will shape the future; it is trying to discover the way humanity sees itself and it will try to solve the difficulties the future might bring. Can philosophy be the answer, or does it take more than human understanding? This idea will result in an attempt to formulate some principles of integral and progressive thinking, an attainment that can today only be envisioned in its outlines and that will have to be developed over time.¹⁵

A note about popularity needs to be inserted here. Popularity is not a criterion of truth, in fact, it often is indicative of a lack of truth, or, as history has proven, it is an indication of what can be called "half-truth." Something becomes popular because it conveys some truth, but in an easy form, which often disguises the untruthful, but popular aspect of the statement. In the case of the Integral Philosophy of Ken Wilber this issue will be explored below under the term of spiritual materialism.¹⁶

He further indicates that the philosophical tradition for several thousand years, in East and West, has seen the structure of being in similar ways, talking about the area of the "I" as the Beautiful, about the area of "We" as the Good and about the right sight (the "It and Its") as the area of the True. (See picture above) Combining the tradition and the modern understanding of consciousness he added another aspect to this structure, that of the levels. With this concept, he introduces into the structure of the perennial philosophy the modern idea of historicity, of evolution and progress.

In this Wilber follows the view of Teilhard de Chardin and others, who had indicated that the evolutionary aspect of reality was a new understanding. Additionally, they had also described this evolution in not only a biological Darwinian sense, but also

In Wilber's graph above,¹⁷ the development of the individual consciousness is shown as starting at the center and moving towards the corners in a continuous evolution of awareness, of behavior, of social and cultural understanding.

The same is true for the reality and development of the universe, starting in the center with the big bang and developing upwards and towards the corners in all four directions.

What should never be overlooked is the fact that this development is not happening in four different directions, but that these four quadrants are integrated and corresponding aspects of the same reality. Whatever develops or changes in one quadrant has effects in all the others, and happens at the same level in all four quadrants. This fact was cogently demonstrated by Wilber in an overview of the modern understanding of developmental psychology and is demonstrated in the history of humankind as well.

In the figure above from Wilber's books, this development is depicted. Beginning in the center, the development of the physical world on the right side and of the spiritual world on the left side is noted in the different levels of development. In all four directions, the development starts in the middle and spreads out from there, this progress is interconnected, and all four arrows are presenting the development of the whole.

Obviously, this scheme presupposes the understanding that awareness is present at all levels of development of the universe. The reader is invited to seek the explanation for this understanding of awareness and the history of this ontological and epistemological idea in the writings of Wilber. Wilber describes the development of the universe in three spheres: The understanding, development and integration of physiosphere (matter), biosphere (living organisms) and noosphere (a Teilhardian concept, meaning the sphere of the mind), is presupposed in this scheme.

Wilber's Holon

There is another Wilberian concept (originally coined by Arthur Koestler) that is important for the understanding of this

metaphysical concept of integration, which again places Wilber in the center of modern thinking and demonstrates that all of his concepts are thoroughly integrated with the understanding of science. This is his concept of the Holon. This Greek term stands in for the word whole but in a very specific sense. Wilber explains that the world is not made of matter or spirit, who in his and Teilhard's system are never to be separated, but out of Holons. A Holon is a whole consisting of parts in its own right, and which is always at the same time a part of a higher whole.

Consequently, and that is important to the understanding of Wilber's system, everything is such a Holon, and dependent on what place such a Holon is found it will be including always parts and be a part of other wholes. So for example, the atom is a whole compared to subatomic particles such as electrons or even lower quarks etc. As soon as the atom is included in a higher whole such as a molecule, it becomes a part of this. Again, the molecule will be part of the cell, and the cell of the organism and so forth, even into the spiritual area of consciousness, this principle is continued. There is no end in either direction. The reality consists of these Holons, which gradually developed into ever-higher wholes.

When the oppositeness of Guardini and the crossing of opposites is introduced into the Wilberian concept of Quadrants and Holons a new idea is emerging, which we call the tetrachic structure of being. What is important to note is the fact that this is a basic structure of being, it appears in all concrete existing entities, and solves the old problem of the whole and its parts, in developing the understanding of reality. This relationship is placed at the center of the consideration: reality is seen as it is concrete and actual, not in abstract logical constructions, but as it is. It takes this difficult logical structure to approach the concrete and individual reality, to understand its functioning and gain new insight in "how reality really is."

It is further important to recognize that it takes a special way of thinking and understanding in order to be able to penetrate to this level of understanding. As Teilhard of Chardin mentioned, there are two different way of thinking,

However, it is just at this point, in fact, that we meet an initial split in the thinking mass of mankind.

And further:

Beneath an infinite number of secondary differentiation, caused by the diversity of social interests, of scientific investigation or religious faith, there are basically two types of minds, and only two: those who do not go beyond (and see no need to go beyond) perception of the multiple – however interlinked in itself the multiple may appear to be – and those for whom perception of this same multiple is necessarily completed in some unity. There are only, in fact, pluralists and monists: those who do not see, and those who do.¹⁸

Obviously, in this paper the thinking in unity is attempted and there are several ways how this can be described. Teilhard calls it monistic versus pluralistic thinking, another way to understand the relationship between these different ways of thinking and understanding reality was described by Guardini, who wrote his book before Teilhard's papers were available and mentioned three ways of understanding.

Guardini's Epistemology or three Ways of Understanding

Guardini at the end of his book "Der Gegensatz" presents another interesting consideration about the way concrete reality is understood. He distinguishes three levels of understanding: rational, trans-rational and super-rational (in German: Rational, Außer-Rational and Über-Rational).

The first is the rational understanding forming concepts, which abstracts from the concrete individual reality and forms a general idea. In order to individualize we have to give this thing, this animal or person a name or indicate that we mean this house and not the other house next to it. Fortunately, houses have numbers and people and pets have names, otherwise we could not speak about an individual person without describing

some features that are specific to that individual, or pointing to that individual, like in court.

Guardini describes another way of understanding, which he calls intuition. This way of understanding Guardini calls trans-rational (“Außer-Rational”), which he describes as a clear and normal way of understanding. Additionally, he places these two ways of understanding in an opposition, so that the conceptual, abstract way of understanding can never be totally separated from the intuitive concrete way of understanding. Whenever we think of a general abstract concept, like that of “cat,” or felineity, we somehow have the concrete experience and picture of a specific individual cat or cats in mind, only that makes the abstract thought possible and meaningful.

And whenever we think or talk about an individual cat, for example, the abstract concept of cat is in the field of understanding as well, because we know always both, the focus and concentration may be on the individual or on the abstract concept, but both cannot be thought about without the other side, i.e., its opposite being included and in some way this defines the idea of either a particular animal or person. On the other hand, the idea of animalness, or humanness must be considered whenever the individual example of this animal or person is considered,. Even if we invent a fictitious animal, like the unicorn, we have to make a picture of it in our mind, and this picture will be concrete of such an animal and not abstract as the concept of unicornness would be.

After that discussion, the third way of understanding is mentioned by Guardini with some caution. He claims that the mystery of the living is not in the intuitive versus the rational understanding, but in this third way of understanding that he calls super-rational, it is a higher understanding than reason or intuition, it is the understanding of the whole, of the unity of reality and it is achieved in the tension between rational and intuitive understanding. It is not a Hegelian synthesis, which abolishes the other ways of understanding; it is an original, a first and essential understanding, which is actually very simple in its complicatedness. Any attempt to define this logically, is bound to fail. This core of the concrete reality can only be

understood in an act of knowing, that has the same structure as the reality, and this is what Guardini calls vision (*Anschauung*):

To understand the core of the living reality and to approach its mystery is not a nebulous imagination, it rather takes vision, which is possible only in the tension, and in respect of the mystery, which requires discipline and self-control.¹⁹

Guardini describes further this concept and indicates that any one-sidedness destroys this tension of understanding reality; that it leads to erroneous simplification, and to false explication and failure to understand truthfully. Only the oppositeness of this relationship allows the human mind to grasp the whole and to use rational understanding and intuitive perception in a scientific and philosophically correct way in approaching reality. Rationalism and intellectualism, if used one-sided, will be opposed by Intuitionism, or Romanticism and Mysticism and both will fail to understand reality as it really is.

In understanding reality, this epistemological structure needs always to be kept in mind, and the vast theological and pastoral work of Romano Guardini is testimony to that fact. Here we will use this understanding to improve on the psychological and cosmological conceptualization of Ken Wilber and later it is expected to be helpful in understanding the theological and revelatory Writings of the Bahá'í Faith. The last part of this paper will be an attempt to apply this way of thinking to psychology as a proof of its value and effectiveness. Another thought, which will be considered later, is the fact that in modern physics, especially in Quantum Mechanics, light has oppositional character, it is showing wave characteristics and/or corporal characteristic, depending on the research apparatus of the investigator, the same is true for Einstein's Relativity Theory, between mass and energy.

This oppositional essence at the core of reality has created a revolution in physics and in philosophy as well. It has put consciousness in the center of discourse, with many consequences that will be explored later.

Integral Opposite of Unity in Diversity (Goethe, Solovyov, Gabriel, Wucherer)

The history of the thinking in “Gegensatz” (Oppositeness) has predecessors but comes to its fruition in the writings of Augustinus Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld, who wrote his dissertation on the Gegensatz philosophy of Romano Guardini and developed this and other ideas into a Philosophy of the Whole (Ganzheitsphilosophie). In his most recent book, *Philosophische Theologie im Umbruch*²⁰ (Philosophic Theology in Radical and Renewing Change) he has developed this topic over many pages as a separate topic.

In this excursion or digression first the general idea of the one and the many is discussed, and then its development by Thomas Aquinas is described. The different understanding of the dialectic of the idea of the whole is seen in its extreme understanding of totalitarian unity versus anarchistic plurality. Finally the history of the integral whole is explained in the Aristotelian tradition and the new paradigms of its understanding are presented, where Guardini and Teilhard de Chardin play a major role.

It is significant that Wucherer, when applying this idea of the integral whole to the different religions and the conversion from one religion to another, presents an understanding that is only expressed in the Bahá'í understanding of unity of religion.

A criterion of the truth of one's own religion is the uninhibited and loving acceptance of all other paths to salvation of humankind, because ultimately they all stem from the same origin as your own religion.

He claims in this passage that all religions are from the same origin, are from God, their revelations are presented by distinct messengers, at different times to humanity at different levels of evolution. The same God is revealed in the different revelations, which were given at different historical times to different people, therefore the same message had to be presented in diverse ways. Additionally, he further says that

the conversion or the going from one religion to another (if one has honestly lived in the original religion) is outdated, or possibly even morally questionable, if the growing into another religious community excludes the improved retention and deepening in the own original religion from which one is coming from.²¹

These statements are based on an understanding of the different religions of this world, that is only present in the Bahá'í Faith, i.e., all religions are true and are only steps and historical expressions of the different Manifestations, who all bring the same message from God to humankind, adjusted to the level of understanding in the different periods of history.

That this idea is not alien to the Christian message was demonstrated by Wucherer in a personal discussion with this writer. He reminded this writer of the story of Cornelius in the Acts of the Apostles, (Chapter 10-11) where Cornelius, who obviously was a Roman and a pagan at the time, is several times mentioned as a devout God-fearing person (Act 10:1; 10:22: upright and God-fearing) who in his prayers got a message from God to seek Peter and who together with his family and friends received the Holy Spirit even before he was baptized. It is remarkable that this episode which is a lengthily passage of the Acts and is repeatedly mentioning the religious qualities of Cornelius has been so totally forgotten in Christianity. Many Christians condemn not only the adherents of other Religions but also members of other Christian denominations, a fact that does not seem to be based on scripture, but is a human convention of intolerance and exclusivity born from pride and ignorance and based on a wrong understanding of reality. When the oppositional aspect of reality is overlooked, the unity is destroyed, politically as well as socially and philosophically.

Matter and Spirit (Teilhard, Ebner, Buber)

The relationship between matter and spirit has occupied philosophers throughout history, from materialisms of a Democritus to Hobbes Leviathan and finally to Karl Marx and the dialectical materialism of Communism, as described by

Stalin. There is the dualistic solution as presented by Descartes, which is dominating modern science, and the conflict between Plato and Aristotle, about what is reality, the eternal ideas of Plato or the concrete reality as presented in the physics and metaphysics of Aristotle has never been resolved.

In recent times Teilhard de Chardin has attempted a novel solution by stating that mater and spirit are fundamentally connected, are dependent of each other and are in a process of development that has come in our days to a significant solution.

Ferdinand Ebner has placed the spiritual in man into the word, and proves that the word, given to man is the source of man's spiritual existence, a similar approach has been presented by Buber and the other personal dialogical thinkers of the last century.

Theology

New Heaven and New Earth

In the book of Revelation (21:1) a vision is described

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea.

Bahá'u'lláh interpreted this passage in a new way, stating:

On the contrary, by the term "earth" is meant the earth of understanding and knowledge, and by "heavens" the heavens of divine Revelation. [KI 47]

This change from the old to the new is a change of understanding, of a new understanding of the creation as renewed by the new Revelation. What is prophesied in the book of Revelation has been fulfilled in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the change is a change of understanding; it is a new and *sublime Vision*.

Were the breezes of Revelation to seize thee, thou wouldst flee the world, and turn unto the Kingdom, and wouldst expend all thou possessest, that thou mayest draw nigh unto this sublime Vision. [SLH 81]

In the Surih of the Temple, Bahá'u'lláh describes the Maiden as announcing to the world a new understanding of reality expressed in new and wondrous sciences and craft, brought through the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh:

Erelong shall We bring into being through thee exponents of new and wondrous sciences, of potent and effective crafts, and shall make manifest through them that which the heart of none of Our servants hath yet conceived.²² [SLH 35]

Must it not be assumed that the new philosophical and scientific understandings, which have been presented in the first part of this paper, are part of the new understanding of reality? This new understanding was originated in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and it was found a century later by thinkers and theologians, even if they had no first-hand knowledge of this Revelation. To make sure that this is more than an idle speculation, we will now demonstrate how the Bahá'í Writings can be understood and how this new thinking in Opposite and Tetrarchic structures can be found in the Bahá'í Writings. This is not only found there, but it clarifies these structures, gives them a new and deeper meaning, which does elucidate the Writings as well and makes them easier to understand.

It takes a *New Eye, a New Ear, a New Heart, and a New Mind* to find this new understanding of the Creation and it is given to the seeker, as Bahá'u'lláh stated:

He [the seeker] will find himself endowed with a New Eye, a New Ear, a New Heart, and a New Mind. [KI 195]

“Gegensatz” or Polar Oppositeness in the Bahá’í Writings

In the Bahá’í writings the word opposite is only used in the extreme and contradictory way, so that opposites excluder each other like good and evil, light and darkness. Nevertheless, other concepts are frequently placed in opposite or polar positions as can easily be demonstrated. When Bahá’u’lláh speaks in the Tablet of Wisdom of the *world of existence* coming *into being* he presents on oppositional polar relationship of the principle forces involved.

The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different. Thus doth the Great Announcement inform thee about this glorious structure. [TB 140]

The *active force* and the *recipient force* are clearly describing a “Gegensatz,” they are polar opposites, therefore they are called *the same* and *different*. One can make a reference to the Aristotelian concept of form and matter, but this understanding of *same* and *different* goes beyond the Aristotelian concept of form and matter, which are only conceived as being opposite but not as the same as well. Bahá’u’lláh calls this a *glorious structure* in His *Great Announcement*, placing a great emphasis and importance on this way of describing reality and its origin.

When tetrarchic structures in the Bahá’í Writings are described below, it will become clear that all the concepts used to form a tetrarchy are in a “Gegensatz” or in polar oppositeness to each other and are to be understood in the same way. Such polar concepts are *Firstness* and *Lastness*, *Inwardness* and *Outwardness*, [SVFV 27] *Stillness* and *Motion*, *Will* and *Purpose* [GWB 164], *Ascent* and *Descent* (TU 51); to mention only the most obvious examples. Concluding it can be stated that the concept “Gegensatz” or polar opposites is not present as such in the Writings. Nevertheless, this phrase, common in the Writings, leads us directly to the concept of “Gegensatz” as it was described above.

Tetrarchies in the Bahá'í Writings

Bahá'u'lláh has many fourfold statements that can be seen as tetrarchic statements, because they are addressing the principles or origins of reality. A list is added here, that is most likely not complete, but should make clear that this is a frequently used form of speech in Bahá'u'lláh's Writings.

These structures are from the early writings of Bahá'u'lláh, mainly of the Bagdad Period. The last here mentioned is from the Gleanings but is original in a Tablet written to Mirzá Hádí during Bahá'u'lláh's stay in Edirne (Adrianople). This is the period where most of Bahá'u'lláh's mystical writings were composed, after His stay at the Mountain of Kurdistan where He had contact with Sufis, who were visiting Him later on in Bagdad after His return. Most of these statements were made before his public announcement in the Garden of Ridván. This point is made to explain that it is the mystical approach to reality that is expressed in these tetrarchies. This approach is based on a special way of understanding reality, which is called vision like in this Verse of Bahá'u'lláh:

Were the breezes of Revelation to seize thee, thou
wouldst flee the world, and turn unto the Kingdom, and
wouldst expend all thou possessest, that thou mayest
draw nigh unto this sublime Vision.” [ESW 56]

The same term Vision (in German “Anschauung”), is used by Guardini as presented above, in the context of the way we understand reality. For Guardini Vision transcends the rational and intuitive understanding and is needed to approach the mystery of reality, when he said: “To understand the core of the living reality and to approach its mystery is not a nebulous imagination, it rather takes vision.”²³ This mystery is the reality seen in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and Vision; it is the way to approach this Revealed Reality.

While tetrarchies are found in the so-called mystical writings of Bahá'u'lláh, these are philosophical and fundamental ideas about being, which refer to the structure of reality and give us insight in the new way of understanding reality of the Bahá'í Revelation.

Tetrarchies in Bahá'u'lláh's Mystic Writings

<i>Prayer of the Báb Is there?</i>	<i>Pathways of Love SVFV 25</i>	<i>Praise of Creation SVFV 2</i>	<i>Tabernacle of Unity TU 5.1</i>	<i>True of Thyself SVFV 27</i>	<i>Examine Thine own self GWB 164</i>
<i>Praise be God</i>	<i>Creature to True One</i>	<i>First Fire</i>	<i>Ascent</i>	Firstness	Will
<i>He is God</i>	<i>True One to True One</i>	<i>First Sun</i>	<i>Decent</i>	Lastness	Purpose
<i>All are His Servants</i>	<i>True One to Creature</i>	<i>First Morn</i>	<i>Motion</i>	Outwardness	Motion
<i>All abide by His bidding</i>	<i>Creature to Creature</i>	<i>First See</i>	<i>Stillness</i>	Inwardness	Stillness

The question is here, can we organize these statements into a tetrarchic structure and what does this mean? One answer would be that these statements can be inserted into existing tetrarchic structures without difficulty. If the Bahá'í concepts fit into these structures and if this insertion makes sense, we can conclude that these fourfold structures can be described as tetrarchies. Another answer to the question posed above is the fact that when the Bahá'í concepts are inserted into this structure, they make sense and the other concepts become more meaningful as well. So it seems advantageous on both ends, advantageous for understanding the Bahá'í writings and also for better understanding such structures in modern writings.

Integration of Tetrarchies

It is important that tetrarchies are not logical structures that follow the logical way of understanding; neither do they follow the intuitive way of understanding to follow Guardini's epistemology. Tetrarchies are elements of Vision, of Anschauung, and therefore need to be understood in a totally

new way. Bahá'u'lláh indicate this distinction of understanding when He describes the wayfarer's journey in his mystical pursuit. In the first part of the Valley of Unity He describes the fact that the light of the sun, being white, is reflected in colorful objects as color and concludes that colors are from the object, not from the light. In other words the diversity of the world is based on an underlying unity of light.

In like manner, colors become visible in every object according to the nature of that object. For instance, in a yellow globe, the rays shine yellow; in a white the rays are white; and in a red, the red rays are manifest. Then these variations are from the object, not from the shining light. [SVFV 19]

Later he explains what this fact means to the wayfarer in his journey towards the Unity with the Beloved. Those who only see the diversity and color of objects see only the surface, the outside of beings. What they do not see is the underlying unity of reality, of all things. Looking only at the diversity and differentiations of things, we do not see reality, but see the dust that hides reality. Bahá'u'lláh then talks about some who look at the light, which is the unity in diversity of the world, and the third group He is talking about are those who see the origin of the world's unity; in the metaphor presented here, they see the sun itself.

In sum, the differences in objects have now been made plain. Thus when the wayfarer gazeth only upon the place of appearance — that is, when he seeth only the many-colored globes — he beholdeth yellow and red and white; hence it is that conflict hath prevailed among the creatures, and a darksome dust from limited souls hath hid the world. And some do gaze upon the effulgence of the light; and some have drunk of the wine of oneness and these see nothing but the sun itself. [SVFV 21]

These are the three levels of knowing, the three planes we know reality, from the diversity of this world to the unity in this diversity and to the origin of this relationship of unity in diversity in the unity of God. These different epistemological positions are the cause of conflict in this world, according to

Bahá'u'lláh, which could easily be demonstrated in describing the different philosophical and scientific opinions prevalent today.

Thus, for that they move on these three differing planes, the understanding and the words of the wayfarers have differed; and hence the sign of conflict doth continually appear on earth. [SVFV 21]

In the following passage Bahá'u'lláh describes the three basic ways of understanding reality, the three epistemological positions towards the understanding of reality and he adds a fourth position, the position of ignorance, of being unable to see anything, of being “*completely veiled.*” Again, he adds to this explanation the insight in the problems which is created by those “*ignorant people,*” who do not see the reality in a spiritual understanding and therefore inflict on people what they actually deserve themselves.

For some there are who dwell upon the plane of oneness and speak of that world, and some inhabit the realms of limitation, and some the grades of self, while others are completely veiled. Thus do the ignorant people of the day, who have no portion of the radiance of Divine Beauty, make certain claims, and in every age and cycle inflict on the people of the sea of oneness what they themselves deserve. [SVFV 21]

This description can be compared with Guardini's three ways of understanding, explained above.

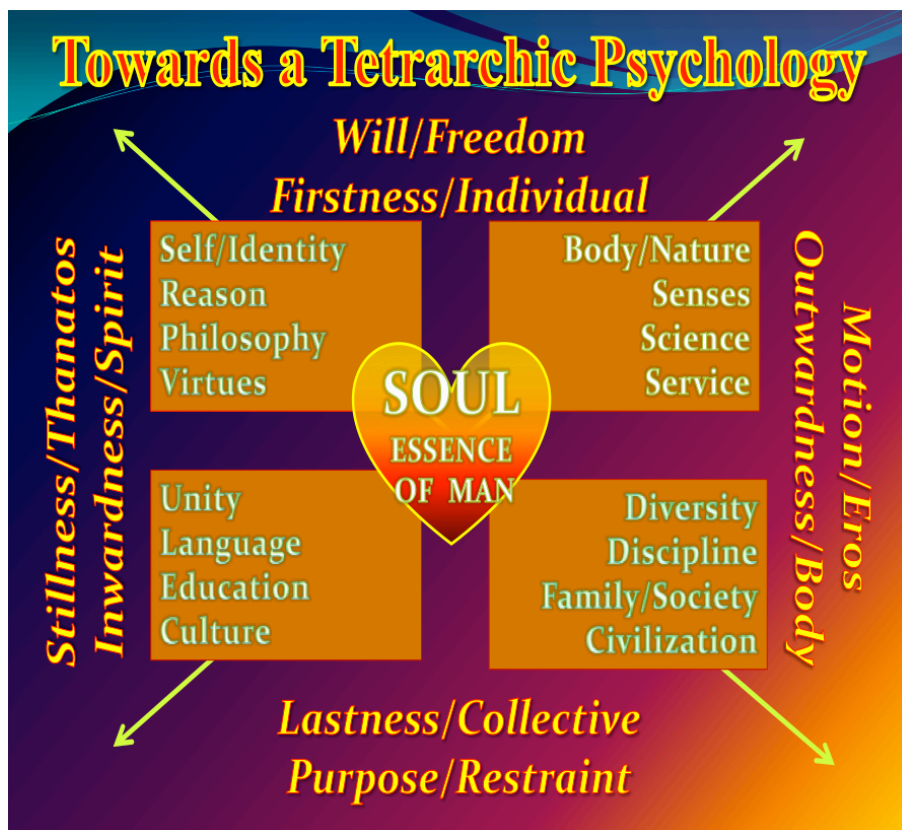
Those “*who dwell upon the plane of oneness*” have vision or Anschauung, those who “*inhabit the realms of limitation*” are bound by logical thinking only, and those who inhabit “*the grades of self*” clearly belong to those who have intuition as their tool of understanding.

It should not be surprising that tetrarchic structures are difficult to understand, especially as we are all seeing the world mostly in scientific and logical terms, are used to explanations of reality in this way and are not educated to accept other ways of understanding. As Guardini has noted vision is difficult, it takes the toleration of the tension between logical knowledge and intuition and it entails “respect of the mystery, which requires

discipline and self-control.” On the other hand, Guardini’s influence in the Catholic understanding of religion, primarily in Germany but even here in USA, where his books are translated, might indicate that this way of thinking is not only powerful, but also forward-looking and progressive for our times.

Thoughts about Dual and Tetrarchic Structures in the Bahá’í Faith

In the following pages, the adjective tetrarchic²⁴ is used from the Greek meaning four (*tetras* = four) princes governing a single kingdom, in contrast to monarchy, where there is only one (*monos* = one) ruler. As used here, tetrarchy refers to the four principles that constitute the whole; they all are independent principles, yet, they are integrated in the whole and they contribute to the whole. In the Bahá’í writings, these four principles are translated into English as the four states of man.



And thus firstness and lastness, outwardness and inwardness are, in the sense referred to, true of thyself, that in these four states conferred upon thee thou shouldst comprehend the four divine states, and that the nightingale of thine heart on all the branches of the rosetree of existence, whether visible or concealed, should cry out: "He is the first and the last, the Seen and the Hidden...." [SVFV 27]

With this passage in mind, we shall below consider the principles of a Tetrarchic Developmental Psychology, which deals with how the human psyche develop and questions of a possible Tetrarchic Psychopathology. The latter considers how mental illness affects the human psyche. We shall also consider what this new approach may mean for a Tetrarchic approach to Psychotherapy.

In the figure below the fourfold or tetrarchic structure is shown to consist of a double tetrarchic paradigm: Two opposite states are opposed and integrated with two other opposite states. In this paradigm, it is important to reconcile and integrate all the four or eight opposites into a whole, as an example of *Unity in Diversity*:

Motion <i>eros/thanatos</i>	< > –	Stillness <i>life/death drive</i>
Will <i>purposeful goal directed</i>	< > –	Purpose <i>freedom of choice</i>

Firstness <i>individual</i>	< > –	Lastness <i>collective</i>
Inwardness <i>spiritual</i>	< > –	Outwardness <i>material</i>

Leaving aside other four-fold principles in the Writings, we shall consider only these four, which depict the reality of life in this double tetrarchic structure. In these four states of man, the tetrarchic paradigm is applied to the different areas of psychology. Bahá'u'lláh indicates that this tetrarchic paradigm is essential to all reality by calling it to come from the “*rosetree of existence*” [SVFV 27]. Another aspect of this structure needs to be emphasized: the total spiritual unity of the soul that is seen in our limited vision as a tetrarchic structure. Bahá'u'lláh expresses that clearly when talking in the same tablet about the different vision of reality:

For some there are who dwell upon the plane of oneness and speak of that world, and some inhabit the realms of limitation, and some the grades of self, while others are completely veiled. [SV 20]

Three different planes of vision of reality are described: one is the plane of oneness, the other the realm of limitation, and grades of self and finally, the realm of those who see nothing at all. What is described in this paper is the realm of “*limitation and self,*” which is the area of psychological studies. Yet the plane of oneness, of unity, and of the whole must never be overlooked and must be taken into account whenever the world is seen as it presents itself to our vision.

Therefore Bahá'u'lláh reminds us at the end of the Valley of Unity of this vision of oneness:

These statements are made in the sphere of that which is relative, because of the limitations of men.

Otherwise, those personages who in a single step have passed over the world of the relative and the limited, and dwelt on the fair plane of the Absolute, and pitched their tent in the worlds of authority and command — have burned away these relativities with a single spark, and blotted out these words with a drop of dew.

And they swim in the sea of the spirit, and soar in the holy air of light. Then what life have words, on such a plane, that “first” and “last” or other than these be seen

or mentioned! In this realm, the first is the last itself,
and the last is but the first. [SV 27]

In the original the above quote and the quote below are one paragraph, here the sentences are separated for easier analysis.

This vision of the *spirit ... in the holy air of light* is what unifies the tetrarchic structure and what allows the four principles described above to be seen in their unity. Both of the contradictory aspects are integrated, or they are the same, so that the first is the last, as noted above. Both must always be in sight, which is why *seekers* must see with the *eye of God*:

Then will the manifold favors and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind.

He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul.

Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude.⁷ [GWB 267]

When analyzing this we find that the tetrarchic structure is based on the integration of opposites, of a dual structure forming a whole. This is basically a dual and paradoxically opposing and integrated structure. The dual nature of man was already indicated in the following verse of the Bible:

All things are double, one against another:
and he hath made nothing imperfect. (Book of Sirach,
25:24)

Here, too, we observe the basis of the fourfold structure described above which embraces the opposites of first and last, inwardness and outwardness. It needs to be noted that several of these tetrarchic structures can be superimposed on each other as seen in the diagram given above which forms a panoramic picture of the human condition.

In this view of human nature, there are three levels of understanding. The first, as indicated by Bahá'u'lláh, is held by people who do not see any unity, who hold on to a materialistic, particularistic worldview that tries to explain everything by its physical parts. The second view is more open seeing the whole in the parts and trying to find some meaning in the world. With this view in mind, we can recognize the paradigm presented here. This view leads to the third view, in which the seeker sees the whole and the parts, sees the spiritual and the material and is in touch with the *rosetree of existence*.

Psychology

After having established the tetrarchic vision of reality in philosophy, after having expanded and transcended this view in the theological section of this paper, it could be applied to a specific field, to psychology to demonstrate its value and potential usefulness. Other realms of reality could be as well be seen in the tetrarchic vision, for example modern Quantum Physics, where the dual character of light as particle and as wave can be seen as a polar opposite and this findings have revolutionized modern physics, but we will not pursue this idea here.

This application to psychology has been made in a previous paper by this author, about "The Essence of Man,"²⁶ in this paper the basic philosophical and theological condition for the finding presented in that paper were more explicitly explained, giving it a deeper understanding so that future application to psychology can be improved, and its meaning towards a new understanding of the psychology of man can be expanded. Further studies will be needed to prove the thesis, which was enlarged in the present paper, to diverse psychological disorders and to the infantile development as well as to the mature human behavior.

The concept of the tetrarchic structure of reality was further explained and the concept of Polarity or Gegensatz was developed to further deepen the understanding of reality as

presented in its tetrarchic structures. The previous paper about “The Essence of Man” and the understanding of the tetrarchic structure as applied to psychology was extended and presented with a better understanding of its integral aspects. These aspects include the polarity of reality and a new epistemology to be able to have a vision of reality seen in its tetrarchic structure. This added insight was found to be present in the Bahá’í Writings, and this further improved the understanding of how to see reality in this new and progressive way, at the three planes of Vision, Reason, and Insight and as presented in the Valley of Unity in the Seven Valleys of Bahá’u’lláh where He said: “*For some there are who dwell upon the plane of oneness and speak of that world, and some inhabit the realms of limitation, and some the grades of self, while others are completely veiled. ...*” [SVFV 21]

It seems to be advantageous that the development of the progressive understanding of the Bahá’í Writings is coordinated with the thinking of today in order to better present them when teaching the Bahá’í Faith. This paper needs to be regarded as another small step towards this goal.

NOTES

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, page 27.

² Paul Watzlawick, *Wie Wirklich ist die Wirklichkeit, Wahn-Täuschung-Verstehen*, (How Real is Reality, Delusion-Error-Understanding), Piper Verlag, München, 2010, ISBN 978-3-492-24310

³ Term often used by philosophers in the (mainly continental) tradition running from Schleiermacher and Dilthey to Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur

⁴ Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2005

⁵ Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848

⁶ Wolfgang Klebel, “Unity and Progressive Revelation: Comparing Bahá’í Principles with the Basic concepts of Teilhard de Chardin” in *Lights of 'Irfán*, Book Five; Wilmette: BNC, 2004, pages 77-108.

⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*; Continuum; London, New York, Second Revised Edition, 1975, pages 301-306

⁸ Tetrarchy in the Roman Empire under Diocletian is described by Pliny the Elder as follows: *regnum instar singulae et in regna contribuuntur.*” (see

Wikipedia under tetrarchy) “Each tetrarch is the equivalent of a singular ruler, and each is contributing to the rule of the whole.” The term tetrarch is known from the Bible where the different tetrarchs, the sons of Herod the Great, who were ruling Israel are mentioned in the history of John the Baptist (Luke 3:1, 3:19), Jesus (Luke 9:7, Matt. 14:1) and then Paul (Acts 13:1). Herod the Great was a monarch (monos=single, arche=beginning, principle, prince, ruler), he divided the kingdom among his sons into four tetrarchies, without dividing the kingdom; the word tetrarch is similar to monarch, instead of one ruler there are four rulers or princes in one kingdom.

⁹ Guardini in his book: *Der Gegensatz, Versuch zu einer Philosophie des Lebendig-Konkreten*, (Oppositeness, an attempt towards a philosophy of the living-concrete) Matthias-Grünwald Verlag, Mainz, fourth edition 1998, mentions that “Polarität” (polarity) and “Gegensatz” have for all practical purpose the same meaning, He stated that “these concepts are comparable if closely looked at” (page 24 footnote). He prefers the word Gegensatz to Polarity because polarity has been too much talked about (“ist zerredet”), in other words, is more confusing in its use. It might be important to talk of “polar opposites when correctly translating the word Gegensatz.

¹⁰ Ibid. page 133

¹¹ This quote is taken from Wikipedia, Hildegard von Bingen.

¹² Romano Guardini *ibid.* page 28. While many of the theological and pastoral books of Guardini have been translated into English, this book, unfortunately, has not yet found a translator.

¹³ Guardini *ibid.* p.41

¹⁴ This idea was presented in *Lights of Irfan*, Wolfgang Klebel “True of Thyself: The Mystical Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and Ken Wilber’s System of Integral Philosophy” Book Six (2005), pages 87-120. The idea was further developed and is here presented in an abbreviated and advanced way.

¹⁵ The dialogical thinking of Martin Buber and Ferdinand Ebner as presented by Augustinus Karl Wucherer Huldendorf and *Ebner und Martin Buber (The dialogical thinking)* Verlag Karl Albert, Freiburg, München, 2002. At present another volume of the same writer is available that will be commented upon later in the paper.

¹⁶ Wilber’s psychological and philosophical system is based on the Psychology of Transpersonalism. In an extensive and internal critique of this philosophy, which places Wilber in a modern and Western Buddhist tradition, Toegel has called Wilber’s position “Spiritual Materialism.” Johannes Toegel, *Eine Theologie des Zeitgeistes, Darstellung und Kritik am Beispiel der Transpersonalen Psychologie* (A theology of the spirit of the time, a presentation and critique using the example of transpersonal psychology); Dissertation (28,684); University of Vienna, 1991. Toegel reports that for three years he had tried the same approach, while living in a cave in Tibet, where he eventually met a true master and realized that true mystical experiences consist in trust and acceptance and not in

striving to higher transpersonal techniques. This issue will be dealt with in another chapter.

¹⁷ This chart is taken from the book, *The Essential Ken Wilber, an Introductory Reader*, by Kendra Crossen Burroughs, Shambhala, Boston & London, 1998, p. 103

¹⁸ Teilhard. "How I believe" page 101 in *Christianity and Evolution*, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London 1969,

¹⁹ Guardini *ibid.* p.174 *passim*

²⁰ Augustinus Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld, *Philosophische Theologie im Umbruch*, Boehlau Verlag, Vienna, Cologne, Weimar, 2011. Especially the Fourth Excursion, pages 469-556

The German word "Umbruch" implies the act of plowing, breaking the earth and opening it for the new seed, indicating radical change and profound renewal, consequently the cover picture of the book is the Sower by Vincent van Gogh, 1888

²¹ *Ibid.* page 477

²² The paragraph is broken u for better understanding. In the phrase "*through thee*" the pronoun *thee* clearly indicates Bahá'u'lláh, it must be questioned why the *Thee* is not capitalized as in all the other paragraphs of this Tablet, this seems to be a printing error.

²³ Guardini *ibid.* p.174 *passim*

²⁴ Tetrarchy in the Roman Empire under Diocletian is described by Pliny the Elder as follows: *regnum instar singulae et in regna contribuuntur.*" (see Wikipedia under tetrarchy) "Each tetrarch is the equivalent of a singular ruler, and each is contributing to the rule of the whole." The term tetrarch is known from the Bible where the different tetrarchs, the sons of Herod the Great, who were ruling Israel are mentioned in the history of John the Baptist (Luke 3:1, 3:19), Jesus (Luke 9:7, Matt. 14:1) and then Paul (Acts 13:1). Herod the Great was a monarch (monos=single, arche=beginning, principle, prince, ruler), he divided the kingdom among his sons into four tetrarchies; the word tetrarch is similar to monarch, instead of one ruler there are four rulers or princes in one kingdom.

²⁵ The book of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus forms part of the Greek Bible though it does not appear in the Jewish Canon; it is therefore one of the deuterocanonical books. It was written in Hebrew, St. Jerome and the rabbis (who quote from it) knew the book in its original language. It is accepted as part of the Christian biblical canon by Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and most Oriental Orthodox but not by most Protestants. (Confer Wikipedia and the Introduction in "The Jerusalem Bible"; Doubleday and Company, Inc.; Garden City, New York, 1966)

²⁶ Wolfgang Klebel, in *Lights of Irfan*, Book Twelve, Wilmette 2010, pages 27-104.

Reason and the Bahá'í Writings

Ian Kluge

Part I

1. Introduction

One of the hallmarks of the Bahá'í Writings is that they place an enormous emphasis on the power of reason. Indeed, few, if any, religious Scriptures have as much to say about reason as the Bahá'í Writings. While other religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism certainly have strong traditions of rational theology and philosophy – for example, Maimonides, Aquinas, Avicenna and Nagarjuna – these are *derived* and *inferred* from revealed Scripture. In contrast, the Bahá'í Writings themselves contain a large number of direct and indirect statements about the nature and importance of reason, as well as its appropriate uses and limitations.

The importance of reason in the Bahá'í Writings is directly emphasized in various ways which will be explored below. Let us begin with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's affirmation that "If a question be found contrary to reason, faith and belief in it are impossible, and there is no outcome but wavering and vacillation" [PUP 181]. That fact that reason is necessary for a steady faith makes the clear the fundamental importance of reason for the Writings. For now, it suffices to note 'Abdu'l-Bahá's declarations that "The foundations of religion are reasonable" [PUP 128] and that "If religion were contrary to logical reason then it would cease to be a religion and be merely a tradition" [PT 143]. In other words, reason is a *sine qua non* for religion to retain its identity as religion; it is an essential attribute of religion. Elsewhere, he adds that religion is "founded upon the premises and conclusions of reason, and both (religion and science) must bear

its [reason’s] test” [PUP 107]. Reason, in effect, is a touchstone by which we may distinguish true religion from superstition. The use of the imperative word “must” indicates not only an obligation to “test” or assess religion by reason, but also that religion is obligated to meet the standards of reason. Further emphasizing the essential nature of reason in religion, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asserts that “*in this age* the peoples of the world need the arguments of reason,” [SAQ 7, emphasis added] indicating, thereby, that the contemporary world has a special need for teaching reason in religion.

To some extent, of course, the need for reason in religion occurs in any age insofar as the Bahá’í Writings view reason or rationality as a defining i.e. essential attribute of humankind:

The human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the *rational* soul, and these two names – the human spirit and the *rational* soul – designate one thing.
[SAQ 208, emphasis added]

Consequently, all revelations appeal to rationality though to different degrees according to humankind’s stage of development in the process of progressive revelation. The extraordinary importance of the “human spirit” or “rational soul” is emphasized by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s declaration that “the spirit of man is the most noble of phenomena ... the meeting between man and God” [PUP 239]. This assertion shows the “rational soul” has a special place in phenomenal creation and even a special spiritual status. From this we may infer that rationality, as an essential attribute of the soul, holds an exalted place the gifts bestowed upon humankind. Furthermore, Shoghi Effendi’s intriguing reference to the “invisible yet rational God” [WOB 112] also points to a close link between religion and reason, though it should be remembered that the ‘rationality of God’ is not assessable to human thought. We know from Shoghi Effendi that God is rational, but as humans, we do not necessarily understand that rationality.

There are at least five reasons why the ubiquitous direct and indirect references to reason in the Writings require study. First, without such an examination, our understanding of the divine Texts will remain incomplete. For example, ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá's declares that "The foundations of religion are reasonable" [PUP 128; cf. 63] – i.e. that the very basis of religion is reasonable or rational – but that requires some understanding of the nature of reason and how it is exemplified in the Writings.

Second, self-knowledge also demands understanding of reason insofar as the human spirit and the "rational soul" are identical, as we have seen above. In short, humans have a divinely bestowed rational essence. As Bahá'u'lláh writes,

Consider the *rational faculty with which God hath endowed the essence of man*. Examine thine own self, and behold how thy motion and stillness, thy will and purpose, thy sight and hearing, thy sense of smell and power of speech, and whatever else is related to, or transcendeth, thy physical senses or spiritual perceptions, all proceed from, and owe their existence to, this same faculty. [GWB LXXXIII, p. 163; emphasis added]

The physical senses as well as the "spiritual perceptions" depend on the "rational faculty" and are informed by it. Bahá'u'lláh's statement also makes it clear that the spiritual aspects of our being are dependent on the "rational faculty" and, therefore, influenced by it. Clearly, without some knowledge of the soul's rational nature, we cannot fully understand our own nature.

Third, the requirements of effective teaching work in the modern world necessitate a better comprehension of reason in the Writings. Contemporary culture is increasingly shaped by science and the scientific method both of which put reason at a premium. This emphasis on rationality is reflected in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's assertion that "*in this age* the peoples of the world need the arguments of reason" [SAQ 7, emphasis added]. The phrase "in this age" draws attention to a special need for rationality in our time. This applies even to spiritual matters: "Therefore, it must be our task to *prove* to the thoughtful *by reasonable arguments* the prophethood of Moses, of Christ and of the other Divine Manifestations" [SAQ 11].

Fourth, the intended audience of the Writings is humankind as a whole which will study and learn from the models of

reasoning given in the divine Texts. These models will influence the way humanity thinks about religion *per se*, about religious issues as well as about the other problems confronting us. It is, therefore, a matter of considerable significance to understand what the Writings say about reason, its nature, its uses and its limitations and how reason is exemplified in the Writings.

Fifth, Bahá'u'lláh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements identifying reason with the essence of humankind have far-reaching implications especially for the goal of unifying human kind into one global commonwealth. Because rationality is a universal aspect of humanity, a connective principle applying to all peoples and cultures across historical epochs and geographical barriers, it forms the basis for a positive global dialogue and a unified world order.

This paper concludes that the Writings make in-depth and far-reaching use of reason in four senses of the term: (1) the powers of reasoning, [PT 90] i.e. the "rational faculty" [GWB LXXXIII 163]; (2) 'reasonableness' as in thinking that is appropriate to its subject matter; (3) 'reasonableness' in the sense of not being random and having a purpose; and (4) the use of logic as in "*logical reasoning*" [SAQ 143, emphasis added]. The most extensively used aspect of reason is *logical reasoning* which is found in almost all explications of the Teachings and principles. Logical reasoning exemplifies what has traditionally been called 'Aristotelian' logic but is also referred to as 'classical' or 'standard logic.'¹ The pervasive presence of such logic should come as no surprise in light of the confirmation of a variety of Aristotelian concepts and arguments in the Writings.² Indeed, as noted in '*Abdu'l-Bahá, in London*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá' had a deep knowledge of Aristotle's philosophy: "The talk [by 'Abdu'l-Bahá'] developed into a learned dissertation on the Philosophy of Aristotle" [ABL 95]. This suggests that 'Abdu'l-Bahá' thought Aristotelian philosophy important enough to discourse on it in some detail. We will, however, also examine whether the Writings include other forms of reasoning.

The first and major part of this paper explores how reason is defined and exemplified in the Bahá'í Writings. Portions of this part may strike some readers as overly technical in regards to

logic, but this is unavoidable to cover the topic thoroughly. It also demonstrates the intellectual richness of the Writings. However, every effort has been made to reduce coverage of technicalities to an absolute minimum. The second part concerns itself with various issues surrounding this subject. These include standard logic and quantum science, standard logic and non-western logical systems, the preservation of diversity and standard logic, and post-colonial critiques of standard logic.

It must be emphasized that this paper concerns itself with a philosophical understanding of the Bahá'í Writings and does not in any way reduce the Writings to a “mere philosophy” [WOB 196]. A philosophical understanding studies the philosophical aspects of the Writings just as a historical understanding examines them from a historical point of view without reducing them to history. As divine revelation intended for humanity's future development, the Writings are multifaceted and thus, can be understood from many perspectives, without being diminished to any one of them. Thus, a philosophic study of reason in the Bahá'í Writings will help us broaden and deepen our understanding and appreciation as we seek to cultivate and develop our faith.

2. The Meanings of Reason and Rationality

In one of its meanings, ‘reason’ refers to a particular human power, capacity or ability: “the power of comprehending, inferring, or thinking especially in orderly rational ways.”³ Reason, in this sense, is a ‘power’ or ability or faculty that humans possess. According to Bahá'u'lláh, this is the “rational faculty with which God hath endowed the essence of man ... [which] should be regarded as a sign of the revelation of Him Who is the sovereign Lord of all” [GWB LXXXIII 163] and which, as we have seen above, distinguishes humans from animals. As a particular human capacity, reason carries out such functions as analysis; argumentation, i.e. giving reasons and/or analysis; evaluation; application; synthesis; identification of cause and effect; abstraction; identifying purpose; analogizing; inferring; induction and deduction. It performs these operations in an

orderly, step-by-step manner that others can follow and test for themselves.

We can observe many of these specific functions of reason in virtually all explications throughout the Writings. For example, it is obvious in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discussion about why the human species undergoes no essential change in evolution, i.e. it does not change from one species to another as "[c]ertain European philosophers"⁴ claim. In the course of explication, 'Abdu'l-Bahá presents a critical *analysis* of the scientific view and then *evaluates* it, i.e. he assesses its merits and rejects it. What the scientists say is "not a proof of the change of species" [SAQ 191]. In so doing, he *presents an argument* for his alternative view, and *gives reasons* for accepting it [SAQ 191]. To strengthen his argument, he presents the *analogy* of the infant's development in the mother's womb from which he *infers* that despite physical changes in form, our human essence does not change. As part of explaining this analogy, he gives a *purpose* for this growth, i.e. to embody God's image [SAQ 191] in the world. This analogy is also a *synthesis* insofar as it integrates the concept of changes in bodily form with the concept of a stable, unchangeable human essence and spiritual nature. He uses *induction* in his references to specific creatures such as the serpent. Finally, he leads us to the principle from which we can *deduce* his teaching from a spiritual source, i.e. the Bible: "We will make man in Our image and likeness."⁵ Any reader of his talk can observe the careful step-by-step manner in which he constructs his argument.

A similar process can be observed in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discussion of the Bahá'í teachings about the trinity. He says, "All have confessed that the question is *beyond the grasp of reason*, for three cannot become one, nor one three. To unite these is impossible; it is either one or three" [TAB3 512, emphasis added]. Consequently, the Trinity cannot be accepted as Christians understand it because it is irrational i.e. violates several logical laws as we shall see below. 'Abdu'l-Bahá performs a *reducto ad absurdum* argument by showing that any "division" in God would lead to an impossible conclusion since "division and multiplicity are properties of creatures which are contingent existences, and not accidents which happen to the self-existent [God]" [SAQ 113]. This conclusion is absurd because

God cannot be subject to accidental changes. Indeed, as we shall see below, the Christian concept of the trinity violates the logical laws of identity, of non-contradiction and the excluded middle. In the course of explicating the Bahá'í view, 'Abdu'l-Bahá *analyses* and *evaluates* Christian view and then *gives reasons* why an alternative explanation is needed. The first reason is that "For God to descend into the conditions of existence would be the greatest of imperfections" [SAQ 113] while the second is that the "Lordly Reality admits of no division" [SAQ 113]. He then presents an *analogy* and a logical *synthesis* to clarify his argument:

Now if we say that we have seen the Sun in two mirrors – one the Christ and one the Holy Spirit – that is to say, that we have seen three Suns, one in heaven and the two others on the earth, we speak truly. And if we say that there is one Sun, and it is pure singleness, and has no partner and equal, we again speak truly. [SAQ 113]

Thus, by using the capacities of human reason, 'Abdu'l-Bahá rationalizes, i.e. gives a rational, non-contradictory form to the doctrine of the Trinity. That which had hitherto been regarded as a 'mystery' beyond reasonable explanation receives a logically rational explanation. Significantly, he finishes his explication of the trinity by saying that either his explanation is true or

the foundations of the Religion of God would rest upon an *illogical proposition* which the mind could never conceive, and how can the mind be forced to believe a thing which it cannot conceive? A thing cannot be grasped by the intelligence except when it is clothed in an intelligible form; otherwise, it is but an effort of the imagination. [SAQ 113, emphasis added]

It is important to note that even when discussing a spiritual issue, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasizes that the mind cannot "conceive" of an "illogical proposition" i.e. cannot genuinely understand it and, therefore, cannot be expected to believe it. Moreover, even the "form" of a proposition must be "intelligible," i.e. reasonable and conforming to logic. It is no longer sufficient to call the trinity a 'mystery' and leave it at that. Moreover, this

passage also shows that he does not accept the idea that the “Religion of God” could rest on illogical, irrational premises: “The foundations of religion are reasonable” [PUP 128]. We observe this principle at work in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s efforts to rationalize various Biblical passages such as those dealing with Adam and Eve: “if the literal meaning of this story were attributed to a wise man, certainly all would *logically* deny that this arrangement, this invention, could have emanated from an intelligent being” [SAQ 122].

It is worth noting that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s explication clearly demonstrates that rationality has a place in considering spiritual issues. In other words, the scope of rationality is not limited to the earthly phenomenal realm.

A second meaning of reason refers to ‘being reasonable,’ in the sense of thinking or acting appropriately. All things, actions or situations have an inherent nature or essence and our responses must be in harmony with this essence, or at least, must not offend against it. An action is reasonable or rational if it is appropriate to the essence of a situation or the object of the action. For example, under normal circumstances, it is not appropriate, and not reasonable to treat an adult like an infant or a crime like an act of charity; their essential natures are too different. Indeed, such treatment commits a logical error, a category mistake, i.e. in treating one kind of thing as if it were another kind of thing. Bahá’u’lláh, advises that a speaker should “deliver his words at the appropriate time and place” [TAB 172], i.e. that words should be in harmony with the nature of a situation and an audience. Words delivered as Bahá’u’lláh prescribes will inevitably be reasonable. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asks, “How can man be content to lead only an animal existence when God has made him so high a creature?” [PT 122] Underlying this rhetorical question is the premise that acting against our higher nature is unreasonable or inappropriate to our nature; it is a logical category mistake in which we illogically treat ourselves as something we are not. A similar idea underlies ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement, “It is not reasonable that man should hold to the old tree, claiming that its life forces are undiminished, its fruit unequalled, its existence eternal” [PUP 141]. Here, too, we observe the concept of ‘inappropriateness’ at work; clinging to

the “old” revelation is inappropriate and, therefore, unreasonable in light of its diminished vigor. By implication, accepting Bahá'u'lláh's new revelation is appropriate and reasonable.

The concept of reasonableness as appropriateness is the foundation of the doctrine of progressive revelation. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says, “All religious laws conform to reason, and are suited to the people for whom they are framed, and for the age in which they are to be obeyed” [PT 141]. The fact that revelations are “suited to the people for whom they are framed” means that they are appropriate and, therefore, reasonable. This supports ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement that “The foundations of religion are reasonable” [PUP 128]. Religious law must be appropriate to the nature of the culture to which is applied. If they were not appropriate to the cultures for which they are revealed, such revelations would make no sense; it would be irrational to obey them. The statement that “religious laws conform to reason” can also mean that such law is consistent with standard logic, i.e. the logic of everyday experience. We shall explore this in greater depth below.

If a thought or action is appropriate and reasonable, it is also just. This principle underlies ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s assertion, “Know that to do justice is to give to everyone according to his deserts” [SAQ 266]. In other words, justice is dispensing an appropriate or reasonable response to an act or statement. This may even apply to ourselves. Bahá'u'lláh's injunction, “*Be fair to yourselves and to others*” [GWB CXVIII 277, emphasis added] illustrates this. If we do not behave according to our nature, i.e. according to our essence, if we behave inappropriately to ourselves, we are not only being unreasonable or irrational but also being “unfair” to ourselves. We are diminishing ourselves. To be fair or just to ourselves we must treat ourselves according to our immortal spiritual nature and not our transient animal nature. This applies to intellectual justice as well. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declares that “I wish you to be fair and reasonable in your judgment, setting aside all religious prejudices” [PUP 364]. In other words, in order judge a subject in a “fair and reasonable” manner, we must judge it according to

its true, i.e. essential nature by setting aside inappropriate prejudices.

The third sense of reason or being reasonable refers to having a purpose. Actions that have no purpose are simply arbitrary and random and, therefore, are not informed or shaped by reason. This is one of the aspects of purpose that seems appropriate to Shoghi Effendi's reference to a "rational God" [WOB 112]. The Writings tell us that God had a purpose in creation: "the purpose of creation ... is the knowledge of Him Who is the Eternal Truth" [KA 176]. Creation is not "fortuitous" [SAQ 181] or accidental but is informed by a plan and purpose. Since creation has a purpose, it also has a certain consistency underlying and guiding its processes, which is to say, creation is fundamentally one. The Universal House of Justice makes this clear in its assertion that "there is a consistency in the universe."⁶

3. Reason as Logic in the Writings

In its fourth, technical sense – which we will explore in some depth – 'reason' refers to the use of logic which is often mentioned through the Writings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states, "The human spirit *consists* of the rational, or *logical*, reasoning faculty" [TAB1 115, emphasis added]. The "human spirit," of course, is the rational soul which is identified here as a "logical reasoning faculty" which distinguishes humanity from animals [SAQ 208]. This identification of reason with logical thought also applies to religion: "If religion were *contrary to logical reason* then it would cease to be a religion and be merely a tradition" [PT 142]. In short, religion must not violate "logical reason." The association of 'reason' and 'logic' are also seen in statements like the following: "By intellectual processes and *logical* deductions of reason this superpower in man can penetrate the mysteries of the future and anticipate its happenings" [PUP 49, emphasis added]. We must note that reason is described as a "superpower" that transcends nature and, therefore, reveal its secrets. He also declares,

If we insist that such and such a subject is not to be reasoned out and tested according to the *established*

logical modes of the intellect, what is the use of the reason which God has given man? [PUP 63, emphasis added]

In other words, all subjects – mundane or spiritual – must be “reasoned out” i.e. examined by such rational procedures as analysis, inference, extrapolate as well as “tested” by logical reason. Failing to do so is neglect of the divine gift of reason bestowed on humankind. Conversely, the gift of reason imposes on us an obligation to use it.

The reference to the “*established* logical modes” is significant because it suggests that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is thinking of the kind of logical reasoning that is generally established in Europe and America at the time. Hegel’s dialectical logic was not generally used, and other developments in non-standard or non-Aristotelian logic were only beginning and were still the province of specialists in a few universities. Thus, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s reference to the “*established* logical modes” is most likely to Aristotelian or standard logic which had widespread use. Indeed, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá believed that Aristotelian logic was globally known: “Today the philosophy and logic of Aristotle are known throughout the world” [PUP 327]. Given that belief, it makes sense for him to make considerable use of Aristotelian logic in the Writings since it would help the Teachings reach a world-wide audience. Furthermore, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá marks Aristotle for special praise because he was “interested in both natural and divine philosophy” which is one of the reasons for the survival of his teachings [PUP 327].

Standard, classical or Aristotelian logic is based on three rules: the law of identity; the law of non-contradiction and the law of the excluded middle. We shall examine in some depth how each of these laws is exemplified in the Bahá'í Writings.

3.1 *The Law of Identity (LI)*

Logical reasoning and all coherent discourse must obey the law of identity (LI) according to which at any given moment, a thing, situation, or process is the same as itself and not something else. A thing can only have one identity, not two at the same time in the same sense and in the same context: a

cactus cannot be a dinner plate, and a horse cannot be a crescent wrench. Of course, a thing may have a variety of characteristics – a horse may be brown, with white feet and a variegated tail – but these characteristics are parts of its existence as a single, specific thing.

When applied to discourse, i.e. discussions and explanations, the LI means that terms must be used consistently; if words change their meanings or slip from one sense of a word into another, confusion ensues and understanding becomes impossible. We are all familiar with disagreements caused by people using a word in different senses, e.g. gendered and ungendered uses of the word 'men.' The statement 'All people are equal' is another example. We must, for example, be careful to use the word "equal" consistently, i.e. not slip from spiritual to legal to economic to sociological equality. We may, of course, discuss how these distinct forms of equality are related but we cannot conflate one meaning into another. In this sense, the Writings, like every other explicatory text, follow the LI.

More important, the Writings apply the LI to a number of metaphysical and spiritual teachings. For example, the principle of identity underlies the Bahá'í teachings about the unique existence of all things, i.e. the teaching that each thing is what it is and never has been or will be something else 'Abdu'l-Bahá also applies the LI when he says, "in the sensible world *appearances are not repeated*" [SAQ 282, emphasis added]. He informs us that no two seeds of grain are alike. Elsewhere he applies this principle to the sun: "the sun is one in its essence, unique in its real identity, single in its attributes" [TAB1 117]. We also observe the LI exemplified in the teachings about human evolution; as noted in a foregoing discussion, 'Abdu'l-Bahá declares that humans have always been human despite any animal-like appearances in their outward form. The human essence or identity has not changed, i.e. is itself and nothing else despite variations of outward form or which of its inherent potentials it exhibits. The identity or essence of a thing is stable.

This principle even applies to things involved in processes. For example, 'Abdu'l-Bahá sees humankind as involved in an evolutionary process but, as we have seen above, he is emphatic

that the human essence is always the same regardless of our stage of development: [PUP 358] “Throughout this journey of progression [through the mineral, plant and animal stations] he has ever and always been potentially man” [PUP 225]. The inner potentials of our essence are present from the beginning and are actualized or externalized over time – which only makes it *appear* as if a change in essence or identity had occurred. In his potential, i.e. in his essence “*Man from the beginning was in this perfect form and composition*”⁷ These ever-present potentials are revealed over time.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá makes theological use of the LI in his argument to explain the impossibility of reincarnation. This is important because it clearly demonstrates that he does not see the laws of logic as applying only to worldly or empirical matters but also to spiritual matters. He states that a rose’s “specific identity can never return” [SWAB 184]. The general or essential qualities that return are shared by all roses but they do not return in the unique form of one particular rose; that rose is what it is, and cannot be replaced by anything else. Its “intrinsic elemental reality” [PUP 421] is absolutely unique. He applies the same principle to the return of Elijah [SAQ 134].

Another theological or spiritual application of the LI is found in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s discussion of the Trinity.

If we say that the Trinity was originally one and was later divided, change and transformation will be necessarily applied to the Essence of Oneness, and change and transformation are necessities of the contingent world and not of the Essence of Divinity. [TAB3 512]

He faults this argument with violating the LI. God, Who is the “Essence of Oneness” cannot be divided and changed; to derive the doctrine of the trinity from such a division denies God’s identity with Himself, and is, therefore, a logical error. It violates the LI by treating God as if He were an ordinary being subject to division, time and space.

3.2 *The Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC)*

The second – and central – law of standard, classic or Aristotelian logic is the law of non-contradiction (LNC). In general terms, this means that a statement cannot simultaneously make two contradictory claims about the same issue. More technically, the LNC says that a thing cannot have and not have the same attributes at the same time in the same sense and from the same perspective or context. We cannot weigh 180 pounds and not weight 180 pounds at the same time, in the same sense and in the same context i.e. our place on earth. On the moon, we would only weigh 29.8 pounds, but that is the result of a change of context or perspective. Another example: an act cannot simultaneously be just and unjust in the same sense and from the same viewpoint. However, we can argue that a punishment is just from the perspective of a person's act, but unjust from the viewpoint of the person's deficient mental capacity.

The Writings' strong commitment to the LNC is based in an equally strong commitment to the unity of truth. Since truth is one, it cannot be divided by contradictions because these fracture truth into mutually exclusive parts. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms, "No one truth can contradict another truth" [PT 136]. This pithy statement is the essence of the LNC and logically obligates us to resolve contradictions to avoid clashing truths. The same may be said of the declaration that "truth or reality is not multiple; it is not divisible" [PUP 106]. This is further reinforced by his assertion that "*truth is one*, although its manifestations may be very different" [PT 128, emphasis added]. Differences in the "manifestations" of truth do not necessarily imply *logical* contradictions which 'Abdu'l-Bahá seeks to avoid. Here, too, is an implied obligation to resolve apparent contradictions. Shoghi Effendi re-affirms this theme, saying, "Truth may, in covering different subjects, appear to be contradictory, and *yet it is all one* if you carry the thought through to the end"⁸ which he emphasizes by asserting that "Truth is one when it is independently investigated, it does not accept division" [JWTA 35]. Again, we detect the implied obligation to "carry the thought through to the end" in order to resolve contradictions and, thereby, comply with the LNC.

There are two main ways of resolving a contradiction to comply with the LNC: the first is to eliminate one part of the contradiction; the second is to show that each statement is refers to a different perspective, or a different sense or time; and the third is to demonstrate an underlying unity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá applies the first method in his philosophical argument for the unity of God:

For the realities of the Essence of Unity, knowledge, and the things known, have an absolute unity which is real and established. Otherwise, the Essence of Unity would become the place of multiple phenomena ... which is absurd. [SAQ 291]

In other words, God, the “Essence of Unity” cannot at the same time and in the same sense be both one and multiple. It is worth noting that he declares the denial of the LNC in this case to be “absurd,” i.e. irrational and, therefore, not only beyond human thought or conception [SAQ 114] but also to be avoided. In addition, he follows this method when dealing with the contradiction between accepting God as an “Ultimate Cause” and asserting that a causal process can go on forever without God. He dismisses the second alternatively as “manifestly absurd” [TAF 18]. In logical terms, He is saying that the causal sequence of creation cannot both go on forever and not go on forever, i.e. end with God. By dismissing one alternative, He enjoins the other.

Generally, resolving contradictions by taking viewpoint/context, time and sense into consideration allows us to reconcile the conflicting sides insofar as conflict is eliminated thereby allowing us to accept the truth of both sides. This allows us a more inclusive view that encourages acceptance of complexities and nuances. In *The Seven Valleys*, Bahá'u'lláh illustrates the first – and more commonly used in the Writings – alternative of resolving contradictions by referring to different perspectives.

let thine Eminence consider his own self; thou art first *in relation to thy son*, last *in relation to thy father*. In thine *outward appearance*, thou tellest of the

appearance of power in the realms of divine creation; in thine *inward being* thou revealest the hidden mysteries which are the divine trust deposited within thee. [SV 26]

Bahá'u'lláh reconciles these contradictory differences – first, last; outward, inward – not by asserting relativism but by correlating these contraries to differences in viewpoint or perspective, i.e. “in relation to” father and son; and to “outward appearance” and “inward being.” Nowhere does He suggest that the father can be both first and last in “relation to [the] son.” In regards to time sequence, “firstness” is the only possible relationship. Here is another example of Bahá'u'lláh modeling this method of resolving contradictions:

Wonder not, if my Best-Beloved be closer to me than mine own self; wonder at this, that I, despite such nearness, should still be so far from Him.... Consider what God hath revealed, that “We are closer to man than his life-vein”. *By this he meaneth* that his heart, which is the seat of the All-Merciful and the throne wherein abideth the splendor of His revelation, is forgetful of its Creator. [GWB XCIII 185, emphasis added]

From the perspective of our human spiritual condition, we can be distant from God, whereas ontologically, from the perspective of our dependence on God as the pre-condition for our existence, God is “closer to us than our own selves. Once this shift is taken into account, the contradiction is harmonized with the LNC.

What the foregoing examples teach us is that the LNC readily accommodates seemingly contradictory statements made from different perspectives or viewpoints. However, while differences of perspective are quite compatible with Aristotelian or standard logic,⁹ they do not necessarily imply relativism. Relativism allows contradictory truth-claims – even from the same perspective – because there supposedly is no ultimate standard by which to judge between various truth-claims. Thus, all truth-claims must be accepted. Standard logic rejects contradictory truth-claims from the same perspective since they cancel each other out. My chair cannot be under me

and not under me at the same time, in the same sense from the same perspective or context. Similarly, because the spiritual and physical perspectives are different, there is no violation of the LNC in claiming that spiritually, humans are the acme of creation [GWB XC 177; cf. GWB XC 179] while at the same time claiming that physically “the animal is nobler, more serene, poised and confident” [PUP 184]. The statements come from the spiritual and physical perspectives, and, therefore, do not contradict each other. Another example: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá uses differing perspectives to resolve the contradiction between sophists who claim the external world is “an absolute illusion” [SAQ 278] and those who claim the external world is real. He says that from God’s perspective, our existence is an “illusion,” but from our own perspective, it is not. In this case, he uses the difference of perspective to synthesize apparently conflicting beliefs. Similarly, he informs us that while a scorpion is evil from the perspective of man, it is not evil from its own perspective [SAQ 263] thereby reconciling two seemingly conflicting views.

It is essential to understand that the principle of the LNC also applies to religion and spiritual issues. Bahá’u’lláh teaches that “the *foundation* of all the religions of God is one; that oneness is truth and *truth is oneness which does not admit of plurality*” [PUP 454, emphasis added]. In logical terms, truth cannot have the attribute of oneness and not have this attribute (i.e. be multiple) in the same sense etc. By returning to the foundations we recover the lost oneness of truth because we resolve any contradictions: the “unity of truth, through the power of God, will make these *illusory differences* [among religions] to vanish away” [SWAB 30, emphasis added]. Here, too, the LNC is affirmed insofar as differences, including contradictory differences, will be dissolved. The “different religions have one truth underlying them; therefore, their reality is one” [PUP 106]. If their “reality is one,” they cannot be contradictory. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá makes a similar affirmation in regards to science, reason and religion: “weigh carefully in the *balance of reason* and science everything that is presented to you as religion. If it passes this test, then accept it, for it is truth” [PT 144, emphasis added]. Instructing us to use the “balance of reason” includes employing the tools of

logic. If an idea cannot pass this test, “reject it, for it is ignorance!” [PT 144]

By following Bahá'u'lláh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's example, we can resolve even seemingly intransigent contradictory statements. One of the most challenging is Bahá'u'lláh's declaration about the origin of creation:

The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different. [TB 140]

The statement appears to violate the LNC insofar as it says these two forces are “the same, yet ... different.” However, there is no self-contradiction in saying that these two are the same in origin and substance but are different in form and function. In terms of origin and substance they both instantiations of God's Will, while in terms of form and function one is active and the other is receptive. In either case, they are manifestations of God's Will. We may also analyze this paradox with the aide of the Writings endorsement of Aristotle's four causes: the material, efficient, formal and final causes [SAQ 280]. Both the active and passive parts share a material cause, i.e. a substance which is a manifestation of God's Will; in this sense they are alike. However, they differ formally, i.e. in form and, therefore, they differ in function. Yet, they are alike vis-à-vis their efficient cause which is God Who brings them into existence and is the origin of their action. Finally, they are alike in their final cause – which is creation – by means of the “heat” or energy released by their interaction. In both of these interpretations, the contradiction has been settled by observing that different perspectives explain the otherwise contradictory attributes.

Interestingly, two real-life phenomena illustrate this situation. The first, and clearer of the two is magnetism. Every magnet has two poles, i.e. it is one thing or substance but always has two polar opposite functions which generate an electromagnetic field just as the active and receptive forces generate the heat “from which existence [comes] into being.” The second example is water. Both ice and steam have the same

substance, i.e. water, yet these two obviously differ in form and function, and in these different forms can also interact.

3.3 The Law of the Excluded Middle (LEM) in the Bahá'í Writings

The Bahá'í Writings are consistent with the LNC and, therefore, exemplify a two-value logic – the two values being ‘true’ and ‘false.’ The law of the excluded middle (LEM) says that a statement or its negation must be either true or false: either an elephant is heavier than a flea or an elephant is not heavier than a flea. There is no middle ground and one of these two propositions *must* be true. (The difference between the LNC and the LEM is that the LNC says no proposition can be *both* true and false, and the LEM says that a statement or its specific negation *must* be *either* true *or* false.) There is no middle ground between them.

The Writings, of course, are not a logic and philosophy text, but they contain numerous passages which are consistent with the LEM's principle that there is no middle ground between a proposition and its negation. For example, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá says, “This is the Truth and beyond the Truth there is only error” [TAB1 115]. In other words, a statement is either true or not true – and by implication, we must choose one or the other. There is no valid third alternative. The same thinking underlies statement as such as “This is the truth and there is nothing beyond the truth but manifest error” [TAB2 304] as well as “This is the truth and there is naught beyond the truth save error” [TAB3 524]. By asserting that ‘outside’ the truth there is only “error” or falsity, these statements affirm the principle of the LEM that there is no middle ground between falsity and truth. It also implies that we must choose one or the other. The same is true of the following statement: “Verily this is the truth and naught is there beside the truth but manifest error” [TAB 25]. According to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá we should all have “a sword which divides truth from falsehood” [TAB1 166]. This metaphor shows a clear division between true and false without any suggestion of a middle ground; moreover, the rigor of the language used strongly suggests we are obligated to choose between the two.

Two-value reasoning also applies to theological matters. Speaking of Christ, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, "The sword [Christ] carried was the sword of His tongue, with which He divided the good from the evil, *the true from the false*, the faithful from the unfaithful, and the light from the darkness" [PT 55, emphasis added] He also says, "When Christ appeared, He possessed a sword; but it was the sword of His tongue with which *He separated the false from the true*" [PUP 292, emphasis added]. Referring to Biblical issues, 'Abdu'l-Bahá asks, "Question: How shall we determine the *truth or error* of certain biblical interpretation?" [PUP 212] We observe the principle of the LEM at work in these choices between negations.

The same rigorous division between truth and error is observed in Bahá'u'lláh's statement that "This, verily, is the truth, and all else naught but error" [GWB CXX 255]. The unmistakable implication here, as in all other such statements, is that we should choose truth. Bahá'u'lláh also says, "Behold how the divine Touchstone hath, according to the explicit text of the Book, *separated and distinguished the true from the false*" [KI 227, emphasis added]. Third alternatives are clearly excluded as they are in His statement that one of the tasks of the Manifestations is to ensure that "*the true should be known from the false, and the sun from the shadow*" [KI 53, emphasis added; cf. KI 228]. In other words, the mission of the Manifestations is to help humans distinguish between truth and falsity and to choose one or the other. There is no suggestion that we evade such choices by trying to find a middle ground. Indeed, God tests our ability to distinguish "truth from falsehood ... guidance from error" [KI 8; cf. KI 202, 221]. As required by Aristotle's definition of the LEM, each of these terms is a negation of the other, e.g. happiness and misery, "guidance and error."

As we have shown, 'LEM-statements,' i.e. statements that demand either affirmation or denial without recourse to an alternative or 'middle' are consistently found throughout the Writings. For example, in discussing the trinity, 'Abdu'l-Bahá asserts "for three cannot become one, nor one three. To unite these is impossible; it is either one or three" [TAB3 512]. God is one or not. God is three or not. There is only one correct answer in each proposition – which is that God is one and He is

not three. In criticizing the doctrine of the trinity, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is, in effect, asserting that no middle ground exists, i.e. that the Christian view of God as being one and three is false, i.e. a violation of the LEM. Here is another example: "Absolute repose does not exist in nature. All things either make progress or lose ground. Everything moves forward or backward, nothing is without motion" [PT 88]. 'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly eliminates any middle ground – that repose exists – and gives us a choice between progress and not making progress. The LEM is also applied to spiritual or theological issues: "Now, either one must say that the Blessed Beauty hath made a mistake, or He must be obeyed" [SWAB 214]. Once again, the middle ground has been eliminated. In logical form, this argument reads as follows: Bahá'u'lláh has made a mistake or He has not made a mistake; if He has not made a mistake, He must be obeyed and if He has made a mistake, He must not be obeyed. One of the two alternatives must be accepted.

There are also other forms of the LEM statements in the Writings. These are statements about the existence of God, the existence and immortality of the soul, progressive revelation and the essential infallibility of the Manifestation. The Writings leave no room between accepting these teachings as divine revelation or rejecting them outright. For example, "The human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the rational soul" [SAQ 208] is a LEM statement that is either true or false. Either the human spirit is the rational soul or it is not. Even to have a degree of rationality is to have rationality. Of course, LEM statements can be interpreted by different readers, but such interpretation must rest on either acceptance or rejection. Appearances to the contrary, agnosticism is not a viable middle ground since agnosticism is a statement of one's inner mental condition and not a statement about the propositions themselves.

In reflecting on the LEM in the Writings, we should not be misled by apparent paradoxes which seem to undermine it. For example, in order to explain why He does not, contrary to the custom in Persian writing, use numerous quotations, Bahá'u'lláh quotes,

If Khidir did wreck the vessel on the sea,
 Yet in this wrong there are a thousand rights. [SV 26]

At first glance, it seems as if right and wrong were conflated to make some middle ground between them. This does not necessarily follow. Rather than conflating the two and positing a hypothetical middle ground, it is more logical to say that the “wrong” is, indeed, “wrong” in itself, but that it has some “right” consequences. Because an act and its consequences are not the same things, there is no logical necessity to interpret this example as violations of the LEM.

4. The Principle of Sufficient Reason

In addition to the three laws of standard logic, the Writings also implicitly employ the principle of sufficient reason (PSR). According to this principle there must be a necessary and sufficient reason why every thing or event is what it is and not something else. All of science is based on the PSR since science is a quest for necessary and sufficient reasons why certain events happen and why they happen in the way they do. All humans, regardless of culture or historical time, implicitly or explicitly use the PSR insofar as they ‘troubleshoot’ problems, i.e. try to find the causes of problems. A potter seeking to know why a pot shattered in a fire, uses the PSR to explain and correct the problem.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá appeals to the PSR when he says that the order and complexity of nature “is the creation of God, and is not a fortuitous composition and arrangement” [SAQ 181]. In other words, physical nature alone does not meet the PSR, i.e. it is not sufficient to explain its own existence, order, composition and arrangement. Thus all purely naturalist/materialist explanations are incomplete. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá confirms this, saying, “The divine philosophers declare that the world of nature is incomplete” [PUP 329]. Precisely because physical nature cannot explain itself even in principle, logic forces us to posit something else that transcends physical nature as a sufficient cause. Elsewhere, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá amplifies this argument by appealing to God as the

only sufficient reason or explanation for the order in the universe:

were it not for this *Director*, this *Co-ordinator*, the universe would be flawed and deficient. It would be even as a madman; whereas ye can see that this endless creation carrieth out its functions in perfect order ... it is clear that a Universal Power existeth, *directing* and *regulating* this infinite universe. *Every rational mind can grasp this fact.* [SWAB 48, emphasis added]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's final remark is significant because he associates his argument which is based on the PSR with rationality itself. Not paying attention to the PSR which provides the logical foundation of his argument, is a failure in rationality itself. Another demonstration of the PSR is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's argument to show the necessity for God by means of a First Mover. There must be a First Mover because no sequence of causation can go on forever. He rejects the concept that a causal series can be infinite:

to maintain that *this process goes on indefinitely is manifestly absurd.* Thus such a chain of causation must of necessity lead eventually to Him who is the Ever-Living ... the Ultimate Cause. [TAF 18]

'Abdu'l-Bahá rejects an infinite causal sequences as "manifestly absurd," though he does not specifically say why. However, the reasons are not hard to fathom. Explaining the existence of contingent beings by even more contingent beings leads to an infinite regress which explains nothing and can only be stopped by an "Ultimate Cause" that is not Itself a contingent being. Second, an infinite causal sequence has the "present problem." If the causal sequence is made up of an infinity of individual causal acts, how can it ever arrive at the present? There are an infinite number causal acts between each causal act.¹⁰ Third, how can there be an infinite, i.e. indefinite number of individual things or acts? Any collection of individual things/acts, must be definite, countable, though it may of course be very large. This renders the notion of an infinite causal chain implausible.

In the Writings, there is another aspect to the PSR based on the Bahá'í theory of causality which explicitly confirms Aristotle's four causes: material, efficient, formal and final [SAQ 280, emphasis added]. According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a chair has a material cause, i.e. wood; an efficient cause, i.e. the carpenter; a formal cause, i.e. a plan, or the way the parts are put together; and a final cause i.e. the reason(s) for building the chair. This final cause activates and guides the other three causes. Without it, there is no PSR for building the chair in the first place. Since all "phenomena are preceded by causes," [SAQ 280] it follows that all things have a PSR or final cause. For humans, this PSR is explicitly noted in the Noonday Prayer: "I bear witness that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee." It is also implicitly contained in Bahá'u'lláh's statement that "All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization" [GWB CIX 214]. No explanation of natural phenomena that fails to include a final cause or satisfy the PSR is complete or valid. For example, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, "For the noblest part of the tree is the fruit, which is the reason of its existence. If the tree had no fruit, it would have no meaning" [SAQ 196-197; cf. PT 98]. Without the fruit, the tree lacks a sufficient reason to exist. This has enormous implications for the practice of science which seeks to make its explanations as complete as possible but is averse to the concept of final causes.

5. Deductive Reasoning

Standard logic provides the basic laws that correct reasoning must obey regardless of whether our reasoning methods or procedures are deductive, inductive, analogical or Socratic dialectical. We shall now examine how the Writings make use of these methods.

Deductive reasoning begins with a general or universal statement and then deduces specific consequences entailed in the general statement. For example, the universal statement 'All birds have two wings' entails the conclusion that 'My parrot has two wings.' This conclusion follows the LI, the LNC and the LEM. My bird cannot both have and not have two wings; it must be either true or false that it has two wings.

Deductive reasoning is especially suited to the Writings because it depends primarily on the truth of the initial universal statement. This makes deduction the appropriate mode of reasoning for those in authority with completely trustworthy knowledge. Unlike scientists still looking for the truth, the essentially infallible Manifestation and His interpreter (who has acquired infallibility) are able to give us absolutely reliable universal propositions – e.g. humans are made in God's image – from which we can draw specific conclusions. Their universal propositions provide the guidance we need for our own reasoning process so that we do not wander too far from the truth.

Deductive arguments can be presented formally as one or a series of syllogisms, i.e. a three-part argument in which a conclusion is inferred from first two premises. Here is the most famous deductive syllogism in western philosophy.

- 1) All humans are mortal;
- 2) Socrates is human;
- 3) Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

The conclusion is implicitly embedded or entailed in the first universal premise. If the first two premises are true, the conclusion is necessarily true; no other answer is logically possible without violating one of the rules of reasoning. The conclusion can only be challenged by disproving the first and/or second premises. If 'Socrates' is my cat, the syllogism is false.

We must also realize that all universal premises are embryonic syllogisms, i.e. fully developed syllogisms can be inferred from them. The second premise and conclusions are implied but easily 'unpacked.'¹¹ For example, to say that "All humans are mortal" automatically includes every individual human being. The syllogistic form is simply an efficient way of 'unpacking' the implicit steps to a conclusion. Take, for example, Abdu'l-Bahá's declaration that "[t]he human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the rational soul" [SAQ 208]. This is a universal premise about all humans, which

includes everyone, including our friend, Bill. A syllogism makes this clear:

- 1) The human spirit distinguishes man from animal;
- 2) Bill has a human spirit, i.e. is human;
- 3) Therefore, Bill is distinguished from animals.

Wherever we find a universal premise in the Writings (or any other work) we can test its conclusion by putting it into syllogistic form.

We shall use syllogisms to illustrate the careful deductive structure of the arguments presented in the Writings. Although the Writings do not contain any formalized deductive syllogisms as shown above, many of the arguments they present have a syllogistic structure embedded in them. A well known example of an explicit universal statement from the Writings is, “All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization ... To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man” [GWB CIX 214], from which Bahá'u'lláh immediately draws the conclusion that we should not behave like animals. The core logical argument can be expressed as a syllogism:

- 1) “All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization;”
- 2) Behaving like beasts will not advance a civilization;
- 3) Therefore, humans should not behave like beasts. (“To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man.”)

Of course, we must emphasize that Bahá'u'lláh Himself is not dependent on such deductions for His knowledge and understanding. However, he uses this form as a pedagogical tool to help us grasp His teachings.

Deductive reasoning does not necessarily use the word “all” or “every” explicitly in its general or universal statements, but “all” or “every” must be implied. That is what makes them universal. For example, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says,

thou wilt see that a lower plane can never comprehend a higher. The mineral kingdom, for example, which is lower, is precluded from comprehending the vegetable kingdom... [SWAB 46]

There is a syllogism using an implied universal premise and syllogism embedded in this passage.

- 1) "A lower plane can never comprehend a higher";
- 2) The "mineral kingdom ... is lower";
- 3) Therefore, the mineral kingdom cannot comprehend the vegetable kingdom.

Putting 'Abdu'l-Bahá's arguments into syllogistic form can be quite a laborious step-by-step procedure which is probably why 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not do it. It would quickly prove tedious. However, what is important is that it can be done in order to reveal the rigorous logical structure underlying his and Bahá'u'lláh's arguments. This provides demonstrative support to show that the doctrine that the Teachings are reasonable.

The use of deductive reason includes both "spiritual proof[s]" [SAQ 197] and logical proofs. 'Abdu'l-Bahá identifies the following as a "spiritual proof," i.e. one that does not depend on empirical knowledge.

it cannot be said there was a time when man was not ... from the beginning which has no beginning, to the end which has no end, a perfect manifestation always exists. This man of whom we speak is not every man; we mean the perfect man. *For the noblest part of the tree is the fruit, which is the reason of its existence; if the tree had no fruit, it would have no meaning.* Therefore it cannot be imagined that the worlds of existence ... were without man! [SAQ 196]

The core of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's explanation, parts of which expressed metaphorically, can be formalized in the following syllogism:

- 1) The “Perfect Man” is the final cause (“noblest part”) of existence;
- 2) The “worlds of existence” require a final cause;
- 3) Therefore, there can be no world without the “Perfect Man.”

Of course, 'Abdu'l-Bahá supplements this argument with considerably more details than we find in the syllogisms, but the two foregoing deductive syllogisms represent the logical heart of his argument.

What follows is an example of what 'Abdu'l-Bahá calls “the logical evidences for the immortality of the soul” [SAQ 228].

The logical proof of the immortality of the spirit is this, that no sign can come from a nonexisting thing – that is to say, it is impossible that from absolute nonexistence signs should appear – for the signs are the consequence of an existence, and the consequence depends upon the existence of the principle. So from a nonexisting sun no light can radiate ... [SAQ 225]

In this and the subsequent passages, 'Abdu'l-Bahá goes to extraordinary lengths to show how the soul or spirit can operate without the body. If we focus on the main ideas to be proved in his detailed argument, we can detect two central deductive syllogisms at work. The first proves the existence of the spirit and the second, the spirit's immortality.

- 1) All things that exist show signs of existence (“No sign can come from a nonexisting thing”);
- 2) The spirit shows signs of existence;
- 3) Therefore, the spirit exists

and

- 1) All things that depend on the physical body to exist cannot survive the dissolution of the body;

- 2) The spirit (which exists) does not depend on the physical body for existence;
- 3) Therefore, the spirit can survive the dissolution of the body i.e. is immortal.

These two deductive syllogisms represent the formal structure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's argument. Of course, he goes into far more detail than these core syllogisms but the logical nucleus of his argument is readily apparent.

The other common form of deductive reasoning has its first premise in the conditional i.e. 'if-then' form. For example, here is a passage from *Paris Talks*:

I say unto you: weigh carefully in the balance of reason and science everything that is presented to you as religion. *If* it passes this test, *then* accept it, for it is truth! *If*, however, it does not so conform, *then* reject it, for it is ignorance! [PT 144]

The formalized logical argument embedded in this statement can be written as follows:

- 1) If statement X is presented "as religion";
- 2) X passes the test of reason and science;
- 3) Therefore, we must accept X.

There are numerous examples like this throughout the Writings.¹²

We have demonstrated that deductive reasoning is pervasive throughout the Writings and that it is rigorous enough to be formalized in syllogistic form. This demonstrates that careful logical reasoning is embedded in the Texts which not only advocate but also practice reason. This point becomes more salient when we realize that deductive reasoning follows the four laws of classical reasoning we have discussed.

6. Inductive Reasoning

Instead of working from the top down, as deduction does, inductive reason works from the bottom up and draws general or universal conclusions on the basis of specific examples. We observe that in the past, ants were always attracted to the food at our picnics, and conclude that ants are attracted by picnic food. Unlike deductive conclusions which are logically certain, inductive conclusions have only a degree of probability. For example, we could improve the probability of our conclusion by observing 20,000 picnic sites instead of six. 'Abdu'l-Bahá illustrates inductive reasoning when he writes, "Also [humankind] bringeth to light the past events that have been lost to memory, and foreseeeth by his power of *induction* future happenings that are as yet unknown" [TAF 11, emphasis added]. In other words, on the basis of past events, we can reach a conclusion about future events or likely future events. This is exactly what science does which studies numerous examples of a phenomena and then reaches a conclusion. Elsewhere 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that "through processes of *inductive reasoning* and research" [PUP 50] we can learn a great deal about humanity. In other words, we learn from or conclude from specific individual events.

The Writings nonetheless show us many examples of induction in practice. For example, here is a complete inductive argument with its conclusion stated at the end:

But when you look at Nature itself, you see that it has no intelligence, no will. For instance, the nature of fire is to burn; it burns without will or intelligence. The nature of water is fluidity; it flows without will or intelligence. The nature of the sun is radiance; it shines without will or intelligence ... Man is able to resist and to oppose Nature because he discovers the constitution of things ... all the inventions he has made are due to his discovery of the constitution of things ... *It is evident, then, that man rules over Nature.* [SAQ 3, emphasis added]

Because humans have knowledge and the will to resist nature which has no will of its own, "man rules over nature." This

example models the proper form of an inductive argument: evidence from specific examples is accumulated and then a general or universal conclusion is reached. Here is another example of induction:

Alas that humanity is completely submerged in imitations and unrealities ... They follow superstitions inherited from their fathers and ancestors ... *That which was meant to be conducive to life has become the cause of death; that which should have been an evidence of knowledge is now a proof of ignorance; that which was a factor in the sublimity of human nature has proved to be its degradation.* [PUP 179, emphasis added]

In this passage we observe how 'Abdu'l-Bahá bases his conclusion — that we have turned the opportunities for new life into our degradation — on a wide variety of examples specifically named or alluded to. We should note that in this example, he is drawing a spiritual conclusion from these worldly examples.

Bahá'u'lláh also uses inductive arguments. He lists a series of historical examples in which people have yearned for the Manifestation and then, ironically, turned away from Him when He appeared. Indeed, Bahá'u'lláh goes into considerable detail in each case to give us evidence to support His argument. He then provides us His conclusion:

It behoveth us, therefore, to make the utmost endeavor, that, by God's invisible assistance, these dark veils, these clouds of Heaven-sent trials, may not hinder us from beholding the beauty of His shining Countenance, and that we may recognize Him only by His own Self.
[GWB XIII 26]

From this litany of failures to recognize a new Manifestation, Bahá'u'lláh draws the practical conclusion that we must strive not to make the same error and that, with God's assistance, we learn to recognize the Manifestation for Himself.

7. Analogical Reasoning

The Bahá'í Writings make frequent use of analogical reasoning to explain and support the teachings. In analogies, we observe that two things are similar but not identical, and then reason or draw conclusions about one thing, i.e. the target, by comparisons with something else, i.e. the source.¹³ The more similarities between the source and the target, the stronger the conclusion will be. However, while analogical arguments provide good reasons to accept a conclusion, they do not provide logically necessary proof.

One of the most striking arguments by analogy in the Writings concerns the organic nature of human society. According to Bahá'u'lláh, we should

Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. [GWB CXX 254]

The underlying analogy is that initial appearances notwithstanding, both the human body and the world/society are living organisms. Because they are the same kinds of things, we can transfer attributes from one to the other, i.e. from the source – the human body – to the target – the world/society. Thus, He says that the world/society, like the human body, can also suffer “disorders and maladies.” For health, we need properly integrated parts functioning for the good of the whole.

Shoghi Effendi uses this organic concept of society to build his argument for dealing with Covenant breakers. He describes the Faith “as a living organism” [WOB 23], which, like an organism is able “to expand and adapt itself to the needs and requirements of an ever-changing society” [WOB 23]. He transfers the attributes of an organism, i.e. the source, to the target, i.e. the Bahá'í Faith. Consequently, Shoghi Effendi concludes that internal existential threats to the Faith must be excised from the Bahá'í community like “a cancer” [DG 16, emphasis added]. Tolerating internally rebellious and destructive elements within itself would expose the Faith to mortal danger.

Another example of an argument from analogy is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s use of the sun and its planets to show why an intermediary between God and humankind is necessary. He informs us that “An intermediary is needed to bring two extremes into relation with each other” [PT 57]. This is the principle on which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá constructs his analogy. It asserts that when two extremes are to be connected, a third connecting entity is necessary.

The Divine Reality may be likened to the sun and the Holy Spirit to the rays of the sun. As the rays of the sun bring the light and warmth of the sun to the earth, giving life to all created beings, so do the ‘Manifestations’ ... bring the power of the Holy Spirit from the Divine Sun of Reality to give light and life to the souls of men. [PT 57]

The rays are the necessary intermediaries between the sun and the earth because the sun itself cannot descend to earth just as God does not descend into materiality. Consequently, “there must be a Mediator between God and Man, and this is none other than the Holy Spirit, which brings the created earth into relation with the ‘Unthinkable One’, the Divine Reality” [PT 57].

8. Socratic Dialectical Reasoning

In his guidance to the conduct of consultation by a Spiritual Assembly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says, “The shining spark of truth cometh forth *only* after the clash of differing opinions” [SWAB 87, emphasis added]. This statement encapsulates the essence of Socratic dialectic reasoning¹⁴ in which we seek the truth by carefully cross-examining all ideas, by trying them against contradictory or alternative suggestions and by analyzing them in light of divine revelation and for logical consistency. Naturally, we must take into account the spiritual context of this intellectual procedure for it is this spiritual context which forms the psycho-spiritual environment that helps us find the truth. This spiritual focus is essential because it discourages human idiosyncrasies, foibles and/or personal agendas from derailing the dialectical reasoning process.

Two words stand out in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement: "clash" and "only." The former strikes a somewhat 'Hegelian chord' in its allusion to a "clash" or collision to test viewpoint and its rivals. The word "only" seems to re-enforce this 'Hegelian chord' insofar as the "clash" of opinions (not individuals) is necessary for testing viewpoints. However, in contrast to the Hegelian dialectic, Socratic and Bahá'í dialectical reasoning does not necessarily end in a synthesis of views; truth may be with one point of view or another.

Although dialectical reasoning is necessary to Bahá'í consultation, it is not sufficient. Bahá'í consultation makes a key improvement in the process of dialectical reasoning by requiring participants to surrender personal ownership of ideas.

When an idea is put forth it becomes at once the property of the group. Although this notion sounds simple, it is perhaps the most profound principle of consultation ... When followed, this principle encourages those ideas that spring forth from a sincere desire to serve, as opposed to ideas that emanate from a desire for personal aggrandizement or constituency-building.¹⁵

Eliminating the concept of 'ownership' of ideas is essential to dialectical reasoning because the required objectivity is easily lost if the participants are side-tracked by personal 'politics.' As 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, "They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion" [SWAB 87]. Truth is all that matters.

The role of dialectical reasoning is seen primarily in the requirements of consultation and less so in the Writings which have few clear-cut examples of dialectic reasoning. This is not unexpected since the Writings characteristically reason deductively from infallibly given universal premises and do not generally show the 'debating' process by which actual conclusions are reached. However, we do have an example of dialectical reasoning in its embryonic stage in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's discussion of pantheism in *Some Answered Questions*. Here we observe the pattern of exposition and refutation and/or improvement that characterizes dialectical reasoning. In the

discussion of pantheism, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains Sufi and Theosophist beliefs about God’s relationship to the phenomenal world and then contrasts them with what the Prophets have taught. According to him, the Prophets teach that phenomenal reality emanates from God Who “remains and continues in the exaltation of Its [God’s] sanctity” [SAQ 293]. Manifestation, however, means something appears in various forms. He demonstrates the weaknesses of the Sufi-Theosophical arguments for manifestation and why emanation is the correct alternative. A similar pattern of exposition and refutation is found in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s discussion about reincarnation [SAQ 282] and “The Birth of Christ” [SAQ 87].

It should be mentioned in passing, that dialectical reasoning requires adherence to the four laws of reasoning discussed in previous sections. A dialogue in which terms are not used consistently, in which the choice of truth or falsity is evaded, in which logical self-contradictions are rampant and in which reasons are not adequate to the subject matter quickly degenerates into nonsense that communicates nothing except confusion. No one will know what anyone else is talking about and that makes communication impossible. It destroys the very possibility and purpose of consultation.

9. A “Rational God”

Perhaps the most intriguing statement about rationality in the Bahá'í Writings is Shoghi Effendi’s reference to

that invisible yet *rational God* Who, however much we extol the divinity of His Manifestations on earth, can in no wise incarnate His infinite, His unknowable, His incorruptible and all-embracing Reality in the concrete and limited frame of a mortal being. Indeed, the God Who could so incarnate His own reality would, in the light of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, cease immediately to be God. So *crude* and *fantastic* a theory of Divine incarnation is as removed from, and incompatible with, the essentials of Bahá'í belief ... [WOB 112, emphasis added]

Shoghi Effendi's explanation tells us that an infinite and perfect God cannot incarnate Himself in finitude and imperfection without losing His identity as God. As Shoghi Effendi says, were God to do so, He would "cease immediately to be God." i.e. God must be infinite and perfect to be God. Therein we see consistency with the law of identity (LI). Shoghi Effendi's statement is also consistent with the law of non-contradiction (LNC) which tells us that God cannot be infinite and perfect as well as finite and imperfect at the same time in the same sense. Next, we observe the law of the excluded middle (LEM) insofar as one or the other of following statements must be true: 'God is infinite and perfect' or 'God is not infinite and perfect.' A third choice — which is precisely what the Christian understanding of the trinity asserts — is not logically possible. Shoghi Effendi describes this non-existent third choice as "crude and fantastic" which is a very strong rejection of a doctrine from another religion. Consistency with the three basic laws of standard logic is clearly one reason why Shoghi Effendi refers to a "rational God." We hasten to add that this does not compromise God's absolute freedom to act as He pleases. As creator of the laws of logic He is free to choose to act in agreement with them.

Further evidence of God's rationality is also seen in creation. As shown above, creation has a final cause, or purpose, a reason for being by which we can begin understanding it as an orderly composition and not "as a fortuitous composition and arrangement" [SAQ 181]. Order and purpose are essential attributes of rationality, and, in this case, signs of a "rational God" acting in the phenomenal world. Bahá'u'lláh says,

And when the sanctified souls rend asunder the veils of all earthly attachments ... then will *the purpose of creation*, which is the knowledge of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, become manifest. [KA 176]

Speaking of natural creation, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, "the creation of God ... is *not a fortuitous composition and arrangement* [SAQ 181, emphasis added] and is "composed and combined with the greatest strength, conformable to wisdom and according to universal law" [SAQ 181]. Here, too, we observe that God reveals

Himself as acting consistently with purpose and reason. This does not, of course, mean that we humans always understand this purpose or the reasons for creation, but it means we can rest assured that such reasons and such a purpose exist.

10. The Limits of Reason

There are, broadly speaking, three viewpoints about the powers of reason. Rationalism in its strongest form, often associated with empiricism and logical positivism, maintains that reason can tell us 'everything.' Whatever cannot be known by reason is not knowledge. Reason alone is both necessary and sufficient. At the other extreme is skepticism, in our time mainly in its postmodern guise, which says reason can tell us nothing. There is no truth and we only have opinions or viewpoints, none less or more true than any other. Reason is neither necessary nor sufficient. Moderate rationalism lies between these two extremes. It holds that reason can tell us some things but not others; it has the ability to provide some knowledge but it also has limits. In short, reason is necessary but not sufficient.

In our view, the Bahá'í Writings espouse moderate rationalism, i.e. the view that reason is necessary but not sufficient. Having examined the necessity of reason in the Writings, let us turn our attention to its limitations. Doing so requires a brief excursion into ontology since Bahá'í epistemology has an ontological foundation. In a nutshell, the Writings teach that ontology determines epistemology, i.e. what can be known is determined by a thing's ontological status. Because "the degrees of existence are different and various, some beings are higher in the scale than others" [SAQ 130]. The result is that "everything which is lower is powerless to comprehend the reality of that which is higher" [SAQ 146, emphasis added] which brings us to the first limitation: human reason cannot comprehend God.

It is evident that the human understanding is a quality of the existence of man, and that man is a sign of God: how can the quality of the sign surround the creator of the sign? ... Therefore, *the Reality of the Divinity* is

hidden from all comprehension, and concealed from the minds of all men. *It is absolutely impossible to ascend to that plane.* We see that everything which is lower is powerless to comprehend the reality of that which is higher. [SAQ 146, emphasis added]

The ontological difference between God and humankind is intrinsic and cannot be overcome. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states categorically that “it is *absolutely impossible* to ascend to that plane.” This impossibility forbids all claims to know “the reality” or Essence of God and rejects all claims to having attained and experienced ontological unity with God, even if only in a subjective, emotional or ‘mystic’ state. This impossibility is “absolute” and, therefore, falsifies any claim to have attained such union from any perspective.¹⁶

However, our understanding of this ontological difference must be fine-tuned for, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, “The existence of the Divine Being hath been clearly established, *on the basis of logical proofs*, but the reality of the Godhead is beyond the grasp of the mind” [PUP 47, emphasis added]. In other words, we may know by logical proofs *that* God exists but not *what* God is, i.e. we may know about His existence which can be logically demonstrated, but we cannot know His Essence. In a similar vein Adib Taherzadeh writes,

It is essential to differentiate between the ‘Essence of God’ which Shoghi Effendi describes as the ‘innermost Spirit of Spirits’ or ‘Eternal Essence of Essences’, and ‘*God revealed*’ to humanity. *The former is unknowable, while the latter is comprehensible to man.*¹⁷

The “Essence of God” is unknowable but “God revealed’ to humanity” i.e. God as revealed in phenomenal creation – can be known. He is known to us through the revelation of the Manifestations. What the Manifestation reflects is derived from and associated with God – that is precisely what makes him a Manifestation – and what He reveals to us about God, is knowledge about God appropriate to human understanding.

Another limitation of reason is identified when 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms that by “intellectual development and power of reason,

man cannot attain to his fullest degree – cannot accomplish the progress effected by religion” [PUP 170]. Yet again, this time from a new perspective, the Writings support the central contention of moderate rationalism that reason while necessary is not sufficient for the full development of humankind. “No system of philosophy has ever been able to change the manners and customs of a people for the better” [PT 164] – a fact amply illustrated by the tragic history of various ideologies in the 20th Century. Genuine human development requires the power of the Holy Spirit:

The world of humanity must be confirmed by the breath of the Holy Spirit in order to receive universal education. [PUP 170]

Another limitation of reason is that it cannot learn about the essence of things directly. This brings us to one of the most philosophically important passages in the Writings.

Know that there are two kinds of knowledge: the knowledge of the essence of a thing and the knowledge of its qualities. *The essence of a thing is known through its qualities; otherwise, it is unknown and hidden.* [SAQ 220, emphasis added]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wording in the second statement requires careful examination. It asserts that the “essence of a thing *is known through its qualities*; otherwise it is unknown and hidden.” In other words, it is, in fact, possible to know *about* essences but only by means of their “qualities” or attributes. Knowledge of essences is indirect, mediated by “their qualities.” There is no direct knowledge of the essence. Consequently, our reasoning is limited to these externalized, manifested qualities and actions of things. Abdu’l-Bahá adds,

the inner essence of anything is not comprehended, but only its qualities. For example, the inner essence of the sun is unknown, but is understood by its qualities, which are heat and light. The inner essence of man is unknown and not evident, but *by its qualities it is characterized and known. Thus everything is known by*

its qualities and not by its essence. Although the mind encompasses all things, and the *outward beings are comprehended* by it, nevertheless these beings with regard to their essence are unknown; they are *only known with regard to their qualities.* [SAQ 220]

This passage reinforces the interpretation that the essence of things is not known in-itself but only externally by manifested qualities and their inter-action with the world. Only God has such knowledge of “inner essence[s].” Once again, we observe that this distinction puts restrictions on the powers of reason by forestalling all claims to immediate, ‘inside’ knowledge of essences. This prohibits any claims of ontological ‘mystical union’ with God since that would obviously provide such ‘inside’ knowledge of the divine.

We must also recognize that reason cannot comprehend the higher spiritual realms such as the Abhá Kingdom, i.e. “the worlds beyond this, and their condition” [ABL 66]. This is another important limitation of reason, one which has a direct effect on beliefs regarding the after-life and the existence of super-sensory realms of being. Of these worlds, we can only know what the Writings tell us.

Furthermore, reason by itself cannot complete its quest for knowledge, i.e. it lacks the power to attain the certainty with which the process of reasoning completes itself. (If it did not seek certainty what would be the point of the quest for knowledge?) Reason is necessary but is not sufficient to attain its natural goal of certainty. To attain certainty by itself, reason could only rely on still more reason, thus setting up an infinite regress which never achieves its goal. To achieve this certainty we must go beyond reason.

How shall we attain the *reality of knowledge?* By the breaths and promptings of the Holy Spirit, which is light and knowledge itself. *Through it the human mind is quickened and fortified into true conclusions and perfect knowledge.* [PUP 21, emphasis added]

In our view, the “reality of knowledge” includes the certainty that all knowledge seeks. This is only attained by the

“promptings of the Holy Spirit” which enliven and strengthen the mind and “fortify[]” it into “true conclusions.” In short, the reasoning capacities are strengthened so that our findings have truth and certainty, i.e. “perfect knowledge.” Abdu'l-Bahá also says,

It is *most certain* that if human souls *exercise their respective reason and intelligence upon the divine questions, the power of God will dispel every difficulty, and the eternal realities will appear as one light, one truth, one love, one God and a peace that is universal.*
[PUP 79]

What makes this statement especially interesting is that assistance from the “power of God,” is conditional upon our “exercise” of “reason and intelligence.” If we fail in this “exercise,” divine help cannot or will not assist us, a situation similar to *The Arabic Hidden Words* which state, “If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee” [HW Ar. 5].

Equally noteworthy is the reference to using “reason and intelligence upon the *divine questions*,” i.e. to using reason in regards to spiritual issues thereby emphasizing that reason is not only applicable to the phenomenal realm. This passage illustrates yet again that reason is necessary but not sufficient in the quest for knowledge. The same idea is expressed in the following passage:

He has bestowed upon him the power of *intellect* so that through the attribute of *reason, when fortified by the Holy Spirit, he may penetrate and discover ideal realities* and become informed of the mysteries of the world of significances. As this power to penetrate the ideal knowledges is superhuman, supernatural, man becomes the collective center of spiritual as well as material forces... [PUP 303, emphasis added]

Reason, when “fortified by the Holy Spirit,” may acquire knowledge of “ideal” i.e. non-material realities and the supernatural realm because reason is “superhuman, supernatural.” When properly assisted, reason is not confined

to the phenomenal world. However, without help from the Holy Spirit, even our natural, scientific knowledge is not possible.

Without the Holy Spirit he [man] would have no *intellect*, he would be *unable to acquire his scientific knowledge* ... *The illumination of the Holy Spirit* gives to man the power of thought, and enables him to make discoveries by which he bends the laws of nature to his will. [PT 58; cf. FWU 51]

Without the Holy Spirit, humans would have no “intellect” i.e. no mind and no reason by which to make scientific discoveries. Obviously, the “illumination” of the Holy Spirit is a pre-condition for the intellect or reasoning power in humankind; this divine illumination “*gives to man the power of thought*” and “*enables him to make discoveries.*” This explains why the action of the Holy Spirit cannot be explained in strictly rational and empirical terms. Illumination from the Holy Spirit is a pre-condition for reason and is therefore, ontologically superior to it. As we recall, the ontologically lower cannot understand the higher. Thus, the conclusion that the Holy Spirit’s actions are beyond reason is not merely a ‘mystification’ or evasion but rather a strict logical consequence of the relationship between the dependent things and that on which they depend.

Finally, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá says that the

Holy Spirit gives the *true method of comprehension* which is *infallible* and *indubitable*. This is through the help of the Holy Spirit which comes to man, and this is the condition in which *certainty* can alone be attained. [SAQ 297, emphasis added]

Here, too, we find reference to the “true method of comprehension” which is available to the “quickened” mind as well as to the certainty or infallibility that “perfect knowledge” requires. Knowledge acquired with assistance of the Holy Spirit is described as “infallible and indubitable.” Elsewhere, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also notes the possibility of certain knowledge: if we have proof that is acceptable to the senses, to reason, to “traditional authority” [PUP 254] and to the heart, we will have knowledge

that can be “relied upon as perfectly correct” [PUP 254]. Later he adds that we can absolutely rely [on] and declare to be complete” [PUP 256, emphasis added] a proof that meets these four criteria. These statements suggest that *in principle* it is possible for humans to have certain knowledge – a topic we shall now examine more closely.

11. The Reliability of Reason

There is yet one more, extraordinarily important limitation of reason i.e. the unreliability of the reasoning process itself. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to this limitation in his discussions when he that philosophers cannot come to any final agreement on a wide variety of issues.

Therefore, it is evident that the method of reason is *not perfect*, for the differences of the ancient philosophers, the want of stability and the variations of their opinions, prove this. For if it were perfect, all ought to be united in their ideas and agreed in their opinions. [SAQ 296, emphasis added]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s conclusion is based on the premise that truth is one; consequently, if the reasoning process were fully reliable, this one truth would be evident to all. Elsewhere he adds that these differences among scientists and philosophers are “clear proof that human reason is not to be relied upon as an infallible criterion” [PUP 21].

We must carefully examine ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements about the unreliability of reason because they can easily be misinterpreted to undermine virtually everything the Writings say about epistemology, i.e. about knowledge and reason. First, we must note what the passage does *not* say. Although it discusses the reasoning process, the construction of chains of inferences, the formation of “opinions,” and debates among philosophers and scientists, it does *not* discuss what we may call the ‘basic knowledge’ we use to build rational inferences and arguments. In other words, this limitation of reason does not undermine or relativize statements such as fire is hotter than ice; a triangle has three sides; an elephant has more mass than an

ant; you either went to bed last night or did not; the sun seems to go around the earth. The Writings, of course, make constant use of such basic knowledge in developing arguments, explicating teachings and illustrating spiritual principles: spring is preceded by winter and followed by summer [SAQ 73]; a clear sky lets us see the sun [PT 62]; we can travel underwater in submarines [PT 41]. The significance of this observation is that it limits human fallibility to the process of reasoning and does not necessarily apply to all knowledge claims. We may acquire certain knowledge or facts and though they are very basic, they are absolutely necessary to the construction and explication of arguments whether our own or those in the Writings. In fact, the Writings depend on basic knowledge being certain and universal in order to reach a world-wide audience. The full significance of this will become apparent later. For now we shall only conclude that the Bahá'í Writings avoid skepticism about all knowledge by recognizing the validity of basic knowledge.

If misinterpreted, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements about the imperfection of the reasoning process can lead to claims of a serious self-contradiction in the Writings. On one hand, the Writings note the unreliability of reason while on the other, they put enormous emphasis on reason and rationality, even for religion and spiritual issues. As we have seen, 'Abdu'l-Bahá admonishes us to use reason as a test for distinguishing religion from ignorance and superstition. However, if reason is unreliable, how can we use it as instructed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá? How can it be useful in recognizing superstitions when reason itself is not reliable? On the surface at least, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's critique of reason seems to undermine and contradict the Writing's strong advocacy of reason. This confronts us with a stark question: Do the Writings contradict themselves?

Before demonstrating how Shoghi Effendi resolves this contradiction, it is important to recall that reasoning "fortified" [PUP 22] by the Holy Spirit can attain "certainty" [SAQ 299]. Therefore, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's declaration about the limits of reason do not apply in such cases. This means that infallibility is possible in principle – a fact of immense importance in regards to the Universal House of Justice which is the recipient of divine guidance.

One way of resolving this apparent contradiction between advocating and apparently undermining reason is to recall Shoghi Effendi's statement that the Bahá'í Faith is "scientific in its method."¹⁸ This has several applications. The first is that science recognizes that *in principle* reason is fallible and that all truth-claims are provisional, but at the same time, it recognizes that *in practice* truth-claims are accepted as true until there is empirical evidence and demonstrably better reasoning to prove otherwise. No mere imaginative speculation about possibilities suffice to dislodge a provisionally certain fact; better empirical evidence and better reasoning are required. Thus, while from the perspective of *principle*, there are no absolute certainties in science, from the perspective of *practice* there are *pragmatic certainties* we use until contrary concrete observational and rational evidence arises. All accepted scientific facts are in this position: fallible in principle but having pragmatic certainty. For example, in principle the heliocentric theory of the solar system is fallible, but in practice no one questions it given the absence of empirical evidence. The suggestion that it is simply an illusion from Descartes' clever demon – or the Matrix – is of no value to science. In this way, science strikes a balance between stability and change.

Applied to the Writings, this leads to the view that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's occasional statements about the fallibility of natural, unassisted reason concern *principle*, while his frequent statements extolling and recommending reason concern *practice*. This means there is no contradiction between principle and practice because they refer to different aspects of reasoning. Therefore, they do not really contradict or undermine each other.

We might also say that while the main emphasis is on the use of reason, passages on the limitations of reason are meant primarily as a heuristic admonition to forestall hubris about our reasoning processes and the resulting conflicts. This 'corrective view' is supported by the enormous disparity between the number of passages extolling and recommending reason and the very small number of passages about its limitations [SAQ 207; PUP 21 and 254]. Like any good teacher, 'Abdu'l-Bahá highlights the main lesson he wants to teach, in this case, the importance of

using reason in the quest for both spiritual and worldly knowledge. However, he also provides a corrective if arguments get out of hand, and forestalls the hubris of extreme rationalism that might even claim to know God in His Essence.

The inherent fallibility of reason also raises the problem of circular reasoning. If reason is fallible, how can we use it to judge a work of reasoning with any confidence in the results? We are caught in a vicious circle. Is there a way of escape? In principle, for science there is no escape since there is nothing superior to reason by which to judge its results. One can only check and re-check one's data and conclusions in hopes of finding hidden errors — and await the results of other research. On the other hand, Bahá'í epistemology distinguishes between natural reason working alone and natural reason “fortified” [PUP 22] by the Holy Spirit and, therefore, has a superior platform by which to judge the results of reasoning. The problem for Bahá'ís is knowing which reasoning process has been “fortified” and which has not.

To help us judge the results of our reasoning, the Writings are “scientific in [their] method” in a second way. The sciences use a “negative gate-keeper” method of excluding inadequate viewpoints that cannot meet certain criteria — such as quantification, physicality, objectivity or falsifiability. Any hypothesis that meets the various criteria is acceptable until experimentation or the discovery of an internal reasoning error rule it out. For example, although in quantum physics the Copenhagen interpretation is most often cited, (a trend that is now changing) there are, in fact, several other scientifically valid interpretations of quantum data. They all make the same predictions and are, therefore, recognized as equally valid, e.g. interpretations by Everett, Gell-Mann and de Broglie-Bohm.¹⁹

The negative gate-keeper has two correlated functions. First, it tells us what criteria a hypothesis or viewpoint must have to be acceptable. In physics, quantification is one of them. Second, the negative gate-keeper tells us what to avoid. Physicists must avoid Aristotelian concepts of momentum and chemists must avoid the phlogiston theory of combustion. The negative gate-keeper does not dictate any specific interpretation or hypothesis but only criteria which our theories must satisfy.

Within that framework, we may believe or hypothesize anything we believe is true. The net effect is that both unity of subject matter and diversity of exploration and hypothesizing are preserved.

A similar situation prevails in the Writings. They lay out certain criteria for our beliefs. For example, they must be based on the Writings and at least be conflict-free vis-à-vis guidance from the Universal House of Justice. Furthermore, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá also tell us particular beliefs to avoid. For example, the criteria that God does not manifest Himself in His creation, leads to the rejection of metaphysical pantheism [SAQ 289], and God's literal incarnation in Christ [SAQ 152]. On the basis of the criteria that "there are no repetitions in nature" [PUP 285] the concept of re-incarnation [PUP 167] is rejected. Ontological materialism [PUP 262], is denied because it asserts that spiritual and non-material aspects of existence are not real. 'Abdu'l-Bahá rejects the traditional Biblical interpretation of the Fall [SAQ 122] because it violates the criterion of logical reason: "the intelligence cannot accept it" [SAQ 122]. He rejects a host of traditional Biblical interpretations on this ground.²⁰ Among the other views rejected are the concepts of a real infinite regress [SAQ 148], atheism, the materiality of the soul and the mortality of the human soul. This list tells us what beliefs to avoid, and, thereby, helps us set aside viewpoints which imply or directly invoke rejected positions. However, as with science, the negative gate-keeper here does not dictate any specific understanding *per se*; it only gives us criteria for whatever understandings we may develop.

'Abdu'l-Bahá presents this idea in the image of the garden. Although he envisages a garden made up of many kinds of flowers, he also distinguishes between the plants in the garden and those outside in their "wild state" [SAQ 194]. The latter he associates with unfruitfulness. However, just as some plants or trees can be cultivated to become fruitful, some concepts can be revised to meet the criteria of the Writings [SAQ 7]. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's example gives a concrete illustration how negative gate-keeping preserves the unity, i.e. identity of the Bahá'í teachings and, at the same time allows the maximal diversity of ideas and understandings.

The need for negative gate-keeping is clear. Without the ability to make critical judgments and to impose criteria of understanding, without some way of distinguishing truth from error, the independent investigation of truth would be a pointless exercise. Why bother seeking the truth if every proposition or viewpoint is true? Indeed, if every proposition or truth-claim is true, how can we even try to distinguish truth from error or identify “the people of error” [TDP 51; SAQ pp. 59, 75]. In such situations, no guidance – even divine guidance – is necessary: we can simply believe whatever suits us at the moment which is the very antithesis of the Manifestation’s mission.

There are several advantages to the negative gate-keeper method used by the Writings. One is that it preserves the unique identity and nature of the Bahá’í Faith and its teachings while, at the same time, allowing the maximal variety of ideas and understandings. It balances unity-in-diversity with as much emphasis on the unity as on the diversity. Any ideas that do not run afoul of the criteria the Writings establish are acceptable, even though they may clash with each other.

The negative gate-keeper has one other advantage, namely, it provides what we have called ‘practical certainty’ in a foregoing section of this paper. While reason alone cannot give us absolute certainty, our understandings and practices can have ‘practical certainty’ as long as they meet the criteria of reason and the guidelines given by the Writings. This, too, strengthens diversity because it encourages different understandings and practices to flourish without threatening the unity of the teachings.

Inevitably, it will be asked ‘How do we determine which interpretation is to be passed by the negative gate-keeper?’ In our opinion, there is no hard-and-fast answer to this question. Instead, there are several means by which an idea may be tested. The Bahá’í Faith, of course, has no clergy or ‘official philosopher’ to ensure harmony with the Teachings because it guarantees that individuals have a duty and right to investigate and think for themselves. Thus, in our view, this determination is first made by those who suggest an idea; they have an obvious interest in seeing that their ideas harmonize with the Writings

or at least are neutral. Second, whether or not an idea can pass the negative gate-keeper may emerge in discussion with others who might be able to show an explicit or implicit problem. Moreover, given the enormous emphasis on reason in the Writings, we might also say that the application of reason itself can help us make this determination. If an argument logically implies conclusions that violate certain Teachings, and/or are logically deficient, then obviously there is a problem to be rectified. Finally, in the case of papers intended for publication, the review process may also play a role under some circumstances.

12. Non-Discursive Knowing and Thinking

So far we have examined what is called 'discursive reason,' i.e. reaching conclusions on the basis of chains of inference based on universal premises, empirical evidence or analogies. Discursive reasoning requires clearly articulated steps according to the laws of logic. In our view, this kind of reasoning is pervasive throughout the Writings – but does not cover all ways of acquiring knowledge and reaching conclusions. The Writings, as noted before, espouse a moderate rationalism which recognizes the validity of non-discursive methods of knowing and finding truth. Some authors such as Ken Wilber²¹ refer to these methods as 'transrational,' i.e. psycho-spiritual processes that include but transcend reason. They do not violate rationality but go beyond it.

Before proceeding, it is important to highlight that non-discursive reasoning is not to be confused with irrationality. The irrational and the non-discursive differ insofar as irrationality involves a cognitive deficiency or confusion in the reasoning process. It may involve setting aside reason in favor of something else, e.g. a personal preference or desire, a political agenda, an advantage to be gained or a sheer assertion of will power for its own sake. On the other hand, non-discursive reasoning is a way of acquiring knowledge or reaching conclusions about reality that does not involve the chains of inference we have previously examined.

When speaking of non-discursive reasoning, we must distinguish between the process and the result. By definition, the process itself is non-discursive i.e. it cannot be communicated by laying out a chain of logical inferences. About the process we must remain silent, or communicate by metaphors, analogies or by various forms of artistic expression. However, the result, i.e. the conclusions we reach or the actions we take on the basis of the non-discursive process must, at the very least, not contradict the Writings's emphasis on rationality. The Writings would be weakened by another serious self-contradiction in their epistemology if intrinsic rationality of the soul and 'other ways of knowing' conflicted with reason instead of complementing it. Even if the process of attaining knowledge is non-discursive, the results must still make sense in and be applicable to this world. If they do not, they will simply be irrational – which means they would not pass the test of rationality which the Writings recommend. Indeed, if such 'other ways of knowing' were irrational, they would also be violating the very essence of man, i.e. the "rational soul."

It is noteworthy that irrationality has only negative connotations in the Writings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá associates the irrational with the "foolish" [SWAB 185], and with the "irrational drinker" [TAB3 492]. Shoghi Effendi associates it with the "illogical,"²² with "irrational instincts of youth, its follies, its prodigality, its pride, its self-assurance, its rebelliousness, and contempt of discipline" [PDC 117] and "superstition" [WOB 137]. Irrationality has no place in the Bahá'í quest for knowledge and truth.

13. Non-Discursive Thinking: The Heart

Although the heart is the most important 'organ' or capacity for non-discursive reasoning, it is not in inherent conflict with reason. 'Abdu'l-Bahá tells us, "The world of minds corresponds with the world of hearts [PUP 270, emphasis added]. In other words, the heart and mind or reason²³ are distinct but they are not opposed, i.e. do not necessarily contradict one another although they 'deliberate' in different ways. The Writings show this in several ways. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, "And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is, that religion must be in conformity with science

and reason, *so that it may influence the hearts of men.*"²⁴ It is noteworthy that reason is able to "influence the heart." This idea is emphasized in the following:

If religious belief and doctrine is at variance with reason, it proceeds from the limited mind of man and not from God; therefore, it is unworthy of belief and not deserving of attention; *the heart finds no rest in it, and real faith is impossible. How can man believe that which he knows to be opposed to reason? Is this possible? Can the heart accept that which reason denies?* Reason is the first faculty of man and the religion of God is in harmony with it. [PUP 231]

There are several issues here. First is the suggestion that what is rational comes from God, and what is irrational comes from the human mind. Here, too, God is associated with rationality – as in Shoghi Effendi's reference to the "rational God" – though this trait does not, of course, exhaust His nature. Second, the heart cannot find rest in beliefs and doctrines that are "at variance with reason." In other words, the heart cannot find rest in the irrational and even more – "real faith" in the irrational is "impossible." The heart cannot accept ideas that violate reason which means that in some sense the heart is rational too or at least sufficiently sensitive to rationality to make it a requirement.

Throughout the Writings we are instructed to "ponder in [our] hearts" [SWAB 241] a variety of subjects such as Bahá'u'lláh's prophesies [SWAB 17], "the mysteries of Divine Revelation" [KI 47], and the social principles of the Faith. The heart is described as "the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God" [GWB CXXV 264]. It is clear that the heart, like reason, is able to cogitate, assess, reflect, analyze, understand and conclude, albeit it ways that we cannot explain discursively. For example, Bahá'u'lláh says, "Ponder this in thine heart, that thou mayest comprehend its meaning" [GWB XVII 46], and "Ponder this in thine heart, that the truth may be revealed unto thee" [GWB XXXII 76] thereby showing that the heart can examine, reflect on, understand and comprehend the truth. The heart has an epistemological function as indicated by the phrase

“understanding heart” [GDM 51]. The heart’s function in acquiring truth is noted elsewhere as well: “May your hearts become clear and pure like unto polished mirrors in which may be reflected the full glory of the Sun of Truth” [PT 95] and “men of *enlightened heart* worship truth on whatever horizon it appears” [PT 128, emphasis added]. It also has a cognitive function as indicated by the phrase, “sight of thy heart” [SWAB 37] which is to say that in its own way, the heart can perceive things, in this case, “intellectual realities” among which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lists “all the qualities and admirable perfections of man” [SAQ 263] and “love” [SAQ 83]. The heart is also described as a “spiritual faculty” [TAB1 208] gifted in “spiritual susceptibilities” [PUP 7; cf. TAB2 286] which is to say, it is open to spiritual influences: “reflections of the spirit and impressions of the Divine are now mirrored clear and sharp in the deep heart’s core” [SWAB 19].

However, what can it mean to ‘ponder in our hearts’? How can we ‘ponder’ or reach understandings or conclusions without abstract concepts or discursive logical operations or, possibly, even without words? To what extent can we be conscious of these deliberations? On the basis of our studies, we conclude that the Writings do not provide us with precise information about this because one cannot give exact discursive descriptions of non-discursive processes. We can only experience them and feel their influences on our thinking as we “ponder in [our] hearts” [SWAB 241].

Given the consistent association of the heart with various kinds of love in the Writings, it seems plausible that the deliberations of the heart are intimately connected with the feelings of love for God and His creation, i.e. the ‘agapeic’²⁵ aspects of humankind. These include sympathy, empathy, personal and existential concern, compassion, and devotion. But even this love is rational in the sense of being appropriate to the soul that God has created in each person. Thus, when we “ponder in [our] hearts,” it seems likely that we deliberate under the guidance of, or in the light of, love as the fundamental force in the cosmos: “Love is the fundamental principle of God’s purpose for man, and He has commanded us to love each other even as He loves us” [PT 121]. When pondering in our hearts, we observe and reflect about people, things and issues from the

perspective of God's universal love as reflected in us and, in doing so, reach our conclusions. How exactly this happens, cannot, as said before, be discursively explained. It is a process that must be personally experienced directly to be understood. In that way, it resembles what 'Abdu'l-Bahá says about our understanding of immortality:

But if the human spirit will rejoice and be attracted to the Kingdom of God, *if the inner sight becomes opened, and the spiritual hearing strengthened, and the spiritual feelings predominant*, he will see the immortality of the spirit *as clearly as he sees the sun*.
[SAQ 225]

This heart-knowledge is immediate, like the knowledge of our own physical sensations and even spiritual insights. According to the Writings, the mind and spirit are directly aware of our own bodily states as well as our own feelings and "spiritual conditions" [SAQ 157].

Such knowledge is not based on a clear-cut subject/object division as are all other kinds of knowledge and thought. When we perceive a tree or think about an idea, there is a difference between the object of thought and the person thinking, i.e. between subject and object, the knower and what is known. Consequently, we must consciously exert "effort and study" to know and think about them because they are external to us. However, with our bodily, emotional and spiritual states, we are both subject and object, knower and known. It is a direct, immediate, intimate "knowledge of being" not a mediated, objective knowledge *about* being. Moreover, this knowledge is not limited to ourselves alone. Because humans are a "microcosm" [PUP 69] the laws, principles or 'mysteries' of entire universe is "expressed or revealed" [PUP 69] within us. This suggests that in our heart-ponderings, we may, if we go deep enough, also gain knowledge about creation in this way.

14. Intuition

Intuitions are another non-discursive way of knowing according to the Writings. Speaking about the divine origin of the universe, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says,

These obvious arguments are adduced for weak souls; but if the *inner perception* be open, a hundred thousand clear proofs become visible. Thus, when man *feels the indwelling spirit*, he is in no need of arguments for its existence. [SAQ 6]

If we have direct sight or experiential knowledge we have no need of discursive, step-by-step inferential reasoning. Opening our eyes – not devising arguments – will prove the existence of the sun. The direct experience is identified with feelings in this passage, once again suggesting that feelings are the medium of this kind of direct, non-discursive knowledge. After discussing the immortality of the soul, 'Abdu'l-Bahá declares,

if the inner sight becomes opened, and the spiritual hearing strengthened, and the spiritual feelings predominant, he will see the immortality of the spirit as clearly as he sees the sun. [SAQ 225, emphasis added]

Here, too, we observe that direct insight – “inner sight” – and “spiritual feelings” give us non-discursive knowledge about spiritual topics like immortality. However, we must bear in mind that direct “inner sight,” though not subject to inferential reasoning, is not inherently irrational, and thereby, opposed to the “rational soul.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá shows the necessity of intuition for ontological reasons. There are “invisible realms which the human intellect can never hope to fathom nor the mind conceive” [SWAB 185]. These cannot be known by discursive reasoning no matter how astute; rather we must cleanse the channel of our “spiritual sense” [SWAB 185] which leads us to “the sweet scents of holiness” [SWAB 185] or intuitions from the “invisible realms.” Again, we should note that nothing here suggests that these intuitions are not in harmony with reason even though the process of receiving them cannot be described discursively.

Like intuitions, 'transcendent experiences' also seem to take us out of the world of ordinary time and space. Such experiences can only be discussed – if at all – only by means of poetic metaphors. We find one such described in *The Seven Valleys*. Having explained His statements about firstness and lastness, Bahá'u'lláh informs us that these statements apply to the “sphere of that which is relative,” i.e. the ordinary world, “of variation and oneness, of limitation and detachment” [KI 160].

These statements are made in the sphere of that which is relative, because of the limitations of men. Otherwise, those personages who in a single step have passed over the world of the relative and the limited, and dwelt on the fair plane of the Absolute, and pitched their tent in the worlds of authority and command – have burned away these relativities with a single spark, and blotted out these words with a drop of dew. And they swim in the sea of the spirit, and soar in the holy air of light. Then what life have words, on such a plane, that “first” and “last” or other than these be seen or mentioned! In this realm, the first is the last itself, and the last is but the first. [SV 26]

A few “personages” have transcended this ordinary plane of existence. In some indescribable way, they have attained a realm beyond explanation by discursive reasoning, though what transpires in that realm is not be incompatible with reason. God, after all, is a “rational God” and we would not expect His creation to violate His own nature. What we encounter in this realm is beyond discursive explanation, a knowledge that must be experienced, not discursively described. The acceptance of such experiential knowledge emphasizes the moderate rationalism in the Writings.

One of the conclusions we may draw from our discussion of the heart, intuition and transcendent experience is that rationality and discursivity are not synonymous in the Writings. Viewing a work of art may give us experiential knowledge but such knowledge is not necessarily non-rational because it is non-discursive, i.e. cannot be satisfactorily be explained in

inferential steps. Indeed, given our essential nature as “rational souls” and the existence of a “rational God” it is hard to see how any true knowledge or understanding of any sort could be non-rational even though it is non-discursive.

15. The Uses of Reason in the Writings

Perhaps the most important use of reason in the Writings is to test the validity of religion and religious beliefs.

Consider what it is that singles man out from among created beings, and makes of him a creature apart. Is it not his *reasoning power*, his intelligence? *Shall he not make use of these in his study of religion?* I say unto you: *weigh carefully in the balance of reason and science everything that is presented to you as religion.* If it passes *this test*, then accept it, for it is truth! If, however, it does not so conform, then reject it, for it is ignorance! [PT 144]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá notes that reasoning is humanity’s distinguishing feature and, in the form of a rhetorical question, tells us to use our “reasoning power” in our “study of religion.” There is no suggestion here that reason cannot deal with spiritual issues. He then commands us to “test” religion by reason. Elsewhere he tells us that “Religion must stand the *analysis of reason*” [PUP 175]. If religion must pass the test of rationality, then obviously reason is sufficiently reliable to make such analysis feasible and worthwhile. If it were not, there would be no point to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s command to use it. This demonstrates yet again that while we must be aware of reason’s limitations, we should not let them deter us from using and relying on reason. He says,

In *divine questions* we *must not* depend entirely upon the heritage of tradition and former human experience; nay, rather, we *must exercise reason, analyze and logically examine* the facts presented so that confidence will be inspired and faith attained. [PUP 327, emphasis added]

It is important to note the imperative – “we *must* exercise reason” which implies not only that reason is sufficiently reliable for the task but also that we are remiss if we do not use it. Noteworthy as well is the command that we must “*logically* examine” religious teachings. Moreover, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also declares that “If religion were contrary to *logical reason* then it would *cease to be a religion* and be merely a tradition” [PT 142, emphasis added]. Here, too, we observe the association of reason and logic.

Further evidence of reason’s ability to deal with and test spiritual subjects is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s declaration that

The *intellectual proofs* of Divinity are based upon *observation* and *evidence* which constitute *decisive argument, logically proving* the reality of Divinity, the effulgence of mercy, the certainty of inspiration and immortality of the spirit. This is, in reality, the science of Divinity [PUP 326].

Even the existence of God – Who is absolutely non-material – can be “decisive[ly]” proven by reason and logic, a view reaffirmed elsewhere when he says, the “existence of the Divine Being hath been *clearly established*, on the basis of *logical* proofs.”²⁶ It is significant that he accepts the validity of logical proofs of God’s existence as being “decisive” and “clearly established” without the slightest suggestion that we should doubt these results. Once again we observe that reason and logic are not only applicable to metaphysical and theological subjects but are also deemed sufficiently reliable to be used in this way. Other spiritual topics which reason can demonstrate are “the effulgence of mercy,” “the certainty of inspiration” and the “immortality of the spirit” all of which transcend the empirical-physical aspects of reality. In a similar vein, he affirms “The Unity of God is *logical*, and this idea is not antagonistic to the conclusions arrived at by scientific study” [PT 141]. He also asserts that “If a question be found contrary to reason, faith and belief in it are impossible, and there is no outcome but wavering and vacillation” [PUP 181]. Reason is necessary to attaining genuine faith that can withstand the tests of this world; without such support from reason, faith will

vacillate or waver. This suggests that reason is also necessary to faith and that faith without reason is deficient.

'Abdu'l-Bahá sums up his teachings about reason and religion with the assertion that "The foundations of religion are reasonable" [PUP 128]. In other words, reason is at the very base of religion and is, fundamentally, a rational enterprise though we cannot grasp all aspects of this rationality in logical discursive reason. This reasonable foundation is, of course, why religion and science can be in harmony: they share the same foundation and, therefore, are unified in their beginnings.

16. The Search for Truth

The Writings are clear that reason enables us to discover truth; after all, if reason could not discover truth, there is no point in requiring us to use it. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, "God has created man in order that he may perceive the *verity* of existence and endowed him with *mind or reason* to discover *truth*" [PUP 287, 303, emphasis added].²⁷ Similarly, he says, "He [God] has endowed him [man] with mind, or the faculty of reasoning, by the exercise of which he is to investigate and *discover the truth*" [PUP 291, emphasis added]. He declares that "God has created man and endowed him with the power of *reason whereby* he may arrive at *valid conclusions*" [PUP 312, emphasis added]. Indeed, the Bahá'í Writings constantly emphasize that truth exists and that reason can discover it. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá says,

[t]he power of the *rational soul can discover* the realities of things, *comprehend* the peculiarities of beings, and *penetrate* the mysteries of existence. All sciences, knowledge, arts, wonders, institutions, discoveries and enterprises *come from the exercised intelligence of the rational soul*. [SAQ 217, emphasis added]

The last sentence is especially important, telling us that "all sciences, knowledge ... come from the exercised intelligence of the rational soul." If all knowledge comes from the rational soul, this includes non-discursive knowledge which is still rational though not open to discursive explanation. As noted

before, discursivity and rationality are not synonymous in the Writings. There are levels of truth which, though rational, cannot be set down in step-by-step inferences of discursive reasoning. To emphasize reason's ability to discover truth, 'Abdu'l-Bahá says,

God has created man in order that he may *perceive the verity of existence* and endowed him with *mind or reason* to *discover truth*. Therefore, scientific knowledge and religious belief must be conformable to the analysis of this *divine faculty* in man. [PUP 287; cf. PUP 291]

It is noteworthy that he says that "religious *belief*" must be "conformable" to reason, implying, thereby, that irrational religious beliefs are unacceptable and that such beliefs are unworthy of the "rational soul." This statement also implies that there are real differences between truth and nonsense.

Part II: Questions Concerning Reason

In the first part of this study, we have examined the role of reason in the Writings. We shall now turn our attention to some the issues that may arise in regards to this topic.

17. The Issue of Diversity

Because of the strong and pervasive emphasis on reason throughout the Bahá'í Writings, the issue of diversity arises. It may be argued that the prominence of reason and especially standard or Aristotelian reason throughout the Writings undermines the teachings on diversity, notably cultural diversity. Standard reasoning is, after all, the associated with a particular, i.e. Western culture and is not necessarily relevant to all cultures. Some might even argue that the emphasis on such reason is little more than a "post-colonialist" attempt to impose Western thought forms on the non-Western world. In general terms, we may ask, 'Why is there such a pervasive presence of Aristotelian or standard logic when such logic seems to

undermine diversity and privilege works that harmonize with reason or at least do not contradict it?’

Before continuing, we must emphasize the unchallengeable *right* of individuals to hold any view/interpretation of the Writings they like, rationally tenable or not. That right is never in question and must be vigorously upheld: “at the very root of the Cause lies the principle of the undoubted right of the individual to self-expression, his freedom to declare his conscience and set forth his views” [PBA 43]. Nonetheless, saying that nothing can diminish our right to hold even rationally untenable views is not the same as saying that all views are equally rational and/or tenable. The first is a judicial issue while the second is epistemological.

However, the Writings instruct us to use the “divine faculty” [PUP 287] of reason as a tool to distinguish tenable from untenable views. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá directs us to

weigh carefully in the balance of *reason* and science everything that is presented to you as religion. If it passes this test, then accept it, for it is truth! If, however, it does not so conform, then *reject it*, for it is *ignorance!* [SAQ 144]

Elsewhere he tells us that “both [religion and science] are founded upon the premises and conclusions of *reason*, and both *must* bear its test” [PUP 107]. This makes it clear that reason is inherently a selective mechanism which involves rejecting some views or, at least, setting them aside until they have been made rationally tenable. Such a selective mechanism is necessary because the whole point of investigating the truth is lost without it. Why seek the truth if there is no way of distinguishing it from error, or if we have no standard by which to differentiate the more plausible from the less plausible? Without the standard of reason “anything goes”²⁸ and consequently, one of the foundational teachings — seeking the truth — of the Bahá’í Faith is lost. Indeed, the concept of consultation is also lost without the goal of distinguishing the tenable from the untenable. Making such distinctions is precisely the point of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s declaration that “The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of

differing opinions” [SWAB 87]. Finally, the doctrine of the harmony of science and religion is undermined if we refuse to recognize that reason is necessary to help us distinguish tenable from untenable views, e.g. oxidation versus the phlogiston theory of combustion.

If all viewpoints were equally rational or tenable or all harmonized with the Writings to an equal degree it is difficult, if not impossible, to explain why Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá reject some ideas as false. Metaphysical pantheism [SAQ 289], ontological materialism [PUP 262], and re-incarnation [PUP 167] are explicitly disallowed. Furthermore, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá refer to some ideas as “absurd” [SAQ 291], “childish” [PUP 219], “erroneous” [SAQ 278; TB 124], “mistaken” [PUP 87], and “wrong” [SAQ 6] thereby, obviously rejecting them, and, by implication, guiding us to reject them too. In other words, acceptance and encouragement of diversity does not necessarily mean that “anything goes” and that there are no standards by which to distinguish the tenable from the untenable. The Writings make reason, and specifically standard reason, one of those standards.

It might be argued that making such judgments on the basis of the pervasive presence of standard or Aristotelian reasoning in the Writings is a manifestation of a ‘post-colonialist’ sense of superiority. However, there are several problems with the ‘post-colonial’ critique. Most obviously, the objection is, in the last analysis, beside the point. Whether it is ‘post-colonial’ thinking or not, the Bahá'í Writings see rationality as the essential attribute of the human soul and pervasively and consistently model rationality in the form associated with Aristotelian or standard reasoning. In other words, this form of reasoning is unavoidable in any encounter with the Writings. Regardless of what culture people come from and what level of education they have, they will have to enrich themselves with this aspect of the Writings if they wish to understand the arguments used by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Since “in *this* age the *peoples of the world* need the arguments of reason” [SAQ 7, emphasis added] it would especially difficult to overlook the ubiquity of Aristotelian reasoning in the Writings simply

because a number of current academic theories find this model of rationality problematic.

The main problem with the 'post-colonialist' critique is that it commits the genetic fallacy, i.e. a fallacy of irrelevance which makes a pejorative judgment about something on the basis of its supposed origins or past use instead of by its inherent content and application. The fact that standard logic originated in the West and spread globally by means of Western imperialism does not necessarily make it inapplicable on a global basis to other cultures and in our time. Indeed, since the Bahá'í Writings make such extensive use of standard logic decisively, it seems obvious that neither its content nor its application is necessarily and inherently harmful to anyone or any culture. Without a doubt, the Writings use and recommend such reasoning and provide such models precisely because they are deemed helpful and conducive to human development during the remainder of this dispensation. Would we expect the Bahá'í Writings to model or recommend anything that does not have positive potential for human development? Surely, given the pervasiveness of standard logic in the Writings, it is more likely that such reasoning is *essential* or *necessary* to positive human development.

A second major problem with the 'post-colonial' critique is that it overlooks the universality of the Law of Non-contradiction (LNC), which encapsulates the essence of standard or Aristotelian reasoning. No matter what individuals or cultures claim to believe about logical contradictions, no matter what models of logic they have, in the practice of daily life they behave according to the LNC. People in all ages and in all places know that we cannot have eaten lunch and not eaten lunch at the same time, in the same sense and from the same perspective. Recognizing this is a survival skill. Hunters and gatherers know that they have either bagged a kill or collected berries – or they have not. No tribe's winter storage both contains and does not contain meat. Nor do humans act as if a truck – or a lion or a mastodon – is both coming and not coming at them at the same time and the same sense. A failure to recognize the LNC and act on it is potentially injurious or even fatal. The LNC does not even need to be known discursively or consciously. A newborn

'knows' that it cannot be fed and not fed at the same time in the same sense – and will let us clearly know which is the case! In other words, regardless of what theoretical superstructures or models of reason/logic are constructed by various cultures, they do not negate the practical, daily application of the LNC.

In our view, the Writings make use of this daily, practical logic which humans apply precisely because it is universally accessible to people everywhere and at all times. In that sense, it is not culture-bound: no matter what culture we are in or at what time we live, my child cannot be fed and not fed at the same time and in the same sense. What parent – even one who explicitly 'disbelieved' in the LNC – would confuse one with the other? This universality makes standard, i.e. Aristotelian reasoning ideal for meeting the world's need for a unified, global method of reasoning without which human cross-cultural communication will be severely hindered and, thereby, impede the quest for world unity and peace.

In reflecting about reason in the Bahá'í Writings, the question arises whether or not 'other kinds' i.e. non-standard logic may be found in the Writings. More specifically, we must consider if the Writings rule out the use of logical systems that deny the law of non-contradiction (LNC). In our view, the answer is negative: there is no mandate to limit such matters *a priori* although it is difficult to see how two such contradictory systems can be reconciled. The most we can say is that this study has found no evidence of non-standard logic whereas we have found plentiful evidence of the implicit and explicit use of standard, Aristotelian reasoning. Nowhere, for example, do we find we find many-valued logics such as Nagarjuna's *catuskoti*. We can, of course, debate why anyone would follow adopt such logic in light of the persistent and pervasive use of standard or Aristotelian reasoning throughout the Writings. Furthermore, we may discuss if such a strategy actually succeeds in regards to a particular Text.

More specifically, we have found no intentionally paradoxical, i.e. self-contradictory passages that cannot be resolved by the resources of standard logic as given in the Writings. Two examples follow.

Our first passage concerns the “mystic knower” [SVFV 51] and the “grammarian” [SVFV 51] in Bahá'u'lláh's parable in *The Four Valleys*. When the two travelers arrived at “Sea of Grandeur” [SVFV 51], the mystic “flung himself onto the waves but the grammarian stood “lost in his reasonings” [SVFV 51]. First appearances to the contrary, this story is not a critique of reason per se but a critique of the misuse of reason. The moral is clear: there is a time for discursive reason and there is a time to act. The grammarian's fault is not in reasoning – after all, his reasoning has brought him to the Sea of Grandeur – but in failing to distinguish between situations that require reasoning and those that require action. He fails to act appropriately i.e. reasonably, and he lacks the courage to act on the basis of his reasoning. He misuses reason, not having understood that reason cannot tell us everything as moderate rationalism asserts. Some things can only be learned by doing and experience. That is why “the death of self is needed” [SVFV 51], i.e. complete, unreserved existential commitment, not further rationalization.

Another apparent conflict with reason is found in the Báb's statement that “reason, even in its utmost level of abstraction, is confined to the understanding of limited phenomena.”²⁹ Reading this, we must be careful not to assume that “limited phenomena” are material/physical phenomena, and, therefore reason is limited to these. Reason, as we have seen, can also deal with “intellectual realities which are not sensible, and which have no outward existence” [SAQ 186] as well as with spiritual issues. It is true that reason cannot understand unlimited phenomena because reason requires concepts which are inherently limited but that is exactly why the Writings espouse a moderate rationalism – to allow other avenues of knowing. However, as we have shown in regards to other ways of knowing, i.e. non-discursive knowledge and reasoning, non-discursive is not synonymous with non-rational.

These examples remind us that the Writings espouse a “moderate rationalism” according to which reason cannot tell us everything. Other ways of knowing are also available, such as ‘action’ in the example of the mystic knower and the grammarian. There is also the knowledge of the heart as noted in previous discussions. The ubiquity of Aristotelian logic in the

Writings does not necessarily negate the validity of these other ways of knowing, so there is no necessary conflict between them. Indeed, we would not expect such conflicts because truth is one, i.e. it cannot be divided by contradictions. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms, "No one truth can contradict another truth" [PT 136].

18. Standard Logic and Modern Science

One critique of standard or 'classical' reasoning is that it is limited to the ordinary macroscopic world in which we live, and is, therefore, out of step with developments in quantum physics which operates at the microscopic level. Our reasoning should be in harmony with the microscopic level which is the basis for macroscopic reality. It is argued that the Writings would not model and recommend standard logic since it is not in harmony with quantum logic.

The most obvious answer to this critique is that notwithstanding developments in quantum physics, the Writings clearly show a persistent and pervasive use of standard or Aristotelian reason. The evidence we have presented – as well as the greater volume of evidence excluded – cannot be avoided. Moreover, in our view, it is doubtful that Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá would make such widespread use of this type of reasoning if we were not meant to understand it and use it as a model. Nor is it likely that the Writings would present believers with insurmountable obstacles vis-à-vis quantum theory and logic.

Furthermore, in daily practice it is difficult to see how we would we apply quantum logic – especially in the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum phenomena – to life at the macroscopic level. What application can there be in the macroscopic world of the Copenhagen principle that objects or persons do not exist until they are observed and only as long as they are observed? How can we use quantum logic derived from this fact vis-à-vis trains or mastodons? Is there anything we can practically do in our lives with the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle which dictates that we cannot simultaneously ascertain the position and velocity of a particle? While this may be true at

the microscopic level, at the macroscopic level traffic police seem to have no trouble doing both. The application of quantum logic in the macroscopic world seems like a recipe for incredible confusion. We must also bear in mind that while the Copenhagen interpretation is the best known version of quantum theory, it is not the only one. Indeed, there are at least six other viable interpretations at least one of which, David Bohm's, is consistent with standard logic. In other words, all quantum interpretations do not necessarily lead to the strange effects associated with the Copenhagen model.³⁰

Indeed, the claim that standard logic is out of step with the quantum logic used to study events at the micro-level is questionable and open to debate. Mathematical physicist Roland Omnès, who has done pioneering work in reconciling classical (standard) logic and quantum logic, sees no reason to abandon standard logic because

it can be shown that common sense logic is actually a logic of consistent quantum histories and that *common sense arguments are ultimately verbalizations of implications that can be demonstrated in quantum logic* ... the probability for common sense to be wrong is practically always negligible as long as it deals with macroscopic objects.³¹

He adds,

common sense conforms to the quantum nature of laws governing the material world, at least in normal conditions, and for objects on our human scale (and often, even well below it).³²

In other words, there is no irreducible and necessary conflict between standard logic and quantum logic. This is exactly what we would expect from a Bahá'í perspective because reality is one: "As reality is one and cannot admit of multiplicity, therefore different opinions must ultimately become fused into one" [SWAB 298]. If reality is truly one, it seems unlikely that it is bifurcated into two, mutually contradictory, i.e. absolutely incompatible parts or levels. Reality would be fragmented and

multiple. At the very least we would expect that the two types of reasoning are complementary and not contradictory.

A different critique of the standard logic used in the Writings is that standard logic does not work in the astronomical sciences because of relativity. This argument appears to confuse relativity theory in astronomy and relativism in philosophy. Unlike philosophic relativism which has no absolutes by which to make judgments about various truth-claims, scientific relativity theory has an absolute – the speed of light – which is the same in all frames of reference i.e. the same for all observers regardless of their motion. It is a universal constant, a universal speed limit. From this it is readily apparent that a particle either has or has not attained light speed or some fraction of it. Such measurements – subject to the LNC – fall well within the purview of standard logic. In addition, even though the same event can appear contradictory in different frames of reference, i.e. in different perspectives, the same event cannot have all contradictory appearances in the same frame of reference or perspective. In other words, the LNC still applies.

Let us examine one more case. Heisenberg accepts that standard and quantum logic are related (one is an extension – not negation – of the other).³³ However, Heisenberg also endorses the Aristotelian concepts of act and potency in his understanding of the quantum world.³⁴ For him, the superposition of a particle refers to its potentials for actualization; for potentials – even opposite potentials – to exist simultaneously does not violate standard logic.³⁵ Heisenberg's view that quantum logic is an "extension" of classical logic means that like Newtonian physics, standard logic is valid within its own sphere, i.e. the macro-world, which means that there is no inherent conflict with quantum physics. Standard logic is the appropriate logic for the macro-world which is why Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá make use of it.

19. Conclusions

On the basis of this study of reason in the Bahá'í Writings, we may reach seven major conclusions.

1. The Bahá'í Writings assert that "The foundations of religion are reasonable" [PUP 128] and consistently advocate and even require the use of reason in regards to phenomenal and spiritual/religious matters and as a test for truth and falsity.
2. The Bahá'í Writings pervasively model standard, Aristotelian or classical reasoning in their explications, illustrations and arguments.
3. The Bahá'í Writings espouse moderate rationalism which recognizes 'other ways of knowing.' They reject the idea that non-discursive reasoning is necessarily non-rational;
4. The Bahá'í Writings use a negative gate-keeper method to protect both the 'unity' and the 'diversity' in "unity-in-diversity";
5. The Bahá'í Writings adopt a scientific response to the fallibility of reason;
6. Given the pervasive use of standard logic in the Writings, it is reasonable to conclude that they intend this as the universal logic for humankind;
7. Arguments against standard logic in the Writings based on post-colonial theory, quantum mechanics or relativity theory are untenable and not persuasive.

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NOTES

- ¹ Nicholas Bunnin; Jiyuan Yu (2004). *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western philosophy*, p. 266: “[Logic] is divided into standard (or classical) logic, non-standard logic and inductive logic. Standard logic includes traditional logic (Aristotelian syllogism) and modern classical logic which is an expansion of traditional logic ...” Also L. T. F. Gamut (1991). *Logic, Language, and Meaning, Volume 1: Introduction to Logic*, pp. 156-157: propositional and predicate logic (classical logic is propositional) “can nevertheless be regarded as standard logic.”
- ² See Ian Kluge, *The Aristotelian Substratum of the Bahá'í Writings in Lights of Irfan* 4, p. 17-79, 2003.
- ³ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, <http://merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reason>
- ⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 191. cf. Chapter 49, “*The Growth and Development of the Human Race.*”
- ⁵ *Genesis* 1:26 in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 192.
- ⁶ From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated 22 June 1977, online at http://bahai-library.com/compilation_bahai_scholarship_khan
- ⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 193; emphasis added; see also Shoghi Effendi in *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community*, p. 458.
- ⁸ Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, Feb. 24, 1947 in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 476.; emphasis added.
- ⁹ However, we must not mistake an acceptance of differences in perspective with relativism. Classical, Aristotelian logic asserts that from any one given perspective, only one claim can be true whereas relativism asserts that no truth-claim can be established because there is no absolute standard by which to judge. Relativism accepts even contradictions as ‘true,’ whereas standard logic does not.
- ¹⁰ This is not a repetition of Zeno’s arrow paradox since Zeno was discussing a single trajectory subject to mental divisions and this statement deals with real – not mental – divisions between individual, definite acts.
- ¹¹ An incomplete syllogistic form called an ‘enthymeme’ is missing one of the propositions, or the conclusion is implied but not stated.
- ¹² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 7, 90, 177, 258, 293, 304 to identify only a few.
- ¹³ Bunnin and Yu, editors, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Western Philosophy*, p. 25.
- ¹⁴ These are known as the dialogues of Plato but feature Socrates as the usual protagonist.

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- ¹⁵ Bahá'í International Community, "Consultation," <http://info.bahai.org/article-1-3-6-3.html>
- ¹⁶ See Ian Kluge, "Relativism in the Bahá'í Writings," (*Lights of Irfan*) for an examination of various passages on this topic.
- ¹⁷ Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* v 4, p. 129; emphasis added.
- ¹⁸ Shoghi Effendi, *Extracts from the USBN*, # 85, July 1934, p. 6.
- ¹⁹ Jim Al-Khalili, *Quantum: A Guide for the Perplexed*, p. 132 – 153.
- ²⁰ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* in Part 2 "Some Christian Subjects," pp. 83-143.
- ²¹ Ken Wilber, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, p. 92.
- ²² From the Guardian to an individual believer, October 1, 1935: *Canadian Bahá'í News*, February 1968, p. 11) Compilations, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 490.
- ²³ Reason and mind are the same in the Writings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 22; also p. 360, p. 287.
- ²⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet to the Hague*, p. 5; emphasis added.
- ²⁵ From the Greek 'agape' i.e. love for humanity-in-general.
- ²⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 46. See also *Some Answered Questions*, p. 225 in regards to logical proof for immortality.
- ²⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 303, p. 287; emphasis added.
- ²⁸ Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*, p. 5. "The only principle that does not inhibit progress is anything goes."
- ²⁹ The Báb, in Nader Saiedi, *Gate of the Heart*, p, 211.
- ³⁰ Nick Herbert, *Quantum Realities*.
- ³¹ Roland Omnes, *Quantum Philosophy*, p. 190; emphasis added.
- ³² Roland Omnes, *Quantum Philosophy*, p. 193.
- ³³ Werrner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy*, p. 155.
- ³⁴ Werrner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy*, p. 154.
- ³⁵ Heisenberg also writes, "The probability wave of Bohr, Kramers, Slater... was a quantitative version of the old concept of "potentia" in Aristotelian philosophy." *Physics and Philosophy*, p. 15.

Eyewitness Account of the Massacre of Bahá'ís in Nayriz on the Naw-Ruz 'Abdu'l-Bahá Interred the Remains of The Báb on Mount Carmel

Baharieh Rouhani Maani

Naw-Ruz 1909 is a significant landmark in the history of the first Bahá'í century. 'Abdu'l-Bahá chose the festive occasion to accomplish a most sacred task entrusted to Him by His Father. The task was the interment of the remains of the Báb in a specific spot in the heart of Mount Carmel in Haifa. When Bahá'u'lláh assigned the task to His Most Great Branch, the remains of the Báb were still in Iran and the land on which a befitting Mausoleum for the purpose was to be built had not yet been acquired. The accomplishment of the task became one of the principle objectives of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry. This objective and that of His trip to the West achieved within a short period after He gained freedom from decades of exile and incarceration are mysteriously linked. He undertook His historic journey to Egypt and the West only after He had successfully completed the original structure of the Shrine of the Báb and ceremoniously interred the body of the martyred Herald of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation in the designated spot. Another historic event took place thousands of miles away during that historic Naw-Ruz: The believers in Nayriz were targeted once again for adhering to the tenets of the nascent Faith, and eighteen souls innocent of any wrongdoing were tortured and put to death. 'Abdu'l-Bahá links the interment of the "sanctified body of His Holiness, the Báb ... in the Shrine on Mount Carmel" to the event in Nayriz. He says: "[S]acrifice was necessary and martyrdom required ... The loved ones in Nayriz ... won the trophy of excellence."¹

The Interment of the Remains of The Báb

Gripping as is the life and martyrdom of the Bab, the account of the rescue of His body, its transfer to the Holy Land, and interment in a spot designated by Bahá'u'lláh in the heart of Mount Carmel sixty years later is no less fascinating. According to Shoghi Effendi, "[T]he mangled bodies of the Báb and His fellow-martyr, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali Zunuzi, were removed, in the middle of the second night following their execution, through the pious intervention of Haji Sulayman Khan, from the edge of the moat where they had been cast to a silk factory owned by one of the believers of Milan, and were laid the next day in a wooden casket, and thence carried to a place of safety. Subsequently, according to Bahá'u'lláh's instructions, they were transported to Tihran and placed in the shrine of Imam-Zadih Hasan" [GPB 273]. The decision to transfer the remains to Tihran "was prompted by the wish the Báb Himself had expressed in the 'Ziyarat-i-Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim,'"² in which, addressing the buried saint, He says: "Well is it with you to have found your resting-place in Ráy, under the shadow of My Beloved. Would that I might be entombed within the precincts of that holy ground!"³

It took sixty years from the date the bodies of the Báb and His fellow-martyr were removed from the edge of the moat outside Tabriz until they were finally interred in the Shrine on Mount Carmel. During that time "by reason of the ascendancy of the enemy, and from fear of the malevolent" the sacred remains knew "neither rest nor tranquility" until "through the mercy of the Abha Beauty" they were "ceremoniously deposited, on the day of Naw-Ruz, within the sacred casket, in the exalted Shrine on Mt. Carmel."⁴ Early in His ministry, 'Abdu'l-Bahá arranged for the "precious Trust" to be transported to the Holy Land. It was delivered into His hands on 31 January 1899 [GPB 274].

Immediately after the remains reached the Holy Land, 'Abdu'l-Bahá with great difficulty acquired the plot of land on Mount Carmel, which Bahá'u'lláh had specified for the Resting Place of the Báb's remains, and began constructing the original six rooms of the Shrine. With the intrigues employed by

Covenant-breakers to abort or at least indefinitely delay the completion of the project, it took nine years for the original structure to be built. "Every stone of that building, every stone of the road leading to it" `Abdu'l-Bahá "with infinite tears and at tremendous cost, raised and placed in position" [GPB 275]. To help the believers grasp the significance of this undertaking and appreciate its vital importance, Shoghi Effendi says:

`Abdu'l-Bahá Himself testified, on more than one occasion, that the safe transfer of these remains, the construction of a befitting mausoleum to receive them, and their final interment with His own hands in their permanent resting-place constituted one of the three principal objectives which, ever since the inception of His mission, He had conceived it His paramount duty to achieve. This act indeed deserves to rank as one of the outstanding events in the first Bahá'í century. [GPB 273]

The successful completion of this sacred undertaking fulfilled an old prophecy in Zechariah: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord."⁵ The enshrining of the remains of the Báb paved the way for another remarkable achievement of `Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry: His trip to Egypt, North America and Europe. The consummation of the second depended on the accomplishment of the first and neither was possible without `Abdu'l-Bahá gaining freedom from decades of exile and strict confinement. His freedom could not be realized without drastic changes in Iran and Turkey, two countries intent on uprooting the nascent Cause of God or at least keeping its advancement in check. Had the necessary changes occurred sooner, Abdu'l-Bahá would have built the Báb's Shrine, entombed His remains earlier, then undertaken His trip to the West when He was younger and time constraints were not so intense. Freedom came when `Abdu'l-Bahá was sixty-six years old and His health impaired. Time was of the essence. The world was moving toward the first conflagration of international magnitude. With the dethronement of Muhammad-'Ali Shah in Iran and Sultan `Abdu'l-Hamid, the Ottoman Emperor, impediments to His freedom were removed. Several months after achieving

freedom, He with His own hands placed, during a moving ceremony, the inner casket containing the sacred remains of the Báb and His fellow-martyr in the marble sarcophagus prepared by the Bahá'ís of Rangoon, Burma. The sarcophagus had arrived and been placed beforehand in the vault of the Shrine, which had been built for the purpose. The historic Naw-Ruz that witnessed one of the most significant achievements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry coincided with the martyrdom of eighteen Bahá'ís in Nayriz.

In a visitation prayer revealed in 1909 in honor of the Bahá'í martyrs of Nayriz, 'Abdu'l-Bahá beseeches God to make their blood the cause of the dissemination of divine signs, of the appearance of mysteries and the shining of light in other lands.⁶ On the Naw-Ruz that witnessed the interment of the remains of the Báb on Mount Carmel and the martyrdom of the Bahá'ís in Nayriz, 'Abdu'l-Bahá received the joyous news of the convocation in Chicago of the first American Bahá'í Convention and the election of the members of the Bahá'í Temple Unity, a prelude to the election of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, linking the entombment of the remains of the Báb and the election of the Bahá'í Temple Unity with the martyrdom of the believers in Nayriz.

On the day of the entombment of the remains of the Bab, three believers from Nayriz were among the eastern and western pilgrims present at the ceremony.⁷ On that day 'Abdu'l-Bahá singled out the three Nayrizi pilgrims for special consideration. The outpourings of His loving kindness vouchsafed to these three pilgrims astonished the recipients and everyone present. After the ceremony, 'Abdu'l-Bahá announced that there was room in His carriage for three people. Not wishing to show favoritism, He asked that a lot be drawn. The drawn names were those of the three pilgrims from Nayriz. These friends were well aware of their unworthiness and of the presence at the gathering of devoted and outstanding believers from the east and the west, so they could not fathom the significance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá focusing His special attention on them. The following day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went for a walk along the seashore and took with Him the pilgrims from Nayriz. As He was walking, He looked at

the sea and spoke of a storm. Seeing the calm sea, the Nayrizi pilgrims thought 'Abdu'l-Bahá was speaking of a storm in the making. 'Abdu'l-Bahá repeated: "The sea is stormy, very stormy." He then turned to the pilgrims and said you are dismissed. Tomorrow you return home. He gave them specific instructions how to proceed and said: Tarry not anywhere until you reach home.⁸

The Mystery of Sacrifice

Shortly after the martyrdom of the believers in Nayriz during Naw-Ruz 1909, 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed a Tablet. In it He speaks of the heroism of the friends, of the atrocities they suffered and the effect of the pure blood that was shed there. The Tablet leaves no doubt that the martyrdom of those lovers of the Blessed Beauty was a ransom for the highly remarkable undertaking of His ministry, the interment of the sanctified body of the Báb in its eternal resting place on Mount Carmel:

O ye Friends of God! In these days Nayriz hath become the place for blood shedding. Sanctified souls among the loved ones of the Lord have sacrificed their lives and hastened to the field of martyrdom in the path of the conspicuous Light. For this the eyes are tearful and hearts burn with sorrow. Sobbing and sighs have soared to the highest heaven and extreme sadness hath caused lamentation to appear anew. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's highest wish is to quaff a drop of the chalice of faithfulness and to be intoxicated with the wine of sacrifice, that the end of His life may be the beginning of infinite grace...

O ye friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! In these days, through a felicitous event and confirmations from the Lord of the highest Heaven, as well as assistance from the unseen Kingdom, the sanctified body of His Highness, the Bab, was interred in its Shrine on Mount Carmel. Therefore, sacrifice was necessary and martyrdom required. The loved ones in Nayriz, inebriated by this brimming chalice and with the rod of high resolve, have won the

trophy of excellence. Happy are they and blessed is this chalice, which is overflowing with the wine of the love of God. Upon them be the Glory of God...⁹

The necessity of sacrifice and the requirement of martyrdom in relation to the interment of the remains of the Báb and its linkage to what the Bahá'ís of Nayriz suffered highlight the significance of a phenomenon strongly present in the early history of the Bahá'í Faith. The tree of the Cause of God has indeed been nurtured with the blood of martyrs. Before His declaration, the Báb offered up His only son, Ahmad, as a sacrifice. Thousands of believers met their death and many more thousands sacrificed everything they possessed for the promotion of His Cause. He later offered His own life in the path of the One Whose Advent He had come to herald. Two decades later Bahá'u'lláh sacrificed His saintly son, Mirza Mihdi, for the realization of the lofty ideals of His Cause, while He was incarcerated together with His family and companions in the army barracks in 'Akka. Nearly two years had passed since they had arrived there and lived under stringent restrictions. No change in their situation was in sight. The few pilgrims who spent months travelling on foot to attain Bahá'u'lláh's presence had to be content with seeing the movement of His hand from a distance, then retrace their steps. For the doors of the prison to open, for some relief to come to Bahá'u'lláh, His family and companions, for the pilgrims to attain the presence of their Best Beloved, a mighty sacrifice was required. That sacrifice was the sanctified life of the Purest Branch, the youngest son of Bahá'u'lláh and Asiyyih Khanum. "His dying supplication to a grieving Father was that his life might be accepted as a ransom for those who were prevented from attaining the presence of their Beloved" [GPB 188]. Prison doors opened four months after his martyrdom.

The Purest Branch's sacrifice served other purposes. The quickening of the world and the unification of its inhabitants owe their realization to Bahá'u'lláh offering up His beloved son as a ransom: "I have, O my Lord, offered up that which Thou hast given Me, that Thy servants may be quickened, and all that dwell on earth be united" [GPB 188].

The Uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya Kuhistani

The episode that led to the massacre of eighteen Bahá'ís in Nayriz during Naw-Ruz 1909 has become known as the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya, for it was under his command that the rebel forces living in the Kuhistan region surrounding Nayriz launched an attack on the town, wreaked havoc on the Bahá'í inhabitants, and massacred the male believers they laid their hands on. Rebels invariably thrive when chaos and confusion reign. When the government is strong, the officials are just and the rule of law is observed, they keep a low profile, ever ready to take advantage when the ingredients for security are absent.

The quest for freedom from the despotic rule of the Qajar kings began in Iran almost simultaneously with the Advent of the Báb in the mid-nineteenth century and culminated in the constitutional revolution in the early years of the twentieth century. The Advent of the Báb awakened the people of Iran to the potentialities inherent in human beings and raised their awareness of the glorious destiny awaiting the human race. His teachings spread throughout the country and beyond startling the ecclesiastics and government leaders alike. The transformative power of His revelation changed the inner realities and outward conduct of His followers, which continued to grow after His execution in 1850. Thousands of His followers were put to death, and Bahá'u'lláh, the most prominent and influential of all, was forced to leave the country and spend the rest of His life in exile. Some fair-minded scholars have begun assessing the influence of the Báb's teachings on the movement for reform in Iran. Future historians and analysts, unbiased and impartial, will no doubt cover in detail the crucial contribution that His Advent, as well as that of Bahá'u'lláh and the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, have made to social and political change in that land and beyond.

The constitutional revolution created a fertile ground in Iran for the proponents and opponents of democracy to get entangled in their opposing ideologies and fight for priorities that served their selfish ends. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in constant communication with the believers and provided guidance that protected them from falling a victim to the intrigues employed

by self-seeking individuals on either side. The volume of Tablets revealed during that period testifies to the precariousness for the Bahá'ís of the events that transpired. Muzaffari'd-Din Shah's willingness during his ministry (1896-1906) to allow some measure of democracy to take hold afforded some relief to the Bahá'ís in Iran and enabled them to promote the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh with less stringent restrictions. The atmosphere was favorable enough for 'Abu'l-Bahá to send a Bahá'í delegation consisting of Mr. Hippolyte Dreyfus and Lua Getsinger to meet the Shah and his Prime Minister, Mirza 'Ali Asghar Khan Atabak, during the Shah's second visit to Paris in 1902. The purpose of the meeting was to seek restitution of Bahá'í rights and appeal for justice. The relative calm during the reign of Musaffari'd-Din Shah provided the people of Iran, including the Bahá'ís, some measure of freedom to pursue independently matters of conscience. As a result, people in high office and from all walks of life, who wished to know about the Bahá'í Faith, had the opportunity to do so without fear of severe persecution.

The signing of the decree to adopt a constitution and establish a parliament in 1906 presaged a new era of social and political change in Iran. However, the Shah's death immediately after he signed the decree, his successor's opposition to democratic rule, and the blatant interference of foreign nations in the internal affairs of the country, threw everything into confusion and chaos ensued. Muhammad 'Ali Shah, who succeeded Muzaffari'd-Din Shah, disbanded the parliament and sided with those who benefited from dictatorship. He was dethroned by the proponents of democracy in 1909 and his son, Ahmad, a minor when he came to power, ruled by proxy. These rapid changes and deep-rooted ideological differences and conflicts weakened the central government, emboldened different factions and tribes who sought autonomy, and gave rise to rebellion especially in areas farther away from the capital. One such place was Nayriz, a small town situated about 228 kilometers to the south east of Shiraz.

Although a famous town in ancient Iran, when the Báb declared His Mission in 1844, Nayriz was an obscure place on the map of that country. What made it prominent again was the

heroism of the Bábís of the town who fought alongside Jinab-i Vahid in the Fort of Khajih and defended their right to adhere to a new system of belief they considered the pathway to individual and collective transformation and salvation. That episode ended on 29 June 1850, ten days before the Báb's martyrdom, but the heroism of the believers did not end there. After Jinab-i Vahid and many valiant souls were martyred, the survivors of the Fort of Khajih episode were persecuted mercilessly. The continuation of the atrocities committed against the defenseless Bábí community reached unbearable proportions when Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan, the governor of Nayriz responsible for the first upheaval and the continued suffering of the believers, was murdered.

To escape the onslaught of a relentless enemy, the scattered beleaguered believers took refuge in nearby mountains under the leadership of 'Ali Sardar, assisted by Khajih Qutba, two young and brave souls who cared for the survivors of the first Nayriz upheaval. Their congregation alarmed the governor, who sent exaggerated reports to Shiraz and gathered an army to force the Bábís into submission. This second upheaval became known as Jang-i Jabal (Battle of Mountain), during which nineteen strongholds each consisting of nineteen brave believers engaged the combined forces of the government and tribal factions living in the area. One of the strongholds was defended solely by women under the leadership of Nanih Sami` (the mother of Sami`).¹⁰ The believers fought heroically to the last fighting man and woman. That episode occurred in 1852 and coincided with the imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh in the Siyah Chal of Tihiran and the intimation of His Mission in the concluding months of that year. The survivors of the second Nayriz upheaval, mostly old men, women and children, were taken captive and sent to Shiraz, every two riding on the back of an unsaddled horse, with the heads of martyrs on spears parading before them. Most men suffered martyrdom at different stages of the journey; the rest were executed in Tihiran. The women and children, after untold suffering, were freed in Shiraz and abandoned to their fate. Many returned to Nayriz, some remained in Shiraz. One of the survivors, a young boy about twelve years old, named Muhammad-Shafi`, who had lost his father and four paternal uncles in the first and second

Nayriz upheavals, was taken captive together with his mother and grandfather. He and his mother were held in Shiraz; his grandfather, Mirza `Abdu'l-Husayn, together with other male survivors, continued the arduous journey toward Tihran.¹¹

Muhammad-Shafi and his mother were among the women and children captives who were freed in Shiraz and remained there. Under the care of his mother he continued his education and grew up to be a staunch and devoted believer. With the help of the Imam Jum`ih, who knew his father and grandfather, Muhammad-Shafi` became proficient in religious knowledge necessary for holding responsible positions. Impressed with his personality and demeanor, after the death of his grandson, the Imam Jum`ih appointed Muhammad-Shafi` to the prestigious position of the Imam (prayer leader) of Jami` mosque in Nayriz.¹² He then became known as Mullá Muhammad-Shafi`, and served the people of his town and its surrounding areas with integrity and distinction. He attained Bahá'u'lláh's presence in Baghdad and dedicated his life to the promotion of His Cause. The many Tablets revealed in his honor testify to the staunchness of his faith and to the selfless services he rendered. He later wrote an account of the first and second upheavals in Nayriz during the Bábí period and sent the original of his manuscript to the Holy Land. Nabil bases his account of those episodes on Mullá Muhammad-Shafi`'s booklet.¹³ It is believed that the account was written when Bahá'u'lláh directed Bahá'ís with firsthand knowledge of historical events to prepare such accounts and send them to the Holy Land. The original of Mulla Muhammad-Shafi`'s manuscript has so far not been found. It may have been among the material stolen by the Covenant-breakers. The draft of the manuscript was destroyed during the third episode, known as the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya.¹⁴ Fortunately by then a few transcripts had been made and were held by certain individuals. Muhammad-Shafi` Rouhani, the author of *Lama'atu'l-Anvar* and the father of this writer, located one transcript in Rafsanjan in the province of Kirman, which he used for writing the history of the Babi-Bahá'í Faith in Nayriz.

An interval of more than half a century separates the second Nayriz upheaval, known as Jang-i Jabal (Battle of Mountain),

from the third episode, known as the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya. The lengthy lull in the cessation of hostilities has been attributed to the wise leadership of Mulla Muhammad-Shafi'. He established friendly relationship with governor Fath-'Ali Khan, the son of Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan.¹⁵ The two entered into a formal agreement, which both sides honored to the end of their lives. The provisions of the agreement provided for mutual understanding and respect, and for disputes to be settled through negotiation, not violence and armed conflict. The friendly contacts between them led to the governor investigating the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's Claim and professing belief in the tenets of His Faith. During his governorship the general atmosphere in Nayriz changed and became so warm and friendly between Bahá'ís and Muslims that a number of prominent Bahá'í teachers were allowed to visit the place, teach the Cause of God to people of all backgrounds, and complement Mulla Muhammad-Shafi' in his efforts to promote the nascent Faith and deepen the understanding of the friends in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.¹⁶ As a result, the friends' transition from the Bábí to Bahá'í Faith was very smooth. The militant Bábís of Nayriz accepted Bahá'u'lláh as the One for Whom the Báb had sacrificed Himself, and changed their conduct to comply with the tenets of His Cause, one of which was the abolition of holy war. Their firmness in Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant passed the test when after His Ascension the opponents of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His appointed Successor, tried hard but failed to win their support.

Mulla Muhammad-Shafi's eldest grandson and namesake, a true heir of his grandfather in many respects, by a strange coincidence was also twelve years old when the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya took place. Like his grandfather, the young Muhammad-Shafi' made acquiring knowledge his lifelong quest, became a committed Bahá'í, was steadfast like a solid rock in the Covenant, and dedicated his life to the promotion of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. One of his imperishable services has been the writing of the history of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths in Nayriz. After extensive search, as stated earlier, he found in Rafsanjan in the province of Kirman a transcribed copy of his grandfather's booklet, gathered his own notes, located and interviewed the living members of the families of survivors of

the earlier episodes, added his own observations of subsequent events, and wrote *Lama`atu'l-Anvar, Depicting the Soul-Stirring Episodes of Nayriz*.¹⁷ He also wrote his memoirs, entitled *Khatirat-i Talkh va Shirin (Bittersweet Memories)* which were published after his death. The following account is based principally on these two sources.¹⁸

Eyewitness Account of the Massacre of Bahá'ís in Nayriz During Naw-Ruz 1909

It was mid-March 1909 when the notorious rebel from the Kuhistan region, Shaykh Dhakariyya, who had earned his reputation by defying government regulations, by launching attacks on defenseless people, plundering property, using distortion to enrich himself and his supporters, even causing bloodshed, engaged in armed conflict with the local government of Nayriz. The attack did not happen in a vacuum. It was carried out on orders from Haji Siyyid `Abdu'l-Husayn-i Lari, the leader of the Shi'is of the area. His pretext was setting up a national government and protecting Islam from undesirable influences. It was several days before Naw-Ruz. Bahá'ís were fasting and like all Iranians were preparing to embrace the New Year. With the launching of the attack the festive mood turned somber, then it became a nightmare for the Bahá'ís of the town when on Naw-Ruz eve the Shaykh conquered an important fort outside Nayriz and turned the attack, which until then the inhabitants thought was political and against the local government, into an onslaught against the Bahá'ís. That Naw-Ruz coincided with the interment of the remains of the Báb in the heart of Mount Carmel, fulfilling the sacred task Bahá'u'lláh had entrusted to His Most Great Branch many years earlier.

That a rebel with meager resources and control over a tiny part of the country could in the name of religion declare war on a local governor installed and supported by the regime in power and prevail is a tale beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that during the rein of the Qajar kings, whom Iranians considered usurpers of the crown, clergy in Iran gained inordinate influence and meddled at will with matters of state culminating in humiliating defeat for the country, the loss of

territory to Russia, intensification of the influence of foreign powers, and causing widespread discontent. Disgusted with the hopeless situation, Iranians rose up against despotism and demanded reform. The movement for democracy gathered momentum and yielded some tangible results in the early years of the nineteenth century. The preoccupation with internal struggles for social and political change and the rapid succession of kings sapped whatever strength was left and exhausted the energy needed to keep law and order in the country. When the constitutional revolution was in full swing, in some provinces certain elements took advantage of the weakness of the central government and raised the banner of rebellion. Among them were clerics who worked with tribal heads and looked for opportunities to spread their influence. The deteriorated security situation was a gift to the rebels who thrived when chaos and confusion reigned. Some tribes revolted against the central authority and wreaked havoc on the regions they brought under their control. Nayriz was one of the worst affected areas.

During the constitutional revolution 'Abdu'l-Bahá provided constant guidance to the Bahá'ís of Iran and warned them emphatically against getting involved. As a result, the believers kept clear of politics and continued promoting the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, revolving around the principle of the oneness of humankind. The truce that Mulla Muhammad-Shafi' had negotiated with Fath-'Ali Khan, the governor of Nayriz, years earlier enabled prominent Bahá'í teachers to visit Nayriz, provide spiritual sustenance to the believers, and guide eager souls to the pathway of truth. The visit of the last two itinerant teachers during this period, Mr. Tarazu'llah Samandari, later appointed by Shoghi Effendi to the rank of a Hand of the Cause of God, and Mr. Ali Akbar Rafsanjani,¹⁹ coincided with the period leading to the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya. The meetings held for these teachers were filled to capacity; even rooftops were occupied. Some of the inhabitants of the town started investigating the truth of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission and expressed interest in joining the Faith. This development roused the animosity of the antagonists and determined them to do what it took to stop the progress achieved. The deputy governor of Nayriz, a friend of the Faith, secretly sent a message to the

Local Spiritual Assembly, apprised its members of the enemy's schemes, and advised that the best course of action was for the visitors to leave Nayriz immediately and go to a safer place. Upon the receipt of this advice, the two teachers, escorted by ten Bahá'í men known for their bravery and staunchness of faith, left for Sarvistan, a town in the province of Fars not very far from Nayriz.

The teachers left the town safely but the adversaries did not stop agitating. They turned to Haji Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i Lari, the leader of the Shi'is of the area, and beseeched him to take necessary action to curb the advancement of the Bahá'í Faith. The Haji had an added incentive to encourage an assault on Nayriz to take place: he had received an invitation from the Shaykhu'l-Islam²⁰ of the town asking him to subdue the local government and rid Nayriz of its governor and his family. The reason the Shaykhu'l-Islam had turned against the local government was unrelated to the Bahá'í Faith and the teaching activities of the friends. In fact, he was favorably inclined toward Bahá'u'lláh's Cause. His grievance had to do with an incident involving the governor and his deputy, which he found highly offensive and humiliating.

Mas'udu'd-Dawlih, the son of Asifu'd-Dawlih, was then the governor of Nayriz. He was married to Nazhatu'l-Muluk, the daughter of Fath-'Ali Khan. Her brother, Muhammad Hasan Khan-i Sartip, was the deputy governor. Mas'udu'd-Dawlih committed an act which, though legal in Islam, caused great offence and cost him his position. What did he do? He contracted another marriage, this time with the daughter of the Shaykhu'l-Islam, a very influential personage in the area, nay in the province of Fars. His first wife's family, immensely displeased with Mas'udu'd-Dawlih, brought tremendous pressure to bear on him until he relented and divorced his second wife. This was something far beyond what the Shaykhu'l-Islam could bear. Deeply offended and insulted by the incident, he decided to exact revenge and waited for opportunity to present itself. When he found the ground ready, he sent an invitation to Haji Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Husayn to attack Nayriz and dislodge the governor.²¹

The requests that Haji Siyyid `Abdu'l-Husayn received from the fanatic inhabitants of Nayriz and from the Shaykhu'l-Islam provided ample justification for him to act, but the timing had to be right. The dethronement of Muhammad `Ali Shah Qajar and the ensuing chaotic situation presented the hoped-for opportunity. To realize the dream of subduing the people of the town and inducing them to do what he and his supporters desired, he needed a ruthless agent. Shaykh Dhakariyya Kuhistani, whose authority was supreme in twelve small towns and villages in the mountains surrounding Nayriz, was the man for the job. The Haji ordered the Shaykh to proceed toward the town with forces under his command. Shaykh Dhakariyya was happy to comply and did as ordered. He and the armed men under his control moved toward Nayriz intent on conquering the town, expelling the governor, establishing an autonomous entity that opposed the central government, and dealing the Bahá'ís a fatal blow.

Nayriz was besieged and fighting began between the forces of the governor supported by the inhabitants of Nayriz on the one hand and the rebels supported by tribesmen living in the surrounding areas on the other. To prevent support and supplies from Shiraz, the capital of the province of Fars, to reach the governor's forces in Nayriz, the rebels cut off all means of communication.

After three days of fighting, the rebels took the northern highlands and strongholds. After that victory, Shaykh Dhakariyya invited the inhabitants of Nayriz to the fort of Sayfabad, which he had conquered. The people were curious to know what the Shaykh had in mind, so they attended the meeting. Shaykh Dhakariyya's purpose was to induce them to cooperate with him. To succeed, he knew that he had to offer them incentives they could not refuse. Knowing the fanatic population's deep-rooted animosity toward the Bahá'í Faith and its followers, he made the Bahá'ís a scapegoat. In his speech he introduced Haji Siyyid `Abdu'l-Husayn-i Lari as the defender of Islam and the supporter of a national government, and himself as the standard-bearer of Islam. In the same speech he attacked the Bahá'í Faith and roused his audience against the Bahá'ís of the town.²² By so doing he helped the seed of hatred and

contention, which had been planted in their hearts decades earlier, to yield the fruit he desired. At the same time he diminished support for the local government, whose forces were already hard pressed to hold ground. Then in a surprise attack by night, he took a section of the town known as Mahallih Kuchih Bala.²³ A few days later another section of the town fell into the rebels' hands and they moved closer to Mahallih Bazar, the seat of the government. The governor of Nayriz, Mas'udu'd-Dawlih, and his brother-in-law Hasan Khan-i Sartip, the grandson of Haji Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan,²⁴ fled Mahallih Bazar and moved to Mahallih Chinarsukhtih, where the Bahá'ís lived. They chose the Jami` mosque, which was a mighty stronghold, for their defense. Intimidated by the approaching forces of the Shaykh, the governor and his brother-in-law fled Nayriz by night in disguise and left the Bahá'ís at the mercy of the advancing forces of the Shaykh. Thus Mahallih Chinarsukhtih became the battlefield. Fighting began around the Jami` mosque between the inhabitants of that mahallih and the rebels. One of the Bahá'ís, Muhammad-Hasan, son of Rahim, was killed during that encounter. After Mahallih Chinarsukhtih fell to the rebels, the Shaykh issued a decree making it a religious duty to kill the Bahá'ís, plunder their property, and set fire to their homes. The fanatics among the inhabitants of Mahallih Chinarsukhtih joined hands with the Shaykh's forces in carrying out the decree. Most Bahá'ís, in obedience to Bahá'u'lláh's teachings prohibiting His followers from engaging in holy war, left Nayriz and moved to a mountainous area to the south of the town, where the early Bábís had defended themselves against their adversary. Some with infants, or elderly family members unable to walk a long distance, could not get very far and went into hiding closer to the town.

Among the Bahá'ís who fled the town and took refuge in the nearby mountains were the twelve-year old Muhammad-Shafi`, his two younger brothers, his mother, Nurijan Khanum, and his maternal uncle and aunts. Fearing the outcome of the Shaykh's victory, they took off for areas outside the town they considered safe.

Other Bahá'í fugitives from Nayriz scattered in the same region: Those younger and stronger moved further up the

mountain in search of safer hiding places, the groups consisting of older people, women and children stayed in caves lower down the mountain. With the group comprising Muhammad-Shafi` and his family was a servant who carried some provisions for them on the back of a mule. They started off early in the morning of Naw-Ruz 1909. The mother of Muhammad-Shafi`, a devoted and valiant soul, knowing the gravity of the situation, related stories about the heroic deeds of the early believers, awakening in them the spirit of heroism and sacrifice. Before noon they reached a valley known as Tang-i Lay-i Hina and took refuge in a small cave. When night fell, everywhere was pitch black and no sound could be heard except the water and the wind. Frightened and bewildered, they counted the hours and minutes. About midnight they heard footsteps and wondered whether the enemy had discovered their hideout. As they held their breath in readiness to meet their fate, they heard a familiar voice. A Muslim relative, whose Bahá'í wife was a member of the group, had come to warn his relatives that the area was unsafe. He informed them of the Shaykh's decree and added that he had announced that whoever presented the severed head of a male Bahá'í, age ten years or older, would receive the reward of a hundred tumans; if a Bahá'í were captured and taken to him alive, the captor would receive 2000-3000 Rials, the wealthier the victim the higher the reward. However, the women and small children were not to be harmed, he said. The visiting relative suggested that while it was still dark the men should take an unfrequented mountain route to flee the area, and the women and children return to Nayriz. Everyone agreed. What was of concern was the situation of the boys who were older than ten. Muhammad-Shafi` was then about twelve years old. He and two other boys two years younger than him could not keep pace with the men who were going to Sarvistan on foot.²⁵ After deliberation, it was decided that he and the other two boys should wear the chadur and accompany the women. As the parting time arrived, Muhammad-Shafi`'s maternal uncle, Shaykh Muhammad Husayn, turned to his Muslim brother-in-law and said:

Now that we are saying goodbye and moving towards an unknown destiny, God has willed that you take charge of these defenseless and homeless women and

children. I adjure you to hide them in an obscure and deserted place in Nayriz. If you see that the enemy is likely to find and dishonor them and you are unable to provide protection, throw them into a well and cover it with debris that no blight may touch this family.

Readers unfamiliar with the cultural norms of the Middle East in the early nineteenth century may find it extraordinary, even outrageous that men made life and death decisions on behalf of the women in their care. Unless one has lived in those places at the time when those norms dictated certain behavior, it would be most difficult, if not impossible, to understand the dynamics at work. Tradition backed by Quranic references was the supreme determiner of behavior. What they perceived as 'honor' was uppermost in men's minds, when it came to their womenfolk. Men were in charge of the affairs of the women, and they made decisions as necessary to ensure at any cost what they considered their honor. If they could not do it themselves, they delegated the responsibility to another male member of the family, which is what happened here. It must be added that the women who fell in the hand of the enemy, if they did not enjoy amnesty, suffered a worse fate than death, as evidenced by what is going on today in places where religious and holy wars occur.

At the time of farewell, the immediate future looked bleak. No one knew what the future held. The hope of reunion was slim indeed. Time was short. Loved ones had no choice but to separate. Tears were ceaseless, hearts were burning with anguish, sighs were soaring high, but uttering a sound could cost their lives, emotions had to be contained and words were uttered in whisper. The fate of the ones who were fleeing, as well as those who were returning to Nayriz was unknown. Those who fled faced many hazards on the way. Those who remained had little hope of making it through the ordeal. Risky as the choices were, they were better than immediate annihilation.

After the men left, the women and children, exhausted and distraught, decided to tarry a while longer in the Tang-i-Lay-i Hina. They spent the night in fear and uncertainty. No one had the appetite to eat. However, spiritually they were ready to embrace any eventuality. When daylight broke, the boys who were older than ten wore the chadur and with the women started

walking toward Nayriz. With them was Mashhadi Hasan, the Muslim husband of Muhammad-Shafi's aunt, as well as the servant, whose name was Muhammad-Taqi. On the way they could hear gunshots and see fire raging in that part of the town where Bahá'ís lived. They realized that their houses had been set on fire. The rebels' practice was to set fire to Bahá'í houses after plundering the contents. As the group continued walking, feeling anxious and exhausted, the mule that carried their provisions, carpet and bedding, was wrested out of the servant's hand by thieves and the servant himself stripped of his clothes. However, the women were not disturbed. About noon, hungry and without necessary provisions, they reached the ruins of a house where they decided to retire for a while. They spent the night in that spot without food and water. Fear of being discovered kept everyone awake. Every time they heard a footstep, all rushed to a dry well within the ruins of the house and stood ready to throw themselves in, to honor the parting words of Shaykh Muhammad-Husayn.

The plunderers and opportunists were hard at work that night searching every corner of the town and the surrounding areas to find male Bahá'ís, turn them in, and collect their reward. The next morning another Muslim relative, a cousin by the name of Mirza Muhammad-i-Shu`a`, who had heard his aunts and cousins were staying in that place, rushed to their aid, took them to his home and offered hospitality until the situation improved. To get to his house, the group had to walk through the area in front of the Masjid-i Jami` in Mahallih Chinarsukhtih, where fighting was intense. As they were passing through the area, the young Muhammad-Shafi saw from under his chadur deplorable and tragic scenes. Opposite the mosque he saw a body hanging upside down from a mulberry tree. The corpse was bright red, like freshly barbequed meat. There was also a heap of stone collected under the body. His curiosity made him ask whose corpse it was. In response, his cousin said it was the corpse of Mulla Muhammad-`Ali who, together with his son-in-law, Mulla Hasan, had been killed in Mahallih Bazar on the day of Naw-Ruz. The corpse of Mulla Hasan, he was told, was similarly hung in Mahallih Bazar but Mulla Muhammad-`Ali's body had been dragged to Mahallih Chinarsukhtih near the mosque, where it had been set on fire, hanged and stoned. So many stones were

used that an elevation was formed under his body. The purpose of inflicting abuse on dead bodies was to send a twofold message: To intimidate the believers that if they insisted on holding on to their new belief they would suffer a similar fate, and to strike fear in the hearts of those who sympathized with the Bahá'í Faith that if they crossed the line and joined the adherents of that Faith, they would know what to expect.

Seeing the horrific scene and hearing the explanation in response to his question so affected Muhammad-Shafi` that after reaching the home of his cousin, he fell ill and developed a temperature. The scene was so imprinted on his soul that he remembered it vividly to the end of his life.

The search for male Bahá'ís continued. The hostile elements among the population let loose by Shaykh Dhakariyya violated the privacy of every Bahá'í home. They entered any and all areas where they suspected Bahá'ís were hiding. The men who had not fled the area and gone to Sarvistan were in grave danger. Nayriz and its surroundings were combed for male Bahá'ís. When found, they were dragged out and delivered to the Shaykh's gunmen, who took them to the Shaykh for interrogation, the hope being that they would recant their belief in Bahá'u'lláh in exchange for their lives. However, none caved in under pressure, they all courageously confirmed their adherence to the Bahá'í Faith and expressed readiness to die, to vindicate its truth. They were summarily tried and brutally put to death, their properties confiscated, plundered and burnt to the ground, their women and children left without shelter, protection, barest necessities and means to survive.

In that chaotic situation the rebels and ruffians enriched themselves by causing the innocent Bahá'ís death and destruction, others to sustain untold suffering and heartache. But among the population there were some who extended a helping hand to their Bahá'í friends and neighbors, at times risking their own lives. A case in point is a Muslim father whose daughter was engaged to a young Bahá'í man, named 'Ali, arrested for his faith. He did what he could to save the life of his son-in-law to be and succeeded in getting a decree from the Shaykh to spare the young man's life. When he happily reached the place of execution with the decree in his hand, he realized it

was too late, 'Ali had already been executed. Then he saw that 'Ali's brother, Mulla Rahman, was being taken to the arena of sacrifice. He used the decree to save his life instead. Mulla Rahman was kept in prison until Shaykh Dhakariyya left Nayriz, then freed.²⁶

Another man saw his Bahá'í friend, Amru'llah Nikayin, sitting in the full view of public gaze on the day the Shaykh's gunmen had entered the town and were roaming the place looking for Bahá'ís. He realized that his friend was unaware of the dangers facing the Bahá'ís. He immediately briefed him of the situation and advised him to take refuge in a house where his father and brother-in-law were hiding. The father, the son and the son-in-law stayed in that house for about a week before being discovered by those working for the Shaykh. When armed men entered to search the house and got close to the room where the three were hiding, one of the neighbors, a Mirza Nasru'llah, came forward, protested that they had entered unannounced, and angrily said: "If you are looking for Bahá'ís, I am one of them." In the encounter he received some injuries. A group of Muslims later testified that Mirza Nasru'llah was not a Bahá'í, and he was released. However, the house was no longer a safe place for the Bahá'ís to hide. At midnight when no one was around, Mirza Nasru'llah took the three Bahá'ís to a place outside Nayriz, showed them the route to Sarvistan and said all Bahá'í fugitives have fled to that town; it is best for you to join them there, he said. The three left Nayriz. In Khayr, a village between Nayriz and Runiz, they tarried for a while. Unfortunately, while there they were robbed of their belongings. They were even stripped of the clothes they were wearing. But they did make it alive to Sarvistan and joined other Bahá'í fugitives there.

When the young Muhammad-Shafi` and his family reached the home of his cousin, the women were accommodated in one room and he had to stay in a storeroom, away from the eyes of would-be intruders. An opening large enough for him to crawl into was made under saddlebags that were filled with dried fruit, nuts and grain. He spent 13 days and nights in that hole until Shaykh Dhakariyya left Nayriz. The only time he could leave his hiding place for a brief time was late at night. The Muslim

relatives kept the fugitives abreast of the news: more Bahá'ís were killed every day. Even ten-year-old Bahá'í boys were not immune. If one were found alive, he would be burned rather than killed. Muhammad-Shafi` saw clearly that this could happen to him but instead of being fearful, was so filled with the spirit of faith and sacrifice that he found himself ready to offer up his life for his belief. He attributed his state of readiness for sacrifice to the visit of the two prominent Bahá'í teachers, Mirza Tarazu'llah Samandari and Mirza `Ali Akbar-i Rafsanjani, who had visited Nayriz before the incident. Their visit had prepared the Bahá'ís of the town for such a day, he believed.

During the thirteen days of the Naw-Ruz celebration that Shaykh Dhakariyya was in Nayriz (21 March to 3 April 1909), eighteen valiant believers were brutally tortured and killed for no reason other than their adherence to the Bahá'í Faith. As stated earlier, every one of them was taken to the Shaykh and ordered to recant his faith or be killed. Each refused to recant and preferred to die for the truth he had embraced. Those martyred were Mulla Hasan, Mulla Muhammad `Ali, Muhammad Hasan-i Kulahmal, Mulla `Abdu'l-Majid, Aqa `Abbas, Muhammad Isma`il, `Ali, the son of Muhammad Isma`il, Muhammad Ibrahim, the brother of Muhammad Isma`il, Asadu'llah, the son of Muhammad Ibrahim, Mihdi, the son of Mulla Husayn and son-in-law of Muhammad Isma`il, `Ali Akbar, the son of Mashhadi Naw-Ruz and the nephew of Muhammad Isma`il and Muhammad Ibrahim, Mulla Husayn, the son of Zaynal and the father of Mihdi, Muhammad `Ali, the son of Darvish, Ibrahim, the son of Darvish and brother of Muhammad `Ali, Mirza Akbar Kaffash, Ustad `Ali Sabbagh, originally from Sirjan, Ustad `Ata`u'llah, and Amru'llah, the son of Sulayman.²⁷

Before Shaykh Dhakariyya left Nayriz, he installed a man there as his deputy. The rule of the Shaykh and his deputy lasted for a month. During that time pressure was maintained on the Bahá'ís. Those who were hiding could not come out. The properties, which had been confiscated, stayed in the rebels' hands and the women and children, through necessity, lived on the barest minimum. Muhammad-Shafi` and the members of his group lived for a month on a daily ration of figs and a little

coarse bread. After a month, news was received that a new governor had been installed in Fars, that Qavamu'l-Mulk-i Shirazi had been put in charge of keeping law and order in the province, and that he had ordered his forces to move towards Nayriz and the areas under the control of tribal chiefs. As this news spread, the situation improved. Muhammad-Shafi` and two other Bahá'í boys of his age were able to venture out. He could run errands for his mother outside the home. But whenever he stepped out, he faced the abusive language of the children who roamed the streets and inflicted on him and other Bahá'ís as much insult and harm as they possibly could. One day he met another Bahá'í, Haji Mir `Ali, who had just come out of his hiding place. He whispered into the ear of Muhammad-Shafi`: "Relief supplies have arrived from Shiraz. Tell your mother to send someone to my home to receive a saddlebag of wheat (about 75-80 kilos)." The young boy was overjoyed, ran home and gave his mother the glad-tidings. His mother said in response, "My husband is in the Holy Land, I cannot degrade him by accepting handouts." The young hungry boy, who was longing for a piece of good bread, was naturally disappointed.

Gradually the inhabitants of the town discovered where Muhammad-Shafi` and his family were hiding and exerted pressure on their hosts for having provided shelter to Bahá'ís. One day the landlady suggested to grandmother Nurijan that in order to put an end to the talk circulating in town, she should consider going with the womenfolk to the mosque. She stressed that her mere presence in the mosque would suffice to ease the pressure. Grandmother refused to comply, saying, "I will leave your home and stay in the wilderness but will not visit the mosque. I will not bring upon myself the blight of people thinking that I have abandoned my faith."

It was close to mid-May 1909 when Nurijan Khanum took the hands of her three young sons and returned to their home, of which only a skeleton remained. The first night was spent on the rubble with no bedding, but to them it looked like heaven, for they had been freed from confinement and could breathe a sigh of relief. Another month passed before her husband, Mirza `Abdu'l-Husayn, returned from the Holy Land and found his business partner, Mulla Hasan, martyred, all accounting books,

records and documents destroyed, harvests demolished, agricultural produce devastated, and his family destitute. He had to start all over again and build his life from scratch.

When the pilgrims heard the news that Mulla Hasan had been martyred on Naw-Ruz, they realized the significance of what 'Abdu'l-Bahá had said in response to the request they made on his behalf: Mulla Hasan had wanted to go on pilgrimage and asked his friends to submit to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the request that he may attain his heart's desire. Instead of granting the request, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said that he had attained. The pilgrims knew that Mulla Hasan had never been on pilgrimage and fearing that they had not presented the request properly, repeated it in different words. 'Abdu'l-Bahá said again that he had attained. When the returning pilgrims found out what had transpired on Naw-Ruz, they realized that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was aware of Mulla Hasan's martyrdom at the time it was taking place. He knew that in the world of spirit he had attained his heart's desire.²⁸

The Fate of the Bahá'ís Who Fled Nayriz

Between seventy to eighty Bahá'í fugitives from Nayriz gathered in Sarvistan, which was the only safe place accessible to them in the province of Fars. After Shaykh Dhakariyya entered Nayriz as a victor and issued his infamous decree, many male Bahá'ís fled the town. They took off on foot in small groups. The first town on their route where the Bahá'í community could offer them refuge was Istahbanat, but danger awaited them there as well. The fanatics were determined to bar the fugitives from entering. They agitated the inhabitants to arise against 'infidels' coming to their town. The Bahá'ís of Istahbanat, knowing the dangers awaiting their fellow religionists, appointed a trustworthy person to meet the groups before they entered Istahbanat, warn them of the dangers awaiting them in the town, and advise them to proceed directly to Sarvistan. The fugitives' first stop was Runiz, a place between Istahbanat and Nayriz, owned by some members of the Afnan family. The man who managed the property was Mir Muhammad Hasan, a Bahá'í. He warmly received the fugitives and extended to them loving hospitality. Within twenty-four hours almost all the fugitives had gathered there. Although

warmly welcomed, the fugitives could not tarry there for long, for nomadic tribes roamed the area frequently, rendering the place unsafe. Therefore, the fugitives continued their journey to Sarvistan. They sent one person ahead of time, to inform the friends in that town of their imminent arrival. Mr. Tarazu'llah Samandari and Mr. 'Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, who had left Nayriz before the disturbances, were still in Sarvistan. In consultation with them, the believers prepared a plan for sending relief supplies to the refugees and for receiving them in their town. The provisions and warm clothing that were sent proved critical, for the number of fugitives was large, not everyone was dressed properly for the bitter cold, nor did they have sufficient foodstuff to continue the arduous journey on foot.

Kharman Kuh, the mountain route the fugitives had to cross to get to Sarvistan, was covered with snow, and there was no clear path to follow. When they reached the peak, they had no choice but to slide down on their back, to reach the other side. By the time all got down, they suffered from exhaustion and had no energy to continue the trip. Seeing a friendly face awaiting their arrival on the other side and receiving the means of sustenance sent from Sarvistan ignited in their hearts the spark of hope. This was to them like heaven compared with the hell they had been through. After a short sojourn there, they continued their trip. In the vicinity of Sarvistan, sympathetic friends came out en masse to meet them. What a scene to behold! After days of traversing rough trails and snow-covered mountain routes, uncertain of what was lying ahead, they found themselves amidst loving friends who received them with open arms, shed with them tears of joy, and joined them in offering prayers of gratitude to the Lord. Alas, the joy was incomplete and had sorrow in its embrace. The fugitives, grateful for having reached a safe place, were anxious about the fate of their wives, children, mothers and sisters they had left behind. They knew not what had happened to them after their midnight separation days ago.

Life for the refugees was made as comfortable as possible within the means available to the Bahá'ís of Sarvistan. Meanwhile, a new provincial governor, Sahamu'd-Dawlih, was installed in Shiraz, the capital of Fars, and Nasru'd-Dawlih was

given responsibility to keep law and order in areas populated by tribes and nomads. On his way to Laristan, he stopped in Sarvistan, where the Bahá'í refugees were gathered. They appointed Khajih Muhammad, a survivor of the first and second Nayriz upheavals, to submit a written complaint against Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i Lari and Shaykh Dhakariyya. They also briefed Nasru'd-Dawlih in detail of what the Bahá'ís of Nayriz had been put through. Nasru'd-Dawlih was visibly affected by what he heard, and promised to do everything in his power to make the two men responsible for the atrocities to pay for their crimes. Right then he issued a decree appointing Rida Quli Khan, the Mushir-i Divan, as the deputy governor of Nayriz, charging him with responsibility to subdue the Shaykh's deputy and his supporters with the help of the Bahá'ís. He told Rida Quli Khan to leave immediately for Nayriz and carry out the order as soon as the Bahá'ís reached there. At the same time, he advised the Bahá'í refugees to leave for Nayriz and assist the deputy governor to carry out his mission. He further advised the friends not to demand the return of their confiscated properties found in the hands of the rebels. For that, he said, "await my arrival." The Bahá'ís did as advised. Nasru'd-Dawlih, faithful to his promise, succeeded in cleansing Nayriz from the presence of the rebels, and returned the confiscated properties to their rightful owners.

The end of the Shaykh Dhakariyya episode did not mean the end of disturbances in Nayriz. Time and again the Shaykh and other rebels attacked Nayriz and caused the Bahá'ís much suffering, the loss of property and livelihood. A detailed account of each event is written in *Lam'atu'l-Anvar* by Muhammad-Shafi' Rouhani, which is currently being translated for publication in English.

NOTES

¹ From 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet in Persian, the approved English translation of which is quoted on page 16 of *Against Incredible Odds* by this author.

² Nabil-i Zarandi, *The Dawn-Breakers*. Translated from the original Persian by Shoghi Effendi, first British edition, p. 379.

³ *ibid.*

⁴ H.M. Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant*, p. 126.

⁵ Zechariah, vi.12. Quoted in H.M. Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant*, p. 129.

⁶ The full text of the Tablet is quoted in Muhammad-'Ali Faizi, *The Queen of Carmel*, p. 99.

⁷ The three Nayrizi pilgrims were: Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn Rouhani, Mirza Ahmad Vahidi and Mirza Fadlu'llah 'Inayati.

⁸ Muhammad-Shafi' Rouhani, *Khatirat-i-Talkh va Shirin*, p. 18, quoted in Baharieh Rouhani Maani, *Against Incredible Odds*, p. 13.

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 24-5. The approved provisional English translation of the Tablet is quoted in *Against Incredible Odds*, p. 16.

¹⁰ It was customary in those days to identify women, when necessary, by the name of a close male family member. Here the valiant warrior was known by the name of her son, Sami'.

¹¹ Mirza 'Abdu'l-Husayn was unable to keep pace with the caravan due to age and ill health. He was beheaded in Sa'adatabab, a village between Shiraz and Abadih. His body was buried there and his head along with the heads of other martyrs were taken to Abadih, where they were buried.

¹² This was very early in the history of the Faith and believers were not yet barred from holding positions in the mosque.

¹³ Nabil-i-Zarandi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 472. Nabil refers to Mulla Muhammad-Shafi' as Mulla Shafi', its abbreviated form.

¹⁴ Muhammad-Shafi' Rouhani, *Lama'atu'l-Anvar*, p. 569, footnote 41

¹⁵ Zaynu'l-'Abidin Khan was the governor of Nayriz when the Fort of Khajih episode took place.

¹⁶ Mirza Haydar 'Ali, Mirza Mahram, Aqa Mirza Mahmud Zarqani, Aqa Mirza Jalal Zarqani are among the renowned Baha'i teachers who visited Nayriz and were received warmly by Mulla Muhammad-Shafi' (*Lama'atu'l-Anvar*, p. 125).

¹⁷ *Lama'atu'l-Anvar, Depicting the Soul-Stirring Episodes of Nayriz* was first published in two volumes by the Baha'i Publishing Institute of Tihnan, Iran. The first volume was published in 130 BE (1972), the second in 132 BE (1974). The two volumes were republished with revisions and index in 2002 by Century Press, Australia.

¹⁸ The two sources differ slightly in a few minor details.

¹⁹ Mr. Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, a devoted believer from Rafsanjan in the province of Kirman, knew by heart many Tablets and captivated his audience with his melodious voice. He passed away prematurely.

²⁰ Siyyid Shahabu'd-Din Ashraf. According to the author of *Lama'atu'l-Anvar*, he was familiar with the tenets of the Baha'i Faith and a believer at heart. He had no intention to harm the Baha'is. The unintended consequences of his invitation caused him deep regret and remorse. He withdrew from

public life after the uprising of Shaykh Dhakariyya. His poems in praise of Bahá'u'lláh testify to his belief in the truth of the Cause of the Blessed Beauty.

- ²¹ Haji Siyyid 'Abdu'l-Husayn was from Lar, a town in the district of Laristan. He was inspired by Shaykh Fadlu'llah Nuri, a notorious cleric who played a dubious role in the movement for democracy in Iran, and antagonistic toward Baha'is. The Shi'is of Nayriz and the surrounding areas paid allegiance to Haji 'Abdu'l-Husayn-i Lari.
- ²² It has been related that during that meeting the Shaykh served dates to those gathered, letting it be known that he had fed everyone with a small amount of dates, to common people a feat, to some a miracle.
- ²³ There were four Mahallih (locations) in Nayriz, each with its own characteristics and distinctions. For more information, see *Against Incredible Odds*, p. 3.
- ²⁴ It was during his governorship that the first Nayriz upheaval, the Fort of Khajih episode, took place in 1850, and it was his murder in 1852 that caused Jang-i Jabal, or the second Nayriz upheaval.
- ²⁵ Sarvistan is a town in the province of Fars, about half way between Shiraz and Nayriz. The reason Baha'is felt safe there was the peaceful coexistence between the inhabitants. Some influential Baha'is who were in positions of responsibility had created an atmosphere conducive to mutual understanding and respect.
- ²⁶ Had Mulla Rahman been put to death, the number of martyrs would have been nineteen, but the last minute intercession kept the number at eighteen, says the author of *Lama'atu'l-Anvar*.
- ²⁷ An account of the life of each martyr, as well as the immediate members of their families, the Tablets revealed in their honor, and other matters related to the Shaykh Dhakariyya episode and its aftermath are given in *Lama'atu'l-Anvar, Depicting the Soul-Stirring Episodes of Nayriz* by Muhammad-Shafi' Rouhani.
- ²⁸ Mirza Ahmad Vahidi, one of the three pilgrims, is the source of this anecdote.

Role of Principles in the Bahá'í Faith

Principles and Fashion

Farjam Majd

Abstract

Are moral laws and values relative or absolute? Is living according to long-established moral values old-fashioned? How did past religions fall into ritualistic imitations? Should we be more conservative or progressive? And more generally, how do we identify and apply principles to questions of great import?

To explore these questions systematically, a hierarchical or tree-like model of the world is presented including two tree structures each having nodes and links defining multiple levels of organization: a system tree (specific to general) and a type tree (general to specific). Any entity at all, an object, a principle, a process, and the like may be represented as a node at some level in these two tree structures. This hierarchical model holds within itself and clearly manifests many important and inherent relationships between the entities it represents by virtue of the position of those entities on the trees. Examples of these inherent relationships are simultaneity and relativity.

The principles revealed by Bahá'u'lláh are shown to be general principles at the root of the type tree and while in their application variations exist, in their essence they are unchangeable truths. Thus, being principled has nothing to do with being old-fashioned or new-fashioned; or conservative or progressive because principles are timeless.

Introduction

Abdu'l-Bahá, the Son of the Author and Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh, has stated: “[n]ow concerning nature, it is but the essential properties and the necessary relations inherent in the realities of things. And though these infinite realities are diverse in their character yet they are in the utmost harmony and closely connected together” [TAF 20]. This is a very insightful and important statement. It signifies that diverse and different entities are connected together and have relations in their realities which are inherent. Here, a class of inherent relationships, concerning the inherent hierarchical structures of entities and information, is explored.

Of Fashion and Models

No discourse on fashion is complete without talking about models and supermodels. Context is our friend, however, and by identifying the proper context we need not stray too far from our objectives in this paper. One of the distinguishing qualities of the human mind is its ability to understand abstract relationships and think in terms of models of reality. Simply put, a model of an entity is a set of components with the interrelationships between them, all together representing the entity. Models of entities are not unique or complete. Various aspects of an entity may be modeled, possibly each aspect with a different model, for better focus and other practical purposes.

An entity can literally be anything: an object, a process, a relationship, an organization, or any other conceivable thing. Principles are no exception. They can be modeled. However, a model for one or a number of particular principles is not being proposed here. Rather, a meta model, a model of models, a supermodel is presented. This supermodel includes general and important aspects of every other model, as will be made clearer in the following passages.

The Runway in the Forest

Every supermodel needs a runway to demonstrate her talents. The runway for our supermodel is a forest full of trees. After all, what else would a forest be full of? But these are no ordinary trees. They hold the keys to clearly defining and understanding some of the most significant, puzzling, and sometimes contentious issues human kind has faced and continues to face.

Let's first start with the trees and we'll eventually get to the forest. Actually, we'll have to first start with the roots, branches, and leaves to create the tree. One aspect of a tree is that it represents a hierarchy, and a hierarchy is a very fundamental structure. We'll soon find out just how fundamental it is. However, the reader is cautioned that this walk in the forest at first may seem dry and feel like a walk in the desert, far from the subject at hand. But, this walk is necessary to build a foundation and will soon lead us back to the main path.

Any entity at all, an object, a principle, a process, and the like may be represented as a hierarchy. This is because any such entity inevitably has some components which constitute the entity. In turn, the entity itself is inevitably a component of a bigger entity. Perhaps viewing this entity as a system offers a more concrete and tangible perspective, because it is clear that a system has components and it is equally clear that the system is a component in a bigger system. This inclusion of components in bigger and bigger systems, or conversely, systems containing smaller and smaller components define a hierarchy. This concept is best illustrated with some examples to indicate at once its ubiquity and broadness across diverse areas, and its power and simplicity to represent important aspects of any system.

As a first example, consider the system of language. A book is a system of written language which includes chapters. Each chapter in turn includes pages, pages include paragraphs, paragraphs include sentences, sentences include words, words include letters, and so on. The book system itself is also a component of a library, which is a bigger system. The relationship between each part of the written language and its

constituent components can be clearly represented as a hierarchy.

As a second example, consider a physical system, such as a house. A house is a system which includes rooms, rooms include walls and doors, walls include bricks (and doors have their own components), and so on. The house system itself is also a component in a bigger system which is a neighborhood. The relationship between each part of the house and its constituent components can also be clearly represented as a hierarchy.

The Anatomy of a System Tree

The hierarchical relationship described above may now be cast in the mold of a tree, as depicted in Figure 1, to help us get back to our roots in this paper. A system tree, further described below with respect to Figure 2, represents no less than a whole system. Tree structures, when used for modeling, are generally depicted in an upside down orientation with the root at top and leaves at bottom. A system, as a whole, being modeled or represented by a system tree corresponds to the root. First level components of the system, those which together form the system, correspond to internal nodes (shown by small circles in these figures) or branches of the tree. The second level components, or subcomponents, those which together form the first level components, correspond to the next level of nodes or branches.

This correspondence between the system components and subcomponents with the nodes of the tree continues until the leaves of the tree are reached. The leaves of the tree represent the last set of subcomponents to be modeled. This point is arbitrary and depends on the purpose of the modeling. That is, the tree may have arbitrary depth and may be extended upwards from the root or downwards from the leaves to include an arbitrary number of levels. Hence, a given tree may also be viewed as a sub-tree in a bigger tree, making the root node of the sub-tree, an intermediate node in the bigger tree, which in turn will have a higher level root of its own.

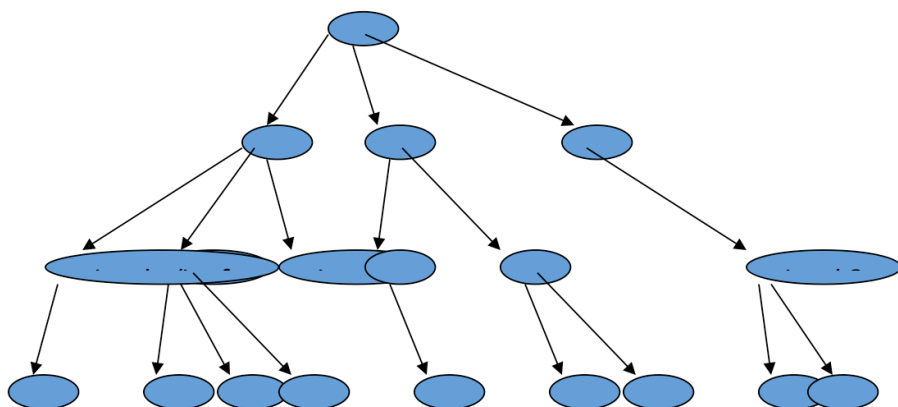


Figure 1: General (upside down) tree structure

As also indicated before, the specifics of the system tree are somewhat arbitrary, and thus flexible, in that the system being modeled may be decomposed into components along boundaries and based on parameters dictated by the purpose of modeling and the nature of the application at hand. That is, the model is not deterministic or unique. In other words, the same system may be modeled with many different system trees depending on the purpose of the modeling, amount of details desired, and the type of information needed, to name just a few factors considered in modeling.

The Physiology of a System Tree

If the structure of a tree is its anatomy, then the properties are its physiology. This hierarchical model has certain intrinsic properties, which are briefly described here. A few of these properties are described in more detail as they are more relevant to the modeling and analysis of principles. The system tree is firstly characterized as being a Specific To General (STG) tree when proceeding from the root to the leaves. This is so because the system as a whole, corresponding to the root, is the most specific entity being modeled. As the tree is traversed towards the leaves, each successive subcomponent becomes simpler and thus more general. To illustrate, going back to the example of the house, a house as a whole is a specific and particular building. The next level of components of the house, for

example, the rooms, are necessarily simpler and necessarily more general in nature. That is, the same room can be a component of many houses while the houses as a whole are specific and different from each other. Similarly, a room is made of walls which are still simpler and more general than rooms, and a wall is made of bricks, which are the most general and least specific or distinguished components in the building and thus may be used in any part of any building.

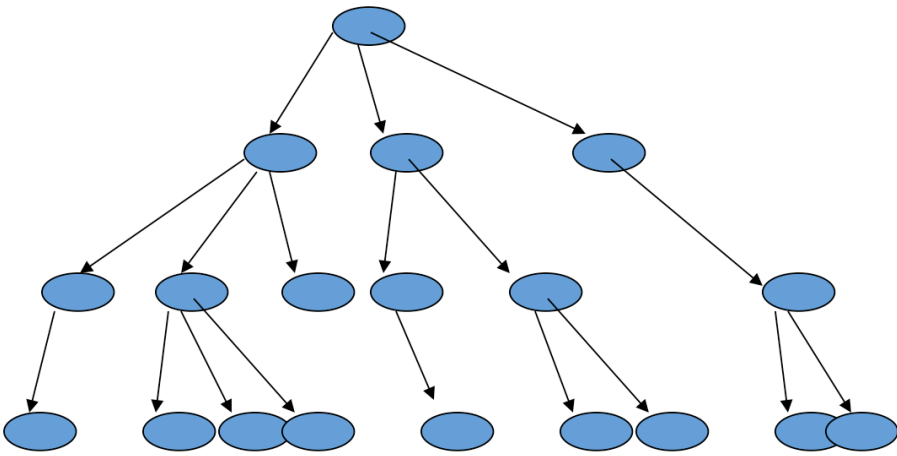


Figure 2: System tree – STG: Specific (root) To General (leaves)

A few words about the semantics of trees will help in describing their properties more clearly. The system tree is an upside down tree including successive layers of nodes going from a single root node to the leaf nodes. If the root node is viewed as a first generation, then the next level of nodes may be viewed as its children or the second generation. The third level of nodes are the children of the second generation or level, and so on down to the leaves. Thus, each node has both a single parent and one or more children. A node is a child with respect to its higher level nodes (closer to the root node) and a parent with respect to its lower level nodes (closest to the leaves).

But the attributes and characteristics of the hierarchical tree model does not end with generational analogy of parent and

children. There are many other important and interesting characteristics which are inherent in this fundamental structure. Some of the most important of these characteristics, briefly reviewed below, include containment/inclusion, scope, recursion, simultaneity, relativity, symmetry, emergent properties, system behavior, abstraction, dependency flow, and reductionism.

Containment or Inclusion

The containment or inclusion property of the system tree provides that a node includes, or is constituted by all its child nodes. So, a room node in a model of a house includes or contains all child nodes such as walls and doors. Conversely, when walls and doors are combined, they constitute a room.

Scope

The scope property provides that the scope of detail at every level of the tree is different from other levels. As the tree is traversed towards the root node, the scope becomes broader. This property is sometimes indicated with the semantics of high-level (less detailed; near the root) or low-level (more detailed; near leaves) in system tree, analogous to zooming out or in with a camera, when looking at a house, respectively.

Recursion

The recursion property provides that any arbitrary node in a system tree can itself be considered the root of the sub-tree under that node. That is, the tree structure is recursive and any sub-tree looks like the whole tree in structure.

Simultaneity

The simultaneity property is highly significant and has many important implications in various fields. This property provides that a system may operate differently at different levels of the system tree, at the same time without conflict or contradiction. For example, in the house model, a round wall may be made

with square bricks. A round wall can exist at one level simultaneously with square bricks at a lower level, without contradiction. As another example, consider the system tree of the process of walking. Walking is a process at one level and includes foot steps as its components at a lower level. A person may walk several times from a door to a window and back, which is a deterministic path, while the size and direction of each step taken is random. So, a deterministic process may exist simultaneously with a random process in the same overall process, at different levels and without contradiction.

Relativity

The relativity property provides that at high levels, which have less detail and thus fewer choices, the properties are more absolute. While at low levels, which have more detail and thus offer more choices, the node attributes are more variable and more relative. Something can be relative only if a choice of more than one option is available, while it is absolute when there is only one choice. Each child node is relative compared with its parent, while the parent node is absolute with respect to its children because there is only a single parent node for potentially multiple child nodes. As an example, consider entering a house. Entering a particular house, modeled as a root node in a system tree, is an absolute action in the sense that the house is either entered or not. But within the house, multiple different rooms may be entered, which is a relative action in the sense that there are multiple choices of rooms, which are child nodes.

Symmetry

The symmetry property is closely related to the relativity property and provides that symmetry or invariance in the system tree increases going towards the root.

Emergent Properties

The emergent properties attribute is an important concept, which provides that new properties or behaviors of the system

appear going towards the root of the system tree, which properties do not exist at lower levels. For example, in the three dimensional space, the concept of an angle comes into existence only after two dimensions are considered. Angles do not exist in one dimension. Another example is electronic memory, which appears at the level of several interconnected gates or flip-flops and does not exist at lower level of individual transistor switches.

Analytical Properties

Some useful analytical properties of system tree includes requirement and causation analysis. Briefly, the process of analyzing the requirements for achieving an end result may be modeled as a system tree by modeling the requirements in each level as child nodes and the result as their parent. Similarly, causation may be modeled as a system tree by modeling the causes at each level as child nodes and the effect as their parent. Many other analytical tools may be developed based on these basic models.

Level-Relativity

The level-relativity of system behavior is related to simultaneity and provides that system behavior cannot be merely specified as a whole and must be specified relative to a particular level.

Abstraction

The abstraction property is essential to intelligence and provides that moving towards the more general and common elements from specific elements may provide essential information needed in analysis without unnecessary details that clutter up the subject.

Dependency Flow

The dependency flow property provides that logical dependency is always from general to specific. This means the

general must exist before the specific can exist because the general is always embedded in the specific, but not vice versa.

Reductionism

Reductionism, which is the idea that the more complex can be described in terms of the more basic, is limited in part by emergent properties, because emergent properties cannot be entirely described in terms of simpler ones.

A Few Comments about Applicability of Tree-Based Models

While the system tree is not the main focus of this paper, it shares many properties in common with the type tree described below. Additionally, the system tree is equally applicable to principles and their components, same as it pertains to any entity, as elaborated above.

The system tree, together with the type tree, form a comprehensive model for important aspects of any entity in the physical world. This statement is not an overreach or a boast. The physical world is characterized by entities composed of components. Abdu'l-Bahá states:

This limitless universe is like the human body, all the members of which are connected and linked with one another with the greatest strength. How much the organs, the members and the parts of the body of man are intermingled and connected for mutual aid and help, and how much they influence one another! [SAQ 245]

He clearly confirms that the universe itself is composed of parts and members. He further states: “[t]he physical station is phenomenal; it is composed of elements, and necessarily everything that is composed is subject to decomposition” [SAQ 151]. Again, He confirms that the “physical station,” that is, anything that exists in the physical world, “is composed of elements.” Hence, the system tree may be used to represent important properties and relationships between components in

any entity. Thus, the applicability of the system tree to any entity is certain.

Similarly, the type tree, as further described below, is also generally applicable to any entity composed of various characteristics, since such characteristics may be added or removed from various entities represented by the tree nodes at different levels, corresponding to moving up and down the tree.

Some may recognize the similarity between the general-to-specific (type tree) and specific-to-general (system tree) with the deductive and inductive reasoning methods, respectively. However, although similar in some respects, these concepts are not the same. The deductive and inductive reasoning methods are logical techniques for arriving at a valid conclusion from valid premises. These techniques are not models for system components or attributes, as are system and type trees, respectively. They also do not have the same properties, some of which were enumerated above for the tree-based models.

But our forest has more than one type of tree, it has two types: the system tree described above, and a type tree (also known as an “inheritance” tree in computer science circles) described below. The type tree is opposite the system tree in the sense that it is General To Specific (GTS): the root is the most general and the leaves are the most specific. Figure 3 shows a type tree for a house. In a type tree, the root represents a general type of characteristic or attribute, which is “inherited” by each lower level moving towards the leaves. For example, a building is a more specific type of structure and inherits the attributes of the structure; a residential building is a more specific type of building and inherits the attributes of the structure and the building; and a house is a more specific type of residential building and inherits the attributes of the structure, the building, and the residential building. So, in this example model, the house is the most specific type while the structure is the most general. The inclusion property for type trees provides that each lower node inherits and includes all the attributes of the higher level nodes in its path. Each lower node in a lower level also adds new attributes not existing in the upper levels or nodes.

use of this methodology, the supermodel is actually simple to understand and apply in its essential aspects.

As an illustrative example, the biological principle that every living organism must consume food to survive can be instructive in understanding the application of the type tree. Let's call this the "food principle." This principle in its most general form, stated above, may be represented by the root node. At the next lower (more detailed) level, the nodes may represent principles which provide that plants, carnivores, and herbivores, as more specific types of living organisms, each require the appropriate food to survive. For example, at this level, the food principle requires carnivores to eat meat to survive. In the type tree, according to the property of inclusion, these nodes inherit the attributes of living organisms and foods from the root principle. Still, at the next lower level, a horse is a more specific type of a herbivore and consumes grass, a more specific type of food. At this level, the horse inherits the attributes of herbivores in turn in addition to the attributes of living organisms.

Applying the properties of simultaneity and relativity to the type tree representing the food principle provides valuable insights. The property of simultaneity provides that the different versions of the food principle, one at the root level applying to all living organisms and one at the lower level applying to horses, are simultaneously true without contradiction or conflict.

However, all principles are not created equal. The relativity property provides that the nodes, and the principles they represent, that are closer to the root are more general and hold true for the lower levels, while the reverse is not true. Conversely, the nodes farther away from the root are more relative and varied. As nodes get farther away from the root, the number of nodes increase at each level, signifying more inherited attributes, and creating more variations and options. For example, in the above model of the food principle, At the root, there is only one form of this principle, which states that "living organisms need food to survive." The same statement at a more specific level proliferates into more varied forms such as "horses need grass to survive," "wolves need meat to survive,"

“birds need seeds to survive,” and the like. The lower level principles only hold true at their own nodes (and lower ones, if any), but not for their siblings at the same level. So, there is no valid principle stating that “horses need seeds to survive.”

Applying these insights to social principles can be even more illuminating. Four seemingly self contradictory examples will be used for this purpose: unity in diversity, courtesy in different cultures, religious imitations, and the conservative-progressive dichotomy.

Unity in Diversity

Unity in diversity is the Bahá'í principle that states that the Bahá'í Faith “does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of *thought and habit*, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a *wider loyalty*, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race” [WOB 41]. But, how can such diversity, particularly of “*thought and habit*,” work with a “*wider loyalty*?” This concept precisely corresponds with the type tree and some of its properties, simultaneity and relativity, in particular. The property of relativity requires that “*wider loyalty*” increases as the type tree is traversed towards its single root node because of fewer nodes, while diversity of “*thought and habit*” increases as it is traversed towards the leaves because of more nodes and accumulated attributes. But, simultaneity property precludes contradiction despite differences between the nodes. Thus, the concept of unity in diversity, far from being a contradictory concept, is perfectly consistent and logical.

To take a specific example of unity in diversity, consider the diversity of teaching, or teachers for that matter. As a root principle, the purpose of teaching is the transfer of knowledge to the student with the help of the teacher. Thus, the type tree representing the principle of teaching starts. Moving down towards the leaves, the next level of nodes may represent more specific types of teaching. For example, one node at this level may represent teaching in a classroom, while another node may represent teaching by doing, and a third node may represent

teaching via independent study. Each method may be suitable and selected for a different type of subject, student, or teacher. And each method is still for the transfer of knowledge to the student, in compliance with the root principle.

The unity is at the root or towards the upper levels closer to the root, and the diversity is at the lower levels. In the above example, the unity aspect is that each type of teaching is united with others in that they are all a type of teaching and fulfill the purpose of teaching when appropriately selected. The diversity aspect is that there are diverse teaching methods at lower levels, each suitable for a different situation.

Therefore, the selection of a particular method (or node) depends not only on the attributes inherited from upper nodes, but also on attributes which differentiate the nodes at the level under consideration. And even though the nodes within a level are different and possibly in conflict, there are no conflicts across levels between parent and child nodes. This is simultaneity in action.

Cultural Courtesy

Courtesy appears in different, and sometimes contradictory forms in different cultures. For example, in some oriental countries burping after eating a meal is considered a sign of enjoyment of the meal and courtesy or complement to the host, while in many other cultures it is considered rude to do so. Bahá'u'lláh says: "*O people of God! I admonish you to observe courtesy, for above all else it is the prince of virtues. Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of courtesy and is attired with the vesture of uprightness*" [TB 88]. If we define courtesy as behavior patterns or statements that show respect to the receiving party, then the principle of courtesy so defined is modeled as the root of a type tree. According to the relativity property, behaviors at the lower levels on the type tree become more specific and each correspond to the various cultures and attributes associated with respect in those cultures. Further, according to the simultaneity property, the behaviors represented by the lower level nodes can be simultaneously

courteous without contradicting the higher levels or root courtesy principles.

However, sometimes people misinterpret a behavior as discourteous. There are two sources of errors in type tree that may cause such misinterpretation: a *type one error* results if it is mistakenly assumed that a lower level node is at a higher or root level, and a *type two error* results if it is assumed that a higher level or root node is at a lower level. In this example, a type one error occurs if courtesy in a particular culture is mistakenly assumed to be a root principle. Then, behavior from any other culture that contradicts this behavior is deemed discourteous because it does not fall under this mistaken root. So, if burping is considered rude as a matter of fundamental principle, then regardless of culture one may consider it rude behavior. Conversely, a type two error occurs if the root principle is mistakenly assumed to belong to a lower level. So, one may assume that showing respect is optional when showing courtesy; simply one of many alternatives. But, courtesy cannot be dissociated from respect. Respect is an inherent part of any courteous behavior regardless of other accompanying cultural rituals.

Religious Imitations

“This divinely-purposed delay in the revelation of the basic laws of God for this age, and the subsequent gradual implementation of their provisions, illustrate the principle of progressive revelation which applies, as Bahá'u'lláh Himself explained, even within the ministry of each Prophet” [SCKA 5]. In the context of type trees, the concept of progressive revelations, as revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, is an expansion of the type tree from the root upwards, that is, towards more general principles. This concept may be made clearer by revisiting the recursion property and the topology of the tree structure. More specifically, a root node in a tree, such as the type tree of Figure 3, may be placed at an intermediate node of a bigger tree, Thus, the old tree becomes a sub-tree. making the old root node an intermediate node. For example, if the type tree modeling a particular religion or revelation is attached at the intermediate root of a bigger tree, then the progressive revelation becomes the new root node in the bigger tree, with respect to the

particular revelation, which is now a sub-tree. Hence, the particular revelation is a more specific incarnation of the concept of progressive revelation, which is applicable to all revelations.

In religions past, various principles targeted specific needs of the society at the time. For example, in Judaism and Islam there are restrictions on types of food the faithful can consume. In contrast, in the Bahá'í Faith, there are substantially no food restrictions (except for alcoholic drinks) and decisions are left to the believers mostly based on health criterion, which is a higher level principle than a principle banning pork products, for example.

Thus, religions fall into dogmatic rituals and imitations by making a type one error: thinking the principles revealed in their religions for specific needs of the time belonged to a higher level in the type tree than the level to which they truly belonged. So, when they have to switch to other practices which are more suitable for later times, they fail and continue to adhere to outdated rituals of older times.

To Be Conservative or Progressive? That's the Question

A divisive subject, particularly in modern politics, but also in popular culture and society, the conservative-progressive dichotomy has convinced many that only one or the other can be right, never both. This is where we return to the issue of fashion: is it old-fashioned to be principled, particularly when the principles were known in some form since older times? To answer this question, the relativity property must be revisited. The relativity property provides that the closer to the root a principle is, the more absolute it is, and thus, the less dependent it is on various attributes, which attributes in turn define the situations to which the principle applies. As such, true root principles are timeless and do not change according to changing situations over time, or at least are broadly applicable to many situations. That is, they are not relative with respect to various situations, but absolute. In other words, principles are by definition conservative, namely, they are *conserved* over time and across different situations.

Moral relativity is sometimes associated with progressive positions. To explore this aspect, it is helpful to reiterate that

not all principles are created equal. That is, there are principles at the root of a tree which are absolute in the context of that tree, and then there are situational principles at lower levels in the same tree that are relative. Relativity, recall, exists because at lower levels alternatives exist one of which may be chosen according to a given situation. As an example, consider again the moral law of courtesy towards others as the root principle. This is an absolute principle and does not change relative to different cultures. However, culture-based manners are principles corresponding to intermediate or leaf nodes and are relative.

This conclusion precludes the notion of moral relativity when observing true root principles. Moral relativity is the embodiment of the type two error in the type tree in which a root principle is mistakenly assumed to be a lower level principle and thus relative to situation. When this error occurs, a root principle that is applicable to all situations is not observed or is only applied to some. Of course, moral relativity is a valid and essential concept to understand and apply for principles corresponding to intermediate or leaf nodes in the type tree.

Conversely, the application of principles, that is the more specific principles under the root principle, that are applicable in particular situations, are relative with respect to the situation or problem to which they are applied. In this sense, the application of principles is by definition progressive.

But, according to the simultaneity property, conservative and progressive incarnations of principles can be simultaneously true and valid, because they operate on different levels. Hence, the conservative-progressive dichotomy is a false dichotomy. One should be, and actually has no other choice than being conservative when observing root principles, and conversely, he should be, and has no other choice than being progressive when observing application of principles in new situations.

Putting It All Together

Employing system and type trees and their properties as models in the analysis of various problems, systems, concepts,

entities, and principles provides a general methodology for such analysis, rather than specifically modeling any particular problem domain. This general applicability creates a powerful framework for clearly defining problems and issues and devising approaches and solutions.

One of the most important and widely applicable results of understanding this methodology is that root principles are not relative and are thus timeless. There are no “old-fashioned” or “progressive” principles. Principles are eternal, even though our understanding of such principles are refined as we grow. Applications of root principles, however, are relative to situations and must be adapted accordingly. This relationship between root principles and their applications is nowhere more evident in modern life than in the relationship between science and technology. Scientific principles are timeless while their applications, namely technology, change with time, needs, and situations. Newton’s laws of motion propelled fish in prehistoric oceans, moved horse and buggy 200 years ago, and sets in motion jet planes and space craft today. The principles remain unchanged, but new applications are devised as understanding of the principles is refined.

At this point in human history, Bahá'u'lláh has revealed many social, moral, and philosophical principles and guidelines that may be considered as root principles due to their very general and high level natures. Abdu'l-Bahá, the appointed interpreter of His Writings, takes these general principles and defines lower level, more detailed principles for practical application in various situations. In effect, Abdu'l-Bahá traverses the type tree towards the leaves, providing more specific application of the root principles. In observing these principles, the two types of errors, substituting low level principles for higher level ones and substituting the higher level principles for lower level ones, are avoided by observing their relative levels of detail, context, and application. Making either of these errors may result in misunderstanding and misguided application of the principles.

For example, if a root principle enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, such as leading a chaste life, is mistaken as a lower level principle applicable only in specific situations, such as within a culture or during a particular period, then when outside those

specific situations, one will mistakenly assume that this principle is not applicable any more.

Conversely, if a lower level principle or practice, such as adopting a particular type of food, attire, or marriage ceremonies at a particular locality, is taken as a root principle, then one will mistakenly assume that at all places and all times such practices must be observed, leading to empty and inapplicable imitations and rituals.

Conclusion

All analysis, explicitly or implicitly, depend on models, which represent various concepts and entities by defining elements of such entities and the inter-relationships between these elements. The hierarchical model, effectively represented by tree-like structures, have properties that encompass every entity by representing intrinsic structural relationships and properties of the entities, regardless of their specific natures or the fields in which the entities exist. The system tree has a Specific To General (STG) structure, while the type tree has a General To Specific (GTS) structure. The type and system trees provide a general methodology for the analysis of principles and entities, rather than providing a specific model for a particular system or problem. The properties of the type tree are especially important for principles and clarify the structure of many difficult and ill-defined problems.

An analysis of the properties of the type tree reveal that root principles are not relative and are thus timeless. The relativity and simultaneity properties of the type tree show that there are no “old-fashioned” or “progressive” principles. Principles are eternal, but their applications are relative to situations. These properties also reveal that principles can have different effects at different levels in the type tree without contradiction. These properties further show that type one and type two errors, namely, substituting low level principles for higher level ones and substituting the higher level principles for lower level ones, respectively, can cause misguided applications of principles at all levels.

Commentary on a Passage in the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

Moojan Momen

O Shaykh! Seek thou the shore of the Most Great Ocean, and enter, then, the Crimson Ark which God hath ordained in the Qayyum-i-Asma for the people of Bahá'. Verily, it passeth over land and sea. He that entereth therein is saved, and he that turneth aside perisheth. Shouldst thou enter therein and attain unto it, set thy face towards the Kaaba of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting, and say: "O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy most glorious light, and all Thy lights are verily glorious." Thereupon, will the doors of the Kingdom be flung wide before thy face, and thou wilt behold what eyes have never beheld, and hear what ears have never heard.

— Bahá'u'lláh, *ESW*, pp. 139-140

The above is a passage from Bahá'u'lláh's last major work, the Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. This book is addressed to "the son of the Wolf," Shaykh Muhammad Taqi known as Áqá Najafi (1846-1914). It is worth pausing a while to reflect upon the life of this individual as it becomes relevant when we come to consider the above quotation. Áqá Najafi was a member of what became the most powerful clerical family in Isfahan. They were called the Masjid-Sháhí or Najafí family, often also called the Áqáyán-i Masjid-i Sháh. His father, Shaykh Muhammad Baqir (1235/1819-1883), was called "the Wolf" by Bahá'u'lláh on account of his responsibility for the execution of the King of Martyrs and Beloved of Martyrs in Isfahan in 1879. This father and son controlled the Shah Mosque (Masjid-i Sháh) in Isfahan and the Shaykh Lutfu'llah Mosque as well as building a

new mosque, the Masjid-i Naw, and were implacable enemies of the Bahá'í community. Both father and son used their power in Isfahan to extort large amounts of money from the citizens as religious taxes. One of their most lucrative actions was to hoard grain during the famines that occurred and then sell it to a starving population at grossly inflated prices. When the mayor of Isfahan, Haji Muhammad Ja'far, protested at this, they accused him of being a 'Babi' and had him executed.

Father and son rose to the height of their power after the death of two other powerful clerics in Isfahan in 1874-5: In February 1874, Sayyid Asadu'lláh Rashtí died; by this time, the Imám-Jum'ih Mir Muhammad Sultán ul-'Ulamá was very feeble and weak and would be dead within a year. This left Shaykh Muhammad Baqir and his son Áqá Najafí as the preeminent power among the 'ulama of Isfahan for the rest of the century. In May of the same year, 1874, Sultan Mas'ud Mirza Zill us-Sultan (1850-1918) became governor of Isfahan which he was to remain for the next 33 years (until 1907). Although he was the eldest son of Nasiru'd-Din Shah, he was excluded from the succession because his mother was not of the royal family. For most of his time as governor of Isfahan, especially in the later years, Zill us-Sultan was engaged in a titanic struggle for control of the town with Shaykh Muhammad Baqir and Aqa Najafi. At stake was the ability to gain wealth and power through control of endowments, through dominating the merchants, traders and craftsmen of the city, and thus determining whether these citizens gave of their money for government taxes or for religious ones. Whoever was able to exert power in the city would be the person to whom the merchants, traders and craftsmen of the city would turn to settle disputes and in return would be the recipient of emoluments and gifts. In the struggle for control of the city, the Bahá'ís were often caught in the middle. The clerics would raise a disturbance against the Bahá'ís as a way of discomfiting Zill us-Sultan, demonstrating their power and the weakness of the governor. The governor and the 'ulama were not however always on opposite sides. Sometimes, if a wealthy Bahá'í came to their attention, their avarice would surmount their enmity and they would sink their differences in order to gain whatever they could from denouncing him as a Bahá'í.

According to Bahá'í accounts, this is what happened in the first major episode of Bahá'í persecution that occurred in Isfahan. Perhaps fittingly this episode occurred right at the start of the new era for Isfahan, within a few days of the arrival of Zill us-Sultan in 1874. There were episodes of persecution instigated by the Wolf (until his death in 1882) and the son of the Wolf throughout the whole of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, starting in 1874 with an attempt to have all of the Bahá'ís in Isfahan arrested and in particular a family of wealthy merchants, five brothers, who were sons of Haji Abu'l-Hasan Shushtari. Mulla Kázim of Tálkhunchih was executed in February 1879; the King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs in March 1879; Mirza Ashraf was executed in 1888; then from 1889-1900 for a period of eleven years there was almost continual persecution of the Bahá'ís of the village of Sidih and the small nearby town of Najafabad. In 1903 there was a major upheaval in Isfahan itself during which the Bahá'ís took refuge in the Russian Consulate — this episode inspired the major episode of persecution in Yazd that year that resulted in the death of about 100 Bahá'ís.

In the above-quoted passage there are references to two external works:

1. The first of these external references is to the *Qayyumu'l-Asma*, the first work of the Báb after His declaration. Indeed the first chapter of this book was revealed to Mulla Husayn Bushru'i on the night of the Báb's Declaration to him in May 1844. Bahá'u'lláh makes several references in other places to the fact that there is a reference to a Crimson Ark prepared for the "people of Bahá'" in the *Qayyúmu'l-Asmá*. See, for example, the following instance from the *Ishráqát*:

We have admonished Our loved ones to fear God, a fear which is the fountainhead of all goodly deeds and virtues. It is the commander of the hosts of justice in the city of Bahá'. Happy the man that hath entered the shadow of its luminous standard, and laid fast hold thereon. He, verily, is of the Companions of the Crimson Ark, which hath been mentioned in the *Qayyúm-i-Asmá*. [TB 120]

Shoghi Effendi also alludes to the fact that the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá "eulogizes the high station ordained for the people of Bahá', the 'Companions of the crimson-colored ruby Ark'" [GPB 23].

Insofar as can be ascertained, it seems that by the "Crimson Ark," Bahá'u'lláh intended the Cause of God and by the "companions of the Crimson Ark," He intended those who were His true followers, those who manifested the Divine Attributes and were loyal to the Covenant of God. This is seen in such quotations as the following:

Know thou that the souls of the people of Bahá, who have entered and been established within the Crimson Ark, shall associate and commune intimately one with another, and shall be so closely associated in their lives, their aspirations, their aims and strivings as to be even as one soul. They are indeed the ones who are well-informed, who are keen-sighted, and who are endued with understanding. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. [GWB 169]

Bless, O my God, those of the followers of the Bayan as have been numbered with the people of Bahá, who have entered within the Crimson Ark in Thy Name, the Most Exalted, the Most High. Thy might, verily, is equal to all things. [PM 44]

Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself. Verily, such a man is reckoned, by virtue of the Will of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, with the people of Bahá who dwell in the Crimson Ark.¹

The glory which proceedeth from God, the Lord of the Throne on High and of the earth below, rest upon you, O people of Bahá, O ye the companions of the Crimson Ark, and upon such as have inclined their ears to your sweet voices and have observed that whereunto they are bidden in this mighty and wondrous Tablet.²

How great the blessedness that awaiteth the king who will arise to aid My Cause in My Kingdom, who will

detach himself from all else but Me! Such a king is numbered with the companions of the Crimson Ark – the Ark which God hath prepared for the people of Bahá.³

Once again We exhort all believers to observe justice and fairness and to show forth love and contentment. They are indeed the people of Bahá, the companions of the Crimson Ark. Upon them be the peace of God, the Lord of all Names, the Creator of the heavens.⁴

Adib Taherzadeh states that the reference to the ‘people of Bahá’ as the ‘companions of the Crimson-Coloured Ark’ moving upon the ‘Crimson Sea’ is in the first chapter of the *Qayyumu’l-Asmá*,⁵ but this appears to be incorrect, since the present writer can find no such reference. The closest that the present author can find to such a reference in the *Qayyumu’l-Asma* occurs in the first half of the *Surat al-Akbar* – *Surah 57*. This passage can be translated thus:

Verily God has created around this Báb seas of water of the Elixir, made crimson by the oil of Existence and made alive by the fruit of Desired One. And God has ordained for it ships (arks) of His precious crimson rubies. And only the people of Bahá’ have the permission of God the Exalted One to sail upon it.⁶

2. The second external reference is less obvious. It relates to the words that Bahá’u’lláh bids the Shaykh to recite: “*O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy most glorious light, and all Thy lights are verily glorious.*”

These words come from a dawn prayer for Ramadan, the month of the Islamic Fast, which was revealed by the fifth Shi’i Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir. This prayer is well-known to Bahá’is because the names of the months of the Badí’ calendar, which was created by the Báb and adopted by Bahá’u’lláh, are drawn from that prayer. Indeed they occur in that prayer in the exact order in which they are in the Badí’ calendar. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir urged his followers to recite this prayer because:

If people knew the greatness of this supplication before God, the speed with which it would [enable the devotee to] be answered, they would certainly kill each other with swords in order to obtain it. And if I took an oath that the Ism Alláh al-A`zam (Mightiest Name of God) is in this prayer, I would be stating the truth. Thus, when you recite this supplication, recite it with all concentration and humility and keep it hidden from other than his people [i.e. non-Shi'is].⁷

The first Bahá'í month is Bahá and this prayer by Muhammad al-Baqir begins with exactly the sentence that Bahá'u'lláh bids the Shaykh to recite: "*O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy most glorious light, and all Thy lights are verily glorious.*" A more literal translation of this passage is:

I beseech Thee by Thy Bahá' (Splendour) at its most splendid (abhá') for all Thy Splendour (*bahá'*) is truly resplendent (*bahiyy*). I, verily, O my God! beseech Thee by the fullness of Thy Splendour (*bahá'*).⁸

There is, however, an interesting back-story that may explain why Bahá'u'lláh is bidding Aqa Najafi to recite this prayer. The Bahá'is in Isfahan had begun to use this prayer in their teaching of the Bahá'í Faith in Isfahan, saying that this prayer proves that Bahá' is the Greatest Name of God: since Muhammad al-Baqir has assured Muslims that the Greatest Name is somewhere in the prayer and it is right that the Greatest Name be given precedence and priority and placed first in the sequence of Names. Therefore the Greatest Name of God is Bahá'.

Word of this reached the ear of the Son of the Wolf Aqa Najafi. The rest of the story is taken up by the French scholar A.-L.-M. Nicolas, who was a French diplomatic officer in Iran at this time and visited Isfahan. Nicolas relates the following story which demonstrates well the degree of Aqa Najafi's hatred of the Bahá'is – that he was even willing to distort the religion of Islam rather than see any advantage to Bahá'is. Concerning the Muslim dawn prayer for the Fast, Nicolas writes:

The Imam Baqir [the Fifth Imam of the Shi'his] has said that this prayer is the loftiest of prayers because it contains the greatest name of God – Bahá'! The Muslim world naturally remained in agreement with this until the day when someone drew the attention of Aqa Najafi, the mujtahid of Isfahan, to the fact that in it was precisely the name of the Man-Yuzhiruhu'llah [Him Whom God shall make manifest] promised by the Bab. Aqa Najafi prohibited the saying of this prayer from that time on.⁹

Word of Aqa Najafi's action in prohibiting the recital of this dawn prayer of the Imam Muhammad Baqir must have been sent to Bahá'u'lláh as He was in receipt of regular reports from all of the towns and villages where Bahá'is lived. Thus when in the passage that we are considering, Bahá'u'lláh bids Aqa Najafi to recite this very same dawn prayer that the Shaykh had prohibited, we can pause to wonder about this. Was Bahá'u'lláh teasing Aqa Najafi in asking him to do what he had prohibited? Was Bahá'u'lláh rebuking Aqa Najafi for prohibiting a prayer that revealed by one of the holiest figures in Shi'i Islam? How would Aqa Najafi have read this passage?

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NOTES

- ¹ Kalimát-i-Firdawsiiyih, in Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 71
- ² Lawh-i-Dunyá, in Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 97

³ Kitab-i-Aqdas, para 84; see also Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 212

⁴ Ishraqat, in Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 134

⁵ Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, v 1, p. 280

⁶ Translated from Manuscript of E.G. Browne collection, F11(11), dated 1 Muharram 1323 (1905), in hand of Mirzá Áqá Khán Kirmání, in University Library, Cambridge, p. 191.

⁷ Trans. by Stephen Lambden, see <http://hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-Biblical-islam-BBst/dawnP.htm>.

⁸ Trans. by Stephen Lambden, see <http://hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/03-Biblical-islam-BBst/dawnP.htm>.

⁹ Nicolas, *Livre de Sept Preuves*, pp. 57-8n; translated in Moojan Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944*, pp. 280n.

`Abdu'l-Bahá's Elucidation of the Concept of the Oneness of Humanity During His Western Travels

Wendi Momen

The concept of the oneness of humanity in the Bahá'í writings

The Bahá'í teachings centre on two interrelated and often interchangeable concepts: the oneness of humanity and the unity of humankind.

For the purposes of this paper, I take the 'oneness of humanity' to be an expression of a fundamental truth about the nature of humanity, while 'unity of humankind' is an aspiration of the way human beings need to act so that civilization will advance sustainably into the future.

The central teaching of the Bahá'í Faith is the oneness of humankind.

The principle of the Oneness of Mankind – the pivot round which all the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh revolve ... implies an organic change in the structure of present day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. [WOB 42-43]

The principle of the oneness of humanity is embedded in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh.¹ As a concept, it was not unknown: it is also found in Islam.² In the West, however, the idea was not well developed at the beginning of the 20th century, even among the Bahá'ís. It was `Abdu'l-Bahá in his role as the interpreter of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh who explained to the Bahá'ís and others what this concept meant and how they should

apply it in their lives. His talks, public and private, during his travels to the West in 1911-13 frequently expanded on this primary Bahá'í teaching.

What 'Abdu'l-Bahá did was to establish new definitions of 'all', 'we' and 'us.' There are many identifiers of the 'other': strange faces, strange clothes and hats, strange practices and customs, strange ideas and religion. In effect, 'Abdu'l-Bahá defined 'all', 'we' and 'us' in a more inclusive way and overturned western ideas of 'foreign', 'stranger', 'strangeness', 'other', 'enemy'.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in the West

'Abdu'l-Bahá was freed from 40 years of captivity in 1908 by the Young Turk Revolution. In 1911 he left the Middle East for the first time and travelled to Europe, visiting France and Britain. His purpose was to bring the teachings of his father, Bahá'u'lláh, to the West. 'Abdu'l-Bahá made a longer and more extensive visit to the West in 1912-13, spending eight months in the United States, including a few days in Montreal, Canada, as well as short visits to England, Scotland, Stuttgart, Vienna and Budapest, with a stay of 22 weeks in Paris.

The themes of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks in the West were peace, the oneness of humanity, one God, the equality of women and men, the importance of education for everyone but especially for women and children, the unity of religions, the need to rid oneself of prejudices of all kinds, economic issues, political topics such as good governance and the like. These themes are interrelated and 'Abdu'l-Bahá linked them in several of his talks. These topics became known as the 'principles' of the Bahá'í Faith (although there are many Bahá'í teachings not incorporated into the list). That 'Abdu'l-Bahá focused on the social issues of the day rather than on the more ethereal and mystical teachings which can be found in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and which he did address from time to time can be attributed to the injunction of the Bahá'u'lláh "Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and centre your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements" [GWB 213].

Each of the countries visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá experienced what today we would today call racism. It was part of the institutions of government and business and was widespread among individuals in their relationships with others. No country provided full rights to all the people living in it; some denied people the full rights of citizenship, others access to services, still others the right to marry persons of their choice, etc. It was common for people to demean members of different ethnic, religious or class groups, to make fun of them or to treat them as though they were invisible.

'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in the West at a time of great social change. The scientific and technological advances of the 19th century were being played out at every level of society. Social developments included the rise of middle classes; mass transportation, including relatively inexpensive passage to North America from Europe; the growth of the labour movement; better health owing to better medicines, drains, plumbing and nutrition resulting in a steady increase in population; greater access to education; calls for the extension of the franchise to women; and the transfer of Darwinian concepts such as 'survival of the fittest' to a social context and the rise of social Darwinism. The movement of people in the 19th and early 20th century – as refugees from pogroms or from poverty, as slaves or bonded servants, through colonization – increased the diversity of many European countries and particularly the United States. What did not change so rapidly was the attitude of people towards those who were 'different' in some way – 'foreign', dark-skinned, with a different religion, disabled, poor, of a lower 'class', uneducated, 'woman'.

Major challenges to the principle of the oneness of humanity

The major challenges to the principle of the oneness of humanity that 'Abdu'l-Bahá encountered were anti-Semitism, which was particularly rife in Europe and in the 19th century had led to pogroms against the Jews; xenophobia, a suspicion of foreigners of any description, again, particularly in Europe; and

racism, particularly by whites towards blacks and Native Americans in North America, a racism which was based on colour and assumed that members of a particular race all had the same characteristics, such as laziness. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was acutely aware of the dangerous racial climate in the United States and warned that steps should be taken to change it.

... the stress and strain imposed on the fabric of American society through the fundamental and persistent neglect, by the governed and governors alike, of the supreme, the inescapable and urgent duty – so repeatedly and graphically represented and stressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His arraignment of the basic weaknesses in the social fabric of the nation – of remedying, while there is yet time, through a revolutionary change in the concept and attitude of the average white American toward his Negro fellow citizen, a situation which, if allowed to drift, will, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, cause the streets of American cities to run with blood ... [CF 126]

In addition, nationalism and nationalist movements were poised to change the map of Europe while colonialism changed the map of the world. 'Abdu'l-Bahá particularly noted the tense situation in Europe, which he said was largely due to prejudice:

Just now Europe is a battlefield of ammunition ready for a spark, and one spark will set aflame the whole world. [PUP 122]

The causes of dispute among different nations are always due to one of the following classes of prejudice: racial, lingual, theological, personal, and prejudices of custom and tradition. [ABL 59]

By focusing in his public lectures and private discussions on the central principle of the oneness of humankind, 'Abdu'l-Bahá directly challenged the entrenched social views – and, perhaps more importantly – the racist behaviours of many people. Further, he was a living example of how one could demonstrate that they upheld the principle.

The situation in Europe at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in 1911-13

Anti-Semitism was rife across Europe at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels. France, for example, had only recently emerged from the Dreyfus affair which had exposed the anti-Semitism and ethnic nationalism prevalent there. Vienna was a centre of religious prejudice and racism. Approximately two and a half million Jews, mostly from central Europe, immigrated to the United States between 1881 and 1924, contributing to a revival of anti-Semitism there.³ Anti-Semitism in Germany rose steadily through the early years of the 20th century, culminating in the atrocities of the 1930s and 1940s.

At the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visits to Britain the country was preoccupied with the issue of Home Rule for Ireland – an island divided by religious prejudice into sectarian camps. In 1912 unionists pledged to resist Home Rule, by force if necessary. This issue, the partition of Ireland and the subsequent 'troubles' that arose from it, are in the popular media couched as having a religious basis but others have suggested that they may also be seen as having a basis in race. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's promotion of the concept of the oneness of humanity countered both perceptions, seeing both divisions as subsets of the basic set 'humanity'.

At the same time, the women's suffrage movement was very active in the UK, with suffragettes turning more militant in their efforts to win the vote. While disapproving of the use of violence to achieve the suffragettes' ends, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a strong advocate of the advancement of women and of their enfranchisement. Again, in the Bahá'í teachings, women are half of the 'humanity' that is one.

There are many indicators of the racism that was embedded in British society at the time and that racism was promoted, perhaps unwittingly – that is, without malice, since non-whites were not considered 'one of us'. For example, a popular children's book, *The Adventures of Two Dutch Dolls* by Florence Kate Upton, had been published in London in 1895. It told the story of two dolls in a toy shop who encountered Golliwogg, 'a horrid sight, the blackest gnome', wearing 'bright

red trousers, a red bow tie on a high collared white shirt, and a blue swallow-tailed coat', a 'caricature of American black faced minstrels',⁴ easily mocked. So popular was the Gollywogg character that he became the central character in 14 further books and was made into a similarly popular rag doll. At best, use of this character was insensitive to the feelings of the non-white population of Britain, where the character originated (although it also became popular in other parts of Europe and in the US and Australia). It may be that the racial epithet 'wog', used by the British to denote foreigners, particularly from the Middle or Far East, came from this character (although this may also be an acronym for Western Oriental Gentleman, or similar).⁵ It was this attitude of the white society that people of a different race or nationality did not merit being treated with dignity that 'Abdu'l-Bahá challenged by giving a different definition of what a human being is – not merely a physical being with physical characteristics, which were more or less the same – but divinely created, a noble being with the same potential regardless of superficial physical characteristics.

Canada too had racist policies. For example a law denied rights to the Chinese, even if they were citizens.⁶ Jews and Native Americans were also targets of racism in Canada.

Racism and xenophobia were deeply embedded in Austria. Austrians' traditional dislike for specific groups such as Turks, Serbs and especially Jews climaxed during the Second World War. But it was in the United States, with its recent history of the slavery of, primarily, black people, that 'Abdu'l-Bahá promoted most vigorously the oneness of humanity and was able to demonstrate this teaching in the most dramatic ways.

Prevailing ideas of race in the West

Popular ideas about race and how a person's colour or other characteristics related to race were based on religious, legal, scientific and traditional determinants.⁷ Among the most pernicious were the biblical justification for slavery, particularly of foreigners;⁸ the concept that developed during the height of 18th and 19th century slave trade that black people were cursed with the 'curse of Ham'⁹ for their sins and

deserved the punishment of slavery; and the idea, ostensibly based on scientific principles and promoted by 19th-century physicians, that people of 'mixed blood' – 'mulattoes' – were more susceptible to disease than those of 'pure' blood and lived shorter lives; and that their descendants, if the mixing of blood continued into the next generations, would become progressively less fertile.¹⁰

An influential proponent of what developed into 20th century European racism was Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau, whose "Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races" (1853-1855) argued against mixing races (identified as black, white, and yellow) and questioned whether the black and yellow races belonged to the same human family as the white race. He believed the white race, which he called the 'Aryan' and identified with Germanic people, was superior to the other races and that it was the white race that was responsible for the progress and advance of civilization, so long as it remained free of contamination by intermarrying with other races. Although Gobineau was interested only in how social life operates, his work was the inspiration for those who developed political platforms from it, such as Hitler.

In the United States, popular notions of race based on physical characteristics such as skin colour and facial features were bolstered by a legal decision of Judge Henry St George Tucker in *Hudgins v. Wright* (State of Virginia, 1806).¹¹ The case concerned a Virginia slave, Hannah Hudgins, who sought freedom on the grounds that her mother was a Native American, not black, and that Hannah herself was Native American, not black. The Virginia Supreme Court upheld a decision in a lower court on the grounds that as she *looked* 'Indian', she *was* Indian and therefore was entitled to be considered a non-slave. Judge Tucker's decision reads, in part:

Nature has stamp't upon the African and his descendants two characteristic marks, besides the difference of complexion, which often remain visible long after the characteristic distinction of colour either disappears or becomes doubtful; a flat nose and woolly head of hair. The latter of these disappears the last of all; and so strong an ingredient in the African constitution is this

latter character, that it predominates uniformly where the party is in equal degree descended from parents of different complexions, whether white or Indians ... Upon these distinctions as connected with our laws, the burden of proof depends.¹²

Tucker deemed that because Hannah had long straight hair — clearly the characteristic of a Native American — and not the woolly hair of black Africans, she must be a Native American, not a black African, and therefore entitled to her freedom. This judgement embedded a concept of racial stereotyping within a legal framework.

Situation of the American Bahá'í community at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in 1912

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited North America in 1912 there were very few Bahá'ís at all on the continent¹³ and very few indeed were of African-American heritage. Stockman says that by July 1908, 15 blacks had accepted the Faith in Washington DC, owing to efforts of Pauline Hannen¹⁴ — there were about 70 Bahá'ís altogether in the city at the time¹⁵ — about 21.4 per cent of the Bahá'í community, compared to the proportion in the city of 28 per cent.¹⁶

Among the blacks in Washington DC at this time was Louis Gregory, a 'prominent black lawyer', who became a Bahá'í in 1909 through the efforts of Carrie York, the Hannens, and Lua Getsinger. He was president of the Bethel Literary and Historical Society, the city's oldest black organization, and was able to bring the Faith to the attention of black intellectuals. He promoted integration between black and white Bahá'ís, writing to the Washington DC Bahá'ís deploring the segregation of the Bahá'í community. As a result, in March 1910 the Washington Bahá'ís began to hold racially integrated meetings in what was a wholly segregated city in America's South. In 1911 Gregory was elected to Washington's 'Working Committee', thus becoming the first black to serve on a Bahá'í consultative body; in 1912 he was elected to the Executive Board of Bahai Temple Unity.¹⁷

The oneness of humankind was a very difficult concept for Bahá'ís at the turn of the 20th century to put into practice in their personal lives. In the United States, fraternization between black and white races was not only frowned upon, it was criminalized. The American Civil War of 1861-5 may have freed black slaves but it did not change segregation laws. 38 of its 50 states had at some time 'anti-miscegenation'¹⁸ laws¹⁹ – laws banning interracial relationships and/or marriage which were first introduced by several of the American colonies in the late 17th century and the last of which were repealed only in 1967.²⁰

Even in many 'northern' states that had fought to free slaves, blacks could not stay in the same hotels as whites, eat in the same restaurants, or frequent the same clubs. Public transport was available to both but seats were reserved for white people and black people had to stand, or sit at the back. Tall buildings had separate lifts for blacks and whites and interracial marriage was illegal in a number of 'northern' states. Even though blacks had been able to attend university since 1837,²¹ graduates were not afforded the same jobs as whites and even if they achieved professional status, they were excluded from society.

The Bible was used in the US to defend anti-miscegenation laws well into the 20th century, using a racist interpretation of stories such as that of Phinehas²² and the 'Curse of Ham'.²³

Even before he arrived in America 'Abdu'l-Bahá was aware of the damage race prejudice was causing to the country:

One of the great reasons of separation is colour. Look how this prejudice has power in America, for instance. See how they hate one another! Animals do not quarrel because of their colour! Surely man who is so much higher in creation, should not be lower than the animals. Think over this. What ignorance exists! White doves do not quarrel with blue doves because of their colour, but white men fight with dark-coloured men. This racial prejudice is the worst of all. [ABL 55]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's application of the teaching of the oneness of humanity in the West

It was into this society that 'Abdu'l-Bahá came, bearing the message of the oneness of humanity. A number of people — black and white — agreed with the sentiment, as an intellectual reality and a statement about human nature, but did not see that it had anything to tell them about the way they lived their lives. They might have been quite willing to accept that people of different races should be free and should vote in elections, should attend school as children and university as adults but would not have considered them eligible to be friends or want them as neighbours, nor would they have wished to have them over to dinner or to marry their daughters. 'Abdu'l-Bahá challenged this complacency by deliberately bringing people of different races and nationalities together and personally revelling in the display of diversity, rather than hiding it away. Thus, for example, he was very touched by the attendance of different races at the meeting in Washington DC at which he described the people as different gems. Balyuzi reports that after this meeting, 'He was wonderfully exhilarated' as he travelled to his next engagement.

His voice could be heard, loud and clear, exclaiming: 'O Bahá'u'lláh! What hast Thou done! O Bahá'u'lláh! May my life be sacrificed for Thee! O Bahá'u'lláh I May my soul be offered up for Thy sake! How full were Thy days with trials and tribulation! How severe the ordeals Thou didst endure! How solid the foundations Thou hast finally laid, and how glorious the banner Thou didst hoist.'²⁴

'Abdu'l-Bahá acknowledged that there are differences in humanity, differences of gender, colour, race, nationality, class, thought, opinion, religion, language; and he encountered many forms of social differentiation and discrimination on his travels and was himself the target on some occasions. All these differences he considered to be superficial and of negligible importance.²⁵ If they had any importance or significance, it was to add to the beauty and diversity of the human race. Giving inappropriate importance to any of these differences

undermines, he suggested, the full expression of the oneness of humanity.

However, in his talks 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not focus on the particularities of these divisions but rather on the message of the oneness itself as an antidote for all divisions and coolness between people of different ethnicities and backgrounds.

He outlined some practical steps people could take to develop the oneness of humankind as a lived reality. For example, he said all people needed to remove all forms of prejudice from their lives:

We must banish prejudice. Religious, patriotic, racial prejudices must disappear, for they are the destroyers of human society. We must become the cause of the unity of the human race. [ADP 25]

A new religious principle is that prejudice and fanaticism whether sectarian, denominational, patriotic or political are destructive to the foundation of human solidarity; therefore man should release himself from such bonds in order that the oneness of the world of humanity may become manifest. [BWF 247]

If you meet those of different race and colour from yourself, do not mistrust them and withdraw yourself into your shell of conventionality, but rather be glad and show them kindness. Think of them as different coloured roses growing in the beautiful garden of humanity, and rejoice to be among them.

Likewise, when you meet those whose opinions differ from your own, do not turn away your face from them. All are seeking truth, and there are many roads leading thereto. Truth has many aspects, but it remains always and forever one.

Do not allow difference of opinion, or diversity of thought to separate you from your fellow-men, or to be the cause of dispute, hatred and strife in your hearts.²⁶

In his very first public talk ever – on 10 September 1911, City Temple, London – 'Abdu'l-Bahá discussed this basic teaching of Bahá'u'lláh:

This is a new cycle of human power ... It is the hour of unity of the sons of men and of the drawing together of all races and all classes ... The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers. [ABL 19-20]

It was an invitation to the Lake Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration in May 1912 that ostensibly brought 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the United States:

From the beginning, 'Abdu'l-Bahá took keen interest in efforts to bring into existence a new international order. It is significant, for example, that His early public references in North America to the purpose of His visit there placed particular emphasis on the invitation of the organizing committee of the Lake Mohonk Peace Conference for Him to address this international gathering.²⁷

As it was the Lake Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration in May 1912 that brought 'Abdu'l-Bahá to the United States, it is significant to note that his talk on 15 May at the conference was entitled “The Oneness of the Reality of Humankind.” In his opening remarks he drew attention to the situation 60 years previously, with the revolutions across Europe in 1848 and the wars in Persia, describing the enmity between the different religions and nationalities. It was at this time, he said, that Bahá'u'lláh appeared, proclaiming the ‘oneness of the world of humanity and the greatest peace’. Those who accepted Bahá'u'lláh’s teachings ‘were united and attained the greatest amity and unity’ such that the ‘Kurd, the Arab, the Persian and the Turk freed themselves from the prejudice of race and were people agreed’. ‘Among those people

the utmost of love and oneness of peace now obtain, for the great teachings of Bahá'u'lláh make for the oneness of the world and for humanity, universal peace and arbitration,' he stated.²⁸

'Abdu'l-Bahá's response to anti-Semitism and xenophobia

'Abdu'l-Bahá specifically challenged prevailing ideas of anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racism. For example, with regard to anti-Semitism, he told members of the Temple Emmanu-El in San Francisco:

... the foundation of the religion of God laid by Moses was the cause of their eternal honour and national prestige, the animating impulse of their advancement and racial supremacy and the source of that excellence which will always command the respect and reverence of those who understand their [particular] destiny and outcome.... [PUP 364]

He explained to New Yorkers that in 1870 Bahá'u'lláh had written to the Shah of Persia advising him to 'be kind to all his subjects', 'dispense justice', 'make no distinction between the religions' and 'charging him to deal equally with Jew, Christian, Muslim and Zoroastrian' and 'to remove the oppression prevailing in his country'.

At that time [1870] the Jews were greatly oppressed in Persia. Bahá'u'lláh especially recommended justice for them, saying that all people are the servants of God, and in the eye of the government they should be equally estimated. 'If justice is not dealt out, if these oppressions are not removed and if thou dost not obey God, the foundations of thy government will be razed, and thou shalt become evanescent, become as nothing.'
[PUP 223]

'Abdu'l-Bahá understood why people were xenophobic but asked them to overcome this by changing their behaviour towards foreigners:

Let not conventionality cause you to seem cold and unsympathetic when you meet strange people from other countries. Do not look at them as though you suspected them of being evil-doers, thieves and boors. You think it necessary to be very careful, not to expose yourselves to the risk of making acquaintance with such, possibly, undesirable people.

I ask you not to think only of yourselves. Be kind to the strangers, whether come they from Turkey, Japan, Persia, Russia, China or any other country in the world.

Help to make them feel at home; find out where they are staying, ask if you may render them any service; try to make their lives a little happier.

In this way, even if, sometimes, what you at first suspected should be true, still go out of your way to be kind to them – this kindness will help them to become better. [PT 15]

`Abdu'l-Bahá's challenge to racism

But it was racism, particularly colour prejudice in North America, that `Abdu'l-Bahá focused on primarily in his western travels. Using a variety of images and metaphors, he explained the beauty in the diversity of humankind. He overturned age-old concepts of racial superiority and inferiority, challenged even the very concept of 'race'. Further, more than merely voicing the principle of the oneness of humanity, he demonstrated it in his own actions, often causing consternation or outrage among both Bahá'ís and the wider population.

The idea that 'races' are natural distinctions in humanity, that there is a biological basis for distinguishing one group of people from another determined by physical characteristics such as colour, hair type, skin texture, the shape of the nose or eyes is questioned today by scientists, forensic anthropologists and others.²⁹ The notion of 'race' as it is popular conceived is a social construct yet human differentiation based these physical features is still accepted today as a way to distinguish and

categorize groups of people, often to suppress them or to exert power over them. At the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels in the West this concept was very much embedded in the popular mind as well as in social and political institutions and legal frameworks.

In a talk at Howard University, an historically black university in Washington DC, 'Abdu'l-Bahá dismissed the idea that there were 'races' of people, focusing rather on the idea that there is only one race, the human race:

There are no whites and blacks before God. All colours are one, and that is the colour of servitude to God. Scent and colour are not important. The heart is important. If the heart is pure, white or black or any colour makes no difference. God does not look at colours; He looks at the hearts. He whose heart is pure is better. He whose character is better is more pleasing ... white and black are the descendants of the same Adam; they belong to one household ... All humanity is descended from them. Therefore, in origin they are one.
[PUP 45]

At the same time, he used the language of 'different races' familiar to his hearers to explain the principle of the oneness of humanity, drawing on what he saw as the superficial physical differences among people to demonstrate his point.

How 'Abdu'l-Bahá made his points

To discuss the issue of the oneness of humanity with western audiences, 'Abdu'l-Bahá focused on the physical characteristics of human beings, selecting the one – colour – that was immediately obvious to everyone and the one used by most people to determine race, particularly for purposes of social and other forms of discrimination. He also discussed differences of religion, nationality and gender.

Use of metaphors

In many of his western talks 'Abdu'l-Bahá used metaphors from nature to describe the physical colour differences of people. Always used to show the beauty of the diversity of colours, the metaphors most frequently employed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá were flowers in a garden, leaves and fruits of a tree, waves of an ocean, jewels and the human body.

The metaphor of flowers may be an extension of the metaphor for the oneness of humanity found in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, trees: 'Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.' [GWB 218]. The use of garden imagery for western audiences was inspired. For Christians and Jews, the garden evokes the Garden of Eden and its inhabitants, Adam and Eve, and serves as a reminder that all people have a common ancestry. Further, many of the cities to which 'Abdu'l-Bahá travelled were famed for their public gardens and parks – Paris, Washington DC, London – gardens and flowers were particularly loved by the English; and they were thus familiar to his audiences. Thus when 'Abdu'l-Bahá described how a garden is enhanced by having flowers of different colours and shapes, he was describing something people could understand and appreciate and they immediately grasp his point:

... difference of race and colour is like the variegated beauty of flowers in a garden ... If all the flowers in a garden were of the same colour, the effect would be monotonous and wearying to the eye ... the various races of humankind lend a composite harmony and beauty of colour to the whole. Let all associate, therefore, in this great human garden even as flowers grow and blend together side by side without discord or disagreement between them. [PUP 67-69]

'Abdu'l-Bahá frequently reiterated Bahá'u'lláh's own metaphor likening humanity to a tree with different leaves, branches and fruit:

Bahá'u'lláh has addressed the world of humanity, saying, 'Verily, ye are the fruits of one tree and the

leaves of one branch.' This signifies that the entire world of humanity is one tree. The various nations and peoples are the branches of that tree. Individual members of mankind are represented by the twigs and blossoms. Why should these parts of the same tree manifest strife and discord toward each other? [PUP 372]

and sometimes expanded it create not only a visual image but an evocation of a pleasant springtime:

All men are the leaves and fruit of one same tree, they are all branches of the tree of Adam, they all have the same origin. The same rain has fallen upon them all, the same warm sun makes them grow, they are all refreshed by the same breeze. [PT 129]

Another metaphor drawn from nature used by 'Abdu'l-Bahá was that of the ocean and its waves. Bahá'u'lláh had used this metaphor to describe the immensity of his revelation,³⁰ the bounty and mercy of God,³¹ the vastness of God's knowledge³² and many other characteristics of God and His revelation. 'Abdu'l-Bahá added to this catalogue by comparing the oneness of humanity to the ocean. As he had recently spent many days at sea, perhaps contemplating the ocean and its waves, this may well have been in his mind when he drew on this imagery to explain the principle to a western audience:

Your souls are as waves on the sea of the spirit; although each individual is a distinct wave, the ocean is one, all are united in God.

Every heart should radiate unity, so that the Light of the one Divine Source of all may shine forth bright and luminous. We must not consider the separate waves alone, but the entire sea. We should rise from the individual to the whole. The spirit is as one great ocean and the waves thereof are the souls of men. [PT 83]

We must use these powers in establishing the oneness of the world of humanity, appreciate these virtues by accomplishing the unity of whites and blacks, devote

this divine intelligence to the perfecting of amity and accord among all branches of the human family so that under the protection and providence of God the East and West may hold each other's hands and become as lovers. Then will mankind be as one nation, one race and kind – as waves of one ocean. Although these waves may differ in form and shape, they are waves of the same sea. [PUP 51]

The jewel metaphor employed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá was also effective for western audiences. Jewels are beautiful, expensive, rare, desirable and highly prized and using them to describe human beings of different colour cast people in a new light:

A meeting such as this seems like a beautiful cluster of precious jewels – pearls, rubies, diamonds and sapphires ... In the clustered jewels of the races, may the coloured people be as sapphires and rubies, and the whites as diamonds and pearls. The composite beauty of humanity will be witnessed in their unity and blending.³³

For whites to hear blacks beings described as rubies and sapphires was highly unusual – as no doubt it was for the blacks themselves.

Howard Colby Ives records an incident involving a number of street children who had been invited to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá.³⁴ One was a black 13 year old boy who did not enter the room for fear he was not invited. 'Abdu'l-Bahá welcomed him in, saying that here was a black rose. Later, when offering the children chocolates, he picked out a very dark one and laid it against the boy's cheek. The other boys looked at their friend in a new light and he himself thought of himself differently.

To Ives, who witnessed the encounter, 'the scene brought visions of a new world in which every soul would be recognized and treated as a child of God.'

Another metaphor used by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to demonstrate the sort of unity possible among humans was the human body. Again, this may be an extension of the image of unity provided by Bahá'u'lláh: 'Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members

of one body' [GWB 139]. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's description of the differentiated organs and limbs of the body working together provides his audience with perhaps the most easily understood of all his metaphors, as everyone has a body and understands how its different parts contribute to its functioning:

This diversity [of races, etc.], this difference is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the limbs and organs of the human body, for each one contributeth to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole. [SWAB 290]

Joining of East and West

It was not only the bringing together of black and white that 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed. In Europe, as well as in North America, 'Abdu'l-Bahá described the oneness of the peoples of the East and the West.

The most important principle of divine philosophy is the oneness of the world of humanity, the unity of mankind, the bond conjoining East and West, the tie of love which blends human hearts. [PUP 31]

As the East and the West are illumined by one sun, so all races, nations, and creeds shall be seen as the servants of the One God. The whole earth is one home, and all peoples, did they but know it, are bathed in the oneness of God's mercy. God created all. He gives sustenance to all. He guides and trains all under the shadow of his bounty. [ABL 38]

'Abdu'l-Bahá not only reiterated the basic oneness of all people from both the East and the West but also encouraged both to come together in unity, that is, to manifest their essential oneness and to act as one people:

I have come here with this mission: that through your endeavours, through your heavenly morals, through your devoted efforts a perfect bond of unity and love may be established between the East and the West so

that the bestowals of God may descend upon all and that all may be seen to be the parts of the same tree – the great tree of the human family. [PUP 16]

Deeds, not words

'Abdu'l-Bahá exhorted people to do more than pay lip-service to the principle to the oneness of humanity:

Love ye all religions and all races with a love that is true and sincere and show that love through deeds and not through the tongue; for the latter hath no importance, as the majority of men are, in speech, well-wishers, while action is the best. [SWAB 69]

Thus although it is the primarily the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks given on his journeys across Europe and North America that were recorded, it was often the actions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá himself that made greatest and most lasting impression on people. The Bahá'í Faith does not rely upon the recorded actions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a reliable guide to the truth of the revelation, nevertheless, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá was appointed by Bahá'u'lláh as the Perfect Exemplar of his teachings, observing 'Abdu'l-Bahá's deeds was an important way for Bahá'ís, and others, to understand how Bahá'u'lláh's teachings could be implemented in their own lives. Hence there are several accounts by eye-witnesses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's demonstration of the oneness of humankind.

Actions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Demonstrating the oneness of race: Louis Gregory at luncheon

Perhaps the primary example pointed to by Bahá'ís of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's actions demonstrating the oneness of humanity, the equality of all and the due regard that people should hold for one another was the luncheon held in the rigidly segregated Washington DC at the home of the Chargé d'Affaires for the Persian Legation, Ali Kuli Khan, a Bahá'í, on 23 April 1912 at

which 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the guest of honour.³⁵ A number of dignitaries were invited to the luncheon, which took place after 'Abdu'l-Bahá had spoken at Howard University on the 'harmony between blacks and whites and the unity of humankind',³⁶ and diplomatic seating protocol was observed. Local Bahá'í Louis Gregory, a black lawyer whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá had met previously, was not invited to the luncheon but 'Abdu'l-Bahá had asked him to attend at the home of Ali Kuli Khan prior to it for a consultation. When the guests were called for luncheon, 'Abdu'l-Bahá went into the dining room but Mr Gregory stayed behind. When everyone was seated, 'Abdu'l-Bahá called for Mr Gregory. While the host was seeking him, 'Abdu'l-Bahá rearranged the seating, placing Mr Gregory in the seat of honour at his right,³⁷ demonstrating 'Abdu'l-Bahá's disregard for the convention that segregated blacks and white at such occasions and providing a simple example of how unity of races could be embedded in one's personal life.

Demonstrating the oneness of rich and poor

It was not just a recognition of the oneness of races that interested 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He was also concerned that people understand that the oneness of the human race extended to the poor and indigent as well. A most telling example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's response to the poor living in a big city was his attendance at the Bowery Mission on Manhattan's Lower East Side on 19 April 1912. He had only been in the United States for a week, having arrived on the 11th.

The Bowery Mission was established in 1879 by the Rev. and Mrs. A. G. Ruliffson as a very decidedly Christian mission with the objective of assisting recent immigrants to New York City who had not yet found adequate means to earn a living. Over time it provided help, both material and spiritual, to the homeless and impoverished in New York. It is the third oldest gospel mission in the United States. New York was a centre of immigration at this time and many of the people who lived there were immigrants from Europe seeking a better life in the United States — economic migrants, as they are known today — and by definition were poor, as well as being on the bottom rung of society. At the time the Bowery Mission catered for men only,

although there had been a well-established programme since 1894 of taking poor city children into the countryside for their health and relaxation. Juliet Thompson states that many of the men were alcoholics and came to the mission to get out of the cold. The Bowery itself was a place of great deprivation and poverty, known for its 'down and outs' well into the 1950s – and was often called 'skid row'.

It was the practice of the Mission to invite outside speakers to preach to the men who came there and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was probably seen as simply another such. Juliet Thompson arranged the visit.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's talk was short and simple, apparently less than 800 words. He addressed the men as 'my relatives, my companions', saying 'I am your comrade'. He did not chide them or call them to great things, ask to change their lives or to transform themselves. He did not ask them to give up their alcohol, to renounce their sins or change their ways. Rather he told them that Jesus himself was poor, that he said 'Blessed are the poor', not 'Blessed are the rich' and that he said he, too, was poor and that the Kingdom of God is for the poor. He told them they should be thankful to God that 'although this world you were indigent yet in the Kingdom of God you were precious'. Some today might consider this to be patronizing, telling the poor that their poverty is a good thing, and wonder why 'Abdu'l-Bahá would take this line. It is important, however, to recall that the ethic of the time was very much that the poor *deserved* to be poor because they lived ignoble lives. In the popular view, just as in some of the tabloid press of today, the poor were poor because they were lazy and stupid and had too many children and drank too much – not because the social environment failed to educate them, provided no safety net when they were out of work, that there was little public housing, that private rents were extortionate and accommodation for the poor was crowded, unsafe, unhygienic and precarious – tenement slums, in other words. 'Abdu'l-Bahá reversed this picture for the men of the Bowery, telling them that

The *rich* are mostly negligent, inattentive, steeped in worldliness, depending upon their means, whereas the

poor are dependent upon God, and their reliance is upon Him, not upon themselves. Therefore, the poor are nearer the threshold of God and His throne. [PUP 33]

'Abdu'l-Bahá did not talk about the Bahá'í principle of bridging the gap between extreme wealth and extreme poverty. He did not talk about the history of the Bahá'í Faith or even about Bahá'u'lláh, except to mention that Bahá'u'lláh himself had been poor and that he had 'admonished all that we must be the servants of the poor, helpers of the poor, remember the sorrows of the poor, associate with them; for thereby we may inherit the Kingdom of heaven' and that 'God has not said that there are mansions prepared for us if we pass our time associating with the rich, but he has said there are many mansions prepared for the servants of the poor, for the poor are very dear to God.' [PUP 33]

He ended his brief talk by praising the men at the Bowery Mission:

So, my comrades, you are following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Your lives are similar to His life; your attitude is like unto His; you resemble Him more than the rich do. Therefore, we will thank God that we have been so blessed with real riches.

Then he offered himself to them:

And in conclusion, I ask you to accept 'Abdu'l-Bahá as your servant. [PUP 34]

'Abdu'l-Bahá could have left it there and just gone away. But he did not. He did not let the 400 to 500 destitute men who heard him pass back into the city night to sleep in doorways, to scavenge for food. Rather, having told them poverty is not an ignoble state, he then proceeded to give them money, a silver coin or two each — as many as five or six for the most destitute.³⁸ He did not ask them to buy food with it or to save it or use it for noble purposes. He just gave it. How it was spent was not a concern of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He gave, without admonition or advice. Some accepted ungraciously, some with

grace;³⁹ again 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not concerned with their response — he merely gave.

And he shook each hand. He actually touched the people he spoke to. This small act is very significant. Many would not have dared touch a person of the streets for fear of catching a disease or worse. However, 'Abdu'l-Bahá habitually shook the hands of the people who came to hear him. The shaking of hands with the priest as one leaves the church after a service is characteristic of the Christian faith and may well have been expected by those at the Bowery Mission. The shaking of hands can be a symbol of equality and in this instance no doubt was meant as such by 'Abdu'l-Bahá — another example of the oneness of humanity.

Demonstrating the oneness of women and men

I have discussed elsewhere 'Abdu'l-Bahá's articulation of the Bahá'í teaching of the equality of women and men.⁴⁰ Briefly, he spoke frequently about this principle while in the West, prompted in part by the issue of women's suffrage, which was politically and socially controversial and saw women taking direct, often militant, action to force governments to legislate for it. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in favour of women's suffrage but advised that they use non-violent means to achieve it. He also exhorted men to recognize the equality of women and to provide them with the educational, economic, political and job opportunities that would enable them to progress.⁴¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá included 'women' in the term 'humanity' and made few distinctions between them and men, casting any such differences as 'negligible'.⁴²

But 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not merely speak about the teaching of the equality of women and men, he showed how it could be implemented within the Bahá'í community and, by extension, within the community at large. For example, he gave significant responsibilities to women for the initiation and management of important developments within the religion.

Some ten years before 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to the West, Chicago Bahá'ís, inspired by the laying of the corner stone of House of Worship in Ishqabad in 1902, asked him whether it

would be possible to establish a Temple in Chicago. He wrote two Tablets to the Chicago House of Spirituality giving his approval. On 7 June 1903 he sent a third Tablet to Corinne True, president of the Chicago Women's Assembly of Teaching:

I entreat God to assist the confirmed believers in accomplishing this great service and with entire zeal to rear this mighty structure which shall be renowned throughout the world ...

Whosoever arises for the service of this building shall be assisted with a great power from His Supreme Kingdom and upon him spiritual and heavenly blessings shall descend, which shall fill his heart with wonderful consolation and enlighten his eyes by beholding the glorious and eternal God! [TAB 96-97]

True took this to be an assignment from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, writing to a friend, 'He wrote me instructions about the Temple to my utter astonishment that placed a great responsibility on my shoulders.'⁴³ Her response was to take the letter to the Women's Assembly of Teaching, which raised some money for the Temple. However, not much progress was made until just before True was to go on pilgrimage in 1907. She launched a petition calling for the start of construction on the Temple, writing to Bahá'ís all over the country. Almost 800 signatures were collected, the petition sheets glued together by True's husband into a large scroll and the scroll taken to 'Akka and presented to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá received the scroll, he gave True detailed instructions on the location and design of the Temple and, much to her surprise and the discomfiture of the men on the House of Spirituality, assigned her a major role in the task of building the Temple. Thus 'Abdu'l-Bahá involved women in the most significant project of the American Bahá'í community of the early 20th century.

Similarly, in 1920 'Abdu'l-Bahá assigned Agnes Parsons the task of organizing 'a Convention for unity of the coloured and white races'.⁴⁴ Parsons was a wealthy white socialite in Washington DC who had become a Bahá'í around 1908 and financially supported many of the prestigious Bahá'í activities.

Washington DC was the hub for Bahá'í teaching among the African Americans but there is no evidence to suggest that she was involved with this. Louis Gregory was assigned to assist her with this controversial activity.

Parsons reached out to her circle of socially prominent women to be patrons of the event and 19 agreed. She was able to secure high-ranking speakers, including Senator Samuel Shortridge of California, Congressman Martin B. Madden of Illinois and Congressman Theodore Burton of Ohio. Assisted by Gregory and a committee chosen by her, Parsons organized in Washington DC from 19 to 21 May 1921 what was to become the first in a long series of Race Amity (later Race Unity) conferences to be held throughout the US.

These are among the many examples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá entrusting women with important tasks outside their apparent areas of competence and experience and thus enabling both women and men to see practical illustrations of his advice to men, that they give women opportunities to achieve their potential⁴⁵ and that 'When men own the equality of women there will be no need for them to struggle for their rights!'⁴⁶

The elephant in the room

'Abdu'l-Bahá gave many practical demonstrations of how people might begin to appreciate and act upon the principle of the oneness of humanity. Among the most telling of these was his arrangement of the marriage of Louis Gregory to Louise (Louisa) Mathews, a white Englishwoman. The 'elephant in the room' at the time, that is, the one obvious issue that everyone wished to ignore, was the question of intermarriage. In the United States it was, as discussed above, actually illegal in 25 of the 48 US states of the time and so this issue might not have been so pressing as integration of meetings and activities. However, 'Abdu'l-Bahá responded to a correspondent who was happy that progress had been made in that there were now Bahá'í meetings for each race:

You have written that there were several meetings of joy and happiness, one for white and another for

coloured people. Praise be to God! ... If it be possible, gather together these two races, black and white, into one Assembly, and put such love into their hearts that they shall not only unite but even intermarry. Be sure that the result of this will abolish differences and disputes between black and white. Moreover, by the Will of God, may it be so. This is a great service to humanity. [BWF 358]

Thus even after all 'Abdu'l-Bahá's lectures about racial harmony and the oneness of humanity and his expressions of how pleased he was at interracial meetings, nevertheless the idea of integration between blacks and white was so controversial and so outside social mores of the time that very few Bahá'ís were able to effect any change in their behaviour.

Gregory and Mathews had met while on pilgrimage in March 1911 and had been attracted to one other as friends. During their pilgrimage 'Abdu'l-Bahá had spoken about the importance of race unity. 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged the two to develop their friendship and to consider marriage. In the course of the next year 'Abdu'l-Bahá continued to hint that he would be pleased if they would marry and eventually they decided to do so. They were married on 27 September 1912 in New York in a quiet Church of England ceremony, the exchange of Bahá'í wedding vows being said after the main ceremony. They were the first interracial Bahá'í couple.

The Effectiveness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Efforts

'Abdu'l-Bahá spent a considerable in Europe, the United States and Canada. He spoke to thousands of people, both in public and in private. He was the subject of hundreds of newspaper accounts. He was lauded and praised by clergy, lay people, rich and poor. Yet the number of people who became Bahá'ís was very small and the number of people who understood his message and were prepared to act very limited.⁴⁷

However, there are several indicators of the effectiveness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's efforts to embed a consciousness of the oneness of humanity among both Bahá'ís and the wider society. First, he

gave them actions they could take, however small, such as holding meeting where all races were welcome, including women on Local Spiritual Assemblies⁴⁸ and giving service to the poor.

He changed the discourse among Bahá'ís on the meaning of the oneness and unity of humanity and refined 'we' ('We must banish prejudice ... We must become the cause of the unity of the human race' [ADP 25]), making oneness not just an intellectual position but a change of one's personal being so that one's behaviour towards others reflected the reality of oneness. Further, 'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly articulated the Bahá'í position and eventually changed the behaviour of Bahá'ís. This did not happen immediately. In Washington DC, for example, the relationship between blacks and whites deteriorated after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit, despite the presence of the Gregorys.⁴⁹ In time, however, the concept of the oneness of humanity became not only an oft-quoted principle of Bahá'í discourse but a feature of Bahá'í community life, activism and advocacy, inspiring successive generations of Bahá'ís to embed this principle into their personal lives such that today it is the defining characteristic of Bahá'ís and their communities worldwide.

NOTES

¹ See, for example, 'The Great Being saith: O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch' [GWB 218]. And: 'The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens' (ibid. p. 249); and 'He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body' (ibid. p. 213).

² See http://islamicweb.com/begin/introducing_islam.htm.

³ 'A Century of Immigration, 1820-1924'. From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America. <http://loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/haven-century.html>

⁴ Dr David Pilgrim, Professor of Sociology, Ferris State University, November 2000. <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/golliwog/>

⁵ D. Wilton 24 February 2007. Wog. Wordorigins.org. Retrieved from <http://www.wordorigins.org/index.php/more/579>

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11. See <http://www.duhaime.org/LawMuseum/CanadianLegalHistory/LawArticle-584/1914-Chinaman-Racism-In-Law.aspx>. Anti-‘Hindu’ (Indian) articles appeared in the press, pointing out the colour of the skin of the immigrants, as described in the March-April 1912 edition of *The Aryan*, a newspaper ‘Devoted to the Spread of the Eastern View of Truth; The Interests of the Hindus in the British Dominions; and the Causes of Present Unrest in India, published in Victoria, BC.’
- ⁷. For a detailed history of racism and slavery, see M. L. Perry, *The Last War: Racism, Spirituality and the Future of Civilization*. Oxford: George Ronald, 2005.
- ⁸. See, for example, Leviticus 25:44-6 (Revised Standard Version):
- As for your male and female slaves whom you may have: you may buy male and female slaves from among the nations that are round about you. You may also buy from among the strangers who sojourn with you and their families that are with you, who have been born in your land; and they may be your property. You may bequeath them to your sons after you, to inherit as a possession for ever; you may make slaves of them, but over your brethren the people of Israel you shall not rule, one over another, with harshness.
- and 1 Tim. 6:1-2:
- Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed. Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brethren; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved.
- ⁹. Genesis. 9:18-26.
- ¹⁰. See <http://un.org/wcm/content/site/chronicle/home/archive/issues2007/thesolidarityofpeoples/theideologyofracism> and Amanda Thompson, *Scientific Racism: The Justification of Slavery and Segregated Education in America*, online at <http://pat.tamu.edu/journal/vol-1/thompson.pdf>
- ¹¹. For a partial transcript of the case see <http://academic.udayton.edu/legaled/Race/Cases/Hudgins%20v%20Wrights.htm>
- ¹² See [http://academic.udayton.edu/legaled/Race/Cases/Hudgins v Wrights.htm](http://academic.udayton.edu/legaled/Race/Cases/Hudgins%20v%20Wrights.htm)
- ¹³. Stockman says that by the time of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit in 1912, there were between 1200 and 1600 ‘active members’ and perhaps as many as 2000 Bahá’ís, which included the conversion of blacks and Japanese. Robert H. Stockman, *The Bahá’í Faith in America, Early Expansion, 1900-1912*, vol. 2. Oxford: George Ronald, 1995, pp. 382-3.
- ¹⁴. *ibid.* p. 226.

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- ¹⁵. Robert H. Stockman, 'The American Baha'i Community in the Nineties'," in Dr Timothy Miller, ed., *America's Alternative Religions*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1995.
- ¹⁶. Two blacks accepted the Faith in Kheiralla's time (Stockman, *Bahá'í Faith in America*, vol. 2, p. 224; in Alabama Paul and Addie Dealy brought 'perhaps a dozen' blacks in to the Faith but the community of Fairhope ultimately died out Ibid.). According to Stockmen, the three Jamaicans who became Bahá'ís in Pittsburgh in 1909 may have been black (ibid. p. 341).
- ¹⁷. ibid. pp. 343-4.
- ¹⁸. 'Miscegenation' was coined in the US in 1863, in the middle of the American civil war, from the Latin *miscere*, 'to mix', and *genus*, 'kind'. Its quasi-scientific etymology was intended to give credence to alleged differences between races, as if all people were not *Homo sapiens sapiens*, a popular view at the time.
- ¹⁹. Perry, *Last War*, pp. 1-2.
- ²⁰. See *Loving v. Virginia* (1967), which declared Virginia's 'Racial Integrity Act of 1924' – and thus all anti-miscegenation laws – unconstitutional. It was not until 2001 that the last of the them was in fact overturned, when Alabama finally complied.
- ²¹. What are known as 'historically black colleges and universities' – institutions of higher education reserved for blacks – were established primarily after the American civil war. The first, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania, was established in 1837.
- ²². See Numbers 25:1-9. Phinehas was a high priest of Israel who executed an Israelite man and a Midianite woman while they were together in the man's tent, ending a plague said to have been sent by God to punish the Israelites for sexually intermingling with the Midianites.
- ²³. See Genesis 9:20-7. The Curse of Ham (Curse of Canaan) refers to Ham's father Noah placing a curse on Ham's son, Canaan. Ham saw his father naked in his tent and told his two brothers, Shem and Japheth, who then covered Noah with a cloak. When Noah awoke he pronounced the curse on Ham's son, Canaan, who was condemned to be a 'servant of servants'. to his brothers. While originally a justification of the subjection of the Canaanites to the Israelites it was later understood as an explanation for black skin and slavery.
- ²⁴. H. M. Balyuzi, 'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh. Oxford: George Ronald, 1987, p. 182.
- ²⁵. Only four years after its founding, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, now the United States's oldest, largest and most widely recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization, was visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Below is an excerpt from his talk at Fourth Annual Conference of NAACP at the Handel Hall, Chicago, Illinois:

Can we apply the test of racial colour and say that man of a certain hue – white, black, brown, yellow, red – is the true image of his Creator? We must conclude that colour is not the standard and estimate of judgement and that it is of no importance, for colour is accidental in nature. The spirit and intelligence of man is essential, and that is the manifestation of divine virtues, the merciful bestowals of God, the eternal life and baptism through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, be it known that colour or race is of no importance. He who is the image and likeness of God, who is the manifestation of the bestowals of God, is acceptable at the threshold of God – whether his colour be white, black or brown; it matters not. Man is not man simply because of bodily attributes. The standard of divine measure and judgement is his intelligence and spirit. (PUP 68)

- ²⁶. 'Abdu'l-Bahá speaking on 28 October 1911 in Paris. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*. London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1967, p. 53.
- ²⁷. Commissioned by the Universal House of Justice, *Century of Light*, Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2001, para. 10.2.
- ²⁸. Report of the 8th Annual Lake Mohonk Conference on Int'l Arbitration, 15-17 May 1912, pp. 42-4: <http://centenary.bahai.us/talk/oneness-reality-humankind>
- ²⁹. See, for example, the debate 'Does Race Exist?' at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/evolution/does-race-exist.html>; and Michael J. Bamshad and Steve E. Olson, 'Does Race Exist?' *Scientific American*, December 2003.
- ³⁰. See, for example, Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, pp. 187-8; and *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988, p. 247.
- ³¹. See, for example, Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988, p. 85; and *Gleanings*, p. 61.
- ³². See, for example, Bahá'u'lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries: Javáhiru'l-Asrár*. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002, p. 16; and *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 150.
- ³³. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 182.
- ³⁴. See Howard Colby Ives, *Portals to Freedom*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1973, pp. 64-7.
- ³⁵. I have written of this in my earlier paper for the Irfan Colloquium and therefore allude to it here only briefly. See "'Abdu'l-Bahá's Encounter with Modernity during His Western Travels'.
- ³⁶. Mahmúd-i-Zarqání. *Mahmúd's Diary*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1998, p. 55.
- ³⁷. *The Bahá'í World*. vols. 1-12, 1925-54. rpt. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980. *Bahá'í World*, vol. 12. p. 668.
- ³⁸. *Diary of Juliet Thompson, The*. Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1983, p. 260.
- ³⁹. *ibid.*

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- ⁴⁰. See Wendi Momen, 'The Two Wings of Humanity: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Articulation of the Equality of Women and Men During His Western Travels'.
- ⁴¹. See, for example, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 182; and *Promulgation*, pp. 134, 284.
- ⁴². 'Abdu'l-Bahá, quoted in a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, 8 January 1981.
- ⁴³. Mrs Charles Lincoln Papers, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois. Quote in Nathan Rutstein, *Corinne True: Faithful Handmaid of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1987, p. 42.
- ⁴⁴. See Gregory, 'Inter-Racial Amity', *Bahá'í World*, vol. 2, pp. 281-5.
- ⁴⁵. 'As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness which might be theirs.' 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 133.
- ⁴⁶. *ibid.* p. 163.
- ⁴⁷. Commissioned by the Universal House of Justice, *Century of Light*, para. 3.16.
- ⁴⁸. The first time women were eligible to be elected to a Local Spiritual Assembly was in 1912 after 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to the Chicago House of Spirituality explaining that a new election should be held to include women. The new body included both men and women members. See Anthony A. Lee, Peggy Caton, Richard Hollinger, Marjan Nirou, Nader Saiedi, Shahin Carrigan, Jackson Armstrong-Ingram and Juan R. I. Cole, 'The Service of Women on the Institutions of the Bahá'í Faith', presented at the New Zealand Bahá'í Studies Association Conference, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1988.
- ⁴⁹. See Gayle Morrison, *To Move the World*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982, pp. 73-81, 82.

'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt

Early September 1910 - 5 December 1913

Julio Savi

Abstract

'Abdu'l-Bahá discontinuously sojourned in Egypt from early September 1910 to 5 December 1913. This paper is a concise study of the historical and political background of this sojourn and of its chronicle. Egyptian cities and towns visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá are briefly described as they were in those days. Members of the Holy Family who visited Him in Egypt are mentioned. The public opinion reaction and the press coverage are succinctly outlined. Several important personages and resident and visiting Bahá'ís who met Him are listed. A short comment on possible meanings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence in Egypt concludes the paper.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's travel in Egypt is announced by Shoghi Effendi as follows:

He, quietly and without any previous warning, on a September afternoon, of the year 1910, the year following that which witnessed the downfall of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Ḥamid and the formal entombment of the Báb's remains on Mt. Carmel, sailed for Egypt ...¹

Historical and political background

This travel which 'Abdu'l-Bahá decided to undertake to Egypt, Europe and North America was made possible by an important historical event, known as the Young Turk

Revolution. The Ottoman Empire, whose part the Holy Land was in those years, had always been ruled by an authoritarian regime. In previous centuries this kind of government was normal and none paid any attention. But after the American Revolution (1763-1783), and especially the French Revolution (1789-1799), libertarian ideas made their way in the Western world producing the sundry insurrectional, bourgeois, liberal and democratic movements of the nineteenth century. Unavoidably the echoes of these risings also reached the Ottoman Empire. And thus at the beginning of the twentieth century an association was formed in that country known as the Young Turks, inspired by Mazzini's "Young Italy (Giovane Italia)" (1831-1848). Historians define it as a coalition of groups, quite different from one another, formed by dissident, progressive, modernist Turkish citizens, opposed to the status quo, who were united by the common wish to actuate a constitutional reform of the Turkish absolute monarchy. In 1908 they arose in arms against the Sultan 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd II (1842-1918), who reigned from 1876 to 1909, and his despotic government. The first result of this military revolt was the restoration of the constitution, on 24 July 1908. As a consequence, all political and religious prisoners of the Empire were set free. Among them there also was 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who was thus free to leave not only 'Akká, but also the Holy Land, where He had arrived in 1868.

As to Egypt, the first country that 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited after His departure from Haifa, in those days it was pervaded by conflicting political movements. The country was only nominally a part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1867 the Sultan 'Abdu'l-'Azíz recognized Egypt's Governor, Ismá'íl Páshá (1830-1895), a grandson of Mehmet Ali (1769-1849), an Albanian Pasha, a politician and a military leader, considered the founding father of modern Egypt, as Khedive. Khedive, from the Persian *khidív* or *khadív*, "lord, prince, sovereign," is often translated "viceroy." In 1879 Ismá'íl was deposed and his title passed to his son Tawfíq Páshá (1852-1892). In 1882 the British army occupied Egypt, but the Khedive remained on the throne and the country nominally remained under the Ottoman rule. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Great Britain struggled to increase its influence over the country's affairs and more or

less covertly undermined the attempts by the young Khedive, 'Abbás Ḥilmí II (1874-1944), who assumed the throne at the death of his father Tawfíq Páshá in 1892, to innovate the Egyptian administration. At the same time, an arising and increasing national conscience kept alive the wish of many Egyptians to achieve complete freedom. And thus there was strife between those who saw the wellbeing of the country as an actuation of the Western models and those who wanted to seek the assistance of the tottering Ottoman Empire to achieve the Muslim Union, preached by the Persian (or Afghan) theologian Jamálu'd-Dín-i-Afghání (1838-39-1897), who came to be considered as the greatest Muslim reformer of the nineteenth century. Moreover, immediately before 'Abdu'l-Bahá's arrival, Egypt had been shaken by an umpteenth violent clash between Copts and Muslims.

'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in Egypt and brought a wave of spirituality and modernity to a country which, although it was the most intellectually advanced nation in the Arabic world, in the religious, political and literary perspectives, had undoubtedly much to learn from such an innovator as the Master.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's sojourn in Egypt

'Abdu'l-Bahá's sojourn in Egypt lasted 23 months altogether, in three different periods. The first time He remained in the country eleven months, from early September 1910 to 11 August 1911, when He took off for Marseilles on the S.S. Corsica. The second time He stayed on for four months, from early December 1911 to 25 March 1912, when He sailed via Naples bound to New York on the S.S. Cedric. The third and last time He sojourned in Egypt for seven months, from 16 June 1913, when He arrived to Port Said from Marseilles on the S.S. Himalaya, to 2 December 1913, when He boarded a Lloyd Triestino boat bound to Haifa, where He arrived on 5 December. Ahmad Sohrab (1893-1958), who served as 'Abdu'l-Bahá's secretary and interpreter from 1912 to 1919 and was excommunicated by Shoghi Effendi in 1939, has left a detailed account of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sojourn in Egypt from 1 July to 30 September 1913. Sohrab, whose original name was Aḥmad-i-

Işfahání, went to America in 1901-1902, when he was very young, as Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl's attendant. His diary, published under the title of *Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt*, by New York's Sears and London's Rider in 1929, comprises a chronicle of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's activities during those months as well as translations of His Tablets and talks.

A short chronicle of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's sojourn in Egypt

The details of the Master's departure from Haifa are reported by the *Bahá'í News* of the Bahá'ís of the United States, later called *Star of the West*, whose first issue had appeared on 21 March 1910. *Bahá'í News* publishes a part of a letter written on 29 August 1910 by Sydney Sprague (1875-1943) to Isabella Brittingham. Sprague became a Bahá'í in Paris in 1902ca. He was one of the earliest Bahá'í pioneers and travel teachers, and went as far as India and Burma. His book *A Year With the Bahais in India and Burma*, in which he narrates his travels in the East, was published in London in 1908. 'Abdu'l-Bahá called him Eskander. In 1910 he married a niece of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wife,² the daughter of Mírzá Asadu'lláh-i-Işfahání, the man who had been in charge of the conveyance of the remains of the Báb from Iran to the Holy Land, and the sister of Amín Faríd (1880ca.-1953), who accompanied the Master in His travels in the West, and was excommunicated by the Master in 1914.³ Isabella Brittingham (1852-1924), one of the 19 Disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is considered as the most eminent among the early American Bahá'í women.⁴ The letter said:

I have a very big piece of news to tell you. Abdu'l-Bahá has left this Holy Spot for the first time in forty-two years, and has gone to Egypt. Think of the vast significance and importance of this step! ... Everyone was astounded to hear of Abdu'l-Bahá's departure, for no one knew until the very last minute that he had any idea of leaving. The afternoon of the day he left, he came to Mirza Assad Ullah's home to see us and sat with us awhile beside a new well that has just been finished and said that he had come to taste the water.

We did not realize that it was a good-bye visit. Then he took a carriage and went up the hill to the Holy Tomb (of the Bab). That night, as usual, the believers gathered before the house of Abdu'l-Bahá to receive that blessing, which every day is ours, of being in his presence, but we waited in vain, for one of the sons-in-law came and told us that Abdu'l-Bahá had taken the Khedivial steamer to Port Said.⁵

It seems that even the Greatest Holy Leaf, His beloved sister, was informed of this travel only by a Tablet He sent her while He already was on the steamer bound to Egypt.⁶

Other details of this departure are described in another letter published by the *Bahá'í News* in December 1910. The letter is signed by Siyyid Asadu'lláh-i-Qumí, an old believer who, a resident in the Holy Land since 1886, accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His travels to Europe and North America. The letter says:

You have asked for an account of Abdu'l-Bahá's departure to the land of Egypt. Abdu'l-Bahá did not inform anyone that he was going to leave Haifa. The day he left he visited the Holy Tomb of the Báb on Mt. Carmel and when he came down from the mountain of the Lord, he went direct to the steamer. This was the first anyone knew about the matter. Within two days he summoned to his presence Mirza Nouredin⁷, Shougi Effendi, Khosro,⁸ and this servant. The only persons who accompanied Abdu'l-Bahá to Egypt were Mirza Moneer Zain⁹ and Abdul Hossein, one of the pilgrims who was leaving at that time. When Mirza Nouredin arrived in Port Said, his brother Mirza Moneer returned to Haifa.

For nearly one month Abdu'l-Bahá remained in Port Said and the friends of God came from Cairo, in turn, to visit him. One day he called me to accompany him when taking a walk in the streets of the city. He said: "Do you realize now the meaning of my statement when I was telling the friends that there was a wisdom in my

indisposition?" I answered, "Yes, I do remember very well." He continued, "Well, the wisdom was that I must always move according to the requirements of the Cause. Whatever the Cause requires for its promulgation, I will not delay in its accomplishment for one moment! Now, the Cause did require that I travel to these parts, and had I divulged my intention at that time, many difficulties would have arisen."¹⁰

As soon as the Master left the Holy Land, Mírzá Muḥammad-`Alí (1853ca.-1937) spread the rumor that the Master had fled away because He feared new persecutions from the new Turkish government. Mírzá Muḥammad-`Alí immediately told it to `Akká's Metropolitan, who was among his friends. The Metropolitan telegraphed to one of his men in Jaffa, who boarded the same steamer on which the Master was, approached the Master and dared to inquire about His identity directly from Him. The same thing happened in Port Said.

After a one month's sojourn in Port Said, `Abdu'l-Bahá again boarded a steamer without mentioning His intentions to anyone. *Star of the West* announced this event as follows: "SPECIAL. Word has been received from Port Said that Abdul Baha has sailed from that port on a steamer for an unknown destination."¹¹ He intended to go to Europe. But it was very soon evident that His health did not permit Him to undertake such a journey. He disembarked in Alexandria, whence He left only on 11 August 1911, bound to Marseilles.

A few details of this departure are recorded in the same letter written by Siyyid Asadu'lláh-i-Qumí and published by the *Bahá'í News*:

The day that he left for Alexandria he did not mention the matter to anyone; nor did this servant know the time of his departure. However, when I heard that he had left, I hurried to the steamer and there met him with two pilgrims from Ishqabad. He said: "*Tell the friends, how, under severe circumstances of bodily weakness, I have accepted the hardships of traveling to promote the Word of God, to spread the Cause of God and to diffuse the Fragrances of God! I have left behind*

friends, relatives and home for the sake of the Cause!”

By this he meant that the believers of God must follow in his footsteps and illumine the East and the West with the lights of knowledge, peace and brotherhood.¹²

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá disembarked in Alexandria, He discovered that the climate was suitable for His health and therefore He stopped there. After all those years of imprisonment in an insalubrious place, His health was quite poor. And thus He did what He Himself recommends to the Bahá’ís:

... man must become evanescent in God. Must forget his own selfish conditions that he may thus arise to the station of sacrifice. It should be to such a degree that if he sleep, it should not be for pleasure, but to rest the body in order to do better, to speak better, to explain more beautifully, to serve the servants of God and to prove the truths.¹³

He put His body at rest, so that He could muster His strength in view of the long travels He intended to undertake. And thus it happened that the Egyptian city became His headquarters during His prolonged sojourn in Egypt. In those three years He repeatedly went back to that city, whose climate enabled Him to regain the required energy, for facing His later journeys, especially His long travel to North America.

Ali M. Yazdi (1899-1978), a believer born in Egypt who went to the United States in 1921, who witnessed the Master’s arrival in Alexandria in October 1910, describes this event in a book, *Blessings Beyond Measure*, posthumously published by his wife in 1988, as follows:

A crowd gathered in front of the Hotel Victoria for His arrival. Suddenly there was a hush, a stillness, and I knew that He had come. I looked. There He was! Then He walked through the crowd – slowly, majestically, smiling radiantly as He greeted the bowed heads on each side. I could only get a vague impression of Him, as I could not get near Him. The sound of the wind and the

surf from the nearby shore drowned out His voice so that I could hardly hear Him. Nevertheless, I went away happy.

A few days later a villa was rented for Him and His family not far from the Hotel Victoria. It was in the best residential section, next to the beautiful Mediterranean and the beaches. Like all the villas in that area, it had a garden with flowers and flowering shrubs. It was there that 'Abdu'l-Bahá chose to receive a great variety of notables, public figures, clerics, aristocrats, and writers – as well as poor and despairing people.¹⁴

A detailed chronicle of those days, during which 'Abdu'l-Bahá so frequently came and went, would take too long. We will describe only a few episodes.

Hasan M. Balyuzi (1908-1980), a biographer of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, reports a fact that reveals the Master's care in His relations with the Muslims. Balyuzi remarks that

'Abdu'l-Bahá's sojourn in Alexandria coincided with the Muslim lunar month of Muḥarram. This is the month that witnessed the martyrdom of Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad and the third apostolic Imam of His Faith, together with many others of the House of the Prophet. That tragedy occurred on the tenth day of Muḥarram, 61 A.H., which corresponded to October 10th A.D. 680. The Shí'ah world has mourned his martyrdom ever since.¹⁵

During that month Shi'ites arrange gatherings to commemorate the sad event. Balyuzi narrates that

Persians of Alexandria invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to their meeting. He went and was received with every mark of respect. He gave a robe to the reciter of the heart-rending story of Karbilá, rewarding him richly for his talent and devotion. He also left money with the hosts to hold a commemorative meeting on His behalf and to feed the poor.¹⁶

In those days, the organizers of the First Universal Race Congress, which was held in London on 26-29 July 1911 and was attended by more than 2000 people, invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to deliver a speech during the Congress. On 29 May 1911 He answered that His present circumstances prevented Him from attending.¹⁷ At the beginning of May 'Abdu'l-Bahá moved to Cairo and settled in Zaytun, a district of the city. Balyuzi informs us that during that sojourn, beside meeting several important personages, on a Friday He visited the Shrine of Siyyidah Zaynab, sometimes considered as Imam Ḥusayn's sister, and recited there the Friday prayer.¹⁸ The *Star of the West* issue of 8 September 1911 records:

Abdul Baha, after staying nearly three months in Cairo during which time he was interviewed by many prominent people returned again to Ramleh, the delightful suburb of Alexandria, on July 22nd. He was accompanied by Mirza Assadullah, Mirza Moneer, Mirza Mahmoud and Aga Khosro.¹⁹

The same issue of *Star of the West* also published an article by Louis G. Gregory (1874-1951), which briefly describes Gregory's sojourn in Ramleh between 10 April and 4 May 1911. Gregory also wrote a more detailed account of his pilgrimage in a book entitled *A Heavenly Vista: The Pilgrimage*, published in Washington in 1911. The article published by *Star of the West* says:

I am asked by the STAR OF THE WEST for impressions gathered during a recent pilgrimage to Abdu'l Baha at Ramleh and the Holy City. Now I can respond but briefly; but later I hope that a full account may be given to the friends of the Cause of all the valuable lessons received from the Perfect Man.

It is the will of Abdul Baha that all the friends should be united and happy in the light of the Kingdom. On one occasion BAHAOULLAH said, "My Presence is happiness and peace. Hell is the hearts of those who deny and oppose." Today the happiness and peace of the Glory of God (BAHÁ'U'LLÁH) are reflected in the clear Mirror

of Abdul Baha. Thus by meeting him one meets all the Prophets and Manifestations of cycles and ages past. It is difficult for one to realize at the time, or for a long time afterwards, the true honor of such a meeting. To one who realizes even faintly who this Servant of God is and what powers he represents, such a meeting is high above all the honors of earth. But no soul can give adequate testimony of what Abdul Baha may be to any other soul. With mental and spiritual horizon more or less limited, each pilgrim discerns according to his capacity the Majesty and Power that radiate from the Center of God's Covenant.

At Ramleh Abbas Effendi²⁰ might at times be seen walking about the streets. Ofttimes he would ride upon the electric tramway, making change and paying his fare in the most democratic fashion. His reception room was open to believers and non believers alike. Upon a visit to some unfortunates one day I asked if they knew him. "O yes," they responded, "he has been in this house." Thus in one way or another thousands of Persians had opportunity to see ABBAS Effendi; but among these how few perceived Abdul Baha Viewed with the outer eye, he scored about the medium height, with symmetrical features. His lineaments indicate meekness and gentleness, as well as power and strength. His color is about that of parchment. His hands are shapely, with the nails well manicured. His forehead is high and well rounded. His nose is slightly aquiline; his eyes light blue and penetrating; his hair is silvery, and long enough to touch the shoulders; his beard is white. His dress was the Oriental robes, graceful in their simplicity. On his head rested a light tar bush, surrounded by a white, turban. His voice is powerful, but capable of producing infinite pathos and tenderness. His carriage is erect and altogether so majestic and beautiful that it is passing strange that anyone seeing him would not be moved to say: "This truly is the King."

On the rational plane his wisdom is incomparable. During the time of my visit persons of culture were present from different parts of the world. But people of acquired learning are but as children to Abdul Baha. They were reverent in their attitude toward him²¹

Another pen portrait of the Master in those days was written by Ali M. Yazdi, who at that time was eleven years old. He remembers that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s voice was “very resonant, very beautiful.” Then he adds:

He was straight as an arrow. His head was thrown back. His silver-gray hair fell in waves to His shoulders. His beard was white. His eyes were keen; His forehead, broad. He wore a white turban around an ivory felt cap. He looked at everyone, smiled and welcomed all with “*Khushámádíd. Khushámádíd*” (“Welcome. Welcome”) ... When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke to me, I would look into His eyes – blue, smiling, and full of love.²²

On 11 August 1911, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá boarded the S.S. Corsica bound to Marseilles. He went back to Egypt in early December 1911. Of this second sojourn of the Master in Egypt Balyuzi only wrote: “‘Abdu’l-Bahá wintered in Egypt.”²³ Neither does *Star of the West*, a rich source of information on the Master’s travels, report news about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s sojourn in Egypt in those months. On 9 April 1912 it simply writes:

A report that Abdu’l-Bahá and suite sailed from Alexandria, Egypt, March 25th on the White Star Line S. S. “Cedric” due to arrive in New York City, April 10th, has been confirmed.²⁴

Only in 1918 *Star of the West* informs us that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá celebrated Naw-Rúz 1912 at the Victoria Hotel with a dinner attended by 85 friends. He delivered a speech on the meaning of Naw Rúz published by the American journal.²⁵

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s departure for America on 25 March 1912 is described by both Ali M. Yazdi and Maḥmúd-i-Zarqání (1875ca.-1924), a Persian Bahá’í, a chronicler of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s travels in the West. In his youth Maḥmúd travelled and taught

the Faith throughout Iran. In 1903 he went to India, where he sojourned for many years. Later on he went in pilgrimage to Haifa, where he remained for a certain time and transcribed many Tablets. From Haifa He accompanied the Master to Europe and America. Yazdi writes:

Again 'Abdu'l-Bahá left us, this time for America. I will never forget the scene of His departure, as He came out of the house and turned to wave His last farewell to His disconsolate family looking down from the veranda above. They were greatly concerned about His safety and well-being. He was sixty-eight years old. He had suffered many hardships and gone through severe trials. He had been in prison for forty years of His life. And now He was undertaking a journey to a far-off country utterly different from any to which He was accustomed.

But 'Abdu'l-Bahá had made up His mind. And when He made up His mind, nothing could change Him. He strode out of the garden gate without looking back. He walked for several blocks near the shore to take the electric train to Alexandria, where He would board the ship that was to take Him to New York. He was followed by about thirty believers who walked silently behind Him. I was one of them.²⁶

Elsewhere Yazdi mentions the S.S. Cedric, on which the Master embarked bound to the United States: "It was a beautiful ship, one of two that plied regularly between Alexandria and New York, stopping only at Naples."²⁷ Of His departure from the port of Alexandria, Maḥmúd-i-Zarqání writes:

The ship left the port of Alexandria with a burst of steam and great fanfare. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's companions numbered six: Shoghi Effendi, Siyyid Asadu'lláh-i-Qumí, Dr Amínu'lláh Faríd,²⁸ Mírzá Munír-i-Zayn, Áqá Khusraw and this servant.²⁹

Maḥmúd tells that the Master was sad, because He had just received the news that His third daughter, Rúhá Khánum, was seriously sick. He also tells that the physician on the ship was an Italian and misidentified them as Turks. The doctor immediately gave them trouble because of the health of Khusraw’s eyes. He said that they were affected by trachoma. In Naples other Italian doctors confirmed his diagnosis and said that the eyes of Shoghi Effendi and Mírzá Munír-i-Zayn also were affected by the same disease and that the American authorities would have never permitted them to enter the U.S.A. Therefore the Master, given also the fact that the same Dr Faríd agreed with the Italian doctors, asked the three to disembark at Naples and to go back to the Holy Land. Yazdi remembers that in Ramleh Shoghi Effendi had been “in seventh heaven. He had heard so much about America, and he longed to be with the Master as He traveled throughout North America and gave the Message. He looked forward with great anticipation to the experience ... He was extremely happy.”³⁰ Rúḥíyyih Rabbani (1910-2000), the wife of the Guardian, says about this episode of the life of her husband:

One can well imagine what heart-break this brought to a boy of fifteen, setting out on the first great adventure of his life, how much more to Shoghi Effendi, so attached to his grandfather, so excited over the trip on a big boat, the great journey to the West in a day when such long voyages were relatively rare and eventful! He always remembered this episode with sadness, but in a touching spirit of submissiveness to the constant blows he received all his life. It is easy to say it was the Will of God – but who knows how often the next step, planned by God, is diverted into another, less perfect path, by the evil plotting of men? There is no doubt the Master was greatly grieved by this event, but had to keep His own counsel, lest the secret of Shoghi Effendi’s future be prematurely revealed and worse befall him through the malice and envy of others.³¹

The story of this travel in North-America and later in Europe is not our concern. In July 1913 Ahmad Sohrab, who came back

from the United States together with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, wrote to *Star of the West*:

On 17 June 1913 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived at Port Said aboard the steamship *Himalaya*. From there he sent a telegram instructing many pilgrims to come to Port Said. As there was not enough room to receive them in the hotel in which he was staying, a tent was erected on the roof for the purpose.³²

He was accompanied by Siyyid Asadu'lláh-i-Qumí, Mírzá 'Alí-Akbar-i-Nakhjavání, Mírzá Maḥmud-i-Zarqání and Ahmad Sohrab.³³

'Abdu'l-Bahá remained in Port Said from 17 June to 11 July 1913. He left the town because of its heat and humidity and went to Ismailia, where He stayed in the hotel of a certain Mr. J. Bosta. His health did not improve. Therefore on 17 July He went to Alexandria. Here He stayed for two weeks in Hotel Victoria in Ramleh. Then He rented a villa close to Mazlúm Páshá Station. Ahmad Sohrab describes a number of details of that sojourn. On 13 August he describes one of the most common occupations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, writing Tablets to believers and non-believers:

When I returned from Alexandria in the afternoon I was told that the Master had asked for me. I went immediately to the garden. Seeing me standing near the door, he permitted me to enter and to take a seat. He was walking in the avenue fronting a most charming rose-garden, and dictating Tablets to Mirza Moneer. Shohgi [sic] Effendi was there also. For nearly three hours, the limpid stream of revelation flowed to irrigate the parched ground of hearts in distant climes! Just as the sun was sinking behind the western horizon, he revealed a most touching prayer. His voice was like the music of the spheres, now chanting in a clear rich voice, now in a low, sweet undertone. The effect made us forgetful of everything. The dusk of the evening, the murmur of the breeze through the roses and trees, the unbroken calmness of the atmosphere, the spiritual

beauty of the presence of the Master, and then as we looked up, the twinkling stars all combined to weave around our hearts a garland of spiritual enchantment! We were in reality worshipping the glorious King of Kings in the holiest moment of our lives! The prayer was a supplication to the throne of the Almighty for the purification of souls and the spiritualization of hearts, – in order that men might sing the praises of their Lord, and cause the ringing cries of “Ya Baha El Abha” to ascend from their meeting places to the Supreme Concourse. As we left the garden, I carried with me that wonderful prayer of the Beloved! On the wings of Light it had ascended to the throne of the Almighty and had been accepted by the Ruler of Mankind.³⁴

Sohrab’s diary also illustrates other aspects of the Master’s daily life in those days. On 4 August Sohrab writes that early in the morning he “was summoned by the Beloved” together with other friends and thus he went to His house. When he arrived there

... the door opened and we were bidden to the Master’s writing room. As we sat there we heard Shoghi Effendi chanting with pathos and sweetness. As he ended the prayer suddenly I heard the voice of the Master. I was on my feet. What marvelous depth of feeling! It causes the stones to dance with joy! He was teaching Shoghi Effendi how to chant and how to control his voice under various expressions³⁵

On 18 September he writes:

It was a hot day, but the rose-garden is always cool, the fresh breeze wafting. The master asked Shoghi Effendi to bring him a bottle of Evian water. Meanwhile an Arab, who is a laborer, came in and saluted him. The Arab told a long story, illustrating it with poems, about the source of the Nile, that it is in paradise and flows from under a throne – a pretty legend. Then a few men came in to see the Master. He spoke to them in detail on trustworthiness, and told them three stories about

his own life. For three hours we sat in his presence listening with attention to every word he said. When he left the rose-garden, Shoghi Effendi and I went to the Sidi Jaber station to welcome our dear sister, Mrs. Fraser. We greeted her on behalf of the Master. After ten minutes, she stood before him. She is going to live with the Holy Family, and I have no doubt that the Bahai world will receive a rich and valuable treasure when her Diary is given out.³⁶

On 30 September 1913 Ahmad Sohrab's diary comes to a conclusion. Balyuzi gives but a short description of those days. He informs us that the Master did not feel good in Ramleh and thus He moved for a few days to Abúqír. This may have happened in November 1913. Since His health did not improve and the friends in the Holy Land were begging Him to come back, He decided to return to Haifa.³⁷ *Star of the West* does not give any information about the Master's sojourn in Egypt in those months. Only the issue of 19 January 1914 publishes a letter written on 27 December 1913 by H. Imogene Hoagg (1869-1945), an American believer that visited several times Italy, to Charles Mason Remey (1874-1974).³⁸ This letter describes the Master's arrival in Haifa. Ali M. Yazdi writes that on 2 December 1913 'Abdu'l-Bahá left Alexandria and returned to the Holy Land.³⁹ He arrived in Haifa on 5 December. Of His presence in Egypt we have no photograph. Indeed, as Balyuzi remarks, after the Master's earliest photographs taken in Adrianople in 1867 when He was a young man, "there were none until He reached London in 1911."⁴⁰

Egyptian cities and towns visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The first Egyptian town visited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá was Port Said. He sojourned there when He arrived in the country, during September and October 1910. He was again in Port Said from 17 June 1913, when He arrived on the S.S. *Himalaya* back from His long trip in North America and Europe, to 11 July of the same year, when He moved to Ismailia. The place where He spent more time was Alexandria, precisely the suburb of

Ramleh. He arrived there in October 1910 and remained until May 1911, when He went to Cairo. He returned on 22 July 1911 and moved away bound to Europe on 11 August 1911. He came back from Europe in early December 1911 and left on 25 March 1912 bound to North America via Naples. Finally He sojourned in Ramleh from 17 July 1913 to 2 December of the same year, except a short period in November that He spent in Abúqír.⁴¹ He also spent three months in Cairo, in the suburb of Zaytun, from May 1911 to 22 July of the same year, a week in Ismailia, from 11 to 17 July 1913, and a short time in Manşúra.⁴² Ahmad Sohrab has written graphic descriptions of some of the Egyptian towns that hosted 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Port Said had become a town only after the opening of the Suez Canal on 17 November 1869. Sohrab writes about it:

Forty years ago there were only a handful of dingy hovels with half-naked Arabs. There was no trade, there were no houses, and no communication existed with the outside world. Almost all the area on which the present up-to-date city with its 60,000 busy inhabitants is built, is land reclaimed from the sea. When the Suez Canal joined the two mighty oceans together, Port Said became an international port, and from that date the magical progress of the city continued uninterruptedly.⁴³

In 1910, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived there, Port Said was an international center, inhabited not only by Egyptians, but also by Europeans of different nationalities. Sohrab describes a feast for the French Day of Independence:

The European part of Port Said is decorated with thousands of Japanese lanterns, the French flag is seen everywhere, and everybody seems to enter into the spirit of celebration on this National Feast of the Republic of France. After sunset the principal avenues, the French Consulate, the Banks, firms and buildings are lighted up by electricity. The street in which the Eastern Exchange, Continental and Casino Palace Hotels are built, is a riot of music promenaders, Arabs,

Greeks, Italians, English, German, and French. Everybody is out to have a good time and to see the sights. The avenue from one end to the other is wired, and a roof is constructed of Japanese lanterns. The trees also bear such luminous fruits.⁴⁴

Sohrab also describes a Catholic procession in the town:

To-day the French inhabitants had a gorgeous religious procession which started from their church. All the streets through which it passed were adorned with flags, bunting and Japanese lanterns. The priests were dressed in their pompous surplices of red, gold and silver. There were long lines of young girls dressed as angels, also a company of choir boys. The procession was brought to an end by a large statue of the Virgin Mary, holding the child, Jesus, in her arms. Of course thousands of Arabs left their work to gaze at this very spectacular sight of what they called "idol worship," and not understanding the sacredness of these symbols, they poked fun and laughed in their sleeves. How sad is the ignorance of humanity!⁴⁵

As to Alexandria, Sohrab writes:

Alexandria to all intents and purposes is like a progressive American city. Its tall buildings, its large department stores, its clean avenues, its double-decked electric cars, its delightful parks, its electrically lighted boulevards and streets, its fine promenades around the seaport, are all signs of a wonderful prosperous spirit. As I passed along the streets it seemed as though I was walking on an avenue in New York, and I wondered at the magical transformations which had taken place since this city was burned to the ground during the Arabi [sic] revolution thirty-one years ago. The inhabitants of all nations, Greeks, Italians, French, Jews, English, Arabs, Persians, live here and associate with one another in perfect harmony.⁴⁶

As a matter of fact ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sojourned in Ramleh, about which Sohrab writes:

Ramleh is a modern Egyptian town with all the conveniences of western civilization. It is a summer resort for the most important European officials in the service of the Egyptian Government, and also for the native Pashas. There are lovely parks, all kinds of hotels and splendid houses. We have a nice furnished apartment about two hundred yards from the residence of the Beloved.⁴⁷

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrived in Alexandria, He stayed at the New Victoria Hotel (later Summer Palace Hotel). Sohrab describes it as follows:

From my room I see the great clock of the New Victoria Hotel, wherein the Beloved stayed from time to time. The manager with much pride shows to the guests the various rooms occupied by the Master. He knows something about the Cause, and recognizes the great honor and blessing bestowed upon him and his hotel. When the Master was here the last time, he gave two large feasts just before his departure for America. There are a few other hotels and houses in which the Beloved has lived periodically. The homes of the Pashas are really wonderful specimens of the best Renaissance architecture. They very much resemble the houses and villas I have seen at Nice. Wonderful palaces, furnished with a taste truly magnificent, and are enclosed within gardens, the beauty and charm of which rival the fairy-lands of the artists and the poets. These “villas” are surrounded by walls from two to four yards high. The principal avenues are macadamized and clean and the narrow streets are also very much like the garden paths of Nice. As one walks through them the perfume of the flowers is inhaled, the branches of the trees overhanging the walls give a cool, inviting shade and the climbing vines add to the charming verdancy. A man passing through the streets and observing the houses, sees all the windows tightly shut. The stranger may think that

they are not inhabited, but on inquiring about this custom of closing the windows, he is politely informed that as the owner is Mohammedan, the blinds are drawn, so that no foreign eyes may gaze upon the dark beauties of the women.⁴⁸

'Abdu'l-Bahá also lived for three months, from May to 22 July 1911, in Cairo, in the district of Zaytun, recently become famous for supposed Marian apparitions. Those apparitions of lights were reportedly seen by thousands of people and photographed.

In Ismailia the Master stayed from 11 to 17 July 1913, to avoid the humid heat of Port Said. Sohrab describes it as follows:

There is a beautiful large park, lovely buildings, clean avenues and many electric lights. I was quite surprised at the size of the park with its big pine trees and flowers. We saw also the native quarter. The goats, the hens, the donkeys and the other animals live in the same room with the Arabs, making a peaceful family.⁴⁹

As to Abúqír, a village on the Mediterranean Sea about 20 miles north-east of Alessandria, Europeans remember it for the battle fought and won by Napoleon I in 1799 against the Ottoman army. The Master stayed there only a few days. As to Manşúra, it is a town located in the Nile delta region, on the eastern bank of Damietta branch. Its name means the victorious, in remembrance of a victory achieved by the Egyptians against King Louis IX of France in 1249 during the Seventh Crusade. Hájí Mirzá Haydar-'Alí (1830ca.-1920), known as the Angel of Carmel, who during his travels to teach the Faith had spent ten years in the terrible prisons of Sudan, lived there for many years since the time when Bahá'u'lláh was confined in Adrianople (he may have gone there in 1866). Sohrab's diary that ends on 20 September 1913 does not mention either Abúqír or Manşúra.

The Holy Family

Members of the Holy Family visited a few times their Beloved during His stay in Egypt. As has been said, the Master called Shoghi Effendi in September 1910. Then Shoghi Effendi returned to the Holy Land to attend his school. In April 1911, Shoghi Effendi was once more with his Grandfather, in Ramleh. We learn this detail from Gregory, who writes in his diary: "Before entering we met Shoghi and Rouhi, two beautiful boys, the grandsons of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. These children of the Holy household show great affection for pilgrims."⁵⁰ Shoghi Effendi also was with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in March 1912 when He embarked on S.S. Cedric bound to America and remained on board with Him as far as Naples. On 1 August 1913 Sohrab writes:

the Greatest Holy Leaf, Abdul Baha's sister, his daughter,⁵¹ Shoghi Effendi, and five or six others ... arrived from Haifa. The Beloved came to see us, sat for one hour, drank a cup of coffee, and then left us to return to his house to see the newcomers ...⁵²

'Abdu'l-Bahá had sent the Greatest Holy Leaf to Egypt in 1892 after Bahá'u'lláh's ascension, together with His eldest daughter, Dīyá Khánum (d.1951), so that she could recover, after the severe blow of her Father's loss. In that period she was a guest of Hájí Mírzá Ḥasan-i-Khurásání. During the Master's absence from Haifa she administered the affairs of the Cause in the Holy Land. Shoghi Effendi writes in this regard:

And when, in pursuance of God's inscrutable Wisdom, the ban on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's confinement was lifted and the Plan which He, in the darkest hours of His confinement, had conceived materialized, He with unhesitating confidence, invested His trusted and honoured sister with the responsibility of attending to the multitudinous details arising out of His protracted absence from the Holy Land.⁵³

Elsewhere he more concisely writes:

At the time of His absence in the western world, she was His competent deputy, His representative and vicegerent, with none to equal her.⁵⁴

The Master's daughters also visited their Father during His sojourn in Egypt. For example, on 24 July 1913 Sohrab informs us that Ṭúbá Khánum (1880ca.-1959), the Master's second daughter, was in Ramleh with her Father⁵⁵ and on 19 July 1913 he writes that Rúḥá Khánum, His third daughter, was coming to Egypt.⁵⁶ On 5 September Sohrab writes:

Yesterday the Master's daughter⁵⁷ left for Cairo with Basheer,⁵⁸ for a short stay. To-day Shoghi Effendi joined his mother with Haji Niaz.⁵⁹ In the afternoon four Bahais arrived from Cairo.⁶⁰

Baharieh Rouhani Ma'ani, a biographer of the women of the Holy Family, hypothesizes that Munírih Khánum (1847-1938), 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wife, also was among the members of the family⁶¹ who, in Rúḥíyyih Rabbani's words,

hastened to His presence there [in Egypt], among them Shoghi Effendi, who joined Him about six weeks after His arrival ... arriving in the company of the Greatest Holy Leaf and others on 1 August in Ramleh, where 'Abdu'l-Bahá had once again rented a villa.⁶²

Like her sister in law, Munírih Khánum also had already been in Egypt for health reasons, first in 1898ca. and then at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶³ Finally, members of His family were with Him in Ramleh when He left for New York.⁶⁴

Although this person is not a member of the Holy Family, we mention here the meeting between the Master and one of His cousins on His Father's side. On 1 July 1913 Sohrab writes:

To-day two pilgrims arrived, Mirza Fazlollah, the son of the oldest brother of Baha-Ullah from Persia, and a young Bahai from Damascus. Upon hearing of the arrival of the son of his uncle, Abdul Baha called him into his presence and showered much love upon him. I was not there to witness the scene and to hear his

words. But Ali Akbar [Nakhjavání] told me that the Master spoke about his childhood days. Things that I should like to have heard.⁶⁵

The public opinion

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrived in Egypt, Egyptians knew very little about Him and the Bahá’í Faith. They knew only what had been reported by such authoritative, but prejudiced, sources, as officers of the Iranian government, which had banished Bahá’u’lláh from His own country, or Ottoman officers, who had condemned Bahá’u’lláh to a perpetual exile in the prison-city of ‘Akká. As a matter of fact, Egyptians had heard only calumnies about the Faith. As soon as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrived in Egypt, He was immediately able to prove that those rumors were wrong. Indeed, such was His personal charm, that He won the esteem and friendship of all the major personages of the country, whom He repeatedly met during mutual cordial visits. He met “clerics, aristocrats, administrators, parliamentarians, men of letters, journalists and publicists, Arabs, Turks and Persians, who sought His presence. The poor and the deprived also had access to Him and went away happy.”⁶⁶ During His stay in Egypt ‘Abdu’l-Bahá received many guests, but He never delivered a public talk. However, as a blog on His travels in the West remarks, “the little the Egyptian press published about Him or about His talks given in other countries was ... rich enough to be considered by historians and writers as a public proclamation of the Bahá’í Faith, which in those days was referred to also as the Bábí Faith.”⁶⁷

Siyyid Asadu’lláh wrote to *Star of the West* in this regard:

Also, distinguished editors of Arabic and Persian newspapers, such as Moaid [Mu’ayyad] and Tchehre Nema [Chihrih Nama], have talked with him and afterward wrote and published columns of praise and commendation on his Teachings and greatness. Thus the newspapers have given great publicity to the Movement. In regard to the Moaid [Mu’ayyad] article, Abdul Baha says: “A clipping from the newspaper of Moaid [Mu’ayyad], which is the first newspaper of

Egypt and its editor well known throughout the world for his learning, is enclosed. Formerly, this person, through the instigation of some influential resident Persians, wrote many articles against this Cause and called the Bahais infidels. But when Abdul Baha arrived in this country, with one interview he was completely changed and contradicted all his former articles with this one. This is the type of the just man!”

There is no doubt that this trip is fraught with wonderful results for the Cause and many people will become awakened. In one of these interviews Abdul Baha stated he may go to Cairo and pass the remainder of the winter in that city. The Egyptian winter weather is ideal, temperate and agrees with him. Since he has arrived in Egypt his health is much improved, and should he decide to go to America it will not be before the springtime. ⁶⁸

Century of Light remarks:

To some extent the way had no doubt been paved by warm admiration for the Master on the part of Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh, who had met Him on several occasions in Beirut and who subsequently became Mufti of Egypt and a leading figure at Al-Azhar University. ⁶⁹

Muḥammad Abdúh (1849-1905) was an Islamic liberal reformer and teacher, initially the editor of the official gazette of the Egyptian government, *Al Waqa’i’ Al Misriyya* (Egyptian facts), which was founded in 1828, the first Egyptian newspaper. Exiled from Egypt in 1882, when he went back to his country, he was a teacher in the ancient al-Azhar University, founded in 970ca. which took its name, “the luminous,” from a title of Fatima, Muḥammad’s daughter, called *az-zahra*, the brilliant. He also was Great Mufti of Egypt, the **second** highest religious position in the country. He is remembered as one of the greatest Egyptian thinkers and reformers. In the 1880s while he was in exile in Beirut he met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and was influenced by His words, coming to think that Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings could save Egyptian society from the ills by which it was

afflicted. Therefore he attempted a reform of the Shari'ah, but his plans were frustrated by the opposition of the conservatives.⁷⁰

The press coverage

As soon as 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in Egypt, the main newspapers of the country immediately began to publish articles on His visit. On 19 September 1910, *Al-Ahram* (The pyramids), founded in 1875, then pro-French and today the most popular Egyptian newspaper, published the news of the unexpected visit to the country of the "leader of the Bábí Faith." The article said:

Abbas Effendi left His residence in the city of 'Akká a few days ago for Port Said, an event that has precipitated His Persian followers residing in Egypt to hasten to that city to be blessed by visiting Him. This surprise visit has given rise to speculation and controversial claims between His opponents and supporters about its motive. The former have alleged He left 'Akká out of fear of what may come upon Him from the new constitutional Turkish regime. His followers, strongly deny these uncorroborated allegations. In fact, He came to Egypt for health reasons because the air of Egypt is indicated as a cure for His asthmatic attacks caused by His long incarceration.⁷¹

Despite this article, a few unfriendly personages questioned the opportunity of the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt. After about a month, on 16 October, the editor of *Al-Mu'ayyad* ("the victorious" or "the supporter"), a nationalist newspaper, founded in 1889, very popular in those years, answered their questions. This editor was the skillful Shaykh 'Alí Yusif, who had previously criticized the Bahá'ís and their faith, suggesting to take firm measures against them. He met the Master in Ramleh and after that meeting he wrote: "His Eminence Mirza 'Abbas Effendi, the learned and erudite Head of the Bahá'ís in 'Akká and the Centre of authority for Bahá'ís throughout the world, has reached the shores of Alexandria."⁷² At first, related

the writer, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stayed in the Victoria Hotel, but after a few days moved to a rented house. Then he went on to explain:

He is a venerable person, dignified, possessed of profound knowledge, deeply versed in theology, master of the history of Islam, and of its denominations and developments ... whosoever has consorted with Him has seen in Him a man exceedingly well-informed, Whose speech is captivating, Who attracts minds and souls, dedicated to belief in the oneness of mankind ... His teaching and guidance revolve round the axis of relinquishing prejudices: religious, racial, patriotic.⁷³

Shaykh Yusif said that he twice went to see 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and during those interviews learned that His coming had absolutely no political motive, for "he 'does not interfere in political matters;' His 'stay in Egypt is for health reasons.'" The news report concluded with a warm reiteration of welcome to the learned and wise Visitor, and wished Him a happy stay and recovery of good health.⁷⁴

Al-Muqaṭṭam, a pro-British newspaper founded in 1888 which took its name from a chain of hills south-east of Cairo, and which in those years was the most eminent among the Egyptian newspapers, published on 28 November 1910 an appreciative report. The nationalist semiweekly *Wadía'n-Níl* (the Valley of the Nile), founded in 1867 and sometimes considered as the first private newspaper in Egypt, did the same and published many praises of the Master. Even the Persian illustrated weekly journal *Chihrih-Nama*, published in Egypt between 1904 and 1950, praised Him. Balyuzi writes in this regard:

Its editor, Mirza 'Abdu'l-Muḥammad-i-Írání, the Mu'addibu's-Sulṭán [the Preceptor of the Sovereign], had in the past, in common with many of his countrymen resident in Egypt, displayed feelings far from friendly. Now he reported 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels with respect and admiration.⁷⁵

On 19 January 1911 *Al-Ahram* spoke once more about the Master. It wrote:

His reverence Abbas Effendi, the head of the Bábí Faith, is still visiting and being visited, with much veneration, by senior officials and high ranking individuals. He is the son of Bahá'u'lláh, and His successor, and a descendant of a noble Persian lineage. Kindness and love to all regardless of social rank or religious affiliation are His distinguishing attributes for He looks at the unifying force latent in the humanity of all people and not at their diverse beliefs or worldly conditions.⁷⁶

Balyuzi mentions a last article on the Master of the *Egyptian Gazette* of 27 June 1913, entitled "Abdul Baha in Egypt. Wonderful Scenes in Port Said. Eastern Bahais Assembled in Force."⁷⁷ The article also said: "At Port Said the pilgrims have erected a huge tent on the roof of a native hotel and there they gather and sing with touching devotion."⁷⁸

Personages

Of the many personages that attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt, only the most important will be mentioned. Easterners will be listed as first. In 1910-1911 in Alexandria an old enemy of the Faith, Mirzá Muḥammad-Mihdí Khán, the Za'imu'd-Dawlih [Chief of the State], a Persian politician who had published in 1903 a critical history of the Bábí Movement, called repeatedly on 'Abdu'l-Bahá and showed great reverence towards Him. In Cairo, Shaykh Muḥammad Bakhit, the Mufti of Egypt, and Shaykh Muḥammad Rishád, the Imam of the Khedive, visited Him and He returned their visit. In Cairo He met Jurji (Giorgio) Zaydan (1861-1914), an eminent Lebanese, Christian writer, the editor of the journal *Dar al-Hilal* (The Crescent), later transformed into a publishing house that still exists today. Zaydan was proud of his Arabic background and wrote a book entitled *The Flying Mameluch*, a popular work of Arabic history.

The most important meeting in Cairo was that with the Khedive, 'Abbás Ḥilmí II (1874-1944), who showed a special reverence towards the Master. Balyuzi says that the two personages met twice. The organizer of those meetings was 'Uthmán Páshá Murtaḍá, the Khedive's chamberlain, and Balyuzi remarks that he

was devoted to 'Abdu'l-Bahá ... A Tablet which 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed to 'Uthmán Páshá in October 1919 (five years after 'Abbás Ḥilmí was deposed) is indicative of the stature of the man: he is called 'Amír-al-wafa' – the Prince of Fidelity.⁷⁹

The Master met once more the Khedive in Ramleh in 1913. On 15 August 1913 Ahmad Sohrab writes in this regard:

During our absence in the afternoon, Osman Pasha, one of the Ministers of the Khedive, called on the Master conveying the loving greetings of the Ruler of Egypt and his longing to meet him. The date was then fixed for the afternoon of August 17th. His Highness the Khedive is now staying in Alexandria. His summer resort is near Ramleh. He lives in one of his palaces fronting the sea called Raas-ottin [Ras at-Tín]. The Khedive is friendly to the Bahai Movement and has special regard for the Master. It may be that history will record that he is one of the few Oriental Rulers who has received Abdul Baha with due honor.⁸⁰

On 17 August he records:

This was an important date in the Bahai calendar because Abdul Baha and the ruler of Egypt met each other for the second or third time. Beyond this bare announcement I have no other information. The Master may give us, later, an account of the meeting, and thus in our imagination we may construct a picture, or he may not divulge any of the details. None of the believers were with him. For the present it is enough to know that on this day, between three and six p.m., the

sovereign of Egypt had the honor and privilege of talking with Abdul Baha.⁸¹

On 4 September 1913 'Abdu'l-Bahá had a visit from Prince Muḥammad 'Alí, (1875-1955), the Khedive's brother and the heir to the throne. The Prince had already attained the presence of the Master, first in Egypt in 1912, then in New York on 22 July 1912,⁸² then again in Paris in 1913 and finally during the Master's travel to Egypt the Prince was with Him for four days, on 12-16 June 1913. He admired so much 'Abdu'l-Bahá that he considered Him as "the most important man in our century."⁸³ And he loved Him so much that he called Him "'Abbás Bábá' which in Arabic means 'Abbás Father or Father 'Abbás."⁸⁴ Sohrab describes their meeting in Ramleh as follows:

In the afternoon Prince Mohamad Ali, the brother of the Khedive, called on Abdul Baha. The Prince arrived in his automobile at the door of our house, and hearing that the Master lived close by in another one, said that he would walk to it. Mirza Moneer was about to go on ahead to notify Abdul Baha, when he appeared in his long, loose, cream-colored coat from the other side of the street. Thus, in the middle of the road, the Master and the Prince met, each offering to the other courtesies designated for the most distinguished men. Every one looking at this strange scene wondered, while trying to imagine what had brought a royal Prince of Egypt to the Threshold of Abbas Effendi. The Master was walking ahead and the Prince a few feet behind, and while they were talking in the most animated manner, they disappeared from our view.⁸⁵

Ahmad Sohrab also describes the Egyptian Páshás' admiration for the Master, though words uttered by one of them:

We have produced in the Orient a man such as Abbas Effendi, who alone visited Europe and America, and who through the sheer force of his personality and the wonderful soundness and brilliancy of his philosophy, captivated the pulpits and platforms, revolutionized the current of western thoughts, opened before your faces

vistas of glorious ideals, and drew to his audiences thousands of men and women who were deeply attracted to his humane and divine wisdom, while the Press of the West from one end to another had but one tongue by which to praise his many virtues and to elucidate his system of religion and philosophy. Yes, we are proud of him. We honor him because he comes from the heart of the Orient. He represents us, he utters our ideals and longings. You have never sent us a man who could travel in the Orient and deliver lectures as Abbas Effendi has done in the West.⁸⁶

In Egypt the Master also received Khájih Ḥasan Nizamí (1879-1955), an Indian scholar and mystic of the Chistí Sufi order, a prolific writer, an upholder of Islam in India, who later translated the Seven Valleys into Urdu.⁸⁷ Finally, 'Abdu'l-Bahá met in Ramleh the well-known Egyptian writer 'Abbás Maḥmúd Al-'Aqqad (1889-1964), the author of about a hundred books of philosophy, religion and poetry, famous for his flourished prose. In the years 1980s the Egyptian television produced a TV series on his life, titled *The Giant*. 'Aqqad has left a description of that meeting titled "An hour with 'Abdu'l-Bahá."⁸⁸ Last but not least, Sohrab's diary records on 24 September 1913:

Yesterday the new Persian Consul General arrived from Constantinople and the Master sent all the students to welcome him at the steamer and to-day, with Mirza Ali Akbar [Nakhjavání], he went to Alexandria to pay him a visit, in the hotel where he is staying for a few days before his departure for Jadda. In the course of conversation Abdul Baha pointed out to the Consul General the impartial attitude of the Bahais in recent developments in Persia and how they are the lovers of Peace and progress. The mission of the Bahai Cause is universal and not local; its principles are for all humanity; its objects are world-wide. The Bahais are the army of spiritual and intellectual advancements. Then he spoke a few words about the promotion of the Cause in America and Europe. The Consul General became very attracted, and made an engagement to come next day and call on the Master.⁸⁹

As to the Westerners, we remember the English Wellesley Tudor Pole (1884-1968) who visited the Master in Ramleh in the second half of November 1910. Tudor Pole is remembered as a writer, a philosopher, a mystic and a life-long lover of religious experiences, mystic visions and spiritualism. He also is remembered because, along with Winston Churchill, he was the deviser of the silent minute, which the people of Britain observed during the Second World War (1939-1945) every evening at 9 pm. After that meeting he accepted the Faith, but later on became estranged from it, when Shoghi Effendi began to build its Administrative Order. During the First World War Tudor Pole was a major of the British army. He learnt of the perils hanging over the Master because of the hate of the Turkish commander, Jamál Páshá, and urged the British military authority to protect Him. In December 1910 he published his interview with the Master on the journal *Christian Commonwealth* (28 December 1910), later reprinted by *Star of the West*.⁹⁰ *Star of the West* also published a part of a letter describing Tudor Pole's meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

You may be interested in hearing of my recent visit to Abdu'l-Bahá at Ramleh, near Alexandria. I spent nine days at Alexandria and Cairo during the second half of November, 1910. Abdu'l-Bahá's health had very greatly improved since his arrival from Port Said. He was looking strong and vigorous in every way. He spoke much of the work in America, to which he undoubtedly is giving considerable thought. He also spoke a good deal about the work that is going forward in different European centres as well as in London, and he expects great things from England during the coming year ... A Bahai paper is to be read at the Universal Races Congress in London next July.⁹¹

In Cairo 'Abdu'l-Bahá met Ronald Storrs, in those days Oriental Secretary of the British Agency and later knighted. Storr had known 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1909 in the Holy Land. Now in Egypt, in his own words, he "had the honour of looking after him and of presenting him to Lord Kitchener."⁹² Lord Horatio Herbert Kitchener (1850-1916), was the British Agent and Consul-General (*de facto* administrator) in Egypt. In 1898 he

had conquered Sudan and therefore he was known as Lord Kitchener of Khartoum. Sir Storrs writes that Lord Kitchener “was deeply impressed by his personality, as who could fail to be?”⁹³

Sometimes between 1910 and 1913 the Russian playwright Isabella Grinevskaya (1864-1944) attained the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. After that meeting, Grinevskaya accepted the Faith, to which she remained faithful for the rest of her life, keeping in touch with Eastern and Western Bahá'ís. She is remembered for the many books she published, in which she described the life of the Jews of the middle class and especially the situation of young intellectual Jew women. She wrote a play titled *The Báb*, which was performed in St. Petersburg in 1904 and in 1916-1917. The play was translated into French and praised by Tolstoy. She also wrote an essay about her meeting with the Master and a poem and play titled *Bahá'u'lláh*. This play was never performed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's presence was also attained by Rustum Vambéry, the son of the famous Arminius, the Jew Hungarian intellectual (ca. 1832-1913) whom the Master met in Budapest on 12 April 1912.⁹⁴ Arminius Vambéry was a traveler, an orientalist and a polyglot. A number of scholars maintain that the personage of Professor Van Helsing in Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897) was inspired by Vámbéry. As a matter of fact, Chapter 23 of the novel mentions a “friend Arminius of Budapesth.”

Resident and visiting Bahá'ís

Among the many Bahá'ís who lived in Egypt in those days the chronicles mention especially Mírzá Ḥasan Khurasání of Alexandria, who in 1892 had the honor of hosting Bahíyyih Khánum and Mohammed Yazdi (1848-1933), whom Gregory describes as “an oriental gentleman of pleasing manners and placid countenance.”⁹⁵ The Bahá'í historian Graham Hassall also mentions Hájí Mírzá Ḥaydar-'Alí.⁹⁶ Among the Bahá'ís in Egypt during the Master's visits there also was a very distinguished personage, Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl-i-Gulpáygání (1844-1914), known for his broad culture and his deep studies of the Bahá'í Faith,

one of the 19 Apostles of Bahá’u’lláh. He went to Cairo in July 1895, and was a lecturer of al-Azhar University. Between 1901 and 1904 he traveled through Europa and North America, to strengthen the new Bahá’ís. When the Master went to Egypt, the Master often invited him at his presence. Ahmad Sohrab repeatedly describes their meetings. Isabel Fraser also describes his presence in Ramleh, where the Master had asked him to come to enjoy his company.⁹⁷

The chronicles also mention Shaykh Faraju’lláh Zakí al-Kurdí, a Kurdish Bahá’í who lived in Cairo. He is the author of the well-known compilation of prayers by Bahá’u’lláh in Persian and Arabic, beside the Persian Hidden Words, *Ad’iyih-i Haḍrat-i Maḥbúb* (Prayers of the Beloved). He also published the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, three volumes of Tablets by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, a collection of talks delivered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Europe and America and other important Bahá’í texts. He translated into Arabic the Tablet of *Ishraqát* and submitted his translation to the Master. Shoghi Effendi writes in this regard:

So great is the importance and so supreme is the authority of these assemblies that once ‘Abdu’l-Bahá after having himself and in his own handwriting corrected the translation made into Arabic of the *Ishraqat* (the Effulgences) by Sheikh Faraj, a Kurdish friend from Cairo, directed him in a Tablet to submit the above-named translation to the Spiritual Assembly of Cairo, that he may seek from them before publication their approval and consent.⁹⁸

As to Westerners, as has been said, Louis Gregory, an American negro who had accepted the faith in 1909 and the first Hand of the Cause of his race, was invited by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and stayed in Ramleh from 10 April to 4 May 1911. In his diary of this pilgrimage he describes the house of the Master as “a modest but comfortable-appearing house with a front garden.” He lists the persons who were present during his first meeting with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: “Tamaddun ul Molk and Nouraddin Zaine, Persians, and Nevill G. Meakin and Miss Louisa A. M. Mathew (afterwards Mrs. Louis G. Gregory), English.” In this booklet he describes again the Person of the Master:

'Abdu'l-Bahá appeared about the medium height, with a strong frame and symmetrical features. His face is deeply furrowed and His color about that of parchment. His carriage is erect and His entire form strikingly majestic and beautiful. His hands and nails are shapely and pure. His silver hair is long enough to touch the shoulders. The beard is snow white, the eyes light blue and penetrating, the nose slightly aquiline. The voice is powerful, but capable of infinite pathos, tenderness and sympathy. His dress was that of the Oriental gentleman of the highest classes, simple and neat and very graceful. The color of His apparel was light, the outer robe being made of alpaca. On His head rested a light fez, surrounded by a white turban. The meekness of the servant, the majesty of the king, are in His brow and form.

As to Louisa Matthew (1866-1956), she was an English believer of a well-to-do family, graduated from Cambridge. She had gone to Paris to continue her musical studies and there accepted the Faith in the early twentieth century. 'Abdu'l-Bahá introduced Louis G. Gregory to her in Ramleh in April 1911. On 27 September 1912 He Himself married the two. It was a happy marriage, but filled with difficulties because of their different races. The two told that, during their travels, they were often obliged to stay at different hotels. Louisa devotedly served the Faith for all her life especially in Central Europe (Sofia, Bulgaria).

In those years also Edith MacKaye de Bons (1878-1959) lived in Egypt. This American lady went to Paris to study voice. There she met May Bolles Maxwell (1870-1940). Their meeting took place on 1899 Christmas Day and Edith became the first person who was brought to the Faith by May Bolles in the French capital. Edith later moved to Sion, Switzerland, because she had married Dr Joseph de Bons (1871-1959), a local dentist. The de Bons lived in Egypt for a few years and in 1911 they had the honor of attaining the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Ahmad Sohrab writes in his diary of 29 July 1913:

In the afternoon I called on the Beloved and in his presence found DeBons, a French Bahai dentist practicing in Cairo – now on his way to Switzerland to meet his wife. Abdul Baha is going to take him for a drive through Nozha Park, which is the National Park of Alexandria. I have heard much praise of it, but have not yet been there. They say it rivals any park in Europe or America. For nearly two hours Abdul Baha entertained the doctor driving through the park and speaking to him about his spiritual experiences in America.⁹⁹

Sohrab’s diary also informs us of the arrival of other believers come to Egypt to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. On 13 July 1913 Sohrab mentions Mrs. Jean Stannard, an English believer and a travel teacher, who in 1921 translated the Hidden Words into English, a translation highly appreciated by Shoghi Effendi. In 1925 she founded in Geneva the International Bahá’í Bureau, later managed by Imogene Hoagg. The Bahá’í International Community writes in this regard:

The International Bahá’í Bureau served as a gathering place for Bahá’ís traveling to Geneva for the activities of the League of Nations and of other international organizations, and published an international magazine.¹⁰⁰

In 1929 the International Bahá’í Bureau was recognized by the League of Nations. Sohrab writes about Mrs. Stannard:

Mrs. J. Stannard, an English Bahai, is back in Port Said and may stay with us for several days. I had a most pleasant conversation with her about the progress of the Cause in Germany and England. The Master may send her to India. She is a very active and energetic worker and no doubt will be able to spread the Bahai movement very effectively.¹⁰¹

On 24 July 1913 Lua Getsinger (1871-1916), the Herald of the Covenant and one of the 19 Disciples of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, arrived in Egypt.¹⁰² Sohrab writes in this regard:

This morning the Beloved sent for me. He was feeling well. Mrs. Getsinger was called into the room and the plan of her journey to India discussed. Since her arrival she has been living with Abdul Baha's family which is presided over by the Greatest Holy Leaf!¹⁰³

Sohrab informs us that the Master did not want Lua to go to India alone and thus summoned Mrs. Isabel Fraser Chamberlain (1871-1939), the compiler of a collection of talks delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Europe, known as *Abdu'l-Bahá on Divine Philosophy*, published in 1917 in Boston by the publisher The Tudor Press. Sohrab's diary of 18 September 1913 records:

In the afternoon Abdul Baha passed by, followed by Shoghi Effendi. He called for me and I walked behind him in the rose-garden. A telegram sent to Port Said from the Master to Ahmad Yazdi: "Send Mrs. Fraser to Ramleh," brought back the answer that she had left at one o'clock. He told me to go with Shoghi Effendi to the station and bring her home. We were expecting her for a few days. I was delighted to hear the news.¹⁰⁴

In the same day Sohrab writes he went and fetch her at the station together with Shoghi Effendi.

On 22 September Sohrab announced the arrival of Dr. Edward Getsinger (1866-1935), Lua Getsinger's husband, one of the first pilgrims in December 1898, a faithful servant of the Cause, who published the first collection of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings in English. Sohrab records many anecdotes of the meeting of the Master with the Bahá'is who hastened to Egypt to see Him. We like to conclude this short note on those visits of devoted pilgrims with a detail from Sohrab's diary:

One of the pilgrims – El Yahou, an old man – had brought with him from Cairo a bouquet of fragrant white flowers and six white fezes for the Master. He stayed with us last night and kept our party in a good humor until very late. In the morning he wanted the flowers and fezes to be taken to the Master, which I did with great pleasure. I knocked at the door, and the

beloved opened it. He took the bundle out of my hand and told me that he would send for him in a few minutes.¹⁰⁵

Meanings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence in Egypt

‘Abdu’l-Bahá may have chosen Egypt as the headquarters of His travels in the West first of all because it was near enough to the Holy Land to enable Him to see what the Covenant-Breakers would do in His absence and, in case of extreme necessity, to quickly go back home. In the meantime, the climate of Egypt, much healthier than that of ‘Akká and Haifa, would have alleviated the consequences of the numerous afflictions that troubled His body, as for example His asthmatic attacks. Moreover in Egypt there was a flourishing Bahá’í community and the relations between that community and the Bahá’í community in the Holy Land had always been very close.

The consequences of His presence in Egypt have been very important. First of all, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá could personally deny, through His wisdom and the mysterious charm emanating from His Person, all the calumnies on the Bahá’í community and on Himself, which external and internal enemies of the Faith had spread through the country. The importance of the Master’s sojourn in Egypt is explained by *Century of Light* as follows:

An aspect of the Egyptian sojourn that deserves special attention was the opportunity it provided for the first public proclamation of the Faith’s message. The relatively cosmopolitan and liberal atmosphere prevailing in Cairo and Alexandria at the time opened a way for frank and searching discussions between the Master and prominent figures in the intellectual world of Sunni Islam. These included clerics, parliamentarians, administrators and aristocrats. Further, editors and journalists from influential Arabic-language newspapers, whose information about the Cause had been coloured by prejudiced reports emanating from Persia and Constantinople, now had an opportunity to learn the facts of the situation for themselves. Publications that had been openly hostile changed their

tone. The editors of one such newspaper opened an article on the Master's arrival by referring to "His Eminence Mírzá 'Abbás Effendi, the learned and erudite Head of the Bahá'ís in 'Akká and the Centre of authority for Bahá'ís throughout the world" and expressing appreciation of His visit to Alexandria. This and other articles paid particular tribute to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's understanding of Islam and to the principles of unity and religious tolerance that lay at the heart of His teachings.¹⁰⁶

Last but not least, 'Abdu'l-Bahá met many important Western personages, who later spoke about Him to their relatives and friends in Europe, both through letters and personally during their visit to their countries. *Century of Light* writes in this regard:

Despite the Master's ill health that had caused it, the Egyptian interlude proved to be a great blessing. Western diplomats and officials were able to observe at first-hand the extraordinary success of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interaction with leading figures in a region of the Near East that was of lively interest in European circles. Accordingly, by the time the Master embarked for Marseilles on 11 August 1911, His fame had preceded Him.¹⁰⁷

The Universal House of Justice summarizes the main aspects of the presence of the Master in Egypt and in the West in the triennium 1910-1913 as follows:

Uncompromising in defence of the truth, yet infinitely gentle in manner, He brought the universal divine principles to bear on the exigencies of the age. To all without distinction — officials, scientists, workers, children, parents, exiles, activists, clerics, sceptics — He imparted love, wisdom, comfort, whatever the particular need. While elevating their souls, He challenged their assumptions, reoriented their perspectives, expanded their consciousness, and focused their energies. He demonstrated by word and deed such

compassion and generosity that hearts were utterly transformed. No one was turned away.¹⁰⁸

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- ¹ Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 280, chap.19, para. 6.
- ² See "News Notes," *Star of the West*, vol. 1, no.10 (8 September 1910) p.9.
- ³ See *Star of the West*, vol. 5, no.15 (12 December 1914), p.237.
- ⁴ See "The Disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Heralds of the Covenant'," *Bahá'í World*, vol. 3 (1928-1930), pp.84-5.
- ⁵ "Abdul-Bahá in Egypt," *Star of the West*, 1:12 (16 October 1910), p.1.
- ⁶ Quoted in *Bahíyyih Khánum*, p.13.
- ⁷ Mírzá Núri'd-Dín-i-Zayn, the son of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín, one of the nineteen Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh, the person who asked the questions of "Questions and Answers" of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. See "The Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh. 'Pillars of the Faith'," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 3 (1928-1930), pp.80-1.
- ⁸ *Khusrav*, the attendant of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, coming from Burma.
- ⁹ Mírzá Munír-i-Zayn, the son of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín.
- ¹⁰ "Abdul-Bahá in Egypt," *Star of the West*, vol. 1, no.15 (12 December 1912), p.2.
- ¹¹ "Abdul-Bahá in Egypt," *Star of the West*, vol. 1, no.12 (16 October 1910), p.1.
- ¹² "Abdul-Bahá in Egypt," *Star of the West*, vol. 1, n.15 (12 December 1912), pp.2-3.
- ¹³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets*, vol. 2, p.460.
- ¹⁴ Yazdi, *Blessings*, p.16.
- ¹⁵ Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.137.
- ¹⁶ Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.137.
- ¹⁷ See Tudor-Pole, "The First Universal Races Congress," *Star of the West*, vol. 2, no. 8 (10 August 1911), pp.3-4.
- ¹⁸ See Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.138.
- ¹⁹ "News Items," *Star of the West*, vol. 2, no. 9 (8 September 1911), p.7.
- ²⁰ 'Abdu'l-Bahá was also known under this name.
- ²¹ "Impressions of Abdul-Bahá while at Ramleh. By Mr. Louis G. Gregory," *Star of the West*, vol. 2, no.9 (8 September 1911), p.5.
- ²² Yazdi, *Blessings*, pp.18, 20.
- ²³ Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.171.
- ²⁴ "Special," *Star of the West*, vol. 3, no.2 (9 April 1912), p.8.
- ²⁵ See "The Feast of Naurooz (New Day)," *Star of the West*, vol. 9, no.1 (21 March 1918), pp.8-9.

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- ²⁶ Yazdi, *Blessings*, pp.20, 22.
- ²⁷ Yazdi, “Memories of Shoghi Effendi,” *Bahá’í World*, vol. 19 (1983-1986), p.756.
- ²⁸ A nephew of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wife.
- ²⁹ Zarqání, *Maḥmúd’s Diary*, p.13.
- ³⁰ Yazdi, *Blessings*, pp.51-2, 53.
- ³¹ Rabbani, *The Priceless Pearl*, p.19.
- ³² Sohrab, quoted in “News Notes,” *Star of the West*, vol. 4, no.7 (13 July 1913), p.121.
- ³³ See Balyuzi, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá*, p.395.
- ³⁴ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, pp.187-8.
- ³⁵ Sohrab, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt*, p.152.
- ³⁶ Sohrab, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt*, p.330.
- ³⁷ See Balyuzi, ‘*Abdu-Bahá*, p.402.
- ³⁸ Hoagg, “Abdul-Bahá’s return to the Holy Land,” *Star of the West*, vol. 4, no.17 (19 January 1914), pp.288, 290.
- ³⁹ See Yazdi, “Memories of Shoghi Effendi,” *Bahá’í World*, vol. 19 (1983-1986), p.756.
- ⁴⁰ Balyuzi, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá*, p.xii.
- ⁴¹ See Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.281, chap. 19, para.6.
- ⁴² See “The Centenary of the Arrival of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt (continued).”
- ⁴³ Sohrab, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt*, p.96.
- ⁴⁴ Sohrab, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt*, pp.62-3.
- ⁴⁵ Sohrab, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt*, pp.88-9.
- ⁴⁶ Sohrab, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt*, pp.109-10.
- ⁴⁷ Sohrab, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt*, pp.106-7.
- ⁴⁸ Sohrab, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt*, pp.165-6.
- ⁴⁹ Sohrab, ‘*Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt*, p.80.
- ⁵⁰ Gregory, *A Heavenly Vista*, bahai-library.com/gregory_heavenly_vista.
- ⁵¹ His eldest daughter Ziyá Khánum.
- ⁵² Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, p.141.
- ⁵³ Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration*, p.192.
- ⁵⁴ Quoted in *Bahiyiyih Khán*um, p.28.
- ⁵⁵ See Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, p.107.
- ⁵⁶ See Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, p.85.
- ⁵⁷ Seemingly the first daughter of the Master, Dīyá Khánum, the mother of Shoghi Effendi]
- ⁵⁸ A Bahá’í who in 1913 was with the Master in Ramleh. See Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, pp.189, 195, 282. He could be the same Bashír, the

Master's steward, mentioned by Marzieh Gail (1908-1993) in *Summon*, p.237ff.

- ⁵⁹ An old Persian believer of the times of Bahá'u'lláh who in those days lived in Cairo and who passed away in a very advanced age on 5 December 1919. See "Mirza Haji Niaz," *Star of the West*, vol. 10, no.19 (2 March 1920), p.351.
- ⁶⁰ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, p.283.
- ⁶¹ See Rouhani Ma'ani, *Leaves*, p.346.
- ⁶² Rabbaní, *Priceless Pearl*, p.21.
- ⁶³ See Rouhani Ma'ani, *Leaves*, pp.336-8.
- ⁶⁴ See Yazdi, *Blessings*, pp. 20, 22.
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- ⁷⁰ See Scharbrodt, *Islam and the Baha'i Faith*.
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- ⁷⁵ Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.137.
- ⁷⁶ Quoted in "The Centenary of the Arrival of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt (continued)."
- ⁷⁷ Quoted in Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.398.
- ⁷⁸ Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 5.
- ⁷⁹ Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.401.
- ⁸⁰ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, pp.195-6.
- ⁸¹ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, p.201.
- ⁸² See Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p.230.
- ⁸³ Quoted in Root, "A Great Prince Speaks of 'Abdu'l Baha," *Star of the West*, vol. 20, no.10 (January 1930), p.301.
- ⁸⁴ Ibidem.
- ⁸⁵ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, p.276.
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- ⁸⁷ See Holley, "Current Bahá'í Activities in the East and West. Australasia and the Far East," *Bahá'í World*, vol. 4 (1930-32), p.89.
- ⁸⁸ See "'Abbás Mahmúd Al-'Aqqad visits 'Abdu'l-Bahá,'" *The Far-Stretching River*.
- ⁸⁹ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, pp.354-5.
- ⁹⁰ See (Tudor-Pole), "A Wonderful Movement In The East. A Visit To Abdul Baha At Alexandria," *Star of the West*, 1:18 (7 February 1911), pp.1-4.
- ⁹¹ "Extracts from Letter from Mr. Wellesley Tudor Pole," *Star of the West*, vol. 1, no.18 (7 February 1911), pp.5-6.
- ⁹² Quoted in Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, p.227.
- ⁹³ *Ibidem*.
- ⁹⁴ See Root, "A Visit to Rustum Vambery," *Star of the West*, vol. 19, no.11 (February 1929), p.330.
- ⁹⁵ Gregory, "A Heavenly Vista."
- ⁹⁶ See "Baha'í country notes: Egypt."
- ⁹⁷ See "A Glimpse of Mirza Abul-Fazl at Ramleh," *Star of the West*, vol. 4, no.19 (2 March 1914), pp.316-7.
- ⁹⁸ Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p.23.
- ⁹⁹ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, p.126.
- ¹⁰⁰ "1926. International Bahá'í Bureau."
- ¹⁰¹ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, p.62.
- ¹⁰² See "The Disciples of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. 'Heralds of the Covenant'," *The Bahá'í World*, vol. 3 (1928-1930), pp.84-5.
- ¹⁰³ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, p.182.
- ¹⁰⁴ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, pp.329-30.
- ¹⁰⁵ Sohrab, *Abdul-Bahá in Egypt*, p.198.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Century of Light*, pp.14-15, cap.2, par. 16-18.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Century of Light*, pp.14-15, cap.2, par. 16-18.
- ¹⁰⁸ Riḍván 2011, to the Bahá'ís of the World.

Elucidations

Individual Rights and Freedoms

A Message from the Universal House of Justice

December 29, 1988

To the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in the United States of America

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

We have noticed with concern evidences of a confusion of attitudes among some of the friends when they encounter difficulties in applying Bahá'í principles to questions of the day. On the one hand, they acknowledge their belief in Bahá'u'lláh and His teachings; on the other, they invoke Western liberal democratic practices when actions of Bahá'í institutions or of some of their fellow Bahá'ís do not accord with their expectations. At the heart of this confusion are misconceptions of such fundamental issues as individual rights and freedom of expression in the Bahá'í community. The source of the potential difficulties of the situation appears to us to be an inadequacy of Bahá'í perspective on the part of both individual believers and their institutions.

Recognizing the immense challenge you face to resolve such confusion, we pause to reflect with you on these issues in search of a context in which relevant fundamental questions may be discussed and understood in the community.

The extraordinary capacities of the American nation, as well as the superb stewardship of the Bahá'í community within it, have repeatedly been extolled in the writings of our Faith. In His Tablets and utterances, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Centre of the Covenant, projected a compelling vision of the world-embracing prospects of that richly endowed country. "The American nation," He averred, "is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world, and be blest in both the East and the West for the triumph of its people." In another assertion addressed to the Bahá'í community itself, He uttered words of transcendent importance: "...your mission," He affirmed, "is unspeakably glorious. Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a centre from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God will, in the plentitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established."

Shoghi Effendi, in various statements, celebrated the remarkable achievements and potential glories of that specially blessed community, but was moved to issue, in "The Advent of Divine Justice," a profound warning which is essential to a proper understanding of the relation of that Bahá'í community to the nation from which it has sprung. "The glowing tributes," he solemnly wrote, "so repeatedly and deservedly paid to the capacity, the spirit, the conduct, and the high rank, of the American believers, both individually and as an organic community, must, under no circumstances, be confounded with the characteristics and nature of the people from which God has raised them up. A sharp distinction between that community and that people must be made, and resolutely and fearlessly upheld, if we wish to give due recognition to the transmuting power of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, in its impact on the lives and standards of those who have chosen to enlist under His banner. Otherwise, the supreme and distinguishing function of His Revelation, which is none other than the calling into being of a new race of men, will remain wholly unrecognized and completely obscured." It is the far-reaching, transformative implications of this distinction which we especially invite you to contemplate.

The vantage point that gives us perspective and is the foundation of our belief and actions rests on our recognition of the sovereignty of God and our submission to His will as revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, His supreme Manifestation for this promised Day. To accept the Prophet of God in His time and to abide by His bidding are the two essential, inseparable duties which each soul was created to fulfill. One exercises these twin duties by one's own choice, an act constituting the highest expression of the free will with which every human being has been endowed by an all-loving Creator.

The vehicle in this resplendent Age for the practical fulfillment of these duties is the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh; it is, indeed, the potent instrument by which individual belief in Him is translated into constructive deeds. The Covenant comprises divinely conceived arrangements necessary to preserve the organic unity of the Cause. It therefore engenders a motivating power which, as the beloved Master tells us, "like unto the artery, beats and pulsates in the body of the world". "It is indubitably clear," He asserts, "that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant." Through it the meaning of the Word, both in theory and practice, is made evident in the life and work of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the appointed Interpreter, the perfect Exemplar, the Centre of the Covenant. Through it the processes of the Administrative Order — "this unique, this wondrous System" — are made to operate.

In emphasizing its distinctiveness, Shoghi Effendi has pointed out that "this Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Bahá'u'lláh has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret His Word and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances". In another statement, he maintains that, "It would be utterly misleading to attempt a comparison between this unique, divinely-conceived Order and any of the diverse systems which the minds of men, at various periods of their history, have contrived for the government of human institutions." "Such an attempt," he felt, "would in itself betray a lack of

complete appreciation of the excellence of the handiwork of its great Author.”

The lack of such appreciation will detract from the perspective of anyone who measures Bahá'í administrative processes against practices prevalent in today's society. For notwithstanding its inclination to democratic methods in the administration of its affairs, and regardless of the resemblance of some of its features to those of other systems, the Administrative Order is not to be viewed merely as an improvement on past and existing systems; it represents a departure both in origin and in concept. “This new-born Administrative Order,” as Shoghi Effendi has explained, “incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, without being in any sense a mere replica of any one of them, and without introducing within its machinery any of the objectionable features which they inherently possess. It blends and harmonizes, as no government fashioned by mortal hands has as yet accomplished, the salutary truths which each of these systems undoubtedly contains without vitiating the integrity of those God-given verities on which it is ultimately founded.”

You are, no doubt, conversant with the Guardian's expatiations on this theme. Why, then, this insistent emphasis? Why this repeated review of fundamentals? This emphasis, this review, is to sound an appeal for solid thinking, for the attainment of correct perspectives, for the adoption of proper attitudes. And these are impossible without a deep appreciation of Bahá'í fundamentals.

The great emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Order of Bahá'u'lláh is not meant to belittle existing systems of government. Indeed, they are to be recognized as the fruit of a vast period of social evolution, representing an advanced stage in the development of social organization. What motivates us is the knowledge that the supreme mission of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the Bearer of that Order, is, as Shoghi Effendi pointed out, “none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations,” indicating the “coming of age of the entire human race”. The astounding

implication of this is the near prospect of attaining an age-old hope, now made possible at long last by the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. In practical terms, His mission signals the advent of "an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced". It is a fresh manifestation of the direct involvement of God in history, a reassurance that His children have not been left to drift, a sign of the outpouring of a heavenly grace that will enable all humanity to be free at last from conflict and contention to ascend the heights of world peace and divine civilization. Beyond all else, it is a demonstration of that love for His children, which He knew in the depth of His "immemorial being" and in the "ancient eternity" of His Essence, and which caused Him to create us all. In the noblest sense, then, attention to the requirements of His World Order is a reciprocation of that love.

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It is this perspective that helps us to understand the question of freedom and its place in Bahá'í thought and action. The idea and the fact of freedom pervade all human concerns in an infinitude of notions and modes. Freedom is indeed essential to all expressions of human life.

Freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of action are among the freedoms which have received the ardent attention of social thinkers across the centuries. The resulting outflow of such profound thought has exerted a tremendous liberating influence in the shaping of modern society. Generations of the oppressed have fought and died in the name of freedom. Certainly the want of freedom from oppression has been a dominant factor in the turmoil of the times: witness the plethora of movements which have resulted in the rapid emergence of new nations in the latter part of the twentieth century. A true reading of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh leaves no doubt as to the high importance of these freedoms to constructive social processes. Consider, for instance, Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation to the kings and rulers. Can it not be deduced from this alone that attainment of freedom is a significant purpose of His Revelation? His denunciations of tyranny and His urgent appeals on behalf of the oppressed

provide unmistakable proof. But does not the freedom foreshadowed by His Revelation imply nobler, ampler manifestations of human achievement? Does it not indicate an organic relationship between the internal and external realities of man such as has not yet been attained?

In his summary of significant Bahá'í teachings, Shoghi Effendi wrote that Bahá'u'lláh "inculcates the principle of 'moderation in all things'; declares that whatsoever, be it 'liberty, civilization and the like', 'passeth beyond the limits of moderation' must 'exercise a pernicious influence upon men'; observes that western civilization has gravely perturbed and alarmed the peoples of the world; and predicts that the day is approaching when the 'flame' of a civilization 'carried to excess' 'will devour the cities'."

Expounding the theme of liberty, Bahá'u'lláh asserted that "the embodiment of liberty and its symbol is the animal"; that "liberty causeth man to overstep the bounds of propriety, and to infringe on the dignity of his station"; that "true liberty consisteth in man's submission unto My commandments". "We approve of liberty in certain circumstances," He declared, "and refuse to sanction it in others." But He gave the assurance that, "Were men to observe that which We have sent down unto them from the Heaven of Revelation, they would, of a certainty, attain unto perfect liberty." And again He said: "Mankind in its entirety must firmly adhere to whatsoever hath been revealed and vouchsafed unto it. Then and only then will it attain unto true liberty."

Bahá'u'lláh's assertions clearly call for an examination of current assumptions. Should liberty be as free as is supposed in contemporary Western thought? Where does freedom limit our possibilities for progress, and where do limits free us to thrive? What are the limits to the expansion of freedom? For so fluid and elastic are its qualities of application and expression that the concept of freedom in any given situation is likely to assume a different latitude from one mind to another; these qualities are, alas, susceptible to the employment alike of good and evil. Is it any wonder, then, that Bahá'u'lláh exhorts us to submission to the will of God?

Since any constructive view of freedom implies limits, further questions are inevitable: what are the latitudes of freedom in the Bahá'í community? How are these to be determined? Because human beings have been created to "carry forward an ever-advancing civilization," the exercise of freedom, it may be deduced, is intended to enable all to fulfill this purpose in their individual lives and in their collective functioning as a society. Hence whatever in principle is required to realize this purpose gauges the latitudes or limits of freedom.

Contemplating Bahá'u'lláh's warning that "whatsoever passeth beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence," we come to appreciate that the Administrative Order He has conceived embodies the operating principles which are necessary to the maintenance of that moderation which will ensure the "true liberty" of humankind. All things considered, does the Administrative Order not appear to be the structure of freedom for our Age? 'Abdu'l-Bahá offers us comfort in this thought, for He has said that "the moderate freedom which guarantees the welfare of the world of mankind and maintains and preserves the universal relationships, is found in its fullest power and extension in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh".

Within this framework of freedom a pattern is set for institutional and individual behavior which depends for its efficacy not so much on the force of law, which admittedly must be respected, as on the recognition of a mutuality of benefits, and on the spirit of cooperation maintained by the willingness, the courage, the sense of responsibility, and the initiative of individuals — these being expressions of their devotion and submission to the will of God. Thus there is a balance of freedom between the institution, whether national or local, and the individuals who sustain its existence.

Consider, for example, the Local Spiritual Assembly, the methods of its formation and the role of individuals in electing it. The voter elects with the understanding that he is free to choose without any interference whomever his conscience prompts him to select, and he freely accepts the authority of the outcome. In the act of voting, the individual subscribes to a covenant by which the orderliness of society is upheld. The

Assembly has the responsibility to guide, direct and decide on community affairs and the right to be obeyed and supported by members of the community. The individual has the responsibility to establish and maintain the Assembly through election, the offering of advice, moral support and material assistance; and he has the right to be heard by it, to receive its guidance and assistance, and to appeal from any Assembly decision which he conscientiously feels is unjust or detrimental to the interests of the community.

But occupation with the mechanics of Bahá'í Administration, divorced from the animating spirit of the Cause, leads to a distortion, to an arid secularization foreign to the nature of the Administration. Equally significant to the procedures for election — to further extend the example — is the evocation of that rarefied atmosphere of prayer and reflection, that quiet dignity of the process, devoid of nominations and campaigning, in which the individual's freedom to choose is limited only by his own conscience, exercised in private in an attitude that invites communion with the Holy Spirit. In this sphere, the elector regards the outcome as an expression of the will of God and those elected as being primarily responsible to that will, not to the constituency which elected them. An election thus conducted portrays an aspect of that organic unity of the inner and outer realities of human life which is necessary to the construction of a mature society in this new Age. In no other system do individuals exercise such a breadth of freedom in the electoral process.

* * *

The equilibrium of responsibilities implied by all this presupposes maturity on the part of all concerned. This maturity has an apt analogy in adulthood in human beings. How significant is the difference between infancy and childhood, adolescence and adulthood! In a period of history dominated by the surging energy, the rebellious spirit and frenetic activity of adolescence, it is difficult to grasp the distinguishing elements of the mature society to which Bahá'u'lláh beckons all humanity. The models of the old world order blur vision of that which must be perceived; for these models were, in many instances, conceived in rebellion and retain the characteristics

of the revolutions peculiar to an adolescent, albeit necessary, period in the evolution of human society. The very philosophies which have provided the intellectual content of such revolutions – Hobbes, Locke, Jefferson, Mill, come readily to mind – were inspired by protest against the oppressive conditions which revolutions were intended to remedy.

These characteristics are conspicuous, for example, in the inordinate skepticism regarding authority, and consequently, in the grudging respect which the citizens of various nations show toward their governments; they have become pronounced in the incessant promotion of individualism, often to the detriment of the wider interests of society. How aptly, even after the lapse of half a century, Shoghi Effendi's views, as conveyed by his secretary, fit the contemporary scene: "Our present generation, mainly due to the corruptions that have been identified with organizations, seem to stand against any institution. Religion as an institution is denounced. Government as an institution is denounced. Even marriage as an institution is denounced. We Bahá'ís should not be blinded by such prevalent notions. If such were the case, all the divine Manifestations would not have invariably appointed someone to succeed Them. Undoubtedly, corruptions did enter those institutions, but these corruptions were not due to the very nature of the institutions but to the lack of proper directions as to their powers and nature of their perpetuation. What Bahá'u'lláh has done is not to eliminate all institutions in the Cause but to provide the necessary safeguards that would eliminate corruptions that caused the fall of previous institutions. What those safeguards are is most interesting to study and find out and also most essential to know."

We make these observations not to indulge in criticism of any system, but rather to open up lines of thought, to encourage a re-examination of the bases of modern society, and to engender a perspective for consideration of the distinctive features of the Order of Bahá'u'lláh. What, it could be asked, was the nature of society that gave rise to such characteristics and such philosophies? Where have these taken mankind? Has their employment satisfied the needs and expectations of the human spirit? The answers to such questions could lay the

ground for a contrasting observation of the origin and nature of the characteristics and philosophy underlying that Order.

* * *

As to freedom of expression, a fundamental principle of the Cause, the Administrative Order provides unique methods and channels for its exercise and maintenance; these have been amply described in the writings of the Faith, but they are not yet clearly understood by the friends. For Bahá'u'lláh has extended the scope and deepened the meaning of self-expression. In His elevation of art and of work performed in the service of humanity to acts of worship can be discerned enormous prospects for a new birth of expression in the civilization anticipated by His World Order. The significance of this principle, now so greatly amplified by the Lord of the Age, cannot be doubted; but it is in its ramifications in speech that keen understanding is urgently needed. From a Bahá'í point of view, the exercise of freedom of speech must necessarily be disciplined by a profound appreciation of both the positive and negative dimensions of freedom, on the one hand, and of speech, on the other.

Bahá'u'lláh warns us that "the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison." "Material fire consumeth the body," He says in elaborating the point, "whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endureth a century." In tracing the framework of free speech, He again advises "moderation". "Human utterance is an essence which aspireth to exert its influence and needeth moderation," He states, adding: "As to its influence, this is conditional upon refinement which in turn is dependent upon hearts which are detached and pure. As to its moderation, this hath to be combined with tact and wisdom as prescribed in the Holy Scriptures and Tablets."

Also relevant to what is said, and how, is when it is said. For speech, as for so many other things, there is a season. Bahá'u'lláh reinforces this understanding by drawing attention to the maxim that, "Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as

timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it.”

Speech is a powerful phenomenon. Its freedom is both to be extolled and feared. It calls for an acute exercise of judgement, since both the limitation of speech and the excess of it can lead to dire consequences. Thus there exist in the system of Bahá'u'lláh checks and balances necessary to the beneficial uses of this freedom in the onward development of society. A careful examination of the principles of Bahá'í consultation and the formal and informal arrangements for employing them offer new insights into the dynamics of freedom of expression.

As it is beyond the scope of this letter to expatiate upon these principles, let it suffice to recall briefly certain of the requisites of consultation, particularly for those who serve on Spiritual Assemblies. Love and harmony, purity of motive, humility and lowliness amongst the friends, patience and long-suffering in difficulties – these inform the attitude with which they proceed “with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views,” each using “perfect liberty” both in so doing and in “unveiling the proof of his demonstration”. “If another contradicts him, he must not become excited because if there be no investigation or verification of questions and matters, the agreeable view will not be discovered neither understood.” “The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions.” If unanimity is not subsequently achieved, decisions are arrived at by majority vote.

Once a decision has been reached, all members of the consultative body, having had the opportunity fully to state their views, agree wholeheartedly to support the outcome. What if the minority view is right? “If they agree upon a subject,” ‘Abdu'l-Bahá has explained, “even though it be wrong, it is better than to disagree and be in the right, for this difference will produce the demolition of the divine foundation. Though one of the parties may be in the right and they disagree that will be the cause of a thousand wrongs, but if they agree and both parties are in the wrong, as it is in unity the truth will be revealed and the wrong made right.” Implicit in this approach to the social utility of thought is the profundity of the change in

the standard of public discussion intended by Bahá'u'lláh for a mature society.

The qualities by which the individual can achieve the personal discipline necessary to successful consultation find their full expression in what Shoghi Effendi regarded as the “spirit of a true Bahá'í”. Ponder, for instance, the appealing remark addressed to your own community in one of his earliest letters: “Nothing short of the spirit of a true Bahá'í can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candour, and courage on the other.” This was an appeal to the maturity and the distinction towards which he repeatedly directed their thoughts.

* * *

Because the Most Great Peace is the object of our longing, a primary effort of the Bahá'í community is to reduce the incidence of conflict and contention, which have categorically been forbidden in the Most Holy Book. Does this mean that one may not express critical thought? Absolutely not. How can there be the candour called for in consultation if there is no critical thought? How is the individual to exercise his responsibilities to the Cause, if he is not allowed the freedom to express his views? Has Shoghi Effendi not stated that “at the very root of the Cause lies the principle of the undoubted right of the individual to self-expression, his freedom to declare his conscience and set forth his views”?

The Administrative Order provides channels for expression of criticism, acknowledging, as a matter of principle, that “it is not only the right, but the vital responsibility of every loyal and intelligent member of the community to offer fully and frankly, but with due respect and consideration to the authority of the Assembly, any suggestion, recommendation or criticism he conscientiously feels he should in order to improve and remedy certain existing conditions or trends in his local community”. Correspondingly, the Assembly has the duty: “to give careful consideration to any such views submitted to them”.

Apart from the direct access which one has to an Assembly, local or national, or to a Counsellor or Auxiliary Board member, there are specific occasions for the airing of one's views in the community. The most frequent of these occasions for any Bahá'í is the Nineteen Day Feast which, "besides its social and spiritual aspects, fulfills various administrative needs and requirements of the community, chief among them being the need for open and constructive criticism and deliberation regarding the state of affairs within the local Bahá'í community". At the same time, Shoghi Effendi's advice, as conveyed by his secretary, goes on to stress the point that "all criticisms and discussions of a negative character which may result in undermining the authority of the Assembly as a body should be strictly avoided. For otherwise the order of the Cause itself will be endangered, and confusion and discord will reign in the community."

Clearly, then, there is more to be considered than the critic's right to self-expression; the unifying spirit of the Cause of God must also be preserved, the authority of its laws and ordinances safeguarded, authority being an indispensable aspect of freedom. Motive, manner, mode, become relevant; but there is also the matter of love: love for one's fellows, love for one's community, love for one's institutions.

The responsibility resting on the individual to conduct himself in such a way as to ensure the stability of society takes on elemental importance in this context. For vital as it is to the progress of society, criticism is a two-edged sword: it is all too often the harbinger of conflict and contention. The balanced processes of the Administrative Order are meant to prevent this essential activity from degenerating to any form of dissent that breeds opposition and its dreadful schismatic consequences. How incalculable have been the negative results of ill-directed criticism: in the catastrophic divergences it has created in religion, in the equally contentious factions it has spawned in political systems, which have dignified conflict by institutionalizing such concepts as the "loyal opposition" which attach to one or another of the various categories of political opinion: conservative, liberal, progressive, reactionary, and so forth.

If Bahá'í individuals deliberately ignore the principles imbedded in the Order which Bahá'u'lláh Himself has established to remedy divisiveness in the human family, the Cause for which so much has been sacrificed will surely be set back in its mission to rescue world society from complete disintegration. May not the existence of the Covenant be invoked again and again, so that such repetition may preserve the needed perspective? For, in this age, the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh has been protected against the baneful effects of the misuse of the process of criticism; this has been done by the institution of the Covenant and by the provision of a universal administrative system which incorporates within itself the mechanisms for drawing out the constructive ideas of individuals and using them for the benefit of the entire system. Admonishing the people to uphold the unifying purpose of the Cause, Bahá'u'lláh, in the Book of His Covenant, addresses these poignant words to them: "Let not the means of order be made the cause of confusion and the instrument of union an occasion for discord." Such assertions emphasize a crucial point; it is this: In terms of the Covenant, dissidence is a moral and intellectual contradiction of the main objective animating the Bahá'í community, namely, the establishment of the unity of mankind.

* * *

We return to the phenomenal characteristics of speech. Content, volume, style, tact, wisdom, timeliness are among the critical factors in determining the effects of speech for good or evil. Consequently, the friends need ever to be conscious of the significance of this activity which so distinguishes human beings from other forms of life, and they must exercise it judiciously. Their efforts at such discipline will give birth to an etiquette of expression worthy of the approaching maturity of the human race. Just as this discipline applies to the spoken word, it applies equally to the written word; and it profoundly affects the operation of the press.

The significance and role of the press in a new world system are conspicuous in the emphasis which the Order of Bahá'u'lláh places on accessibility to information at all levels of society. Shoghi Effendi tells us that Bahá'u'lláh makes "specific

reference to ‘the swiftly appearing newspapers’, describes them as ‘the mirror of the world’ and as ‘an amazing and potent phenomenon’, and prescribes to all who are responsible for their production the duty to be sanctified from malice, passion and prejudice, to be just and fair-minded, to be painstaking in their inquiries, and ascertain all the facts in every situation”.

In His social treatise, “The Secret of Divine Civilization,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá offers insight as to the indispensability of the press in future society. He says it is “urgent that beneficial articles and books be written, clearly and definitely establishing what the present-day requirements of the people are, and what will conduce to the happiness and advancement of society”. Further, He writes of the “publication of high thoughts” as the “dynamic power in the arteries of life,” “the very soul of the world”. Moreover, He states that, “Public opinion must be directed toward whatever is worthy of this day, and this is impossible except through the use of adequate arguments and the adducing of clear, comprehensive and conclusive proofs.”

As to manner and style, Bahá’u’lláh has exhorted “authors among the friends” to “write in such a way as would be acceptable to fair-minded souls, and not lead to cavilling by the people”. And He issues a reminder: “We have said in the past that one word hath the influence of spring and causeth hearts to become fresh and verdant, while another is like unto blight which causeth the blossoms and flowers to wither.”

In the light of all this, the code of conduct of the press must embrace the principles and objectives of consultation as revealed by Bahá’u’lláh. Only in this way will the press be able to make its full contribution to the preservation of the rights of the people and become a powerful instrument in the consultative processes of society, and hence for the unity of the human race.

* * *

Some of the friends have suggested that the emergence of the Faith from obscurity indicates the timeliness of ceasing observance in the Bahá’í community of certain restraints;

particularly are they concerned about the temporary necessity of review before publishing.

That the Faith has emerged from obscurity on a global scale is certain. This definitely marks a triumphant stage in the efforts of the community to register its existence on the minds of those who influence world events. Consider how, because of the sufferings and sacrifices of the friends in Iran, the concerns of the community in these respects have become a matter of discussion in the most influential parliaments and the most important international forums on earth. That this emergence frees the Cause to pursue objectives hitherto unreachable is also undeniable; but that it marks the attainment of the community's anticipated maturity is entirely doubtful.

How could it have attained maturity, when we know from the clear guidance of the beloved Guardian that obscurity is but one of the many stages in the long evolution towards the Faith's golden destiny? Has he not advised us all that the subsequent stage of oppression must precede the stages of its emancipation and its recognition as a world religion? Can the friends forget the oft-quoted warning of 'Abdu'l-Bahá concerning the bitter opposition that will confront the Cause in various lands on all continents? In the case of the American believers, has Shoghi Effendi not alluded to this coming fury in his description of them as the "invincible Army of Bahá'u'lláh, who in the West, and at one of its potential storm-centres is to fight, in His name and for His sake, one of its fiercest and most glorious battles"?

Those who are anxious to relax all restraint, who invoke freedom of speech as the rationale for publishing every and any thing concerning the Bahá'í community, who call for the immediate termination of the practice of review now that the Faith has emerged from obscurity – are they not aware of these sobering prospects? Widespread as has been the public revulsion to the current persecutions in Iran, let there be no mistake about the certainty of the opposition which must yet be confronted in many countries, including that which is the Cradle of the Administrative Order itself.

The Faith is as yet in its infancy. Despite its emergence from obscurity, even now the vast majority of the human race

remains ignorant of its existence; moreover, the vast majority of its adherents are relatively new Bahá'ís. The change implied by this new stage in its evolution is that whereas heretofore this tender plant was protected in its obscurity from the attention of external elements, it has now become exposed. This exposure invites close observation, and that observation will eventually lead to opposition in various quarters. So far from adopting a carefree attitude, the community must be conscious of the necessity to present a correct view of itself and an accurate understanding of its purpose to a largely skeptical public. A greater effort, a greater care must now be exercised to ensure its protection against the malice of the ignorant and the unwisdom of its friends.

Let us all remember that the struggle of the infant Faith of God to thrive is beset with the turmoil of the present age. Like a tender shoot just barely discernible above ground, it must be nurtured to strength and maturity and buttressed as necessary against the blight of strong winds and deadly entanglements with weeds and thistles. If we to whose care this plant has been entrusted are insensitive to its tenderness, the great tree which is its certain potential will be hindered in its growth towards the spreading of its sheltering branches over all humankind. From this perspective we must all consider the latent danger to the Cause of ill-advised actions and exaggerated expectations; and particularly must we all be concerned about the effects of words, especially those put in print. It is here that Bahá'í authors and publishers need to be attentive and exert rigorous discipline upon themselves, as well as abide by the requirements of review at this early stage in the development of the Faith.

* * *

The right of the individual to self-expression has permeated the foregoing comments on the various freedoms, but, even so, a word more might be said about individual freedom. The fundamental attitude of the Faith in this respect is best demonstrated by statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá concerning the family. "The integrity of the family bond," He says, "must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed... All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be

sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honour of one, the honour of all.”

The individual's relation to society is explained by Shoghi Effendi in the statement that, “The Bahá'í conception of social life is essentially based on the principle of the subordination of the individual will to that of society. It neither suppresses the individual nor does it exalt him to the point of making him an anti-social creature, a menace to society. As in everything, it follows the golden mean.”

This relationship, so fundamental to the maintenance of civilized life, calls for the utmost degree of understanding and cooperation between society and the individual; and because the need to foster a climate in which the untold potentialities of the individual members of society can develop, this relationship must allow “free scope” for “individuality to assert itself” through modes of spontaneity, initiative and diversity that ensure the viability of society. Among the responsibilities assigned to Bahá'í institutions which have a direct bearing on these aspects of individual freedom and development is one which is thus described in the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice: “to safeguard the personal rights, freedom and initiative of individuals”. A corollary is: “to give attention to the preservation of human honour”.

How noteworthy that in the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, while the individual will is subordinated to that of society, the individual is not lost in the mass but becomes the focus of primary development, so that he may find his own place in the flow of progress, and society as a whole may benefit from the accumulated talents and abilities of the individuals composing it. Such an individual finds fulfillment of his potential not merely in satisfying his own wants but in realizing his completeness in being at one with humanity and with the divinely ordained purpose of creation.

The quality of freedom and of its expression – indeed, the very capacity to maintain freedom in a society – undoubtedly depends on the knowledge and training of individuals and on their ability to cope with the challenges of life with equanimity.

As the beloved Master has written: “And the honour and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world’s multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.”

* * *

The spirit of liberty which in recent decades has swept over the planet with such tempestuous force is a manifestation of the vibrancy of the Revelation brought by Bahá’u’lláh. His own words confirm it. “The Ancient Beauty,” He wrote in a soul-stirring commentary on His sufferings, “hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty.”

Might it not be reasonably concluded, then, that “true liberty” is His gift of love to the human race? Consider what Bahá’u’lláh has done: He revealed laws and principles to guide the free, He established an Order to channel the actions of the free, He proclaimed a Covenant to guarantee the unity of the free.

Thus, we hold to this ultimate perspective: Bahá’u’lláh came to set humanity free. His Revelation is, indeed, an invitation to freedom — freedom from want, freedom from war, freedom to unite, freedom to progress, freedom in peace and joy.

You, who live in a land where freedom is so highly prized, have not, then, to dispense with its fruits, but you are challenged and do have the obligation to uphold and vindicate the distinction between the licence that limits your possibilities for genuine progress and the moderation that ensures the enjoyment of true liberty.

[signed]

The Universal House of Justice

Appendices

Bibliography of the Bahá'í Writings and Their abbreviations used in this book

ABL	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>'Abdu'l-Bahá in London</i>
ADP	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>Abdu'l-Bahá on Divine Philosophy</i>
BWF	Compilation, <i>Bahá'í World Faith</i>
DG	Shoghi Effendi, <i>Directives from the Guardian</i>
ESW	Bahá'u'lláh, <i>Epistle to the Son of the Wolf</i>
FWU	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>Foundations of World Unity</i>
GPB	Shoghi Effendi. <i>God Passes By</i>
GWB	Bahá'u'lláh, <i>Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh</i>
HW	Bahá'u'lláh, <i>Hidden Words</i>
JWTA	Compilation, <i>Japan Will Turn Ablaze!</i>
KA	Bahá'u'lláh, <i>Kitáb-i-Aqdas</i>
KI	Bahá'u'lláh, <i>Kitáb-i-Íqán</i>
PB	Bahá'u'lláh, <i>The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh</i>
PBA	Compilation, <i>Principles of Bahá'í Administration</i>
PM	<i>Bahá'u'lláh, Prayers and Meditations</i>
PT	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>Paris Talks</i>
PUP	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>Promulgation of Universal Peace</i>
SAQ	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>Some Answered Questions</i>
SCKA	<i>Synopsis and Codification of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas</i>
SDC	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>Secret of Divine Civilization</i>
SLH	Bahá'u'lláh, <i>Summons of the Lord of Hosts</i>
SVFV	Bahá'u'lláh, <i>Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys</i>
SWAB	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá</i>
TAB	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Abbas</i> , volumes 1-3
TAF	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>Tablet to Auguste Forel</i>
TB	Bahá'u'lláh, <i>Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas</i>
TDP	'Abdu'l-Bahá, <i>Tablets of the Divine Plan</i>
TU	Bahá'u'lláh, <i>Tabernacle of Unity</i>
WOB	Shoghi Effendi, <i>World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters</i>

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