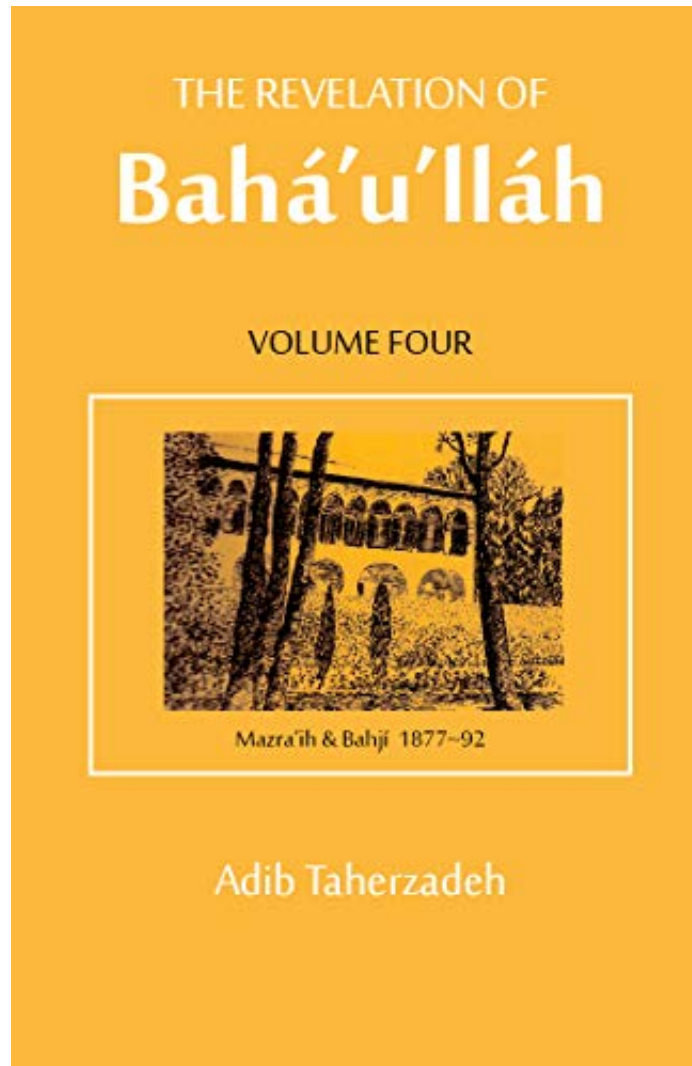


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# Revelation of Baha'u'llah Vol. 4: Mazra'ih and Bahji 1877-92

*by*  
Adib Taherzadeh



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## **Synopsis**

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is a four-volume series about the Scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith. It is a unique survey of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, using both authentic English translations and original sources, that describes the contents of all major works, including many unknown in the West. Volume 4 covers the most momentous period in the ministry of Bahá'u'lláh, the final years of His life when after the long period of exile and imprisonment He took up residence in the delightful Mansion of Bahjí. Here He revealed Tablets of unsurpassed importance, including His last major work Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. Many of the allusions in these Tablets to persons and events are explained in this book.

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To those brilliant souls  
the Bahá'í Pioneers and Teachers in every land  
who have expended their lives and their substance  
in the path of Bahá'u'lláh  
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The extracts from the Writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh contained in this book are from the matchless translations by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, and those carried out under the auspices of The Universal House of Justice. Published sources are acknowledged in the references and Bibliography. There are many other quotations from Persian manuscripts and publications, and these I have translated, unless otherwise indicated. Most quotations had to be edited prior to translation. The footnotes to these quotations, however, are mostly mine, and this is indicated explicitly where confusion may arise. Verses taken from the Qur'án are numbered in accordance with the Arabic text, although their numbering may differ from that given in English translations. Persian and Arabic

names are transliterated in accordance with the system adopted for books on the Bahá'í Faith, but quotations are reproduced in their original form. The early followers of Bahá'u'lláh seldom sought to be photographed. Occasionally group photographs were taken, from which it has been possible to obtain many of the individual photographs which I have included, in the belief that their historical interest outweighs the fact that some are faded and out of focus. I am deeply indebted to the Audio-Visual Department of the Bahá'í World Centre for supplying most of these photographs. I should like to thank Mr Ruhi Shakibai for his excellent reproduction of one of the photographs printed in this book. It has taken a long time to finish writing this book, for as before, the only time available has been the late hours of those evenings spent at home in Dublin. Now that this work is completed, I would like to share with readers certain facts concerning the force motivating this humble undertaking. The chief factor which has supported and sustained me in writing these volumes has been the deep sense of love I cherish in my heart for those believers throughout the world who are unable to read the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh in their original language, and the hope that this series of volumes, however inadequate and superficial, may convey through the potency of the Words of Bahá'u'lláh Himself a small measure of the greatness of His mighty Revelation. A contributory factor has been the loving encouragement which the friends everywhere have showered upon me. In particular, I am deeply indebted to Mrs Marion Hofman for her unflinching and genuine support throughout the last fifteen years. I wish to extend to her my heartfelt gratitude and deep appreciation for her wise counsel and loving encouragement which have been of the greatest assistance to me. I am also deeply appreciative of much valuable advice and help given to me by Dr May Hofman Ballerio in the course of her excellent and ably executed editorial work. I wish to express my warmest thanks for her major contributions to the production of this and previous volumes. Another source of encouragement over the years and for which I am truly grateful is my dear wife, Lesley, whose loving support has played an important part in my work. To Mrs Thelma Batchelor and Mrs Annette Rooney I wish to extend my warmest thanks and appreciation for their excellent typing of the manuscript from my original scribbled notes, great portions of which were difficult to read. My sincere thanks are directed also to Dr Wendi Momen for her skilful production of the Index, and to Mr Harold Boyce for his attention to detail in proofreading and many helpful suggestions.

Adib Taherzadeh Foreword

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh has ushered in the Day of God foretold by all the Prophets of the past. So vast has been the outpouring of this Revelation, extending over a period of forty years, that any attempt to describe it must resemble an attempt to place an ocean within a cup. Moreover, His Revelation is possessed of such a potency that to try to fathom its significance or to probe its hidden mysteries is an act beyond the capacity of mortal men. This puts into perspective the attempt made by the author of these four volumes to capture glimpses of this mighty Revelation and present them to the readers, while knowing only too well how difficult the task is and how inadequately he has treated the subjects. Indeed, all that has been described in these volumes is the outcome of skimming the surface of a tiny part of a boundless ocean. This fourth volume covers the most momentous period in the Ministry of Bahá'u'lláh, a period during which His Revelation reached its climax, and His own Person, after years of exile and imprisonment, majestically ascended the throne of His sovereignty in a delightful Mansion designated by Him as 'the most sublime vision of mankind'. The great many Tablets that streamed forth from the Supreme Pen during this period were to a large extent concerned with promulgating those teachings and principles which, in conjunction with the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, constitute the framework of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order. The events associated with this period were highly significant, contributing as they did to the emergence of the Faith in Persia, and demonstrating

its universality, its vitality and its invincibility as a young Faith possessed of a dynamism unequalled in the annals of religion. While the Faith was steadily growing in the land of its birth, its healing message had also begun to penetrate the neighbouring countries of the East. Some of these accounts appear in this volume. The story begins from where it was left off in volume 3 – the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh at the Mansion of Mazra'ih. It continues with the main events during the remainder of His Ministry, and some of the outstanding Tablets revealed by Him until His ascension in the Mansion of Bahjí. It is the hope of the present author to continue the story in future volumes on the subject of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, the most important and significant part of His Revelation.

**1 Bahá'u'lláh at the Mansion of Mazra'ih**

The departure of Bahá'u'lláh from the prison-city in June 1877 and His transfer to the Mansion of Mazra'ih, a beautiful summer residence of 'Abdu'lláh Páshá in the quiet countryside north of 'Akká, constitute a turning-point in the fortunes of His Ministry. The building at Mazra'ih stood in the middle of a garden, situated on a vast plain. From one side the view was of the Galilee hills and from the other, the sea. One room on the ground floor was used as a reception room by Bahá'u'lláh, and many of the believers attained His presence there. His own room was on the upper floor with a nearby balcony (see vol. 1, pp. 290–91, for an interesting story of Mírzá Ja'far, who fell down from that balcony) overlooking beautiful countryside.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, His Mother the saintly Navváb, and His cherished sister the Greatest Holy Leaf all stayed behind in 'Akká. They visited Bahá'u'lláh from time to time, especially the Master, who attained His presence whenever He could.

**The Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 'Akká**

'Abdu'l-Bahá's main reason for not joining His Beloved Father at Mazra'ih and later at the Mansion of Bahjí was the staggering weight of cares and responsibilities which He had taken upon Himself ever since the days of Adrianople in order to relieve Bahá'u'lláh of the burden of having to attend to daily affairs. In 'Akká these responsibilities weighed so heavily upon Him that He had to remain in the city and take care of a multitude of problems relating to the Bahá'í community as well as to the inhabitants of 'Akká and its neighbouring towns. He was busy from the early hours of the morning until after midnight meeting government officials, religious dignitaries and men of culture and commerce, as well as attending to the needs of the citizens, the poor, the sick, the old, the dying, the widows and the orphans. Governors and officials often sought His advice on matters of great importance to their work. Religious leaders likewise sat at His feet, and all received a measure of His knowledge and wisdom. He was a counsellor to every man, a true and loving father to the poor and the downtrodden. He would spend many hours every day visiting the sick, providing medical treatment, food and clothing for those who needed them. He was indeed the 'Master of 'Akká'. His attention to the affairs of the Bahá'í community was no less important and time-consuming. Not only did He guide and direct the individual Bahá'ís living in 'Akká in their personal and community affairs, but He made detailed arrangements for the stream of pilgrims who were coming to attain the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. The Master ensured that each one of the pilgrims was made comfortable in the Pilgrim House, or accommodated elsewhere. He surrounded them with His all-encompassing love, counselled them in their manifold affairs, and prepared them spiritually for that greatest moment in their lives when they would be ushered into the presence of their Lord. In some cases, He even inspected their clothes and if they were found to be worn out or unsuitable, He would arrange for them to wear new outfits worthy of entering the presence of Bahá'u'lláh.

The following are the reminiscences of Túbá Khánum, one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's daughters, concerning Him in those days: The life of the Master in 'Akká was full of work for others' good. He would rise very early, take tea, then go forth to His self imposed labours of love. Often He would return very late in the evening, having had no rest and no food. He would go first to the Bírúní, a large reception

room, which had been hired, on the opposite side of the street to our house. We often used to watch from our windows, the people crowding there to ask for help from the Master. A man who wished to take a shop must ask advice from Him. Another would request a letter of introduction, or recommendation for some government post. Again, it would be a poor woman whose husband had been falsely accused, or had been taken for a soldier, whilst she and the children were left to starve. One would tell Him of children who were ill-treated, or of a woman beaten by husband or brother. 'Abbás Effendi would send a competent person with these poor people to state the case to the judge at the Court House, so that they might have justice. The Bírúní also received other guests; it came to be looked upon as a centre of interest. The Muftí, the Governor, Shaykhs, and officials of the Court came singly or in groups to call on the Master at the Bírúní. Here they would be offered a specially delicious make of 'qahviyí-khánigí' (coffee). Sipping this, they would talk over all the news, appealing for explanations, advice, or comment, to the Master, Whom they grew to look upon as learned, wise, full of compassion, practical help, and counsel for all. When the Court rose the judge invariably came to the Bírúní, where he would speak of any complicated case, sure that 'Abbás Effendi would solve the problem, however difficult . . . Some days He hardly saw His own family, so hard pressed was He by those who crowded to the Bírúní for some kind of help. The many sick people, Bahá'í and others, were His constant care; whenever they wished to see Him, He went . . . Never did He neglect anything but His own rest, His own food; the poor were always His first care. All sweets, fruits, and cakes which had been sent to Him He would take to the Bírúní for the friends, whom He made very happy . . . As there was no hospital in 'Akká, the Master paid a doctor, Nikolaki Bey, a regular salary to look after the very poor. This doctor was asked not to say who was responsible for this, 'His right hand was not to know what His left wrought.' But for those other things the poor needed when they were ill, numberless, various, always to the Master did they turn their eyes . . . [1] In doing all this 'Abdu'l-Bahá truly shielded His Father from the outside world so that, freed from any involvement in the affairs of the community, He could devote all His time to the Revelation of the Word of God and meeting the believers. 'Abdu'l-Bahá used to visit His beloved Father whenever He could, and this brought much joy to the heart of Bahá'u'lláh. Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí, (for his story see vol. 2.) that spiritual giant immortalized by the title 'The Angel of Carmel', has recorded the following reminiscences of one of his memorable audiences with Bahá'u'lláh. Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí recounts the words of Bahá'u'lláh (These are not to be taken as the exact words of Bahá'u'lláh; they are only recollections of His utterances recalled by Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí) concerning the important role of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in shielding Him from the pressures of the outside world. During the days of Baghdád We ourself used to visit the coffee house (see vol. 3, pp. 250–51. (A.T)) and meet with everyone. We associated with people whether they were in the community or outside, whether acquaintances or strangers, whether they came from far or near. We considered those who were distant from us to be near, and the strangers as acquaintances. We served the Cause of God, supported His Word, and exalted His Name. The Most Great Branch ['Abdu'l-Bahá] carried out all these services, withstood all the difficulties, and endured the sufferings and calamities to a great extent in Adrianople, and now to a far greater extent in 'Akká. Because while in Baghdád, to all appearances We were not a prisoner, and the Cause of God had hardly enjoyed the fame it does today. Those who opposed it and the enemies who fought against it were comparatively few and far between. In Adrianople We used to meet with some people and gave permission to some to attain Our presence. But while in the Most Great Prison We did not meet with anyone (Non-Bahá'ís. (A.T.)) and have completely closed the door of association with the people. Now the Master has taken upon Himself this arduous task for

Our comfort. He is a mighty shield facing the world and its peoples, and so He has relieved Us [from every care]. At first He secured the Mansion of Mazra'ih for Us and We stayed there, then the Mansion of Bahjí. He is so occupied in the service of the Cause that for weeks He does not find the opportunity to come to Bahjí. We are engaged in meeting with the believers and revealing the verses of God, while He labours hard and faces every ordeal and suffering. Because to deal and associate with these people is the most arduous task of all.[2] 'Abdu'l-Bahá's staying in 'Akká served another purpose as well. His brothers, especially Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí[3] and his mother, were highly jealous of Him. It was this brother who, after the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, became the Arch-breaker of His Covenant and rose up with all his power to destroy 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Cause He was promoting. By staying away from Bahá'u'lláh, Who cherished His eldest Son and extolled His station in glowing terms, 'Abdu'l-Bahá succeeded in somewhat dampening the fire of jealousy which was fiercely burning within their breasts. As well as this, Bahá'u'lláh's own practice over the years was, as far as possible, to keep in His company those who were likely to cause trouble or were inwardly unfaithful to Him, so that He could control their mischief and keep them in check. And now that some freedom was given to Him, Bahá'u'lláh chose to live with those members of His household who would prove, in the end, to be disloyal to His Cause. An explanation has been given in a previous volume (see vol. 1, pp. 130–31) as to why those who were so close to Bahá'u'lláh, such as His brother, His sons and daughters and other members of His family, should have been the first to rebel against His Cause and become a source of dissension among His followers. An Air of Freedom In order to appreciate the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's move to Mazra'ih, and why it opened up a new chapter in the annals of the Faith, we may recall the tumultuous years of His Ministry preceding this historic step. As we survey Bahá'u'lláh's eventful life at this juncture, we note that for over a quarter of a century He was the main target of attack by a relentless enemy. Prior to the birth of His own Revelation, He suffered greatly through persecutions directed at the Bábí community. The appalling bastinado, which was inflicted upon Him in public in His native province of Mázindarán, is one example. The humiliating circumstances in which He was conducted on foot and in chains with bare feet and bared head in the heat of the summer to the Síyáh-Chál of Tihrán, His imprisonment in that darksome underground dungeon; the chain of Qara-Guhar which was placed on His neck and which cut through His flesh and left its marks on Him all His life; the hardships He endured during His first exile from His native country to Iraq; the deprivations and sufferings during His solitary retirement in the snow-bound mountains of Kurdistán; His further exile to the capital city of the Ottoman Empire, a city described by Him as the 'seat of tyranny'; His humiliating banishment to Adrianople, the 'remote Prison', travelling in horse-driven carts in sub-zero temperatures; the sufferings He endured in that 'Land of Mystery'; the hardships He was exposed to and the restrictions He underwent on His exile to the desolate city of 'Akká; the unbearable conditions of His solitary cell in the barracks of that city, designated by Him as the 'Most Great Prison'; and His confinement for almost seven years within the walls of a small house devoid of any greenery to please the eye – all these tribulations which He, the Wronged One of the world, had endured with such resignation and forbearance, were at long last coming to an end. His departure from the prison-city signaled the opening of a new era of relative peace and tranquillity in His life. It was not only the fresh air of the countryside at Mazra'ih and the open fields around it which enhanced the circumstances in which He lived. The major factor which brought about a new phase in His ministry was the unveiling of His greatness, His power and His authority to friends and foe alike. This was made manifest when the highest religious leader in the land knelt before Him in a state of humble adoration and begged Him to

leave the prison-city, (see vol. 3, pp. 416–17, for details) a move which the Governor of ‘Akká, notwithstanding the strict edict of the Sultán, had approved. The establishment of Bahá’u’lláh’s residence in the summer mansion of Mazra’ih also created much excitement and joy in the hearts of His companions. The prophecy uttered by Him on His arrival at ‘Akká, that the doors of the prison would be opened, had already been fulfilled when He left the barracks. Now that His confinement within the walls of the city had come to an end the prophecy was fully realized. Bahá’u’lláh loved the beauty of nature and was fond of the outdoor life. Living in the Mansion of Mazra’ih enabled Him to enjoy the scenery after nine years of confinement within the walls of a depressing prison-city. In His Tablets revealed in this period Bahá’u’lláh refers to the beauty of the countryside. In a Tablet to the illustrious Afnán, Áqá Mírzá Áqá, entitled Núru’-d-Dín, (see below) He writes about the delightful scenery at Mazra’ih. He describes in cheerful language the view of the sea on the one side and the hills on the other, and speaks of the charm of the trees laden with oranges which He likens to balls of fire! The believers who came on pilgrimage at this time were also rejoicing in Bahá’u’lláh’s freedom. There were many who attained His presence in this Mansion, in an atmosphere far different from that of former times in Adrianople or ‘Akká. There was an air of freedom, of victory and ascendancy of the Cause which exhilarated every believing heart. It had been the custom from the days of Baghdád for some of the believers to hold a feast and beg Bahá’u’lláh to honour them with His presence. This practice, however, depended upon His permission and sometimes He obliged the believers by accepting their invitation. Even when He was in the barracks, some of the believers used to save the very meagre rations they received so that they could hold a feast on a special occasion for Bahá’u’lláh to attend (see vol. 3, p. 53). It is also apparent from some of His Tablets that certain friends in Persia would send funds to Mírzá Áqá Ján, Bahá’u’lláh’s amanuensis, and ask him to seek permission to hold a feast in their name for Bahá’u’lláh to attend. When Bahá’u’lláh moved out of the city, this practice became easier. After seeking His permission, the friends held feasts in the countryside in various outdoor locations. The bounty of God to those disciples who had the unique privilege of being in the presence of their Lord is immeasurable. It is not possible for us who live a hundred years later to fully appreciate, or even to imagine, the oceans of love, of ecstasy, of devotion and of thanksgiving which must have surged in the hearts of these God-intoxicated people who sat with the Supreme Manifestation of God in places of beauty, or stood as He mingled among them, speaking to them individually or collectively and even joining them in partaking of the food. To what heights of spirituality these souls were uplifted as a result of such gatherings we shall never know. Some who attained His presence have tried to describe the life-giving energies which flowed through their hearts as He spoke to them but have admitted their inability to do so adequately, because to attain the presence of One who embodies within Himself the ‘Most Great Spirit’ (see vol. 3, pp. 144–5) of God is not an experience one can ever describe. Hájí Muhammad-Táhir-i-Málmírí[4] attained the presence of Bahá’u’lláh around 1878–9. When asked by the friends to describe His impressions of the Blessed Beauty, he always recited in answer a Persian poem: And wonder at the vision I have dreamed, A secret by my muted tongue concealed; Beauty that is beyond the poet’s word By an unhearing world remains unheard. The same believer has left to posterity an account of one of the feasts at which he had the honour to be present. These are his words recorded in his memoirs: In the spring season Bahá’u’lláh used to stay at Mazra’ih for some time.[5] Mazra’ih is situated at a distance of about two farsangs [about 12 kilometres] from the city of ‘Akká. To attain His presence I used to go to Mazra’ih in the daytime and at night I stayed at the Pilgrim House. On the first day of the Ayyám-i-Há [Intercalary days] one of the pilgrims had invited Bahá’u’lláh and all the



believers in 'Akká to lunch. I too went to Mazra'ih. Early in the morning a large tent was pitched in front of the entrance to the garden on a delightful open space. That morning all the believers, numbering almost two hundred, consisting of those who were living in the Holy Land and the pilgrims, came to Mazra'ih. Around the time of noon, the Blessed Beauty came down from the Mansion and majestically entered the tent. All the believers were standing in front of the tent. Then Mírzá Áqá Ján, standing in the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, chanted a dawn prayer for fasting which had been revealed on that day. When the prayer was finished the Blessed Beauty instructed all to be seated. Every person sat down in the place where he was standing. His blessed Person spoke to us and after His utterances were ended He asked, 'What happened to the Feast, is it really going to happen?' Thereupon a few friends hurried away and soon lunch was brought in. They placed a low table in the middle of the tent. His blessed Person and all the Aghsán[6] sat around the table and since there was more room, He called some by name to join Him. Among these my name was called; He said, 'Áqá Táhir, come and sit.' So I went in and sat at the table in His presence. At some point Bahá'u'lláh said, 'We have become tired of eating. Those who have had enough may leave.' I immediately arose and His blessed Person left. At first the food which was left over on His plate was divided among the friends, and then group after group entered the tent and had their meal. Everyone at this feast partook of both physical, and spiritual food. I got the prayer of fasting from Mírzá Áqá Ján and copied it for myself. Then in the evening all the friends returned to 'Akká. But the Master was not present that day.<sup>2</sup>

The Garden of Ridván

In addition to Mazra'ih 'Abdu'l-Bahá had earlier on rented the Garden of Na'mayn, an island situated in close proximity to the city of 'Akká. He did this in anticipation of Bahá'u'lláh's release from confinement. After His release Bahá'u'lláh often visited this beautiful spot, usually in the spring, the summer and early autumn seasons. It was designated by Him as the Ridván Garden (Paradise); in some of His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh refers to the garden as the 'New Jerusalem' and 'Our Verdant Isle'. This garden was made beautiful through the dedication and hard work of the Persian believers and the constant supervision and guidance of the Master. They brought great quantities of soil from neighbouring places to make flower-beds all around, while from Persia and neighbouring countries the friends brought many shrubs, trees and flowering plants, some of them rare species. Crossing mountains and deserts, which took several months, they took such care that the plants arrived fresh and ready to be planted in the garden. The care with which the believers brought these plants by long hazardous journeys is an indication of a devotion and a love which finds no parallel in the annals of any religion and which is clearly demonstrated in the beauty of the garden itself. The motive for undertaking this unusual task, which at first seemed impossible, was a deep sense of love for Bahá'u'lláh, a love which knew no bounds. The friends desired to offer Him an earthly gift of beauty which they knew He enjoyed so much. They went so far as to bring to 'Akká the plant of a rare white rose which had been one of His favourite flowers in Tíhrán. In some of His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh refers to these plants and expresses warm appreciation of the devotion of those who brought them. The zeal and devotion of the gardeners who tended the plants and laboured day and night to make the Garden of Ridván a place of beauty for Bahá'u'lláh to enjoy, was no less striking. The Garden of Ridván was situated on a very small island. The little river, which emptied into the sea, divided itself into two streams surrounding that small area of land. In the time of Bahá'u'lláh the garden was laid out in flower-beds and there were many ornamental shrubs and fruit trees. There was a splashing fountain from which water was fed to all parts of the garden. As it flowed, it came rippling down in a broad stream over a stone platform under two large mulberry trees. The stream which flowed by the island was about fourteen to fifteen feet wide and three feet deep; fish were darting about it in

abundance. It was fringed with weeping willows, and the fragrance of jasmine and orange blossoms filled the air. Most of these features are preserved today, except that there is no water circling the garden, for the streams have been diverted in recent times. Whenever Bahá'u'lláh visited the Garden of Ridván it was a joyous occasion not only for Himself but for the Master and all the friends. The atmosphere in this oasis of beauty brought some relaxation to Bahá'u'lláh as He sat on a rectangular bench placed in the shade of the two large mulberry trees. Many believers attained His presence there, and they too sat on similar benches. One believer had an awe-inspiring experience as he gazed upon the face of Bahá'u'lláh in the Garden of Ridván. He was known by the name of Hájí Yahúdá. He grew up in a Jewish family; his father was the chief Rabbi of the city of Rasht and its neighbouring towns in the north of Persia. In his youth, he used to work as a pedlar travelling to various cities. On one of his trips to Hamadán, he encountered a few Bahá'ís who acquainted him with the Mission of Bahá'u'lláh and consequently he was converted to the Faith. Around the year 1888–9 He travelled to 'Akká in order to attain the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. His first meeting with Him took place in the Garden of Ridván. As soon as he was ushered into His presence, the scene of water flowing from the fountain near Bahá'u'lláh's feet as He sat on the bench surrounded by the two streams, vividly brought to his mind the vision of the Prophets of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament: There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.[7] But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.[8] He was overwhelmed by this vision so suddenly and vividly revealed to him. It came upon him as a thunderbolt and he was carried away into a different world. His whole being was stirred to its depths as he saw himself, standing with awe and wonder in the presence of the Lord of the Old Testament. His instant urge was to prostrate himself at the feet of Bahá'u'lláh, and this he did. The effect of this first meeting, and of hearing the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh on that occasion, was to create a fire of love and adoration which continued to burn within his heart till the end of his life. He was transformed into a new creation and was exultant with joy as he left the Holy Land. On his return to Persia Hájí Yahúdá began to teach the Faith among his people. He emerged as a well-known Bahá'í teacher who succeeded in bringing a number of Jews under the shadow of the Cause, and some of these individuals became prominent Bahá'ís in Persia. Hájí Yahúdá also endured hardship and sufferings as a result of severe persecutions which were inflicted upon him by the Jewish community because of his success in teaching the Cause.[9] Túbá Khánum, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's daughter, has described her childhood memories of Bahá'u'lláh in the Garden of Ridván: Oh the joy of the day when Bahá'u'lláh went to the beautiful Ridván, which had been prepared for Him with such loving care by the Master, the friends, and the pilgrims! The Master's heart was gladdened indeed to see the enjoyment of His beloved Father, resting under the big mulberry tree, by the side of the little river rippling by, the fountain which they had contrived splashing and gurgling in sounds refreshing indeed after the long years of confinement in the pestilential air of the penal fortress of 'Akká. Only those who were present there could realize in any degree what it meant to be surrounded by such profusion of flowers, their colours and their scents, after the dull walls and unfragrant odours of the prison city. I remember well the greatest of our joys was to go with Bahá'u'lláh for the occasional picnics to the Ridván. How happy we were with Him. He was indeed the brightness of our lives in that time of difficulty.[10] There were many occasions when the believers held feasts in that garden and Bahá'u'lláh honoured them with His presence. Such gatherings engendered indescribable joy and spirituality, beyond our imagination. The

garden became truly a place of celebration and rejoicing. Siyyid Asadu'lláh-i-Qumí,[11] an eminent believer, has related that once Bahá'u'lláh Himself entertained all the believers with refreshments in the Garden of Ridván to celebrate the release of several Bahá'í prisoners in Tihrán. These included Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl, the Hand of the Cause Hájí Mullá 'Alí-Akbar,[12] and Siyyid Asadu'lláh himself. In His all-embracing knowledge Bahá'u'lláh had announced their release and celebrated the occasion, whereas the telegram bearing this news reached 'Akká a day later. There is a little house at the end of the Garden of Ridván. Here the small room in which Bahá'u'lláh rested, dined and at times revealed Tablets is kept in its original form. The renowned Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí recounts an interesting story of how he was able to see the colour of the head-dress of Bahá'u'lláh for the first time as He was having a meal in that room. This story has been recorded in a previous volume.[13] A Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh revealed there and translated into English hangs on the wall of that room today. Its perusal enables the reader to see how much Bahá'u'lláh enjoyed the Garden and how much He loved the beauty of nature. Here is a translation of this Tablet: He is God, Glorified be He, Grandeur and Might are His! On the morning of the blessed Friday we proceeded from the Mansion and entered the Garden. Every tree uttered a word, and every leaf sang a melody. The trees proclaimed: 'Behold the evidences of God's Mercy' and the twin streams recited in the eloquent tongue the sacred verse 'From us all things were made alive'. Glorified be God! Mysteries were voiced by them, which provoked wonderment. Methought: in which school were they educated, and from whose presence had they acquired their learning? Yea! This Wronged One knoweth and He saith: 'From God, the All-Encompassing, the Self-Subsistent.' Upon Our being seated, Rádíyih, upon her be My glory, attained Our presence on thy behalf, laid the table of God's bounty and in thy name extended hospitality to all present. In truth, all that which stimulateth the appetite and pleaseth the eye was offered, and indeed that which delighteth the ear could also be heard as the leaves were stirred by the Will of God, and from this movement a refreshing voice was raised, as if uttering a blissful call inviting the absent to this Feast. God's power and the perfection of His handiwork could enjoyably be seen in the blossoms, the fruits, the trees, the leaves and the streams. Praised be God who hath thus confirmed thee and her. In brief, all in the Garden were recipients of the choicest bounties and in the end expressed their thanksgiving unto their Lord. O that all God's beloved would have been present on this day! We beseech God, exalted be He, to cause to descend upon thee at every moment, a blessing and a mercy and a measure of divine grace from His presence. He is the Forgiving, the All-Glorious. We send greetings to His loved ones, and supplicate for each one of them that which is worthy of mention and is acceptable in His presence. Peace be upon thee, and upon God's sincere servants. Praise be to Him, the Lord of all mankind. Rádíyih, who is mentioned in this Tablet, was a sister of Munírih Khánúm, the wife of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The dinner was given on behalf of her husband who was not present at the time. He was her cousin Siyyid 'Alí, the only son of Mírzá Hádí, a distinguished Bábí, and the illustrious Shams-i-Duhá.[14] Mírzá Hádí, an uncle of the King of Martyrs and the Beloved of Martyrs,[15] became an ardent believer in the early days of the Faith. He was present at the Conference of Badasht, suffered persecutions, was attacked in that vicinity and died there. His wife Shams-i-Duhá, a close companion of Táhirih, was described by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the 'eloquent and ardent handmaid of God'. Trustworthiness: 'ornament of the people of Bahá' Other Tablets were revealed in this holy spot. There is a celebrated passage[16] about trustworthiness in which Bahá'u'lláh describes a vision He had in the Garden of Ridván of a Maid of Heaven. This passage appears in the Tablets of Ishráqát, Tarázát and also in a Tablet revealed in honour of Hájí Mírzá Buzurg-i-Afnán,[17] one of the illustrious custodians of the House of the Báb in Shíráz. Bahá'u'lláh has

often used the symbolic term 'Maid of Heaven' in those of His Tablets which are revealed in the language of imagery. Sometimes, as in this Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh uses this symbolism to describe the revelation of some of the attributes of God.[18] In others, the term may have different significances which only the deep study of the Holy Writings can reveal. In such beautiful terms Bahá'u'lláh speaks of the importance of trustworthiness: We will now mention unto thee Trustworthiness and the station thereof in the estimation of God, thy Lord, the Lord of the Mighty Throne. One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island. 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, 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 Bahá, 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.'[19] In all His Writings Bahá'u'lláh has exhorted His followers to adorn themselves with the vesture of divine qualities and goodly character. But He has placed a special emphasis on trustworthiness. We cannot imagine a bounty or privilege greater than attaining the presence of the Supreme Manifestation of God. And yet He states in a Tablet to His apostle 'Alí-Muhammad-i-Varqá[20] that in the sight of God it is much more meritorious for a believer to become endowed with trustworthiness than to travel all the way on foot and attain His presence. These are His words: Were a man in this day to adorn himself with the raiment of trustworthiness it were better for him in the sight of God than that he should journey on foot towards the holy court and be blessed with meeting the Adored One and standing before His Seat of Glory. Trustworthiness is as a stronghold to the city of humanity, and as eyes to the human temple. Whosoever remaineth deprived thereof shall, before His Throne, be reckoned as one bereft of vision.[21] In the Tablet of Tarázát Bahá'u'lláh states: The fourth Taráz concerneth trustworthiness. Verily it is the door of security for all that dwell on earth and a token of glory on the part of the All-Merciful. He who partaketh thereof hath indeed partaken of the treasures of wealth and prosperity. Trustworthiness is the greatest portal leading unto the tranquillity and security of the people. In truth the stability of every affair hath depended and doth depend upon it. All the domains of power, of grandeur and of wealth are illumined by its light.[22] And in the Tablet of Ishráqát He reveals some of his choicest exhortations to His followers: Say: O people of God! Adorn your temples with the adornment of trustworthiness and piety. Help, then, your Lord with the hosts of goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character. We have forbidden you dissension and conflict in My Books, and My Scriptures, and My Scrolls, and My Tablets, and have wished thereby naught else save your exaltation and advancement. [23] and again: O Jalíl! Admonish men to fear God. By God! This fear is the chief commander of the army of thy Lord. Its hosts are a praiseworthy character and goodly deeds. Through it have the cities of men's hearts been opened throughout the ages and centuries, and the standards of ascendancy and triumph raised above all other standards.[24] the mansion of mazra'ih'A lovely place, surrounded by gardens' Bahá'u'lláh's reception room on the ground floor. Here He received his guests and dictated to his amanuenses the ridván garden The rectangle of benches in the middle of the garden where Bahá'u'lláh used to sit 'under the big mulberry tree, by the

side of the little river rippling by, the fountain . . . splashing and gurgling in sounds refreshing indeed after the long years of confinement'.the ridván gardenThe little house where Bahá'u'lláh used to restHájí muhammad-i-yazdíOne of the devoted believers resident in the Holy LandIn one of His Tablets[25] revealed in the year 1882 Bahá'u'lláh, in the words of His amanuensis, [26] gives details of a case involving two believers in Alexandria who had acted with exemplary honesty and had won His good-pleasure. They were Hájí Muhammad-i-Yazdí and Siyyid 'Alí-i-Yazdí. These two men were not related but were partners in a successful business establishment. Before going into details of this Tablet about trustworthiness, it is appropriate at this juncture to give a brief account of the life and services of Hájí Muhammad.[27]Hájí Muhammad was a son of Hájí 'Abdu'r-Rahím-i-Qannád (candymaker) from Yazd. In his unpublished 'History of the Faith in the Province of Yazd', Hájí Muhammad-Táhir-i-Málmírí has written an account of the life of Hájí 'Abdu'r-Rahím. The following is a summary of a portion of his notes:It is very difficult for me to describe his exalted character, his spirituality, and radiance, the depth of his faith and his devotion to the Cause of God. Suffice it to say that when the news of the conversion to the Faith of Hájí 'Abdu'r-Rahím became public knowledge, Mírzá Muhammad-Taqí, a mujtahid [doctor of Islamic law] of Yazd, was highly disturbed. He was reported to have said, 'If the whole population of Yazd had been converted to this new Faith, I would not have been as much disturbed as I am now over the conversion of Hájí 'Abdu'r-Rahím. Now the back of Islám is broken.'Because his life was in danger some time after his embracing the Faith, Hájí 'Abdu'r-Rahím was forced to leave Yazd, and eventually went to the Holy Land. He was very dear to Bahá'u'lláh and was permitted by Him to reside there. Among his four sons were Shaykh 'Alí, the eldest, whom Bahá'u'lláh sent on a mission to Khartúm where he established a business and later died. As already mentioned, the other son, Hájí Muhammad, established a business with two other believers in Alexandria. And the youngest son, Ahmad Effendi, was given the honour by 'Abdu'l-Bahá of marrying His youngest daughter.In the Tablet mentioned above Mírzá Áqá Ján gives the story of the events following Shaykh 'Alí's death in Khartúm. He says that when he died the Persian Consul sent the full account of his assets to the commercial attaché of the Persian Embassy in Cairo who in turn demanded the payment of the death duties required by law. Shaykh 'Alí's younger brother Hájí Muhammad and one of his partners Siyyid 'Alí, who are both praised in this Tablet by Bahá'u'lláh for their trustworthiness, assured the authorities that they would fulfil their obligation in this regard. A number of leading merchants of the city also assured the Persian attaché that the Bahá'ís were trustworthy people and would honour their obligation. This episode coincided with the bombardment of Alexandria by British forces in 1882 when a great part of the city was ruined and the business house of Hájí Muhammad, together with all its goods, was utterly destroyed.The two men returned to the Holy Land almost penniless. They succeeded, however, in obtaining a sum of money sufficient to pay their debt to the authorities. Siyyid 'Alí travelled to Cairo and although by then the former commercial attaché had been dismissed from his post, he presented the sum of fifty English guineas[28] to his successor. Both the merchants and the embassy officials were deeply touched by this action. Knowing that the partners' business had been completely wiped out, the commercial attaché at first refused to accept the money. He is reported to have said that this noble act of honesty demonstrated by the Bahá'ís was sufficient for him. However, in the end he took the money and stated that the best reward in this transaction was that the enemies of the Faith were praising the conduct of its followers.Bahá'u'lláh in this Tablet describes this action by the two believers as the king of goodly deeds. He prays that His followers in every land may manifest the spirit of trustworthiness among the people.The story of Hájí Muhammad would not be complete without

referring to one of his noble qualities, namely, his utter obedience to the Centre of the Cause. There was a time when Hájí Muhammad had a business concern in 'Akká. One day he was sitting in his office when the Master arrived with an urgent instruction from Bahá'u'lláh that Hájí Muhammad should immediately proceed to Jaddih (Jiddah) in Arabia. He asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá if he could be permitted to attain the presence of Bahá'u'lláh before departing for Jaddih. The Master told him that there was no time, for the boat was leaving at any minute. Hájí Muhammad at once closed the office, and without even paying a visit to his family boarded the ship which sailed away almost immediately. Once on board, he realized that because of the extraordinary rush, he had not even thought to ask the Master the purpose of his trip to Jaddih. But now it was too late, and he knew that Bahá'u'lláh would guide his steps when he arrived in that city. This is the best example of instant, exact and complete obedience to the command of Bahá'u'lláh. The journey was fraught with danger because the sea was unusually stormy. The danger of the ship sinking was in every-one's mind except for Hájí Muhammad, who was sure that it would sail safely to its destination because God had given him a mission in Jaddih, the nature of which was as yet unknown to him. Soon after disembarking from the ship, he heard two people speaking in Persian among the crowds. When he approached them he soon found out that they were Bahá'ís. They were Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí, that illustrious follower of Bahá'u'lláh, and his fellow prisoner Husayn-i-Shírází who had been set free from their ten-year imprisonment in Khartúm and were on their way to 'Akká.[29] They were in need of help and guidance, for this was their first journey to the Holy Land. Hájí Muhammad knew then that the purpose of his mission in Jaddih was to assist these two souls to go to 'Akká, a task which he then carried out ably.[30] Concerning trustworthiness, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a Tablet to Hájí Áqá Muhammad-i-'Aláqih-band, a devoted Bahá'í from Yazd, states that should a believer succeed in carrying out all goodly deeds but fail, even to a small measure, in trustworthiness and faithfulness, all his good deeds will be void. These are His words: If a man were to perform every good work, yet fail in the least scruple to be entirely trustworthy and honest, his good works would become as dry tinder and his failure as a soul-consuming fire. If, on the other hand, he should fall short in all his affairs, yet act with trustworthiness and honesty, all his defects would ultimately be righted, all injuries remedied, and all infirmities healed. Our meaning is that, in the sight of God, trustworthiness is the bedrock of His Faith and the foundation of all virtues and perfections. A man deprived of this quality is destitute of everything. What shall faith and piety avail if trustworthiness be lacking? Of what consequence can they be? What benefit or advantage can they confer? Wherefore 'Abdu'l-Bahá counselleth the friends – nay rather, fervently imploreth them – so vigilantly to guard the sanctity of the Cause of God and preserve their own dignity as individuals that all nations shall come to know and honour them for their trustworthiness and integrity. They can render no greater service than this today. To act otherwise would be to take an axe to the root of the Cause of God – we take refuge with God from this heinous transgression and pray that He will protect His loved ones from committing so flagrant a wrong.[31] In another Tablet to Jináb-i-Ibn-i-Abhar, (see below) one of the Hands of the Cause of God, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that in their dealings with each other, the believers must uphold the highest standard of honesty and trustworthiness: You have written on the question of how the friends should proceed in their business dealings with one another. This is a question of the greatest importance and a matter that deserveth the liveliest concern. In relations of this kind, the friends of God should act with the utmost trustworthiness and integrity. To be remiss in this area would be to turn one's face away from the counsels of the Blessed Beauty and the holy precepts of God. If a man in his own home doth not treat his relations and friends with entire trustworthiness and integrity, his dealings

with the outside world – no matter how much trustworthiness and honesty he may bring to them – will prove barren and unproductive. First one should order one's own domestic affairs, then attend to one's business with the public. One should certainly not argue that the friends need not be treated with undue care, or that it is unnecessary for them to attach too great importance to the practice of trustworthiness in their dealings with one another, but that it is in their relations with strangers that correct behaviour is essential. Talk like this is sheer fantasy and will lead to detriment and loss. Blessed be the soul that shineth with the light of trustworthiness among the people and becometh a sign of perfection amidst all men.

[32]Addressing Sultán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz, Bahá'u'lláh in the Súriy-i-Mulúk (Súrih of the Kings) makes this thought-provoking statement: Know thou for a certainty that whoso disbelieveth in God is neither trustworthy nor truthful. This, indeed, is the truth, the undoubted truth. He that acteth treacherously towards God will, also, act treacherously towards his king. Nothing whatever can deter such a man from evil, nothing can hinder him from betraying his neighbor, nothing can induce him to walk uprightly.

[33]For some, especially those who are not Bahá'ís, it may be difficult to accept the statement that a person who does not believe in God is not truthful or trustworthy. Of course there are many who do not believe in God but are honest people. However, the proper time for judging honesty or trustworthiness is the time when a person faces a difficult test. In normal circumstances many people behave truthfully. But when confronted with seemingly insurmountable tests or irresistible temptations, then, if there is no fear of God, one will succumb under pressure. In the final analysis it is belief in God and His Messengers that evokes the urge to obey His teachings even in times of test and provocation. The fear of God, according to Bahá'í teachings, is the only means by which the individual can withstand the onslaught of self and passion in times of temptation. In one of His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh thus reveals: The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence and a safe stronghold for all the peoples of the world. It is the chief cause of the protection of mankind, and the supreme instrument for its preservation. Indeed, there existeth in man a faculty which deterreth him from, and guardeth him against, whatever is unworthy and unseemly, and which is known as his sense of shame. This, however, is confined to but a few; all have not possessed and do not possess it.

[34]Some believe that a loving God need not be feared. In a previous volume [35] we have discussed the significance of the fear of God and explained that without it the believer cannot have the strength to sever his attachment to the material world and fix his gaze upon the heavenly abode of his soul.

Abu'l-Qásim the Gardener There are many anecdotes about Bahá'u'lláh in the Garden of Ridván. The following is an account by May Bolles Maxwell [36] describing in beautiful language her impressions of the garden when she visited it during her pilgrimage. May Maxwell was among the first group of pilgrims from the West to visit the Master in 1898–9. She may be regarded as one of the few spiritual giants of the Faith in the Western world. When she passed away Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, described her as "Abdu'l-Bahá's beloved handmaid and distinguished disciple" and bestowed upon her the rank of martyr. These are her reminiscences: After driving for about half an hour we reached the garden where Bahá'u'lláh spent much of His time during His long years of exile in 'Akká. Although this garden is small it is one of the loveliest spots we had ever seen. Bahá'u'lláh frequently said to His gardener, Abu'l-Qásim, 'This is the most beautiful garden in the world.' With its tall trees, its wealth of flowers, and its fountains, it lies like a peerless gem surrounded by two limpid streams of water just as it is described in the Qur'án; and the atmosphere which pervades it is so fraught with sacred memories, with divine significance, with heavenly peace and calm that one no longer marvels to hear of the traveller who, passing one day before its gates, paused and gazing in saw Bahá'u'lláh seated beneath the shade of the mulberry trees,

'that canopy not made with hands,' and remembering the prophecy in the Qur'án, he recognized his Lord and hastened to prostrate himself at His feet. We visited the little house at the end of the garden and stood on the threshold of that room where Bahá'u'lláh was wont to sit in hot weather, and one by one we knelt down, and with tears of love and longing kissed the ground where His blessed feet had rested. We returned to the garden, where Abu'l-Qásim made tea for us, and there he told us the story of the locusts. How that during one hot summer there had been a pest of locusts and they had consumed most of the foliage in the surrounding country. One day Abu'l-Qásim saw a thick cloud coming swiftly towards the garden, and in a moment thousands of locusts were covering the tall trees beneath which Bahá'u'lláh so often sat. Abu'l-Qásim hastened to the house at the end of the garden and coming before his Lord besought Him, saying: 'My Lord, the locusts have come, and are eating away the shade from above Thy blessed head. I beg of Thee to cause them to depart.' The Manifestation smiled, and said: 'The locusts must be fed, let them be.' Much chagrined, Abu'l-Qásim returned to the garden and for some time watched the destructive work in silence; but presently, unable to bear it, he ventured to return again to Bahá'u'lláh and humbly entreat Him to send away the locusts. The Blessed Perfection arose and went into the garden and stood beneath the trees covered with the insects. Then He said: 'Abu'l-Qásim does not want you; God protect you.' And lifting up the hem of His robe He shook it, and immediately all the locusts arose in a body and flew away. When Abu'l-Qásim concluded this story he exclaimed with strong emotion as he touched his eyes: 'Oh, blessed are these eyes to have seen such things; oh, blessed are these ears to have heard such things.' In parting he gave us flowers, and seemed, like all the oriental believers, unable to do enough to show his love.[37] Abu'l-Qásim[38] referred to in this story is the first gardener who dedicated his life to the service of Bahá'u'lláh in that garden. He was a native of the village of Manshád in the district of Yazd. It was mainly through his hard work that the garden was built for Bahá'u'lláh. One of Abu'l-Qásim's brothers was Muhammad-Ibráhím who also served Bahá'u'lláh as a gardener at Bahjí and other places. Ustád 'Alí-Akbar-i-Banná, (see below) an illustrious martyr of the Faith, has recounted in his detailed history of the Faith in 'Ishqábád the following concerning these two brothers: For twenty-seven years[39] these two brothers, Áqá Abu'l-Qásim and Áqá Muhammad-Ibráhím have been serving in the Holy Land. Áqá Abu'l-Qásim has always been a gardener at the Ridván Gardens while Áqá Muhammad-Ibráhím was a gardener at Bahjí, the Junayn Gardens, etc. Seventeen years ago when I had the honour of attaining the presence of Bahá'u'lláh, Áqá Muhammad-Ibráhím in the course of our conversation told me the following story: 'One day the Blessed Beauty was in one of the holy places . . . That place was surrounded by dry reeds and grass. Suddenly these caught fire and the flames rapidly began to spread around. His blessed Person turned to me and said: "Ibráhím, go and put out the fire." I immediately went towards the fire not knowing how to carry out this task. As I approached, a wind blew and pushed the fire away from me. As if the fire was fleeing from me. I put out the fire by throwing a small amount of earth over it. This incident brought to my mind the verse: "We said, O fire, be Thou cold and a preservation unto Ibráhím . . ."' [40] Dr Habíb Mu'ayyad, who travelled to 'Akká in 1907 and was permitted by the Master to study medicine in the University of Beirut, and who later served 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the Holy Land with great dedication, has recorded in his memoirs a brief account of the activities of Abu'l-Qásim in the Garden of Ridván. The following is a summary of his reminiscences: Abu'l-Qásim served in the Garden of Ridván for many years. He worked as a gardener tending the trees, the fruits and flowers. He welcomed the friends to the garden, whether pilgrims or residents, entertained them lovingly, and ensured that they enjoyed their visit. He had devised a master-plan to prevent the Arab inhabitants of 'Akká from entering the Garden.[41] Whenever



he was leaving the Garden to go to 'Akká either to attain the presence of the Master or to purchase food or other necessities, he would lock the gate with the instruction that it should remain locked until his return. He had invented two passwords, one which signalled that the gate was to be opened and the other that it should remain shut. When he returned, if there was no one outside the garden wanting to get in, he would call out a fictitious name, 'Shukru'lláh' (Thanks to God). This meant, 'Thanks to God there is no one bothering us', and the gate would open! If, however, there were some people outside, he would call out the name 'Hasan' which in Persian sounds phonetically like 'They are', meaning, 'They are waiting outside', and the gate would not open! People thought that Hasan was the name of the gardener's servant. And since there was no response from Hasan they would eventually leave the garden area and go home. In this way Abu'l-Qásim protected the fruits and flowers of the garden from the inhabitants.[42] Abu'l-Qásim was tall with broad shoulders, massive in size – a real heavyweight – and 'Abdu'l-Bahá sometimes made humorous remarks about his size and strength, remarks which invoked feelings of joy and gratitude in Abu'l-Qásim.<sup>3</sup> Lawh-i-Hikmat

As we have stated in previous volumes, many pilgrims, mainly from Persia, travelled to the Holy Land and attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh. Most of the well-known teachers of the Faith and His apostles had the privilege of meeting Him at least once in their lives, and there were some who had this privilege several times. One such outstanding believer was Áqá Muhammad-i-Qá'iní, entitled Nabíl-i-Akbar. He came to 'Akká around the year ah 1290 (ad 1873–4) and attained the presence of Bahá'u'lláh in the House of 'Abbúd. His first interview with Him had taken place some years before in Baghdád when He recognized the station of Bahá'u'lláh through some interesting incidents.[43] It was on the occasion of his pilgrimage to 'Akká that Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Lawh-i-Hikmat in his honour.[44] All the Tablets revealed by Bahá'u'lláh after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas assume a special significance, which will be discussed later. This Tablet in Arabic, revealed before Bahá'u'lláh's move to Mazra'ih, stands out amongst the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh for its philosophical terminology and its references to ancient Greek philosophers, as well as profound explanations of the influence of the Word of God, the cause and origin of creation, the mysterious workings of nature, and many other weighty topics. Nabíl-i-Akbar, its recipient, was a man of great knowledge and learning. He was not only distinguished among his contemporaries in the field of theology, but renowned throughout Persia as an accomplished philosopher whose erudition had endeared him to men of culture and high intellect before he embraced the Faith. The following are the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá paying tribute to this great man of God: A sign of guidance he was, an emblem of the fear of God. For this Faith, he laid down his life, and in dying, triumphed. He passed by the world and its rewards; he closed his eyes to rank and wealth; he loosed himself from all such chains and fetters, and put every worldly thought aside. Of wide learning, at once a mujtahid, a philosopher, a mystic, and gifted with intuitive sight, he was also an accomplished man of letters and an orator without a peer. He had a great and universal mind. Praise be to God, at the end he was made the recipient of heavenly grace. Upon him be the glory of God, the All-Glorious. May God shed the brightness of the Abhá Kingdom upon his resting-place. May God welcome him into the Paradise of reunion, and shelter him forever in the realm of the righteous, submerged in an ocean of lights.[45] It is therefore not surprising that Bahá'u'lláh chose to reveal this Tablet in the language of an intellectual philosopher. In it He deplores the condition of the world and its peoples. The following words portray His ominous observations. We exhort mankind in these days when the countenance of justice is soiled with dust, when the flames of unbelief are burning high and the robe of wisdom rent asunder, when tranquillity and faithfulness have ebbed away and trials and tribulations have waxed severe, when covenants

are broken and ties are severed, when no man knoweth how to discern light and darkness or to distinguish guidance from error.[46]At no time has the perversity of the human race which He describes been more evident than it is today. In many of His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh warned mankind that unless they recognized and turned to Him, world conditions would deteriorate day by day. And He prophesies that the old order will be rolled up and a new one spread out in its stead. Having described some of the ills afflicting human society, Bahá'u'lláh in the Tablet of Hikmat reveals some of the choicest of His counsels which can alone deliver mankind from the abyss of ungodliness into which it has sunk so deeply. Teachings for the Spiritualization of Humanity Addressing the peoples of the world, Bahá'u'lláh in this Tablet sets out some of those teachings which are designed to spiritualize the human race and usher in an age in which nobility of character and the acquisition of divine virtues will become the main aim of life for the individual. O peoples of the world! Forsake all evil, hold fast that which is good. Strive to be shining examples unto all mankind, and true reminders of the virtues of God amidst men. He that riseth to serve My Cause should manifest My wisdom, and bend every effort to banish ignorance from the earth. Be united in counsel, be one in thought. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches.[47]To 'forsake all evil' and become 'shining examples' are not possible to achieve simply by trying. To reach this exalted goal the heart must be touched by the love of God, and this is not possible until the individual recognizes His Manifestation for today and becomes assured of the truth of His Mission. It is then that his strivings to acquire heavenly virtues can be assisted by God. The key is to acquire certitude in one's faith. Bahá'u'lláh in a Tablet[48] to one of his hand-maidens affirms that the heart is the dawning-place of the light of His Countenance, and the treasure-house of the pearls of His love. He urges her to bathe her heart with the waters of certitude, so that it may be cleansed from the remembrance of anyone save Him. Only then can it become the recipient of His boundless favours. Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl, the renowned Bahá'í scholar, states in one of his well-known treatises that the way in which an individual can acquire certitude has been given in the Qur'án in the following verse: Worship Thy Lord until thou attainest certitude.[49]As we have already stated in a previous volume,[50] Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl became the embodiment of divine virtues and perfections to such an extent that 'Abdu'l-Bahá urged the friends to emulate him as their exemplar. Even a cursory study of his life will demonstrate that his noble achievements were mainly due to his deep sense of attachment to God and an irresistible urge to worship Him. The worship of God is not limited to prayer and acts of devotional service. There are other aspects which are just as important. The essential qualities which man needs in his devotions are sincerity of motive and submissiveness to his Creator. To turn to God at all times with true love, to commune with Him in spirit, to regard Him as always present, to praise and glorify Him by word and by deed, to pray ardently for His confirmations, to promote His Cause, to carry out His teachings and to serve mankind in one's daily work – all these acts constitute the main features of worshipping God. Prayer alone will not be conducive to the good-pleasure of God if it is not followed by service to the Cause. This is confirmed in many of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings. Returning to the Tablet of Hikmat, we note the exhortation, 'Let each morn be better than its eve . . . ' This counsel may be regarded as the application of one of the laws of creation. In this life any living organism is either growing or declining. The same principle applies to the soul of man. The only difference in this case is that the individual has to make the choice of either growing spiritually or not. All the qualities and virtues which the soul acquires in this life, together with one's faith, must be allowed to grow day by day. If not, the person is going to decline, perhaps without realizing it. For in God's creation there is no in-

between state of things or remaining stationary. Bahá'u'lláh's counsel to better our spiritual condition every day is thus a fundamental principle of creation. In one of His Tablets[51] he further emphasizes this principle when He states that the believer should arrange his life in such a way that with each breath he may become a new person and with each step arrive at a loftier height, so that in this way he may, at all times, be engaged in the purification of his own self. In the Tablet of Hikmat Bahá'u'lláh further exhorts the peoples of the world in these words: Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion. Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavours be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe. Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low. Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts. O ye beloved of the Lord! Commit not that which defileth the limpid stream of love or destroyeth the sweet fragrance of friendship. By the righteousness of the Lord! Ye were created to show love one to another and not perversity and rancour. Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for your fellow-creatures. Glory not in love for your country, but in love for all mankind. Let your eye be chaste, your hand faithful, your tongue truthful and your heart enlightened. Abase not the station of the learned in Bahá and belittle not the rank of such rulers as administer justice amidst you. Set your reliance on the army of justice, put on the armour of wisdom, let your adorning be forgiveness and mercy and that which cheereth the hearts of the well-favoured of God.[52] Bahá'u'lláh has often referred to the 'learned in Bahá', as in this Tablet, and extolled their virtues. He has also praised the 'rulers in Bahá'. Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, has explained these two terms in the following passage, which is translated from Persian. In this holy cycle the 'learned' are, on the one hand, the Hands of the Cause of God, and, on the other, the teachers and diffusers of His teachings who do not rank as hands, but who have attained an eminent position in the teaching work. As to the 'rulers', they refer to the members of the Local, National and International Houses of Justice.[53] Bahá'u'lláh has paid glowing tribute to the 'learned in Bahá' in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. We have referred to this in a previous volume.[54] The exalted counsels of the Tablet of Hikmat are in marked contrast to the way in which the great majority of the peoples of the world are conducting their lives today. However, a careful study of the Mission of Bahá'u'lláh makes it clear that His Faith is destined to embrace the whole of the human race, and that in the fullness of time these exhortations are designed to exert the greatest influence upon the life of man on this planet, to revolutionize human society and shape the conduct of its individual members in accordance with His heavenly teachings. But during His Ministry Bahá'u'lláh endured with patience and forbearance the many cruelties which a perverse generation inflicted upon Him. He refers to Himself as the Celestial Bird when he pours out His heart to Nabíl-i-Akbar, saying: In such circumstances as thou seest, how can the Celestial Bird soar into the atmosphere of divine mysteries when its wings have been battered with the stones of idle fancy and bitter hatred, and it is cast into a prison built of unyielding stone? By the righteousness of God! The people have perpetrated a grievous injustice.[55] In this Tablet Bahá'u'lláh alludes to Násiri'd-Dín Sháh when he says: 'We revealed unto one of the rulers that which overpowereth all the dwellers of the earth.'[56] And, further on, He alludes to the martyrdom of Badí[57] when he refers to the lamentations of the 'inmates of the cities of justice and equity'. The Origin of Creation The Tablet of Hikmat reveals some of the mysteries of God's creation. In one of His Tablets,[58] Bahá'u'lláh states that in each verse of the Tablet of

Hikmat an ocean is concealed. In answer to a question by Nabíl-i-Akbar concerning the origin of creation, Bahá'u'lláh reveals these words: As regards thine assertions about the beginning of creation, this is a matter on which conceptions vary by reason of the divergences in men's thoughts and opinions. Wert thou to assert that it hath ever existed and shall continue to exist, it would be true; or wert thou to affirm the same concept as is mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, no doubt would there be about it, for it hath been revealed by God, the Lord of the worlds. Indeed He was a hidden treasure. This is a station that can never be described nor even alluded to. And concerning the question, 'I did wish to make Myself known'; there was God, and His creation had ever existed beneath His shelter from the beginning that hath no beginning, apart from its being preceded by a Firstness which cannot be regarded as firstness and originated by a Cause inscrutable even unto all men of learning.[59] There are some profound statements in the above passage. Bahá'u'lláh describes two well-known concepts concerning the origin of creation. One is that creation has always existed and that it has no beginning nor will have an end. The other relates to a hadith (tradition) of Islám in which the voice of God proclaims, 'I was a hidden treasure, I wished to make Myself known, so I created man that I might be known.' [60] Bahá'u'lláh explains that these two concepts in the above passage are in reality the same. Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in many of their Tablets have asserted that creation has existed from the beginning that has no beginning. Since God is eternal and has always existed and will continue to exist till the end that has no end, so His creation has also existed from eternity. It is impossible to imagine that there was a time when 'nothingness' had an existence. For there can be no such thing as absolute non-existence. The other concept, that God was a hidden treasure and created man in order to make Himself known, seems to imply an interval without a creation. Such a concept is tantamount to saying that there was a time when God was devoid of His attribute 'the Creator'. Bahá'u'lláh in the Tablet of Hikmat rejects this theory and confirms that creation had no beginning. He says: ' . . . There was God, and His creation had ever existed beneath His shelter from the beginning that hath no beginning . . . ' Having established this basic truth, He describes the beginning of creation 'being preceded by a Firstness which cannot be regarded as firstness . . . ' In these words Bahá'u'lláh makes a distinction between the eternity of God and the eternity of His creation. The existence of God is not preceded by a cause whereas creation has come into being through a cause. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has explained [61] that creation emanates from God, and that it does not come about through incarnation. The difference between emanation and incarnation can be explained by the following examples: A book emanates from the author. But no part of the author can be said to be a part of his book, and so he does not incarnate himself in his creation. On the other hand, a seed manifests itself in its creation which is the tree, its branches and its fruits. In this case we note that the seed has become part of the tree. Another example is the sun and its rays. The rays emanate from the sun. It does not break up into pieces to form the rays. It is the same with God and His creation. The creation emanates from God. It has not come into being through incarnation, for if it had, then God would have to be a part of creation, and this would immediately reduce Him to the state of a finite being. Having established that creation emanates from God, we note a similarity between the sun and its rays. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has spoken about this, as recorded in Some Answered Questions: Although the rays are always inseparable from the sun, the sun is pre-existent and the rays are originated; for the existence of the rays depends upon that of the sun, but the converse does not hold true: The sun is the bestower of grace and the rays are the grace itself. [62] Similarly creation cannot be dissociated from God, and the two exist together. But God is pre-existent and self-subsisting. He is exalted above firstness or lastness or time, whereas creation is

preceded by a cause. It is 'preceded by a firstness which cannot be regarded as firstness and originated by a Cause inscrutable even unto all men of learning'. The relationship between God and His creation is explained by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in these words: Therefore, although the contingent world exists, in relation to the existence of God it is non-existence and nothingness. Man and dust both exist, but how great the difference between the existence of the mineral and that of man! The one in relation to the other is non-existence. Likewise, the existence of creation is non-existence in relation to that of God. Thus, even though the universe has existence, in relation to God it is non-existence.[63] In the Lawh-i-'Abdu'l-Vahháb revealed in 'Akká Bahá'u'lláh speaks about the immortality of the soul. Of its existence in the spiritual worlds of God He reveals these words: Such an existence is a contingent and not an absolute existence, inasmuch as the former is preceded by a cause, whilst the latter is independent thereof. Absolute existence is strictly confined to God, exalted be His glory.[64] In the Tablet of Hikmat Bahá'u'lláh confirms that creation had always existed but not in the same form. These are His words: That which hath been in existence had existed before, but not in the form thou seest today.[65] The universe with all its heavenly bodies is infinite in range and eternal in time. However, change is one of the characteristics of matter. Anything which is composed of matter will eventually decompose. Some heavenly bodies disintegrate while others come into being. But existence as a whole remains eternal and perpetual. A vital clue to the origin of creation is given in the following statement by Bahá'u'lláh in the Tablet of Hikmat: 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. Such as communicate the generating influence and such as receive its impact are indeed created through the irresistible Word of God which is the Cause of the entire creation, while all else besides His Word are but the creatures and the effects thereof. Verily thy Lord is the Expounder, the All-Wise.[66] To appreciate the above passage one needs to be well versed in ancient Greek and Islamic philosophy. Bahá'u'lláh has used the terminology of the ancient philosophers to expound the true cause of creation. The theory of the 'active force' and 'its recipient' is related to the four elements, fire, air, water and earth. To those who are familiar with this philosophy, it is clear how the 'active force' and 'its recipient' are the same and yet different. However, this theory, which is very ancient and complicated, is beyond the scope of this book.[67] What is important to the general reader is the disclosure by Bahá'u'lláh that creation has come about through the heat generated by the interaction of this 'active force' and 'its recipient', and that these two were created through the Word of God. There are many Tablets in which Bahá'u'lláh has elucidated the process of creation. But in all these He has asserted that the Word of God, sent down from the Heaven of Divine Revelation, is the cause of life both physical and spiritual. In a Tablet[68] Bahá'u'lláh states that the life of everything is dependent upon the Word of God. Not only do the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh bear ample testimony to this truth, but the Holy Books of past Dispensations also confirm it. In the Gospels it is recorded: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.[69] We read in Isaiah: For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud . . . So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please . . . [70] It is stated in Islám that when God wanted to create, He uttered one word 'BE', [71] and then creation came into being. Much has been quoted from Bahá'í scriptures in previous volumes [72] about the potency of the Word of God and its creative energies. Bahá'u'lláh in the Tablet of Hikmat has disclosed to mankind the mystery of the creative power of God. He has imparted the

knowledge of the origin of creation. He thus affirms: Every event must needs have an origin and every building a builder. Verily the Word of God is the cause which hath preceded the contingent world . . . [73] But in the same way that man is unable to know the essence of God, he is also unable to understand the process by which the Word of God has brought creation into being. Of the sacred nature of the Word, Bahá'u'lláh reveals in the Tablet of Hikmat: Know thou, moreover, that the Word of God – exalted be His glory – is higher and far superior to that which the senses can perceive, for it is sanctified from any property or substance. It transcendeth the limitations of known elements and is exalted above all the essential and recognized substances. It became manifest without any syllable or sound and is none but the Command of God which pervadeth all created things. It hath never been withheld from the world of being. It is God's all-pervasive grace, from which all grace doth emanate. It is an entity far removed above all that hath been and shall be. [74] God in His Essence is unknowable to man and His Manifestations. No description or attribute, however exalted, can ever be ascribed to His Essence. The divine attributes such as 'the All-Knowing', 'the All-Wise', 'the Omnipotent' and similar ones, cannot be assigned to God's innermost Being. If they could, then these attributes would impose limitations upon His Essence, which is exalted above any description or praise. These exalted designations are only attributed to God revealed to man and not to His Essence. One of the attributes of God is 'the Creator'. But nor can this attribute be ascribed to the inner reality of God. It seems that somehow the creative force emanates from God and is the source of divine revelation and of creation. It is also referred to as the 'Primal Will' of God or the Universal Reality. 'Abdu'l-Bahá speaks of it in these terms: It follows that all things have emanated from God; that is, it is through God that all things have been realized, and through Him that the contingent world has come to exist. The first thing to emanate from God is that universal reality which the ancient philosophers termed the 'First Intellect' and which the people of Bahá call the 'Primal Will'. This emanation, with respect to its action in the world of God, is not limited by either time or place and has neither beginning nor end, for in relation to God the beginning and the end are one and the same. The pre-existence of God is both essential and temporal, while the origination of the contingent world is essential but not temporal, . . . Though the First Intellect is without beginning, this does not mean that it shares in the pre-existence of God, for in relation to the existence of God the existence of that universal Reality is mere nothingness – it cannot even be said to exist, let alone to partake of the pre-existence of God. An explanation of this matter was provided on a previous occasion. [75] Creation in this life takes place through the instrumentality of nature. And nature may be described as the manifestation of the 'Primal Will of God' in this physical universe. Bahá'u'lláh confirms this in the Tablet of Hikmat: Say: Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise. Were anyone to affirm that it is the Will of God as manifested in the world of being, no one should question this assertion. It is endowed with a power whose reality men of learning fail to grasp. Indeed a man of insight can perceive naught therein save the effulgent splendour of Our Name, the Creator. Say: This is an existence which knoweth no decay, and Nature itself is lost in bewilderment before its revelations, its compelling evidences and its effulgent glory which have encompassed the universe. [76] The subject of creation appears in many Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who have both shed much light on this theme. Their explanations will be of great assistance in widening the vision of mankind to the realities of God's creation. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has also enriched this knowledge through many of his talks and discourses.

Notable among these are the talks given at the dinner table in His home in 'Akká, and compiled under the title *Some Answered Questions*. Another valuable source of information and enlightenment on this subject is *Amr va Khalq* (vol. 1), a compilation of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Persian. In the *Tablet of Hikmat* Bahá'u'lláh recalls having explained to Nabíl-i-Akbar the mysteries of creation in the house of Majíd. This person is 'Abdu'l-Majíd-i-Shírází. A brief reference to this interview has been made in a previous volume.

[77]References to Ancient Philosophy In the *Tablet of Hikmat* Bahá'u'lláh dwells at length on the work and beliefs of ancient Greek philosophers and sages. He asserts that 'the essence and fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets', names some of the Greek philosophers who 'acquired wisdom' from the Prophets of Israel, affirms that the philosophers of old believed in God, praises the work of Socrates and refers to him as 'the most distinguished of all philosophers' who was 'highly versed in wisdom', and gives details of the work and aspirations of several sages of Greece. It is obvious that some of these details are not to be found in history books, and are indeed revealed for the first time through the knowledge of God and His Revelation. Ethel Rosenberg, one of the early British Bahá'ís, asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá about some of the differences between the historical records and the accounts given by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Tablet of Hikmat*. In reply she received a lengthy *Tablet* from the Master.[78]

In it 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that records which relate to ancient times before Alexander the Great are not reliable, because they were compiled in later years, mainly from oral traditions. Furthermore, there are many major discrepancies even within reliable historical records. He gives the example of the Holy Book of Torah and states that there are three versions, the Hebrew, the Greek and the Sámerí. But they differ considerably about certain historical events which he enumerates in this *Tablet*. Having demonstrated the unreliability of ancient historical records, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that the true version of history is that which is revealed to the Prophets of God. For they are the revealers of the Word of God and have the knowledge of past and future events. We can find a striking example of this in the Qur'án. A great part of that Book consists of the stories found in the Old and the New Testaments. These were all revealed anew to Muhammad, for He had no access to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. Indeed, they were not translated into Arabic until centuries after the death of Muhammad. One of the proofs of the authenticity of the Holy Bible is that its stories were confirmed centuries later through direct revelation in the Qur'án. It is interesting to note that the Quranic version of some of these stories contains details which cannot be found in the Old or the New Testaments. In addition, there are in the Qur'án some accounts of ancient prophets which are entirely new, and which give a fuller description altogether of the history of religions. There is a verse in the Qur'án which throws light on this subject. In one of the chapters, the voice of God reveals some of the stories relating to Moses, Pharaoh and the children of Israel. Then, as if Muhammad were in doubt about the veracity of some of the accounts, the voice of God addresses Him in these words: And if Thou art in doubt as to what We have revealed unto Thee, then ask those who have been reading the scriptures from before thee. The truth hath indeed come to Thee from Thy Lord so be not of those who doubt.[79]

God is the Knower of all things and if one believes that He manifests Himself to man through His Manifestations, then it follows that their words are the truth and that they have the knowledge of all things. To cite an example: it is well-known that Bahá'u'lláh had not read most of the Writings of the Báb, including the *Bayán*, the Mother Book of the Bábí Dispensation. He Himself testifies to this fact in these words addressed to the notorious Hádíy-i-Dawlat-Ábádí: (see below) God testifieth and beareth Me witness that this Wronged One hath not perused the *Bayán*, nor been acquainted with its contents . . . I swear by God! This Wronged One, by reason of His constant association with

men, hath not looked at these books [The Writings of the Báb], nor gazed with outward eye on these Writings.[80] Despite this, Bahá'u'lláh, during His forty years' Ministry, quoted profusely from the Writings of the Báb. Innumerable are the passages of the Bayán and other Writings of the Báb that Bahá'u'lláh has quoted in His Tablets. Seen from the human point of view, such a performance is impossible of achievement. But there can be no comparison between God and man. The Manifestation of God is endowed with divine knowledge, whereas man is not. Past, present and future are all before the Chosen Ones of God who represent Him in this world. In the Tablet of Hikmat Bahá'u'lláh describes this: 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. This is a Tablet wherein the Pen of the Unseen hath inscribed the knowledge of all that hath been and shall be – a knowledge that none other but My wondrous Tongue can interpret. Indeed My heart as it is in itself hath been purged by God from the concepts of the learned and is sanctified from the utterances of the wise. In truth naught doth it mirror forth but the revelations of God. Unto this beareth witness the Tongue of Grandeur in this perspicuous Book.[81] Nabil-i-Akbar, for whom the Tablet of Hikmat was revealed, was one of the greatest teachers of the Cause and very dear to Bahá'u'lláh. In this Tablet He reveals for him the secret of successfully teaching His Faith. Through His counsels He sets out the most important prerequisites for teaching. Although these exhortations are addressed to Nabil-i-Akbar, they are equally applicable to other believers in their teaching work. These are the words of Bahá'u'lláh addressed to him: Teach thou the Cause of God with an utterance which will cause the bushes to be enkindled, and the call 'Verily, there is no God but Me, the Almighty, the Unconstrained' to be raised therefrom. Say: Human utterance is an essence which aspireth to exert its influence and needeth moderation. 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. Meditate upon that which hath streamed forth from the heaven of the Will of thy Lord, He Who is the Source of all grace, that thou mayest grasp the intended meaning which is enshrined in the sacred depths of the Holy Writings.[82] The Tablet of Hikmat is like an ocean. Nabil-i-Akbar immersed himself in it and obtained a great many of the pearls of wisdom hidden in its depths. He was a distinguished believer who is regarded as one of Bahá'u'lláh's Apostles; he served his Lord with utter dedication until the end of his life. After his passing 'Abdu'l-Bahá conferred on him the rank of Hand of the Cause of God. 4 Varqá, Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh While Bahá'u'lláh resided in the Mansion of Mazra'ih, many Bahá'ís came on pilgrimage and attained His presence. Notable among them was Hájí Mullá Mihdiy-i-'Atrí, a native of Yazd, accompanied by two of his sons – the eldest, Mírzá Husayn, and the youngest, 'Alí-Muhammad, later surnamed Varqá by Bahá'u'lláh. The latter became one of the luminaries of the Faith, an Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh who in the end laid down his life in His path. In his unpublished 'History of the Faith in the Province of Yazd', Hájí Muhammad-Táhir-i-Málmírí gives the following account: Hájí Mullá Mihdí used to produce quantities of rose water and attar of rose each year in Yazd, hence he was known as 'Atrí (distiller of attar) . . . One day he held a large meeting[83] in his house in Yazd and invited the Bahá'ís, including the members of the Afnán family,[84] to attend. About two hundred believers attended this meeting. Among them was a certain Dervish Mihdí, who was a Bahá'í and had a melodious voice.[85] He chanted Bahá'í songs in a very loud voice



and a few others chanted Tablets. No such meeting had ever been held in Yazd since the Cause began in that city. The next morning Shaykh Muhammad-Hasan-i-Sabzivári [a leading mujtahid of Yazd and an inveterate enemy of the Cause] summoned Hájí Mullá Mihdí to his office and there ordered his men to flog him brutally in his presence. Then he issued orders for his exile from Yazd. Mírzá Husayn and Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad [Varqá], his sons, went into hiding at the time of their father’s arrest. The other son, Mírzá Hasan, fled to a neighbouring town. Hájí Mullá Mihdí, accompanied by his two sons Mírzá Husayn and Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad-i-Varqá, left Yazd on foot and eventually travelled to the Holy Land via Baghdád. Because of old age and fatigue, Hájí became ill on the way. They arrived at Mazra’ih by way of Beirut and Sidon. But Hájí died on arrival and was buried alongside the road to ‘Akká. Whenever the Blessed Beauty passed by his grave on His way to ‘Akká or Mazra’ih, He would pause there, put His blessed foot on the grave and stop beside it for a few moments. Although Hájí did not attain the presence of Bahá’u’lláh this time, he had, on a previous occasion, visited Baghdád with his eldest son Mírzá Husayn where he met his Lord face to face. Bahá’u’lláh had revealed Tablets for him for many years, all indicative of his deep love and devotion to the Cause. The outpouring of Bahá’u’lláh’s blessings upon him were indeed boundless. In a Tablet addressed to Varqá, Bahá’u’lláh, in the words of His amanuensis (See reference 26) describes the way in which He and some of His companions once on their way to Mazra’ih stopped at the grave of his father and revealed such exalted verses in his honour that no pen could describe the glory with which his soul was invested. Bahá’u’lláh has revealed for him a Tablet of Visitation which clearly indicates how exalted was his rank among the Concourse on High.[86] ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has affirmed that He built his grave with His own hands. The following is a tribute paid by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to this noble soul: . . . With his two sons, one the great martyr-to-be, Jináb-i-Varqá, and the other Jináb-i-Husayn, he set out for the country of his Well-Beloved. In every town and village along the way, he ably spread the Faith, adducing clear arguments and proofs, quoting from and interpreting the sacred traditions and evident signs.[87] He did not rest for a moment; everywhere he shed abroad the attar of the love of God, and diffused the sweet breathings of holiness. And he inspired the friends, making them eager to teach others in their turn, and to excel in knowledge. He was an eminent soul, with his heart fixed on the beauty of God. From the day he was first created and came into this world, he single-mindedly devoted all his efforts to acquiring grace for the day he should be born into the next.[88] His heart was illumined, his mind spiritual, his soul aspiring, his destination Heaven. He was imprisoned along his way; and as he crossed the deserts and climbed and descended the mountain slopes he endured terrible, uncounted hardships. But the light of faith shone from his brow and in his breast the longing was aflame, and thus he joyously, gladly passed over the frontiers until at last he came to Beirut. In that city, ill, restive, his patience gone, he spent some days. His yearning grew, and his agitation was such that weak and sick as he was, he could wait no more. He set out on foot for the house of Bahá’u’lláh. Because he lacked proper shoes for the journey, his feet were bruised and torn; his sickness worsened; he could hardly move, but still he went on; somehow he reached the village of Mazra’ih and here, close by the Mansion, he died. His heart found his Well-Beloved One, when he could bear the separation no more. Let lovers be warned by his story; let them know how he gambled away his life in his yearning after the Light of the World. May God give him to drink of a brimming cup in the everlasting gardens; in the Supreme Assemblage, may God shed upon his face rays of light. Upon him be the glory of the Lord. His sanctified tomb is in Mazra’ih, beside ‘Akká.[89] Mírzá Husayn, the eldest son, was a devoted believer. This pilgrimage was his third, as he had attained the presence of Bahá’u’lláh twice before in Baghdád. It was he who took to Yazd for the first time a copy of the Hidden Words,

which he had obtained on his second visit to Baghdád. He also intimated to many Bábís then that Bahá'u'lláh, and no one else, was 'Him Whom God shall make manifest'. This was long before Bahá'u'lláh's declaration. He also informed some of the believers of the defection of Mírzá Yahyá, for whom the Bábí community of the time had high regard. The second son, Mírzá Hasan, was also dedicated to the Cause, and Bahá'u'lláh has revealed some Tablets in his honour and showered His confirmations upon his soul. Mírzá 'Alí-Muhammad, entitled Varqá, the youngest son, is one of the Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh. He was about twenty-two years old when he left his native city of Yazd. He was a poet of outstanding calibre, knowledgeable in the science of ancient medicine and well-versed in religious subjects. He was an erudite and eloquent teacher of the Cause, one who had truly recognized the station of Bahá'u'lláh; he was filled with His love and radiated the power and the beauty of the Faith to those who came in contact with him.

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