

Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh

(To be used as part of the opening remarks by the MC)

One hundred twenty five years separate us from the days when Bahá'u'lláh lived amongst men. "...The Faith which He proclaimed has encircled the globe and marches from triumph to triumph, and the resplendent edifice which He raised stands to offer certitude and peace to a disordered world."

... Bahá'u'lláh left His human temple in the early hours of the morning of 29th of May 1892. A Telegram bore the news to Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid, the despot of Turkey: "The Sun of Bahá has set." It was sent by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. ... The same cable also informed the Sultan that His earthly temple would be laid to rest in a house next to the Mansion of Bahjí. 'Abdu'l-Hamid gave his consent....

Bahá'u'lláh had left the mortal plane. Many there were who came to mourn Him. They did not bear allegiance to Him, they could not see in Him the Redeemer of Mankind, yet they knew that a great Being had gone from their midst. They were from diverse backgrounds and sects and Faiths and nations – officials and leading figures and priests, learned men and poets and men of letters, rich and poor, Druses, Sunnī and Shī'ih Muslims, Christians of diverse denominations, and Jews... And Bahá'u'lláh, at the time of His ascension, was still a prisoner of the Turkish government....

With the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh draws to a close a period which, in many ways, is unparalleled in the world's religious history... An epoch, unsurpassed in its sublimity, its fecundity and duration by any previous Dispensation, and characterized, except for a short interval of three years, by half a century of continuous and progressive Revelation, had terminated. The Message proclaimed by the Báb had yielded its golden fruit....

But, "the Sun of Bahá continues to shine, its energizing and life-bestowing rays continue to revivify the hearts and minds of men, to penetrate the dark and dense clouds of superstition, bigotry and prejudice, to disperse the heavy and oppressive fogs of despair and disillusionment, to shed revealing light upon the baffling problems which bewilder a wayward, fatigued and storm-tossed humanity...."

(H. M. Balyuzi: Bahá'u'lláh – The King of Glory)

“The Tongue of Wisdom proclaimeth: He that hath Me not is bereft of all things. Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. I am the Sun of Wisdom and the Ocean of Knowledge. I cheer the faint and revive the dead. I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.

The incomparable Friend saith: The path to freedom hath been outstretched; hasten ye thereunto. The wellspring of wisdom is overflowing; quaff ye therefrom. Say: O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Verily I say, whatsoever leadeth to the decline of ignorance and the increase of knowledge hath been, and will ever remain, approved in the sight of the Lord of creation. Say: O people! Walk ye neath the shadow of justice and truthfulness and seek ye shelter within the tabernacle of unity.”

(Bahá'u'lláh: The Tabernacle of Unity)

"O kings of the earth! Give ear unto the Voice of God, calling from this sublime, this fruit-laden Tree, that hath sprung out of the Crimson Hill, upon the holy Plain, intoning the words: 'There is none other God but He, the Mighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise.'... Fear God, O concourse of kings, and suffer not yourselves to be deprived of this most sublime grace. Fling away, then, the things ye possess, and take fast hold on the Handle of God, the Exalted, the Great. Set your hearts towards the Face of God, and abandon that which your desires have bidden you to follow, and be not of those who perish. Relate unto them, O servant, the story of Ali [the Báb], when He came unto them with truth, bearing His glorious and weighty Book, and holding in His hands a testimony and proof from God, and holy and blessed tokens from Him. Ye, however, O kings, have failed to heed the Remembrance of God in His days and to be guided by the lights which arose and shone forth above the horizon of a resplendent Heaven. Ye examined not His Cause when so to do would have been better for you than all that the sun shineth upon, could ye but perceive it. Ye remained careless until the divines of Persia -- those cruel ones -- pronounced judgment against Him, and unjustly slew Him. His spirit ascended unto God, and the eyes of the inmates of Paradise and the angels that are nigh unto Him wept sore by reason of this cruelty. Beware that ye be not careless henceforth as ye have been careless aforetime. Return, then, unto God, your Maker, and be not of the heedless.... My face hath come forth from the veils, and shed its radiance upon all that is in heaven and on earth; and yet, ye turned not towards Him, notwithstanding that ye were created for Him, O concourse of kings! Follow, therefore, that which I speak unto you, and hearken unto it with your hearts, and be not of such as have turned aside. For your glory consisteth not in your sovereignty, but rather in your nearness unto God and your observance of His command as sent down in His holy and preserved Tablets. Should any one of you rule over the whole earth, and over all that lieth within it and upon it, its seas, its lands, its mountains, and its plains, and yet be not remembered by God, all these would profit him not, could ye but know it.... Arise, then, and make steadfast your feet, and make ye amends for that which hath escaped you, and set then yourselves towards His holy Court, on the shore of His mighty Ocean, so that the pearls of knowledge and wisdom, which God hath stored up within the shell of His radiant heart, may be revealed unto you.... Beware lest ye hinder the breeze of God from blowing over your hearts, the breeze through which the hearts of such as have turned unto Him can be quickened...." **(Bahá'u'lláh: Súriy-i-Mulúk (Tablets to the Kings))**

“Well nigh half a century had passed since the inception of the Faith.

Cradled in adversity, deprived in its infancy of its Herald and Leader, it had been raised from the dust, in which a hostile despot had thrown it, by its second and greatest Luminary Who, despite successive banishments, had, in less than half a century, succeeded in rehabilitating its fortunes, in proclaiming its Message, in enacting its laws and ordinances, in formulating its principles and in ordaining its institutions, and it had just begun to enjoy the sunshine of a prosperity never previously experienced, when suddenly it was robbed of its Author by the Hand of Destiny, its followers were plunged into sorrow and consternation, its repudiators found their declining hopes revive, and its adversaries, political as well as ecclesiastical, began to take heart again.

Already nine months before His ascension Bahá'u'lláh, as attested by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá’, had voiced His desire to depart from this world. From that time onward it became increasingly evident, from the tone of His remarks to those who attained His presence, that the close of His earthly life was approaching, though He refrained from mentioning it openly to anyone. On ... May 8, 1892 ... He contracted a slight fever which, though it mounted the following day, soon after subsided. He continued to grant interviews to certain of the friends and pilgrims, but it soon became evident that He was not well. His fever returned in a more acute form than before, His general condition grew steadily worse, complications ensued which at last culminated in His ascension, at the hour of dawn, on May 29, 1892, eight hours after sunset, in the 75th year of His age. His spirit, at long last released from the toils of a life crowded with tribulations, had winged its flight to His "other dominions," dominions "whereon the eyes of the people of names have never fallen," and to which the "Luminous Maid," "clad in white," had bidden Him hasten, as described by Himself in the Lawh-i-Ru'ya (Tablet of the Vision), revealed nineteen years previously, on the anniversary of the birth of His Forerunner.

Six days before He passed away He summoned to His presence, as He lay in bed leaning against one of His sons, the entire company of believers, including several pilgrims, who had assembled in the Mansion, for what proved to be their last audience with Him. "I am well pleased with you all," He gently and affectionately addressed the weeping crowd that gathered about Him. "Ye have rendered many services, and been very assiduous in your labours. Ye have come

here every morning and every evening. May God assist you to remain united. May He aid you to exalt the Cause of the Lord of being." To the women, including members of His own family, gathered at His bedside, He addressed similar words of encouragement, definitely assuring them that in a document entrusted by Him to the Most Great Branch He had commended them all to His care.

The news of His ascension was instantly communicated to Sultán 'Abdu'l-Hamid in a telegram which began with the words "the Sun of Bahá has set" and in which the monarch was advised of the intention of interring the sacred remains within the precincts of the Mansion, an arrangement to which he readily assented. Bahá'u'lláh was accordingly laid to rest in the northernmost room of the house which served as a dwelling-place for His son-in-law, the most northerly of the three houses lying to the west of, and adjacent to, the Mansion. His interment took place shortly after sunset, on the very day of His ascension.

The inconsolable Nabil, who had had the privilege of a private audience with Bahá'u'lláh during the days of His illness; whom 'Abdu'l-Bahá' had chosen to select those passages which constitute the text of the Tablet of Visitation now recited in the Most Holy Tomb; and who, in his uncontrollable grief, drowned himself in the sea shortly after the passing of his Beloved, thus describes the agony of those days: "Methinks, the spiritual commotion set up in the world of dust had caused all the worlds of God to tremble... My inner and outer tongue are powerless to portray the condition we were in... In the midst of the prevailing confusion a multitude of the inhabitants of Akka and of the neighbouring villages, that had thronged the fields surrounding the Mansion, could be seen weeping, beating upon their heads, and crying aloud their grief."

For a full week a vast number of mourners, rich and poor alike, tarried to grieve with the bereaved family, partaking day and night of the food that was lavishly dispensed by its members. Notables, among whom were numbered Shi'as, Sunnis, Christians, Jews and Druzes, as well as poets, ulamas and government officials, all joined in lamenting the loss, and in magnifying the virtues and greatness of Bahá'u'lláh, many of them paying to Him their written tributes, in verse and in prose, in both Arabic and Turkish. From cities as far afield as Damascus, Aleppo, Beirut and Cairo similar tributes were received. These glowing testimonials were, without exception, submitted to 'Abdu'l-Bahá', Who now represented the Cause of the

departed Leader, and Whose praises were often mingled in these eulogies with the homage paid to His Father.

And yet these effusive manifestations of sorrow and expressions of praise and of admiration, which the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh had spontaneously evoked among the unbelievers in the Holy Land and the adjoining countries, were but a drop when compared with the ocean of grief and the innumerable evidences of unbounded devotion which, at the hour of the setting of the Sun of Truth, poured forth from the hearts of the countless thousands who had espoused His Cause, and were determined to carry aloft its banner in Persia, India, Russia, Iraq, Turkey, Palestine, Egypt and Syria.

With the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh draws to a close a period which, in many ways, is unparalleled in the world's religious history. The first century of the Bahá'í Era had by now run half its course. An epoch, unsurpassed in its sublimity, its fecundity and duration by any previous Dispensation, and characterized, except for a short interval of three years, by half a century of continuous and progressive Revelation, had terminated. The Message proclaimed by the Báb had yielded its golden fruit. The most momentous, though not the most spectacular phase of the Heroic Age had ended. The Sun of Truth, the world's greatest Luminary, had risen in the Síyáh-Chál of Tihrán, had broken through the clouds which enveloped it in Baghdad, had suffered a momentary eclipse whilst mounting to its zenith in Adrianople and had set finally in Akka, never to reappear ere the lapse of a full millennium. God's newborn Faith, the cynosure of all past Dispensations, had been fully and unreservedly proclaimed. The prophecies announcing its advent had been remarkably fulfilled. Its fundamental laws and cardinal principles, the warp and woof of the fabric of its future World Order, had been clearly enunciated. Its organic relation to, and its attitude towards, the religious systems which preceded it had been unmistakably defined. The primary institutions, within which an embryonic World Order was destined to mature, had been unassailably established. The Covenant designed to safeguard the unity and integrity of its world-embracing system had been irrevocably bequeathed to posterity. The promise of the unification of the whole human race, of the inauguration of the Most Great Peace, of the unfoldment of a world civilization, had been incontestably given. The dire warnings, foreshadowing catastrophes destined to befall kings, ecclesiastics,

governments and peoples, as a prelude to so glorious a consummation, had been repeatedly uttered. The significant summons to the Chief Magistrates of the New World, forerunner of the Mission with which the North American continent was to be later invested, had been issued. The initial contact with a nation, a descendant of whose royal house was to espouse its Cause ere the expiry of the first Bahá'í century, had been established. The original impulse which, in the course of successive decades, has conferred, and will continue to confer, in the years to come, inestimable benefits of both spiritual and institutional significance upon God's holy mountain, overlooking the Most Great Prison, had been imparted. And finally, the first banners of a spiritual conquest which, ere the termination of that century, was to embrace no less than sixty countries in both the Eastern and Western hemispheres had been triumphantly planted.

(Shoghi Effendi: 'God Passes By')

In a Tablet addressed to Maryam (Mary), the wife of His brother, Haji Mirza Rida-Quli, soon after His return from Sulaymaniyyih, Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

“The wrongs which I suffer have blotted out the wrongs suffered by My First Name [the Báb] from the Tablet of creation...After countless afflictions, We reached 'Iraq at the bidding of the Tyrant of Persia, where, after the fetters of Our foes, We were afflicted with the perfidy of Our friends. God knoweth what befell Me thereafter! At length I gave up My home and all therein, and renounced life and all that appertaineth unto it, and alone and friendless, chose to go into retirement. I roamed the wilderness of resignation, travelling in such wise that in My exile every eye wept sore over Me, and all created things shed tears of blood because of My anguish. The birds of the air were My companions and the beasts of the field My associates. . . . By the righteousness of God! I have borne what neither the oceans, nor the waves, nor the fruits, nor any created thing whether of the past or of the future, hath borne or will be capable of bearing.”

(H.M. Balyuzi: Bahá'u'lláh - The King of Glory)

And in the Epistle to the Son of Wolf, He wrote:

"As My tribulations multiplied, so did My love for God and for His Cause increase, in such wise that all that befell Me from the hosts of the wayward was powerless to deter Me from My purpose. Should they hide Me away in the depths of the earth, yet would they find Me riding aloft on the clouds, and calling out unto God, the Lord of strength and of might. I have offered Myself up in the way of God, and I yearn after tribulations in My love for Him, and for the sake of His good pleasure. Unto this bear witness the woes which now afflict Me, the like of which no other man hath suffered. Every single hair of Mine head calleth out that which the Burning Bush uttered on Sinai, and each vein of My body invoketh God and saith: 'O would I had been severed in Thy path, so that the world might be quickened, and all its peoples be united!' Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed."

(Bahá'u'lláh: Epistle to the Son of the Wolf)

“Send down Thy blessings, O my God, upon the Tree of the Bayán, upon its root and its branch, its boughs, its leaves, its fruits and upon whatsoever it beareth or sheltereth. Cause this Tree then to be made into a magnificent Scroll to be offered to the presence of Him Whom Thou wilt make manifest on the Day of Judgement, that He may graciously allow the entire company of the followers of the Bayán to be restored to life and that He may, through His bounty, inaugurate a new creation.

Indeed all are but paupers in the face of Thy tender mercy, and lowly servants before the tokens of Thy loving-kindness. I beg of Thee, by Thy bounty, O my God, and by the outpourings of Thy mercy and bestowals, O my Lord, and by the evidences of Thy heavenly favours and grace, O my Best Beloved, to watch over Him Whom God shall make manifest that no trace of despondency may ever touch Him.

(The Báb: Selections from the Writings of the Báb)

“Every unbiased observer will readily admit that, ever since the dawn of His Revelation, this wronged One hath invited all mankind to turn their faces towards the Day Spring of Glory, and hath forbidden corruption, hatred, oppression, and wickedness. And yet, behold what the hand of the oppressor hath wrought! No pen dare describe his tyranny.

Though the purpose of Him Who is the Eternal Truth hath been to confer everlasting life upon all men, and ensure their security and peace, yet witness how they have arisen to shed the blood of His loved ones, and have pronounced on Him the sentence of death.

The instigators of this oppression are those very persons who, though so foolish, are reputed the wisest of the wise. Such is their blindness that, with unfeigned severity, they have cast into this fortified and afflictive Prison Him, for the servants of Whose Threshold the world hath been created. The Almighty, however, in spite of them and those that have repudiated the truth of this "Great Announcement," hath transformed this Prison House into the Most Exalted Paradise, the Heaven of Heavens.”

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh)

“Let not your hearts be perturbed, O people, when the glory of My Presence is withdrawn, and the ocean of My utterance is stilled. In My presence amongst you there is a wisdom, and in My absence there is yet another, inscrutable to all but God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. Verily, We behold you from Our realm of glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favored angels.

O peoples of the earth! God, the Eternal Truth, is My witness that streams of fresh and soft-flowing waters have gushed from the rocks, through the sweetness of the words uttered by your Lord, the Unconstrained; and still ye slumber. Cast away that which ye possess, and, on the wings of detachment, soar beyond all created things. Thus biddeth you the Lord of creation, the movement of Whose Pen hath revolutionized the soul of mankind.

Know ye from what heights your Lord, the All-Glorious is calling? Think ye that ye have recognized the Pen wherewith your Lord, the Lord of all names, commandeth you? Nay, by My life! Did ye but know it, ye would renounce the world, and would hasten with your whole hearts to the presence of the Well-Beloved. Your spirits would be so transported by His Word as to throw into commotion the Greater World -- how much more this small and petty one! Thus have the showers of My bounty been poured down from the heaven of My loving-kindness, as a token of My grace; that ye may be of the thankful....

Beware lest the desires of the flesh and of a corrupt inclination provoke divisions among you. Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. Thus counselleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe. Consider the mercy of God and His gifts. He enjoineth upon you that which shall profit you, though He Himself can well dispense with all creatures. Your evil doings can never harm Us, neither can your good works profit Us. We summon you wholly for the sake of God. To this every man of understanding and insight will testify.”

(Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh)

“When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.”

**(Bahá'u'lláh: The Kitáb-i-Aqdas
- Synopsis and Codification of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas)**

"Thou knowest, O my God, that I desire for Him naught except that which Thou didst desire, and have chosen Him for no purpose save that which Thou hadst intended for Him. Render Him victorious, therefore, through Thy hosts of earth and heaven... Ordain, I beseech Thee, by the ardour of My love for Thee and My yearning to manifest Thy Cause, for Him, as well as for them that love Him, that which Thou hast destined for Thy Messengers and the Trustees of Thy Revelation. Verily, Thou art the Almighty, the All-Powerful."

(A prayer by Bahá'u'lláh – The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh)

“While in prison We have revealed a Book which We have entitled 'The Most Holy Book'. We have enacted laws therein and adorned it with the commandments of thy Lord, Who exerciseth authority over all that are in the heavens and on the earth. Say: Take hold of it, O people, and observe that which hath been sent down in it of the wondrous precepts of your Lord, the Forgiving, the Bountiful. It will truly prosper you both in this world and in the next and will purge you of whatsoever ill beseemeth you. He is indeed the Ordainer, the Expounder, the Giver, the Generous, the Gracious, the All-Praised.”

(Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas)

“In such manner hath the Kitáb-i-Aqdas been revealed that it attracteth and embraceth all the divinely appointed Dispensations. Blessed those who peruse it. Blessed those who apprehend it. Blessed those who meditate upon it. Blessed those who ponder its meaning. So vast is its range that it hath encompassed all men ere their recognition of it. Ere long will its sovereign power, its pervasive influence and the greatness of its might be manifested on earth. Verily, thy God is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.”

(Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas)

He it is Who abideth forever in the Realm of Glory.

The Cause of God hath come down upon the clouds of utterance, while they that have joined partners with Him are afflicted with a sore torment. The hosts of Divine Revelation, bearing the banners of celestial inspiration, have descended from the heaven of His Tablet in the name of God, the Almighty, the Most Powerful, and the faithful rejoice in His victory and dominion, while the deniers are filled with dismay. O people! Do ye flee from the mercy of God after it hath pervaded all that is in the heavens and on the earth? Barter not away that mercy wherewith God hath favoured you, nor withhold yourselves therefrom, for they that turn away are indeed in grievous loss. The mercy of God is like unto the verses that are sent down from one same heaven: The true believers quaff therefrom the wine of everlasting life, while the ungodly drink a scalding draught. And whensoever the verses of God are rehearsed unto them, the fire of hatred is kindled in their breasts. Thus do they barter away the bounty that God hath bestowed upon them and are reckoned among the heedless. Strive, O people, to enter beneath the sheltering shadow of the Word of God. Quaff, then, from it the choice wine of inner meaning and explanation, for it is the repository of the living waters of the All-Glorious and hath appeared from the horizon of the Will of the All-Merciful with matchless splendour. Say: Out of this Most Great Ocean there hath branched the Pre-existent Sea; blessed the one that hath attained and found repose upon its shores.

There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness; well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow. Verily the Limb of the Law of God hath sprung forth from this Root which God hath firmly implanted in the Ground of His Will, and Whose Branch hath been so uplifted as to encompass the whole of creation. Magnified be He, therefore, for this sublime, this blessed, this mighty, this exalted Handiwork! Draw nigh unto Him, O people, and taste the fruits of wisdom and knowledge that have proceeded from Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Knowing. Whoso hath failed to taste thereof is deprived of God's bounty, though he partake of all that the earth can produce, could ye but perceive it! A Word hath, as a token of Our grace, gone forth from the Most Great Tablet—a Word which God hath adorned with the ornament of His own Self, and made it sovereign over the earth and all that is therein, and a sign of His greatness and power among its people, that all may glorify thereby their Lord,

the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise, and extol the praise of their Creator and the sanctity of the Soul of God that holdeth sway over all created things. This, verily, is none other than a Word sent down by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the Ancient of Days. Render thanks unto God, O people, for His appearance; for verily He is the most great Favour unto you, the most perfect bounty upon you; and through Him every mouldering bone is quickened. Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God, and whoso turneth away from Him hath turned away from My Beauty, hath repudiated My Proof, and transgressed against Me. He is the Trust of God amongst you, His charge within you, His manifestation unto you and His appearance among His favoured servants. Thus was I bidden to deliver unto you the message of God, your Creator, and I have fulfilled that whereunto I was bidden. Unto this bear witness God, and His angels, and His Messengers, and His sanctified servants. Inhale, then, the sweet savours of Paradise from its roses and be not of them that are deprived. Hasten to win your share of the grace which God hath bestowed upon you and suffer not yourselves to be veiled therefrom. We have sent Him down in the form of a human temple. Blest and sanctified be God Who createth whatsoever He willeth through His inviolable, His infallible decree. They who deprive themselves of the shadow of the Branch are lost in the wilderness of error, are consumed by the heat of worldly desires, and are of those who will assuredly perish.

O people! Hasten to enter beneath the shadow of God, that it may shield you from the blazing heat of this Day wherein none shall find shelter or refuge save under the shadow of His Name, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. Attire yourselves, O people, with the raiment of certitude, that it may protect you from the darts of idle fancy and vain imaginings and that ye may be numbered with the faithful in these days—days wherein none may attain certitude nor achieve constancy in the Cause of God save by renouncing that which is current amongst men and by turning towards this hallowed and refulgent Beauty.

O people! Will ye take a false deity for your helper rather than God? Will ye follow the Most Great Idol before your Lord, the Almighty, the Most Powerful?^[19] Forsake their mention, O people, and seize the cup of life in the name of your Lord, the All-Merciful. By the righteousness of God! A single drop from this cup quickeneth all humankind, could ye but know it. Say: None shall be immune in this Day from God's

[19. See Qur'án 4:51.]

decreed; none shall find refuge save in Him. This, verily, is the truth, and aught else is but manifest error. God hath made it incumbent upon all to teach His Cause to the extent of their ability. Such is the decree that the Finger of might and power hath recorded in the Tablets of supernal glory. Whoso quickeneth but a single soul in this Revelation, it is as though he had quickened all humanity: Him will God, on the Day of Resurrection, raise again to life in the paradise of His oneness, adorned with the raiment of His own Self, the Sovereign Protector, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful. Such is the nature of the assistance ye can render to your Lord, and naught else is worthy of mention in this Day in the presence of God, your Lord and the Lord of your sires of old. As for thee, O servant, give ear unto that which We have admonished thee in this Tablet, and seek at all times the grace of thy Lord. Disseminate this Tablet amongst them that have believed in God and in His signs, that they may observe its injunctions and be numbered with the righteous. Say: O people! Spread not disorder on the earth nor dispute with your fellow men, for this would ill beseem them that occupy, beneath the shadow of their Lord, the station of such as are faithful to the one true God. Whensoever ye encounter a thirsty soul, give him to drink from the cup of everlasting life; and whensoever ye find a hearing ear, recite unto him the verses of God, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Compassionate. Unloose your tongues with kindly words and, should ye find the people inclined towards the Sanctuary of God, summon them to the truth; otherwise leave them to their own selves and to that condition which is the reality of the nethermost fire. Beware lest ye cast the pearls of inner meaning before the blind and the barren in heart, inasmuch as they are deprived of beholding the light and are unable to distinguish the worthless pebble from the precious and gleaming pearl. Wert thou for a thousand years to recite unto a stone the verses of wondrous glory, would it ever be affected by them or comprehend their significance? Nay, by thy Lord, the All-Merciful, the Most Compassionate! Wert thou to recite unto the deaf all the verses of God, would they hear a single letter thereof? Nay, by His ancient and glorious Beauty! Thus have We imparted unto thee the gems of divine wisdom and utterance, that thou mayest fix thy gaze upon thy Lord and rid thyself of all attachment to the world. May His spirit rest upon thee and upon them that abide within the habitation of holiness and that are endued with true constancy in the Cause of their Lord.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Súriy-i-Ghusn (Tablet of the Branch))

***Verily, I am the One Who abideth disconsolate beneath the canopy of
this world.***

O Rasúl! Shouldst thou ask concerning the Sun of the heaven of inner meaning, know that it hath been eclipsed by the clouds of envy; and shouldst thou enquire regarding the Moon of the realm of everlasting holiness, be apprised that it hath been obscured by the shrouds of hatred; and shouldst thou search after the Star of the firmament of unseen reality, be informed that it hath sunk below the horizon of malice. Behold, a lone Husayn assailed by a hundred thousand deadly foes! Behold, a solitary Abraham compassed by a myriad tyrant kings!^[20] Behold, one stainless Soul that vast multitudes aim to seize! Behold, one single Throat that countless daggers seek to pierce! Not a single night in Mine earthly life did I find rest; not a single day was I granted repose. At one time My severed head was sent as a trophy from land to land; at another I was suspended in the air. At one time I had for a boon companion him who dealt Me a fatal blow; at another I had for a close associate him who profaned My remains. Every morn, as I arose from My bed, a fresh affliction awaited Me; and every eve, as I repaired to the solitude of My chamber, a sore trial was in store. In the succession of My woes there was no reprieve, and in the onslaught of My sorrows there was no respite. Notwithstanding all this, I stood against Mine enemies manifest as the sun and appeared before the dwellers of the heavenly kingdom bright as the moon. Not for an instant did I seek to preserve Mine own life, and not for a moment did I pursue Mine own ease and comfort. I offered up My soul in the path of My Beloved and laid down My life for His sake. My fortress was My reliance on God, and My shield Mine attachment to that peerless Friend; Mine armour was Mine unflinching trust in Him, and My hosts Mine ardent hope in His grace.

At length My revelation aroused the envy of My foes and elicited the rancour of the malicious. O My Rasúl! Wert thou to gaze with a keen and discerning eye, thou wouldst behold all things—yea, verily, even the denizens of the Realm on high—sharing in Mine anguish and sorrow. O Rasúl! The oppressive gloom of satanic envy hath concealed the resplendent Morn of the spirit, and the darksome veils of malice have obscured the refulgent rays of the Day-Star of eternal holiness.

At this present hour the Ancient King hath purposed to take leave of this wayward

[20 "Deadly foes" (lit., "Shimrs") and "tyrant kings" (lit., "Nimrods"): Shimr dealt the blow that killed Imám Husayn, and Nimrod was the persecutor of Abraham.]

people. Yet none knoweth whether, even after His departure, this Essence of God's mercy will be spared the sting of these venomous serpents, as was clearly witnessed after His first banishment.

O Rasúl! Canst thou perceive the plight of this wronged and banished Soul Who findeth Himself sore tried by two contending peoples, and Who hath neither the pity of His foes nor the compassion of His friends? I swear by My Beauty that the afflictions I suffer at the hands of Mine enemies are a hundred thousand times easier to bear! Render thanks unto God that thou art not fully acquainted with the condition of Him Who is the Eternal King and that which He hath been made to suffer. These indeed are days whose like the eye of creation hath never seen.

Strive, then, that thou mayest forsake the path of illusion and imitation and gain admittance into the realm of inner vision and the kingdom of spiritual discoveries. For in these days all are bewildered in the drunkenness of ignorance, save those whom thy Lord hath willed to spare. Some consider the fading mirage to be the billowing ocean and reckon the impenetrable darkness as the radiant morn. Others, having forsaken the river of eternal life, content themselves with a vanishing drop. Such is the state and condition of the people: "Thus have We created the souls in divers conditions."^[21]

As to thee, O Rasúl, shouldst thou wish to take flight in the atmosphere of My love, it behoveth thee to soar above the kingdoms of earth and heaven and all that they contain, that thou mayest attain the paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Glorious. Well is it with them that have entered therein!

(Bahá'u'lláh: Lawḥ-i-Rasúl (Tablet to Rasúl))

[21 Cf. Qur'án 71:14.]

Sorrowful is He at My sorrows.

O Maryam! The wrongs which I suffer have blotted out the wrongs suffered by My First Name^[22] from the Tablet of creation. The clouds of divine decree have at every moment rained down upon this manifest Beauty the showers of tribulation. My banishment from My homeland was for the sake of none but the Beloved; My exile was in no other path save that of His good-pleasure. In the midst of heaven-sent trials I glowed bright as a candle, and in the face of divinely ordained afflictions I stood as firm as a mountain. In manifesting the outpourings of His grace I was even as a bounteous cloud, and in laying hold on the foes of the peerless King I was even as a burning flame.

The clear tokens of My power roused the envy of My foes, and the compelling evidences of My wisdom stirred the hatred of the malevolent: Not a single night did I repose in peace; not a single morn did I awake in tranquillity. I swear by the beauty of God that Husayn^[23] shed tears of anguish at the wrongs I suffered and Abraham cast Himself into the flames for the sake of the afflictions I sustained. Wert thou to gaze with discernment, thou wouldst behold the Eye of Grandeur weeping sore beneath the tabernacle of sanctity, and the Essence of Majesty lamenting within the realms of loftiness. Unto this beareth witness the Tongue of truth and glory.

O Maryam! From the land of Tá,^[24] after countless afflictions, We reached 'Iráq, at the bidding of the Tyrant of Persia,^[25] where, after the fetters of Our foes, We were afflicted with the perfidy of Our friends. God knoweth what befell Me thereafter! At length, abandoning My home and all that was therein, and renouncing My life and all that pertained thereunto, I retired alone and companionless. I roamed the wilderness of resignation, travelling in such wise that in My exile every eye wept sore over Me, and all created things shed tears of blood because of My anguish. The birds of the air were My companions and the beasts of the field My associates. In such wise did I, even as the flash of the spirit, pass over this fleeting world. For two years or rather less, I shunned all else but God, and closed Mine eyes to all except Him, that haply the fire of hatred may die down and the heat of jealousy abate.

[22 The Báb.]

[23 Imám Husayn]

[24 Tihrán]

[25 Násiri'd-Dín Sháh]

O Maryam! To divulge the heavenly secrets would be unbecoming, and to disclose the celestial mysteries would be unseemly. By “secrets” is meant naught other than the treasures enshrined within Mine own Being. By the righteousness of God! I have borne what no man, be he of the past or of the future, hath borne or will bear.

During this period of retirement none, whether among My brothers or any other soul, sought to investigate the matter, let alone to grasp its significance, though its import surpasseth the creation of earth and heaven. And yet, I swear by God, every breath drawn in the course of My journey was better than the service of both worlds, and my very retreat was the mightiest testimony and the most perfect and conclusive evidence. Yea, true vision is needed, if one is to behold the Scene of transcendent glory, inasmuch as the blind one is deprived of beholding his own countenance, much less the Countenance of eternal holiness. How can a mere shadow comprehend the One Who casteth it? How can a handful of clay grasp the subtle reality of the heart?

At last the divine decree prompted certain spiritual souls to remember this Canaanite Youth.^[26] Armed with a number of petitions, they searched in every place and enquired from every person, until they found in a mountain cave a trace of this traceless One. He, verily, guideth all things unto the Straight Path.^[27] I swear by the Day-Star of eternal truth that the arrival of these souls so astonished and amazed this poor and exiled Soul that My pen is powerless to describe it. Perchance a steel-sharp pen will emerge from the realm of eternity, rend the veils asunder, and reveal these secrets with perfect truth and absolute sincerity; or haply an eloquent tongue will speak and bring forth the pearls of the spirit from the shell of silence. And this indeed would not be hard of accomplishment for God. In brief, the hand of Him Who is the Unconstrained broke the seal of the mysteries—this, however, none can perceive save them that are endued with true understanding, nay rather, them that have severed themselves from all things.

So it was that the Luminary of the world returned to ‘Irâq, where We found no more than a handful of souls, faint and dispirited, nay utterly lost and dead. The Cause of God had ceased to be on any one’s lips, nor was any heart receptive to its message. This lowly Servant arose then with such vigour to protect and promote the Cause of

[26 Joseph]

[27 Cf. Qur’ân 22:54]

God that methinks a new resurrection was ushered in. The glory of the Cause became in every town and its fair name exalted in every city, to such an extent that all the rulers treated it with tolerance and benevolence.

O Maryam! The determination evinced by this Servant to withstand the onslaught of His foes from every sect and kindred so deepened their rancour that it can scarcely be depicted or imagined. Thus was it ordained by the Lord of might and power.

O Maryam! The Pen of the Ancient of Days proclaimeth: Among the foremost duties prescribed is to cleanse one's heart of all but God. Sanctify then thy heart from aught save the Friend, that thou mayest be made worthy to enter the court of communion.

O Maryam! Free thyself from the fetters of blind imitation, that thou mayest gain admittance into the blissful realm of detachment. Sever thy heart from the world and all that is therein, that thou mayest attain to the sovereign rule of faith and be not debarred from the Sanctuary of the All-Merciful. Through the power of renunciation, rend asunder the veil of idle fancy and enter the hallowed retreats of certitude.

O Maryam! Though a tree be laden with a myriad leaves and fruits, a gust of autumnal wind sufficeth to obliterate them all. Remove not, then, thy gaze from the very root of the Tree of Divinity and the branch of the Lote-Tree of celestial glory. Consider the ocean, how serene it lieth, how majestically it reposeth within its bed. Yet the winds of the will of the eternal Beloved cause countless ripples and innumerable swells to appear upon its surface, each wave distinct and divergent from the others. All the peoples of the world today are preoccupied with the ebb and flow of these waves, and are oblivious of the stupendous might of that Sea of seas whose every movement layeth bare the signs of Him Who is the Unconstrained.

Commune, O Maryam, with the Spirit of the All-Merciful and, shunning the company and kinship of the Evil One, seek shelter within the inviolable protection of the Lord of bounty, that haply the hand of His loving-kindness may deliver thee from the path of selfish pursuits and direct thy steps towards the realm of transcendent glory.

Abandon these fleeting shadows, O Maryam, and turn towards the Day-Star of unfading splendour. Every shadow oweth its existence and motion to the presence of the sun; for were the latter to withhold its grace for a single moment, all things would sink beneath the veil of non-existence. How sad and regrettable indeed that one

should occupy oneself with the transitory things of this world and be debarred from the Dayspring of eternal holiness!

O Maryam! Appreciate the value of these days, for ere long thou shalt no longer behold the Celestial Youth in this contingent realm, but shalt perceive the signs of grief in all created things. Soon shall ye bite your fingers' ends in remorse, for ye shall fail to find this Youth, even were ye to search out the reaches of earth and heaven. Thus hath the decree been sent down from the realm of transcendent glory. Yea, ere long thou shalt behold all existence biting its fingers in bereavement over this Youth, and, search as it may through the entirety of every earth and every heaven, yet will it fail to attain His presence.

In brief, matters have come to such a pass that this Servant hath resolved to retire alone from the midst of this wretched people. Apart from the women of the Household who must needs remain with Me, I shall admit no one else to Our company, not even the attendants of My consort. Let us see then what God hath purposed. I depart, whilst My companions are the tears I shed and Mine associates the sighs I utter; My solace is My pen and the delight of My soul is Mine own beauty; My hosts are My reliance upon God and Mine armies are My trust in Him. Thus have We imparted unto thee a measure of the mysteries of this matter, that thou mayest be of them that apprehend.

O Maryam! All the waters of the world and its rivers have flowed from the eyes of this Youth, which, even as the clouds, have rained down their tears at the wrongs He hath suffered. In short, We have ever offered up Our life and soul in the path of the Beloved, and We are thankful and content in the face of whatever may befall Us. At one time My head was raised aloft on a spear, and at another it fell into the hands of My deadly enemy. At one time I was cast into the fire, and at another I was suspended in the air. Such indeed hath been the treatment that the ungodly have meted out to Us.

O Maryam, We have called this Tablet "the choicest of lamentations" and "the vernal shower of tears". We have dispatched it unto thee that thou mayest weep, at thy heart's ease, and share in the agonies and afflictions of the Ancient Beauty.

(Bahá'u'lláh: Lawḥ-i-Maryam (Tablet to Maryam))

“Although the Realm of Glory hath none of the vanities of the world, yet within the treasury of trust and resignation We have bequeathed to Our heirs an excellent and priceless Heritage. Earthly treasures We have not bequeathed, nor have We added such cares as they entail. By God! In earthly riches fear is hidden and peril is concealed. Consider ye and call to mind that which the All-Merciful hath revealed in the Qur’án: “Woe betide every slanderer and defamer, him that layeth up riches and counteth them.”^[28] Fleeting are the riches of the world; all that perisheth and changeth is not, and hath never been, worthy of attention, except to a recognized measure.

The aim of this Wronged One in sustaining woes and tribulations, in revealing the Holy Verses and in demonstrating proofs hath been naught but to quench the flame of hate and enmity, that the horizon of the hearts of men may be illumined with the light of concord and attain real peace and tranquillity. From the dawning-place of the divine Tablet the day-star of this utterance shineth resplendent, and it behoveth everyone to fix his gaze upon it: We exhort you, O peoples of the world, to observe that which will elevate your station. Hold fast to the fear of God and firmly adhere to what is right. Verily I say, the tongue is for mentioning what is good, defile it not with unseemly talk. God hath forgiven what is past. Henceforward everyone should utter that which is meet and seemly, and should refrain from slander, abuse and whatever causeth sadness in men. Lofty is the station of man! Not long ago this exalted Word streamed forth from the treasury of Our Pen of Glory: Great and blessed is this Day—the Day in which all that lay latent in man hath been and will be made manifest. Lofty is the station of man, were he to hold fast to righteousness and truth and to remain firm and steadfast in the Cause. In the eyes of the All-Merciful a true man appeareth even as a firmament; its sun and moon are his sight and hearing, and his shining and resplendent character its stars. His is the loftiest station, and his influence educateth the world of being.

Every receptive soul who hath in this Day inhaled the fragrance of His garment and hath, with a pure heart, set his face towards the all-glorious Horizon is reckoned among the people of Bahá in the Crimson Book. Grasp ye, in My Name, the chalice of My loving-kindness; drink then your fill in My glorious and wondrous remembrance.

O ye that dwell on earth! The religion of God is for love and unity; make it not the

[28 Qur’án 104:1–2]

cause of enmity or dissension. In the eyes of men of insight and the beholders of the Most Sublime Vision, whatsoever are the effective means for safeguarding and promoting the happiness and welfare of the children of men have already been revealed by the Pen of Glory. But the foolish ones of the earth, being nurtured in evil passions and desires, have remained heedless of the consummate wisdom of Him Who is, in truth, the All-Wise, while their words and deeds are prompted by idle fancies and vain imaginings.

O ye the loved ones and the trustees of God! Kings are the manifestations of the power, and the daysprings of the might and riches, of God. Pray ye on their behalf. He hath invested them with the rulership of the earth and hath singled out the hearts of men as His Own domain.

Conflict and contention are categorically forbidden in His Book. This is a decree of God in this Most Great Revelation. It is divinely preserved from annulment and is invested by Him with the splendour of His confirmation. Verily He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

It is incumbent upon everyone to aid those daysprings of authority and sources of command who are adorned with the ornament of equity and justice. Blessed are the rulers and the learned among the people of Bahá. They are My trustees among My servants and the manifestations of My commandments amidst My people. Upon them rest My glory, My blessings and My grace which have pervaded the world of being. In this connection the utterances revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas are such that from the horizon of their words the light of divine grace shineth luminous and resplendent.

O ye My Branches! A mighty force, a consummate power lieth concealed in the world of being. Fix your gaze upon it and upon its unifying influence, and not upon the differences which appear from it.

The Will of the divine Testator is this: It is incumbent upon the Aghsán, the Afnán and My kindred to turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch. Consider that which We have revealed in Our Most Holy Book: "When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root." The object of this sacred verse is none except the Most Mighty Branch ['Abdu'l-Bahá]. Thus have We graciously revealed unto you Our potent Will, and I am verily the Gracious, the All-Bountiful. Verily God hath ordained the station of the Greater Branch

[Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí] to be beneath that of the Most Great Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. He is in truth the Ordainer, the All-Wise. We have chosen “the Greater” after “the Most Great”, as decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

It is enjoined upon everyone to manifest love towards the Aghsán, but God hath not granted them any right to the property of others.

O ye My Aghsán, My Afnán and My kindred! We exhort you to fear God, to perform praiseworthy deeds and to do that which is meet and seemly and serveth to exalt your station. Verily I say, fear of God is the greatest commander that can render the Cause of God victorious, and the hosts which best befit this commander have ever been and are an upright character and pure and goodly deeds.

Say: O servants! Let not the means of order be made the cause of confusion and the instrument of union an occasion for discord. We fain would hope that the people of Bahá may be guided by the blessed words: “Say: All things are of God.” This exalted utterance is like unto water for quenching the fire of hate and enmity which smouldereth within the hearts and breasts of men. By this single utterance contending peoples and kindreds will attain the light of true unity. Verily He speaketh the truth and leadeth the way. He is the All-Powerful, the Exalted, the Gracious.

It is incumbent upon everyone to show courtesy to, and have regard for, the Aghsán, that thereby the Cause of God may be glorified and His Word exalted. This injunction hath time and again been mentioned and recorded in the Holy Writ. Well is it with him who is enabled to achieve that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days, hath prescribed for him. Ye are bidden moreover to respect the members of the Holy Household, the Afnán and the kindred. We further admonish you to serve all nations and to strive for the betterment of the world.

That which is conducive to the regeneration of the world and the salvation of the peoples and kindreds of the earth hath been sent down from the heaven of the utterance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. Give ye a hearing ear to the counsels of the Pen of Glory. Better is this for you than all that is on the earth. Unto this beareth witness My glorious and wondrous Book.^[29]

(Bahá'u'lláh: Kitáb-i-‘Ahd (Book of the Covenant))

[29 This translation of the Kitáb-i-‘Ahd was first published in *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*]

TABLET OF VISITATION

The praise which hath dawned from Thy most august Self, and the glory which hath shone forth from Thy most effulgent Beauty, rest upon Thee, O Thou Who art the Manifestation of Grandeur, and the King of Eternity, and the Lord of all who are in heaven and on earth! I testify that through Thee the sovereignty of God and His dominion, and the majesty of God and His grandeur, were revealed, and the Daystars of ancient splendor have shed their radiance in the heaven of Thine irrevocable decree, and the Beauty of the Unseen hath shone forth above the horizon of creation. I testify, moreover, that with but a movement of Thy Pen Thine injunction "Be Thou" hath been enforced, and God's hidden Secret hath been divulged, and all created things have been called into being, and all the Revelations have been sent down.

I bear witness, moreover, that through Thy beauty the beauty of the Adored One hath been unveiled, and through Thy face the face of the Desired One hath shone forth, and that through a word from Thee Thou hast decided between all created things, caused them who are devoted to Thee to ascend unto the summit of glory, and the infidels to fall into the lowest abyss.

I bear witness that he who hath known Thee hath known God, and he who hath attained unto Thy presence hath attained unto the presence of God. Great, therefore, is the blessedness of him who hath believed in Thee, and in Thy signs, and hath humbled himself before Thy sovereignty, and hath been honored with meeting Thee, and hath attained the good pleasure of Thy will, and circled around Thee, and stood before Thy throne. Woe betide him that hath transgressed against Thee, and hath denied Thee, and repudiated Thy signs, and gainsaid Thy sovereignty, and risen up against Thee, and waxed proud before Thy face, and hath disputed Thy testimonies, and fled from Thy rule and Thy dominion, and been numbered with the infidels whose names have been inscribed by the fingers of Thy behest upon Thy holy Tablets.

Waft, then, unto me, O my God and my Beloved, from the right hand of Thy mercy and Thy loving-kindness, the holy breaths of Thy favors, that they may draw me away from myself and from the world unto the courts of Thy nearness and Thy

presence. Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou, truly, hast been supreme over all things.

The remembrance of God and His praise, and the glory of God and His splendor, rest upon Thee, O Thou Who art His Beauty! I bear witness that the eye of creation hath never gazed upon one wronged like Thee. Thou wast immersed all the days of Thy life beneath an ocean of tribulations. At one time Thou wast in chains and fetters; at another Thou wast threatened by the sword of Thine enemies. Yet despite all this, Thou didst enjoin upon all men to observe what had been prescribed unto Thee by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

May my spirit be a sacrifice to the wrongs Thou didst suffer, and my soul be a ransom for the adversities Thou didst sustain. I beseech God, by Thee and by them whose faces have been illumined with the splendors of the light of Thy countenance, and who, for love of Thee, have observed all whereunto they were bidden, to remove the veils that have come in between Thee and Thy creatures, and to supply me with the good of this world and the world to come. Thou art, in truth, the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.

Bless Thou, O Lord my Lord, the Divine Lote-Tree and its leaves, and its boughs, and its branches, and its stems, and its offshoots, as long as Thy most excellent titles will endure and Thy most august attributes will last. Protect it, then, from the mischief of the aggressor and the hosts of tyranny. Thou art, in truth, the Almighty, the Most Powerful. Bless Thou, also, O Lord my God, Thy servants and Thy handmaidens who have attained unto Thee, Thou, truly, art the All-Bountiful, Whose grace is infinite. No God is there save Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous.

(Bahá'u'lláh)