

# **Seeds of Revelation and the Mystic Bond between The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh**

## **An Exposition on Excerpts from the Persian Bayán**

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### **Introduction**

In this paper a series of spiritual concepts are explored through the eyes of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh that show a remarkable continuity and harmony of meaning yet are expressed in many different ways. The Persian Bayán offers a rich array of verses that captured the hearts of the early Bábís. It is through these writings that one may peer into the remarkable mind of the young charismatic Báb. His eloquence in espousing the truths of the Creator enabled His followers to achieve unimaginable deeds of heroism for the Cause of God in the most difficult of circumstances. Then the majestic figure of Bahá'u'lláh emerged to carry forth an even greater world embracing revelation that will in the fullness of time sweep away the heartbreak, the pain and endless iniquities of bygone generations. Their relationship begins with the most basic, the most essential and the most enduring qualities that are attainable in human life.

### **Inner Temple**

For religion to have any meaning it must touch the emotions of the human heart, otherwise it will simply become an intellectual exercise devoid of conviction. This lack of emotional content is in fact one of the barriers to faith. How to open the door of the soul is mystifying. Some forms of art, especially music can do this but we have to know where to take it from there. Certain individuals accept unconditionally the precepts of revelation once the heart is moved by the eloquence of a Great Prophet while others spend countless years investigating "The Word" without true comprehension. In other words, logic alone cannot evoke emotional response while passion without rationale cannot achieve lasting certitude. So what is the nature of our soul, of our inner life, of the heart of hearts of our deepest sense of personal reality? The resplendent Herald of a new cycle in human history, the Báb is the first to address the subject.

In the Persian Bayán, the holy book of the Bábí Dispensation, the Báb refers to the physical frame as being the throne of the inner temple. He explains that, though the body may experience pain, it is the inner temple of the body, not the body itself that takes delight in joy or is saddened by pain. For this reason the body should be treated with utmost honor and respect for, by doing so is to honor the inner reality. (SWB 95)

Bahá'u'lláh expands the analogy to encompass the world in terms of a human temple. He compares the need that a human being has for clothing to the need that the body of mankind has for the mantle of justice and wisdom. He identified His robe to be the Revelation given to us by God and that when its purpose is fulfilled it shall be renewed when new circumstances require a fresh measure of the light of God. (GWB 81)

## Purity

The above descriptions of the inner temple of the individual and the human temple of the body of mankind mandate that certain conditions are required in order for them to flourish in a state of joy where justice prevails and where we conduct ourselves with wisdom. The Báb points out the first and foremost condition that we must achieve in everyday life, purity. “*GOD loveth those who are pure. Naught in the Bayán and in the sight of God is more loved than purity and immaculate cleanliness . . .*” (SWB 80) He goes on to state that God does not want to see any soul in the Bayán deprived of joy and radiance. He does desire that all be inwardly and outwardly adorned with purity under all conditions and that no repugnance be caused to them.

Bahá'u'lláh speaks at length on virtues and attributes that pertain to God and He ranks some among the highest of qualities such as “*trustworthiness, truthfulness, purity of heart while communing with God, forbearance, resignation to whatever the Almighty hath decreed, . . .*” (GWB 290) He further expands on the Báb's comments about purity and admonishes the friends to strive to find favor in the sight of God and adds:

*O CHILDREN OF ADAM! Holy words and pure and goodly deeds ascend unto the heaven of celestial glory. Strive that your deeds may be cleansed from the dust of self and hypocrisy and find favor at the court of glory; for ere long the assayers of mankind shall, in the holy presence of the Adored One, accept naught but absolute virtue and deeds of stainless purity...(HW 69)*

## Veils

But there are man-made barriers so severe that they may offer difficult but subtle tests that inhibit one's spiritual progress. These are veils that are opposite to purity. They are derived from corrupted religious beliefs that ironically result in heinous actions. From the Báb we have:

*HOW veiled are ye, O My creatures, ... who, without any right, have consigned Him unto a mountain [Máh-Kú], not one of whose inhabitants is worthy of mention ... With Him, which is with Me, there is no one except him who is one of the Letters of the Living of My Book. (SWB 87)*

The Báb explains that, for Him “*there is not at night even a lighted lamp!*” However, in places of worship there are unnumbered lamps shining for Him (the Promised One) that is in reality the Báb. Moreover, all receive His benefits but are so veiled as “*to refuse Him even a lamp.*” And Bahá'u'lláh issues a warning about veils.

*It behoveth us, therefore, to make the utmost endeavor, that, by God's invisible assistance, these dark veils, these clouds of Heaven-sent trials, may not hinder us from beholding the beauty of His shining Countenance, and that we may recognize Him only by His own Self. (GWB 27)*

In another tablet He says “*Verily, I say: The Cause of God hath never had, nor hath it now, any peer or equal. Rend asunder the veils of idle fancies.*” (ESW 114)

## Love

At the innermost heart of faith, as extolled by the Báb in the Bayán, is love of and for God. He reveals that “*The path to guidance is one of love and compassion, not of force and coercion.*” (SWB 77) He states “*He hath cherished and will ever cherish the desire that all men may attain His gardens of Paradise with utmost love, that no one should sadden another, not even for a moment ...*” (SWB 86)

Bahá'u'lláh also places love at the core of faith. He mentions this word over four thousand times throughout His numerous writings.

*Blessed the man who hath sought enlightenment from the Day-Star of My Word. Blessed he who hath attired his head with the diadem of My love. (TB 17)*

*O SON OF MAN! Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty. (HW 3-7)*

Speaking with the voice of God, He says that we should “*Seclude ourselves in the stronghold of His love.*” (ESW 49) And He exclaims “*Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship.*” (ESW 14)

## Prayer

Of all the activities of which man may participate, the most important in the final analysis must be the act of prayer; for with it “*man holdeth communion with God...*” (KA Notes 166) As such, the intonement of prayer brings one closer to God than any other means within the material world. The Báb emphasized the importance of sincerity in the act of prayer. He said that motive should not be the expectation of God’s reward, though true worship opens the door to the paradise of God’s pleasure. He further stated:

*The most acceptable prayer is the one offered with the utmost spirituality and radiance; its prolongation hath not been and is not beloved by God. The more detached and the purer the prayer, the more acceptable is it in the presence of God.* (SWB 79)

In the same vein, Bahá'u'lláh gives the great hope that when the heart accepts the Divine Messenger of God, His light shines through the soul and body. He becomes the hearing ear of the one drawn to Him in prayer. And He infers that when we pray in a state of communion we may receive assistance from Holy Souls. He warns, on the other hand, that we are not to confuse our station with the essence of God, that His utterances are not to be construed as anthropomorphism, that is, the ascribing of human characteristics to inanimate objects, animals, or natural phenomena. (*Websters*) Also we should not “*see in them the descent of the worlds of God into the grades of the creatures.*” (SV 22-3)

## Resurrection

There may not be another subject so controversial as resurrection. It has been expounded in so many ways that most are utterly confused about its true meaning. The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh have expressed collectively what has to be the clearest vision of what resurrection means. The Báb compares the day of resurrection to any regular day when the sun rises at dawn and falls at sunset. But when a new Revelation dawns the people remain oblivious to the rising in the land where it occurs. The appearance of Muḥammad went unnoticed at first and He was silent because He knew that the unbelievers could not bear such news. And when He did announce the new Day, the people considered Him to be like them and did not even think of Him as a believer. The Báb further compares His own

Dispensation to that of Muḥammad in the way that He was rejected by the people and incarcerated not knowing that their own belief existed because of Him, i.e. the Qá'im. (SWB 79) He said "that all should dwell within His cradle of protection and security until the Day of Resurrection which marketh the dayspring of the Revelation of Him Whom God will make manifest. (SWB 79)

Thus, resurrection in this context refers to the dawn of a new Revelation with the emergence of a Manifestation of God in human form. In other words a new cycle in the spiritual life of man is born on the wings of spiritual insight from a great Prophet in order to help mankind deal with the exigencies of a new age. Expanding on this, Bahá'u'lláh speaks of Muḥammad as an example of fulfillment of prophecy with respect to our spiritual identity and its relationship to the human body:

*Nay, by "trumpet" is meant the trumpet-call of Muḥammad's Revelation, which was sounded in the heart of the universe, and by "resurrection" is meant His own rise to proclaim the Cause of God. He bade the erring and wayward arise and speed out of the sepulchres of their bodies, arrayed them with the beauteous robe of faith, and quickened them with the breath of a new and wondrous life. (KI 116-7)*

Bahá'u'lláh writes also that anyone who attains the presence of a Divine Messenger attains the "Presence of God" and enters the state of immortal life but that this is only possible in the Day of Resurrection, which is the rise of God in "His all-embracing Revelation." He expounds upon the importance of this phenomenon and then asks

*can a more precious, a mightier, and more glorious day than this be conceived, so that man should willingly forego its grace, and deprive himself of its bounties, which like unto vernal showers are raining from the heaven of mercy upon all mankind? (KI 142-4)*

The Báb, in His statement describes the Day of Resurrection in this age to be marked by "the Revelation of He Whom God will make manifest" the One we now know to be Bahá'u'lláh. Through this new Revelation we discover the answers to deeper and deeper mysteries that are related to the writings of the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh expounds upon the inner mysteries of rebirth, of return and of resurrection for example and then explains how those believers in previous Dispensations who embrace the Faith of God and who reached the sublime state of certitude can be regarded as the "return" of those in former Dispensations who had reached the same point of faith.

*For whatsoever the people of a former Dispensation have manifested, the same hath been shown by the people of this latter generation. Consider the rose: whether it blossometh in the East or in the West, it is none the less a rose. For what mattereth in this respect is not the outward shape and form of the rose, but rather the smell and fragrance which it doth impart. (KI 158-9)*

He further states

*It hath been demonstrated and definitely established, through clear evidences, that by "Resurrection" is meant the rise of the Manifestation of God to proclaim His Cause, and by "attainment unto the divine Presence" is meant attainment unto the presence of His Beauty in the person of His Manifestation...*

Bahá'u'lláh declares that "*they have foolishly clung to the term 'seal,' and remained utterly deprived of the recognition of Him Who is the Revealer of both the Seal and the Beginning, in the day of His presence.*" (KI 170) Finally His comment about the word "seal" is born out in the Old and New Testament of the Holy Bible.

*But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased...(Daniel 12:4)*

*And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. (Daniel 12:9)*

Six centuries later St. John wrote of the sealed book at the time of the end:

*And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon . . . (Revelation 5:4)*

*And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. (Revelation 5:5)*

Bahá'u'lláh's ancestry does in fact include Jesse, the forerunner of David. He refers to "the time of the end" as the closing of the Adamic cycle with the declaration of the Báb in confluence with His own rising that would introduce a whole new cycle for the maturity of humankind. (SAQ 62)

## Paradise

There are perhaps as many perceptions of paradise as there are people in the world. And each one no doubt mixes worldly elements within their ideal of what constitutes an idyllic state of being. Even the most devout followers of religion are not free of human limitations with regard to the paradigms of paradise. However we may be freed from these limitations when we perceive through the eyes of a Messenger of God by viewing the intertwining descriptive elements of this elusive goal as presented by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

*There is no paradise, in the estimation of the believers in the Divine Unity, more exalted than to obey God's commandments, and there is no fire in the eyes of those who have known God and His signs, fiercer than to transgress His laws and to oppress another soul, even to the extent of a mustard seed... (SWB 79)*

The sanctity of divine obedience and the repercussion of disobedience is enhanced by Bahá'u'lláh with an uplifting characterization of paradise:

*O DWELLERS OF MY PARADISE! With the hands of loving-kindness I have planted in the holy garden of paradise the young tree of your love and friendship, and have watered it with the goodly showers of My tender grace; now that the hour of its fruiting is come, strive that it may be protected, and be not consumed with the flame of desire and passion. (HW 33-4)*

The Báb, speaking as a mouthpiece of God, carries the meaning of paradise even further away from the material world and adds “I affirm that no Paradise is more sublime for My creatures than to stand before My face and to believe in My holy Words...” And He further states that “no fire hath been or will be fiercer for them than to be veiled from the Manifestation of My exalted Self and to disbelieve in My Words.” (SWB 87) Bahá'u'lláh quotes the Báb as He addresses the Bábís and transcends the former Dispensation to His Own as an element of paradise. “Wherefore, hath My Forerunner, as a sign of submissiveness and humility, said: ‘The whole of the Bayán is only a leaf amongst the leaves of His Paradise.’” (ESW 158-9) The beauty of the realm of God within the context of the Báb’s Holy Book is thus retained within a much broader perception of paradise in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. The Báb, on the other hand, clarifies the individual uniqueness of paradise with respect to the perfection of the individual. He states “No created thing shall ever

*attain its paradise unless it appeareth in its highest prescribed degree of perfection.*" (SWB 88)

So paradise is not necessarily infinite but relative depending upon the kingdom or level of existence. But it is the reality of the spiritual realm and it's paradise that reaches the highest level of perfection as attested by Bahá'u'lláh:

*O OFFSPRING OF DUST! Be not content with the ease of a passing day, and deprive not thyself of everlasting rest. Barter not the garden of eternal delight for the dust-heap of a mortal world. Up from thy prison ascend unto the glorious meads above, and from thy mortal cage wing thy flight unto the paradise of the Placeless.* (HW 39)

From this it may be said that whatever perfections have been achieved in mankind's evolution, we are neither to linger in the past nor to cling to material perfections on the pathway of the soul. The Báb expresses this same theme in a totally different way:

*Man's highest station, however, is attained through faith in God in every Dispensation and by acceptance of what hath been revealed by Him, and not through learning; inasmuch as in every nation there are learned men who are versed in divers sciences . . .* (SWB 89)

Finally, paradise is defined by Bahá'u'lláh regarding this "highest station" as He returns full circle to the basic requirement for one to enter paradise when He says

*Empower me, then, O my God, to be reckoned among them that have clung to Thy laws and precepts for the sake of Thee alone, their eyes fixed on Thy face... These, indeed, are they... whose Paradise is entrance into Thy presence and reunion with Thee.* (PM 299)

## **Covenant**

Perhaps it is the Covenant between a Messenger of God and His followers that is the most important aspect of faith. Without the Covenant, faith may not be sustained nor is it likely to pass the test of certitude. The explanation by the Báb defines what Bahá'u'lláh refers to as the 'Greater Covenant':

*The Lord of the universe hath never raised up a prophet nor hath He sent down a Book unless He hath established His covenant with all men, calling for their acceptance of the next Revelation and of the next Book; inasmuch as the out-pourings of His bounty are ceaseless and without limit.* (SWB 87)

Bahá'u'lláh invokes the words of the Báb in establishing His own validity:

*Glorified art Thou, O My God! Bear Thou witness that, through this Book, I have covenanted with all created things concerning the Mission of Him Whom Thou shalt make manifest, ere the covenant concerning Mine own Mission had been established...(ESW 160)*

The Covenant then is the anchor that holds everything together in the life of a Bahá'í. It follows that the whole of society in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh will be likewise held together in the fullness of time.

*Say: 'The light hath shone forth from the horizon of Revelation, and the whole earth hath been illumined at the coming of Him Who is the Lord of the Day of the Covenant!' The doubters have perished, whilst he that turned, guided by the light of assurance, unto the Dayspring of Certitude hath prospered. (TB 119)*

## Progressive Revelation

In the Bayán the Báb reveals how the process of continuing cycles of revelation brings new depths of spiritual knowledge and understanding to the world of man. He explains that each new dispensation is introduced by a Manifestation of God and that this is like the rising of the sun each day. At the same time there is only one sun regardless of the number of risings. Thus God is constant while His Manifestations on earth are distinguished in Their human form. The Truth that They bring is relevant to the time in which They appear and to the capacity of the people in Their day. They may be seen as outwardly different but in reality are fundamentally the same. His writing during the time of His incarceration points out the relationship between Divine Messengers using the example of Muḥammad:

*It is clear and evident that the object of all preceding Dispensations hath been to pave the way for the advent of Muḥammad, the Apostle of God. These, including the Muḥammadan Dispensation, have had, in their turn, as their objective the Revelation proclaimed by the Qá'im. The purpose underlying this Revelation, as well as those that preceded it, has, in like manner, been to announce the advent of the Faith of Him Whom God will make manifest. And this Faith - the Faith of Him Whom God will make manifest - in its turn, together with all the Revelations gone before it, have as their object the Manifestation destined to succeed it. (SWB 105-6)*

Bahá'u'lláh again connects to the Báb by enlarging upon His basic principle of Progressive Revelation in mystical terms that are pregnant with mysteries yet to be discovered:

*The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to His saying, "His grace hath transcended all things; My grace hath encompassed them all," hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence. (GWB 47)*

Bahá'u'lláh revealed His Laws some twenty years after His Revelation burst forth in the dark pit of Tihiran and were purposely held back until a propitious time even though His followers were pressing with petitions for Him to reveal the new laws. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas there is a most interesting observation regarding Progressive Revelation.

This divinely purposed delay in the revelation of the basic laws of God for this age, and the subsequent gradual implementation of their provisions, illustrate the principle of progressive revelation which applies even within the ministry of each Prophet. (KA Notes 219-20)

## Proof

Of all the types of proof verifying the validity of a Manifestation of God it is unquestionably the words as written by Him that stand as the most convincing notwithstanding the numerous instances of prophetic fulfillment. The Báb revealed thousands upon thousands of verses that were disseminated among the populace. They included His Epistles, His Prayers and philosophical treatises. He wrote a thousand verses in the span of five hours without pause, and His commentaries dealt with the lofty themes of the "*true understanding of God and of the oneness of His Being . . .*" (SWB 109) He did this in a way that astounded the doctors and philosophers of the time. He summarized:

*The evidence set forth by God can never be compared with the evidences produced by any one of the peoples and kindreds of the earth; and beyond a shadow of doubt no evidence is set forth by God save through the One Who is appointed as His supreme Testimony. Moreover, the proof of revealed verses doth, alone and of itself, conclusively demonstrate the utter impotence of all created things on*

*earth, for this is a proof which hath proceeded from God and shall endure until the Day of Resurrection.* (SWB 109)

Bahá'u'lláh completely embraces the claim of the Báb regarding the Word of God as proof of His Truth:

*And if thou dwellest in the land of testimony, content thyself with that which He, Himself, hath revealed: "Is it not enough for them that We have sent down unto Thee the Book?" This is the testimony which He, Himself, hath ordained; greater proof than this there is none, nor ever will be: "This proof is His Word; His own Self, the testimony of His truth."* (KI 91-2)

### Unknowable Essence

The Báb made a statement that will forever stand the test of scientific scrutiny no matter how far advanced it may become when he says, in so many words, that God has always existed and will continue to do so ad infinitum. Though we praise God, He is still exalted above any mention and is not to be the subject of any comparison. He further describes the unique condition of God as being "inscrutable to all men" as He is the Creator of all that exists. In the words of modern logicians, He is the only "uncaused cause" in existence.<sup>1</sup> Even when referring to Manifestations of God, He makes an astonishing statement:

*No created thing comprehendeth Him, while He in truth comprehendeth all things. Even when it is said 'no created thing comprehendeth Him', this refers to the Mirror of His Revelation, that is Him Whom God shall make manifest. Indeed too high and exalted is He for anyone to allude unto Him.* (SWB 113)

The very subject of the Báb's commentary, Bahá'u'lláh, completely embraces His concept of limitation in the relationship between God and His Messengers when He describes Him as "*the unknowable Essence...exalted beyond every human attribute...*" He further states:

*Far be it from His glory that human tongue should adequately recount His praise, or that human heart comprehend His fathomless mystery. He is, and hath ever been, veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and will remain in His Reality everlastingly hidden from the sight of men. "No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision; He is the Subtile, the All-Perceiving..."* (GWB 46-8)

## Sign of God in All Things

This subtitle is absolutely not meant to be confused with pantheism, “the doctrine that the universe conceived of as a whole is God and, conversely, that there is no God but the combined substance, forces, and laws that are manifested in the existing universe. The cognate doctrine of pantheism asserts that God includes the universe as a part though not the whole of his being.”<sup>2</sup> The Báb clearly defines the signs of God with this comment:

*He hath moreover deposited within the realities of all created things the emblem of His recognition, that everyone may know of a certainty that He is the Beginning and the End, the Manifest and the Hidden, the Maker and the Sustainer, the Omnipotent and the All-Knowing, the One Who heareth and perceiveth all things, He Who is invincible in His power and standeth supreme in His Own identity... (SWB 112)*

Bahá'u'lláh takes these thoughts to a deeper level when He refers to the soul as a sign of God and then characterizes the soul as a forerunner or preparer that proclaims the reality of all the worlds of God. (GWB 160-1) He then augments the Báb's commentary.

*Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God, inasmuch as within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that Most Great Light...(GWB 177-8)*

## Eternity

In the Persian Bayán the Báb introduced an aspect of religion that would characterize one of the fundamental principles of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. He wrote, “*The revelation of the Divine Reality hath everlastingly been identical with its concealment and its concealment identical with its revelation...*” What did He mean? His explanation introduced a deeper question:

*That which is intended by 'Revelation of God' is the Tree of divine Truth that betokeneth none but Him, and it is this divine Tree that hath raised and will raise up Messengers, and hath revealed and will ever reveal Scriptures. From eternity unto eternity this Tree of divine Truth hath served and will ever serve as the throne of the revelation and concealment of God among His creatures, and in every age is made manifest through whomsoever He pleaseth. (SWB 112)*

From this we are assured that a Revelation from God is concealed until a propitious time in accordance with His Will and that only through the agency of His chosen Messenger can His Revelation be revealed. The Báb's comment thus plants the seed for the principle of progressive revelation as enunciated by the Beloved Guardian, Shoghi Effendi:

in accordance with the principle of progressive revelation every Manifestation of God must needs vouchsafe to the peoples of His day a measure of divine guidance ampler than any which a preceding and less receptive age could have received or appreciated. (WOB 102-3)

The mystery of concealment then is clarified when it is related to the current level of civilization as inferred by Christ when He said to His followers "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." But what did His comment "from eternity unto eternity" mean? Was He just using a figure of speech to emphasize a point? From the candor and tone of His writings it does not seem likely that He would trivialize any cosmological notation with a mere figure of speech. So what does eternity mean in the context of His passage?

Eternity is defined as an endless or immeasurable time, that is, of infinite duration. But time is called the period when something occurs or it is the period during which an action, process, etc, continues; it is of measured or measurable duration. Time is therefore finite in contrast with infinite duration. (*Webster's*) This apparent contradiction reveals the ambiguous nature of word meanings due perhaps to the subjective aspect of their origins when compared to mathematical notations that are inherently rigorous. Yet words are indispensable without which communication would be impossible.

If eternity is intrinsic to the concept of time then it must be relegated to the phenomenal world, the world of action, momentum, energy and relativity. But what about that world without time or place, the spiritual world that we are destined to enter once we've given up the physical garment? Interactions that occur in that state are completely devoid of physical limitation. Eternity in that Kingdom has no real meaning; it could either be a moment or forever when put in terms of our limited understanding.

There is an analogy to this in the theory of relativity when, according to the Lorenz transformation that Einstein implemented in his theory, an entity moves with the speed of light it literally stands still within its relative time frame by virtue of the dilation of time or distance primarily because the speed of light has a finite limit. For example, if an individual on earth could view a clock

mounted on a space ship that is moving away close to the speed of light he would observe that the hands of the clock were moving very slowly while a passenger inside would see them moving at a normal rate! Thus the observer would see a moment of time lasting for a very long time while the passenger inside would see a specific beginning and end to each passing second. The relative nature of time then allows the coexistence of a beginning and no beginning depending upon the observer and likewise of an end without an ending. In other words it allows for finite periods within eternal duration on a cosmic scale. In any event the Báb infers that by eternity is meant time in the phenomenal sense with endless cycles in which God provides divine guidance. But how can there be more than one eternity?

First, the seed of thought about eternity planted by the Báb is brought into focus by Bahá'u'lláh when He states:

*A sprinkling from the unfathomed deep of His sovereign and all-pervasive Will hath, out of utter nothingness, called into being a creation which is infinite in its range and deathless in its duration. The wonders of His bounty can never cease, and the stream of His merciful grace can never be arrested. The process of His creation hath had no beginning, and can have no end.* (GWB 61)

The mystery deepens. If we have eternity followed by another eternity inferred by the Báb how can we have a creation with no beginning and no end as stated by Bahá'u'lláh? For one thing, talking about limits versus non-limits in this way quickly becomes redundant due to limitations of language, so a different approach is necessary. Too, we are treading the deep water of cosmological questions that are beyond one's individual capacity to solve. Moreover, the process of creation takes many forms and is God ordained as attested by Bahá'u'lláh: "In every age and cycle He hath, through the splendid light shed by the Manifestations of His wondrous Essence, recreated all things..." (GWB 61) Second, to put the question to rest we may further appeal to Bahá'u'lláh where He writes in the Seven Valleys:

*Although the divine worlds be never ending, yet some refer to them as four: The world of time (zaman), which is the one that hath both a beginning and an end; the world of duration (dahr), which hath a beginning, but whose end is not revealed; the world of perpetuity (sarmad), whose beginning is not to be seen but which is known to have an end; and the world of eternity (azal), neither a beginning nor an end of which is visible.* (SV 45)

Finally, to validate the Báb's meaning regarding eternity, Bahá'u'lláh's Son 'Abdu'l-Bahá reinforces His Father's statements.

*Briefly, there were many universal cycles preceding this one in which we are living. They were consummated, completed and their traces obliterated. The divine and creative purpose in them was the evolution of spiritual man, just as it is in this cycle. The circle of existence is the same circle; it returns. The tree of life has ever borne the same heavenly fruit.* (PUP 220)

The forgoing discussion provides an interesting example of Bahá'u'lláh's principle that there must be harmony between science and religion. For current theory holds that the universe was born in a point of 'singularity', which exploded in The Big Bang, from which it has expanded for the last 13.7 billion years.<sup>3</sup> It remains to prove if it will ultimately collapse and recycle in the far distant future or continue on an endless journey. The important thing to note is that whereas science struggles to explain how things happen, religion explains why they happen as mentioned above by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The 'why' or purpose behind phenomena is further confirmed by Bahá'u'lláh when He said that God has "*recreated all things so that whatsoever reflecteth in the heavens and on the earth the signs of His glory may not be deprived of the outpourings of His mercy, nor despair of the showers of His favors.*" (GWB 61-2) He further states:

*Just as the conception of faith hath existed from the beginning that hath no beginning, and will endure till the end that hath no end, in like manner will the true believer eternally live and endure. His spirit will everlastingly circle round the Will of God.* (GWB 141)

The fascinating way that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh transcend the physical and spiritual worlds in such seamless fashion with their use of language obliterates apparent contradictions in both spiritual and physical terms. Yet they leave us with the tantalizing prospect of deeper meanings that only a humble approach can hope to unravel.

## **He Whom God Shall Make Manifest**

One aspect of the mystic bond between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh is dramatically reflected in His frequent repetition of the words "He Whom God Shall make manifest." Prophet Founders of the great religions of the past have always told their followers about another one to come in the fullness of time. Of course significant spans of time separated them but in the case of the Báb, the one to follow Him was contemporary in time and place. This is unprecedented in the annals of religion and one might be tempted to ask the question as to why two Manifestations of God were simultaneously necessary

in the mid-nineteenth century, but that is not in our purview to consider because God can do whatever He chooses. On the other hand if one reflects upon the enormity of the mission of unifying mankind in 1844 it becomes obvious that people in the world then were not prepared to accept universal unity in a single moment with all the quake like social readjustments that it would entail. Stages of change are therefore required.

Thus, progress comes in incremental steps that may at times be very large. Such was the situation when the Báb declared His mission. With each new cycle of Revelation a new Divine Messenger must abrogate the laws of the immediate previous dispensation. Islam was the last before the Báb in the line of prophetic dispensations and had an enormous following. It had seen its birth with Muḥammad and rose to its zenith in the first few centuries of growth then tragically fell into a long sunset of corruption as prophetically depicted in the book of Revelations. (SAQ 45-61) The great sacrifices needed to abrogate the laws of Islam included the martyrdom of a most precious being in the person of the Báb. Immediately, from the time of that brutal event forward, the unification of the religions and peoples of the world would require the efforts of a new Manifestation of God. From this we can see that there were two stages in the closing of the "Adamic cycle" and the birth of a whole new cycle in the spiritual evolution of humankind. And the Báb, Who initiated the process, was very clear about admonishing His followers to accept Bahá'u'lláh. He said:

*Know thou of a certainty that whenever thou makest mention of Him Whom God shall make manifest, only then art thou making mention of God...* (SWB 80)

*And know thou of a certainty that by Paradise is meant recognition of and submission unto Him Whom God shall make manifest, and by the fire the company of such souls as would fail to submit unto Him or to be resigned to His good-pleasure.* (SWB 82)

Bahá'u'lláh quotes the Báb's admonition that one should look upon the Messenger to come with the eyes of that Messenger otherwise one would be veiled from Him. This infers that one must detach from any preconceived notions about a Divine Messenger at the time of His rising. Our own eyes are too closely connected with human limitations to be able to see with spiritual clarity unless and until we open our hearts and minds to a new reality. (ESW 154-5)

## Stage of Seed

So far, we have examined a number of basic concepts in religion that were introduced by the Báb and reverently embraced by

Bahá'u'lláh. The ramifications of these concepts were clarified with deeper meanings by the Blessed Beauty concurrently with His Revelation regarding new laws for the spiritual unification of mankind. Bahá'u'lláh quotes the Báb as He characterizes this fascinating process:

*Ere nine will have elapsed from the inception of this Cause, the realities of the created things will not be made manifest. All that thou hast as yet seen is but the stage from the moist germ until We clothed it with flesh. Be patient, until thou beholdest a new creation... (ESW 152)*

It was in fact nine years after the declaration of the Báb that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh became full blown in the dark pit of Tihiran. The Báb had also commented earlier regarding the consummation of Islam and His statement categorically identified what is now taken as a key point in this essay, the idea that the Bayán is the beginning or the “seed” for a new dispensation to follow.

*The Resurrection of the Bayán will occur at the time of the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest. For today the Bayán is in the stage of seed; at the beginning of the manifestation of Him Whom God shall make manifest its ultimate perfection will become apparent.*

He continues to explain that a new Manifestation will be brought into being for the purpose of “gathering the fruits” of His own, the Báb's Revelation in a manner similar to the transition from Muḥammad to the Qá'im. He further states: “*The fruits of Islam cannot be gathered except through allegiance unto Him [the Qá'im] and by believing in Him.*” (SWB 107-8) A deep spiritual intimacy between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh is thus revealed here though they never actually met. It further shows the powerful sense of continuity of the Word of God as expressed through the agency of these two Divine Manifestations and by extrapolation, between all Manifestations of God. When viewed in this light it makes the divisiveness of world religion seem utterly absurd.

Sadly, the very One that the people should have embraced for the gathering of the fruits of Islam was imprisoned by them in the Mountain of Máh-Kú. As He explained, the Qur'án promised a day of resurrection for all and that all would be brought before the presence of God but since it would be impossible “*to appear before the Most Holy Essence of God*” then the only feasibility “*is attainment unto the Primal Tree.*” (SWB 108)

## Station of Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh is the Manifestation of God in this Day. His dispensation will last at least a full millennium and the new cycle in His name will span a myriad of new dispensations to come that will cover a half million years. (WOB 101-2) These are bold statements but when taken in the context of religious evolution their validity becomes self evident. From the beginning of the Adamic cycle through the conclusion of the dispensation of Muḥammad there has been an ever-widening aspect of spiritual needs in the life of man. From the individual relationship of man to God in the days of Adam. Then the first to acknowledge God, through the family as a sanctified unit occurred in the days of Noah, wherein the process of deepening awareness of a Creator became integral to the human conscience. This advanced to the tribal unit of Abraham and then to unified governance based on explicit laws in the days of Moses. When Christ came, the city state of Hellenic culture was the primary basis for governance especially Rome, and He conquered her vast domain by the fourth century. Then by the sixth century the concept of unity of nationhood became dominant with the advent of Muḥammad. Now the world of nations is in dire need of global spiritual unity. The social and moral crises in the modern world demands a Divine physician, and that physician, Bahá'u'lláh, was introduced and exalted by the Báb through His own brief Dispensation.

*Better is it for a person to write down but one of His verses than to transcribe the whole of the Bayán and all the books, which have been written in the Dispensation of the Bayán. For everything shall be set aside except His Writings, which will endure until the following Revelation. And should anyone inscribe with true faith but one letter of that Revelation, his recompense would be greater than for inscribing all the heavenly Writings of the past and all that has been written during previous Dispensations. Likewise continue thou to ascend through one Revelation after another, knowing that thy progress in the Knowledge of God shall never come to an end, even as it can have no beginning. (SWB 91)*

Bahá'u'lláh characterizes the new Day and His own emergence:

*O thou that hast fixed thine eyes upon My countenance! The Day Spring of Glory hath, in this Day, manifested its radiance, and the Voice of the Most High is calling. We have formerly uttered these words: "This is not the day for any man to question his Lord. It behoveth whosoever hath hearkened to the Call of God, as voiced by Him Who is the*

*Day Spring of Glory, to arise and cry out: 'Here am I, here am I, O Lord of all Names; here am I, here am I, O Maker of the heavens! I testify that, through Thy Revelation, the things hidden in the Books of God have been revealed, and that whatsoever hath been recorded by Thy Messengers in the sacred Scriptures hath been fulfilled.'"* (GWB 163-5)

In His last major work He harks back to a comment by the Báb that draws into bold relief His enormous respect for Bahá'u'lláh:

*Lawful is it for Him Whom God will make manifest to reject him who is greatest on earth, inasmuch as such a one is but a creature in His grasp, and all things adore Him. After Him a Cause shall be given unto you which ye shall come to know.* (ESW 152)

### Station of the Báb

The Báb was a Manifestation of God Whose Ministry occurred at the confluence of the closing of the Adamic cycle and the Birth of the Bahá'í era. The Primal point fulfilled an absolutely critical mission as the Herald of a new age that would hearken the beginning of maturity for humankind. Bahá'u'lláh extols the importance of the Báb in most exalted terms:

*Magnify Thou, O Lord my God, Him Who is the Primal Point, the Divine Mystery, the Unseen Essence, the Day-Spring of Divinity, and the Manifestation of Thy Lordship, through Whom all the knowledge of the past and all the knowledge of the future were made plain, through Whom the pearls of Thy hidden wisdom were uncovered, and the mystery of Thy treasured name disclosed, Whom Thou hast appointed as the Announcer of the One through Whose name the letter B and the letter E have been joined and united, through Whom Thy majesty, Thy sovereignty and Thy might were made known, through Whom Thy words have been sent down, and Thy laws set forth with clearness, and Thy signs spread abroad, and Thy Word established, through Whom the hearts of Thy chosen ones were laid bare...* (PM 84-6)

The Báb constantly reminded His followers of "Him Whom God shall make manifest" but never seemed to mention Him by name. It has often been said that Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí "took" the name of Bahá'u'lláh and He surely became designated by that title at the conference of Badašht which occurred in June of 1848. In early April of that year the Báb was removed from Máh-Kú to Chihriq. (DB 259) However, well before that conference, there was an instance during the Báb's nine months of incarceration in the prison

castle of Máh-Kú when He wrote a definitive statement in the Bayán regarding the Glory of God as described by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.

It should be noted, in this connection, that in the third Vahid of this Book there occurs a passage which, alike in its explicit reference to the name of the Promised One, and in its anticipation of the Order which, in a later age, was to be identified with His Revelation, deserves to rank as one of the most significant statements recorded in any of the Báb's writings. "*Well is it with him,*" is His prophetic announcement, "*who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord. For He will assuredly be made manifest. God hath indeed irrevocably ordained it in the Bayán.*" (GPB 25-6)

But until the Promised One were to appear, the Báb in reference to His Own Dispensation maintained:

*In this Revelation the Lord of the universe hath deigned to bestow His mighty utterances and resplendent signs upon the Point of the Bayán, and hath ordained them as His matchless testimony for all created things. Were all the people that dwell on earth to assemble together, they would be unable to produce a single verse like unto the ones which God hath caused to stream forth from the tongue of the Point of the Bayán. Indeed, if any living creature were to pause to meditate he would undoubtedly realize that these verses are not the work of man, but are solely to be ascribed unto God, the One, the Peerless, Who causeth them to flow forth from the tongue of whomsoever He willeth, and hath not revealed nor will He reveal them save through the Focal Point of God's Primal Will.* (SWB 104-5)

## Conclusion

The Báb introduced concepts regarding faith and human relations that were revolutionary for the time and place in which they were uttered. The proof of His station and the truth of His Revelation were so profound, so powerful that He was brutally martyred by the Persian leaders out of abject fear of His charismatic popularity. This happened six short years after His declaration in 1844. Three years later, in fulfillment of the Báb's prophecy, a new Dispensation was born in the dark pit of Teheran through a new Messenger of God, Bahá'u'lláh. He and the Báb were contemporaries but never physically met, yet an extraordinary relationship emerged that would forever tie Them together as the

Twin Manifestations of the Bahá'í Dispensation. The Báb introduced new concepts in religion as He addressed the Shiite world by abrogating the laws of Islam. Bahá'u'lláh introduced a great number of new concepts as He addressed the world by abrogating many laws of the world's great religions and, in fact by utterly disenfranchising the sanctity of priesthood. He also enlarged upon a number of the Báb's concepts and permanently made some of them part of the foundation of His own Faith. The mystical bond between them and their spiritual reality that intertwines in mysterious ways that far exceed intelligence or the senses is confirmed by Bahá'u'lláh when He refers to the Báb's explication "*I am the first to adore Him, and pride Myself on My kinship with Him.*" (ESW 158-9) What does this intriguing relationship between these two Divine Messengers of God mean in its finality? What impetus does it hold for the third millennium? At the very least we are in the early stages of implementing the Divine Plan as envisioned in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh that began with the seeds planted by the Báb. And now, the fire of light is blazing, the call has echoed through all the halls of knowledge and the heart of every soul on earth has been touched if only they knew it. The resurrection has occurred and it is the destiny of this generation's believers to arise to help others awaken and to make way for that "Kingdom of God on Earth" that has been so long in waiting.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Love, Power and Justice*, 82.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica 2005 Delux CD-ROM, *Pantheism*.

<sup>3</sup> *L.A. Times*, 03-10-04, sec A20, Associated Press.

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