

The Significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation



Part of a Series on Major Themes of the Creative Word

“The Word of God may be likened unto a sapling, whose roots have been implanted in the hearts of men. It is incumbent upon you to foster its growth through the living waters of wisdom, of sanctified and holy words, so that its root may become firmly fixed and its branches may spread out as high as the heavens and beyond.” —Bahá'u'lláh

In this series:

The Word of God

*The Covenant: Its Meaning and Origin
and Our Attitude Toward It*

The Significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation

Youth Can Move the World

The Spiritual Conquest of the Planet

The Journey of the Soul

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The Significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation

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Preface

A letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi states: “The principles, administration and fundamentals of the Faith are well known, but the friends need greatly to study the more profound works which would give them spiritual maturity to a greater degree, unify their community life, and enable them to better exemplify the Bahá’í way of living. . . .”¹

This book is part of a series whose purpose is to draw the reader into a study of the profound concepts found in the Bahá’í Revelation. It is also intended to serve as a bridge leading to expanded study of the writings of Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi.

The book can be used for individual or group study. Each lesson is divided into a number of possible segments that can be used selectively:

- Introduction** An introduction to the lesson.
- Overview** A general presentation of new information.
- Explanation** Details of the “Overview” with quotes and examples.
- Readings** Quotations from the writings on the lesson topic.
- Illustrations** Excerpts on the lesson topic, usually from books by Bahá’ís; often includes stories of Bahá’í history.
- Further Study** Three ways to explore the lesson topic in more depth.
- Questions** Questions that review the lesson material.
- Answers** Answers to the questions.
- Discussion** Questions for group discussion.
- Exercise** An exercise that explores the topic in more depth.
- Feedback** Suggested answers for the exercise.

Note in the “Readings” section that some words in the passages from the writings are defined in the margins for your convenience. Words having a specific meaning in a Bahá’í context are underlined and defined with that meaning. Pronunciation of Bahá’í and Islamic terms is also provided.

¹ *The Importance of Deepening* 45-46

To use this book for individual study, create your own study plan by choosing the sections you want to cover in each lesson. Depending on your personal preference you may wish to skip some of the sections. However, please do not skip the “Readings” section, since this provides a chance to read the Word of God and comments by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice. Use the right margins on each page to make notes and record ideas. You may find it most convenient to study a lesson—or just one lesson segment—with your daily prayers in the morning or evening.

The book can also be used to create a plan for group study. For example, each lesson can be read and discussed section by section. Or, group members can read the lesson on their own, then come together weekly for discussion of the quotations and questions. As a third option, a group leader can summarize the “Overview,” “Explanation,” and “Illustration” sections in a ten to fifteen minute presentation before the group reads and discusses the quotations.

At the end of the book is an index with references that go beyond the quotations covered in the lessons. The index offers a valuable starting point for an extended study of the significance of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation.

Beyond personal and group deepenings, this book can be used as a resource for preparing for firesides, public talks, or seminar work at Bahá’í schools. We hope you find it useful, educational, and uplifting.

National Teaching Committee
April 1989

*Thou hast from everlasting been immeasurably exalted above
the mention of all beings, and wilt continue unto everlasting
to remain far above the conception of Thy creatures.. . . .*

*How sweet, therefore, is the praise Thou givest to Thine own
Self, and the description Thou givest of Thine own Being!*

—Bahá'u'lláh

1

The Day of God

Introduction

We live in a very special time: the Day of a new Revelation from God brought to humanity by Bahá'u'lláh. “How vast is the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh!” Shoghi Effendi states. “How great the magnitude of His blessings showered upon humanity in this day! And yet how inadequate our conception of their significance and glory!”¹

Though our understanding of so great a Revelation will always fall short of its true glory, the “first obligation” of every believer is, nevertheless, “to strive to obtain a more adequate understanding of the significance of Bahá'u'lláh’s stupendous Revelation.”²

Shoghi Effendi explains that we must turn to Bahá'u'lláh’s own words if we wish to obtain a clearer understanding of the importance and meaning of His Revelation. The Guardian highlights four themes from Bahá'u'lláh’s writings for our attention. They include passages that glorify “His long awaited Day” (examined in this chapter), His presentation of the “unprecedented claim He has advanced” (chapters 2 and 3), His statements regarding the “mysterious forces He has released” (chapters 4 and 5), and the “station” attained by those who recognize His Revelation (chapters 5 to 7).³

¹ *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 24

² Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 100

³ *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 103

Overview

For thousands of years God has sent His Manifestations⁴ to illumine the world of humanity. Each of these Manifestations united humanity with God and guided individuals and society with divine teachings. Each also left a promise for the future—the promise of the Day of God.

“It is evident,” writes Bahá’u’lláh, “that every age in which a Manifestation of God hath lived is divinely ordained and may, in a sense, be characterized as God’s appointed Day. This Day, however, is unique and is to be distinguished from those that have preceded it.”⁵

That this Day of God is different is apparent in the emphatic promises of past religions, in statements from the Bahá’í writings that describe the significance and glory of this Day, and in expectations that a new age for humanity will dawn.

Explanation

The Manifestations of God all play a part in a universal cycle⁶ of humanity’s development that can be compared to the life cycle of a human being.

- The Manifestations of the past have guided humanity through its infancy and childhood. They have served in the “prophetic” stage of the cycle of humanity’s development, preparing us for our coming of age in the Day of God.
- Bahá’u’lláh provides guidance so that we can pass from adolescence to adulthood. With the advent of the Day of God, the stage of prophecy that began with Adam and was sealed with Muḥammad was completed. Bahá’u’lláh inaugurated a new stage, the stage of fulfillment, that is to last 500,000 years.⁷ His own Dispensation will last at least 1000 years.

⁴ A Manifestation is a Messenger of God through Whom God’s perfections and attributes are expressed; examples include Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muḥammad, the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, and others. (See *Gleanings*, pages 46-102.)

⁵ *Gleanings* 60

⁶ See *Some Answered Questions*, pages 160-61.

⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 102

- The Manifestations of the future⁸ will provide additional guidance from God for our adult stage. While there is no stage of human development beyond adulthood (the stage of fulfillment), there is an unlimited degree of progress that can be made within this stage.

To help us understand the distinguishing character of the Day of God in relation to the Manifestations of the past, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá uses the example of the sun in illuminating the earth.

- The sun is always the same sun. Yet as the earth moves about the sun during the year, the measure of the energy of the sun sent to parts of the earth changes. In summer, days are longer, and the intensity of heat and light sent to earth is greater.

“The station of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states, “. . . is represented by . . . the sun’s mid-summer and highest station. By this is meant that this holy Dispensation is illumined with the light of the Sun of Truth from its most exalted station, and in the plenitude of its resplendency, its heat and glory.”⁹ “Centuries, nay ages must pass away ere the Day Star of Truth shineth again in its mid-summer splendor. . . .”¹⁰

- The extra measure of the sun’s power has its effect on the earth. It is in the summer that the earth brings forth its most abundant fruits—plants and animal life flourish. The summer sun produces rapid growth and ripens the fruit for harvest.

The intensity of the spiritual power released in the Day of God has propelled humanity toward a new stage in its development.

⁸ “. . . the Manifestations of His Beauty no beginning hath beheld, and they will continue to the ‘End that knoweth no end.’” (Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* 167; see *Gleanings* 68, 73, and 346.)

⁹ In *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 127

¹⁰ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 110

Readings

1. “The time foreordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, have all been fulfilled. Out of Zion hath gone forth the Law of God, and Jerusalem, and the hills and land thereof, are filled with the glory of His Revelation. . . .

“In the Book of Isaiah it is written: ‘Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty.’ No man that meditateth upon this verse can fail to recognize the greatness of this Cause, or doubt the exalted character of this Day—the Day of God Himself. This same verse is followed by these words: ‘And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day.’ This is the Day which the Pen of the Most High hath glorified in all the holy Scriptures. There is no verse in them that doth not declare the glory of His holy Name, and no Book that doth not testify unto the loftiness of this most exalted theme. Were We to make mention of all that hath been revealed in these heavenly Books and holy Scriptures concerning this Revelation, this Tablet would assume impossible dimensions.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 12-13

2. “. . . To His [Bahá’u’lláh’s] Day Joel and Zephaniah had both referred as the ‘day of Jehovah . . .’ His Day Ezekiel and Daniel had, moreover, both acclaimed as the ‘day of the Lord,’ and Malachi described as ‘the great and dreadful day of the Lord’ when ‘the Sun of Righteousness’ will ‘arise, with healing in His wings. . . .’

“He alone is meant by the prophecy attributed to Gautama Buddha Himself, that ‘a Buddha named Maitreya, the Buddha of universal fellowship’ should, in the fullness of time, arise and reveal ‘His boundless glory. . . .’

“To His Day Jesus Christ Himself had referred as ‘the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory.’ . . . St. Peter had spoken of it as the ‘Day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.’ His Day he, furthermore, had described as ‘the times of restitution of all things, which God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets since the world began.’

“To Him Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, had alluded in His Book as the ‘Great Announcement,’ and declared His Day to be the Day whereon ‘God’ will ‘come down’ ‘overshadowed with clouds. . . .’ To His Day He . . . had paid a glowing tribute, glorifying it as the ‘Great Day,’ the ‘Last Day,’ the ‘Day of God,’ the ‘Day of Judgment,’ . . . the ‘Day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of the world. . . .’”

—Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 95-96

The Promised Day

foreordained: decreed or ordered beforehand

Revelation: presentation by God of His will and truths to humanity; the measure of divine truth brought by each Manifestation (Messenger) of God

Isa 2:10-11

exalted: glorified

Joe 1:15; 2:1; 2:11; 2:31; 3:14

Zep 1:7; 1:14; 2:2; 2:3

Eze 13:5; 30:3

Mal 4:5; 4:2

Mat 19:28

2Pe 3:12

Act 3:21

restitution: act or fact of restoring something or repaying someone

Greatness of the Day of God

allusions: indirect references

countenance: face

manifest: obvious, clear, apparent to the senses

ken: range of sight or understanding

comprehension: understanding

profound: marked by intellectual depth or insight; deeply felt

sublime: splendid

adorned: beautified, decorated

peerless: without equal

myriad: indefinitely large number

corruptible: capable of being decayed or ruined; capable of changing from good to bad

3. “Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the Sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness. The soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted for this wondrous Day. All the divers kindreds of the earth have, likewise, yearned to attain it.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 11

4. “All glory be to this Day, the Day in which the fragrances of mercy have been wafted over all created things, a Day so blest that past ages and centuries can never hope to rival it, a Day in which the countenance of the Ancient of Days hath turned towards His holy seat. . . .

“... He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendor is revealed. . . .’ Verily this is the Day in which both land and sea rejoice at this announcement, the Day for which have been laid up those things which God, through a bounty beyond the ken of mortal mind or heart, hath destined for revelation.”

—*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 3-5

5. “The excellence of this Day is immensely exalted above the comprehension of men, however extensive their knowledge, however profound their understanding.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 108

6. “The purpose underlying all creation is the revelation of this most sublime, this most holy Day, the Day known as the Day of God, in His Books and Scriptures. . . .’ ‘This is the Day in which God’s most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. . . .’ ‘A fleeting moment, in this Day, excelleth centuries of a bygone age. . . .’ ‘The world of being shineth, in this Day, with the resplendency of this Divine Revelation. All created things extol its saving grace, and sing its praises. The universe is wrapt in a ecstasy of joy and gladness. . . . Well is it with him that hath lived to see this Day, and hath recognized its station. . . .’ ‘This Day a different Sun hath arisen, and a different Heaven hath been adorned with its stars and its planets. The world is another world, and the Cause another Cause. . . .’ ‘Peerless is this Day, for it is as the eye to past ages and centuries and as a light unto the darkness of the times. . . .’ ‘Should the greatness of this Day be revealed in its fullness, every man would forsake a myriad lives in his longing to partake, though it be for one moment, of its great glory—how much more this world and its corruptible treasures!’”

—Bahá’u’lláh, in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 77-79

A New Age for Humanity

7. “Praise be to God, throughout succeeding centuries and ages the call of civilization hath been raised, the world of humanity hath been advancing and progressing day by day, various countries have been developing by leaps and bounds, and material improvements have increased, until the world of existence obtained universal capacity to receive the spiritual teachings and to hearken to the Divine Call.... Then at last the call of the Kingdom was raised, the spiritual virtues and perfections were revealed, the Sun of Reality dawned, and the teachings of the Most Great Peace, of the oneness of the world of humanity and the universality of men were promoted. We hope that the effulgence of these rays shall become more and more resplendent, so that the goal of this universal human process will be attained and the love of God will appear in the utmost grace and beauty and bedazzle all hearts.”—*Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 285-86

hearken: give attention

effulgence: radiance

*resplendent: shining
brilliantly*

*bedazzle: to dazzle,
impress greatly; bewilder*

8. “That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race can neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day, this period of newness and consummation. . . . The gifts and blessings of the period of youth, although timely and sufficient during the adolescence of mankind, are now incapable of meeting the requirements of its maturity.”—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 165

*consummation: fulfillment;
completion*

9. “See how, in this day, the scope of sciences and arts have widened out, and what wondrous technical advances have been made, and to what a high degree the mind’s powers have increased, and what stupendous inventions have appeared.

“This age is indeed as a hundred other ages: should ye gather the yield of a hundred ages, and set that against the accumulated product of our times, the yield of this one era will prove greater than that of a hundred gone before.”

—*Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 111

10. “The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, whose supreme mission is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations, should . . . be regarded as signaling through its advent the *coming of age of the entire human race*. It should be viewed not merely as yet another spiritual revival in the ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelations, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man’s collective life on this planet.”—Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 163

*organic: relating to living
things; parts are intercon-
nected; change in one part
affects all parts*

*culmination: attainment to
the highest point or degree*

*recurrent: happening or
appearing again or
repeatedly*

For more quotations on
topics raised in this lesson
see the index, page 83.

Illustration

Although different terms and symbols are used, reference to the Day of God is found in various traditions. The following example is taken from the Lakota Sioux:

“. . . The foundation of our spiritual teaching was based upon the teachings and laws given by a woman named [White Buffalo Calf Woman] who was a spirit from God sent through the buffalo. She came at different recurrent times or stages in the spiritual development of the Lakota people. . . .

“The point that . . . my grandfather always stressed was the perspective of the apocalypse, or the second coming. . . . He was aware of the teachings attached to the sacred pipe, which is . . . a symbol of the Covenant. . . .

“When [White Buffalo Calf Woman] brought the pipe . . . She gave some particulars as to what they were to be aware of . . . for the signs of Her return—the return of Her spirit. One of the things She said was that She would return in the form of the morning star. On her departure She became the evening star—which is recognized as a seven pointed star. Interestingly enough, all the tribes generally agree that it is female. The morning star all the tribes recognize as a male entity. She mentioned She would return in the form of the morning star, meaning the eight pointed star. . . . When She left She said for us to be wary of this return. . . .

“[My grandfather] told me a little bit about [a] seeming . . . chronological discrepancy. . . . The Lord Jesus Christ came almost 2000 years ago. According to different sources this White Buffalo Calf Woman could not have come more than 1000 years ago. So he was perplexed by the fact that our spiritual dispensation was 1000 years newer than the one from across the ocean. . . . He hoped that I could always be open to different teachings. . . .

“I came into contact with some Bahá’í people. During the course of about three years we engaged in frequent conversations. . . . [A Bahá’í] showed . . . a shot of the shrine of the Báb. . . . Everything was eight sided or eight pointed. I asked, ‘What is the meaning of that?’ . . . I mentioned the teaching of [White Buffalo Calf Woman]. . . . When She was going to return She said: ‘look to the morning star.’ So I asked them, ‘What are the characteristics of the Báb?’ . . . My friend told me He is the symbol of the first point of light on the horizon of a new day . . . the sign of hope that a new Day will dawn. . . . These are exactly the qualities that we associate with the morning star. . . . This struck home.”

—Kevin Locke, transcript of a recorded talk, April 21, 1984

Further Study

Select one of the passages from the “Readings” section.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| What does the passage say? | In what specific ways can this passage be applied in your life? |
|----------------------------|---|

List any unanswered questions about the lesson you may want to explore in more depth. Use the index on page 83 and the additional reading below to help you find answers to your questions.

| |
|----------------------|
| 1. 2. 3. 4. |
|----------------------|

Gleanings, by Bahá'u'lláh, 1-46

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, by Shoghi Effendi, 103-12

The Advent of Divine Justice, by Shoghi Effendi, 75-85

Passages of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the Day of God.

Thief in the Night, by William Sears

A commentary that includes references from the Bible foretelling the coming of the Day of God.

The Bahá'í Proofs, by Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, 131-35

A commentary indicating that the promised Day of God is fulfilled only by Bahá'u'lláh.

Personal Reflection

Remaining Questions

Additional Reading

Questions

1. List three promises of the Day of God:

2. (Circle all that apply.) Which of the following are unique features of the Day of God that attest to its greatness:

- a. every Prophet longed for this Day
- b. what was “hidden” is now revealed
- c. God has manifested Himself
- d. it is the purpose of creation

3. (Circle all that apply.) The new age for humanity:

- a. applies only to a renewal of religion
- b. is the outcome of a developmental process
- c. is a sign of its adolescence
- d. will involve the unity of nations

Answers

The following are suggested answers. Depending on your understanding of the quotes, you may have different answers. Consider the suggested answers a starting point for thought and discussion.

1. Promises of the new Day may include any explicit references in the Holy Books of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam (page 8); the statements of a promised age in other religious traditions (see page 8 and page 11); and the descriptions of the Day of God found in the Bahá'í writings (see, for example, page 9) You may be aware of other references.
2. **a, b, and d.** For “a,” see #3, page 9; for “b,” see #4, page 9; and for “d,” see #5, page 9. Regarding “c,” this may or may not be correct depending on your reasoning. God has manifested Himself in this Day, but this is not unique because He has done it with the coming of each Manifestation. However, one meaning of the term “Day of God” is that God Himself will come. This is indicated by statements that “God” will “come down” and “mankind shall stand before the Lord of the world” (see #2, page 8). For a more detailed explanation, see chapter 2.
3. **b and d.** For “b,” see #7 and #8, page 10 and for “d,” see #10, page 10. Regarding “a,” the new age applies to material as well as spiritual progress. Regarding “c,” the new age is a sign of humanity’s maturity not its adolescence (see #8, page 10).

Discussion

What is the Day of God? What makes this Day great?

What do you think is meant by Bahá'u'lláh's statement, “He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come?” (Refer to #4, page 9.)

Describe, in your own words, the “universal human process.” (Refer to #7, page 10.) What is the relationship between this process and the Day of God? What is the “goal” of the process? How could you explain the process to individuals interested in “new age” ideas?

What are some of the signs of the breakdown and chaos in the existing world order? What are some of the signs of the renewal of society promised in the Day of God?

2

The Station of Bahá'u'lláh

Introduction

The last chapter gave us a glimmering of the greatness of the Day of God. In this chapter we will try to get some insight into the station of the One Who ushered in this great Day.¹

Who is Bahá'u'lláh? To know the answer to this question, we must see Him, not through our own preconceptions, but as He presents Himself. “Look . . . upon Me,” Bahá'u'lláh states “with Mine eyes, and not with the eyes of anyone besides Me. Ye will, otherwise, be never capable of recognizing Me, though ye ponder My Cause as long as My Kingdom endureth, and meditate upon all created things throughout the eternity of God. . . .”²

¹ Because of the topic, this chapter is much longer than any of the others. There are six pages of Readings. If you are involved in group study or in study at a Bahá'í school you may wish to cover this chapter in two sessions.

² *Gleanings* 272-73

Overview

“O ye that inhabit the heavens and the earth!” Bahá’u’lláh proclaims. “There hath appeared what hath never previously appeared. He Who, from everlasting, had concealed His Face from the sight of creation is now come.”³

In presenting Himself to humanity, Bahá’u’lláh has made an extraordinary claim—a claim that challenges everyone to investigate and accept its truth. He alone, of all God’s Manifestations, has claimed to usher in the long-promised Day of God. To gain some insight into the station of Bahá’u’lláh, we need to understand the claim of:

- His relation to humanity;
- His relation to other Manifestations; and
- His relation to God.

Explanation

Bahá’u’lláh is the Promised One. “All the divers kindred of the earth” have “yearned” for His coming.⁴ He is the “Best-Beloved” Who is seeking “reunion” with His loved ones.⁵ He claims for Himself the heart of every person, that He may transform them from material to spiritual beings. “We, verily, have come for your sakes, and have borne the misfortunes of the world for your salvation.”⁶

Bahá’u’lláh is the intermediary between God and humanity in this Day. He has come to judge humanity and to set its affairs in order. He has revealed the laws of God. He has laid the foundation for a new World Order. He has provided teachings necessary to achieve “that Age of Ages when swords will be beaten into plowshares, when the Kingdom promised by Jesus Christ will have been established, and the peace of the planet definitely and permanently ensured.”⁷

His Relation to Humanity

³ *Gleanings* 31

⁴ Bahá’u’lláh, in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 78

⁵ Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 32-34

⁶ *The Proclamation of Bahá’u’lláh* 92

⁷ Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, Preface, v

His Relation to Other Manifestations

Bahá'u'lláh explains that the essential reality of all the Manifestations is the same.⁸ They do differ, however, in the nature of their assigned mission and in the extent of the Revelation They bring.⁹

The Manifestations of the past prepared humanity for the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. “Every Prophet hath announced the coming of this Day,” Bahá'u'lláh states, “and every Messenger hath groaned in His yearning for this Revelation. . . .”¹⁰ The Manifestations of the future will provide additional guidance from God, but will, nevertheless, remain under the shadow of Bahá'u'lláh. The unique position Bahá'u'lláh holds in relation to the other Manifestations is due to the unprecedented measure of the Revelation of the light of God He brings and the pivotal nature of His mission in the development of human affairs.

God is exalted above all creation. He is far above even the ability of the Manifestations of God to understand Him.¹¹

The Manifestations are like perfect mirrors that reflect the image of the sun (God).¹² If we were to look in the mirror and say “that is the sun” it would be a true statement. Similarly, if we say “that is not the sun” it would also be true. “Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: ‘I am God,’” Bahá'u'lláh states, “He, verily speaketh the truth. . . . And were they to say, ‘We are the Servants of God,’ this also is a manifest and indisputable fact.”¹³

Bahá'u'lláh reflects the image of God to a measure unsurpassed in bygone dispensations. Even the name “Day of God” testifies to the degree to which God has revealed Himself. It is even as if meeting God face-to-face. The Báb states that any mention of the presence of God in all the Holy Scriptures is a reference to the presence of “Him Whom God shall make manifest” [Bahá'u'lláh].¹⁴

His Relation to God

8 *Gleanings* 51

9 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 52

10 In *The Advent of Divine Justice* 78

11 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 62-63

12 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 48

13 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 54

14 Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. II, 17

Readings

1. “Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One. The Call of God hath been raised, and the light of His countenance hath been lifted up upon men. It behoveth every man to blot out the trace of every idle word from the tablet of his heart, and to gaze, with an open and unbiased mind, on the signs of His Revelation, the proofs of His Mission, and the tokens of His glory.” —Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 10-11

2. “I am the One Whom the tongue of Isaiah hath extolled, the One with Whose name both the Torah and the Evangel were adorned. . . .” —*The Proclamation of Bahá’u’lláh* 29

3. “To Israel He was neither more nor less that the incarnation of the ‘Everlasting Father,’ the ‘Lord of Hosts’ come down ‘with ten thousand saints’; to Christendom Christ returned ‘in the glory of the Father,’ to Shi‘ah Islám the return of the Imám Ḥusayn; to Sunnī Islám the descent of the ‘Spirit of God’ (Jesus Christ); to the Zoroastrians the promised Sháh-Bahrám; to the Hindus the reincarnation of Krishna; to the Buddhists the fifth Buddha.”

“To Him Isaiah, the greatest of the Jewish prophets, had alluded as the ‘Glory of the Lord,’ the ‘Everlasting Father,’ the ‘Prince of Peace,’ the ‘Wonderful,’ the ‘Counsellor,’ the ‘Rod come forth out of the stem of Jesse’ and the “Branch grown out of His roots,’ . . . Who ‘shall judge among the nations,’ Who ‘shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slay the wicked,’ and Who ‘shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. . . .”

“To Him Jesus Christ had referred as the ‘Prince of this world,’ as the ‘Comforter’ Who will ‘reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement,’ as the ‘Spirit of Truth’ Who ‘will guide you unto all truth’ Who ‘shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak,’ as the ‘Lord of the Vineyard,’ and as the ‘Son of Man’ Who ‘shall come in the glory of His Father’ ‘in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,’ with ‘all the holy angels’ about Him, and ‘all nations’ gathered before His throne.” —Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 94-95

4. “We, verily, have come for your sakes, and have borne the misfortunes of the world for your salvation. Flee ye the One Who hath sacrificed His life that ye may be quickened? . . . Say: We, in truth, have opened unto you the gates of the Kingdom. Will ye bar the doors of your houses in My face?” —*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 10-11

His Relation to Humanity

countenance: face

anguish: extreme pain or distress of mind

Torah: the Pentateuch, or first five books of the Old Testament; the entire body of Jewish law

Evangel: the Gospel

incarnation: embodiment in human form and substance

Everlasting Father: Isa 9:6

Ten thousand saints: Deu 33:2

Lord of Hosts: there are over 250 reference to the Lord of Hosts in the old testament

glory of the Father: Mat 16:27; Mar 8:38

alluded: called or directed attention to something

Isa 9:6, Isa 2:4, Isa 11:12

Prince of this world: Joh 14:30

Comforter: Joh 14:16; Joh 15:26; Joh 16:7-8

reprove: express disapproval to or of

Spirit of Truth: Joh 16:13

5. “Say: He Who is the Unconditioned is come, in the clouds of light, that He may quicken all created things with the breezes of His Name, the Most-Merciful, and unify the world, and gather all men around this table which hath been sent down from heaven.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 46

6. “Praise be to Him Who hath fashioned this new era, this age of majesty, even as the unfolding pageant where the realities of all things can be exposed to view. . . . Both the seen and the unseen worlds have been illumined, and the Promised One hath come to earth and the beauty of the Adored One hath shone forth.

“Salutations, blessings, and welcome to that Universal Reality, that Perfect Word, that Manifest Book, that Splendor which hath dawned in the highest heaven, that Guide of all nations, that Light of the world—the billowing ocean of Whose abounding grace hath flooded all creation, in such wise that the waves thereof have cast upon the sands of this visible world their shining pearls. Now hath the Truth appeared, and falsehood fled away; now hath the day dawned and jubilation taken over, wherefore men’s souls are sanctified, their spirits purged, their hearts rejoiced their minds purified, their secret thoughts made wholesome, their consciences washed clean, their inmost selves made holy: for the Day of Resurrection hath come to pass, and the bestowals of thy Lord, the Forgiving, have encompassed all things.”—*Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 38-39

7. “Verily, He (Jesus) said: ‘Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.’ In this day, however, We say: ‘Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become quickeners of mankind.’

—*The Proclamation of Bahá’u’lláh* 91

8. “He Who in such dramatic circumstances was made to sustain the overpowering weight of so glorious a Mission was none other than the One Whom posterity will acclaim, and Whom innumerable followers already recognize, as the Judge, the lawgiver and Redeemer of all mankind, as the Organizer of the entire planet, as the Unifier of the children of men, as the Inaugurator of the long-awaited millennium, as the Originator of a new ‘Universal Cycle,’ as the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, as the Fountain of the Most Great Justice, as the Proclaimer of the coming of age of the entire human race, as the Creator of a new World Order, as the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 93-94

Unconditioned: not limited by conditions of time or space; absolute

quicken: give life to

pageant: a play or dramatic spectacle devised for a public celebration

salutations: a formal expression of praise; the ceremonial words or acts of one who meets, welcomes, or formally addresses another

jubilation: the state of being exultant or rejoicing in triumph

posterity: succeeding generations

acclaim: declare

inaugurator: one who formally opens something such as an era or public institution

millennium: period of 1000 years; the thousand years that Christ will reign on earth (Rev 20:1-6)

His Relation to Other Manifestations

9. “O people! I swear by the one true God! This is the Ocean out of which all Seas have proceeded, and with which every one of them will ultimately be united. From Him all the Suns have been generated, and unto Him they will all return. Through His potency the Trees of Divine Revelation have yielded their fruits, every one of which hath been sent down in the form of a Prophet, bearing a Message to God’s creatures. . . . This He hath accomplished through the agency of but one Letter of His Word, revealed by His Pen—a Pen moved by His directing Finger—His Finger itself sustained by the power of God’s Truth.” —Bahá’u’lláh, in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 80

potency: power or effectiveness

10. “But for Him no Divine Messenger would have been invested with the robe of prophethood, nor would any of the sacred scriptures have been revealed.” —Bahá’u’lláh, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 104

11. “Glorified be God! All the heavenly scriptures of the past attest to the greatness of this Day, the greatness of this Manifestation, the greatness of His signs, the greatness of His Word, the greatness of His constancy, the greatness of His preeminent station. . . . Indeed all the Prophets have yearned to attain this Day.”

attest: give evidence or proof of; prove

constancy: firmness

preeminent: superior to all others in importance, prominence or excellence; outstanding

—*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 258-59

12. “. . . [the Báb], magnifying the Name of Him Who shall be made manifest, saith: ‘I would be the first to adore Him.’ Now it behoveth one to reflect upon the significance of the ‘Adorer’ and the ‘Adored One,’ that perchance the people of the earth may partake of a dewdrop from the ocean of divine knowledge and may be enabled to perceive the greatness of this Revelation.” —*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 53

Him Who shall be made manifest: the One promised by the Báb; Bahá’u’lláh

adore: to worship; to love deeply and devotedly

perchance: perhaps

partake: have or take a share

13. “Contemplate with thine inward eye the chain of successive Revelations that hath linked the Manifestation of Adam with that of the Báb. I testify before God that each one of these Manifestations hath been sent down through the operation of the Divine Will and Purpose, that each hath been the bearer of a specific Message, that each hath been entrusted with a divinely-revealed Book and been commissioned to unravel the mysteries of a mighty Tablet. The measure of the Revelation with which every one of them hath been identified had been definitely fore-ordained. . . . And when this process of progressive Revelation culminated in the stage at which His peerless, His most sacred, and exalted Countenance was to be unveiled to men’s eyes, He chose to hide His own Self behind a thousand veils, lest profane and mortal eyes discover His glory.”

commissioned: invested with authority or the right to act; appointed as one’s representative

fore-ordained: predestined, decreed beforehand

culminated: climaxed, reached its highest point

profane: not sacred; showing disrespect or irreverence toward God or something sacred

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 73-74

14. “Each of the Divine Manifestations has . . . a cycle, and during the cycle His laws and commandments prevail and are performed. When His cycle is completed by the appearance of a new Manifestation, a new cycle begins. In this way cycles begin, end and are renewed, until a universal cycle is completed in the world. . . .

“ . . . A universal cycle in the world of existence signifies a long duration of time, and innumerable . . . periods and epochs. In such a cycle the Manifestations appear with splendor in the realm of the visible until a great and supreme Manifestation makes the world the center of His radiance. His appearance causes the world to attain maturity, and the extension of His cycle is very great. Afterward, other Manifestations will arise under His shadow. . . .

“We are in the cycle which began with Adam, and its supreme Manifestation is Bahá’u’lláh.” — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 160-61

15. “Baha’u’lláh is not the intermediary between God and the other Manifestations.”

— Shoghi Effendi, letter of 7-23-36

16. “Know thou assuredly that the essence of all the Prophets of God is one and the same. Their unity is absolute. God, the Creator, saith: There is no distinction whatsoever among the Bearers of My Message. They all have but one purpose; their secret is the same secret. To prefer one in honor to another, to exalt certain ones above the rest, is in no wise to be permitted. . . .

“The measure of the revelation of the Prophets of God in this world, however, must differ. Each and every one of them hath been the Bearer of a distinct Message, and hath been commissioned to reveal Himself through specific acts. It is for this reason that they appear to vary in their greatness.”

— Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 78-79

17. “O Jews! If ye be intent on crucifying once again Jesus, the Spirit of God, put Me to death, for He hath once more, in My person, been made manifest unto you. . . . Followers of the Gospel! If ye cherish the desire to slay Muhammad, the Apostle of God, seize Me and put an end to My life, for I am He, and My Self is His Self. . . . Followers of Muḥammad! If it be your wish to riddle with your shafts the breast of Him Who hath caused His Book the Bayán to be sent down unto you, lay hands on Me and persecute Me, for I am His Well-Beloved, the revelation of His own Self, though My name be not His name. I have come in the shadows of the clouds of glory, and am invested by God with invincible sovereignty.”

— Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 101

epoch: a period of time in history marked by certain important events or developments; an era

intermediary: one who acts as an agent between two parties

Bayán (buy-awn): one of the central books of the Báb

18. “This is the Day, O My Lord, which Thou didst announce unto all mankind as the Day whereon Thou wouldst reveal Thy Self, and shed Thy radiance, and shine brightly over all Thy creatures.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations* 275

19. “Amos saith: ‘The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter His Voice from Jerusalem. . . .’ And likewise He saith: ‘Our God will come, and He will not be silent.’

“. . . Reflect upon these words addressed by Him Who is the Desire of the world to Amos. He saith: ‘Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, for, lo, He that formeth the mountains and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of Hosts, is His name. . . .’

“Isaiah saith: ‘The Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day.’ Concerning the greatness of the Revelation He saith: ‘Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty.’ And in another connection He saith: ‘. . . the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the splendor of our God.’

“These passages stand in need of no commentary. They are shining and manifest as the sun, and glowing and luminous as light itself.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 145-46

20. “Incline thine ear unto the voice of God, the King, the Holy, and turn thou unto Paradise, the Spot wherein abideth He Who, among the Concourse on high, beareth the most excellent titles, and Who, in the Kingdom of creation, is called by the name of God, the Effulgent, the All-Glorious.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 57

21. “Call thou to mind the days when He Who conversed with God tended, in the wilderness, the sheep of Jethro. . . . He hearkened unto the Voice of the Lord of mankind coming from the Burning Bush which had been raised above the Holy Land, exclaiming, ‘O Moses! Verily I am God, thy Lord and the Lord of thy forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.’ He was so carried away by the captivating accent of the voice that He detached Himself from the world and set out in the direction of Pharaoh and his people, invested with the power of thy Lord Who exerciseth sovereignty over all that hath been and shall be. The people of the world are now hearing that which Moses did hear, but they understand not.”

—*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 265

His Relation to God

Amo 1:2, Amo

Amo 4:12-13

Isa 2:10-11

Isa 35:2

luminous: shining with light; readily understood; free from obscurity, clear

hearkened: gave attention

accent: distinctive manner of pronunciation

22. “That which they accepted from the Bush they now refuse to accept from Him Who is the Tree of the world of existence. . . .

“By the righteousness of God! But for the anthem of praise voiced by Him Who heralded the divine Revelation, this wronged One would never have breathed a word which might have struck terror into the hearts of the ignorant and caused them to perish. Dwelling on the glorification of Him Whom God shall make manifest . . . the Báb in the beginning of the Bayán saith: ‘He is the One Who shall proclaim under all conditions, “Verily, verily, I am God, no God is there but Me, the Lord of all created things. In truth all other things except Me are My creatures.”’” —*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 53

23. “Naught is seen in My temple but the Temple of God, and in My beauty but His Beauty, and in My being but His Being, and in My self but His Self. . . . There hath not been in My soul but the Truth, and in Myself naught could be seen but God.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 109

24. “Let no one meditating . . . on the nature of the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, mistake its character or misconstrue the intent of its Author. The divinity attributed to so great a Being and the complete incarnation of the names and attributes of God in so exalted a Person should, under no circumstances, be misconceived or misinterpreted. The human temple that has been made the vehicle of so overpowering a Revelation must . . . ever remain entirely distinguished from that . . . invisible yet rational God Who, however much we extol the divinity of His Manifestations on earth, can in no wise incarnate His infinite, His unknowable, His incorruptible and all-embracing Reality in the concrete and limited frame of a mortal being. Indeed, the God Who could so incarnate His own reality would . . . cease immediately to be God. . . .

“That Bahá’u’lláh should, notwithstanding the overwhelming intensity of His Revelation, be regarded as essentially one of these Manifestations of God, never to be identified with that invisible Reality, the Essence of Divinity itself, is one of the major beliefs of our Faith. . . .”

—Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 112, 114

25. “Know verily that whenever this Youth turneth His eyes towards His own self, he findeth it the most insignificant of all creation. When He contemplates, however, the bright effulgences He hath been empowered to manifest, lo, that self is transfigured before Him into a sovereign Potency permeating the essence of all things visible and invisible.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 102

anthem: song or hymn of praise or gladness

misconstrue: misinterpret; misunderstand

attributed: said to belong to

vehicle: a medium through which something is expressed; a carrier

rational: possessing the power of reasoning

extol: to praise highly

incarnate: to make something that is abstract concrete by putting it in human form; embody

essence: fundamental nature or quality

transfigure: change the form or appearance of

permeate: pervade; to pass through every part of a thing

For more quotations on topics raised in this lesson see the index, page 83.

Illustrations

“Another universal opinion among the Christians is that Christ was the Lord of Hosts of the old Testament. Yet the Jewish Prophets had foretold that when the Lord of Hosts came He would not find the Jews in the Holy Land, all would have been scattered among the nations and would have been living in misery and degradation for centuries; but when Jesus came Palestine was full of Jews and their expulsion did not begin until the year 70 A.D.; it may be said to have continued till the year 1844.

“To confirm orthodox Christian opinion it is customary in all churches to read on Christmas morning, as if it referred to Jesus, the passage which Isaiah wrote about the Lord of Hosts (Isa 9:6-7).

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and
his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince
of Peace. Of the increase of his government and
peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of
David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to
establish it with judgement and with justice from
henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of
hosts will perform this.

“Yet the descriptive titles given do not belong exclusively to Christ, while some of them He specifically repudiated as if to make such a mistaken reference to Himself impossible. He disclaimed being the Mighty God when He called Himself ‘the son of God;’ disclaimed being the Father when He said, ‘my Father is greater than I;’ and being the Prince of Peace when He said, ‘I came not to send peace, but a sword.’ He disclaimed bearing the government upon His shoulder or that it would be His judgement and justice forever when He said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’”

“In spite of Christ’s promise of further revelation of the Truth, through the Comforter, through His own return, through the Spirit of Truth, the Christian Church regards his revelation as final, and itself as the sole trustee of true religion. There is no room for the Supreme Redeemer of the Bible to bring in great changes for the establishment of the Kingdom of God. . . .

“Having thus closed God’s Covenant with the Bible, sacred history—God directed—came to an end, and secular history, having no sense of divine destiny nor unity, began.”

—Townsend, *Christ and Bahá’u’lláh* 27-28

Joh 5:18-47

Joh 14:28

Mat 10:34

Joh 18:36

Joh 14:16

Joh 14:28

Joh 16:13

parable: a simple story, using symbols, told to present a truth or enforce a moral

“Then He [Jesus] began to tell the people this parable: ‘A certain man planted a vineyard, leased it to vinedressers, and went into a far country for a long time.

“Now at vintage-time he sent a servant to the vinedressers, that they might give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the vinedressers beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

“Again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed.

“And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast him out.

“Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son. Probably they will respect him when they see him.’”

“But when the vinedressers saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.’”

“So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore what will the owner of the vineyard do to them?”

“He will come and destroy those vinedressers and give the vineyard to others. . . .’”

“And the chief priests and the scribes that very hour sought to lay hands on Him, but they feared the people—for they knew that He had spoken this parable against them.”¹⁵

—Luke 20:9-19, The New King James Version

¹⁵ “To Him Jesus Christ had referred . . . as the ‘Lord of the Vineyard’ . . .” (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 95)

Further Study

Select one of the passages from the “Readings” section.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| What does the passage say? | In what specific ways can this passage be applied in your life? |
|----------------------------|---|

List any unanswered questions about the lesson you may want to explore in more depth. Use the index on page 83 and the additional reading below to help you find answers to your questions.

| |
|----------------------|
| 1. 2. 3. 4. |
|----------------------|

Gleanings, by Bahá’u’lláh, 46-136

Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, by Bahá’u’lláh, 47-54

Passages on God and His Manifestations, and Bahá’u’lláh’s station in relation to both.

God Passes By, by Shoghi Effendi, Chapter VI

The Guardian’s description of the station of Bahá’u’lláh.

The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, Vol. IV, by Adib Taherzadeh, 125-44, 406-09

Commentary, with quotations, on the station of Bahá’u’lláh.

Personal Reflection

Remaining Questions

Additional Reading

Questions

1. List at least seven of the titles attributed to Bahá'u'lláh as described in this chapter:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
 6. _____
 7. _____

2. (Circle all that apply.) In relation to humanity, Bahá'u'lláh:
 - a. will establish a world civilization
 - b. will redeem all humanity
 - c. will unite all humanity
 - d. is the incarnation of the Everlasting Father

3. (Circle all that apply.) In relation to the other Manifestations of God, Bahá'u'lláh is:
 - a. the same in regard to His mission
 - b. the same in the universal cycle
 - c. distinguished by His essence
 - d. distinguished because He sent them to humanity

4. (Circle all that apply.) In relation to God, Bahá'u'lláh:
 - a. represents the presence of God among humanity
 - b. incarnates the names and attributes of God
 - c. incarnates the reality of God
 - d. must remain distinguished from God

Answers

The following are suggested answers. Depending on your understanding of the quotes, you may have different answers. Consider the suggested answers a starting point for thought and discussion.

1. See the titles described in #1 and #3 on page 18, #8 on page 19, #17 on page 21, and #19 on page 22.
2. **a, b, c, and d.** For “a,” “b,” and “c,” see #8, page 19. For “d,” see #3 on page 18. The title “Everlasting Father ” does not refer to God; thus we are not saying that Bahá’u’lláh is the incarnation of God. Isaiah 9:6 indicates that the Everlasting Father is a “child” that is “born” “unto us.”
3. **d.** Regarding “d,” see #9 and #10 on page 20. The opposite of statements “a,” “b,” and “c” are true. Regarding “a,” see #16, page 21. For “b,” see #14, page 21. For “c,” see page 17 and #16 and #17, page 21.
4. **a, b, and d.** For “a,” see page 17, #18, #19, and #20 on page 22 and #22 and #23 on page 23. For “b,” “c,” and “d” see #24 on page 23.

Discussion

Review some of the specific titles Bahá’u’lláh claims for Himself. What proofs could be put forward to support Bahá’u’lláh’s claim to these titles? Use, if possible, both proofs based on reason and proofs from the Scriptures. (Refer especially to #3, page 18 and #8, page 19.)

Describe Bahá’u’lláh’s relationship to the other Manifestations of God. How is He the same? How is He different? What is meant by a “universal cycle?” (Refer to #14, page 21.)

Describe Bahá’u’lláh’s relationship to God. How is this different from the other Manifestations? How is it the same? (Refer to pages 22-23.)

3

The Nature of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation

Introduction

In the last chapter, we learned of Bahá'u'lláh's explanation of His own station. Just as He identifies Himself as the “supreme Manifestation of God,”¹ so, too, does He make a similar claim for His Revelation. “In truth,” He states, “the station of this Revelation transcendeth the station of whatever hath been manifested in the past or will be manifested in the future.”²

In this chapter we will examine some of the aspects of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh that distinguish it from previous revelations.

1 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 151

2 *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* 74-75

Overview

To “reveal” means to make something that is hidden or unknown become apparent. This is what the Manifestations of God do. Through Their words and Their own Being, They make apparent to humanity the names and attributes of God³ and bring knowledge of God’s will for humanity.

Bahá’u’lláh, too, has the same mission, but to a degree and extent never before possible in past ages. His mission includes not only educating and transforming each soul, but also establishing the spiritual and social unity of the whole of mankind.

To accomplish His objectives, the Revelation presented by Bahá’u’lláh takes on characteristics and features which distinguish it from previous Revelations. For example, the measure of divine Revelation poured forth upon mankind is greatly increased. The Revelation of the names and attributes of God and of the knowledge of God goes far beyond what has been presented in the past. Also, everything necessary to establish an enduring unity among all nations and peoples is provided in His teachings.

³ Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 48; “attributes” or “names” of God refer to such qualities as sight, wisdom, justice, knowledge, etc. (see *Some Answered Questions* 148). The Manifestations of God are perfect embodiments of these qualities. However, the degree to which They each reveal these qualities to humanity is related to their specific earthly mission (see *Gleanings* 48, 52).

Explanation

Although the station of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation exceeds that of the Revelations of the past and future, the triumphs it will achieve should not, Shoghi Effendi states, be attributed "to a superior merit" over any previous Dispensation. Rather it should be seen "as the inevitable outcome of the forces that have made of this present age an age infinitely more advanced, more receptive, and more insistent to receive an ampler measure of Divine Guidance."⁴ The Revelations of the past have thus prepared humanity for this new, greater measure of divine blessings.

Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation presents the essence of the Revelations gone before. "In this most mighty Revelation, He states, "all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest and final consummation."⁵ Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation instills a new love and appreciation for the unity underlying the previous Revelations and expands and adds to their themes.

The Revelation comes to humanity in two ways: through the life of the Manifestation and through His Book. The many stories of Bahá'u'lláh's life amply demonstrate His Revelation of the names and attributes of God; even His enemies admitted His greatness and outstanding character. For nearly forty years the Word of God streamed forth from Bahá'u'lláh's pen, resulting in more than one hundred volumes. So great was this outpouring that, in one short period of His life, "the equivalent of all that hath been sent down aforesaid unto the Prophets hath been revealed."⁶ The written Revelation touches on material and social as well as spiritual matters.

It is not yet possible for us to fully understand all the implications of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. "This generation," Shoghi Effendi writes, "stands too close to so colossal a Revelation to appreciate, in their full measure, the infinite possibilities of His Faith, the unprecedented character of His Cause, and the mysterious dispensations of His Providence."⁷ However, the purpose for which Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation was established is clear. "We, verily, have come to unite and weld together all that dwell on earth."⁸ The features which distinguish His Revelation from those of the past largely pertain to making the goal of unity a reality.

4 *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 60

5 *Gleanings* 244

6 Bahá'u'lláh, in *God Passes By* 171

7 *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 24

8 Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 24

Readings

1. “. . . He Who is the Eternal Truth manifesteth Himself in conformity with that which He Himself hath proposed, and not according to the desires and expectations of men.” —Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 82

2. “The Revelation which, from time immemorial, hath been acclaimed as the Purpose and Promise of all the Prophets of God, and the most cherished Desire of His Messengers, hath now, by virtue of the pervasive Will of the Almighty and at His irresistible bidding, been revealed unto men. . . .

“. . . This is a Revelation, under which, if a man shed for its sake one drop of blood, myriads of oceans will be his recompense. Take heed, O friends, that ye forfeit not so inestimable a benefit, or disregard its transcendent station. Consider the multitude of lives that have been, and are still being, sacrificed in a world deluded by a mere phantom which the vain imaginations of its peoples have conceived. Render thanks unto God, inasmuch as ye have attained unto your heart’s Desire, and been united to Him Who is the Promise of all nations.” —Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 5-6

3. “The Revelation of which I am the bearer is adapted to humanity’s spiritual receptiveness and capacity; otherwise, the Light that shines within me can neither wax nor wane. Whatever I manifest is nothing more or less than the measure of the Divine glory which God has bidden me reveal.” —Bahá’u’lláh, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 60

4. “The highest essence and most perfect expression of whatsoever the peoples of old have either said or written hath, through this most potent Revelation, been sent down from the heaven of the Will of the All-Possessing, the Ever-Abiding God.” —Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 95

5. “This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it—verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures.

“Say: This is the infallible Balance which the Hand of God is holding, in which all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth are weighed, and their fate determined. . . . Say: Through it the poor have been enriched, the learned enlightened, and the seekers enabled to ascend unto the presence of God.” —Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 136-37

6. “All that hath been sent down hath and will come to pass, word for word, upon earth.” —Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 150

Nature of the Revelation

time immemorial: old beyond memory

pervasive: spread through every part of

myriads: indefinitely large numbers

recompense: reward

forfeit: lose the right to by error

transcendent: supreme, incomparable

deluded: deceived; mislead

phantom: something not real appears visible; ghost

vain: lacking substance or worth; hollow

wax: to become greater

wane: to lessen in force or intensity

infallible: never in error

Distinguishing Features of the Revelation

sublimity: the culminating or highest point

grandeur: nobility of character or spirit

amanuensis: secretary

amanuensis: secretary

preeminent: standing apart by reason of superior importance, significance, or influence

blotted out: removed

strife: earnest struggle for superiority or victory

malice: desiring or wishing pain, injury, or distress to another

mischief: the state of those who disagree and lack harmony

prerequisites: something necessary

concord: to achieve harmony of opinion or purpose

dissident: disagreeing in opinion or belief

delimited: limited, confined

7. “And among His signs is the sublimity of His grandeur, His exalted state, His towering glory, and the shining out of His beauty above the horizon of the Prison: . . . so that heads were bowed before Him and voices lowered, and humble were the faces that turned His way. This is a proof never witnessed in the ages gone before.”

—*Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 16

8. “The mysteries of the Holy Books have become explained in the manifestation of Bahá’u’lláh. Before He appeared, these mysteries were not understood. Bahá’u’lláh opened and unsealed these mysteries.”

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 197

9. “Such are the outpourings . . . from the clouds of Divine Bounty that within the space of an hour the equivalent of a thousand verses hath been revealed.’ ‘So great is the grace vouchsafed in this day that in a single day and night, were an amanuensis capable of accomplishing it to be found, the equivalent of the Persian Bayán would be sent down from the heaven of Divine holiness.’”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *in God Passes By* 171

10. “O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the preeminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God’s holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity.”

—*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 94

11. “In every dispensation the light of Divine Guidance has been focussed upon one central theme. . . . In this wondrous Revelation, this glorious century, the foundation of the Faith of God and the distinguishing feature of His Law is the consciousness of the Oneness of Mankind.”

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *in The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 36

12. “In every dispensation, there hath been the commandment of fellowship and love, but it was a commandment limited to the community of those in mutual agreement, not to the dissident foe. In this wondrous age, however, praised be God, the commandments of God are not delimited, not restricted to any one group of people, rather have all the friends been commanded to show forth fellowship and love, consideration and generosity and loving-kindness to every community on earth.”

—*Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 20-21

13. “Far from aiming at the overthrow of the spiritual foundation of the world’s religious systems, its avowed, its unalterable purpose is to widen their basis, to restate their fundamentals, to reconcile their aims, to reinvigorate their life, to demonstrate their oneness, to restore the pristine purity of their teachings, to coordinate their functions and to assist in the realization of their highest aspirations.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 114

14. “The tribulations attending the progressive unfoldment of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh have indeed been such as to exceed in gravity those from which the religions of the past have suffered. Unlike those religions, however, these tribulations have failed utterly to impair its unity. . . .”

—Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 410

15. “. . . A specific teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past . . . is the ordination and appointment of the Center of the Covenant. By this appointment and provision He [Bahá’u’lláh] has safeguarded and protected the religion of God against differences and schisms, making it impossible for anyone to create a new sect or faction of belief.”

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 455-56

16. “. . . this Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Bahá’u’lláh has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret his Word and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 145

17. “One of the potentialities hidden in the realm of humanity was the capability or capacity of womanhood. Through the effulgent rays of divine illumination the capacity of woman has become so awakened and manifest in this age that equality of man and woman is an established fact.”

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 74

18. “The century has come when all religions shall be unified. The dispensation is at hand when all nations shall enjoy the blessings of international peace. The cycle has arrived when racial prejudice will be abandoned by tribes and peoples of the world. The epoch has begun wherein all native lands will be conjoined in one great human family. For all mankind shall dwell in peace and security beneath the shelter of the great tabernacle of the one living God.”

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 370

avowed: stated firmly, positively, or assuredly

reconcile: to bring into harmony or accord

reinvigorate: give renewed life or energy to

pristine: uncorrupted; fresh and clean

aspirations: strong desire for advancement

tribulations: trials, afflictions, ordeals

gravity: seriousness

impair: to damage; to deplete the soundness, strength, effectiveness, or perfection of something

breach: an open space in a barrier

adherents: followers

ordination: act of decreeing

provision: something that limits or qualifies an agreement or offer

schisms: division; defection from a dominant belief or ideology

effulgent: splendorous; brilliant

manifest: apparent, evident, clear to the senses or mind

conjoined: to bring or come together into some manner of union; to join forces especially in order to act more effectively

For more quotations on topics raised in this lesson see the index, page 83.

Illustration

“Some of the disciples of Bahá’u’lláh who attained His presence have referred to the transcendental majesty of His person. This was such a striking feature of Bahá’u’lláh that people who came face to face with Him were awed by His presence and often became speechless. Hájí Mírzá Óaydar-‘Alí [an early Bahá’í teacher] . . . has commented on this in these words:

““Outwardly He was a Prisoner, condemned and wronged, but in reality He was the Sun of Glory, the Manifestation of grandeur and majesty, the King of the Kingdom of poise and dignity. Although He showed much compassion and loving-kindness, and approached anyone who came to his presence with tender care and humbleness, . . . yet . . . no one, whether faithful or disbelieving, learned or unlettered, wise or foolish, was able to utter ten words in His presence in the usual everyday manner. Indeed, many would find themselves to be tremulous with an impediment in their speech.

““Some people asked permission to attain His presence for the sole purpose of conducting arguments and engaging in controversies. As a favor on His part, and in order to fulfil the testimony and to declare conclusively the proofs, He gave permission to enter the court of His majesty and glory. As they entered the room, heard His voice welcoming them in, and gazed at His countenance beaming with the light of grandeur, they could not help but prostrate themselves at His door. They would then enter and sit down. When He showed them where to sit, they would find themselves unable to utter a word or put forward their questions. When they left they would bow to Him involuntarily. Some would be transformed through the influence of meeting Him and would leave with the utmost sincerity and devotion, some would depart as admirers, while others would leave His presence, ignorant and heedless, attributing their experience to pure sorcery.

““When a believer describes what he has experienced in the presence of Bahá’u’lláh, his impressions may be interpreted as being formed through his attitude of self-effacement and a feeling of utter nothingness in relation to Him. But to what can it be attributed when one enters into His presence as an antagonist and leaves as a believer, or comes in as an enemy but goes out a friend, or comes to raise controversial arguments, but departs without saying anything and, due to wilful blindness, attributing this to magic? To be brief, the bounties which were vouchsafed to a person as a result of attaining His presence were indescribable and unknowable. The proof of the sun is the sun itself.””

transcendental: of or relating to a world other than the actual world

tremulous: trembling or quaking

impediment: defect of speech

sorcery: witchcraft

self-effacement: humility, selflessness

antagonist: one who expresses or manifests opposition

vouchsafed: granted

Further Study

Select one of the passages from the “Readings” section.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| What does the passage say? | In what specific ways can this passage be applied in your life? |
|----------------------------|---|

List any unanswered questions about the lesson you may want to explore in more depth. Use the index on page 83 and the additional reading below to help you find answers to your questions.

| |
|----------------|
| 1. 2. 3. |
|----------------|

The Promulgation of Universal Peace, by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 453-456
Talks given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His travels in the United States in which He described the basic teachings and distinguishing features of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation to a variety of audiences.

The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh by Shoghi Effendi, 97-157
The Guardian’s letter, “The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh,” which summarizes some fundamental truths presented in the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh.

The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh by Adib Taherzadeh, Vol. I-IV
Four volumes that trace the history and content of the writings of Bahá’u’lláh.

Personal Reflection

Remaining Questions

Additional Reading

Questions

1. (Circle all that apply.) Regarding previous Revelations, the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh:
 - a. is superior in merit
 - b. summarizes their essence
 - c. completes them
 - d. repeals their fundamentals

2. (Circle all that apply.) The names and attributes of God and the knowledge of God are revealed through:
 - a. the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh
 - b. the person of Bahá'u'lláh
 - c. the unity of humanity
 - d. the maturity and receptivity of this age

3. List nine distinctive features of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh discussed in this chapter:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
 6. _____
 7. _____
 8. _____
 9. _____

Answers

The following are suggested answers. Depending on your understanding of the quotes, you may have different answers. Consider the suggested answers a starting point for thought and discussion.

1. **b** and **c**. For “b,” see page 31 and #4 page 32. For “c,” see page 32 (to consummate something is to complete it). The quote in the first paragraph, page 31, indicates that “a” is incorrect; it is the age that is more advanced, the Revelation is not superior in merit (see #3, page 32) although it surpasses the others in scope (see page 29). Regarding “d,” see #13, page 34.
2. **a** and **b**. See page 30 and #7 and #9, page 33.
3. Among the possible answers are: the revelation of the Glory of God through the person of Bahá’u’lláh (#7, page 33); the unsealing of Holy Books (#8, page 33); the quantity of the revelation of the Word of God (#9, page 33); the removal from the book of all causes of disunity (#10, page 33); the lack of division between believers and non-believers (#12, page 33); the uniting of religions (#13 and #18, page 34); the severity of the trials affecting the Faith (#14, page 34); the establishment of the Covenant (#15, page 34); the establishment by the Founder of the administration (#16, page 34); the equality of men and women (#17, page 34); and the coming of peace, the end of prejudice, and the unity of nations (#18, page 34).

Discussion

How does each of the distinctive features of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation promote the goal of unity. Refer to quotations #7-#18 on pages 33 and 34.

How would you answer the question: “If the Bahá’í Faith is the same as other religions, why do we need it? Why not stay with the religions we already have?” (Use examples and references from the chapter.) How would you explain the aim of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation toward the other Revelations? (Refer to #13, page 34.)

Compare the attitude Bahá’ís are commanded to have toward non-believers with the history of previous religious dispensations. (Refer to #12, page 33.)

4

The Forces of the Revelation

Introduction

In the last two chapters we examined the claim of Bahá'u'lláh in relation to His station and the nature of His Revelation. In the next two chapters we will look at the potent forces released by the Revelation and their impact on individuals and society.

“Within the throat of this Youth,” Bahá'u'lláh states, “there lie imprisoned accents which, if revealed to mankind to an extent smaller than a needle’s eye, would suffice to cause every mountain to crumble, the leaves of the trees to be discolored and their fruits to fall; would compel every head to bow down in worship and every face to turn in adoration to turn unto this omnipotent Ruler. . . .”¹ The forces of Bahá'u'lláh’s Revelation are unprecedented in their quantity and potency.

Shoghi Effendi writes: “The weight of the potentialities with which this Faith, possessing no peer or equal in the world’s spiritual history, and marking the culmination of a universal prophetic cycle, has been endowed, staggers our imagination. The brightness of the millennial glory which it must shed in the fullness of time dazzles our eyes.”² This chapter can only offer an introduction to the study of the forces driving Bahá'u'lláh’s Faith toward its ultimate goal.

¹ In *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 108-09

² *God Passes By*, Foreword, xi

Overview

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh has released tremendous spiritual energy³ into the world. This energy has had, is having, and will continue to have an impact that will not be fully understood or appreciated until far into the future.

The spiritual energies released by Bahá'u'lláh endow all things with new potential. These energies propel and direct the unfolding of the new capacities so that God's purpose for creation—the realization of oneness through the establishment of unity—is ultimately achieved. The Covenant provides the instrument that directs and canalizes the forces of the Revelation.⁴

Shoghi Effendi states: “The creative energies released at the hour of the birth of His Revelation, endowing mankind with the potentialities of the attainment of maturity are deranging, during the present transitional age the equilibrium of the entire planet as the inevitable prelude to the consummation in world unity of the coming of age of the human race.”⁵ In investigating this impact of the forces of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation we will examine three areas:

- the awesome forces infused into the world;
- the organic process which these forces drive; and
- the outcome of the forces in the attainment of unity.

Explanation

To see how the forces of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation act in the world, we can return to the analogy of the sun used in the first chapter.

- Dawn, the first light of the sun, brings life to the world. All of creation responds to the change from night to day. Birds begin to sing, pollen is released, and plants begin to capture the sun's energy to help them grow. Even activity that occurred at night was due to the energy provided by the sun from the previous day. Without the sun's heat and light there would be no life.

³ Referred to variously as power (*The Advent of Divine Justice* 80), forces (*The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 107), breezes (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 114), energies (*The Promised Day is Come* 122), and in other ways.

⁴ See *The Covenant: Its Meaning and Origin and Our Attitude Toward It*, another study booklet in this series.

⁵ *Citadel of Faith* 81

Through the forces of His Revelation Bahá'u'lláh has brought into being a new creation. "We have," He states, ". . . breathed a new life into every human frame and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration."⁶

- Seasons of the year change according to the relationship between the sun and the earth. In the Day of God, the forces of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh are like the energy of the sun at the summer solstice. This is the time of year when the sun is at its highest point in relation to the earth. The days are longest, and the sun's heat and light are more intense.

Regarding the intensity of the forces of His Revelation, Bahá'u'lláh writes: "Know thou of a certainty that the day Star of Truth hath, in this Day, shed upon the world a radiance, the like of which bygone ages have never witnessed."⁷

- The intensity of the sun during the summer season provides a chance to grow crops. The energy of the sun drives the organic process of the plant that makes it grow.

In the same way, the forces of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation "have instilled into humanity the capacity to attain . . . [the] final stage in its organic growth and collective evolution."⁸

- The plants have within them the potential to yield fruits and vegetables. The energy of the summer sun ripens the fruits and vegetables for harvest time.

The forces of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation instill new potential in individuals and society. These forces can be tapped to achieve this potential. The Golden Age of the Bahá'í Faith, "inspired and directed by the creative energies released by Bahá'u'lláh's World Order," will "witness the unification of all the peoples and nations of the world, the establishment of the Most Great Peace, [and] the inauguration of the Kingdom of the Father upon earth."⁹

6 *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 107
7 *Gleanings* 319

8 Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 118
9 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 411-12

Readings

1. “[Bahá’u’lláh’s] ministry . . . by virtue of its creative power, its cleansing force, its healing influences, and the irresistible operation of the world-directing, world-shaping forces it released, stands unparalleled in the religious annals of the entire human race. . . .”

—Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 106

2. “It is in Our power, should We wish it, to enable a speck of floating dust to generate, in less than the twinkling of an eye, suns of infinite, of unimaginable splendor, to cause a dewdrop to develop into vast and numberless oceans, to infuse into every letter such a force as to empower it to unfold all the knowledge of past and future ages.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 107

3. “I testify that no sooner had the First Word proceeded, through the potency of Thy will and purpose, . . . than the whole creation was revolutionized, and all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth were stirred to the depths. Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken, were divided, separated, scattered, combined and reunited, disclosing, in both the contingent world and the heavenly kingdom, entities of a new creation, and revealing, in the unseen realms, the signs and tokens of Thy unity and oneness.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations* 295-96

4. “‘The whole earth is now in a stage of pregnancy. . . . Immeasurably exalted is the breeze that wafteth from the garment of thy Lord, the Glorified! For lo, it hath breathed its fragrance and made all things new! . . .’ ‘The onrushing winds of the grace of God, have passed over all things. Every creature hath been endowed with all the potentialities it can carry. And yet the peoples of the world have denied this grace! Every tree hath been endowed with the choicest fruits, every ocean enriched with the most luminous gems. Man, himself, hath been invested with the gifts of understanding and knowledge. The whole creation hath been made the recipient of the revelation of the All-Merciful, and the earth the repository of things inscrutable to all except God. . . . The time is approaching when every created thing will have cast its burden.’”

—Bahá’u’lláh, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 169

5. “Behold how, in this Day, the Beginning is reflected in the End, how out of Stillness Motion hath been engendered. This motion hath been generated by the potent energies which the words of the Almighty have released throughout the entire creation.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 168

The Awesome Power Infused into the World

unparalleled: having no equal or rival and being single in kind or excellence

annals: a chronological record of events

infuse: pour in; to steep

entities: things which have existence in space or time

advent: arrival

fragrance: a sweet or pleasant odor

endowed: provided

potentialities: things that can develop or become actual

luminous: shining, giving light, radiant

invested: provided with a quality

repository: a place where something is deposited or stored

inscrutable: being beyond one's powers to discover, understand, or explain

cast its burden: a reference to the fulfillment of the earth's "stage of pregnancy"

engendered: caused something immaterial; generated, induced

The Forces Drive an Organic Process

impelled: urged forward

regeneration: renewal

redemption: freeing from sin and its consequences

generative: creative

repulsed: drove back

onslaught: attack

revolutionizing: changing radically

canalized: channeled or directed the flow of

undeterred: not discouraged or prevented from achieving something

fashion: form or construct

embryonic: in an early stage of development

unobtrusive: not pushy, does not intrude

consecrated: devoted

actuated: moved to action

impaired: diminished in quality or value

befogged: confused

anemic: not sufficient

leavening: introducing one thing into another so as to change or affect it

crystallizing: taking definite shape

tangible: real; able to be touched

inconsiderable: insignificant

6. “A process, God-impelled, endowed with measureless potentialities, mysterious in its workings, . . . infinitely rich in its promise for the regeneration and redemption of human kind, had been set in motion in Shíráz, had gained momentum successively in Ṭihrán, Baghdád, Adrianople, and ‘Akká, had projected itself across the seas, poured its generative influences into the West, and manifested the initial evidences of its marvelous, world-energizing force in the midst of the North American continent.

“It . . . had gathered speed . . . until it had encircled the earth. . . . It had repulsed every onslaught directed against it . . . and had exalted to heights of incredible courage the weakest and humblest among those who had arisen and become willing instruments of its revolutionizing power.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 402

7. “The Instrument He had forged, the Covenant He had Himself instituted, had canalized, after His passing, the forces released by Him in the course of a forty-year ministry, had preserved the unity of His Faith and provided the impulse required to propel it forward to achieve its destiny.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 405

8. “Conscious of their high calling, confident in the society-building power which their Faith possesses, they press forward undeterred and undismayed, in their efforts to fashion and perfect the necessary instruments wherein the embryonic World Order of Bahá’u’lláh can mature and develop. It is this building process, slow and unobtrusive, to which the life of the world-wide Bahá’í Community is wholly consecrated, that constitutes the one hope of a stricken society. For this process is actuated by the generating influence of God’s changeless Purpose, and is evolving within the framework of the Administrative Order of His Faith.

“In a world the structure of whose political and social institutions is impaired, whose vision is befogged, whose conscience is bewildered, whose religious systems have become anemic and lost their virtue, this healing Agency, this leavening Power, this cementing Force, intensely alive and all-pervasive, has been taking shape, is crystallizing into institutions, is mobilizing its forces, and is preparing for the spiritual conquest and the complete redemption of mankind. Though the society which incarnates its ideals be small, and its direct and tangible benefits as yet inconsiderable, yet the potentialities with which it has been endowed, and through which it is destined to regenerate the individual and rebuild a broken world, are incalculable.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 195

9. “In this wondrous Age . . . the Word of God hath infused such awesome power into the inmost essence of humankind that He hath stripped men’s human qualities of all effect, and hath, with His all-conquering might, unified the peoples in a vast sea of oneness.”

—*Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 20

10. “Praise be to God, today the splendor of the Word of God hath illumined every horizon, and from all sects, races, tribes, nations and communities souls have come together in the light of the Word, assembled, united and agreed in perfect harmony. Oh! What a great number of meetings are held adorned with souls from various races and diverse sects! Anyone attending these will be struck with amazement, and might suppose that these souls are all of one land, one nationality, one community, one thought, one belief and one opinion; whereas, in fact, one is an American, the other an African, one cometh from Asia and another from Europe, one is a native of India, another is from Turkestan, one is an Arab, another a Tajik, another a Persian and yet another a Greek. Notwithstanding such diversity they associate in perfect harmony and unity. . . . Verily, this is from the penetrative power of the Word of God! If all the forces of the universe were to combine they would not be able thus to gather a single assemblage so imbued with the sentiments of love, affection, attraction and enkindlement as to unite the members of different races and to raise up from the heart of the world a voice that shall dispel war and strife, uproot dissension and disputation, usher in the era of universal peace and establish unity and concord amongst men.”

—*Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 292

11. “The ages of its infancy and childhood are past, never again to return, while the Great Age, the consummation of all ages, which must signalize the coming of age of the entire human race, is yet to come. . . . This will indeed be the fitting climax of that process of integration which, starting with the family . . . must, after having called successively into being the tribe, the city-state and the nation, continue to operate until it culminates in the unification of the whole world, the final object and the crowning glory of human evolution on this planet. . . . It is the creative energies which His Revelation has released in the ‘year sixty’ and later reinforced by the successive effusions of celestial power vouchsafed in the ‘year nine’ and the ‘year eighty’ to all mankind, that have instilled into humanity the capacity to attain this final stage in its organic and collective evolution.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 117-18

Outcome of the Process: Unity

*awesome: inspiring
respectful fear or wonder*

*essence: the most basic,
significant, and indispen-
sable element, attribute,
quality, property, or aspect
of a thing*

*penetrative: tending to
affect deeply or pass
through or into*

*assemblage: a number of
individuals come or
brought together*

*imbued: to introduce one
thing into another so as to
change or affect it*

*dissension: the state of
those who disagree and
lack harmony*

disputation: argument

*year sixty: Islamic year
1260, (1844 A.D.); refer-
ence to the date of the
declaration of the Báb*

*effusions: unrestrained
expression or flow*

*year nine: 1853; reference
to the date nine years after
the Revelation of the Báb
when Bahá’u’lláh received
His Revelation from God*

*year eighty: Islamic year
1280, (1863 A.D.); refer-
ence to the date of the
declaration of Bahá’u’lláh’s
mission*

For more quotations on
topics raised in this lesson
see the index, page 83.

Illustration

“ . . . The majestic process, set in motion at the dawn of the Adamic cycle, . . . commenced six thousand years ago. . . . The first part of this process was the slow and steady growth of th[e] tree of divine revelation . . . as a direct consequence of the light and warmth imparted to it by a series of progressive dispensations associated with Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muḥammad and other Prophets, and of the vernal showers of blood shed by countless martyrs in their path. The second part of this process was the fruition of this tree . . . when the Báb appeared as the perfect fruit and declared His mission in the Year Sixty in the city of Shíráz. The third part was the grinding of this sacred seed, of infinite preciousness and potency, in the mill of adversity, causing it to yield its oil, six years later, in the city of Tabríz. The fourth part was the ignition of this oil by the hand of Providence in the depths and amidst the darkness of the Síyáh-Chál of Tíhrán. . . . The fifth, was the clothing of that flickering light, which had scarcely penetrated the adjoining territory of ‘Iráq, in the lamp of revelation, after an eclipse lasting no less than ten years, in the city of Baghdád. The sixth, was the spread of the radiance of that light, shining with added brilliancy in its crystal globe in Adrianople, and later on in the fortress town of ‘Akká, to thirteen countries in the Asiatic and African continents. The seventh was its projection, . . . in the course of the ministry of the Center of the Covenant, across the seas and the shedding of its illumination upon twenty sovereign states and dependencies in the American, the European, and Australian continents. The eighth part of that process was the diffusion of that same light . . . over ninety-four sovereign states, dependencies and islands of the planet . . . utilizing the agencies of a newly emerged, divinely appointed Administrative Order, and which . . . culminated in the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Bahá’u’lláh’s Mission. The ninth part of this process . . . is the further diffusion of that same light over one hundred and thirty-one additional territories and islands in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, through the operation of a decade-long world spiritual crusade. . . . And finally the tenth part of this mighty process must be the penetration of that light, in the course of numerous crusades and of successive epochs of both the Formative and Golden Ages of the Faith, into all the remaining territories of the globe through the erection of the entire machinery of Bahá’u’lláh’s Administrative Order in all territories, both East and West, the stage at which the light of God’s triumphant Faith shining in all its power and glory will have suffused and enveloped the entire planet.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá’í World* 153-55

commenced: started

vernal: of, relating to, or resembling the spring of the year

fruition: state of bearing fruit

Síyáh-Chál (see-yáh-chol): the black pit in the slums of Tíhrán where, in August 1852, Bahá’u’lláh was chained and imprisoned underground with thieves and assassins; the place where Bahá’u’lláh received the intimations of His Mission

eclipse: total or partial obscuring

diffusion: spreading out widely

crusade: a remedial enterprise undertaken with zeal and enthusiasm

penetration: the process of entering or spreading throughout

suffused: something introduced into another thing so as to change or affect it

Further Study

Select one of the passages from the “Readings” section.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| What does the passage say? | In what specific ways can this passage be applied in your life? |
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List any unanswered questions about the lesson you may want to explore in more depth. Use the index on page 83 and the additional reading below to help you find answers to your questions.

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| 1. 2. 3. 4. |
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The Power of Divine Assistance Crisis and Victory

Compilations, including writings of Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi, that address aspects of the forces involved in the unfoldment of the Faith.

God Passes By, by Shoghi Effendi (see the index of that book)

History of the Faith that includes repeated references to the forces of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation. See especially the Foreward.

The Forces of Light and Darkness, by Hooper Dunbar

Audio tapes of a class given at the Louhelen Bahá’í School.

Personal Reflection

Remaining Questions

Additional Reading

Questions

1. List three ways that the forces released by Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation are described in the writings:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

2. (Circle all that apply.) The forces of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation:
 - a. are unmatched by those of past religions
 - b. have upset the world's stability
 - c. have recreated the world
 - d. have infused the world with new potential

3. (Circle all that apply.) The organic process driven by the forces of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation involves:
 - a. the spread of the Faith
 - b. the rebuilding of society
 - c. the transformation of individuals
 - d. new potential, rather than tangible benefits

4. (Circle all that apply.) The unity created by the forces of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation:
 - a. is demonstrated in the Bahá'í community
 - b. is like the unity found among various groups
 - c. will lead to the unity of all people
 - d. will lead to world peace

Answers

The following are suggested answers. Depending on your understanding of the quotes, you may have different answers. Consider the suggested answers a starting point for thought and discussion.

1. The forces released by Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation are described in the writings as: "power" (#8, page 43), "force" (#1 and #2, page 42), "breezes" (#4, page 42), "energies" (#5, page 42), "influence" (#1, page 42), "potency" (#3, page 42), and "radiance" (page 41).
2. **a, b, c, and d.** For "a," see #1, page 42; for "b," see #5, page 42; for "c," see #3, page 42; and for "d," see #4, page 42.
3. **a, b, and c.** For "a," see #6, page 43. For "b" and "c," see #8, page 43. Regarding "d," while Shoghi Effendi (in #8, page 43) notes that the tangible benefits of the Faith are "as yet" (the message was written in 1936) inconsiderable and that its potentialities were great, he did not mean that its benefits would never be tangible. In fact, he assures us the process driven by the forces of the Faith is "destined to regenerate the individual and rebuild a broken world"—two very tangible results.
4. **a, c, and d.** For "a," "c," and "d," see #10, page 44. Regarding "b," the same quote indicates that "if all the forces of the universe were to combine they would not be able thus to gather a single assemblage so imbued with the sentiments of love, affection, attraction and enkindlement. . . ."

Discussion

How do the forces of the Revelation produce unity among individuals? In society?

How would you describe for a seeker the organic process unfolding in the world?

What do you think is the relationship between the forces of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and the Word of God? (Refer especially to the quotations on page 44.)

5

Response to His Call

Introduction

The recognition of Bahá'u'lláh in this Day is the very purpose of our creation. “The ear of man hath been created that it may hearken unto the Divine Voice on this Day that hath been mentioned in all the Books, Scriptures, and Tablets.”¹

With the appearance of first the Báb and then Bahá'u'lláh, all the signs announced in the Books were revealed and made clear. The Call of God was raised and the whole of mankind summoned to attain the Divine Presence. So clear and manifest are the signs and so loud the call that no one has any excuse for not responding.²

To recognize Bahá'u'lláh is to recognize God. “Attainment unto the Divine Presence can be realized solely by attaining His Presence.”³ Yet, although the first duty of every soul is to recognize God's Manifestation, each soul has the freedom to reject or accept the Call of the Beloved. The choice of each person has a direct impact on the forces released by His Revelation that are, as described in the last chapter, driving the destiny of humanity. The response to the Call of Bahá'u'lláh and the consequences of that response is the subject of this chapter.

¹ Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 2

² Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Promised Day is Come* 6

³ *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* 50

Overview

“The shout hath been raised,” Bahá’u’lláh states, “and the people have come forth from their graves, and arising, are gazing around them. Some have made haste to attain the court of the God of Mercy, others have fallen down on their faces in the fire of Hell, while still others are lost in bewilderment.”⁴

These three categories of humanity’s response to Bahá’u’lláh’s Call—acceptance, opposition, and heedlessness—each have specific consequences for the individual and society. God responds in turn to humanity’s response.

- Those who accept become the recipients of divine grace and instruments for achieving the purpose of God for this Day.
- Those who oppose Bahá’u’lláh are, ultimately, frustrated in their purpose. Instead of slowing the Faith their attacks draw a measure of divine power that accelerates its progress.
- Those who are heedless are like a plant which turns away from the sun—they have cut themselves off from the blessings of the new Revelation. Heedlessness prolongs and aggravates the suffering of humanity which cannot be relieved without applying the remedy prescribed by the Divine Physician, Bahá’u’lláh.

Explanation

Although the Call of Bahá’u’lláh was made to all humanity, it was the world’s rulers and religious leaders who initially received the full force of His Message. At that time in history, the majority of the masses of people were under the influence of civil and religious authorities, and had little opportunity to fairly judge or to embrace the truth of the claim of the Message offered to them.⁵

When the kings and religious leaders refused to heed the Divine summons or arose in opposition to it, the “Divine chastisement” promised by Bahá’u’lláh came to pass. Their Kingdoms fell, and their power was seized by God⁶ and placed, instead, in the hands of the people.⁷ The people, unfortunately, were also slow to respond.

⁴ *Gleanings* 41-42

⁵ Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 19

⁶ Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 20

⁷ Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 149

Because of the heedlessness and opposition of the leaders and their peoples, world affairs have been thrown into chaos. This is a condition we still suffer from, and will continue to suffer from, until the counsels of Bahá'u'lláh for regenerating the world are obeyed. "This judgement of God," Shoghi Effendi states, ". . . is both a retributory calamity and an act of supreme discipline." Humanity is "being simultaneously called upon to give account for its past actions, and is being purged and prepared for its future mission."⁸

An example of the implications of acceptance and opposition to the call of Bahá'u'lláh can be found in an event related to the delivery of the one of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh to the kings.

Bádí' was the son of an early believer, but ignored Bahá'u'lláh's Call. He was disobedient, and a great concern to his family. After meeting Bahá'u'lláh, however, Bádí' was transformed. He became a new creation—filled with radiant joy. To be of service to his Lord, Bádí' eagerly carried the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh to the Sháh of Iran. Such an act, however, was certain to lead to his death. As he delivered the Message he was seized, tortured, and, eventually, his head was crushed. Yet Bádí' received a measure of divine assistance that enabled him to endure his trials and accomplish his purpose. Despite his afflictions Bádí' remained content and steadfast until the end. His behavior astonished those responsible for his sufferings. Bádí' was only one of thousands transformed by Bahá'u'lláh's teachings who arose to serve humanity.⁹

The recipient of the Tablet, Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh, the ruler of Iran, was a determined enemy of Bahá'u'lláh. He was responsible for the martyrdom of the Báb, the imprisonment and exiles of Bahá'u'lláh, and the relentless persecution of the believers. He exerted every effort within his vast earthly powers to extinguish the new Faith. His efforts proved fruitless. "Wert thou to incline thine ear unto the shrill Pen of Glory," Bahá'u'lláh wrote to him, ". . . thou wouldst . . . regard thy sovereignty as the most contemptible of thy possessions, abandoning it to whosoever might desire it, and setting thy face toward the Horizon aglow with the light of His countenance."¹⁰ The Sháh ignored Bahá'u'lláh's summons. His efforts to destroy the Faith, however, only resulted in its expansion and greater glory.

⁸ Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 4

⁹ To read about the story of Bádí' see *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. III, pages 172-203.

¹⁰ *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* 58

Readings

1. “Hear Me, ye mortal birds! In the Rose Garden of changeless splendor a Flower hath begun to bloom, compared to which every other flower is but a thorn, and before the brightness of Whose glory the very essence of beauty must pale and wither. Arise, therefore, and, with the whole enthusiasm of your hearts, with all the eagerness of your souls, the full fervor of your will, and the concentrated efforts of your entire being, strive to attain the paradise of His presence, and endeavor to inhale the fragrance of the incorruptible Flower, to breathe the sweet savors of holiness, and to obtain a portion of this perfume of celestial glory. Whoso followeth this counsel will break his chains asunder, will taste the abandonment of enraptured love, will attain unto his heart’s desire, and will surrender his soul into the hands of His Beloved. . . .

“Night hath succeeded day, and day hath succeeded night, and the hours and moments of your lives have come and gone, and yet none of you hath, for one instant, consented to detach himself from that which perisheth. Bestir yourselves, that the brief moments that are still yours may not be dissipated and lost. Even as the swiftness of lightning your days shall pass, and your bodies shall be laid to rest beneath a canopy of dust. What can ye then achieve? How can ye atone for your past failure?

“The everlasting Candle shineth in its naked glory. Behold how it hath consumed every mortal veil. O ye moth-like lovers of His light! Brave every danger, and consecrate your souls to its consuming flame. . . . With a zest that none can equal make haste to attain unto Him. The Flower, thus far hidden from the sight of men, is unveiled to your eyes. In the open radiance of His glory He standeth before you. His voice summoneth all the holy and sanctified beings to come and be united with Him.” —Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 320-22

2. “In a hundred volumes . . . the Bearer of such a Message has proclaimed, as no Prophet before Him has done, the Mission with which God has entrusted Him. To emperors, kings, princes and potentates, to rulers, governments, clergy and peoples, whether of the East or of the West, whether Christian, Jew, Muslim, or Zoroastrian, He addressed, for well-nigh fifty years, and in the most tragic circumstances, these priceless pearls of knowledge and wisdom. . . . Forsaking fame and fortune, accepting imprisonment and exile, careless of ostracism and obloquy, submitting to physical indignities and cruel deprivations, He, the Vicegerent of God on earth, suffered Himself to be banished from place to place and from country to country. . . .” —Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 6

The Divine Summons

incorruptible: incapable of being destroyed

celestial: heavenly, divine

abandonment: carefree disregard for consequences

enraptured: filled with joy

dissipated: wasted

canopy: overhanging cover

atone: make amends for a wrong

zest: keen enjoyment

potentates: powerful rulers

ostracism: barred from favor; exiled from one’s native land

obloquy: widespread reproach; disgrace resulting from public censure

vicegerent: administrative deputy of a king or judge

Acceptance: The Station of the Believers

3. “Behold, how the divers peoples and kindreds of the earth have been waiting for the coming of the Promised One. No sooner had He, Who is the Sun of Truth, been made manifest, than, lo, all turned away from Him, except then whom God was pleased to guide. We dare not, in this Day, lift the veil that concealeth the exalted station which every true believer can attain, for the joy which such a revel-ation must provoke might well cause a few to faint away and die. . . .

“From the excellence of so great a Revelation the honor with which its faithful followers must needs be invested can be well imagined. By the righteousness of the one true God! The very breath of these souls is itself richer than all the treasures of the earth.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 9-10

4. “These few have been endued with the Divine Elixir that can, alone, transmute into purest gold the dross of the world, and have been empowered to administer the infallible remedy for all the ills that afflict the children of men.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 183

5. “The Word of God hath set the heart of the world afire; how regrettable if ye fail to be enkindled with its flame! ... Knit your souls together, and resolve to adorn yourselves with the ornament of a goodly and praiseworthy character. Let your principal concern be to rescue the fallen from the slough of impending extinction, and to help him embrace the ancient Faith of God. Your behavior towards your neighbor should be such as to manifest clearly the signs of the one true God, for ye are the first among men to be re-created by His Spirit, the first to adore and bow the knee before Him, the first to circle round His throne of glory. I swear by Him Who hath caused Me to reveal whatever hath pleased Him! Ye are better known to the inmates of the Kingdom on high than ye are known to your own selves. Think ye these words to be vain and empty? Would that ye had the power to perceive the things your Lord, the All-Merciful, doth see—things that attest the excellence of your rank, that bear witness to the greatness of your worth, that proclaim the sublimity of your station! God grant that your desires and unmortified passions may not hinder you from that which hath been ordained for you.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 316-17

6. “. . . How superior must be the destiny of the true believer, whose existence and life are to be regarded as the originating purpose of all creation. . . . His spirit will everlastingly circle round the Will of God. He will last as long as God, Himself, will last.”—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 141

elixir: a substance believed to prolong life indefinitely and to change metals into gold

transmute: to change from one form, substance, nature, or class to another

dross: any worthless matter

slough: situation from which it is difficult to get out; place full of deep mud, bog

sublimity: magnificence

unmortified: unrestrained; not subdued

7. “At no time, in no Dispensation, have the Prophets of God escaped the blasphemy of their enemies, the cruelty of their oppressors, the denunciation of the learned of their age, who appeared in the guise of uprightness and piety.” —Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 57-58

8. “For the trials which have afflicted the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh a responsibility appalling and inescapable rests upon those into whose hands the reins of civil and ecclesiastical authority were delivered. . . . Small wonder that He Who is the King of kings and Vicegerent of God Himself should, when abandoned, condemned and persecuted, have uttered this epigrammatic and momentous prophecy: ‘From two ranks amongst men power hath been seized: kings and ecclesiastics.’” —Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 18-20

9. “. . . The history of the first hundred years of its evolution resolves itself into a series of internal and external crises, of varying severity, devastating in their immediate effects, but each mysteriously releasing a corresponding measure of divine power, lending thereby a fresh impulse to its unfoldment. . . .” —Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* xiii

10. “How great, how very great is the Cause! How very fierce the onslaught of all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Ere long shall the clamor of the multitude throughout Africa, throughout America, the cry of the European and of the Turk, the groaning of India and China, be heard from far and near. One and all, they shall arise with all their power to resist His Cause. Then shall the knights of the Lord, assisted by His grace from on high . . . make manifest the truth of the verse: ‘Behold the confusion that hath befallen the tribes of the defeated!’” —‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 17

11. “May God confirm the day when a score of ministers of the churches may arise and . . . cry at the top of their voices that the Bahá’ís are misguided. I would like to see that day, for that is the time that the Cause of God will spread.” —‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Crisis and Victory* 6

12. “The people of the world have grievously erred, for they fondly imagine that they can exterminate the Cause of God. . . . I swear by the righteousness of God that the more they endeavor to quench His Light, the brighter will it shine, and the more they strive to smother its flame, the fiercer will it burn. God’s invincible Will far transcendeth their devices, and His Purpose is supreme above all human desires. . . . Every created thing is impotent before the evidences of His invincible might. . . .” —Bahá’u’lláh, *The Bahá’í World*, Vol. XVIII, 13

Opposition: From Leaders and Peoples of the World

blasphemy: irreverence toward God or anything sacred

denunciation: severe criticism

guise: external appearance

piety: devotion to religion

appalling: filled with horror or dismay

ecclesiastical: relating to a church

epigrammatic: brief, pointed and rich in meaning

kindreds: groups of persons of or regarded as of common ancestry

clamor: a state of noisy confusion

exterminate: to destroy utterly

Heedlessness: The Retributive and Creative Process

swoon: to faint

fetters: bonds, chains

afflicted: suffering pain and distress

calamity: disaster

inveterate: deeply rooted; long-standing

debarred: held back

practitioners: those who practice a profession

unregenerate: unrepentant or unwilling to reform

fuse: unite

discordant: not in agreement with one another

retributory: punishing as a recompense or repayment for some action

convulse: to cause to move violently

disillusion: to leave without illusion; make disenchanting

precipitate: cause to happen quickly

coalesce: grow together

disjointed: separated

For more quotations on topics raised in this lesson see the index, page 83.

13. “The Bugle hath sounded, the Trumpet hath been blown, the Crier hath raised his call, and all upon the earth have swooned away—but still do the dead, in the tombs of their bodies, sleep on.”

—*Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 13

14. “He is indeed as one dead who, at the wondrous dawn of this Revelation, hath failed to be quickened by its soul-stirring breeze. He is indeed a captive who hath not recognized the Supreme Redeemer, but hath suffered his soul to be bound, distressed and helpless, in the fetters of his desires.

“O My servants! Whoso hath tasted of this Fountain hath attained unto everlasting Life, and whoso hath refused to drink therefrom is even as the dead.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 169

15. “Witness how the world is being afflicted with a fresh calamity every day. Its tribulation is continually deepening. . . . At one time it hath been agitated by contentions and disputes, at another it hath been convulsed by wars, and fallen a victim to inveterate diseases. Its sickness is approaching the stage of utter hopelessness, inasmuch as the true Physician is debarred from administering the remedy, whilst unskilled practitioners are regarded with favor, and are accorded full freedom to act.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 39-40

16. “Brimful and bitter indeed is the cup of humanity that has failed to respond to the summons of God. . . .

“. . . The flames which His Divine justice have kindled cleanse an unregenerate humanity, and fuse its discordant, its warring elements as no other agency can cleanse or fuse them. It is not only a retributory and destructive fire, but a disciplinary and creative process, whose aim is the salvation, through unification, of the entire planet.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 115-16

17. “The world is, in truth, moving on toward its destiny. . . . The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh has . . . ‘lent a fresh impulse and set a new direction’ to this vast process now operating in the world. The fires lit by this great ordeal are the consequences of men’s failure to recognize it. They, are, moreover, hastening its consummation. Adversity, prolonged, world-wide, afflictive, allied to chaos and universal destruction, must needs convulse the nations, stir the conscience of the world, disillusion the masses, precipitate a radical change in the very conception of society, and coalesce ultimately the disjointed, the bleeding limbs of mankind into one body, single, organically united, and indivisible.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 122-23

Illustrations

The following story was the experience of a new believer, told by a Bahá'í pioneer to Africa:

“He had been a teacher at a church school when he had first heard of the Faith. One of the Bahá'ís gave him a pamphlet to read. He took it back to his room at the school. It was discovered by the school authorities, and he was told to destroy it and have nothing to do with this new belief. He refused saying, ‘This is my faith. This I can really believe.’ He was warned that if he persisted, he would lose his job. He must either give up his job or this foolishness.

“‘Foolishness?’ he asked. ‘That there is only one God and only one religion? That all the Messengers of God are equal and teach the same truth in different ages? That all men are brothers, and that mankind must not only believe this is so, but behave that way? This is foolishness?’

“He was told to make a choice.

“‘There is no choice,’ he told them. ‘Nothing can make me give up my faith.’

“‘We shall see,’ he was told.

“He was put out of his job. He was barred from securing teaching work at any other school. His father and the tribal authorities were approached by the clergy and asked to influence the boy to return to his work and to the church. He was threatened with banishment from the tribe, with disinheritance, with open opposition. . . .

“Everyone opposed him. Obstacles were hurled into his path. . . . As a last resort, they tried to get the young man’s wife to sway him, to threaten him with divorce unless he abandoned the Bahá'í Faith.

“Little by little, he had been shorn of every tie. He had given up his job, his tribe, his family, his friends, and now his wife and children. There was, he said, no praise due him. If there had been a choice to make, perhaps his wisdom could have been commended; but since God had talked to his heart, the world had died before his eyes. . . .

“Later when we arrived in Dar es Salaam, we heard that this young man had already brought eight new people into the Faith at his pioneer post.”

—Sears, ‘Black Sunlight,’ *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. XII, 929-30

“On June 18, 1871, Emperor Kaiser William I of Germany entered Berlin at the head of his victorious troops. It was a day of great rejoicing. The France of Napoleon III had been crushed. The Emperor was a national hero in Germany. He was becoming legendary. As the clattering hoofbeats of victory rang through the streets of Berlin, Kaiser William I was the cynosure of all eyes.

cynosure: center of attraction

“He had achieved almost every dream. He had become, in turn, prince, king, and now emperor, of a united Germany. There was no one to challenge him.

“And then, one voice was raised in warning. From His far-off prison cell, Bahá’u’lláh reminded the Kaiser of what had befallen the Emperor of France. He warned William that exactly the same fate awaited him, if he did not follow the Counsels which God was offering to the kings of the earth, and devote himself to the service of unity and justice. . . .

“William I did not listen to the warning from the Prisoner of ‘Akká. His death delivered Germany into the hands of his reckless and arrogant grandson, the young William II. The new Kaiser embarked on a cause that was directly opposed to almost every Counsel of the Prisoner. . . .

“The Prisoner had written: ‘O banks of the Rhine! We have seen you covered with gore, inasmuch as the swords of retribution were drawn against you, and you shall have another turn. . . .’

gore: the fluid that circulates in the heart, arteries, capillaries, and veins of a vertebrate animal

“Because of an aggressive military policy, Germany suffered not once, but twice. She was crushed in both World Wars. . . .

“On November 11, 1918, newspaper headlines in Berlin flashed the news: ‘Kaiser abdicates!’

abdicates: parts formally or definitely with a position of honor or power

“The dumbfounded and war-weary Emperor had not yet even been informed. On Sunday, November 10, one day before the Armistice, William II had fled ignominiously to Holland. . . .

ignominiously: shamefully, in disgrace

“[An historian wrote:] ‘There have been more tragic and more disgraceful exits from the stage of history, but few more inglorious.’”

“. . . The empire of the Hohenzollerns toppled to the dust. Its official death-knell was sounded November 28, 1918 when William II signed a formal act of abdication which ended his rule both as a Prussian King and German Emperor. . . .

“Around the world, clergymen saw in these cataclysmic events the fulfillment of Biblical prophecies. But the truth is far greater than any of them grasped. The prophet Jeremiah, speaking of the latter days, said that God promised ‘And I will set my throne in Elam (Persia), and I will destroy from thence the king and the princes. . . .’”

—Sears, *The Prisoner and the Kings* 46-64

Further Study

Select one of the passages from the “Readings” section.

| | |
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| What does the passage say? | In what specific ways can this passage be applied in your life? |
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List any unanswered questions about the lesson you may want to explore in more depth. Use the index on page 83 and the additional reading below to help you find answers to your questions.

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| 1. 2. 3. 4. |
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The Promised Day is Come, by Shoghi Effendi

Outlines the impact of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, with particular emphasis on the kings and religious leaders, and His purpose for humanity.

God Passes By, by Shoghi Effendi

A history of the first hundred years of the Faith by the Guardian that illustrates the response to the Revelation during the time of the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and the Formative Age.

The Dawnbreakers, by Nabíl

The response—acceptance, opposition, and heedlessness—to the dawn of the new dispensation, the declaration of the Báb.

**Personal
Reflection**

**Remaining
Questions**

**Additional
Reading**

Questions

1. What are three ways in which humanity has responses to the summons of Bahá'u'lláh?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

2. (Circle all that apply.) The believers:

- a. hold the same station as all humanity
- b. are to spread the Faith
- c. automatically attract divine assistance
- d. are the purpose of creation

3. (Circle all that apply.) Opposition to Bahá'u'lláh:

- a. came from the civil authorities
- b. came from the clergy
- c. hinders the growth of the Faith
- d. can have no lasting harmful impact

4. (Circle all that apply.) The tribulations affecting and threatening humanity:

- a. are a punishment
- b. are instructive
- c. will cause chaos and destruction
- d. will cause unity and salvation

Answers

The following are suggested answers. Depending on your understanding of the quotes, you may have different answers. Consider the suggested answers a starting point for thought and discussion.

1. Acceptance, opposition, and heedlessness.
2. **b** and **d**. Regarding “b,” see #4 and #5, page 53 and for “d,” see #6, page 53. Choice “a,” is incorrect. Those who accept the Manifestation of God hold a different station than those who oppose or reject the Message, as indicated by the quotations on page 55. Regarding “c,” divine assistance is available to the believer but is dependent on action as indicated in #5 on page 53.
3. **a**, **b**, and **d**. For “a” and “b,” see #7 and #8, page 54. For “d,” see #12, page 54. Choice “c” is incorrect; opposition releases divine power which assists the growth of the Cause. See #10, #12, and #13 on page 54.
4. **a**, **b**, **c**, and **d**. See #16 and #17 on page 55.

Discussion

Discuss the divine summons Bahá’u’lláh has made to the people of the world (#1 and #2 on page 52). What is He asking for? What should your response be?

What effect do the forces released by acceptance of Bahá’u’lláh have? By opposition to Bahá’u’lláh? By heedlessness toward Bahá’u’lláh? (Refer to #4 and #5 on page 53; #9 and #12 on page 54; and #16 and #17 on page 55.)

How can the trials afflicting humanity be a punishment and a creative process at the same time?

Exercise

Upon the response of the individual believer rests the progress of Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. The Universal House of Justice states: “The healthy development of the Cause requires . . . the dedicated effort of every believer in teaching, living the Bahá'í life, in contributing to the Fund, and particularly in the persistent effort to understand more and more the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation.”¹¹ It further explains: “the real secret of universal participation lies in the Master's oft expressed wish that the friends should love each other, constantly encourage each other, work together, be as one soul in one body, and in so doing become a true, organic, healthy body animated and illumined by the spirit.”¹²

The duties of the individual are listed below, along with a quote describing the forces attracted by fulfilling the duty. Think about and describe the benefits these actions bring to the Cause and to humanity, and about specific ways you can practice each duty in your life.

| Duties | Powers Attracted | Benefits to the Cause | Benefits to Humanity | Personal Plan for Action |
|--|---|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Teach the Cause | “. . . The unseen divine assistance encompasseth those who deliver the Message.” ¹³ | | | |
| Live a Bahá'í life | “. . . Living of the Bahá'í life . . . creates the magnet for the Holy Spirit [that] . . . quickens the new soul.” ¹⁴ | | | |
| Contribute to the Fund | “. . . the Lord will abundantly confirm those who expend their wealth in His path.” ¹⁵ | | | |
| Understand the significance of the Revelation | “Let us . . . turn . . . to His counsels and exhortations, and seek from that Source of Celestial Potency all the guidance, the spirit, the power which we shall need for the fulfillment of our mission in this life.” ¹⁶ | | | |
| Love one another | “Love amongst the believers is the magnet which will, above all else, attract the hearts and bring new souls into the Cause. . . .” ¹⁷ | | | |
| Be as one soul | “Whensoever holy souls, drawing on the powers of heaven, shall arise . . . and march in unison, rank on rank, every one of those souls will be even as one thousand. . . .” ¹⁸ | | | |

11 *Wellspring of Guidance* 25

12 *Wellspring of Guidance* 38-39

13 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Power of Divine Assistance* 11

14 On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Individual and Teaching* 32

15 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í Prayers* 84

16 Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration* 35

17 On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, *The Power of Unity* 123

18 *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* 260

Feedback

The following are suggested answers regarding the benefits of each duty for the Cause and for humanity. Suggested answers are also given for personal action, however, you should make your own plan of goals you intend carry out to serve the Faith.

| Duties | Powers Attracted | Benefits to the Cause | Benefits to Humanity | Personal Plan for Action |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Teach the Cause | “... The unseen divine assistance encompasseth those who deliver the Message.” | <i>The Cause grows; the World Order is built; God’s purpose is achieved.</i> | <i>The world receives medicine to cure its ills; the planet is transformed.</i> | <i>Invite friends over to dinner to offer hospitality and to teach as possible.</i> |
| Live a Bahá’í life | “... Living of the Bahá’í life... creates the magnet for the Holy Spirit [that]... quickens the new soul.” | <i>Proves the truth of the Cause; differences among the believers disappear.</i> | <i>Trust is created; others needs are served; prejudice is eliminated.</i> | <i>Pray and fight my personal spiritual battles daily.</i> |
| Contribute to the Fund | “... the Lord will abundantly confirm those who expend their wealth in His path.” | <i>Institutions of the World Order are built; the Faith can grow and develop.</i> | <i>Hastens the arrival of the Most Great Peace and the world’s prosperity.</i> | <i>Contribute to the local, National, Continental and International Funds.</i> |
| Understand the significance of the Revelation | “Let us... turn... to His counsels and exhortations, and seek from that Source of Celestial Potency all the guidance, the spirit, the power which we shall need for the fulfillment of our mission in this life.” | <i>We become more attached to Bahá’u’lláh and serve more actively, teach more often, and live up to the Bahá’í teachings</i> | <i>More people strive to live a Bahá’í life; the new World Order is built; problems of society receive the healing remedy.</i> | <i>Read daily from the writings and host a weekly deepening for community members.</i> |
| Love one another | “This love amongst the believers is the magnet which will, above all else, attract the hearts and bring new souls into the Cause. . . .” | <i>Unity is created; if we are united in love, we can unite others; people are attracted to us.</i> | <i>Hearts are united; people feel loved; less estrangement and violence; more cohesive society.</i> | <i>Be sure to visit and care for community members who are ill or elderly.</i> |
| Be as one soul | “Whensoever holy souls, drawing on the powers of heaven, shall arise... and march in unison, rank on rank, every one of those souls will be even as one thousand. . . .” | <i>Unity in the Faith; others are attracted; more accomplished in service to Cause; it grows and transforms world faster.</i> | <i>Problems of disunity disappear; humanity becomes less concerned with self—more with serving others.</i> | <i>Befriend, serve, and get to know another believer or family of a different race or nationality until we are as one family.</i> |

6

A New Race of Men

Introduction

“God’s purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.”¹

In the last chapter we saw how the forces released by the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh are working in the world to achieve His twofold purpose. Individuals are tested; if they respond positively to His call, they attain a high station and receive divine assistance in their efforts to serve His Cause and transform their lives. Society is chastened to prepare it to accept His Message and the organic unfoldment of His new World Order.

In this chapter and the next we will examine the ultimate outcome of the effects of the forces of His Revelation: the raising of a new race of men and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. These are two of the profound changes which Bahá’u’lláh has destined for humanity.

¹ Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 79-80

Overview

A primary purpose, or goal, of Bahá'u'lláh is to transform the lives of individuals. The change begins with a person's spiritual rebirth through the recognition of Bahá'u'lláh's station. It continues through divine assistance and the effort of the individual to abide by His teachings. It involves the person's relationship with God, the growth of his character, and his interaction with other people. Finally, as a candle lighted by the divine flame, the illumined individual is capable of attracting and igniting others.

So great will be the change in humanity in this Day of God that it will result in "the calling into being of a new race of men," the "supreme and distinguishing feature" of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation.²

Explanation

"... Is not the object of every Revelation," Bahá'u'lláh asks, "to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent."³

The Manifestations of God do not appear among peoples who are demonstrating high morals and spiritual illumination. They do not arise among those with a flourishing civilization. The divine Messengers come to countries and peoples that are "fast declining, or had already touched the lowest depths of moral and spiritual degradation."⁴ Consider the condition of the Jews under Pharaoh; the decline of Israel at the coming of Christ; and the barbarism and idol worship that characterized Arab tribes at the time of Muḥammad.

Bahá'u'lláh, assessing the current condition of humanity states: "The whole of mankind is in the grip of manifold ills."⁵ "No two men," He adds, "can be found who may be said to be outwardly and inwardly united."⁶ And He states: "How long will humanity persist in its waywardness? How long will injustice continue? . . . The winds of despair are, alas, blowing in every direction, and the strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race is daily increasing."⁷

² Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 16

³ *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* 240-41

⁴ Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 17

⁵ *Gleanings* 81

⁶ *Gleanings* 218

⁷ *Gleanings* 216

The people of Persia, from whom Bahá'u'lláh came, were “the most decadent race in the civilized world, grossly ignorant, savage, cruel, steeped in prejudice, servile in their submission to an almost deified hierarchy. . . .”⁸ Nevertheless, the divine forces released, first by the Báb and then by Bahá'u'lláh, succeeded in attracting and transforming individuals through its irresistible power. The new believers became a “race of heroes” suited to start “a similar revolution in the life of mankind.”⁹

The Báb, addressing the first of His followers as He sent them forth to teach humanity, stated: “You are the bearers of the Name of God in this Day. . . . It behoves each one of you to manifest the attributes of God, and to exemplify by your deeds and words the signs of His righteousness, His power and glory. The very members of your body must bear witness to the loftiness of your purpose, the integrity of your life, the reality of your faith, and the exalted character of your devotion. For verily I say, this is the Day spoken of by God in His Book. . . .”¹⁰

As Bahá'u'lláh's teachings spread to the West, the process continued. From the ranks of the American believers, Shoghi Effendi explains, He has demonstrated “His almighty power to raise up from the very midst of a people, immersed in a sea of materialism, a prey to one of the most virulent and long-standing forms of racial prejudice, and notorious for its political corruption, lawlessness and laxity in moral standards, men and women who, as time goes by, will increasingly exemplify those essential virtues of self-renunciation, of moral rectitude, of chastity, of indiscriminating fellowship, of holy discipline, and of spiritual insight. . . .”¹¹

The ultimate heights human beings will reach as a result of the transforming power of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation “are as yet unrevealed.”¹² However, Bahá'u'lláh promises: “The potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested in this promised Day of God.”¹³

8 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 4

9 Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 18

10 Reported words quoted in *The Dawnbreakers* 92

11 *The Advent of Divine Justice* 19

12 Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 214

13 *Gleanings* 340

Readings

1. “The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to resignation and submissiveness to the Will of God, to forbearance and kindness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object is to array every man with the mantle of a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 299

2. “The highest development of man is his entrance into the divine Kingdom, and the outcome of this human existence is the nucleus and essence of eternal life. If man is bereft of the divine bestowals and if his enjoyment and happiness are restricted to his material inclinations, what distinction or difference is there between the animal and himself? In fact, the animal’s happiness is greater, for its wants are fewer and its means of livelihood easier to acquire. Although it is necessary for man to strive for material needs and comforts, his real need is the acquisition of the bounties of God. If he is bereft of divine bounties, spiritual susceptibilities and heavenly glad tidings, the life of man in this world has not yielded any worthy fruit. While possessing physical life, he should lay hold of the life spiritual, and together with bodily comforts and happiness, he should enjoy divine pleasures and content. Then is man worthy of the title man; then will he be after the image and likeness of God, for the image of the Merciful consists of the attributes of the heavenly Kingdom. . . .”

“What are the fruits of the human world? They are the spiritual attributes which appear in man. . . . One whose aspiration is lofty and who has developed self-reliance will not be content with a mere animal existence. He will seek the divine Kingdom; he will long to be in heaven although he still walks the earth in his material body, and though his outer visage be physical, his face of inner reflection will become spiritual and heavenly. Until this station is attained by man, his life will be utterly devoid of real outcomes. The span of his existence will pass away in eating, drinking and sleeping, without eternal fruits, heavenly traces or illumination—without spiritual potency, everlasting life or the lofty attainments intended for him during his pilgrimage through the human world. . . .”

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 335-36

3. “The Hand of Divine Bounty proffereth unto you the Water of Life. Hasten and drink your fill. Whoso hath been reborn in this Day, shall never die; whoso remaineth dead, shall never live.”

—Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 213

God’s Purpose: Transforming Human Beings

resignation: passive agreement to what is asked or demanded; the power or capacity to endure without complaint something difficult or disagreeable

submissiveness: state of receiving or enduring without resistance

forbearance: tolerance; mercifulness

array: dress splendidly

adorn: decorate with ornaments

nucleus: central part

inclinations: attractions toward an opinion, activity, or thing

bereft: deprived or lacking

visage: face or facial expression

proffer: offer; to put something before another for acceptance or consideration

Characteristics of God's New People

4. "Say: Beware, O people of Bahá, lest ye walk in the ways of them whose words differ from their deeds. Strive that ye may be enabled to manifest to the peoples of the earth the signs of God, and to mirror forth His commandments."

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 305

5. "You must manifest complete love and affection toward all mankind. Do not exalt yourself above others, but consider all as your equals, recognizing them as the servants of one God.... Never speak disparagingly of others, but praise without distinction.... If someone commits ... [a] wrong toward you, you must instantly forgive him....

disparagingly: in a way designed to belittle

“. . . Let each one of you be as a lamp shining forth with the light of the world of humanity. Be trustworthy, sincere, affectionate and replete with chastity. Be illumined, be spiritual, be divine, be glorious, be quickened of God, be a Bahá'í."

replete: full

—'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 453

quickened: alive; entered into active growth and development

6. "The Faith of the Blessed Beauty is summoning mankind to safety and love, to amity and peace; it hath raised up its tabernacle on the heights of the earth, and directeth its call to all nations. Wherefore, O ye who are God's lovers, know ye the value of this precious Faith, obey its teachings, walk in this road that is drawn straight, and show ye this way to the people. Lift up your voices and sing out the song of the Kingdom. Spread far and wide the precepts and counsels of the loving Lord, so that this world will change into another world, and this darksome earth will be flooded with light, and the dead body of mankind will arise and live; so that every soul will ask for immortality, through the holy breaths of God."

amity: friendship

tabernacle: house of worship

“. . . Be ye loving fathers to the orphan, and a refuge to the helpless, and a treasury for the poor, and a cure for the ailing. Be ye the helpers of every victim of oppression, the patrons of the disadvantaged. Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race. Pay ye no heed to aversion and rejection, to disdain, hostility, injustice: act ye in the opposite way. Be ye sincerely kind, not in appearance only. Let each one of God's loved ones centre his attention on this: to be the Lord's mercy to man; to be the Lord's grace. Let him do some good to every person whose path he crosseth, and be of some benefit to him. Let him improve the character of each and all, and reorient the minds of men. In this way, the light of divine guidance will shine forth, and the blessings of God will cradle all mankind: for love is light, no matter in what abode it dwelleth; and hate is darkness, no matter where it may make its nest."

darksome: gloomily somber; dark

patrons: special protectors; wealthy supporters

aversion: a feeling of extreme disgust and dislike

reorient: set in a new or different position or direction

cradle: hold securely

—*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* 2-3

A New People

7. “A race of men, . . . incomparable in character, shall be raised up which, with the feet of detachment, will tread under all who are in heaven and on earth, and will cast the sleeve of holiness over all that hath been created from water and clay.”

—Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 31

8. “The heights which, through the most gracious favor of God, mortal man can attain, in this Day, are as yet unrevealed to his sight. The world of being hath never had, nor doth it yet possess the capacity for such a revelation. The day, however, is approaching when the potentialities of so great a favor will, by virtue of His behest, be manifested unto men.”

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 214

9. “. . . 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.”

—Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian #69, 46

10. “They who dwell within the tabernacle of God, and are established upon the seats of everlasting glory, will refuse, though they be dying of hunger, to stretch their hands and seize unlawfully the property of their neighbor, however vile and worthless he may be.”

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 298-99

11. “He is My true follower who, if he come to a valley of pure gold, will pass straight through it aloof as a cloud, and will neither turn back, nor pause. Such a man is, assuredly, of Me. From his garment the Concourse on high can inhale the fragrance of sanctity. . . . And if he met the fairest and most comely of women, he would not feel his heart seduced by the least shadow of desire for her beauty. Such an one, indeed, is the creation of spotless chastity. Thus instructeth you the Pen of the Ancient of Days, as bidden by your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.”

—Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 118

12. “I swear by the one true God! This is the day of those who have detached themselves from all but Him, the day of those who have recognized His unity, the day whereon God createth, with the hands of His power, divine beings and imperishable essences, every one of whom will cast the world and all that is therein behind him, and will wax so steadfast in the Cause of God that every wise and understanding heart will marvel. . . .’ ‘The day is approaching when God will have, by an act of His Will, raised up a race of men the nature of which is inscrutable to all save God, the All-Powerful, the Self-Subsisting.’”

—Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Advent of Divine Justice* 85

behest: command

assayers: those who perform analysis (as of an ore) to determine quality or properties

vile: thoroughly bad or contemptible

sanctity: quality or state of being holy or sacred

wax: grow larger; become

inscrutable: mysterious; having a puzzling or secret quality; not understood

For more quotations on topics raised in this lesson see the index, page 83.

Illustration

The following is a report of statements of Bahá'u'lláh to several Persian princes visiting Him regarding the future state of humanity:

“... Bahá'u'lláh ... said, “My purpose in coming to this corrupt world where tyrants and traitors, by their acts of cruelty and oppression, have closed the doors of peace and tranquillity to all mankind, is to establish, through the power of God and His might, the forces of justice, trust, security and faith. For instance [in the future] should a woman . . . , who is unsurpassed in her beauty and adorned with the most exquisite and priceless jewels, travel unveiled and alone, from the east of the world to the west thereof, passing through every land and journeying in all countries, there would be such a standard of justice, trustworthiness and faith on the one hand, and lack of treachery and degradation on the other, that no one would be found who would wish to rob her of her possessions or to cast a treacherous and lustful eye upon her beautiful chastity! . . .”

“Then Bahá'u'lláh affirmed, “Through the power of God I shall transform the peoples of the world into this exalted state. . . .”

“Concerning the sincerity of motive and purity of deeds, the Tongue of Grandeur [Bahá'u'lláh] addressed them in these words:

““ . . . Suppose that gradually and in the course of time [a very rich man] bestows so much of his wealth on a poor person . . . that he himself is reduced to absolute poverty while the poor man has turned into a very rich man. . . . Suppose in his poor and distressed state he reaches a situation in which he incurs some small debt. Being unable to pay it, he is brought to a public square in town where he is humiliated and punished. . . . At this point suppose he sees his friend [whom he made rich]. . . . Should the thought flash through his mind that he wishes that in return for all his generosity to him, this friend would now come forward and relieve him of this calamity, immediately all his deeds would become void. . . .

““The same thing is true of the second man who has become rich. . . . Should he think in his heart that he is obliged to pay this man's debts . . . because he had earlier shown immeasurable love and kindness towards him, then such a motive . . . would cause him to be deprived of the chalice of sincerity. . . .

““The only way acceptable to God would have been for the first man to have based his acts of generosity on humanitarian principles wholly for the sake of God. In the same way, the second rich man should have acted for the sake of God and as a duty to the world of humanity regardless of the events of the past or the future.””

—Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Vol. IV, 142-43

*exquisite: flawlessly
beautiful and delicate*

*treachery: betrayal of a
trust*

*degradation: decline to a
low, destitute or demoral-
ized state; moral or
intellectual deterioration*

*incurs: becomes liable or
subject to*

chalice: cup

Further Study

Select one of the passages from the “Readings” section.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| What does the passage say? | In what specific ways can this passage be applied in your life? |
|----------------------------|---|

List any unanswered questions about the lesson you may want to explore in more depth. Use the index on page 83 and the additional reading below to help you find answers to your questions.

| |
|----------------------|
| 1. 2. 3. 4. |
|----------------------|

Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, 19-152

The Hidden Words

“In these Tablets,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states, “ye will have a model of how to live and how to be.”

The Divine Art of Living

Unrestrained as the Wind: A Life Dedicated to Bahá’u’lláh

Compilations of the Bahá’í writings on living a spiritual life.

The Advent of Divine Justice, by Shoghi Effendi, 16-43

A discussion of specific challenges facing Bahá’ís: rectitude of conduct, a chaste and holy life, and freedom from prejudice.

The Imperishable Dominion, by Udo Schaefer, 152-238

A commentary, with quotations, on the “new race of men.”

**Personal
Reflection**

**Remaining
Questions**

**Additional
Reading**

Questions

1. Two purposes of God in sending His Manifestations to transform individuals are:
 1. _____
 2. _____

2. (Circle all that apply.) Man's highest development consists of:
 - a. entering into the divine Kingdom
 - b. demonstrating the attributes of God
 - c. acquiring enough material things to be comfortable
 - d. living in both the spiritual and material worlds

3. List five characteristics of the "new race of men":
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____

Answers

The following are suggested answers. Depending on your understanding of the quotes, you may have different answers. Consider the suggested answers a starting point for thought and discussion.

1. See the quotations on page 66. Three purposes indicated there are: 1) to “array every man with the mantle of a saintly character,” 2) to adorn individuals “with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds,” and 3) to quicken those who are spiritually dead.
2. **a, b, and d.** For all three answers see #2, page 66. Answer “c” is not correct since only acquiring material possessions makes us no different than the animals. To be worthy of the title “man” we must acquire spiritual perfections.
3. See pages 67 and 68. Among the possible answers are: deeds match one’s words (#4, page 67); others are considered as equals (#5, page 67); no ill is spoken of anyone (#5, page 67); the teachings of the Faith are obeyed (#6, page 67); service is rendered to others; rejection and hostility are ignored and instead love is demonstrated (#6, page 67); stealing, and even the desire for another’s property, does not occur (#10, page 68); chastity prevails even in face of temptation (#11, page 68); and individuals are detached from the world (#12, page 68).

Discussion

Why does the Manifestation of God appear to peoples who are in a state of moral decline? What are the implications of this for teaching? What are the implications for the interactions among the believers at our current level of development?

Discuss Bahá’u’lláh’s warning to us to “beware . . . lest ye walk in the ways of them whose words differ from their deeds.” How does obedience to the teachings create and maintain unity?

Bahá’u’lláh makes us rethink what it means to be a human being. How would you explain to someone what a human being is? Why are we not now the “new race” Bahá’u’lláh describes? What steps can be taken to help your community become a new people?



The Kingdom of God on Earth

Introduction

In the Bahá'í Writings there are at least two ways that the term “Kingdom of God” is used.

The first refers to the world of God. “. . . The Kingdom is not a material place; it is sanctified from time and place. It is a spiritual world, a divine world, and the center of the Sovereignty of God. . . .”¹ The Kingdom must be established “in the hearts of men,”² referring to the expression of the attributes of God that each person possesses. In this sense Jesus said “the Kingdom of God is within you.”³ Bahá'u'lláh describes the entry into the Kingdom: “whosoever in every dispensation is born of the Spirit and is quickened by the breath of the Manifestation of Holiness, he verily is of those that have attained unto ‘life’ and ‘resurrection’ and have entered into the ‘paradise’ of the love of God.”⁴

The second use of the “Kingdom of God” refers to God’s Kingdom on earth, where His Will is “done in earth, as it is in heaven.”⁵ The Kingdom of God, in this sense, implies nothing less than the transformation of human society in accordance within divine principles. It represents the culmination of a 6000 year process—the realization of God’s purpose for humanity’s earthly existence. It is the Kingdom of God on earth that we will examine in this lesson.

1 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 241

2 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World* 130

3 Jesus, Luke 17:21

4 *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* 118

5 Jesus, Matt 6:10

Overview

“For a single purpose,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states, “were the Prophets, each and all, sent down to earth; for this was Christ made manifest, for this did Bahá’u’lláh raise up the call of the Lord: that the world of man should become the world of God, this nether realm the Kingdom, . . . that the organic unity should reappear and the bases of discord be destroyed and life everlasting and grace everlasting become the harvest of mankind.”⁶

From time immemorial God has guided us toward one collective goal: the unity of the human race in a society that reflects divine qualities. This goal, the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, is not a utopian dream. It will not be thrust upon humanity suddenly and completely through divine intervention. Nor will it be simply the outcome of political or economic development.

The Kingdom of God on earth will be established through the transformation of society in accordance with the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. This transformation will include the spiritualization and union of the peoples of the earth, the formation of a world commonwealth of nations in a new World Order, the creation of the “Most Great Peace,”⁷ and the raising of a spiritual civilization.

Explanation

‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains that a baby passes through various physical stages until its body reaches the age of maturity. Arriving at this stage, it acquires the capacity to show forth spiritual and intellectual perfections. “Similarly,” He adds, “in the contingent world, the human species hath undergone progressive physical changes and, by a slow process, hath scaled the ladder of civilization . . . until it gained the capacity to express the splendors of spiritual perfections and divine ideals and became capable of hearkening to the call of God. Then at last, the call of the Kingdom was raised. . . .”⁸

Human society has progressed through “unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation.”⁹ It now stands on the threshold of world unity. An initial political unity of nations will, over time, evolve into a spiritually based society as a result of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings.

6 *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 31

7 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 162

8 *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 285

9 Shoghi Effendi, *The World*

Order of Bahá’u’lláh 202

The process by which the Kingdom will unfold involves the building of a new World Order and the disintegration of the old. The building process “unfolds a System which may well serve as a pattern” for that world order “towards which a strangely-disordered world is continually advancing.” The disintegrating process “tends to tear down, with increasing violence” the barriers that “block humanity’s progress towards its destined goal.”¹⁰

The oneness of mankind envisioned by Bahá’u’lláh “implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced.”¹¹ The Kingdom is also far more than anything we can currently conceive. The Universal House of Justice warns: “We should constantly be on our guard lest the glitter and tinsel of an affluent society should lead us to think that such superficial adjustments to the modern world as are envisioned by humanitarian movements . . . will of themselves fulfill the glorious mission of Bahá’u’lláh. Far otherwise. These are the things which shall be added unto us once we seek the Kingdom of God, and are not themselves the objectives for which the Báb gave His life [and] Bahá’u’lláh endured such sufferings as none before Him had ever endured. . . . Far deeper and more fundamental was their vision, penetrating to the very purpose of human life. . . .”¹²

What, then, can we know about the coming Kingdom of God on earth? Only the faint glimpses of its glory are revealed in the Bahá’í writings. It will witness the abolition of “all disputes, war, and bloodshed, from the face of the earth.”¹³ It will involve the “spiritualization of the world and the fusion of all its races, creeds, classes and nations”¹⁴ in “one universal Cause, one common Faith.”¹⁵ Also, a “World Commonwealth,” the crowning stage of Bahá’u’lláh’s new World Order, “will have emerged in the plenitude of its power and splendor,” and a world civilization “will have conferred its inestimable blessings upon all mankind.”¹⁶

10 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 170

11 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 43

12 *Wellspring of Guidance* 113-14

13 Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 34

14 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 162

15 Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings* 255

16 Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith* 6

Readings

1. “God’s purpose is none other than to usher in, in ways He alone can bring about, and the full significance of which He alone can fathom, the Great, the Golden Age of a long-divided, a long-afflicted humanity. Its present state, indeed even its immediate future, is dark, distressingly dark. Its distant future, however, is radiant, gloriously radiant—so radiant that no eye can visualize it.”

—Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come* 116

2. “Permanent peace among nations is an essential stage, but not, Bahá’u’lláh asserts, the ultimate goal of the social development of humanity. Beyond the initial armistice forced upon the world by the fear of nuclear holocaust, beyond the political peace reluctantly entered into by suspicious rival nations, beyond pragmatic arrangements for security and coexistence, beyond even the many experiments in cooperation which these steps will make possible lies the crowning goal: the unification of all the peoples of the world in one universal family.

“... ‘The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving toward a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationship, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life.’

“All contemporary forces of change validate this view.”

—The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace* 34-35

3. “. . . Material civilization has progressed greatly, . . . but spiritual civilization has been left behind. Material civilization is like unto the lamp, while spiritual civilization is the light in the lamp. If the material and spiritual civilization become united, then we will have the light and the lamp together, and the outcome will be perfect. For material civilization is like unto a beautiful body, and spiritual civilization is like unto the spirit of life. If that wondrous spirit of life enters this beautiful body, the body will become a channel for the distribution and development of the perfections of humanity.”

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* 11

4. “[Bahá’u’lláh] will subdue the world by spiritual power, not by war and combat; He will do it with peace and tranquillity, not by the sword and arms; He will establish this Heavenly Kingdom by true love, and not by the power of war. . . . He will so educate the nations and people that ... they will, as it is said in the Bible, like the wolf and the lamb . . . become comrades, friends and companio

—‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 58

From Material to Spiritual Civilization

armistice: a suspension of or an agreement for suspending hostilities

pragmatic: practical; having no illusions and facing reality squarely

anarchy: lawlessness; chaos; social disorder

sovereignty: position of being first in rank or power

fetish: irrational reverence or attachment

contemporary: modern; now existing or in progress

5. “For Bahá’u’lláh...has not only imbued mankind with a new and regenerating Spirit. He has not merely enunciated certain universal principles, or propounded a particular philosophy, however potent, sound and universal these may be. In addition to these He . . . has, unlike the Dispensations of the past, clearly and specifically laid down a set of Laws, established definite institutions, and provided for the essentials of a Divine Economy. These are destined to be a pattern for future society, a supreme instrument for the establishment of the Most Great Peace, and the one agency for the unification of the world, and the proclamation of the reign of righteousness and justice upon the earth.” —Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 19

imbued: introduced one thing into another so as to change or affect it

enunciated: made a definite or systematic statement of

propounded: placed before the mind for consideration

6. “. . . Two great processes are at work in the world: the great Plan of God, tumultuous in its progress, working through mankind as a whole, tearing down barriers to world unity and forging humankind into a unified body in the fires of suffering and experience. This process will produce, in God’s good time, the Lesser Peace, the political unification of the world. Mankind at that time can be likened to a body that is unified but without life. The second process, the task of breathing life into this unified body—of creating true unity and spirituality culminating in the Most Great Peace—is that of the Bahá’ís, who are laboring consciously, with detailed instructions and continuing Divine guidance, to erect the fabric of the Kingdom of God on earth, into which they call their fellowmen, thus conferring upon them eternal life.” —The Universal House of Justice, *Wellspring of Guidance* 133-34

tumultuous: marked by violent or overwhelming chaos or upheaval

7. “Today the call of the Kingdom is the magnetic power which draweth to itself the world of mankind, for capacity in men is great. Divine teachings constitute the spirit of this age, nay rather the sun of this age. Every soul must endeavor that the veils that cover men’s eyes may be torn asunder and that instantly the sun may be seen and that heart and sight may be illumined thereby.

“Now, through the aid and bounty of God, this power of guidance and this merciful bestowal are found in thee. Arise, therefore, in the utmost Power that thou mayest bestow spirit upon moldering bones, give sight to the blind, balm and freshness to the depressed, and liveliness and grace to the dispirited. Every lamp will eventually be extinguished save the lamp of the Kingdom, which increaseth day by day in splendor. Every call shall ultimately weaken except the call to the Kingdom of God, which day unto day is raised. Every path shall finally be twisted except the road of the Kingdom, which straighteneth day by day.” —*Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* 310

moldering: decaying; crumbling into particles

balm: relief from or an end to whatever distresses, agitates, or disturbs

8. “. . . The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá’u’lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded. . . . A world language will either be invented or chosen from among the existing languages and will be taught in the schools of all the federated nations as an auxiliary to their mother tongue. A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind. In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will cooperate, and will harmoniously develop. . . .

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

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

“‘One of the great events,’ affirms ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ‘which is to occur in the Day of the manifestation of that incomparable Branch is the hoisting of the Standard of God among all nations. By this is

A Vision of the Kingdom of God on Earth

envisaged: formed an idea of something

autonomy: state of being self-governing

script: written characters

facilitate: to make less difficult

intercourse: interchange of thoughts or opinions through shared symbols

reconciled: brought into accord, harmonized

intrigues: secret plans for accomplishing usually evil or unlawful ends

inordinate: going beyond a normal or acceptable limit

obliterated: eliminated with or as if with a stroke of the pen

destitution: poverty; need

dissipated: spent or expended freely and usually foolishly or futilely

exploitation: use; utilization

prolongation: the act or state of extending or being extended

federal: of or constituting a government with power distributed between a central authority and constituent units

allegiance: loyalty

meant that all nations and kindreds will be gathered together under the shadow of this Divine Banner . . . and will become a single nation. Religious and sectarian antagonism, the hostility of races and peoples, and differences among nations, will be eliminated. All men will adhere to one religion, will have one common faith, will be blended into one race and become a single people. All will dwell in one common fatherland, which is the planet itself. . . .’

“No less enthralling is the vision of Isaiah, the greatest of the Hebrew Prophets, predicting, as far back as twenty five hundred years ago . . . : ‘And He (the Lord) shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.’ . . .”

“The writer of the Apocalypse, prefiguring the millennial glory which a redeemed, a jubilant humanity must witness, has similarly testified: ‘And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. . . . And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”’

“Who can doubt that such a consummation—the coming of age of the human race—must signalize, in its turn, the inauguration of a world civilization such as no mortal eye hath ever beheld or human mind conceived? Who is it that can imagine the lofty standard which such a civilization, as it unfolds itself, is destined to attain? Who can measure the heights to which human intelligence, liberated from its shackles, will soar? Who can visualize the realms which the human spirit, vitalized by the outpouring light of Bahá’u’lláh, shining in the plenitude of its glory, will discover?

“What more fitting conclusion to this theme than these words of Bahá’u’lláh, written in anticipation of the golden age of His Faith—the age in which the face of the earth, from pole to pole, will mirror the ineffable splendors of the Abhá Paradise? ‘This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendors of the Light that shineth from the face of thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful. Verily, We have caused every soul to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty. We have then called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men.”’

—Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh* 203-06

sectarian: relating to a sect

antagonism: deep-seated dislike or ill will or a manifestation of such feeling

adhere: to become or cause to become closely and firmly attached

enthralling: holding spellbound; fascinating

Isa 2:4

rebuke: to criticize adversely, especially in order to warn of or to correct a fault

Apocalypse: Book of Revelation from the Bible

prefiguring: hinting or indicating something to come

redeemed: made good the defects of

jubilant: manifesting proud elation

Rev 21:1-4

inauguration: the process or an instance of being formally introduced

plenitude: abundance; completeness

ineffable: incapable of being expressed in words

For more quotations on topics raised in this lesson see the index, page 83.

Further Study

Select one of the passages from the “Readings” section.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| What does the passage say? | In what specific ways can this passage be applied in your life? |
|----------------------------|---|

List any unanswered questions about the lesson you may want to explore in more depth. Use the index on page 83 and the additional reading below to help you find answers to your questions.

| |
|----------------------|
| 1. 2. 3. 4. |
|----------------------|

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, by Shoghi Effendi

Messages describing the stages which humanity and the Faith will undergo in building the Kingdom of God on earth.

The Promise of World Peace, by the Universal House of Justice

A statement of the Bahá'í teachings on the establishment of peace addressed to the present stage of the world's development.

Peace: More Than an End to War

A compilation of Bahá'í writings on the establishment of peace, world order, and the unity of humanity.

Personal Reflection

Remaining Questions

Additional Reading

Questions

1. (Circle all that apply.) According to the Bahá'í writings, the term Kingdom of God is:
 - a. a spiritual, not material, world
 - b. a spiritualized material civilization
 - c. to be established by military power
 - d. the outcome of 6,000 years of development

2. (Circle all that apply.) The Most Great Peace will come about as the result of the:
 - a. initiative of the nations of the world
 - b. Laws of Bahá'u'lláh
 - c. Bahá'ís breathing life into the world's material body
 - d. institutions established by Bahá'u'lláh

3. List seven characteristics of the Kingdom of God on earth:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
 6. _____
 7. _____

Answers

The following are suggested answers. Depending on your understanding of the quotes, you may have different answers. Consider the suggested answers a starting point for thought and discussion.

1. **a, b, and d.** See the discussion on pages 73 and 74. Answer “c” is not correct because it will be through spiritual power that the Kingdom is established. See quote #4, page 76.
2. **b, c, and d.** Answer “a” is not correct (see #2, page 76) because although the nations of the world will establish the initial period of peace known as the “lesser peace,” permanent peace will be established by the laws of Bahá’u’lláh, the Bahá’ís “breathing life” into the “unified body” of the world, and the institutions established by Bahá’u’lláh (see #5, page 77).
3. Possible answers all come from #8, pages 78-79. They include: the unity of the human race, a world language and world script, an end to national, religious, and racial rivalries, a balancing of the extremes of wealth and poverty, the elimination of disease, a federal system of world government, all the peoples of the world under one religious banner, an end to war, the establishment of a world civilization. For addition ideas see the entire passage from Shoghi Effendi in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pages 202-06.

Discussion

What does Shoghi Effendi mean when he describes the immediate future of as “distressingly dark” but the distant future as “gloriously radiant?” How can this knowledge be used to give hope to the world?

How will a spiritual civilization affect the development of the individual?

There are many people who are skeptical that humanity is capable of building the kind of civilization Bahá’u’lláh describes as the Kingdom of God on earth. How would you convince such a person that Bahá’u’lláh’s vision will, indeed, become a reality?

Index for the Significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation

Introduction

The index provides references on the topic of the significance of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh from a wide range of Bahá'í books. Bold page numbers (beginning on page 83) indicate quotations used, at least in part, in this book; the corresponding page number from *The Significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation* is included in parenthesis.

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Index Abbreviation:
SAB

SAQ

TDP

PUP

SB

ESW

GL

HW

KI

PM

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