

## Commentary/Commentaire/Comentário

### ON HUMAN ORIGINS: A BAHÁ'Í PERSPECTIVE

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In *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 3.2, Dr. Craig Loehle writes:

Finally, Bahá'u'lláh makes a very interesting statement that seems to indicate even the prophets are somewhat subject to chance events. (64)

Loehle then uses a quotation from the English translation of the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* that starts with the following statement:

Other Prophets, similarly, have been subject to poverty and afflictions, to hunger, and to the ills and chances of this world. (64)

I do not know how we can reach the conclusion that events that are not ordained by God may happen to the Manifestations of God. Being subject to afflictions and worldly events seems to be rather different from assuming that they are subject to random events which God does not intend for them. It seems that the word *chance* in the above quotation is taken out of the context in which the whole statement is on the meaning of “clouds” in the old Scriptures. It should be noted that in the original text of this quotation in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* in Persian, there is no word or phrase that could justify such an inference as made by Loehle. The Persian expression is “*Havades-i-Emkaniyyih*,” which literally translated is “worldly events or happenings.” In translating the whole sentence into English in a suitable style for the translation of that book, Shoghi Effendi has used “chances of this world” for “*Havades-i-Emkaniyyih*.” The word *chance*, according to English dictionaries, may be used for “happenings” and “events.”

Without commenting on the liberty that Loehle has taken in using “chance” as a synonym of “fate” and has referred to quotations from the Writings, which are on “fate” and not on “chance,” i.e., accidental events, I only intend to underscore the following point, that when using translations of the holy Writings, it would be helpful where making inferences on the basis of single words to examine the original Persian or Arabic texts and study the historical usage of such words in Persian and Arabic literature.

One major requirement of scholarly study of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is sufficient mastery of the two languages in which these are revealed. This has been a normal approach of students and scholars of religion and should by no means frustrate promising, talented, and sincere students of the Faith. On the contrary, it could persuade them to add the knowledge of the languages of the Revelation to their accomplishments. The Bahá'í community increasingly needs such learned individuals.

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