

Part 3: The Prophecy concerning the advent of Man Yuzhiruhu'lláh¹

The Báb evidently foresaw the imminent advent of the Promised One whom He described in such glowing terms. This is clear from many of the statements He made to contemporaries, whom He exhorted to recognize both Himself and – as soon as He appeared – the promised *Man yuzhiruhu'lláh*. In a letter written to a Muslim clergyman named Sulaymán, for instance, He called upon the addressee to turn to Him (the Báb), since he would otherwise be accursed. If he failed to accept the Báb, God would forgive him only if he turned, by means of a letter, to '*Him whom God shall make manifest*' (SWB 1:9:7) – i.e. in the near future, during Sulaymán's lifetime. From another letter, written by the Báb to the Sharif of Mecca and others, it is again evident that the Báb expected the Promised One to appear during the lifetime of the Sharif. The Báb admonished the Sharif of Mecca

To embrace the Cause of God and to implore that the matter of thine allegiance be brought to the attention of Him Whom God shall make manifest, that He may graciously enable thee to prosper and cause thy fire to be transformed into light. (SWB 1:7:3, p. 30)

Furthermore, it is implied in the Persian Bayán that *Man yuzhiruhu'lláh* would appear during the 19 years following the Báb's declaration of His mission (1844); i.e., in the period up to the year 1863, although God alone would know the hour of His coming. (Bayán VI:3) The early Bábis, too, clearly expected the Promised One to arrive soon. Only this can explain the fact that during the years immediately following the martyrdom of the Báb so many proclaimed themselves to be the Promised One.

In contrast to this, the Azali doctrine that the Promised One was to appear only after 1511 or 2001 years was based on statements made by the Báb in the Persian Bayán concerning *Ghiyáth* (Help) and *Mustagháth* (He who is called upon for help) (Persian Bayán II:17, III:15), from which the numbers 1511 and 2001

¹ From *Making the Crooked Straight*, by Udo Schaefer, Nicola Towfigh, Ulrich Gollmer, trans. by Geraldine Schuckelt (Oxford: George Ronald, 2000).

are derived by means of the Abjad system. This is interpreted as an indication that the promised *Man yuzhiruhu'lláh* will not appear until this length of time has elapsed. This argument was probably developed by the Azalis in order to dismiss Bahá'u'lláh's claim. They certainly referred to this in their rejection of Bahá'u'lláh, as Browne confirms: "To these texts the Ezelis specially appeal in justification of their rejection of Bahá'u'lláh's [sic] claim to be the Promised Deliverer..." (*JRAS* April 1892, p. 299) It is clear from the words of the Báb in the Persian Bayán, however, that the Azali view does not conform to that of the Báb when the latter expresses the hope that the Promised One would come before the end of the *Mustagháth*:

None knoweth save God as to when the Manifestation shall be. Whenever it occurs all have to follow the Point of Truth and thank God. However, it is hoped of God's grace that it will arrive before the Mustagháth and the Word of God will be exalted by it. (Persian Bayán III:15)

It is obvious from these words that the Báb regards the *Mustagháth* as a period of time during which the Manifestation will appear. Bahá'u'lláh evidently shares the Báb's cyclical view and also sees *Ghiyáth* and *Mustagháth* as cycles within which the Promised One will appear. He speaks of the year 9 within the *Mustagháth* in which *Man yuzhiruhu'lláh* has appeared. (*Raḥīq-Makhtúm*, p. 514) In response to the Azali objection that He was already announcing the advent of the Promised One, Bahá'u'lláh argued:

Shake off, O heedless ones, the slumber of negligence, that ye may behold the radiance which His glory hath spread through the world. How foolish are those who murmur against the premature birth of His light. O ye who are inly blind! Whether too soon or too late, the evidences of His effulgent glory are now actually manifest. It behoveth you to ascertain whether or not such a light hath appeared. It is neither within your power nor mine to set the time at which it should be made manifest. God's inscrutable Wisdom hath fixed its hour beforehand. (GWB 50)

The Báb, too, was convinced that the Promised One 'might appear at any time,' (TN, intro, p. xvii) as Browne correctly observed.