# Fire and Light

Selections from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and from the Letters of Shoghi Effendi
Prepared by the Universal House of Justice[1]
1986

* * *

I. FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH
II. FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ
III. FROM THE LETTERS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

* * *

* * *

## I. FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

* * *

### I

All praise be to God, Who, from every drop of blood shed by His chosen ones, hath brought forth a vast creation whose number none but Himself can reckon. He hath raised them to be the embodiments of His love and the manifestations of His tender affection. It is they who are the hands of His Cause amongst men. It is they who have rendered aid unto God in every age and have arisen to promote that which He hath purposed, in such wise that the majesty of the kings and their dreadful might have failed to affright them, nor have they been hindered from following the path of truth by the clash of arms and the furious clamour of battalions. They have raised their triumphal cry amidst all that dwell in the heavens and on the earth, summoning everyone unto the Lord of all mankind, Him Who is the Ruler of this world and of the next, the God of the throne on high and of the earth below.

### II

*He is God, blessed and exalted is He*

All praise be unto the Almighty, the Sanctified—glorified be His power—Who hath ordained that the tyranny of the unjust and the violence of the oppressors should become the means whereby the true lovers draw nigh unto the glorious habitation of the Best-Beloved and the sincere among His servants attain the Paradise of communion with Him Who is the Desire of all men, and that sufferings and tribulations should serve as the instrument whereby His Word of command is spread abroad and the standards of His praise are unfurled in all regions.

How great is His transcendent power, how immensely exalted His all-embracing Will, inasmuch as He produceth light from fire and joy from sorrow.

They that are sunk in heedlessness fondly imagine that massacre and crucifixion cause the fire of the Word of God to be extinguished, and regard martyrdom as a devastating injury. They are utterly oblivious of the truth that through such afflictions the Cause of God is exalted, its fame is

blazoned far and wide, and the martyrs themselves are enabled to attain the boundless retreats of nearness unto God. Immeasurably exalted is the Lord of Wisdom Who doeth that which He willeth and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth.

III

*In the name of the loving Friend*

O mother! Grieve not over the loss of thy son; rather pride thyself therein. Indeed, this is an occasion for gladness and rejoicing, not for despondency and sorrow.

I swear by the Day-Star of the morn of Truth that thy son hath attained a station such as no pen can depict, nor words adequately describe. His habitation is the realm on high, his associates and companions are sanctified and detached souls, and his sustenance the imperishable and hidden blessings of the Lord. In truth, were that lofty and glorious station to be revealed to an extent smaller than a needle's eye before the eyes of them that dwell on earth, they would, one and all, be so filled with joy and ecstasy as to be consumed thereby. Therefore think not that he hath perished. Indeed, he will endure in the heavenly kingdom as long as God Himself endureth. And this calleth for gratitude, not grieving. When he findeth that thou art happy, he becometh more cheerful, but when he perceiveth that thou art disconsolate, this provoketh anguish in his heart.

Busy thyself in the remembrance of God, and unloose thy tongue in celebrating His praise with utmost joy and radiance. God, the Exalted, the True, is with thee. He is kinder than a father and more compassionate than a son.

Call thou to mind the episode of the land of Ṭaf,[2] when a mother sent forth her son who laid down his life in the path of the Beloved. This Day is the king of days. It behoveth thee to show forth such deeds as will distinguish thee from the women of a bygone age. Such beseemeth the servants and maidservants of God. Be thou resigned to His good- pleasure and seek communion with Him.

At this moment the entire company of the Concourse on high are engaged in extolling the virtues of thy son and in acclaiming his attributes. If thou couldst hear, thou wouldst, in thy longing, wing thy flight unto God, the Incomparable, the All-Informed. The day is not far distant when all the dwellers of the earth will magnify his praise and seek blessings from his dust. Verily, incalculable is the bounty of thy Lord. Seize thy chance and be of them that endure with patience.

IV

Nothing hath ever happened, nor will happen, without a cause or effect. Reflect a while and consider how vast the number of the people that have perished, how numerous the cities and towns that have been reduced to dust and now appear as a level plain. Such is their plight now, and only God knoweth the future and that which will come to pass.

Think not that in this turmoil the friends of God have perished by the sword of the oppressors. I swear by the Day-Star of the Kingdom of truth that any of the loved ones of God that hath quaffed the cup of martyrdom during that episode hath ascended unto the realms above and doth abide securely beneath the canopy of the tender mercy of God. Indeed, if those sublime stations were unveiled before the gaze of men, even to the extent of a needle's eye, everyone would raise his voice and exclaim, "Would that I had been with him!" And if any of the friends hath suffered a material loss, such a loss is and will always be a perfect gain. The people of Bahá enjoy utmost benefits, at all times. If at some time or other, according to the dictates of God's inscrutable wisdom, one should incur a certain loss, let this not cause distress. Surely God will glorify it into a gift of inestimable gain. Verily, He is the Lord of Truth, the Powerful, the Knowing, the Wise.

V

Ye should exhort all the friends to patience, to acquiescence, and to tranquillity, saying: O ye loved ones of God in that land! Ye are glorified in all the worlds of God because of your relationship to Him Who is the Eternal Truth, but in your lives on this earthly plane, which pass away as a fleeting moment, ye are afflicted with abasement. For the sake of the one true God, ye have been

reviled and persecuted, ye have been imprisoned and surrendered your lives in His path. Ye should not, however, by reason of the tyrannical acts of some heedless souls, transgress the limits of God's commandments by contending with anyone.

Whatever hath befallen you hath been for the sake of God. This is the truth, and in this there is no doubt. Ye should, therefore, leave all your affairs in His Hands, place your trust in Him, and rely upon Him. He will assuredly not forsake you. In this, likewise, there is no doubt. No father will surrender his sons to devouring beasts; no shepherd will leave his flock to ravening wolves. He will most certainly do his utmost to protect his own.

If, however, for a few days, in compliance with God's all-encompassing wisdom, outward affairs should run their course contrary to one's cherished desire, this is of no consequence and should not matter. Our intent is that all the friends should fix their gaze on the Supreme Horizon and cling to that which hath been revealed in the Tablets. They should strictly avoid sedition and refrain from treading the path of dissension and strife. They should champion their one true God, exalted be He, through the hosts of forbearance, of submission, of an upright character, of goodly deeds, and of the choicest and most refined words.

VI

They that yearn for the abode of the Beloved, they that circle round the sanctuary of the Desired One, are not apprehensive of trials and adversities, nor do they flee away from that which is ordained by God. They receive their portion from the ocean of resignation and drink their fill from the soft-flowing stream of His mercy. They would not surrender the good-pleasure of the Friend in exchange for the kingdom of both worlds, nor would they barter that which the Well-Beloved hath decreed in return for dominion over the realms of the infinite. They would eagerly drink the venom of woe as if it were the water of life, and would drain deadly poison to its bitter dregs just as a sweet and life-giving draught. In the arid wastes of desolation they are stirred with enthusiasm through the remembrance of the Friend, and in the dreary wilds of adversity they are eager and impatient to offer themselves as a sacrifice. Unhesitatingly have they renounced their lives and directed their steps towards the abode of the Best-Beloved. They have closed their eyes to the world and fixed their gaze upon the beauteous countenance of the Friend, cherishing no desire but the presence of the loved One and seeking no attainment save reunion with Him. They fly with the feathers of trust in God, and soar with the wings of adherence unto His Will. In their estimation a blood-shedding blade is more desirable than finest silk and a piercing dart more acceptable than mother's milk.

> High-spirited souls by the myriad are deemed necessary in this path,
> To lay down a hundred lives with every fleeting breath.

It behoveth us to kiss the hand of the would-be assassin and to set out, dancing, on our way to the habitation of the Friend. How indescribably pleasant is that hour, how immeasurably sweet that moment when the inmost spirit is intent upon sacrificing itself, when the tabernacle of fidelity is hastening to attain the heights of self-surrender! With necks laid bare, we yearn for the stroke of the ruthless sword wielded by the hand of the Beloved. With breasts aglow with light, we eagerly await the dart of His decree. Contemptuous of name, we have detached ourselves from all else but Him; we shall not run away, we shall not endeavour to repel the stranger, we pray for calamity that thereby we may soar unto the sublime heights of the spirit, seek shelter beneath the shade of the tree of reunion, attain the highest stations of love, and drink our fill from the wondrous wine of everlasting communion with Him. Surely we will not forfeit this imperishable dominion, nor will we forgo this incomparable blessing. If hidden beneath the dust, we shall rear our heads from the bosom of the tender mercy of the Lord of mankind. No trial can suppress these companions, no mortal feet can traverse this journey, nor can any veil obscure this countenance.

Yea, it is clear and evident that in view of the multitudes of internal and external opponents who have raised the standards of opposition, who have girded the loins of endeavour to eliminate these poor creatures, it standeth to reason that one should turn away from them and flee from this land, nay, from the face of the earth. However, through the loving-kindness of God and by the aid

of His invisible confirmations, we are as radiant as the sun and as shining as the moon. We are established upon the throne of tranquillity and seated upon the couch of fortitude. Of what importance is the shipwreck to the fish of the spirit? What doth a soul celestial care if the physical frame is destroyed? Indeed, this body is for it a prison, and the ship but a place of confinement to the fish. What else but a nightingale can understand a Nightingale's melody, and who else but the intimate friend can recognize the familiar voice of the Friend?

VII

The majesty and glory of the Cause are as great as its trials and afflictions are intense. However, trials and afflictions are scarce noticed in this day, inasmuch as the heaven of divine bounty is uplifted and the ocean of His loving-kindness is manifest. If on the one hand cups of bitter woe and suffering are seen, on the other He Who is the Abhá Beauty is proffering, with His Own hand that hath turned white, the chalice of everlasting life. Though the croaking of the raven is loud, the river of His choice wine is streaming forth.

In one of the Tablets the following utterances were sent down by the Revealer of Verses—glorified and exalted be His Words: "Say, O ye chosen of the one true God! Let not the censure of the froward, nor the denunciations uttered by them that have repudiated His Cause, grieve you, inasmuch as such acts of opposition have, from time immemorial, served as clear proofs of the truth of Him Who is the True One—magnified be His glory. Therefore, should ye hear an unseemly word from an ignorant, foolish, or negligent soul, be assured that it can never do harm, for the day is not far distant when such persons, and whatsoever pertaineth unto them, will have passed away, whereas ye yourselves have been honoured in this day to drink your fill from the living waters of the holy utterances revealed by the All-Merciful and to hearken unto the words 'Ye are of My company.' Thereupon one of the favoured angels that are nigh unto God and circle round His throne uttered this supplication: 'O my Lord and my Master! O my Desired One and my Best-Beloved! O Thou who art the Beloved of all that are in the heavens and on the earth! I beseech Thee to grant, from the ocean of Thy bounty and the Day-Star of Thy heavenly grace, that I may be cursed, reviled, and denounced a myriad times for the sake of Thy love, that these ears of mine may but once be blessed by hearing Thy sweet words "Verily thou art of the people of Bahá."'

"Most of the people of the earth have turned away from the one true God and failed to take their portion from the ocean of divine knowledge. They have ascribed, and will continue to ascribe, unto Him that which hath caused the inmates of the all-highest Paradise as well as the Prophets and Messengers of God to weep sore and wail. This is not the first divine Revelation that hath been manifested in the world. They that are the chosen ones of God should at all times and under all conditions dedicate themselves assiduously to the service of His Cause. Rúmí[3]—upon him be the mercy of God—saith: 'The moon sheddeth light while the dog howleth.' It behoveth everyone to have the utmost regard for the reformation of the world and for that which beseemeth man's sublime station. However, should the continued existence of any one be detrimental to the interests of the Cause of God, the Almighty will undoubtedly lay hold on him as He hath in the past. No one hath fathomed, nor can fathom, His transcendent wisdom."

VIII

A praise exalted above every conception that pen and ink can portray beseemeth the sublime, the ever-blessed court of the Well-Beloved, Who hath initiated the people of Bahá into the school of adversity and directed their steps towards the realm of immortality. Glorified, immensely glorified is the omnipotent Lord, Who hath made blood a means to cause the trees of the exalted Paradise to grow and burst forth, and Who hath ordained that trials and afflictions, though bitter and agonizing, should prove sweeter than sugar to the taste of His loved ones. So strong are the bonds of love for this Well-Beloved that adversities and tribulations have been and will ever be powerless to deflect His ardent lovers from treading His Path.

I swear by Him Who is Our Beloved and your Beloved, that if one's life be not offered up in His path, it would not be worth even as much as a mustard seed, and if one's inmost being be not laid down at His feet, it would appear more abject and insignificant than a pebble. However, none

but the divine Assayers are able to recognize this gem. In truth, when bereft of vision, what advantage would one gain by entering into the all-highest Paradise? If destitute of hearing, what can one perceive by drawing close unto the celestial Tree of Blessedness? The Assayers of these priceless gems are such souls unto whom the following tribute is paid: "They that speak not till He hath spoken and act according to His commandment."[4] Likewise He saith: "They whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of the Almighty."[5]

Is it fondly imagined that death shall not overtake every one? Nay, by God! "Every soul shall taste of death."[6] Such being the case, it would certainly be far better and more fitting if this mortal life were offered up in the path of the Beloved, and sacrificed for the sake of Him Who is the ultimate Desire of all men. Nay, I beg forgiveness of God for this assertion, inasmuch as this sacrifice would be a myriad times more preferable and fitting. Even for this assertion, I once again implore pardon of God.

I earnestly hope and pray that the one true God—magnified be His glory—may graciously brighten the eyes of all men with the collyrium of His knowledge, that they may be enabled to discern with both their inner and outer eyes that which the victims of evil passions and corrupt desires are debarred from seeing and recognizing.

Salutation and praise rest upon them that have not been kept back by any transitory thing whatever, nor been alarmed by the violent commotions provoked by the people of the earth—such people as are immersed in the pursuit of earthly vanities and have been deluded by the gay livery of the world in such wise that they have cast the Cause of God behind their backs. The day is fast approaching when He will have rolled up their domain and spread out a new one in its stead. Verily, He is the One, the Peerless, the Powerful, the Invincible, the Almighty.

## IX

If occasionally, in accordance with the exigencies of God's consummate wisdom, an untoward incident should befall the friends, it would undoubtedly serve as a means whereby divine gifts and heaven-sent bounties will be vouchsafed unto them. Ponder thou upon the tragic episode that hath transpired in the land of Yá.[7] I swear by My life, every single event associated therewith hath led to the exaltation of the Word of God and the advancement of His Cause. Indeed, whatsoever doth happen during the days of the Manifestation of God, though to outward seeming it is but grievous abasement, there lieth concealed within it incalculable glory and honour; and though it appeareth as dire torment, in reality a myriad blessings are enshrined therein.

If those that have erred grievously were aware of the hidden mysteries of martyrdom, they would in no wise commit such deeds. However, God hath caused them to be tongue-tied and bereft of sight, with their minds and power of perception reduced to naught, in such wise that they deem a priceless benefit a grievous loss. With their own hands they help the Cause of God, though they themselves are wholly unconscious of it. Verily God rendereth His Cause victorious at one time through the aid of His enemies, and at another by virtue of the assistance of His chosen ones. Concerning those pure and blessed souls, Our Pen of Glory hath revealed that which excelleth the whole world, its treasures, and whatsoever existeth therein. Erelong shall the heedless and the doers of wickedness be repaid for that which their hands have wrought.

## X

The people of the world have grievously erred, for they fondly imagine that they can exterminate the Cause of God, that they would be able to extinguish His effulgent light and put out His heavenly lamps. Vain indeed are their imaginings. I swear by the righteousness of God that the more they endeavour 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, inasmuch as all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth have been called into being through a single holy breeze—the Word of His command—wafted from His presence, and all shall be brought to naught through but one letter of His. From time immemorial He hath been established upon the seat of His sovereignty, and through eternity will He continue to occupy the inaccessible heights of His glory. Every created

thing is impotent before the evidences of His invincible might, and all beings fade into utter nothingness when confronted with the revelation of His awesome majesty.

The eyes of His loved ones have always wept sore, while His enemies have rejoiced and made merry by reason of their heedlessness. However, that weeping was followed by a myriad blessings and this jubilation by grievous retribution. Erelong the fruits of these two shall appear from the tree of His irrevocable Decree. Therefore how justifiably proud must be the eye which is worthy of shedding tears, and how great the felicity of the neck that is fit to be ensnared in the noose of the Friend.

XI

O God, my God! Thou seest Thy loved ones turning their hearts to Thee, and holding fast unto the cord of Thine ordinances and laws. I beseech Thee by the waves of the sea of Thine utterance, and by Him through Whom Thou didst adorn the heavens of Thy might, to graciously protect them by the aid of Thy hosts.

O God! Thou beholdest Thy lovers in Írán in the clutches of hate and enmity. I beg of Thee, by Thy mercy which hath preceded the contingent world, to raise up from the earth those who will be moved to aid and protect them, and to preserve their rights and the restitution due to them by those who broke Thy Covenant and Testament, and perpetrated such acts as made the inmates of the cities of Thy justice and equity to lament. Thou art, verily, the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

* * *

## II. FROM THE WRITINGS OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

* * *

I

O Lord! These pure souls have ascended unto the realms on high. They have proved themselves nimble and sprightly in Thy service. They rid themselves of all, drew nigh unto Thee, and reached the Fountainhead of eternal life. They have now taken their flight from this world on the wings of longing and have attained Thy kingdom of glory. Gladden Thou their hearts in the world of the unseen and let them abide beneath the shadow of the tree of hope. Bestow upon them Thine infinite mercy and grant them Thy boundless pardon. Make them the signs of Thy forgiveness and the manifestations of Thy forbearance and bounty. Verily, Thou art the Bestower, the Loving, the One Who forgiveth the sins of men.

II

O Lord! These stainless souls grew contemptuous of the world of dust and have ascended unto Thy kingdom. From this dreary world they have winged their flight unto the realm of resplendent glory. Weary and dejected, they languished in this puny nest, eagerly waiting to set out for their celestial habitation. They moved swiftly and sped forth on their flight until they attained unto Thee. O Forgiving One! Grant them Thy forgiveness. O All-Loving One! Bestow upon them Thy tender care. O All-Sufficing One! Give them Thy bounty and be their comforter and companion. Thou art the Pardoner, the Resplendent, the Bestower, the Lord of Strength.

III

O forgiving Lord! These birds that sang Thy praise left their mortal remains buried in desolate tombs, and ascended with the wings of their spirits unto the Frequented Fane. They freed themselves from the pitfalls of this world of dust, so that they might partake of immortal life in

the realms above, might seek shelter beneath the shadow of the tree of hope and abide in a nest upon the twigs of eternity in the Abhá Paradise, the Kingdom on high, singing hymns of glory and praise in wondrous accents and sweet melodies.

O Thou kind Lord! These souls are the birds of Thy meadows, the nightingales of Thy rose-garden. Let them dwell within the orchard of Thy forgiveness and grant them access to the concourse wherein Thine eternal glory shineth resplendent, wherein Thy divine beauty is unveiled and perpetual communion with Thee is assured. Enable them to live eternally and to endure forevermore.

Thou art the Forgiving, the Bountiful, the All-Loving.

IV

O Thou kind Lord! From the horizon of detachment Thou hast manifested souls that, even as the shining moon, shed radiance upon the realm of heart and soul, rid themselves from the attributes of the world of existence, and hastened forth unto the kingdom of immortality. With a drop from the ocean of Thy loving-kindness Thou didst oft-times moisten the gardens of their hearts until they gained incomparable freshness and beauty. The holy fragrance of Thy Divine Unity was diffused far and wide, shedding its sweet savours over the entire world, causing the regions of the earth to be redolent with perfume.

Raise up then, O Spirit of purity, souls who, like those sanctified beings, will become free and pure, will adorn the world of being with a new raiment and a wondrous robe, will seek no one else but Thee, tread no path except the path of Thy good-pleasure, and speak of naught but the mysteries of Thy Cause.

O Thou kind Lord! Grant that this youth may attain unto that which is the highest aspiration of the holy ones. Endow him with the wings of Thy strengthening grace—wings of detachment and divine aid—that he may soar thereby into the atmosphere of Thy tender mercy, be able to partake of Thy celestial bestowals, and may become a sign of divine guidance and a standard of the Concourse on high. Thou art the Potent, the Powerful, the Seeing, the Hearing.

V

*He is God*

O remnants of the martyrs in the path of God! Your letters have been received, and despite the lack of a moment's spare time they were perused with the utmost attention. Since it is impossible to answer each letter separately, I am writing you collectively, and this ye will surely excuse.

Indeed, as a result of the outrages perpetrated by the wicked, the attacks of the rapacious beasts, and the onslaught of the ravening wolves, those blessed souls have endured woeful tribulations and have borne dire sufferings and distressing calamities, each of which calleth for weeping and wailing, for sighing and lamentation. Were eyes to shed tears of blood, they would afford no consolation. By reason of these tragic events 'Abdu'l-Bahá is assailed by despondency and anguish and is beset by bitter sadness and grief.

However, when we ponder carefully it will be observed that these unceasing trials and afflictions, these successive ordeals, though they break one's back, crush one's strength, and exhaust one's endurance, are among the greatest gifts of God, the Ever-Living, the All-Powerful, for He thereby accepteth the self-sacrifice which certain souls are prompted to make in His path, enabling them to attire their heads with the glorious crown of martyrdom and to establish themselves upon the throne of everlasting sovereignty. Such hath ever been the qualification of them that enjoy near access unto God, such are the attributes of the pure in heart.

This life will surely pass away like unto a fleeting shadow, and the gay trappings of this earthly existence will soon be rolled up. The cup of bitter death will be borne round, and the fire of anguish and despair will be set ablaze. The foundation of human life will crumble, and this clamorous outcry and tumult will be hushed to silence and stillness. Rejoicings will cease and pleasures will come to an end. The souls will set out empty-handed on their journey to the next world, compassed by intense grief and anguish. Of the contemplations of bygone days, of the

former life of comfort, joy, and power not a single vestige will be left. Utter perdition will prevail and everyone's grievous loss and deprivation will be laid bare.

However, such faithful friends as have laid down their lives as martyrs will be stirred by the waves of the ocean of ecstasy. They will be filled with joy and radiance through the revelation of heavenly glad-tidings, will receive divine confirmations of loving-kindness, and will be sustained by the wondrous blessings of the peerless Lord in such wise that they will be moved to say: "Praise be unto God that during our lifetime in this mortal world we became the target of darts in the path of God and were exposed to the dire peril of arrows and spears. Every day a shaft of cruelty was hurled at us, and every moment we drank our fill from the draught of affliction, till eventually we hastened forth to the field of martyrdom for the sake of His love, and offered up our hearts and souls in the path of the All-Merciful."

Indeed, at that moment such souls will rejoice with exceeding gladness and will be so carried away by the joyful tidings of God that they will wing their flight to the heaven of eternal glory with the utmost ecstasy, exultation, and spiritual blissfulness. It is our ardent hope, now, that We too may partake of a drop from this celestial cup and may receive a portion from this life-giving draught. Verily, my Lord will vouchsafe His special favours unto whomsoever He pleaseth. No God is there but Him, the All-Bountiful, the Most Generous.

Now praise be to God that the remnants of the families of the martyrs stand like a mighty structure—firm, steadfast, and immovable. Before the eyes of the peoples of East and West they have proved themselves to be wholly self-sacrificing, eager to rush forth to the field of martyrdom, denizens of the kingdom of His love, seated upon the throne of eternal glory, knights of the arena of sacrifice, and rulers of the realm of renunciation and constancy.

Therefore ye should not be sad or sorrowful, nor be oppressed with grief and despondency. Rather it behoveth you to render Him thanksgiving for being the survivors of those illustrious souls, the remnants of them that are favoured at the Threshold of the Almighty. In truth, these calamities and sufferings are a glorious diadem whose glittering gems will shed lustre upon ages and centuries to come.

## VI
## *He is the All-Glorious*

O ye friends of God! O ye favoured ones at the Threshold of the One Who transcendeth all limitations! That distinguished martyr, like unto a lucky star, shineth from the dawning-place of Divine Unity luminous, resplendent, and unmistakable, though mortal eyes are debarred from beholding him. With his face beaming with light, with a luminous brow and enthralling beauty, he is calling aloud from the summit of the heaven of glory, saying: "O my friends! O honoured ones! I quaffed the cup that brimmeth over with the consummate bounty of God and tasted the sweetness of the Abhá Kingdom even from the edge of the sword. I have divested myself of my worn-out garments and raised up my banner in the realm of glory. From the world of dust till the heights of the heavens I spurred on the charger of martyrdom and from this luminous horizon I call out and say: 'O my loved ones! The portals of His most great favour are flung open, and the hearts of the people of Bahá are dilated with joy. The chalice of His bounty is being borne round, and the sweet melodies of the birds of the all-highest Paradise reach every receptive ear. The reviving breeze wafting from the garden of the Abhá Kingdom is laden with perfume, and everyone who hath suffered long is granted intimate communion within the retreats of the Lord of Truth. From the Threshold of the Almighty, the All-Wise, His summons hath gone forth unto all men, and from the realm of the Concourse on high the voice of glad-tidings: "Happy are ye!" is continually raised.'"

Know ye the excellence of this gracious favour, and esteem the value of this precious gift. The outpourings of the mercy of God are copious like unto a boundless ocean, and the manifold blessings of the Abhá Beauty are shed abroad even as the radiance of the shining moon. Were ye to know how great is the revelation of this bounty, how plenteous the gifts that have been vouchsafed, I swear by the ravishing beauty of the Abhá Beloved and by the soul-stirring smile of that peerless Charmer of hearts, that ye would dance with delight in your eagerness to lay down

your lives and would leap with joy as ye hasten to the field of sacrifice. Ye would raise with one hand the brimful cup of self-sacrifice, and with the other the laurel of the supreme bounty successfully won. Thus, in the arena of renunciation, while uttering the triumphal cry "Great is our blessedness! Great is our blessedness! Happy are we! Happy are we!" ye will attain the desire of your hearts, the most glorious martyrdom.

O ye friends of my heart and soul! Slumber not for a moment; relax not, nor linger for an instant. In a spirit of exceeding joy and gladness, with unswerving constancy in the Covenant and the Testament of the ever-forgiving Lord and in anticipation of attaining His luminous horizon, make the greatest effort to diffuse His sweet savours and bend your energies to promote His Cause. Be ye heralds of the Covenant and bearers of the glad-tidings of His Testament. Receive your portion from the breast of His grace, and with high resolve exert your utmost endeavour. Be set aglow with the fire of the love of God, and raise the anthem of jubilation with the full enthusiasm of your heart and soul, so that ye may become intimately familiar with His Call and be initiated into divine knowledge and wisdom.

This world is the empire of the spiritual sovereignty of the Abhá Beauty, and this realm is the seat where the mighty throne of the Kingdom of the Exalted One[8] is established. Its effulgent sun, its shining moon never set; its brilliant stars never fade; its bright horizon is never overcast. Its oceans surge and its birds soar in the heights. Its streams are living waters, soft-flowing rivers of immortality. Its trees are saplings planted in the orchard of the Lord of Glory. Its dominion is the immensity of the realm of the placeless, and its territory the domain of the heart. Its abiding joy is attainment unto the presence of the ever-forgiving Lord. Its sustenance is the liberal bounty that His adored Beauty hath bestowed. Its chalice is the cup tempered at the camphor fountain, its designation the Expanse of Eternal Life, a life that transcendeth the limitations of countless ages.

O my friends! This is the Call of the Covenant. This is the Dispensation of the Well-Beloved of all mankind. This is the gift that the Day-Star of the world hath graciously given. This is the revelation of His incorruptible grace, the manifestation of His perpetual assistance, the evidence of the power that is born of God and the potency of the bestowals proffered by the All-Merciful. What else do ye want? What else do ye expect? Which path do ye tread? Be quick, be quick, O companions! Make haste, make haste, O ye loved ones!

And upon you be His glory!

## VII

O remnants of those effulgent lights! O children of those tabernacles of holiness! O remembrances of those resplendent spirits!

Although your distinguished fathers surrendered their souls in the field of glorious martyrdom, hastened away from the abyss of this sordid world of dust unto the lofty heights of the Abhá Kingdom, and raised the banner of the most great bounty among the Concourse on high, ye have not been left behind, forsaken and lonely. Although your fathers have ascended unto the realms above, Almighty God, more affectionate than a father, is ever present. Indeed, could ye but know how dear ye are in the presence of your true and heavenly Father, ye would stretch forth your wings and take your flight.

And upon ye, O loved ones of God, be His glory!

## VIII

### *He is the All-Glorious*

O offshoot of him who in a transport of delight drank of the chalice of martyrdom in the path of God! That essence of being is so graciously confirmed in this day, with boundless grace and favour at the court of the sovereign Lord of the seen and the unseen, that the embodiments of spiritual majesty and the exponents of true glory are eagerly yearning to render service unto him. Although to outward seeming he was put to a shameful death, in reality he is established upon the throne of unfading exaltation. The day is approaching when kings will seek blessing from his dust and all heads will bow down in his honour, the day when all men will express humility at the revelation of the majesty and grandeur with which the martyrs are invested and all faces will be

downcast before the indomitable power of their testimony. If such is what will take place in this visible world, then imagine what it will be in the spiritual realms of God, so exalted above the comprehension of all beings.

IX

O thou who art seeking the good-pleasure of the Lord of Glory! I have no time to spare. I am completely absorbed in thinking of, in meditating upon and in lamenting for those distinguished martyrs—may my life be offered up as a sacrifice for them.

On the one hand this grievous calamity hath, like unto a dagger, inflicted upon me so profound an injury that no salve can soothe, nor can any balm assuage, while on the other the scene of sacrifice is seen bedecked with such splendid pageantry, such marvellous festivity that the holy ecstasy of its wine seizeth forevermore the minds of those that are godly and spiritual. Moreover, the Concourse on high and the dwellers in the Abhá Kingdom are now expounding the mystery of sacrifice, the main purport of all heavenly Scriptures. Therefore this hath to some degree relieved my grief. In short, the day is approaching when the meads of the Cause of God, having been watered with blood, will have put forth roses and lilies in such profusion that East and West will become fragrant and North and South perfumed. Peace be upon you!

X

*He is God*

O ye who have been wronged in the path of God! The loved ones of the Almighty have always been exposed to the dire oppression and tyranny of the people of iniquity, and His chosen ones have continually suffered woeful cruelties at the hand of the perfidious. The friends of God have always quaffed the cup of adversity proffered by the hand of the immortal Cupbearer. They have been made targets for the darts and spears of the curses, accusations, and reviling that the rebellious and the wicked hurled at them, and have been persecuted and ill-treated by their opponents among the people of the world. Indeed, these tribulations are the very draught with which the Well-Beloved of the world was inebriated, and these calamities are but the effulgent light whereby the luminous brow of the Day-Star of the world was illumined.

Therefore think not that this fierce opposition and cruelty hath brought humiliation and abasement upon you. Nay, I swear by God, besides Whom there is none other God, they redound to imperishable glory and unfading bounty. Indeed, this persecution is a cooling draught and these trials a source of delight. This poison is but sugar and this venom the essence of sweetness. This stab in the breast is a soothing balm to heart and soul and this bitter medicine a healing remedy. One's sense of taste must be unimpaired to perceive its sweetness and to savour its relish. Otherwise, to a bilious patient sugar and honey taste more bitter than venom, and to the diabetic a sweet drink is more harmful than deadly poison.

Meanwhile, O ye loved ones of God, let not these sufferings grieve you, nor let your hearts be sore with sorrow. Erelong will all take pride in them and seek distinction and glory in both worlds. One will say: "In one period I endured hardships by reason of my faith and certitude in the one true God and was recompensed with certain bounties." Another will state: "Because of the love I cherished for the Best Beloved of the world, I once quaffed a deadly poison like unto a cup of eternal life, and since then I have received His perpetual grace." Yet another will exclaim: "In the path of servitude at the Threshold of the Almighty I was cast into prison and gained boundless favours in return." Another will declare: "As a result of the illumination I received from the Day-Star of ethereal glory I was made captive and held fast in chains and stocks, for which exceptional rewards were lavished on me." Another will say: "My heart was set ablaze with the fire of His love in such wise that I hastened to the field of sacrifice and kissed the edge of the sword." Another will state: "The blessed body of my illustrious father was hacked to pieces in the arena of sacrifice for the sake of my glorious Lord." Another will say: "My honoured grandfather was inebriated with the cup of martyrdom which the Cup-Bearer of God's eternal Covenant proffered unto him, and he became the recipient of manifold favours and bestowals." Still another will exclaim: "Our blessed household was ruined in the path of the Adored One." And still another will exclaim: "Our

innocent ancestors were made homeless for having promoted the Word of God." In short, everyone, well pleased, jubilant, and leaping with joy will recount these events at length and will glory in them before the other peoples and kindreds of the earth. Then it will become unmistakably clear and manifest, even to outward seeming, what a great bounty, what a supreme blessing these afflictions and trials in the path of the Blessed Perfection had truly been.

Therefore it behoveth you, O loved ones of God, to raise up your hands in thanksgiving unto the Threshold of the peerless One and say: O one and only God, O matchless Creator! Praised and glorified art Thou for having placed this splendid crown upon the brow of these helpless ones, and this mantle of eternal glory on the shoulders of these indigent ones. The rays of Thy sanctity fell upon bodies of clay, and the lights of the world of eternity shone forth. A flame of Thy bestowal from the enkindled fire appeared and gave the hearts eternal life. Thanks be to Thee for this blessing and this bestowal and this bounty with which Thou hast distinguished these helpless ones. Thou art the Generous, the Merciful, and the All-Loving.

## XI

O thou who art resigned to His irrevocable Decree! Render thanks unto God for having attained so sublime a station. Thou art treading the path of His good-pleasure; thou hast surrendered thyself unreservedly to that which is ordained and destined by Him; thou hast placed thy whole trust in Him and manifested unswerving constancy and fortitude in the face of this grievous calamity. Thus indeed doth it beseem the loved ones of God to conduct themselves, so that when they are beset by hardships or hemmed in by dire affliction they may be able to comfort others and impart consolation unto them, their faces may glow with the light of radiant acquiescence, and they may deliver to the flames the veil of moaning, sighing, and lamentation, inasmuch as resort to sadness and grief in the midst of tribulation is but an indication of lack of assurance and certitude.

In truth, were man to attain the stage of certitude in his spiritual development, no affliction could ever depress his spirits, though he would undoubtedly be influenced by reason of his human susceptibilities. Nevertheless, man's inner being will be so revived by the breeze of divinely ordained woes and trials that the dust of wailing and lamentation will entirely subside and the light of submissive resignation unto His Will shall shine forth like unto a radiant morn.

And upon thee be greetings and praise.

## XII

### *He is the All-Glorious*

O ye who are inebriated with the draught of His Covenant! It is time to pass beyond the desolate wilds of remoteness, so that ye may reach the retreats of the Beloved, drink your fill from the wine of the bestowals of the All-Merciful, hold a heavenly festival, deck forth the stage for a spiritual celebration, and, to the strains of harp and lute and the melodies of the Concourse on high and the songsters in the meads of holiness, break into sweet lays and wondrous tunes in praise and glorification of the Abhá Beauty.

O ye friends of God! Let not the cavils of the foolish grieve you nor the tribulation of this world dismay you. Indeed, the motivating impulse whereby the sweet savours of God are diffused throughout the world is none but the suffering that befalleth His loved ones and the dire troubles that constantly touch His chosen ones.

Consider a while: the greater the affliction they suffered, the higher was raised the banner of devotion and faithfulness; and the more grievous the trials they endured, the more abundant were the outpourings of grace from the Abhá Beauty. For it is during the darksome night that the radiance of light is conspicuous and the illumination of the lamp most perceptible. Therefore enlightened faces when exposed to dire hardships shine forth with the utmost radiance and brightness, and the hearts of His chosen ones when held in chains and fetters are filled with exceeding joy, gladness, and ecstasy.

In the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá' the Exalted One[9] addresseth the Abhá Beauty in these words: "O Thou our great and omnipotent Master! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in Thy path." Ponder ye carefully. The highest aspiration cherished by

Him Who is the Leader of the righteous and the Day-Star of divine splendour was to lay down His life for the sake of the One Who doeth whatsoever He willeth. Thus it is clear and manifest what should be the supreme aspiration and longing of the loved ones of God.

And upon ye be greetings and praise!

## XIII
## *He is God*

O servants of the one true God! O handmaids of the Merciful!

> From the outset love was rebellious and bloodthirsty,
> So as to put every stranger to flight.

One of the requisites of true love is willingness to bear every suffering and tribulation that hath occurred in the past or may occur in the future. Hence a passionate lover is always stained with blood, and he that yearneth to meet the Beloved a constant wanderer. How well is it said:

> The worldly wise who garner the ears of grain are unaware of Laylí's secret,
> For unto none was accorded the great glory but Majnún—he who set the whole harvest afire.

Thus throughout all ages and centuries the righteous have been made a target to the darts of adversity and have fallen victim to the swords of oppression. At one time they quaffed the cup of dire ordeal, at another they tasted the venom of bitter woe. Not for a moment did they enjoy rest and comfort, nor did they repose for a fleeting breath upon the couch of tranquillity. Rather did they endure agonizing torment and patiently carry the burden of hardship that every oppressor was wont to impose upon them. Having been consigned to dungeons and prisons, they severed themselves from the world and all its peoples.

In this way most of the favoured ones of God offered up their lives as martyrs in the field of sacrifice. He Who is the resplendent Morn of divine guidance, the Exalted One,[10] sank below the horizon of sacrifice. Quddús sought companionship with the Beloved through glorious martyrdom. Mullá Ḥusayn opened a new gate to the field of martyrdom. Vaḥíd distinguished himself as a peerless figure in the arena of sacrifice. Zanjání[11] offered up his life as a martyr upon the plain of tribulation. The King of Martyrs hastened forth to the place of sacrifice. The Beloved of Martyrs was enraptured with ineffable gladness when he offered up his life for the sake of God. Ashraf attained the heights of honour as he unflinchingly set his face towards the arena of sacrifice. Badí', as he breathed his last, exclaimed: "Magnified be my Lord, the Most Glorious!" The martyrs of the land of Yá[12] drank their fill with relish from the draught of glorious martyrdom, and the martyrs of Shíráz laid down their lives in the arena of ardent love to the tune of sweet and wondrous melodies. Those massacred in the land of Nayríz were inebriated with the brimful cup of sacrifice, and the martyrs of Tabríz were seized with ecstatic joy and unleashed new energies in the field of sacrifice. Those who renounced their lives in Mázindarán exclaimed: "O Lord! Destine for us this cup that brimmeth over with the choice wine"; while the martyrs of Iṣfahán laid down their lives with utmost joy and radiance.

In brief, there is not a spike whose tip is not tinged with the blood of the martyrs, nor is there a place not dyed crimson with the blood of His ardent lovers. The purpose is to enable you to know that one of the tenets of those that thirst after Him, and the highest aspiration of such as long to behold His face, is to endure hardship, to submit to trials and martyrdom in the path of the Lord of grace. Therefore it behoveth you to render thanks unto God for the bounty of having drunk your fill from this draught and for having tasted deadly poison in the path of the Best-Beloved. Indeed, far from being a poison, this is pure honey and sugar; and far from being bitter in taste, this is the essence of sweetness.

O how eager am I to bear affliction in the path of God! O what a great joy to suffer hardship for His love! O how blessed the man who tasteth the bitterness of woe, and how well is it with him who is swept into the ocean of tribulation in his eagerness to attain the presence of God! It

behoveth you to offer thanksgiving at every moment, inasmuch as ye became the target of atrocities in the path of divine guidance and were exposed to grievous oppressions for the sake of the love ye cherish for the Almighty.

In truth, those that are guided solely by their reason would be unable to perceive the sweetness of this cup, but the ardent lovers will be overjoyed and enraptured by the holy ecstasy which this wondrous draught doth produce. Every discerning observer who hath gazed upon the countenance of that graceful Beloved was prompted to lay down his life as a martyr, and every receptive ear which had hearkened unto that celestial melody suffered its listener to become so enravished with joy as to offer up himself without hesitation as a sacrifice. The moth which is animated by love will burn its wings as it flitteth round the lamp of God, and the phoenix of tender affection will be set ablaze by the fire of ardent desire. No unfamiliar bird can partake of the heat of this Fire, nor can the fowls that dwell upon the dust plunge forth into this heavenly Ocean. However, praise be unto God, ye are the leviathans of this ocean, the birds of this pasture, the moths of this lamp, the nightingales of this meadow.

And upon you rest the glory of the Most Glorious!

## XIV
### *He is God*

O faithful friends in the Abhá Beauty! By reason of the oppression and atrocities that have befallen those two souls whom the people of the world have wronged, ye have raised the cry of lamentation and grieving and have wept and sighed bitterly. This is meet and right, for those two gazelles of the meadow of oneness were held fast in the talons of ferocious beasts, and those two nightingales of the rose-garden of divine unity were gripped in the claws of depraved ravens.

There is no doubt that as a result of those dire woes and sufferings the hearts of the friends of God have been set aflame like unto a candle and they bemoan their grief with tearful eyes. I swear by God, besides Whom there is none other God, were ye to scrutinize carefully, ye would observe that every tree, every rock or clod of earth hath wept sore over this grievous injustice and hostility, and is wasted away by reason of this world-consuming fire.

Indeed, those wronged ones had never hurt the feelings of even a moth, nor had they ever put forth the hand of molestation towards a helpless ant. They were innocent of any crime and sought no refuge except the threshold of the Ever-Living, Self-Subsisting Lord. They had committed no error save that of having shaken off their slumber, and had incurred no guilt but that of becoming captive to His musk-laden tresses. Their grave offence was to display a glimpse of the beauty of the heavenly Peacock. To do this they spread out the plumage of sanctity and intoned sweet melodies even as the warbling of a nightingale. This was the only guilt they had committed; their faithfulness was regarded as a crime, and their sincerity as deceit. Yet notwithstanding their manifold expressions of love and fellowship, the ravening wolves attacked those two radiant, Joseph-like beings and ripped open not only their shirts but their breasts. Indeed, so vehement was their hatred and rancour that they unhesitatingly shed their sacred blood. Erelong will God punish those wicked-doers, both in this world and hereafter, for that which they have wrought, and will bring dire humiliation upon them in this life and in the next. Verily, God is the Avenger, the Almighty.

As to those blessed souls, they will, even as the doves of holiness, wing their flight unto the Concourse on high and in the meads of the Abhá Kingdom will burst into melodious songs, whose strains of sanctity will exhilarate every attentive ear, and whose wondrous accents will be heard at all times by the people of abiding faithfulness. What gift is there greater than this? What blessing is mightier than shedding these few drops of blood in the path of the peerless Lord? What felicity is more meritorious than the bounty of being aided by the mystery of sacrifice to consecrate themselves to the love of the Abhá Beauty? May my life be offered up for those two martyrs; may my whole being be sacrificed for their sake; may my heart be laid down as a ransom for them. Verily, this is a supreme favour, this is a most glorious felicity.

And upon you be salutation and praise.

## XV

In these days when the wicked have created violent disturbances and the opponents have bestirred themselves, they have, in every region, stretched forth the hand of aggression and raised the banner of injustice and animosity. In every locality they have launched attacks against the oppressed.

As is currently known, this grievous assault hath assumed nationwide proportions. In Iṣfahán they aroused a great commotion, in Rasht the foundations of the city were shaken, and in Qazvín they committed manifest atrocities. Indeed, throughout the country agitation is aroused through vehement hostility and dust is stirred up by a raging tempest of hate.

And all this notwithstanding that everyone is fully aware that the friends of God are those whom the people of the world have oppressed and who are the well-wishers of all kindreds and nations. They tread the path of righteousness and seek to foster amity and fellowship with all mankind. They are contemptuous of their own selves and inebriated with the wine of the love of the Almighty. They are sincere and steadfast, shining and radiant. They speak forth, they are competent. They defend the helpless and are a refuge to the fugitive, an asylum to the poor, a haven for the distressed, a remedy for the afflicted, and a balm to the wounds of the needy. They eagerly seek to live in perfect peace with the warlike and quarrelsome tribes, and to those who oppose them they show forth composure, serenity, and kindness.

Be not saddened and grieved by reason of the atrocities the enemies have perpetrated. The day is fast approaching when the light of love will have dispelled the darkness of animosity and the splendours of the sun of truth will have driven away the gloomy night. This spirit of heavenly fellowship, this uprightness of the friends of God will promote the well-being and tranquillity of all mankind. Warring factions will become peaceful, opposing kindreds friendly, hostile peoples reconciled, and aggressive nations united. This is the imperishable glory of the human world. This is the supreme illumination in the kingdom of the Lord of Mercy.

## XVI

### *He is the All-Glorious*

O ye wronged captives! The divines in that land have put forth the hand of aggression and have surpassed in cruelty the Pharaohs who executed their victims upon the stake, and the people of Nimrod, Thamúd, and ʿAd. They have closed the eye of justice, and with the darts of tyranny have pierced the hearts of the oppressed. They have set on fire the harvest of the wronged ones, and deemed it expedient to inflict upon them every cruelty, molestation, and torture, that perchance by so doing the divinely kindled fire might be extinguished, the seething and roaring of the ocean of God's bounty subside, the outpourings of the clouds of His loving-kindness be stopped, the meteor of heavenly guidance be hindered from shedding its radiance upon those regions, the reviving breezes of divine blessing which blow from the direction of His tender mercy be withheld, the fragrance of the rose of His gracious providence no longer be diffused from the garden of divine unity, the light of its brilliant orb be obscured, and the secrets of the manifestation of heavenly bestowals be forgotten.

Alas! Alas! Those divines are unaware that the waves of the ocean of glory will surge high and the pervasive power of the Cause of God will acquire unprecedented glory. Its orb will shine resplendent and the effulgent light of its meteor will permeate the world. Its spark will develop into a flame, its luminous star into a sun, and its drop into a downpour and a flood. Its grain will grow into a harvest, its glittering gem will sparkle in every gathering, its fame will be noised abroad, and the anthem of its glorification will reach the highest heavens.

As to these servants and homeless ones, we were so inebriated with our fill from the draught of the love of God that we yearned to drink deep of that wine of God's Covenant. Thus, chalice in hand, dancing and leaping with joy, we hastened into the arena of sacrifice. We offered supplications begging for adversity. We exposed our breasts as a target for the shafts of oppression and with the whole affection of our hearts and souls we welcomed the sword of injustice.

This body is the abode of ills and this darkened self a cage to every warbling bird. One's corporeal frame shall become dust and a target to dreadful darts. Therefore if it were offered up in

the field of sacrifice for the sake of God, no favour or blessing could be greater than this. Earthly possessions will certainly be lost, and what hath been accumulated will be dispersed; excessive riches will be cast adrift, and the flush of fortune will wither away and fade into nothingness; immense treasures will be squandered, and the wealth gathered up by the wind will eventually be blown away by the wind. Hence, better is it for one's riches to be pillaged and plundered in the path of God than be a booty of the changes and chances of the world.

As to lofty buildings, imposing mansions, and magnificent palaces: Every inhabited and flourishing place will become desolate and every mighty edifice reduced to ruin. Therefore, how much better it is for these habitations which are more fragile than a spider's web to be wrecked and ruined for the love of the sovereign Lord of the Kingdom. For if a house of clay be destroyed, there will be reared in its stead a glorious mansion within the soul-uplifting immensity of the realms above. If one's home and dwelling-place be laid waste in this transitory dust-heap, one will be provided with a matchless and incomparable nest within the rose-garden of eternity.

Thus all that is related to the loved ones of God—their former glory, their present services, the grievous sufferings they have borne—all will, even as carving on slabs of emerald, be recorded on the scrolls of the Abhá Kingdom, and therefrom will they shed their radiance upon all the worlds of God. Then when that light sheddeth its rays upon the tongues of the world of existence, it giveth rise to expressions of praise and glorification; when directed towards human hearts, it evoketh the memory of noble traits, deeds, and virtues; when reflected upon the pages of the world, it becometh the object of the verse "and give me a good name among posterity";[13] it illumineth the surface of the earth; it is made manifest in the form of consecrated spots and sacred Shrines.

## XVII

*He is God*

O servant of Bahá! It behoveth thee to render thanks unto the threshold of the Lord of Oneness for the afflictions that have befallen thee, inasmuch as the adversities that are borne in the path of the one true God are but the revelations of His tender mercy, and any such tribulation is the essence of His bounty.

This life is like unto vapour in a desert, and the existence of every thing is as a mere illusion, evanescent and bound to extinction. That which endureth is the spiritual reality: it is the shining essence; it is life eternal; it is undisturbed felicity, unfading and perpetual, flourishing and plenteous. The revolution of cycles is powerless to ravage it, nor can the succession of ages and centuries molest it. Therefore, this divinely ordained reality, this heavenly sign must needs be preserved.

And the amazing thing is this, that the most effective means whereby this light of truth is safeguarded and protected is the onslaught of the enemies, grievous ordeals, and manifold hardships. The globe of this lamp is the tempestuous winds, and the safety of this ship lieth in the violence of tumultuous waves.

Therefore one must show forth gratitude in the face of Job-like afflictions and must evince joy and pleasure at the unyielding cruelty of evil-doers, inasmuch as such tribulations lead to immortality and serve as the supreme factor to attract His consummate blessings and infinite bestowals.

And upon thee be the glory of the Most Glorious.

## XVIII

*He is God*

O spiritual friends and loved ones of the All-Merciful! In every age believers are many but the tested are few. Render ye praise unto God, ye that are tested believers, that ye have been subjected to every kind of trial and ordeal in the path of the supreme Lord. In the fire of ordeals, your faces have flushed aglow like unto pure gold, and amidst the flames of cruelty and oppression which the wicked had kindled, ye suffered yourselves to be consumed while remaining

all the time patient. Thus ye have initiated every believer into the ways of steadfastness and fortitude. You showed them the meaning of forbearance, of constancy, and of sacrifice, and what leadeth to dismay and distress. This indeed is a token of the gracious providence of God and a sign of the infinite favours vouchsafed by the Abhá Beauty, Who hath singled out the friends of that region to bear grievous sufferings in the path of His love. Outwardly they are fire, but inwardly light and an evidence of His glory. Ye have been examples of the verses "Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps"[14] and "For this let the striving strive."[15]

In short, the day is approaching when the gay trappings of this earthly life will have been rolled up and the sorry plight and adversity of the people of iniquity will have waxed more grievous than those experienced by the oppressed. The inmates of palaces will have been subjected to the confinement of graves, and such as occupy the seats of honour will have fallen upon the dust of misery and abasement.

However, those who have offered up their lives as martyrs will shine resplendent even as a candle, and the effulgent glory of the friends of God will shed its radiance from the horizon of eternity like unto a brilliant star. Behold how wondrous is the bounty whereunto ye have attained. Ye have followed the example set by Him Whom the world hath wronged. Like unto the Day-Star of the world ye have outwardly suffered an eclipse by reason of the injustice the people of malice have wrought. However, far from an eclipse, this is naught but splendour; far from concealment, this is naught but the defeat of the legions. Erelong ye shall behold the shining light of the one true God shedding its radiance upon the whole world, while the heedless ones find themselves in the darkness of extinction.

In the estimation of the loved ones of God, abasement is exaltation itself, and affliction leadeth to faithfulness. Earthly glory and comfort are but a mirage of illusion, while in the realm of the spirit heavenly gifts are everlasting and imperishable. The lights in the nether world may be bright, but they are put out at the break of dawn, whereas the stars that shine in the heaven of the love of God will sparkle continually throughout ages and centuries. Such is everlasting glory, such is infinite bounty, such is life eternal, and such is boundless grace.

And upon you rest salutation and praise.

## XIX

The legions of the world cannot withstand this mighty Army. Its weapons are divine knowledge and assurance, and its sword is its world-encircling light. Physical powers are capable of resisting earthly armies but are impotent before the onslaught of the hosts of heaven. Thousands of times this hath been tried and proven.

The wicked people of Thamúd who manifested fierce hostility towards Ṣáliḥ were unable to withstand His indomitable power. Likewise, the tribes of ʿAd perpetrated revolting outrages, but the spiritual sword of Húd remained unsheathed and the divinely kindled light proved unquenchable. Although the clash of the arms of the wretched Nimrod reached the ears of all peoples, he failed to suppress the glory of Abraham. The misguided Copts marshalled their troops against Moses, yet could not engage Him in battle. The Jews who gainsaid God's Cause aroused violent commotion, regarded the Beauty of the Promised One[16] as a fire no longer bright, stirred up fierce opposition, and launched a campaign of attacks and aggression against Him, but in the end their opposition proved of no avail. The leaders of Ḥijáz inflicted grievous ordeals and atrocities upon the Prince of Mecca,[17] tormented and injured Him as much as it lay in their power, until their assaults grew so vehement that the Lord of the righteous migrated unto Medina, where He proclaimed the Word of God. Later, various kindreds and peoples leagued themselves together, waged tribal war, and encircled that focal Centre of Light from every direction, but failed to subdue Him. This is but a brief account of past experiences.

Nevertheless, it is highly deplorable that subsequent generations, wholly unaware of this outstanding truth, still seek to oppose the Beauty of the Promised One with utter heedlessness. They have armed themselves with a myriad darts of iniquity and swords of transgression and are engaged in unrelenting attacks. Erelong will they realize the grievous mistake they have committed.

They seek to compress the unlimited ocean; they try to stop forthwith the wondrous outpourings of the vernal showers. But alas for them! The reviving breeze that bloweth from the direction of the Abhá Kingdom cannot be halted, and the musk-laden fragrance of faithfulness that wafteth from the rose-garden of the All-Glorious can never be arrested.

During the ministry of Christ, the Cause of God did not pass beyond the regions of Jerusalem. Whatever else was achieved came afterwards. Likewise, in the days of the Prince of Mecca—may the souls of the favoured ones of God be offered up for His sake—the reputation of His sublime Faith was confined to the boundaries of Ḥijáz. However, the fame of this glorious Cause reached the East and the West during the lifetime of the Blessed Beauty, and Tablets were revealed for the crowned heads of the world.

This blameworthy people have already heard and learned how the wicked grievously failed in their opposition towards the Prince of the righteous, yet they are still heedless. This blessed, this mighty Cause which hath stirred the whole earth to its foundation cannot be restrained by the hostility that these bands of weaklings have unleashed. Erelong will they find themselves in manifest loss.

XX

May my life be offered up for the dust of these martyrs; may my entire being be a sacrifice for the blood of the chosen ones of God, them who enjoy near access to His exalted Threshold, who are attracted to the summit of transcendent glory and established upon the seat of truth in the all-glorious Kingdom.

O ye who have suffered martyrdom! O trustees of His Revelation! O distinguished men of virtue! O illustrious and noble ones! May mine inmost reality, my spirit, my entire being, and whatsoever God hath bestowed upon me through His bounty and grace be laid down as a sacrifice for you.

I bear witness that ye are the radiant stars, the gleaming meteors, the resplendent full moons, the brilliant orbs in this wondrous Revelation. Well is it with you, O birds that warble in the gardens of divine unity; blessed are ye, O lions that roar in the forests of detachment; happy are ye, O leviathans that swim in the waters of His oneness. Verily, ye are the signs of divine guidance, ye are the banners that flutter in the field of sacrifice.

I beseech God to bless me, through the breezes of holiness wafted from that glorious centre of sacrifice, and to quicken me with the reviving breath of heavenly communion blowing from that blessed region.

I beg you to intercede on my behalf in the presence of the ever-living, sovereign Lord that He may graciously suffer me to quaff my fill from the choice sealed wine, may grant me a portion from the unbounded felicity that ye enjoy, and may exhilarate my heart by giving me to drink from your chalice which is tempered at the camphor fountain. Verily, my Lord is merciful and forgiving. By bestowing the bounty of sacrifice in this realm of existence, He aideth whomsoever He willeth with whatsoever He pleaseth.

And upon you rest the glory of the Most Glorious!

* * *

## III. FROM THE LETTERS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

* * *

I

If, in days to come, that land[18] should be overtaken by diverse afflictions and calamities; if, to the rigours of the present times, there should be added the outbreak of widespread civil upheavals; if

the country's already dark horizons should become still gloomier and more foreboding, you should neither be filled with trepidation and despondency, nor allow yourselves to be deflected, though it be to the extent of a hair's breadth, from that sound and well-considered course that you have been following up till now—from continuing, in other words, your persistent, tireless, and unremitting labours to increase the number of the Bahá'í administrative institutions, to strengthen their foundations, to enhance the fair name that they enjoy, and to consolidate the respect and standing in which they are held. The release of this innocent and wronged community from the bonds of captivity, and its deliverance from the clutches of the enemy and oppressor, cannot but be accompanied by general commotions and disturbances; likewise, the attainment by the people of Bahá to a position in which they will enjoy true honour, comfort, and tranquillity must inevitably encounter the hostility and resistance, the clamorous opposition and tumultuous protests of all those who harbour enmity and rancour towards them. If, therefore, the troubled waters of the sea of adversity should grow yet more turbulent, if the storm of tribulation should increase in vehemence and assail that sore-tried community from all six sides with fresh disasters, then know unhesitatingly, and with unwavering conviction, that the hour of deliverance, the appointed time when the promises of old are to reach their glorious fulfilment, has drawn nigh, and that the means for the accomplishment of supreme and overwhelming victory by the hard-pressed followers of the Greatest Name in that land have all been readied and prepared. Fixity of purpose and unfaltering resolution are the qualities that must needs be manifested by the people of Bahá if they are successfully to traverse these last remaining stages, and witness, at the highest levels, and in a manner that will fill them with astonishment, the realization of their profoundest hopes and of their most deeply cherished desires. Such is the way of God—"and no change canst thou find in the way of God".[19]

II

In this stern battle of life the members of this oppressed community,[20] aided by the power of the Kingdom and fortified by heavenly determination, by divinely imparted hopes and by glad-tidings from on high, are standing ready and alert to face any commotion or calamity. Unrelenting tribulations and increasing obstacles shall not make them flinch, nor cause them dismay or grief. They know with full certitude that as the horizons of the world grow darker, as its agitation becomes more severe and the prevailing chaos and confusion more widespread, the dawn of the Promised Day will correspondingly draw nearer, and the means for the splendours of His light to be shed abroad will be more readily provided.

However, the fulfilment of glad-tidings, so glorious and heart-uplifting, must needs be heralded by awesome and distressing events, inasmuch as the realization of these irrevocable and divinely ordained promises depends on the awakening and stirring of the conscience of the entire human race, while this cannot be achieved save through the occurrence of unnumbered afflictions, manifold convulsions, and growing adversities. And it is precisely for this reason that the people of Bahá are nourished from the draught of certitude and are alive and active through the spirit of hope. They strive diligently, are alert and watchful, steadfast and vigilant. With heart and soul they exert their efforts. They will not allow the pressure of calamities gradually to impair the foundation of the Cause of God or vitiate the essence of its divinely revealed principles, nor will they permit the wickedness and the prevalence of crime to nullify or eclipse the radiance of the cardinal laws of their Faith, or the aggressive hands of the opponents and the machinations of the ungodly to inflict harm upon this holy Revelation, or the confused theories and ideologies that prevail in these days to create the least deviation from the straight path of God....

III

O grief-stricken and self-sacrificing souls! The Hand of Providence has ordained that those innocent victims of tyranny should once again be oppressed in the clutches of the wrong-doers, and the Will of God, the Ever-Living, the Almighty, has purposed that manifold tribulations and adversities should, like a torrential flood, descend successively upon that wronged community. In these years of dire stress our Lord, the All-Wise, has, as a preliminary measure for the fulfilment of His gracious pledge and in conformity with His undeviating principle, kindled a raging fire of

trials in that country. Be not sorely grieved or dismayed. This is an effective means, preordained and irrevocable, which has been provided by the Causer of causes, through the operation of His immutable Will, and the exercise of His unquestionable power, and in the face of the machinations of every malicious opponent, so that the glory of His Cause may presently be unveiled before the assemblage of man and, in the days to come, His Faith may be rendered victorious and become securely established in that blessed land.

Let nothing frustrate or discourage you. Immerse yourselves in the study of the Holy Tablets. "I testify before God," Bahá'u'lláh asserts, "to the greatness, the inconceivable greatness of this Revelation. Again and again have We, in most of our Tablets, borne witness to this truth, that mankind may be roused from its heedlessness." In another connection this utterance has been revealed: "How great, how very great is this Cause. The day is fast approaching when its stupendous glory will have been made manifest and evident."

This heavenly Faith cannot be compared to the transitory things of the world of existence, nor can it be identified with or likened to physical and earthly forces. Its tabernacle has been raised through dire oppression, its advancement and promulgation depend upon spiritual and mysterious agencies, and factors that are awesome, alarming and totally unexpected. The Tongue of the Ancient of Days, the Comforter of the people of the world, says: "Naught hath been ordained by the finger of His decree for His loved ones except that which is profitable unto them. We beseech Him to graciously enable them to show forth patience and fortitude that haply trials and ordeals might not deflect them from the path of God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing."

Through the insults and indignities suffered by the well-assured and faithful maidservants of God, portals of everlasting honour will be flung open before the face of the women in Persia, nay everywhere in the world, and as a result of the beatings, torture, and cruelties inflicted upon the newly converted Bahá'í youth, a new spirit of liveliness and freshness will stream forth through the veins and arteries of the temple of the Cause of God. The lamentation of the disconsolate who have been made homeless as a result of this grievous event will reach the ears of the spiritually minded in the West, and its powerful repercussions will release a fresh energy in the world of existence, will forge new spiritual ties and lay bare the essence of this heavenly Revelation before the eyes of all men, be they friends or strangers.

Although the sufferings that have befallen the friends during the past few years were not as frequent, as grievous and widespread as the successive waves of afflictions that have been let loose in recent months, yet notwithstanding this and as a direct consequence of the pangs of anguish and devastating sorrow that have crushed the souls of the friends in Persia, the cherished Cause of God has blossomed forth astonishingly and is advancing with a fresh momentum throughout the five continents of the globe.

While Persia remains heedless and unaware and its sorely tried friends are beset by grievous repressions and cruelties, the hosts of life, the bearers of the divine Message of salvation, are moving far and wide over the extensive territories of the free world, and bending their energies to capture the citadels of men's hearts. The motivating impulse, the driving power which is responsible for the successful achievements of these sanctified beings is derived from the heat and flame and the influence released through the relentless persecutions and ordeals which the pure-hearted friends in Persia are enduring. Wherefore has the Master said: "When the light of God is ignited in the East it will shed illumination upon the West and its evidences will become visible both in the North and in the South."

O spiritual brethren! Although the horizons of that country are dark, and manifold hardships and tribulations are continuous and unremitting; although the foundations of that realm are sorely shaken, and the minds of its people in a state of confusion; although there is no peace or protection for the righteous, and the unbelievers are relentless in their hatred and animosity, this anguish and distress, this abasement and ignorance will not endure, nor will this cruelty, captivity, agitation, and disturbance persist. The day is fast approaching when God will have manifested from this horizon such light and power as will cause the sun to be darkened, will obliterate every trace of them that have turned away disdainfully from God, and will illumine the faces of the sincere.

It well beseems you to direct your eager gaze to the glad-tidings that have been revealed by the Pen of the Most High and to let the shining prophecies that are contained in His Most Holy Book and in other Tablets illumine your expectant eyes. Can one imagine a pronouncement sweeter, an utterance and promise more perfect, more appropriate, and more glorious than these conclusive verses that have streamed forth from the repository of the Abhá Pen? Exalted is His Word: "Let nothing grieve thee, O land of Ṭá,[21] for God hath chosen thee to be the source of the joy of all mankind. He shall, if it be His Will ... gather together the flock of God which the wolves have scattered.... The eye of His loving-kindness shall everlastingly be directed towards thee. The day is approaching when thy agitation will have been transmuted into peace and quiet calm." Moreover, the following significant and soul-stirring words have been set down by the pen of the Centre of the Covenant: "Erelong will it be witnessed that the government of the native land of the Blessed Perfection will become the most honoured government of this world, and Írán will become the most prosperous of all lands. This indeed is a token of God's bountiful favour, and verily in this is there a lesson unto every beholder."

Such God-given promises and sublime glad-tidings that the Pen of the Most High and the divinely aided and inspired fingers of the Centre of the Covenant have inscribed will, according to the following blessed verse, be unquestionably fulfilled. How enthralling is His Word: "Whatsoever hath streamed forth from the Pen of the Most High hath either already occurred or shall assuredly come to pass. Not a single letter thereof will remain unrealized, for verily the fair-minded shall behold it established upon the throne of fulfilment."

However, the essential thing is patience, fortitude, courage, and audacity. The day is approaching when that country will have turned into a blissful paradise, when the wronged ones of Persia will have become the pride of the world and the leaders of mankind. And this is a promise that will not be belied.

IV

O followers of the beloved Cause of Bahá'u'lláh! Regard not the smallness of your numbers, nor be depressed and discontented by reason of the harm and injury that you sustain at the hands of friend or foe. Let not the vilifications, the whisperings and idle remarks of the foolish and the short-sighted grieve you, nor the vast array of the multitude of assailants frighten or alarm you.

These tribulations have time and again been foretold by our peerless Master. The prophetic warnings that our supreme Lord has uttered clearly foreshadow the onslaught of the hosts of affliction. Have you not heard what has flowed from the tongue of the Comforter of mankind in this connection? He says: "Say: Tribulation is as water for that which We have planted in human hearts. The day is approaching when out of it will have grown such fruit that every seed thereof will proclaim: Verily, no God is there but Him, the Almighty, the All-Knowing." And likewise He has said: "Through adversity have We fostered the growth of the Faith of God in bygone ages. Erelong wilt thou witness this Cause shining resplendent above the horizon of glory, invested with majesty and power." And also He affirms: "God hath made tribulation as the crown wherewith the head of Bahá is attired. The time is at hand when its radiance will have enveloped the whole world. By My life! Such tribulations as are sustained in the path of God, the Fashioner of all created things, are as cherished by Me as eyes are cherished by men, nay even more! Unto this thy Lord, the Mighty, the Unconstrained, beareth witness."

O apostles of Bahá'u'lláh! How pitiful if we, who are recognized as the bearers of His glorious Name, and related to such an omnipotent Lord, should, in moments of adversity, fail to scrupulously follow the noble example set by Him Who stands peerless in His long-suffering. Happy the one who until his last breath has tasted the venom of woe at the hand of the faithless, and blessed the heart that for the sake of promoting and proclaiming His Cause does not allow himself a moment's rest. Such is the disposition of the pure in heart, such is the method of them that enjoy near access to God, such is the way of the true strivers after God, such befits the hosts that are under the guidance of God, such is the means whereby undoubted triumph and victory will be achieved for the Cause of God.

O people of Bahá! Lift up your voices and hail men of wisdom with glad-tidings. Call aloud between earth and heaven, exclaiming: O people of the world and workers of injustice and

iniquity! Rest assured that we, the followers of the Abhá Beauty, have paid for our Faith with our life-blood, and have tasted the sweetness of sacrifice in the path of His love. Our trust in Him sustains our lives, enabling us to be detached from aught else but Him. We shall promote His Cause to the last breath and offer praise and gratitude at all times for the tribulations He ordains.

O people of the earth! Know you with absolute certainty, and let every wavering and hesitant soul be apprised and take warning, that whatsoever has explicitly been revealed by the All-Glorious Pen will eventually become clear and evident, even as the sun in its noon-tide glory. In this snow-white Spot, and in other lands, the immutable Will of Him Who has stretched out the earth and raised up the heavens shall be fulfilled, the cherished desire of longing hearts will emerge from behind a myriad veils into the realm of existence, and the highest aspiration of the people of Bahá will be fully, perfectly, and conclusively realised. This is that which our Lord has promised us both openly and privily, and indeed this is a promise that will not prove untrue. Therefore it beseems you to arise and exclaim: "O concourse of the earth! Die in your wrath. Erelong will the standard of His Faith be hoisted in every city, shedding radiance upon all regions."

V

*He is God*

O mighty Lord! Thou seest what hath befallen Thy helpless lovers in this darkest of long nights; Thou knowest how, in all these years of separation from Thy Beauty, the confidants of Thy mysteries have ever been acquainted with burning grief.

O Powerful Master! Suffer not Thy wayfarers to be abased and brought low; succour this handful of feeble creatures with the potency of Thy might. Exalt Thy loved ones before the assemblage of man, and grant them strength. Allow those broken-winged beings to raise their heads and glory in the fulfilment of their hopes, that we in these brief days of life may gaze with our physical eyes on the elevation and exaltation of Thy Faith, and soar up to Thee with gladdened souls and blissful hearts.

Thou knowest that, since Thine ascension, we seek no name or fame, that in this swiftly passing world we wish henceforth no joy, no delight, and no good fortune.

Then keep Thy word, and exhilarate once more the lives of these, Thy sick at heart. Bring light to our expectant eyes, balm to our stricken breasts. Lead Thou the caravans of the city of Thy love swiftly to their intended goal. Draw those who sorrow after Thee into the high court of reunion with Thee. For in this world below we ask for nothing but the triumph of Thy Cause. And within the precincts of Thy boundless mercy we hope for nothing but Thy presence.

Thou art the Witness, the Haven, the Refuge; Thou art He Who rendereth victorious this band of the innocent.

VI

The assaults, onslaughts, and attacks perpetrated by the people of arrogance and malice do not and will not endure. They shall, one and all, be dispelled at the appointed time, and no trace of them will be left behind. What will remain, and the influence thereof endure, are the wrongs suffered by the loved ones of God, the audacity they have evinced, the undaunted spirit manifested by the defenders of the Faith of the All-Merciful, their bonds of unity and harmony, and their tenacious adherence and undeviating allegiance to the institutions of the Cause of God in that land.

At present the state of affairs is in turmoil, tribulations are manifold, and the authorities have launched attacks from every direction. However, the invisible Hand of God is at work, and the wrathful Avenger is watching over the oppressed community of the righteous and the pious. Things that were hidden will be revealed, and realities that were unknown will become clear and evident. The innocence of those long-suffering and sanctified beings will definitely be proved and established, and every act of injustice, of iniquity and malice wrought by the evil-doers will be laid bare. The day-star of glory, as is prophesied, will shine forth from that land with such radiance that all men, high or low, of the rulers or the ruled, friend or foe, whether far or near, will be astonished and bewildered.

Now is the time for steadfastness. Now is the ripe moment for the stalwart warriors and champions to show forth courage and to demonstrate their heroism in the arena of service, until such time as God will exalt His Cause, will remove the distress and anxiety of His friends and trusted servants, and glorify those who were brought low among His creatures, to make them spiritual leaders among men, and to make them God's heirs.

VII

The shedding of innocent blood in that blessed land will produce marvellous results, and from it far-reaching consequences will ensue in the course of time. The fierce storm of woes and calamities and the incessant waves of unnumbered trials and incalculable hardships which in recent days have encompassed that small group from all sides are but the first glimmer, the dawning twilight heralding the advent of the new age that has been foretold in the past.

This gloomy night which has lasted for a number of years has plunged every part and region of that country into darkness. The darker the night will turn, and the more intense and dreadful its convulsions and commotions become, the nearer will be the appointed time when the bright morn of deliverance will dawn; when the day-star of felicity and emancipation will shine; when the light of the glory, power, and independence of the Faith of God will radiate with extraordinary brilliance; when the fall and collapse, the destruction and ruin of the people of malice and iniquity in that land will become apparent and conspicuous.

The hosts of Bahá, the concourse of the sore-oppressed ones in that afflicted country, should all know with absolute certainty that the Cause of God is great, and its strengthening grace quickens every mouldering bone; its heavenly confirmations are ever present and its adversaries on the offensive, launching their attacks from all sides. On the one hand they are seized with perturbation and alarm at the sight of the quaking of the foundations of their own structure, and its breakdown and collapse, while on the other hand they are amazed and bewildered at the people of Bahá, and their high degree of tranquillity and firmness, and their long-suffering and unshakable patience.

This is the day for steadfastness. Now is the time for defence and bravery, so that the evil ones who are lying in wait may be disconcerted, defeated, and put to flight, and the prophecies irrevocably decreed by God may be fulfilled without delay.

VIII

Agitations, trials, woes, afflictions, and torture, arson, expulsion, plunder, beating, vilification, captivity, banishment, imprisonment, destruction of life—none of these could hinder the advancement of this beloved Cause; none could weaken the high resolve of its followers and champions in any part of the world; none could damage or disrupt the structure of its New Order; none could create a cleavage, a division, a schism, or any form of sectarianism in the ranks of its embattled hosts. Nay, rather, were one to observe with a discerning eye, it would become clear and evident that commotion in itself—the very succession of calamities, upheavals, and hardships, and the recurrence of trials, adversities, and sufferings—have lent an impetus to the power latent in the Cause and reinforced its compelling force and pervasive influence.

Indeed, as a result of the onrushing tempests of tribulation and the raging hurricanes of tests and trials, the Faith's scope of operation has been enlarged, its pillars have been raised to loftier heights, its foundation has become more secure, its glory more resplendent, the spread of its influence more rapid, its ascendancy and dominion more conspicuous and evident.

Every blow that the hands of the wrongdoer have inflicted upon the community of the followers of the Cause of God from without has proved to be the means of a fresh victory and triumph for the Faith, and every agitation provoked from within through the intrigues and plottings of perfidious traitors has led to a remarkable success for the Cause and to the revelation of its wondrous glory ...

These momentous events, these startling and awesome happenings that have transpired during the past hundred years, confirm the truth of this most perfect, this consummate and enthralling utterance that has proceeded from the repository of the all-glorious Pen—exalted is His saying and blessed His Word: "From time immemorial have We reared the celestial Trees of divine

Revelation with the waters of opposition and the shedding of blood, could ye but perceive it." Likewise He says: "By the righteousness of God! This divine Tree will develop by means of the waters of your opposition, yet ye understand not and remain heedless." Moreover He affirms: "Through affliction hath His Cause been promoted and His praise glorified." In another connection this blessed verse has been revealed: "Should they attempt to conceal its light on the continent it will assuredly rear its head in the midmost heart of the ocean and, raising its voice, proclaim: 'I am the life-giver of the world!'"

The amazing history of this glorious century will conclusively demonstrate to every opponent of the Cause throughout the world that violent upheavals have strengthened the root of this heavenly Tree, severe trials and hardships have reinforced the foundation of the divine Edifice. Dire abasement became a vesture of glory, while adversity and tribulation were oil which fed the flame of the lamp of God's Revelation. Fierce attacks and violence produced steadfastness and constancy, and persecution and privation created interest and led to conversion and proclamation. Torment, repression, and subjugation were means whereby the light of the ascendancy and triumph of this beloved Cause were eventually diffused far and wide. Convulsions and commotions served in the long run to purify and strengthen the body of the Cause of God, while the clamour of the prattler, the uproar of the deceitful, the tumult of the froward were instrumental in raising high the melody of the Kingdom. The rending and tearing of veils caused such realities and mysteries as were latent in the inmost essence of God's Revelation to be uncovered and brought to light. Wherefore has the all-glorious Pen revealed: "Through their injustice we praised the Cause of God, and the anthem of praise, glorifying the Name of thy Lord, was broadcast in all countries. Through their rejection the truth was recognized, and as a result of their cruelties the luminary of justice hath shone forth. Ponder a while, O men of understanding, that ye might perceive." Likewise He states: "At one time He exalted His Cause by the hand of the people of tyranny, and at another by the hand of His chosen servants—they unto whom the heedless ones appear as but a handful of dust, they who declare that which the Pen of the Most High hath proclaimed from the horizon of glory."

IX

Consider what momentous glad-tidings the all-glorious Pen has announced in the Holy Tablets, what explicit promises His exalted and irrevocable Pen has revealed. In the Súratu'l-Haykal these gem-like words are recorded: "He will, erelong, out of the Bosom of Power, draw forth the Hands of Ascendancy and Might—Hands who will arise to win victory for this Youth and who will purge mankind from the defilement of the outcast and the ungodly. These Hands will gird up their loins to champion the Faith of God, and will, in My name, the Self-Subsistent, the Mighty, subdue the peoples and kindreds of the earth. They will enter the cities and will inspire with fear the hearts of all their inhabitants. Such are the evidences of the might of God, how fearful, how vehement is His might!"[22] And likewise these luminous verses are inscribed in this holy Súrih: "The day is approaching when God will have raised up, through Thee, such invincible Hands, such indomitable Helpers, who will emerge from behind the veils, will render victorious the All-Merciful One amidst all the peoples of the world, and will burst forth into such a cry as will leave its mark in all hearts. Thus hath it been decreed in the inscribed Tablet. And they will appear with such power that all the dwellers of the earth will be seized with fear and every one will be sorely shaken."

Moreover He has written: "Erelong will the Call be raised in every city and thou shalt find the people fearful and dismayed by virtue of the awful ascendancy of God's Revelation. Thus hath it been irrevocably ordained in His Holy Scriptures." And also He declares: "Soon will the cry 'Yea, yea, here am I, here am I' be heard from every land. For there hath never been, nor can there ever be, any other refuge to fly to for anyone."[23] And again He says: "The day is fast approaching when God will have manifested from this horizon such light and power as will cause the sun to be darkened, will obliterate every trace of them that have turned away disdainfully from God, and will illumine the faces of the sincere." And likewise He has revealed: "Erelong ye shall witness all men believing in His cause and weeping sore over the good things that have escaped them during His days. Verily He is the Expounder, the All-Knowing."

And He also states: “Soon will the unbelievers behold the banners of victory and will hear the name of God proclaimed from every direction. On that day will they say: ‘Truly we do believe in God.’ Say: God well knoweth what is hidden in the breasts of all men.” And again He has written: “Erelong will the faithful behold the standards of divine manifestation unfurled in all regions.” And likewise He declares: “I swear by the Most Great Book that God’s Revelation shall gain ascendancy and encompass the whole world.”

Moreover, the following resplendent words which have flowed from the Pen of the Centre of the Covenant amply confirm that which the all-glorious Pen of Bahá’u’lláh has revealed: “Despair not of the manifestations of the divine Spirit. Erelong, by the leave of God, the veil will be removed from the face of His Cause, this effulgent light will shed its radiance upon all countries, the signs of His oneness will be spread abroad, and the banners bearing the emblems of your glorious Lord will float above the lofty mansion.” And again He affirms: “The day will soon come when the light of divine unity will have so permeated the East and the West that no man dare any longer ignore it.”[24]

# Notes

1 *Fire and Light* was first published in 1986 by the Universal House of Justice in *The Bahá'í World, Volume XVIII, 1979 – 1983*, pp. 9 – 38. The selections from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi that appear in that volume are drawn from *Nár va Núr* (Fire and Light), a compilation prepared by the Universal House of Justice for the Bahá'ís of Iran and published in 1982 by Bahá'í Verlag, the Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Germany. *Fire and Light* includes those selections in *Nár va Núr* that have been translated into English. The translations of all but extract XI in Section I were prepared by Mr. Habib Taherzadeh, with the assistance of a Committee at the Bahá'í World Centre. ↩

2 Karbilá. ↩

3 Jalálu'd-Dín Rúmí (A.D. 1207–1273), Persian Ṣúfí poet. ↩

4 Qur'án 21:27. ↩

5 Qur'án 24:37. ↩

6 Qur'án 3:184. ↩

7 Yazd. ↩

8 The Báb. ↩

9 The Báb. ↩

10 The Báb. ↩

11 Ḥujjat. ↩

12 Yazd. ↩

13 Qur'án 26:84. ↩

14 Qur'án 37:61. ↩

15 Qur'án 83:26. ↩

16 Jesus. ↩

16 Muḥammad. ↩

18 Írán. ↩

19 Qur'án 33:62. ↩

20 Ṭihrán. ↩

21 Ṭihrán. ↩

22 Translated by Shoghi Effendi, in *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 85. ↩

23 Ibid., pp. 81–82. ↩

24 Translated by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters*, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 111. ↩

This document has been downloaded from the Bahá'í Reference Library. You are free to use its content subject to the terms of use found at www.bahai.org/legal

Last modified: 19 December 2023 10:00 a.m. (GMT)