

UK BAHÁ'Í

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Manifestations of God

Throughout history there has always been successive guidance necessary for humanity's social and spiritual evolution.

TO ALL WHO CELEBRATE THE GLORY OF GOD

The Universal House of Justice's message for the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh.

WHO IS BAHÁ'U'LLÁH?

How to answer a frequently asked question.

TRIBUTES TO BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

From Leo Tolstoy to Edward Granville Browne.

PILGRIMAGE: THIS EARTHLY HEAVEN

A Bahá'í family makes a spiritual journey.





Welcome to *UK Bahá'í*

This edition of *UK Bahá'í* reflects upon the Manifestation of God and, in particular, the Personage of Bahá'u'lláh, the 200th anniversary of Whose birth has been celebrated with such joy and devotion around the world. Here is another opportunity to reflect further on those divine Luminaries and “the One Whose teachings will usher in that long-promised time when all humanity will live side by side in peace and unity.” (The Universal House of Justice, October 2017) Future issues of *UK Bahá'í* will review the events and activities of the bicentenary in more detail (January 2018), explore community building (April 2018) and introduce institutions (July 2018). Your contributions – written or visual – on any of those themes are most welcome.

The Editors

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introduction

The Manifestations of God

Rays of the Sun of Truth

THE WORLD'S GREAT FAITHS have animated civilizations throughout history. The Divinely-inspired Founders of these faiths have affirmed the existence of an all-loving Creator and have sought to cultivate the love of God and of humanity in the human heart. Each of these great Educators has called humanity to higher forms of civilization. These uniquely endowed individuals are the Manifestations of God. They include Krishna, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. While each of Them has a distinct individuality and a definite mission, They all share in a single, divinely-ordained purpose—to “educate the souls of men, and refine the character of every living man...”¹

If we think of God as the unapproachable sun, the source of all light and life in our own solar system, then the Manifestations of God might be compared to mirrors that perfectly reflect the sun's light in a form that human beings can understand. Just as in spring, the coming of the Manifestation of God releases a fresh outpouring of spirit into creation and has a universal effect, providing the main impulse for the further development of consciousness and society. When humanity has entered its “winter,” this new “sun” appears above the horizon and “the spiritual springtime returns again and a new cycle reveals its splendour...the rays of the Sun of Truth shine forth, and the world of being is invested with a new life...”²

Each Manifestation may also be likened to a skilled physician. He has a complete grasp of the nature of the body of humanity and

is able to prescribe the appropriate cure for the ills of the world—one that best meets the requirements of the time in which He appears. Referring to His own Revelation in this age, Bahá'u'lláh wrote, “*The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy.*”³

Thus each Manifestation of God has awakened in whole populations the capacity to love, to forgive, to create, to dare greatly, to overcome prejudice, to sacrifice for the common good, to aspire to express their highest instincts. Their teachings have inspired breathtaking achievements in literature, architecture, art and music. They have fostered the promotion of reason, science and education. Their moral principles have been translated into universal codes of law, regulating and elevating human relationships.

Throughout history, the Manifestations of God have successively provided the guidance necessary for humanity's social and spiritual evolution. These achievements are the common spiritual heritage of the human race; and this process is known as “progressive revelation”.

In this unique period in human history, God has sent two Manifestations of God – the Báb (1819-1850) and Bahá'u'lláh, the two-hundredth anniversary of Whose birth is now being commemorated throughout the entire world.

¹ *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, No.2.

² 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, No.14.

³ *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, CVI



To all who celebrate the Glory of God

*A message for the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh
from the Universal House of Justice, October 2017.*

DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS

THIS SALUTARY TRUTH we maintain: that the peoples of the earth have always been remembered by their God. In every era of history, that unknowable Reality has opened the gates of grace to the world by sending an Emissary charged with providing the moral and spiritual stimulus that human beings need to cooperate and advance. Many of the names of these great Lights to humankind are lost. But some shine out from the annals of the past as having revolutionized thought, unlocked stores of knowledge, and inspired the rise of civilizations, and Their names continue to be honoured and praised. Each of these spiritual and social visionaries, stainless mirrors of virtue, set out teachings and truths that answered the urgent needs of the age. As the world now faces its most pressing challenges yet, we acclaim Bahá'u'lláh, born two hundred years ago, as such a Figure—indeed, as the One Whose teachings will usher in that long-promised time when all humanity will live side by side in peace and unity.

From His early youth, Bahá'u'lláh was regarded by those who knew Him as bearing the imprint of destiny. Blessed with saintly

character and uncommon wisdom, He seemed to be touched by heaven's kindly light. Yet He was made to endure forty years of suffering, including successive exiles and incarcerations at the decree of two despotic monarchs, campaigns to vilify His name and condemn His followers, violence upon His Person, shameful attempts on His life—all of which, out of a boundless love for humanity, He bore willingly, with radiance and forbearance, and with compassion for His tormentors. Even the expropriation of all His worldly possessions left Him unperturbed. An observer might wonder why One Whose love for others was so complete should have been made the target of such hostility, given that He had otherwise been the object of universal praise and admiration, famed for His benevolence and high-mindedness, and had disavowed any claim to political power. To anyone who is familiar with the pattern of history, the reason for His ordeals is, of course, unmistakable. The appearance of a prophetic Figure in the world has invariably given rise to ferocious opposition from wielders of power. But the light of truth will not be put out. And so, in the lives of these transcendent Beings one finds sacrifice, heroism and, come what may, deeds that exemplify Their words. The same is evident in each phase of the life of Bahá'u'lláh. In spite of every hardship, He was never silenced, and His words retained their compelling potency—words spoken with the voice of insight,



diagnosing the world's ills and prescribing the remedy; words carrying the weight of justice, warning kings and rulers about forces that would ultimately sweep them from their thrones; words that leave one's soul uplifted, awed and transformed, determined to free itself from the thorns and brambles of self-interest; and words that are clear, arresting, and emphatic: "This thing is not from Me, but from God." Might one not ask, in considering such a life: if this be not from God, what can be pointed to that is?

The perfect Educators Who, throughout history, brought light to the world, left behind a legacy of sacred words. Within the words that flowed like a river from the pen of Bahá'u'lláh are gifts of enormous range and sublime character. Not infrequently, one who encounters His Revelation responds first to prayers of surpassing beauty that satisfy the soul's longing to befittingly worship its Maker. Deeper in the ocean of His words are discovered the laws and moral imperatives to liberate the human spirit from the tyranny of worldly instincts unworthy of its true calling. Here, too, are found enduring ideals in whose light parents may raise children not simply in their own likeness, but with aspirations more exalted. There are also explanations that reveal the hand of God at work in the history of humankind's winding journey through the stages of tribe and nation towards higher forms of unity. The diverse religions of the world are shown to be expressions of a single underlying truth, related to one another by a common origin, and also by a common purpose: to transform humanity's inner life and outer conditions. Bahá'u'lláh's teachings testify to the nobility of the human spirit. The society He envisions is one worthy of that nobility and founded on principles that guard and reinforce it. The oneness of the human family He places at the core of collective life; the equality of women and men He unequivocally asserts. He reconciles the seemingly counteracting forces of our own age—science and religion, unity and diversity, freedom and order, individual rights and social responsibilities. And among His greatest gifts is justice, manifested in institutions whose concern is for the progress and development of all peoples. In His own words, He has "blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men" and, concurrently, "laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete

and enduring unity". Might one not ask, what would be a befitting response to such gifts?

"It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean," Bahá'u'lláh states. The spiritual teachings brought by successive Messengers through the ages found expression in religious systems that, over time, have become fused with aspects of culture and weighed down with man-made dogmas. But look past these and it becomes clear that the original teachings are the source of the universal values through which diverse peoples have found common cause and which have moulded humanity's moral consciousness. In contemporary society, the reputation of religion has suffered a great deal, and understandably so. If, in the name of religion, hatred and strife are promoted, it is better to do without it. However, true religion can be known by its fruits—its capacity to inspire, to transform, to unite, to foster peace and prosperity. It is in harmony with rational thought. And it is essential to social progress. The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh cultivates within the individual and the community the discipline of acting in the light of reflection, and by this means, insights gradually accumulate about effective ways to work for the betterment of society. Attempts at social change through political intrigue, sedition, vilification of particular groups, or outright conflict are condemned by Bahá'u'lláh, for they merely perpetuate cycles of struggle while lasting solutions continue to elude. He champions instruments of a very different sort. He calls for good deeds, kind words, and upright conduct; He enjoins service to others and collaborative action. And to the task of constructing a world civilization founded on the divine teachings, He summons every member of the human race. Might one not ask, in contemplating the breadth of His vision, upon what foundation shall humanity realistically build hope for the future, if not this?

In every land, those who have been attracted to the message of Bahá'u'lláh and are committed to His vision are systematically learning how to give effect to His teachings. Cohorts of youth are becoming ever more conscious of their spiritual identity and are directing their energies towards the advancement of their societies. People with divergent perspectives are discovering how to replace contention and the imposition of authority with consultation and the collective search for solutions. From every race, religion, nationality, and class, souls are uniting around a vision of humanity as one people and the earth as one country. Many who have long suffered are finding their voice and becoming protagonists of their own development, resourceful and resilient. From villages, neighbourhoods, towns and cities are arising institutions, communities, and individuals dedicated to labouring together for the emergence of a united and prospering world that might truly deserve to be called the kingdom of God on earth. On this two hundredth anniversary of Bahá'u'lláh's appearance, the many who are part of this enterprise are reaching out to those around them with a simple invitation: seize this opportunity to find out who He was and what He represents. Put to the test the remedy He has prescribed. His coming offers sure proof that the human race, threatened by numerous perils, has not been forgotten. When so many people of goodwill throughout the world have for so long beseeched God for an answer to the problems that beset them in their common homeland, is it so surprising that He should have answered their prayer?

— *The Universal House of Justice*

featured story

The year Bahá'u'lláh was born

What was the state of the world in 1817? John Lester looks back at the year when a Manifestation of God came into the world.

IN THE YEAR 1817, Europe was still recovering from the effects of 20 years of war, culminating in the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Waterloo, in Belgium, two years earlier. Napoleon had been exiled to St. Helena in the Atlantic where he would die in 1821. Unrest in Britain in 1819 led to a demonstration in Manchester being fired on by troops, the incident being labelled 'Peterloo', a mocking echo of the great battle four years earlier. Lord Liverpool was Prime Minister and would remain so for another ten years.

The fragile state of King George III's mental health meant that this was the time of the Regency, the Prince Regent succeeding his father as George IV in 1820. The future Queen Victoria, praised by Bahá'u'lláh 50 years later, would not be born for another two years. The United States of America was still incomplete, about to acquire Florida but still lacking Texas and the areas between there and the Pacific.

Elsewhere the British Empire was in the process of being extended. Missionaries had begun to arrive in New Zealand, leading to Britain taking over the islands through the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, the British representative, in his haste, actually claiming the lands between latitudes 50 degrees south and 31 degrees north – the latter being somewhere in the region of Japan. Fortunately everyone knew what he meant.

In literature, 1817 saw the death of Jane Austen, whose name was still unknown to her many readers, to whom she was simply 'A Lady' or the author of her other books. Two female novelists who were acknowledged – albeit one under her marital status (Mrs. Gaskell), the other under a male pen-name (George Eliot) – were both born in this decade and would make perceptive comments within their fiction. Elizabeth Gaskell, in her novel *North and South*, has her clergyman character, Mr Hale, make this observation: "I dare say I am talking in great ignorance; but from the little I know, I should say that the masses were already passing rapidly into the troublesome stage which intervenes between childhood and manhood, in the life of the multitude as well as that of the individual."

The Bahá'í teachings suggest that humanity has indeed reached its collective adolescence. In *Middlemarch*, George Eliot, considering



the impact of the ego on our consciousness of things, writes that it is "as when we look through the window from a lighted room, the objects we turn our backs on are still before us instead of the grass and the trees." That image seems particularly pertinent in the light of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's references to "the prison of self".

Among other novelists, Sir Walter Scott was at the height of his powers with *Rob Roy* published in 1818 whilst Charles Dickens, five



years old in 1817, would be set to work in a blacking business at the age of 12 when his father went bankrupt. “My calamity is my providence” seems applicable here, since the experience enabled Dickens to later write some moving descriptions of poverty in his novels.

Three Romantic Poets – Keats, Shelley and Byron – were in full flow by 1817. John Keats would write in that year, “A thing of beauty is a joy for ever,” finishing his poem *Endymion* in the month of Bahá'u'lláh's birth. Their counterparts in Poland lived in a country that was partitioned with Prussia, Russia and Austria in charge. Gradually there developed a sense of Poland being the Christ of nations, being crucified for the sins of the world and ready to rise again on the Third Day. The coming of a Messiah was imminent. Juliusz Slowacki – eight in 1817 – would write 20 years later in *Anhelli* of the coming of the great ‘King Spirit’ who appeared from age to age and would surely come to Poland before long – an intriguing hint of religious expectation at a national level just seven years before the Declaration of the Báb.

Revolution, which had but recently come to France, would become common throughout the next century but its industrial counterpart was already in full swing. The first railways and steam ships were beginning to be developed at the time of Bahá'u'lláh's birth as if in preparation for making the spreading of His Word all the easier. Large areas of the globe remained known only to their inhabitants but explorers such as David Livingstone (born four years earlier) and Richard Burton (born four years later) would soon be active in bringing them into contact with the rest of the world, enabling all parts of the planet to be able to receive Bahá'u'lláh's Message.

In many ways, then, Bahá'u'lláh was born into a world that was being prepared for his arrival and His Revelation. Since that magic moment, so much more has happened.



Left: Portrait of Lord Byron. Above top: The Peterloo Massacre, a caricature by George Cruikshank. Above: Engraving of Jane Austen.

featured story

Why do the Manifestations of God appear in human form?

When an early pilgrim wanted to see the power of Bahá'u'lláh for himself, he received more than he expected – including a lecture about a parrot!

THERE WAS ONCE a devoted and influential Bahá'í who came from the South Khurasan province of Iran. His name was Jinab-i-Muhammad Kuli-Khán Nakhaee and he led many of his family members to the recognition of Bahá'u'lláh.

After travelling for six months over land from Persia to 'Akká, Jinab-i-Muhammad and a company of fellow pilgrims attained the presence of the Blessed Beauty. But during the first two days of their sojourn in the Holy Land, Jinab-i-Muhammad felt strangely disappointed and disillusioned.

"I accepted the hardships and burdens of a six month journey hither to 'Akká perhaps that I might witness some extraordinary and divine happening," he told his companions, "but Bahá'u'lláh speaks like other men and He gives instructions and teachings not dissimilar to other men. There is perhaps nothing extraordinary or miraculous here."

Jinab-i-Muhammad was still immersed in his worried thoughts on the third day when one of the friends informed him that Bahá'u'lláh wanted to see him alone and unaccompanied.

"I went to the presence of the Blessed Beauty immediately," Jinab-i-Muhammad later recounted, "and I lifted aside the curtain of the room where He was to be close in His presence. I bowed and instantly saw the Blessed Beauty as an incredibly bright and dazzling light. So intense was my experience of this light that I collapsed unconscious."

Jinab-i-Muhammad was dragged to the corridor and then to the pilgrim house. All that he could recall Bahá'u'lláh saying was, "Go in peace and under God's safety."

Poor Jinab-i-Muhammad could not eat or sleep for two days. He

seemed to behold the overwhelming presence of Bahá'u'lláh everywhere and constantly told the other pilgrims that the Blessed Beauty was present. They soon tired of him and asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá to help. After another two days, he was taken once more to Bahá'u'lláh's presence who showered him with kindness.

"Jinab-i-Muhammad Kuli-Khán," Bahá'u'lláh addressed him. "The Manifestations of the Divine Essence are forced to appear in human attire and clothes. If Their true Being which is behind the veil of concealment were to appear then all humanity, like your good self, would lose consciousness and swoon to the unconscious realm."

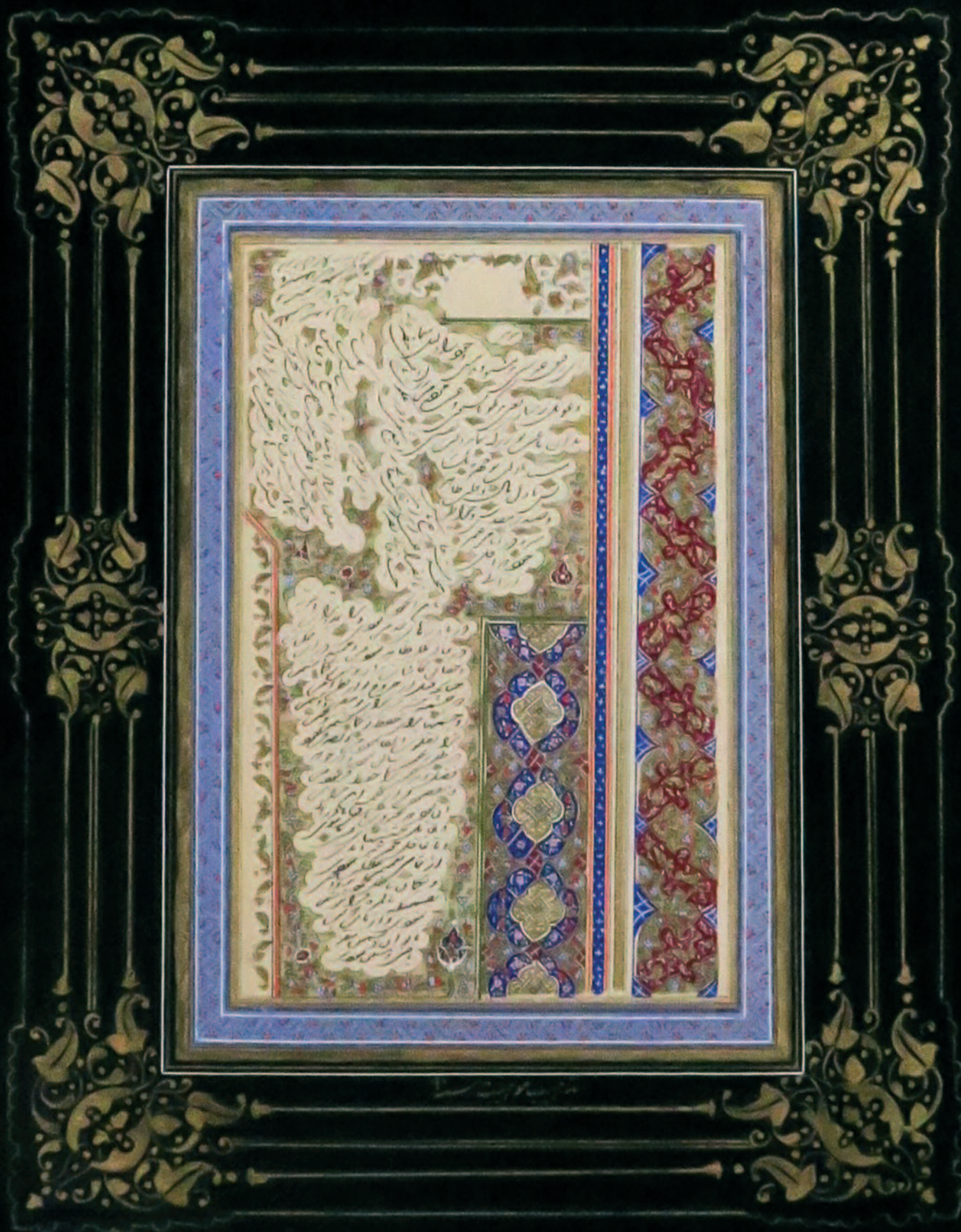
Then, surprisingly, Bahá'u'lláh asked him, "Do you know how parrots are taught to speak?"

Jinab-i-Muhammad bowed and said, "I do not know."

Bahá'u'lláh then explained how a parrot owner will keep his parrot within a cage. He then places a mirror in front of the parrot while, from behind it, he repeats phrases. Seeing another parrot identical to itself talking in front of it, the parrot begins to mimic the speech. If the person who is actually behind the mirror should reveal himself from the start, then the parrot would never learn to speak. Thus it is, Bahá'u'lláh explained, that the Manifestations of God come into the world in human attire and human clothes, so that the awesome power of their being will not frighten humanity.

Utterly transformed by his experience, Jinab-i-Muhammad returned from attaining Bahá'u'lláh's presence. To the end of his days, he was engaged in teaching others. Indeed, he attained such spiritual insight that he predicted the night of his own departure from this earthly realm.

Verses from *The Hidden Words* in the handwriting of Bahá'u'lláh. This illuminated calligraphy, along with other precious items associated with Bahá'u'lláh's life and revelation, are on display in a special bicentenary cabinet at the John Addis Gallery in the British Museum, London, until 22 January 2018.



featured story

Who is Bahá'u'lláh?

With the bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh being observed all over the world, there is one question that is being asked more often, by more people and for a wide variety of reasons. George Ballentyne from Leicester offers some personal reflections on “Who is Bahá'u'lláh?”

EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW who Bahá'u'lláh is, and have the right and opportunity to follow that knowledge as far as they wish. Each enquirer has their own particular reason for asking, “Who is Bahá'u'lláh?” and will await an answer that meets their expectation – whether it’s providing the final piece in a puzzle that has dogged their entire life, or simply making a happy connection with some random strangers in a moment of unexpected friendliness. But it is a question that can be approached in a variety of ways and tackled on a number of levels.

It is probably fair to say that today we can find a suitable answer for every kind of person who wants an answer. We are blessed as never before with an ever-expanding variety of responses, from a range of sources in relation to this Bicentenary: from authoritative statements issued by the Bahá'í World Centre to posters created in Bahá'í children’s classes, from revised versions of tried-and-tested favourite leaflets to blogs and podcasts.

But let us think about the question itself; it is certainly a different one from “Who *was* Bahá'u'lláh?” When speaking about anyone who passed away 125 years ago, it is normal to do so in the past tense. And that is often where one might start when describing Bahá'u'lláh – with the historical person. He was born Mirzá Husayn Alí in Tehran, into a noble family that could trace its origins back to the kings of ancient Persia and its lineage down through the centuries from Abraham. His father was a minister at the court of the Shah. He was known from an early age for innate knowledge and wisdom beyond his years. He declined to follow His father into a role in government, but dedicated himself to kindness and charity. His compassion led to him becoming known far and wide as the ‘Father of the Poor’. He was one of the earliest and most distinguished supporters of the Báb, whose revelation turned Persian society upside down. He took the

name, Bahá'u'lláh (The Glory of God) at that time. Stripped of comfort, privilege and wealth overnight, He was imprisoned and exiled, harried from pillar to post throughout the Middle East along with his family and closest friends, never belonging, never welcome for 40 years. Slowly but steadily spreading his own revelation, He spoke truth to power, with His letters to the secular and religious rulers of the world in his day in the 1870s. In 1892, he passed away and was laid to rest at Bahjí, where He had spent the final years of His life in relative ease.

There are people who believe that Jesus never existed or doubt that the prophet Muhammad ever lived. But we actually have a photograph of Bahá'u'lláh and there is so much material evidence to prove that He lived. We can say, with surety, when and where He was born, when and where He died and virtually everything that happened to Him in between. But what does that actually prove?

At its most basic, we might think about how much information someone actually needs or wants when they ask “Who is Bahá'u'lláh?” A local reporter seeking background colour for a feature about a happy, multi-cultural bicentenary gathering in a church hall is not the same as a professor of comparative religion researching a book to make up for a century-long shortfall in academic consideration of Bahá'u'lláh’s life and teachings. The young mum with two crying kids in a double-buggy, taking refuge from the rain in a shopping centre, who falls into conversation with a couple of Bahá'ís handing out fliers next to an exhibition, killing time till she can make a dash for her bus, may well be satisfied by a different response from the one needed by a seeker, pleading for certitude and confirmation from the depths of their soul.

We’re in no position to judge who should hear what, or why. Many of us will have had the experience of not knowing exactly why we said something, or where this or that answer came from – but how it



seemed to be just what the enquirer needed to hear at that moment, even though they might not have known it themselves. When anyone asks this question, it's as if we're given a lock; and the trick is to use the right key. That can be more a matter of luck than judgement – or perhaps more correctly, a matter of inspiration. We need to be sensitive to what we're being asked, who is asking it – then sometimes, we need to take a leap in the dark.

Or it may be enough to just give them a leaflet. Sometimes this simple disinterested act has the greatest impact. Again, we can all probably think of occasions when we've seen that happen. Maybe we've been close to someone who has been asking, "Who is Bahá'u'lláh?" for a long time but has never been satisfied with the answers we've given them. We introduce them to another friend for the first time, who says something we would never have thought of, perhaps unrelated to that particular question, and a lightbulb comes on above the head of that persistent, yet unsatisfied enquirer. In that moment, they know who Bahá'u'lláh is, and what He means to them. This may be more apprehension than comprehension; it may not be a matter of being convinced by rational argument but suddenly, the truth is within their grasp and they seize it, in something like a reflex motion. Hard for them to explain, perhaps, but impossible for them to let go of. This may have us slapping our forehead, thinking "How come I never thought of that, in all this time?" Many of us will know people who have made personally momentous commitment to Bahá'u'lláh and His religion based on something that seems inconsequential, that means little or nothing to us – but everything to them. I seem to remember something along those lines happening to me, when I found myself ready to declare my faith in Bahá'u'lláh and commit myself to being a Bahá'í.

Is this a different question when we consider it ourselves, as Bahá'ís? Does it require a different answer when we ask it of each

other as members of the worldwide community which bears his name? Can we say that we know the answer, by virtue of the fact that we call ourselves Bahá'ís?

When I consider this question and think how to make sense of it, not only to myself but to others, my first response is: words fail me. But I've come to realise after almost 40 years pondering this question that it's alright to admit that. What isn't alright is giving up trying. We're never going to understand exactly who Bahá'u'lláh is, whether we focus on His person, His mission or His station. It's all too much for any of us to get our head around. It is the greatest mystery the world has ever known; one that we will never unravel. We're not supposed to resolve it once and for all, leading to a time when there's no more need for conversation, for reflection, for the dawning of enlightenment. We can't do without these things and contemplation of the question, "Who is Bahá'u'lláh?" offers a perpetual motion machine of spiritual, philosophical, historical and social enquiry. To every person who ponders it, that question will have a different answer. Each generation will see in it something new and unique to themselves. The energy that enquiry generates can never be exhausted. It's the ultimate renewable resource, replenished and refreshed every day, in every way we care to use it. The question itself is a mirror, the surface of which becomes smoother and purer every time we polish it. The more we look into it, the better we see the Divine attributes which Bahá'u'lláh embodies reflected back out on us.

Some have said that Bahá'u'lláh caught the *zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age, in a prophetic fashion. Perhaps Bahá'u'lláh is the *zeitgeist* – He is the Spirit of the Age. He enables us – and ennobles us – to answer the needs of the world and of our times, through our actions which should speak louder than words. After all, He is the one who counsels us, "Let deeds, not words, be your adorning."

UK Bicentenary News

The Bicentenary of the Birth of Bahá'u'lláh

At the time of this issue of *UK Bahá'í* going to press, some 275 reports have been received of activities that happened throughout the United Kingdom around the weekend of the Twin Holy Birthdays, 21-22 October 2017. Around 12,000 people took part in events, including some 7,000 friends of the Bahá'í community. The next issue of *UK Bahá'í* will offer a full, illustrated round up of the entire commemorative period. In the meantime, here are some highlights from the four parts of the United Kingdom.

ENGLAND

A RECEPTION HOSTED BY the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Bahá'í Faith, held in the **Houses of Parliament** (below) in London, was attended by some 170 guests, including more than 100 friends of the Faith. Twelve MPs attended, as well as 25 representatives of religious communities. Lord Bourne, Minister of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government, concluded his remarks with the quote, “Do not be content with show-



ing friendship in words alone. Let your heart burn with loving kindness for all who may cross your path.”

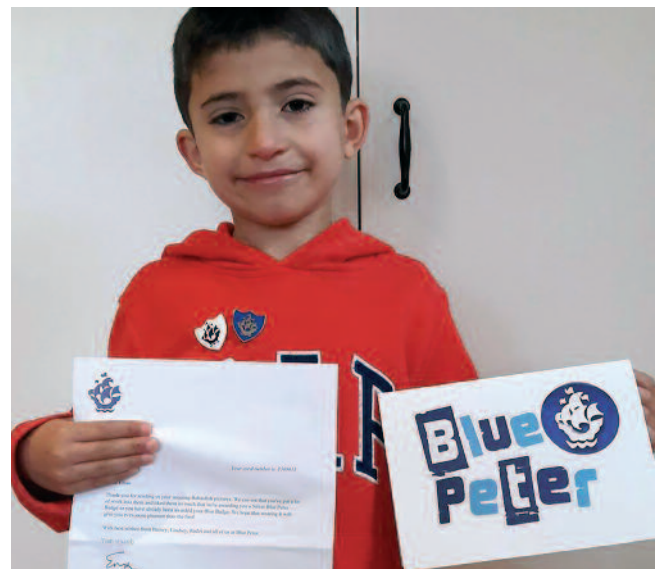
In **Solihull**, more than 1000 invitations were issued for the bicentenary celebrations. Of those, some 400 people attended; almost 300 of them were friends of the Faith. Twenty dignitaries including the Mayor, as well as leaders of various religions, also participated.

In **Cambridge** (top right), a specially-written, dramatic presentation on the 1890 visit to Bahá'u'lláh from Professor Edward G.



Browne, the Cambridge-based Orientalist, was very well received. More than 250 people attended the event, including the granddaughter and great grand-daughter of Professor Browne.

Seven-year old Ethan Howell from **Durham** (below) was awarded a silver Blue Peter badge after he sent two pieces of art inspired by the bicentenary to the BBC TV programme. Ethan was inspired by the recently released schools' video to send his paintings of the dream of Bahá'u'lláh's father, and what the fish in that dream represented. Ethan used hand prints to represent the peoples of the world and this was achieved by asking all of the children





in his class at school to make prints of their own hands.

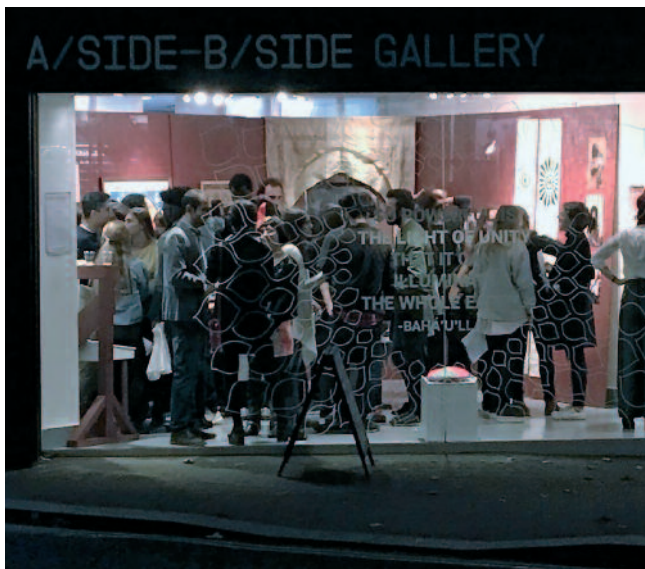
In the London Borough of **Hackney** (above & below), the central event organized by the community was a week-long exhibition in the A/Side-B/Side art gallery on the main thoroughfare of Mare Street. There was an evening programme each evening to complement the exhibition. In the months leading up to the exhibition, hundreds of artists across the world saw call for proposals to respond to the words of Bahá'u'lláh, “So powerful is the light of unity, that it can illuminate the whole earth.”

That same quote formed the basis of a school’s writing and art competition in **Stroud**. The eight pupils who produced the best work were given a special tour of the National Bahá'í Centre where

they presented their posters and poetry to a representative of the National Spiritual Assembly.

The **Trafford** community in Greater Manchester offered a one-hour presentation about Bahá'u'lláh's life and mission to classes in primary schools. Some 900 pupils have received this presentation already.

The **Women's Interfaith Network** hosted its own tribute to Bahá'u'lláh, held at the Houses of Parliament. Welcoming the guests, Baroness Cox (pictured below) said, “Over 150 years ago Bahá'u'lláh called on us to recognise our common humanity, to see





ourselves as noble members of one family...The 200th anniversary of the birth of Bahá'u'lláh is an historic moment and the cause of celebration for us all." Speeches paying tribute to Bahá'u'lláh, his teachings and the Bahá'í community, were also given by Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, His Grace Bishop Angaelos of the Coptic Orthodox Church (pictured), Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra (pictured) of the Muslim Council of Britain.

NORTHERN IRELAND

IN THE SMALL TOWN OF **Magherafelt**, the handful of Bahá'ís had contacted more than 130 individuals through various means,

but particularly in face-to-face conversations, resulting in around 80 guests attending their bicentenary event. One family visited every single neighbour in their street that led to hour-long discussions. Inspiring traditional music was played at a packed event by the Bellaghy Music Group (above).

In **Belfast**, 75 friends of the Faith – including the Deputy Lord Mayor, a previous mayor, and representatives of other Faith – heard the story of the life of Bahá'u'lláh and the growth of the Faith around the world and its arrival in Belfast – narrated in four parts, interspersed with Writings set to music. A specially commissioned film, *Growing unity at the grassroots*, was screened about the Windsor neighbourhood junior youth groups and children's classes.





In **North Down and Ards**, the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Gavin Walker, commented on the peaceful and transformative teachings of Bahá'u'lláh while noting that the persecution suffered by Bahá'u'lláh was similar to all those Manifestations of God who came before Him. Having previously visited the House of Worship in Wilmette, Cllr. Walker said that, although Bangor does not presently have a Temple, it surely will in the future. Member of Parliament Jim Shannon also shared words of encouragement for the Bahá'ís worldwide.

SCOTLAND

IN **Inverurie/Fyvie**, the celebration took the form of a multi-cultural dinner followed by five short dramatic presentations of significant episodes in the life of Bahá'u'lláh. Wonderful, elevated conversations were had on the evening and before, while follow-ups are being planned.

In the small North-east village of **Auchenblae**, where a Bahá'í husband and wife, have lived for just two years, 30 friends of the Faith celebrated with a screening of *Light to the World*. At the end of the film everyone broke into spontaneous applause and, instead of going home, stayed for an extra 90-minutes for conversation, coffee and cake. These two friends now have a devotional meeting organised with so many people coming that they have had to re-book the village hall.

Scottish Bahá'ís celebrated the bicentenary at a parliamentary reception hosted by the Rt. Hon. Ken Macintosh MSP, Presiding Officer of the **Scottish Parliament** (opposite left). Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, Angela Constance, also addressed those present before a programme of music and readings about the life and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Sean Afnan Morrissey (above), a believer from Glasgow, delivered the 'Time for Reflection' in the Scottish Parliament on Tuesday 24 October. A video of the presentation can be watched at: <https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/time-for-reflection-october-24-2017>

WALES

THE DIVERSITY OF PARTICIPANTS at bicentenary events was quite striking. For example, in **Bangor**, where there were some 40 attendees at their celebrations, there were young and old guests from countries as diverse as Colombia, China, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Mauritius, Iran, Venezuela, and the Caribbean.

A beautiful celebration in **Cardiff** took place at the Temple of Peace and consisted of prayers, readings on the life of the Blessed Beauty, a description of community building activities, and musical pieces with vocals, harp and guitar. Readers explained themes of Bahá'í teachings and the life of Bahá'u'lláh. ITV Wales interviewed five friends for a three-minute piece screened on the Early Evening News.

At the celebrations hosted by **Blaina and Nantyglo**, the local Interact Youth Club arrived three hours before the start of the event to help set up. Communities First provided the hall free of charge, printed the posters and invitations, also arranged for a local art group to video the event. The letter of support which was sent to the gathering from Nick Smith, MP, stated, "The Bahá'í Faith's principles of unity, equality and compassion resonate today more than ever. Given the recent events at home and abroad, it is especially important to recognise and celebrate the values of tolerance and community."

Tributes to Bahá'u'lláh

Professor Edward Granville Browne (1862-1926)

In April 1890 Professor Edward Granville Browne — a distinguished British orientalist and Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge University — met Bahá'u'lláh in four successive interviews.

THE ONLY Westerner to meet Him, Browne left the following stirring description of the experience: ... my conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called *táj* by dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban.

The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!

A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued: — "Praise be to God that thou has attained! ... Thou has come



to see a prisoner and an exile. ... We desire but the good of the world and happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment. ... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled — what harm is there in this? ... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come. ... Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold? ... Yet do we see your kings

and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind. ... These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family. ... Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind. ..."

Such, so far as I can recall them, were the words which, besides many others, I heard from Behá. Let those who read them consider well with themselves whether such doctrines merit death and bonds, and whether the world is more likely gain or lose by their diffusion."

Tributes to Bahá'u'lláh

Queen Marie of Romania (1875-1938)

Born Princess Marie of Edinburgh, Queen Marie was the first royal personage to publicly support the Bahá'í Faith.

INDEED A GREAT LIGHT came to me with the message of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It came as all great messages come at an hour of dire grief and inner conflict and distress, so the seed sank deeply... It is a wondrous Message that Bahá'u'lláh and his son 'Abdu'l-Bahá have given us. They have not set it up aggressively, knowing that the germ of eternal truth which lies at its core cannot but take root and spread. There is only one great verity in it: Love, the main-spring of every energy, tolerance toward each other, desire of understanding each other, knowing each other, helping each other, forgiving each other. It is Christ's Message taken up anew, in the same words almost, but adapted to the thousand years and more difference that lies between the year one and today. No man could fail to be better because of this Book. I commend it to you all. If ever the name of Bahá'u'lláh or 'Abdu'l-Bahá comes to your attention, do not put their writings from you. Search out their Books, and let their glorious, peace-bringing, love-creating words and lessons sink into your hearts as they have into mine.

Tributes to Bahá'u'lláh

Count Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910)

Russian author.

ONE OF the highest and purest of religious teachings... Very profound. I know of no other so profound.

*Tributes to Bahá'u'lláh*

George Townshend (1876-1957)

A well-known Irish clergyman, Townshend renounced his orders at the age of 70, in order to publicly proclaim his belief in Bahá'u'lláh.

THE MIGHTIEST PROOF of a Prophet has ever been found in Himself and in the efficacy of

His word. Bahá'u'lláh rekindled the fires of faith and happiness in the hearts of men. His knowledge was innate and spontaneous, not acquired in any school. None could gainsay or resist His wisdom and even His worst enemies admitted His greatness. All human perfections were embodied in Him. His strength was infinite. Trials and sufferings increased His firmness and power. As a divine physician He diagnosed the malady of the Age and prescribed the remedy. His teachings were universal and conferred illumination on all mankind. His power has been poured forth more abundantly since His death. In His presence He stood alone and events have proved and are still proving its accuracy." (*The Mission of Bahá'u'lláh*)

Tributes to Bahá'u'lláh

Thomas K. Cheyne

(1841-1915)

English divine and
Biblical critic.

IF THERE HAS BEEN any prophet in recent times, it is to Bahá'u'lláh that we must go. Character is the final judge. Bahá'u'lláh was a man of the highest class – that of prophets.

*Tributes to Bahá'u'lláh*

Alfred W. Martin

(1862-1932)

Unitarian minister and writer
on religion.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH... paid the price of prolonged exile, imprisonment, bodily suffering, and mental anguish for the faith he cherished - a man of imposing personality as revealed in his writings,

characterized by intense moral earnestness and profound spirituality, gifted with the self same power so conspicuous in the character of Jesus, the power to appreciate people ideally, that is, to see them at the level of their best and to make even the lowest types think well of themselves because of potentialities within them to which he pointed, but of which they were wholly unaware; a prophet whose greatest contribution was not any specific doctrine he proclaimed, but an informing spiritual power breathed into the world through the example of his life and thereby quickening souls into new spiritual activity.

Tributes to Bahá'u'lláh

Wellesley Tudor Pole

(1884-1968)

Writer and philosopher.

WHAT IS the special appeal voiced by Bahá'u'lláh and his son, which has resulted in so many of their followers the world over asserting that they are no longer



Jews, Christians, Moslems or Buddhists, as such but have become Bahá'ís? The answer may well be that as each religious revelation becomes crystallised, dogmatic and formal, the need arises for Truth to be restated in terms that conform to the needs of the new hour.

Tributes to Bahá'u'lláh

Vincenc Lesny

(1882-1953)

Professor of Iranian Studies at
Charles University, Prague

THE CONDITIONS are so changed now, since the technique of the present time has destroyed the barriers between nations, that the world



needs a uniting force, a kind of super-religion. I think Bahá'ísm [sic] could develop to such a kind of religion. I am quite convinced of it, so far as I know the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh... There are modern saviours and Bahá'u'lláh is a Saviour of the twentieth century. Everything must be done on a democratic basis, there must be international brotherhood...I am still of the opinion that... Bahá'u'lláh Himself is the Creator of an eternal bond between the East and the West.

Feature

Gnats into Eagles – How Bahá'u'lláh inspires ordinary young people to do extraordinary things

From the torrid deserts of Persia, through stylish avenues of Paris to the bustle of modern London, young people—rejecting the world's injustices—have arisen to champion the message of Bahá'u'lláh, leading the way in translating His principles into reality.

IN 1868, 15-year-old Áqá Buzurg is suddenly changed by his encounter with the Bahá'í Writings. It is a shock to his family because, for the tall adolescent, service has always been at the periphery of his life. But clearly, he has changed. And with newfound fervour, he begins the trek towards `Akká to behold the Prisoner, Bahá'u'lláh.

No one knows what occurred during these two meetings. All we know is that Áqá Buzurg left transformed. With a new character and new name *Badí'*—"unique, wonderful"—Bahá'u'lláh entrusted the youth with one of His most challenging missions: to present the Lawh-i-Sultán to the most powerful man in Persia, Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh. Bahá'u'lláh had revealed the tablet two years earlier. Finally, He found one worthy to deliver it.

Reverently, Badí' advanced towards the monarch. "I have come to thee from Sheba with a weighty message!" What gave this once rebellious, apathetic youth such courage to approach the self-proclaimed King of Kings? "We took a handful of dust," Bahá'u'lláh remarked of Badí', "and breathed into it the spirit of assurance."

The youth was immediately arrested and horrifically beaten and branded. So astounded were the guards at his fortitude

that they commissioned a photograph. In it, we see a boy looking much older than his years. A haunting stoicism emanates from him. After three days of suffering and refusing to recant his faith, Badí' died. He was 17. Bahá'u'lláh immortalised him as The Pride of the Martyrs. His love for Bahá'u'lláh elevated him from an ordinary teenager to the status of a heroic martyr. In the end, it was that love that killed him.

Just a few decades after Badí's tragic demise, more than three thousands miles away in turn of the century Paris, an Englishman Thomas Breakwell encounters Bahá'u'lláh's teachings through a series of meetings with May Ellis Bolles. Inspired, Breakwell writes, "My heart was afire with love...I felt at peace." Shortly after his recognition of Bahá'u'lláh, Breakwell determines to travel to `Akká to meet Bahá'u'lláh's son and successor, `Abdu'l-Bahá. Breakwell's declaration of faith is brief, but poignant: "My Lord, I believe, forgive me. Thy servant, Thomas Breakwell."

When Breakwell informed `Abdu'l-Bahá that the cotton mills he worked in used children as workers, the Master looked at him sadly and said, "Cable your resignation." Breakwell obeyed immediately, severing all ties with his old life.

The effect of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation on Breakwell's being was immediate. Those that knew him talked of how he developed a profound insight into human needs, an intense sympathy and genuine love for all. Those afflicted with sorrows were drawn to him and would come away from meeting him uplifted. He became the first westerner to pay the Huqúqu'lláh, choosing to live in a cheap and distant part of Paris, walking miles to meetings in order to save his money.

Breakwell, however, suffered from tuberculosis. Within just a year of learning of Bahá'u'lláh, he lay dying in his apartment in Paris. Even at this stage, his devotion to God increased. In his last letter to `Abdu'l-Bahá's secretary, Breakwell wrote, "Torments of the flesh have enabled me to draw much nearer to my Lord..."

Being the first Englishman to recognise Bahá'u'lláh, Breakwell's life inspires deep contemplation. In his short, earthly existence, this youth reached a spiritual station unsurpassed. His example testifies to the power of wholehearted devotion to

transcend every earthly barrier, even time itself.

The sacrifices made by Badí' and Thomas Breakwell continue to serve as a tremendous inspiration to young people around the world. Youth, write the Universal House of Justice, can create "the world anew," inspired by Bahá'u'lláh "to fulfil their duty as conscious builders of a new civilization".

Two students, currently living in London describe their awe for these early heroes of their Faith. From them, they derive the courage whenever they are teaching and serving. They demonstrated how important it is to put trust in God, and to be assured that the right doors will open.

"The way they lived their lives, their unshakeable conviction is extremely humbling," says one, from Uruguay. "Although our challenges and tests can never be compared to what they had to endure, we can only strive to emulate their resolve."

"My love for Bahá'u'lláh expresses itself in service to Him," says the other, a Londoner. "This can be through the simple, daily exercising of virtues. Or it can be a more complex type of service, such as the involvement in a regular neighbourhood activity within the broader framework of the global plans of the Faith."

The training institute process allows him to further translate his love into action: "If the institute process wasn't around, it would almost be frustrating since I would feel overwhelmed by the choices we are confronted with daily."

A young Moldovan woman was touched by the way the community of Bahá'u'lláh's followers were engaged in activities with a noble goal. Joining a study circle provided her with an opportunity to talk about spiritual concepts.

Over time, she fell in love with Bahá'u'lláh and started to walk her own path of service. "It was definitely marked with various setbacks," she admits, "but characterised by many more joyful moments spent serving others."

What these accounts of youth demonstrate is that through the forces released by Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, the "sorry gnat" becomes an "eagle", the "sparrow" a "royal falcon", and a youth a spiritual warrior.



Battambang, Cambodia

Local House of Worship inaugurated in Cambodia

Some 2,500 people gathered on 1 September at a conference to mark the historic dedication of the local Bahá'í House of Worship.

“**A** NEW DAWN is breaking,” announced the Universal House of Justice in a letter addressing the participants, referring to the historic nature of this development for the Bahá'í community.

The vibrant colours, music, and splendour of Cambodia's culture were on display during the morning's program, which began with prayers, readings, and traditional dance. The program also included remarks by several officials from the national and provincial

governments as well as the architect and representatives of the Bahá'í community.

Following the opening session, participants visited the Temple in groups of 250 for a programme of prayers, the first including invited dignitaries and officials. Each group also spent time at a special exhibit, in which it learned about some of the foundational aspects of these edifices, including spiritual empowerment through education, worship and service, and individual and collective transformation.

“The emergence of a House of Worship in Battambang,” wrote the Universal House of Justice, “is a testament to how brightly the light of faith shines in the hearts of the friends there. Its design, the work of an accomplished Cambodian architect, reflects the grace and beauty of that nation's culture; it uses innovative techniques but blends them with forms traditional to the region; it unquestionably belongs to the land from which it has risen...It is an edifice of noble purpose, erected by a people of noble spirit.”

“May those who pass through its portals feel their spirits soar within, may their worship of the one true God strengthen the bonds of affection between them, and may

their love for God be expressed through the service they render to those around them.”
Bahá'í World News Service



The Holy Land, Israel

Pilgrimage – This Earthly Heaven

Each year thousands of Bahá'ís take the opportunity to forge a profound and lasting connection with Bahá'u'lláh through visiting the spiritual and administrative centre of their Faith.

PILGRIMAGE to the Holy Land is an expression of devotion and an outward representation of the spiritual journey upon which each of us has embarked. During pilgrimage, we take the precious opportunity to forge a personal, profound and enduring connection with the Shrines of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. Visiting the Holy Shrines “is obligatory if one can afford it and is able to do so, and if no obstacle stands in one’s way,” wrote ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. For all who make the journey—as this statement from Shoghi Effendi attests—pilgrimage can become a means whereby one “can experience that mystic love which constitutes the very core of every true religion.”

Visits to other Holy Places associated with the lives of the Blessed Beauty and the beloved Master; the loving hospitality



offered by the Universal House of Justice; the precious fellowship with believers from every corner of the earth—these, and other features of pilgrimage, also enable one to obtain, as the Guardian described it, “a clearer vision of the mission and significance of the Faith,” and can “greatly invigorate the friends and stimulate them to greater services and sacrifice.”

In a message written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated 27 April 2017, a number of measures were announced

that have been taken to make pilgrimage more accessible to a larger number of believers:

- THE LONG WAITING list that had existed for many years has been eliminated. Those seeking to go on pilgrimage are now offered, shortly after receipt of their application, a range of dates from which to choose.
- THE FIVE-YEAR waiting period before one can apply to undertake another pilgrimage has been reduced to three.
- IT IS NOW EASIER for a larger number of families and friends to come on pilgrimage together. Permission may now be requested by relatives or friends for those who are not registered Bahá'ís to join them. Friends may apply for pilgrimage through this website: <https://bahai.bwc.org/pilgrimage/main/apply.asp>
- A FILM, *Pilgrimage: A Sacred Experience*, created to help the friends to better appreciate the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage and its role in fostering the development of one’s dedication to the Cause, may also be viewed at <https://bahai.bwc.org/pilgrimage/>



Erin Keenan from Shetland made her first pilgrimage to the Holy Land in March 2017. This account appeared in Shetland Life magazine.

On a hazy March morning I stood atop Mount Carmel and looked down across the



wide blue arc of Haifa Bay. Like driving into Lerwick from the south. Low cloud blurred the low horizon and the ships, moored out at sea, appeared to be ascending. The farthest ships were floating in the sky.

My mother, my stepfather, and I were making a pilgrimage, as many have, from this island in the north to the most densely holy spot on earth. Israel.

We are Bahá'ís.

The founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892) was born into a noble family in Iran, then the Persian empire. He lived a bold, extraordinary life and brought the world a timely Revelation. He declared He was the Promised One of all ages, foretold by the Messengers of the past. Each of them equally from God, revealing successive lessons in the education of mankind. They suffered, revealed, inspired, made new, and guided humanity onward. Now a beautiful new chapter could begin. Now the world could finally hear what had always been true. We are children of one God, one human family, on one common homeland. We can, must, ultimately will share this earth together in unity and peace.

Bahá'í pilgrimage embodies this promise.

The pilgrim speeds madly into the bustling industrial city of Haifa in a rickety taxi, eyes squeezed shut, she barely makes the corner. She survives, she peeks, and sees revealed

above her a rising vertical garden of green and red and gold. A great stack of verdant curves, and through it all a fine white staircase, leading the feet and the eye into paradise.

These are the nineteen terraces that adorn the city of Haifa like a delicate emerald necklace, and magnify the beautiful burnished golden dome that crowns the Shrine of the Báb. Nestled to the side are the white marble buildings that make up the Bahá'í World Cen-

tre: archives, administration, guidance.

The eager pilgrim sees the lower terraces filled with visitors and locals. A dark-eyed bride posing by a fountain, one hand resting daintily atop her snowy hip. Bright knots of friends in jeans, hijabs, yarmulkes, sunglasses, talking and looking around. People breathless at the beauty of the gardens, and the steepness of the fine white steps.

Everywhere the pilgrim walks there is an-



other Bahá'í smiling and serving as a volunteer, come from every corner of the world. A Ghanaian on security detail. Side by kneeling side, a Filipino and Canadian tending to geraniums. A cheery Aussie-Iranian lass helping the international cavalcade to settle in and be of service.

The other pilgrims too are drawn from every continent and every walk of life. We are grouped and guided, cared for and encouraged by all of the varied staff of the Bahá'í World Centre. It feels a refuge, and a miracle.

But Haifa is not the only holy spot in sight.

In 1892 Bahá'u'lláh was laid to rest across the bay, in Bahjí, and there He lies in a modest, lovely shrine, surrounded by the adoration of His followers and the overwhelming scent of roses. Another beautiful garden lies like a flowering Persian carpet around the low building that serves as shelter for His grave.

He did not come to this place by choice. For the bulk of His life, Bahá'u'lláh was a prisoner and exile. He was tortured, insulted, and forced from place to place at the whim of myriad tyrannical rulers of shifting unstable regimes. Bahá'u'lláh declared a pure and awe-inspiring Message from God, in the midst of a deadly political game of chess.

Who was the pawn and who the true King has become apparent with time.

My mother, my stepfather, our new friends, and I approached the threshold of Bahá'u'lláh's shrine. The paths are made of smooth white pebbles, or flat red chunks of terracotta that slip across each other underfoot. I made myself walk slowly. It feels like crossing a shingle beach. Like Easter Quarff. A beauty that is so far beyond us but fills the human heart with wonder.

There is holiness in every varied acre of God's creation, but His shrine is its Primal Point. Bahá'ís the world over turn toward it every day in prayer. For a few days, we could walk around this earthly heaven, and step inside.

Before I went, I never knew that Israel was filled with hoodie crows. They could've strolled in from the bumpy salty field below our house, strutting the well mown grass like veteran foremen.

Praying inside the shrines, you could hear them outside, cawing. Shetland. Holy land. I felt in awe of all of it, and doubly at home.

1817. 2017. 200 years since Bahá'u'lláh's birth. We'll celebrate in Shetland, as people will across the world. It's something to be glad of. Let's be glad.

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good...

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Further Reading

The website of the worldwide Bahá'í community, www.bahai.org, has an excellent section on Bahá'u'lláh – The Divine Educator – (<http://www.bahai.org/bahauallah/>). *The Life of Bahá'u'lláh* website – <https://www.bahauallah.org> – offers a photographic narrative that gives a glimpse into the extraordinary life of Bahá'u'lláh.

Many books explore the life, mission and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. These include:

Bahá'u'lláh – The King of Glory – Hasan M. Balyuzi

Call to Remembrance – Compiled by Geoffrey W. Marks

Bahá'u'lláh – A Short Biography – Moojan Momen

Robe of Light – David S. Ruhe

The Prisoner and the Kings – William Sears

The Story of Bahá'u'lláh – Druzelle Cederquist

Stories of Bahá'u'lláh – Compiled by 'Alí-Akbar Furútán

Day of Glory: The Life of Bahá'u'lláh – Mary Perkins

Bahá'u'lláh, The Prince of Peace – David Hofman

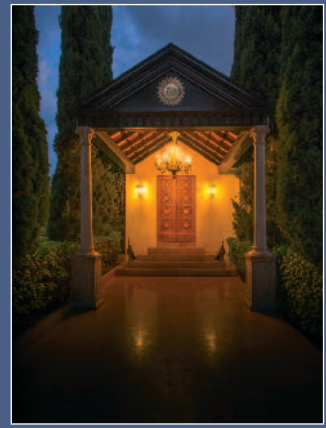
The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh (Four volumes) – Adib Taherzadeh

All of these books, and other relevant titles, are available from:

<http://www.bahaibooks.org.uk>

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

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH



Front cover: Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh.

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