



**What the Bicentenary of the
Birth of Bahá'u'lláh Means to Me**

Who is Bahá'u'lláh
and
How He became my *Mizán*
and my Friend

First
How I acquired belief or faith in
Bahá'u'lláh?

Two Definitions of “Faith”

- Related to religion, faith for most people implies believing that which you cannot prove
- The Bahá'í definition states, “By faith is meant, first, conscious knowledge, and second, the practice of good deeds.”
 - recognition of the Manifestation
 - to observe every ordinance He reveals
 - (reciprocity) neither is acceptable without the other

How Do We Acquire Conscious
Knowledge of the Manifestation?

Through Proofs!

'Abdu'l-Bahá Explains How We Obtain Proof

Every subject presented to a thoughtful audience must be supported by rational proofs and logical arguments

Proofs are of four kinds That is to say, there are four criteria or standards of judgment by which the human mind reaches its conclusions. (Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 86)

- First, through sense-perception
- Second, through the reasoning faculty
- Third, from traditional or scriptural authority
- Fourth, through the medium of inspiration.

Individually, All Four Are Insufficient

. . . the four criteria or standards of judgment by which the human mind reaches its conclusions are faulty and inaccurate. All of them are liable to mistake and error in conclusions

Collectively, They Establish the *Mizán*

But a statement presented to the mind accompanied by proofs which the senses can perceive to be correct, which the faculty of reason can accept, which is in accord with traditional authority and sanctioned by the promptings of the heart, can be adjudged and relied upon as perfectly correct, for it has been proved and tested by all the standards of judgment and found to be complete.

How Do We Apply these four standards to
Those Who claim to be a Manifestation?

Proofs of the Prophet

(from the Iqán)

1. **The Book:** “Therefore, should a person arise and bring forth a myriad verses, discourses, epistles, and prayers, none of which have been acquired through learning, what conceivable excuse could justify those that reject them, and deprive themselves of the potency of their grace?” (Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 220)
2. **Souls arise to proclaim the advent:** “Amongst the proofs demonstrating the truth of this Revelation is this, that in every age and Dispensation, whenever the invisible Essence was revealed in the person of His Manifestation, certain souls, obscure and detached from all worldly entanglements, would seek illumination from the Sun of Prophethood and Moon of divine guidance, and would attain unto the divine Presence. (Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 221) “divinely appointed touchstone” –martyrs to the Cause.
3. **Constancy of the Prophet in proclaiming the Faith of God.** “He was afraid of no one; He was regardless of consequences. Could such a thing be made manifest except through the power of a divine Revelation, and the potency of God's invincible Will?” (, p. 230), Steadfastness in the Faith is a sure testimony, and a glorious evidence of the truth. (Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 233)
4. **Transmuting influence:** “And among the evidences of the truth of His manifestation were the ascendancy, the transcendent power, and supremacy which He, the Revealer of being and Manifestation of the Adored, hath, unaided and alone, revealed throughout the world. No sooner had that eternal Beauty revealed Himself in Shiraz, in the year sixty, and rent asunder the veil of concealment, than the signs of the ascendancy, the might, the sovereignty, and power, emanating from that Essence of Essences and Sea of Seas, were manifest in every land.” (Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 234)
5. **Traditions** (ḥadīths). Prophecies.

Some Other Objective Metrics Proving the
Influence of Bahá'u'lláh
(enabling us to obtain conscious knowledge)

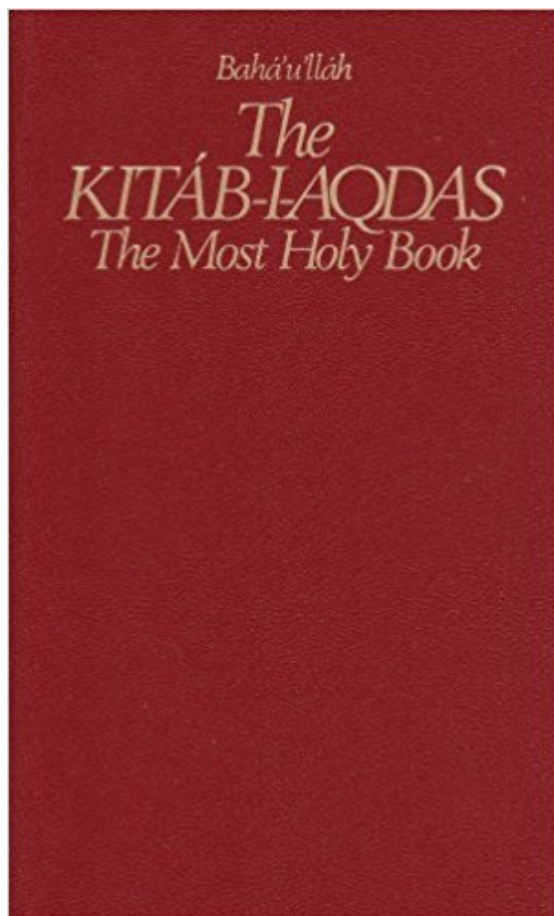
The Miraculous Results of Bahá'u'lláh's Life

- From Him emanated the second most widespread religion in the world in the course of 174 years
- Without seeking power or aligning Himself with the powerful, His influence has spread worldwide
- Never before has a movement spread like this without the vested interest of the rich and powerful
- Never before has the Founder of a revealed religion secured the religion against schism or perversion

From this Simple Room Looking out
On an narrow street in a prison city
emanated . . .



A Blueprint for Transforming Society and Bringing about World Peace



Bahá'u'lláh caused this to become ...



This!



And this to become . . .



This!



and spiritual forces
sufficient to change the world
focus on a simple shrine
for One Who was born into this world
two hundred years ago

The *Qiblih*



“The Point of Adoration”

Subjective metrics by which I came
to accept the station of Bahá'u'lláh

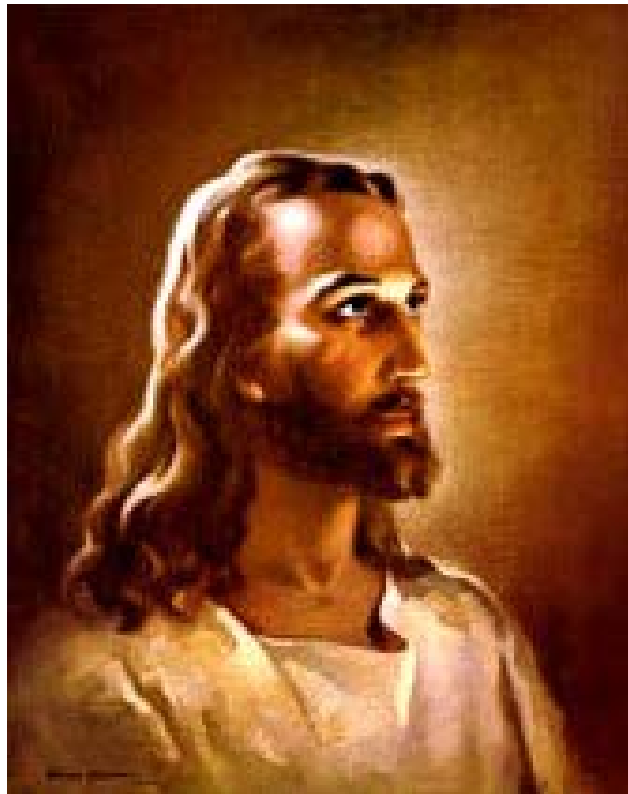
The Influence of Bahá'u'lláh in My Life

- I was raised as a Methodist from childhood to age 19
- I have now been a Bahá'í for 58 years
- That amounts to 29% of the 200 years since the birth of Bahá'u'lláh
- I have had the privilege of being in the presence of nine Hands of the Cause
- I have had access to those who were with the Guardian, with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and with Bahá'u'lláh
- I have borne witness to the completion of the administrative order, the terraces, the arc, and, more recently, the global framework for action.
- In light of this, what does this commemoration mean to me?

My Journey Through Proofs

I Communed with Christ and God
through Prayer and the Word

I Had His Image Before Me and the
Stories of His life I Knew by Heart



I Rejoiced in Songs of Praise

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!*

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For Me the Trinity was no problem: I Sensed a Clear Distinction Between Christ and God

“I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.” (John 5:30)

“...I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.” (John 14:31-15:1)

Christ on The Cross: What it Meant to Others

He Died for Our Sins: Without the Cross, no Salvation and no Christianity



What it Meant to Me

He *Lived* to Help Us Overcome Our Sins New Laws, New Teachings, a Vision of God as Father



My Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith
Provided me a new *Mizán*

The *Mizan*, the “Standard” or the “Balance”

As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings
be. This is the balance--this is the balance.

--Abdu'l-Bahá

The *Mizan*, the “Standard” or the “Balance”

The degree of conscious knowledge you implement into action in an ongoing reciprocal fashion

Equals

The strength of your spiritual powers and
The plenitude and potency of divine blessings you will receive.

The Standard or the Balance



The Touchstone

Thus hath Sadiq, son of Muhammad, spoken: "God verily will test them and sift them." This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 255)



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The Relationship of the *Mizan*
to the Law of Parsimony
(Occam's razor)

The Simplest Explanation is Preferable

- The Ptolemaic Theory (geocentric theory) of the Solar System
 - Becomes convoluted
 - Becomes extremely awkward to maintain
 - Becomes a “tangled web” of theories
- The Copernican Theory (heliocentric theory) of the Solar System
 - Resolved the complexity caused by better observations
 - Explained reality with elegance rather than confusion
 - Untangled the webs
 - Changed the *mizán* for assessment of the cosmos

A Few Logical Axioms That Became My Touchstone or *Mizán* as I applied the Law of Parsimony

- Concept of the Manifestation as Intermediary justified the validity of all other religions
- Concept of the Manifestation explained for me the relationship between Christ and God
- Concept of the Manifestation demystified the trinitarian doctrine.
- Concept of Progressive Revelation explained God at work in history and provided the rational explanation of how there could be one religion—the religion of God—revealed in progressive and successive stages.
- Concept of this “Day” as the maturation of humankind described what I could observe was happening globally and then explicated logically the irrational and convoluted interpretations of the Last Judgment, the Resurrection, and the Book of Revelations as interpreted by other religions

The Nashville Community (proof of followers)

- Why I learned by word-of-mouth
- How I tested the verities
- How I was tested once I moved away

Repositories of Knowledge

Living Examples of “the Bahá’í life”

A Bahá’í Community of Extraordinary Vitality

- Dr. William and Judith Hatcher
- Dr. Mag Carney
- Dr. Sarah Pereira
- Dr. Robert Hayden
- Erma Hayden
- Casey and Alice Walton
- Winston Evans
- Roy and Georgia Miller

Logic and Reason Are Indispensable to Religion and Religious Belief

- God is intelligent and rational
- God's ways must also be intelligently and logically devised
- God's religions must therefore be rational and in accord with one another.
- Faith in God must be based on rational axioms
- Faith without deeds is mere words (and is dead)
- The concept of Progressive Revelation is the sole logical methodology to explain God's plan
- It alone enlightens, informs, and provides the key that unlocks the scripture of every religion
- Religious belief based on blind faith alone is largely superstition and destined to falter and fail

What Exposure to These People and Verities Meant to Me

- I now knew more precisely Who Christ really was
- I could now resolve the enigmas of my Christian beliefs—the trinity, Christ as “the way,” the Second Coming, the Ascension, the symbolism of the Last Supper, the Self-Sufficiency of God, etc.
- Once exposed to the truth, I could no longer tolerate anything less—it was the “razor” that severed the tangles of “mystery”
- I now began to understand what the suffering of Christ was really about
- I could understand the real meaning of the trinity as expressed in the Bahá'í symbol of the Greatest Name
- I eagerly re-read the scriptures and began to resolve other “mysteries” that were no longer enigmatic or to be glossed over as “beyond rational explanation”

For example, “The Third Day He Arose from the Dead”

- The Day of Muhammad
- The Day The Bab
- The Day of Bahá'u'lláh

Peter (first pope) denied Christ three times before the rooster crowed

- The Day of Muhammad
- The Day The Bab
- The Day of Bahá'u'lláh
 - Letter to the Pope

Christ's Subservience to the Father and pre-existence in realm of the spirit

Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my **Father that honoureth me**; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham **rejoiced to see my day**: and he saw it, and was glad.

Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Before Abraham was, I am.** (John 8:53-58)

The Manifestation as the “Way” or Means by which We Come to Know God

Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

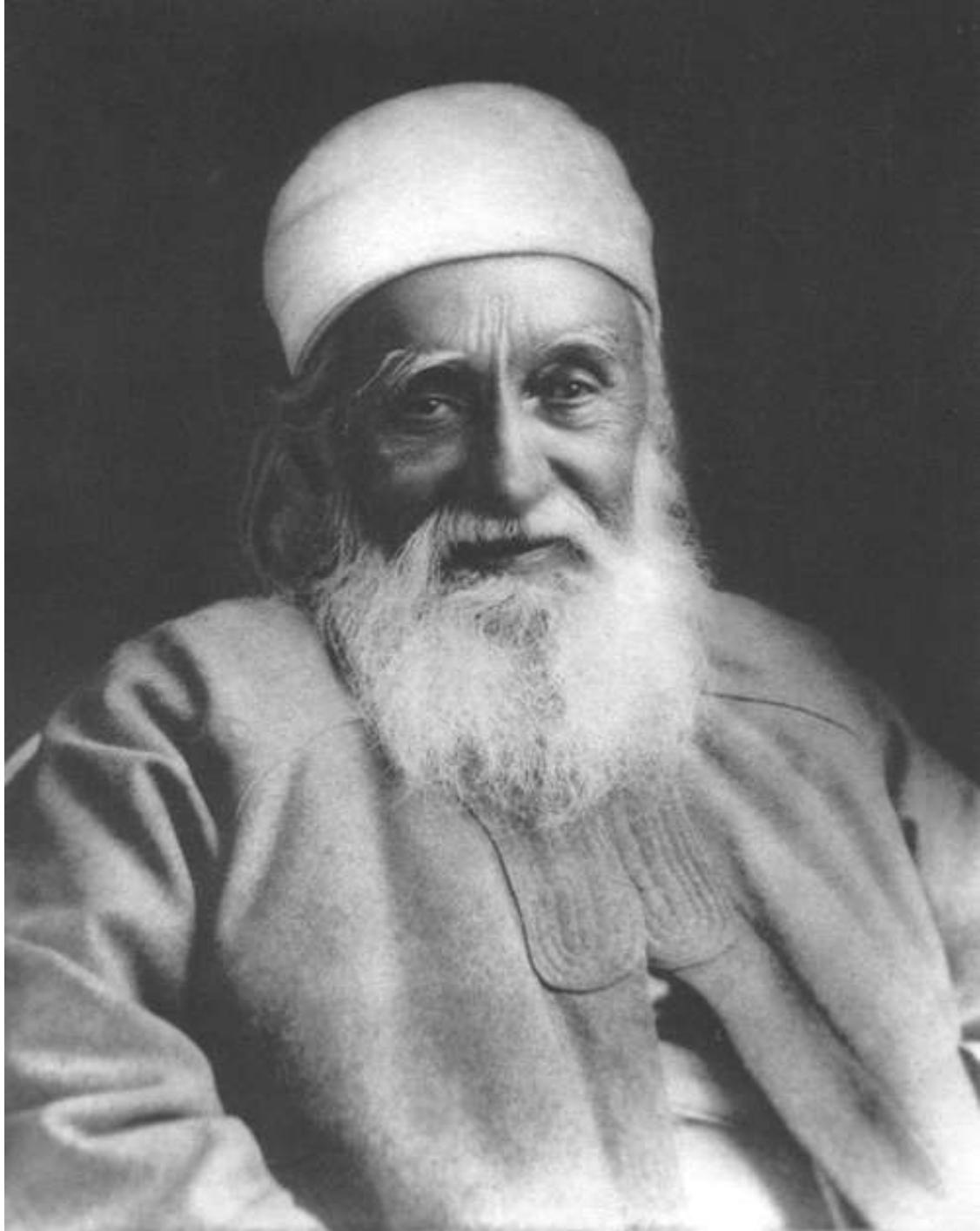
Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. (John 14:5-11)

All Manifestations Are Ontologically the Same

These Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity. In this respect, if thou callest them all by one name, and dost ascribe to them the same attribute, thou hast not erred from the truth. Even as He hath revealed: "No distinction do We make between any of His Messengers!" (Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 152)

Further Subjective Proofs: Two Crucial Problems Remained after I was an isolated Believer

- I had to transfer my principal allegiance from one image to another
- With 'Abdu'l-Bahá this was no problem—His eyes peered into my heart and soul



Whereas Bahá'u'lláh seemed remote,
severe, unapproachable

But there was a logical explanation for
this problem

EPISTLE
TO THE SON
OF THE WOLF

By *Pauline Ketchum*

the solution to this first problem soon became clear

I had to establish study for myself because I could no longer rely on the knowledge of others

O SON OF SPIRIT!

The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.

Like proof of the friend in Tasmania who loves you

or a proof of the existence of God

My Love Relationship Needed Nourishment

- I needed daily conversation and communion with the Friend because I no longer had the constant companionship of the near ones
- I needed to understand and appreciate what the Friend had been through and what qualities the Friend possessed
- I needed to hear all the various things the Friend had to say to me and what guidance He had to give
- It mattered little what the Friend might look like because appearances change over time and we were certainly only guessing about Christ's appearance

One Final Test or Proof Remained

(though there would be many other valuable tests without which no growth would have occurred)

The Test of Muḥammad

- I had to accept Him as being co-equal in station with Bahá'u'lláh, Whom I was only beginning to know
- I had to accept Him as being co-equal in station with Christ, with Whom I had an abiding love relationship
- I had to accept His revelation as possessing an impact on human history, perhaps greater than what Christ had accomplished
- I had to accept His revealed Word as true and as emanating from God.

Delighting in the Qur'an: Every Manifestation Confirms the Others

Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not "Trinity": desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is One Allah: glory be to Him: (for Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs. Christ disdaineth not to serve and worship Allah, nor do the angels, those nearest (to Allah) (Qur'an 4: 171-172)

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Baha'u'llah confirms that Muhammad discusses progressive revelation and the suffering of the Prophets

To them that are possessed of true understanding and insight **the Surah of Hud surely sufficeth.** Ponder a while those holy words in your heart, and, with utter detachment, strive to grasp their meaning. **Examine the wondrous behaviour of the Prophets, and recall the defamations and denials uttered by the children of negation and falsehood,** perchance you may cause the bird of the human heart to wing its flight away from the abodes of heedlessness and doubt unto the nest of faith and certainty, and drink deep from the pure waters of ancient wisdom, and partake of the fruit of the tree of divine knowledge. (**Baha'u'llah**, The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 5-6)

Muḥammad Portrays Progressive Revelation in the Surah of Hud

We sent Noah to his people (with a mission): "I have come to you with a Clear Warning: That ye serve none but Allah: verily I do fear for you the Penalty of a Grievous Day." Surah 11: 25-26

And We sent Moses, with Our Clear (Signs) and an authority manifest, unto Pharaoh and his Chiefs: but they followed the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was no right (guide). Surah 11:96-97

And so it was that Bahá'u'lláh and His Teachings Become My *Mizán* and He became my most intimate Companion

- The Standard by which I took myself into account each day
- The Standard by which I made critical choices in my daily life
- The Standard by which I could understand what was happening in the world
- The Standard by which I could decide how best to dedicate my energy and actions
- The Standard by which I could regulate everything I think, every course of action I undertake, and the means by which I prepare myself for the transition to the afterlife.

We still must think for ourselves!

- Bahá'u'lláh does not reveal a canon of law, but standards and systems for making wise decisions.
- We have the “standard,” but the standard requires that we examine the facts, the writings, the alternatives responses.
- Independent investigation of the truth still applies even after we have accepted Bahá'u'lláh as our *mizán*.

where once Bahá'u'lláh was remote,
now He is my most intimate Friend
and every minute of every day I commune with Him

“O Bahá'u'lláh!” when I’m joyful

“O Bahá'u'lláh” when I’m suffering

“O Bahá'u'lláh” when something goes right!

“O Bahá'u'lláh” when something goes wrong

The dissolution of the tabernacle wherein the soul of the Manifestation of God had chosen temporarily to abide signalized its release from the restrictions which an earthly life had, of necessity, imposed upon it. Its influence no longer circumscribed by any physical limitations, its radiance no longer beclouded by its human temple, that soul could henceforth energize the whole world to a degree unapproached at any stage in the course of its existence on this planet.

--Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 244

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Happy Bicentenary!