

## *In the Name of the Creator of Lovers*

I am writing this story in the city of Haifa on the slopes of Mount Carmel; a city which is a focal centre for the world's spiritual lovers, from whatever colour or race they may be. Lovers who, whether living in the heart of Africa or dwelling on the highest peaks of South America; lovers who inhabit the warm islands of the east, or those who reside in the snow-filled lands of the north of our planet, are, one and all, filled with blissful joy and ecstasy by the mention or the thought of Haifa and Carmel.

*A mention of Thy Name went by;  
the lovers caught it far and nigh.  
With blissful joy it made them dance;  
no matter whether bold or shy.*

At precisely five thirty every afternoon, after having eagerly and fervently walked the distance from the House of the Master to the Shrine of the Báb, and having climbed the two hundred and fifty steps on the way, I arrive at the Pilgrim House that is situated in the proxi-

mity of the Shrine, and inhale the perfumed fragrances of the breezes of love. I gaze upon the shining dome of the Shrine of the Blessed Báb surrounded by elegant cypress trees, and from the resplendent dome that so resembles a golden crown my eyes move down and fall upon the figure of the graceful Queen of Carmel adorned with an emerald belt and seated upon her throne. Every morning hundreds of visitors arrive between the hours of nine and midday, which is the period specifically intended for the tourists to visit the Shrine, and each one extols its majesty and glory in his own words. As the poet says:

*Each one in his unique way  
yearns to sing Thy praise this day*

I recall one evening whilst I was in the company of some friends in the courtyard next to the Pilgrim House, a young American man who was not a Bahá'í arrived through the southern gate. He was dragging his suitcase and luggage, and looked utterly exhausted and worn out. The young man said that he had come to visit the Shrine of the Báb. Upon hearing that the tourists' visiting hours were confined to the mornings, a deep expression of despair appeared on his face. «My sole purpose in coming to Haifa was to visit this Shrine», he said, «I have just arrived and my plane leaves for Holland in the morning». Of course he did attain his wish; he was not denied the visit to the Threshold from which none re-

turns disappointed, and he also enjoyed the hospitality and loving kindness of the friends.

The Shrine of the Báb is indeed exquisite. Irrespective of the occupation or artistic talents of the observer; young and old, man and woman alike, engineers and musicians, poets and physicians, each and every one praises and glorifies it. Yes, the visitors and the tourists do praise it, but it is only the lovers of the Most Exalted One who are mindful that this beautiful monument that shines as a precious gem within the heart of Carmel is but a shell that contains within its bosom a resplendent pearl. A pearl, a lustrous jewel, the notion of which stirs bewildering remembrances and images in their minds: the remembrance of those seven years brimming with trials and afflictions; the recollection of the twenty thousand martyrs; the memory of the sacrificing heroes of the events in Ṭabarsí, Nayríz, Zanján, and the seven martyrs of Tihrán; and finally the image of that square in Tabríz. The image of a young lover who up to his last breath would not let go of the hem of the robe of the Lord of the worlds, and who made his breast the target for the myriad darts of tyranny, and a shield against the afflictions heaped upon the Saviour of the nations; a lover whose being, in the end, was mingled with that of his Lord in such wise that the Most Exalted Pen describes it in the following words:

Verily, We recall in this state, Muḥammad ‘Alí; the one whose flesh was mingled with that of his beloved Lord,

whose blood was intertwined with His blood, body to body and bones to bones.\*

While the poet, in the realm of fancy, ripped apart his garment so that naught would come between him and his beloved, this youth tore asunder his body and crushed his bones so that no obstacle would hinder him from uniting with his Adored One. Manifold legends have been written regarding the enamoured lovers in the world, and myriads of tales, poems, and dramatic works and presentations have been left to posterity in diverse languages; yet, people never tire from reading and hearing them. In Persia, even after the lapse of centuries, stories such as *Shírín* and *Farhád*, or *Laylí* and *Majnún*<sup>†</sup> have remained as popular as ever. Shakespeare's renowned works of *Othello*, or *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as other similar literary compositions written in European languages never exhaust the theatres and cinemas of the world; and furthermore every year, hundreds of thousands of tourists travel to the locations where these love stories were imagined to have occurred. In the Spanish city of Teruel<sup>‡</sup> exist the tombs of two ill-fated lovers;

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\* TN: Provisional translation.

<sup>†</sup> The stories of *Khusraw and Shírín*, and *Laylí and Majnún*, are two of the immortal works of Abú Muḥammad Ilyás Nizámí (535-599 AH [1140-1202 AD]), and are found in his book *Kḥamsih Nizámí*.

*Khusraw and Shírín* was written around the year 576 AH [1180AD], and *Laylí and Majnún* was composed around 584 AH [1188AD].

<sup>‡</sup> 'The lovers of Teruel' is a romantic legend that is alleged to have happened in Teruel; one of the interior cities of Spain; where two ill-fated lovers; Diego de Marcilla and Isabel de Segura, were overtaken by death in a heartbreaking manner and who are buried next to one another.

which every year thousands travel from all over the country to visit. Yet, most of these imaginary stories are simply the product of the vivid mind and the creative pen of their authors. Some have gone as far as writing volumes expressing their doubts as to whether it was Shakespeare himself who composed these works, so one can imagine how much more would the authenticity of the legends themselves be doubted.\*

But, the story of the love of Mírzá Muḥammad ‘Alíy-i-Zunúzí is a true story, it is a historical fact. It is a story for the fostering of which the likes of Shakespeare need to be reborn to delve deep into its depth, to explore it point by point, and to convey its reality to the whole world; not merely through fantasy, but rather by relating the actual event. The emergence of such stories in the real world can only transpire in the religious realm and

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\* The Shakespearean plays have always seemed so marvellous due to their excellence, variety, and vast scope, that some have even considered it impossible that an individual with the conditions of life of that of their author would have had composed them. During the nineteenth century, some literary critics who had closely studied these works doubted that these had been the works of Shakespeare himself. These debates reached their height during this century and on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the birth of the writer. The works of this great author have even been attributed to people such as Bacon, Ruthland, Oxford, etc. Among the mentioned individuals, the well known philosopher and politician, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) has attracted the most attention, and it has been said that he did not wish these works to be published under his own name, because of his status and position. Individuals such as Emerson, Disraeli, and Dickens have been among the supporters of this theory. Some have even gone as far as saying that Shakespeare -just like Homer, the Greek epic poet of a few centuries prior to Jesus Christ- is simply a general name applied to the literature of that age. Needless to say that the views and reasons set forth by these people did not convince the majority of the scholars and researchers, and that Shakespeare remains as a shining star above the British, or rather above the world's horizon.

within the purity of spiritual love. Throughout the history of the bygone Religions –and with the exception of the steadfastness and devotion manifested by Messengers and holy Ones (such as Jesus Christ in the Christian Era, or the Prince of Martyrs\* in Islam)– selfless lovers similar to those of the Bahá'í Faith were not so often found among the believers.

The Manifestations of God are in essence the same light dawning from various horizons. The histories of their Faiths also highly resemble one another. In certain aspects, the history of Judaism is not unlike that of Islam; similarly, among other characteristics, Christianity and

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\* While Jesus Christ was the Word of God and a Divine Manifestation, and although the Prince of Martyrs was one of the Imáms of the Islamic Dispensation, the martyrdom of these two blessed souls have each, in some way, caused the renewal and the salvation of religious life. The Christian world believes that Jesus Christ conferred salvation to the world through His martyrdom. In Islam, merely a few years after the passing of the Prophet Muḥammad, history took a different course as a result of the domination of the Baní-Umayyih [Dynasty of the Umayyads]. Those who came to power as Caliphs, were immersed in that which was forbidden and prohibited, and further openly expressed their enmity with Islám, with the Qur'án, and with the descendents of the Prophet Himself. They became in fact the manifestations of the very beasts referred to in chapter 11 of the Book of Revelation. The confrontation of Ḥusayn, son of 'Alí before the Baní-Umayyih, and finally His martyrdom awoke people to the reality of their position. As such, the martyrdom of Ḥusayn is considered as one of the very significant events of the history of Islam, not only by the Shí'ites but even by the Sunnis as well as the unbiased researchers.

Considering this reality, it is not surprising that in the Islamic Prophesies the advent of Bahá'u'lláh, that is to say that the blessed Personage who was to appear after the advent of the Promised Qá'im, at times has been referred to as the manifestation of Christ, and at times as the return of Ḥusayn. In his book *Baháru'l-Anvár* (vol. 13), Majlisí writes: «And the Spirit of God –Jesus son of Mary– shall descend and shall perform the Obligatory Prayer behind Him». Majlisí also relates from Abí 'Abdu'lláh: «... It is Ḥusayn son of 'Alí, the One Who shall wash the dead body of the Mahdí (the Promised One), and will rule over the world until the time that God wishes...».

the Bahá'í Faith share the element of oppression suffered by their Founders. However, a historical comparison of the initial years of both Revelations and of the conditions of their early believers, serves as a vivid example and a valuable lesson for those who are aware of the intensity of the splendour of the Day-Star of Reality in this wondrous Revelation, and for those who are eagerly awaiting to behold the future of this great and mighty Cause.

A comparison between the events of the last evening spent by Christ and by the Báb, as well as the conditions of Their respective disciples, throws light on realities that may serve as an example to any fair-minded observer. Jesus Christ spent three years summoning the Jews, and despite the severe enmity of His foes He never ceased to teach the Faith of God. During this time, more or less one hundred and twenty people embraced His Cause\*, from among whom twelve were chosen to accompany Him everywhere. Although He invariably spoke to His disciples of love and sacrifice, and whilst He continually exhorted them to live the life of the Kingdom, and even though He counselled them against attachment to this mortal world, it was not until the moment that He Himself stepped forth and sacrificed His own life, that any of them truly recognized the meaning of His words, or any one was found willing to give his life in His path.†

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\* The Bible, The Acts of the Apostles 1:15.

† The first Christian martyr was Stephen who was killed after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as consented by Saul (Paul) who had not yet become a believer. The account of his martyrdom is recorded in chapter 7 of the Acts of the Apostles.

In his book *Jám-i-Jam*<sup>\*</sup>, Awḥadí has set this reality to poetry as follows:

*The disciples of Christ in His presence one day  
had gathered to listen, seek wisdom and pray.  
The mysteries of love He explained to them there  
at times within riddles, at other times bare.  
His fatigue they witnessed for He didn't disguise  
and more closely they looked they saw tears in His eyes.  
For a sign of His love, they asked with desire,  
He said: «Nigh is the day of Abraham's fire».  
Thus early next morning at the break of the day  
He stepped on the gallows; said to their dismay:  
«For any of ye with a clear and fair mind,  
this sign is the greatest that ye ever will find».*

The final evening of Christ was the most sorrowful eve that any of the Manifestations of God has seen in this world. On that evening, upon learning that one of His chosen disciples had bartered Him in return of thirty silver coins, He assembled them and spoke to them of His own departure. He then left them for a few moments to engage in prayer and worship. When He returned to their midst, He found His disciples asleep. He protested to them saying how could they wish for ease and comfort at such a time, and why had they not joined Him in prayer. Yet, when He returned to them a second time, He

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<sup>\*</sup> Awḥadí, the mystic poet from Ádhirbáyján (the north-western region of Iran), lived in the XIV century. His book *Jám-i-Jam* consisting of some five thousand verses of poetry is considered his masterpiece which brought great fame to its author.



again found them asleep.\* When His Holiness was seized and taken away, the disciples all fled with the exception of Peter and another apostle who both followed Him from a distance. Peter was recognised but he denied his Lord. Upon the persistence of the enemy, and in order to free himself from its clutches, he started to curse and vilify his Lord in the face of Christ Himself. As recorded in the Bible, Jesus gave him such a look that penetrated to the depths of his being.† Such was the beginning of a Cause and the end of the earthly life of a Manifestation of God; One Whom –two thousand years later– two thousand million followers throughout the world still adore.

When the Blessed Báb winged His flight from this world to the realms above, thousands had already lovingly laid down their lives in His path, and had bowed their heads before the mesh of His love. And it is the account of the last evening of His life –an elucidating lesson for friends and foes alike– which is the theme of our story.

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\* Matthew chapter 26.

† Luke chapter 22.