

# To understand the Bahá'í World Centre

*A study of the Tablet of Carmel encouraged by our much loved member of the International Teaching Centre, Viola Haake.*

## **The Actual Text: (The dialog is that of a conversation between the lover and the Beloved)**

All glory be to this Day, the Day in which the fragrances of mercy have been wafted over all created things, a Day so blest that past ages and centuries can never hope to rival it, a Day in which the countenance of the Ancient of Days hath turned towards His holy seat. Thereupon the voices of all created things, and beyond them those of the Concourse on high, were heard calling aloud: "Haste thee, O Carmel, for lo, the light of the countenance of God, the Ruler of the Kingdom of Names and Fashioner of the heavens, hath been lifted upon thee."

Seized with transports of joy, and raising high her voice, she thus exclaimed: "May my life be a sacrifice to Thee, inasmuch as Thou hast fixed Thy gaze upon me, hast bestowed upon me Thy bounty, and hast directed towards me Thy steps. Separation from Thee, O Thou Source of everlasting life, hath well nigh consumed me, and my remoteness from Thy presence hath burned away my soul. All praise be to Thee for having enabled me to hearken to Thy call, for having honored me with Thy footsteps, and for having quickened my soul through the vitalizing fragrance of Thy Day and the shrilling voice of Thy Pen, a voice Thou didst ordain as Thy trumpet-call amidst Thy people. And when the hour at which Thy resistless Faith was to be made manifest did strike, Thou didst breathe a breath of Thy spirit into Thy Pen, and lo, the entire creation shook to its very foundations, unveiling to mankind such mysteries as lay hidden within the treasuries of Him Who is the Possessor of all created things."

No sooner had her voice reached that most exalted Spot than We made reply: "Render thanks unto thy Lord, O Carmel. The fire of thy separation from Me was fast consuming thee, when the ocean of My presence surged before thy face, cheering thine eyes and those of all creation, and filling with delight all things visible and invisible. Rejoice, for God hath in this Day established upon thee His throne, hath made thee the dawning-place of His signs and the day spring of the evidences of His Revelation. Well is it with him that circleth around thee, that proclaimeth the revelation of thy glory, and recounteth that which the bounty of the Lord thy God hath showered upon thee. Seize thou the Chalice of Immortality in the name of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, and give thanks unto Him, inasmuch as He, in token of His mercy unto thee, hath turned thy sorrow into gladness, and transmuted thy grief into blissful joy. He, verily, loveth the spot which hath been made the seat of His throne, which His footsteps have trodden, which hath been honored by His presence, from which He raised His call, and upon which He shed His tears.

"Call out to Zion, O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing

splendor is revealed. Beware lest thou hesitate or halt. Hasten forth and circumambulate the City of God that hath descended from heaven, the celestial Kaaba round which have circled in adoration the favored of God, the pure in heart, and the company of the most exalted angels. Oh, how I long to announce unto every spot on the surface of the earth, and to carry to each one of its cities, the glad-tidings of this Revelation -- a Revelation to which the heart of Sinai hath been attracted, and in whose name the Burning Bush is calling: 'Unto God, the Lord of Lords, belong the kingdoms of earth and heaven.' Verily this is the Day in which both land and sea rejoice at this announcement, the Day for which have been laid up those things which God, through a bounty beyond the ken of mortal mind or heart, hath destined for revelation. Ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee, and will manifest the people of Bahá who have been mentioned in the Book of Names."

Sanctified be the Lord of all mankind, at the mention of Whose name all the atoms of the earth have been made to vibrate, and the Tongue of Grandeur hath been moved to disclose that which had been wrapt in His knowledge and lay concealed within the treasury of His might. He, verily, through the potency of His name, the Mighty, the All-Powerful, the Most High, is the ruler of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 15.)

### **Background:**

[Due to the comprehensive nature of the exploration of the Tablet of Carmel by Adíb Taherzadeh it will be quoted in full]

#### 1. The Charter for the World Centre Lawh-i-Karmil

This well-known Tablet in Arabic was revealed by Bahá'u'lláh on Mount Carmel and is one of the most momentous revealed during His Ministry. The first time Bahá'u'lláh visited Haifa was in 1868 when the Austrian Lloyd steamer arrived there in the morning of 31 August. Haifa was then a small town. Bahá'u'lláh disembarked from the ship, stayed a few hours on shore and then sailed to the prison-city of 'Akká. About fifteen years later, when He had moved His residence to the Mansion of Bahjí, Bahá'u'lláh paid a short visit to Haifa and stayed in a house in the German colony. As we have mentioned in a previous volume,[2] a number of German Templers, expecting the return of Christ, went to the Holy Land and built houses at the foot of Mount Carmel, but none recognized Him when He appeared among them. Bahá'u'lláh even lived in their houses and revealed a Tablet for their chief, yet they remained deprived of the knowledge of the advent of the Day of God. The third visit took place in 1890 when He again stayed in the German colony; and the fourth visit, about a year before His ascension, took place in 1891 when He spent about three months in that area.

It is believed to be on this occasion that Bahá'u'lláh went to the Cave of Elijah on Mount Carmel. Centuries before, a Christian order had built a monastery over it in the expectation that Christ, returning in the glory of the Father, would bless it with His presence. It is not surprising that, like the German Templers, none of the monks who were present at the time recognized the station of Bahá'u'lláh when He visited that place. Bahá'u'lláh pitched His Tent in close proximity to the monastery and there revealed the Tablet of Carmel. It is well known that in the future a Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (Bahá'í House of Worship) will be built on that site.

This Tablet contains significant allusions to the establishment of the World Centre of the Faith and is considered its charter. Before the revelation of this Tablet there was apparently nothing in Bahá'u'lláh's Writings concerning the international Seat of His world-encircling order. From the moment He blessed the mountain of God with His footsteps, mysterious forces were released for the creation of the spiritual and administrative centre of the Faith, a centre from which the world-vivifying energies latent within His Revelation will flow to mankind.

In the Tablet of Carmel Bahá'u'lláh enters into a dialogue with the mountain, Carmel. This is not unusual; in other Tablets He has similarly addressed certain cities or locations -- for instance His address to the Land of Ta (Tehran), or His dialogue with Jerusalem as revealed in the Lawh-i-Aqdás. The dialogue in the Tablet of Carmel is at once beautiful, profound and moving. The sublime picture that Bahá'u'lláh has portrayed begins with Himself as He directs His footsteps towards Carmel; the first act in this divine scene is when the voices of 'all created things' are heard addressing Carmel. Then comes Carmel's jubilant words in thanksgiving to its Lord and finally Bahá'u'lláh's response. The opening paragraph of this Tablet raises the curtain of this exalted spectacle.

All glory be to this Day, the Day in which the fragrances of mercy have been wafted over all created things, a Day so blest that past ages and centuries can never hope to rival it, a Day in which the countenance of the Ancient of Days hath turned towards His holy seat. Thereupon the voices of all created things, and beyond them those of the Concourse on High, were heard calling aloud: 'Haste thee, O Carmel, for lo, the light of the countenance of God, the Ruler of the Kingdom of Names and Fashioner of the heavens, hath been lifted upon thee.'

How fascinating is the concept of the voices informing Carmel of Bahá'u'lláh's arrival there, and how beautiful are the words, 'Haste thee, O Carmel, for lo, the light of the countenance of God, the Ruler of the Kingdom of Names and Fashioner of heavens, hath been lifted upon thee.' In this passage Bahá'u'lláh extols the glory of His Revelation and clearly indicates that by His presence there, He has chosen Mount Carmel as 'His holy seat'. The seat is a visible sign, an outward centre of His innermost majesty and dominion.

Of course, the voices of 'all created things' mentioned in the above passage are not heard physically by anyone, let alone when addressing a mountain. This is a spiritual phenomena which only the Manifestation of God has access to. However, it is interesting

to note that on countless occasions Bahá'u'lláh has stated that all created things such as the atoms of the earth, the drops of the ocean, the rocks and the trees have been exhilarated through the vibrating influence of His Revelation. For example, in the Lawh-i-Aqdás He testifies that 'every stone and every tree shouteth aloud: "The Lord is come in His great glory".'

In another Tablet He expresses astonishment that whereas the mineral world is vibrating through the breath of God's utterances in this day, the generality of mankind has remained unaffected. When Bahá'u'lláh was sailing from Gallipoli to 'Akká He indicated in a Tablet that because the Lord was sailing the drops of the sea were exhilarated in such wise that He heard from each drop what no ear could ever hear. We as human beings are not in a position to see or hear such expressions from lifeless objects. We can do no better than to admit our inability to grasp these statements from a physical point of view, but to try to understand their spiritual significance.

On the other hand, all things in the universe are somehow related to each other, and every created thing, even an atom, must have some relationship with its creator. But how that relationship works we shall never know. Science has already proved that many things are happening around us which the human body has no way of sensing. For example, the human senses are incapable of detecting electromagnetic waves, yet we are immersed within them. Lately scientists have discovered that trees communicate with each other, but how this is done they have not yet found out. They have proved this by letting a swarm of insects attack one tree. They have noticed that as a result all other trees within a large area change their chemistry in readiness for a similar attack. Our senses are incapable of detecting such a communication.

If this is so, can we not believe that as attested by Bahá'u'lláh there was a certain reaction by the drops of the sea as He, embodying the Most Great Spirit of God, moved over them? Or can we not say that Mt. Carmel expressed, in a language that its Creator alone could understand, a feeling of exhilaration as Bahá'u'lláh walked over it? But who knows the answer to these questions? Whatever these statements may signify to each believer, let us remember that Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly mentioned them in His Writings. It is not right to look upon God and His creation through one's limited and narrow vision. Who knows the mysterious workings of God in this vast universe? Who knows in what manner all created things respond to their Creator?

A simple and an enlightened approach to the study of the Tablet of Carmel is to consider the dialogue between the voice of the mountain and that of Bahá'u'lláh as a way of expressing God's plan in the language of imagery. That plan was to erect upon that mountain the majestic seat of His spiritual and temporal sovereignty. In this dialogue the mountain of God addresses Bahá'u'lláh in this fashion:

Seized with transports of joy, and raising high her voice, she thus exclaimed:  
'May my life be a sacrifice to Thee, inasmuch as Thou hast fixed Thy gaze upon me, hast bestowed upon me Thy bounty, and hast directed towards me Thy steps.  
Separation from Thee, O Thou Source of everlasting life, hath well nigh

consumed me, and my remoteness from Thy presence hath burned away my soul. All praise be to Thee for having enabled me to hearken to Thy call, for having honoured me with Thy footsteps, and for having quickened my soul through the vitalizing fragrance of Thy Day and the shrilling voice of Thy Pen, a voice Thou didst ordain as Thy trumpet-call amidst Thy people. And when the hour at which Thy resistless Faith was to be made manifest did strike, Thou didst breathe a breath of Thy spirit into Thy Pen, and lo, the entire creation shook to its very foundations, unveiling to mankind such mysteries as lay hidden within the treasuries of Him Who is the Possessor of all created things.'

The literal significance of these words is that before Bahá'u'lláh's visit which blessed the spot with His footsteps, Mt. Carmel was a desolate wilderness, a heap of rocks and rubble. 'Separation from Thee, O Thou Source of everlasting life, hath well nigh consumed me, and my remoteness from Thy presence hath burned away my soul.' And Bahá'u'lláh's response changes the scene of desolation into that of joy and luxuriance: 'Rejoice, for God hath in this Day established upon thee His throne . . . give thanks unto Him in as much as He . . . hath turned Thy sorrow into gladness . . .' are the reassuring words of Bahá'u'lláh. How clearly these words re-echo the vision of Isaiah:

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.

In these statements by Bahá'u'lláh there is no ambiguity as to where the international Seat of His Faith was to be established. From the moment this Tablet was revealed, Mt. Carmel was destined to flourish and become the World Centre of a World Faith, the early stages of which have already come into being. Bahá'u'lláh addresses Carmel in these words:

No sooner had her voice reached that most exalted Spot than We made reply: 'Render thanks unto Thy Lord, O Carmel. The fire of thy separation from Me was fast consuming thee, when the ocean of My presence surged before thy face, cheering thine eyes and those of all creation, and filling with delight all things visible and invisible. Rejoice, for God hath in this Day established upon thee His throne, hath made thee the dawning-place of His signs and the dayspring of the evidences of His Revelation. Well is it with him that circleteth around thee, that proclaimeth the revelation of thy glory, and recounteth that which the bounty of the Lord thy God hath showered upon thee. Seize thou the Chalice of Immortality in the name of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, and give thanks unto Him, inasmuch as He, in token of His mercy unto thee, hath turned thy sorrow into gladness, and transmuted thy grief into blissful joy. He, verily, loveth the spot which hath been made the seat of His throne, which His footsteps have trodden which hath been honoured by His presence, from which He raised His call, and upon which He shed His tears.

Although the voice of Bahá'u'lláh in this Tablet is directed to Carmel, and many of the passages concern the building of the World Centre of the Faith, in reality He is also addressing His followers. Indeed, there are many meanings concealed in this Tablet which the believers may be able to grasp by turning to Bahá'u'lláh in an attitude of prayer and meditation. It is not proper for us to embark upon interpretations of the many passages which are pregnant with divine wisdom and which foreshadow great events. Every individual believer has to deepen himself in the knowledge of the Faith and through prayer and study of the Writings discover the significances which are concealed therein. Each soul is entitled to discover his own interpretation, which must, however, remain personal; his findings will never be authoritative unless they conform to the interpretations of the Master and the Guardian of the Faith.

The following are the concluding passages of the Tablet of Carmel:

‘Call out to Zion, O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendour is revealed. Beware lest thou hesitate or halt. Hasten forth and circumambulate the City of God that hath descended from heaven, the celestial Kaaba round which have circled in adoration the favoured of God, the pure in heart, and the company of the most exalted angels. Oh, how I long to announce unto every spot on the surface of the earth, and to carry to each one of its cities, the glad-tidings of this Revelation -- a Revelation to which the heart of Sinai hath been attracted, and in whose name the Burning Bush is calling: “Unto God, the Lord of Lords, belong the kingdoms of earth and heaven.” Verily this is the Day in which both land and sea rejoice at this announcement, the Day for which have been laid up those things which God, through a bounty beyond the ken of mortal mind or heart, hath destined for revelation. Ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee, and will manifest the people of Bahá who have been mentioned in the Book of Names.’

Sanctified be the Lord of all mankind, at the mention of Whose name all the atoms of the earth have been made to vibrate, and the Tongue of Grandeur hath been moved to disclose that which had been wrapt in His knowledge and lay concealed within the treasury of His might. He, verily through the potency of His name, the Mighty, the All-Powerful, the Most High, is the ruler of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth.

The first part of the above passage, ‘Call out to Zion, O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come!’ may be regarded as a commandment of Bahá'u'lláh to proclaim His Cause to mankind.

The longing of Bahá'u'lláh ‘to announce unto every spot on the surface of the earth, and to carry to each one of its cities, the glad-tidings of this Revelation . . .’ may be said to have been fulfilled initially by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá with the issuing of the Tablets of the Divine Plan. These Tablets, fourteen in all, which constituted the charter for the teaching of the

Faith, were addressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the Bahá’ís of North America. He delineated a world-encircling plan of teaching, the initial stages of which were later incorporated by Shoghi Effendi into a series of national plans which were followed by a world plan known as the Ten Year Crusade. The implementation of the latter was particularly responsible for carrying the Message of Bahá’u’lláh to almost every part of the world. This process will continue until such time as these utterances of Bahá’u’lláh revealed in the Lawh-i-Dunyá are fulfilled:

How vast is the tabernacle of the Cause of God! It hath overshadowed all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and will, ere long, gather together the whole of mankind beneath its shelter.

The most significant part of the Tablet of Carmel is the following:

Hasten forth and circumambulate the City of God that hath descended from heaven, the celestial Kaaba round which have circled in adoration the favoured of God.

Shoghi Effendi has interpreted the meaning of the ‘City of God, the celestial Kaaba’ as the Shrine of the Báb on Mt. Carmel. The forces which were released by Bahá’u’lláh for the implementation of the mighty enterprise involving the transfer of the remains of the Báb and the building of His Shrine became effective almost immediately after the revelation of this Tablet. Bahá’u’lláh one day went to the heart of the mountain where a clump of cypress trees was growing in a circle. His tent was pitched in the centre, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was present in His service. Shoghi Effendi has described this event in these words:

In that same year Bahá’u’lláh’s tent, the ‘Tabernacle of Glory’, was raised on Mt. Carmel, ‘the Hill of God and His Vineyard’, the home of Elijah, extolled by Isaiah as the ‘mountain of the Lord’, to which ‘all nations shall flow’.

An eye-witness has explained that while Bahá’u’lláh was facing the East and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá the West, the Tongue of Grandeur issued instructions to the Master to arrange the transportation of the remains of the Báb from Persia to the Holy Land and their interment in a mausoleum below the clump of cypress trees at a spot which He indicated with His hand. Thus the initial step for this holy enterprise was undertaken by Bahá’u’lláh Himself.

It took almost eight years before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was able to arrange the transfer of the remains of the Báb. The casket containing the sacred remains arrived in ‘Akká on January 1899. Ten years later on Naw-Rúz 1909 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, with His own hands and in the presence of believers from East and West, placed the wooden casket inside a marble sarcophagus which was lowered into the vault built especially for it inside one of the six rooms constructed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for this purpose. In a Tablet He conveyed this good news to the believers in these words:

The most joyful tidings is this, that the holy, the luminous body of the Báb . . . after having for sixty years been transferred from place to place, by reason of the ascendancy of the enemy, and from fear of the malevolent, and having known neither rest nor tranquillity has, through the mercy of the Abha Beauty, been ceremoniously deposited, on the day of Naw-Rúz, within the sacred casket, in the exalted Shrine on Mt. Carmel . . . By a strange coincidence, on that same day of Naw-Rúz a cablegram was received from Chicago, announcing that the believers in each of the American centers had elected a delegate and sent to that city . . . and definitely decided on the site and construction of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

In 1948 preparations were begun by Shoghi Effendi for the building of the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb. In the course of its construction in 1951 he gave this description in a message to the American believers:

I cannot at this juncture overemphasize the sacredness of that holy dust embosomed in the heart of the Vineyard of God, or overrate the unimaginable potencies of this mighty institution founded sixty years ago, through the operation of the Will of, and the definite selection made by, the Founder of our Faith, on the occasion of His historic visit to that holy mountain, nor can I lay too much stress on the role which this institution, to which the construction of the superstructure of this edifice is bound to lend an unprecedented impetus, is destined to play in the unfoldment of the World Administrative Center of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and in the efflorescence of its highest institutions constituting the embryo of its future World Order. For, just as in the realm of the spirit, the reality of the Báb has been hailed by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation as 'The Point round Whom the realities of the Prophets and Messengers revolve', so, on this visible plane, His sacred remains constitute the heart and center of what may be regarded as nine concentric circles,[1] paralleling thereby, and adding further emphasis to the central position accorded by the Founder of our Faith to One 'from Whom God hath caused to proceed the knowledge of all that was and shall be', 'the Primal Point from which have been generated all created things'.

By 1953 the superstructure of the Shrine of the Báb was completed by Shoghi Effendi. And now, 'the city of God . . . the celestial Kaaba, round which have circled in adoration the favoured of God, the pure in heart, and the company of the most exalted angels,' stands majestically in the bosom of God's mountain.

In his cable to the Bahá'í world Shoghi Effendi described the Shrine as the QUEEN OF CARMEL ENTHRONED GOD'S MOUNTAIN, CROWNED GLOWING GOLD, ROBED SHIMMERING WHITE, GIRDLED EMERALD GREEN, ENCHANTING EVERY EYE, FROM AIR, SEA, PLAIN, HILL.

Another significant passage in the Tablet of Carmel is the following:

Ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee, and will manifest the people of Bahá who have been mentioned in the Book of Names.

In the Bahá'í Writings the term 'Ark' is often used to signify the Cause of God, or the Covenant, and Bahá'u'lláh, the Holy Mariner. For example, the Báb in the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá has lauded the community of the Most Great Name, the Bahá'ís, as the companions of the Crimson-coloured Ark. But the 'Ark' in the Tablet of Carmel, according to Shoghi Effendi signifies the Ark of the Law of God. He explains that the sailing of the Ark upon Mount Carmel is an allusion to the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme legislative body of the Faith from which the law of God will flow to all mankind. Shoghi Effendi also refers to the members of the House of Justice as occupants of the Ark mentioned in the Tablet of Carmel. The Universal House of Justice is the main organ of the international Administrative Centre of the Faith, while there are other institutions which form part of this centre.

Again, the Prophets of Israel foresaw these events thousands of years ago, as in this quotation from Isaiah:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

The first step taken by Shoghi Effendi in creating the world Administrative Centre was the acquisition of land on Mt. Carmel in close proximity to the Shrine of the Báb, and the interment of the remains of the Greatest Holy Leaf, the daughter of Bahá'u'lláh, the noblest woman in the Bahá'í Dispensation, in that consecrated spot. This was followed by the transfer of the remains of the Purest Branch, 'created of the light of Bahá', the martyred son of Bahá'u'lláh, offered up by his Father as a 'ransom for the unification of the human race', together with those of his mother, the saintly Navvab, and their burial in the same surroundings. The next step taken by Shoghi Effendi was the creation of an arc surrounding these resting-places and facing the Qiblih[1] of the people of Bahá. The various institutions of the Administrative Centre, including the Universal House of Justice, were to be housed in several edifices erected around this arc. The initial step in the construction of this Administrative Centre was taken when the International Archives Building was built; it was completed by Shoghi Effendi in 1957. Since then the Seat of the Universal House of Justice has been constructed, and it is now planned to erect other edifices to house the remaining institutions and thus complete the Bahá'í World Administrative Centre. The establishment of the Throne of God mentioned in the Tablet of Carmel, as interpreted by Shoghi Effendi, is none other than the establishment of the World Centre on Mount Carmel. He writes:

The conjunction of these three resting-places, under the shadow of the Báb's own Tomb, embosomed in the heart of Carmel, facing the snow-white city across the bay of 'Akká the Qiblih of the Bahá'í world, set in a garden of exquisite beauty, reinforces, if we would correctly estimate its significance, the spiritual potencies of a spot, designated by Bahá'u'lláh Himself the seat of God's throne. It marks, too, a further milestone in the road leading eventually to the establishment of that permanent world Administrative Centre of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth, destined never to be separated from, and to function in the proximity of, the Spiritual Centre of that Faith, in a land already revered and held sacred alike by the adherents of three of the world's outstanding religious systems.

The Spiritual Centre on Mt. Carmel is the Shrine of the Báb, 'the spot round which the Concourse on high circle in adoration'. The Administrative Centre is under the shadow of that sacred Shrine. The combination of the Spiritual and Administrative Centres constitute the Bahá'í World Centre on Mt. Carmel.

In former religions the spiritual and administrative centres have been separated from each other. In Christianity, for example, the administration of religion was moved away from the Holy Land which was its birthplace and spiritual home. This happened in Islam too: the seat of the Caliphate, the temporal ruling body, was established far away from Mecca. This separation of the spiritual and administrative centres in former religions may be regarded as a reflection of the disunity among their followers, divided as they were into many sects and denominations. One of the distinguishing features of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is that the Spiritual and Administrative Centres of the Faith are united and permanently established on the Mountain of God. The authority for this comes from Bahá'u'lláh in His Tablet of Carmel and it is He Who has released the spiritual forces for its realization. The progressive unfoldment of the international institutions of the Cause in the Holy Land demonstrates their inseparability from their spiritual centre. The unity of the two is symbolic of the unity of the Bahá'í community throughout the world, a unity which is destined to embrace the whole of mankind and the establishment of which within human society remains the main aim and purpose of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation for this age.

In one of his communications to the Bahá'í world, Shoghi Effendi projects his vision of the future development of the World Centre of the Faith, unveiling vistas of unimaginable glory in store for mankind:

The raising of this Edifice[1] will in turn herald the construction, in the course of successive epochs of the Formative Age of the Faith, of several other structures, which will serve as the administrative seats of such divinely appointed institutions as the Guardianship, the Hands of the Cause, and the Universal House of Justice. These Edifices will, in the shape of a far-flung arc, and following a harmonizing style of architecture, surround the resting-places of the Greatest Holy Leaf, ranking as foremost among the members of her sex in the Bahá'í Dispensation, of her Brother, offered up as a ransom by Bahá'u'lláh for the quickening of the world and its unification, and of their Mother, proclaimed by Him to be His

chosen ‘consort in all the worlds of God.’ The ultimate completion of this stupendous undertaking will mark the culmination of the development of a world-wide divinely-appointed Administrative Order whose beginnings may be traced as far back as the concluding years of the Heroic Age of the Faith.  
[1 Bahá’í International Archives Building. (A.T.)]

This vast and irresistible process, unexampled in the spiritual history of mankind, and which will synchronize with two no less significant developments -- the establishment of the Lesser Peace and the evolution of Bahá’í national and local institutions -- the one outside and the other within the Bahá’í world -- will attain its final consummation, in the Golden Age of the Faith, through the raising of the standard of the Most Great Peace, and the emergence, in the plenitude of its power and glory, of the focal Center of the agencies constituting the World Order of Bahá’u’lláh. The final establishment of this seat of the future Bahá’í World Commonwealth will signalize at once the proclamation of the sovereignty of the Founder of our Faith and the advent of the Kingdom of the Father repeatedly lauded and promised by Jesus Christ.

This World Order will, in turn, in the course of successive Dispensations of the Bahá’í Cycle, yield its fairest fruit through the birth and flowering of a civilization, divinely inspired, unique in its features, world-embracing in its scope and fundamentally spiritual in its character -- a civilization destined as it unfolds to derive its initial impulse from the spirit animating the very institutions which, in their embryonic state, are now stirring in the womb of the present Formative Age of the Faith.

(Adíb Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh v 4*, p. 357.)

2. In Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, Bahá’u’lláh, after citing the prophetic references made in the Psalms and the Books of Isaiah and Amos, concerning Zion, Jerusalem, Palestine and ‘Akká, states:

‘Carmel, in the Book of God, hath been designated as the Hill of God, and His Vineyard. It is here that, by the grace of the Lord of Revelation, the Tabernacle of Glory hath been raised. Happy are they that attain thereunto; happy they that set their faces towards it. And likewise He saith: “Our God will come, and He will not be silent.”’ ESW p.145

This Epistle, the last outstanding Tablet revealed by Bahá’u’lláh, was penned about a year before His death. There is a vital connection between the passage just cited and the Tablet of Carmel, which was revealed under extraordinary circumstances on that mountain. Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By* (p. 194), refers to the visit of Bahá’u’lláh to Mt. Carmel when He pitched His tent, the ‘Tabernacle of Glory’, in the vicinity of the Carmelite Monastery, Stella Maris, near the cave of Elijah. One evening when I was in Haifa, Shoghi Effendi related that it was in the course of this visit that Bahá’u’lláh revealed His Tablet addressed to that holy mountain, to which, according to Isaiah, ‘all

nations shall flow'. Shoghi Effendi said that Bahá'u'lláh chanted the Words of that Tablet with supreme majesty and power; that 'the forceful tone of His exalted language sounded all around, so that even the monks, within the walls of the monastery, heard every word uttered by Him. Such was the commotion created on that historical occasion,' the Guardian said, that 'the earth seemed to shake, while all those present were overpowered by His mighty and wondrous spirit.'

(Ugo Giachery, *Shoghi Effendi - Recollections*, p. 209.)

The term **Chalice of Immortality** was a fascinating term and required further investigation into the Writings:

1. The Celestial Youth hath, in this Day, raised above the heads of men the glorious **Chalice of Immortality**, and is standing expectant upon His seat, wondering what eye will recognize His glory, and what arm will, unhesitatingly, be stretched forth to seize the Cup from His snow-white Hand and drain it. Only a few have as yet quaffed from this peerless, this soft-flowing grace of the Ancient King. These occupy the loftiest mansions of Paradise, and are firmly established upon the seats of authority. By the righteousness of God! Neither the mirrors of His glory, nor the revealers of His names, nor any created thing, that hath been or will ever be, can ever excel them, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth... The righteous, inmates of the Kingdom on high, shall drink deep from the Wine of Holiness, in My name, the all-glorious. None other besides them will share such benefits. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 107.)
2. Emerge from behind the veil, by the leave of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful, and seize, before the eyes of those who are in the heavens and those who are on the earth, the **Chalice of Immortality**, in the name of thy Lord, the Inaccessible, the Most High, and quaff thy fill, and be not of them that tarry. I swear by God! The moment thou touchest the Cup with thy lips, the Concourse on high will acclaim thee saying, "Drink with healthy relish, O man that hast truly believed in God!" and the inhabitants of the Cities of Immortality will cry out, "Joy be to thee, O thou that hast drained the Cup of His love!" and the Tongue of Grandeur will hail thee, "Great is the blessedness that awaiteth thee, O My servant, for thou hast attained unto that which none hath attained, except such as have detached themselves from all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, and who are the emblems of true detachment." (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 148.)
3. O SON OF DUST! Turn not away thine eyes from the matchless wine of the immortal Beloved, and open them not to foul and mortal dregs. Take from the hands of the divine Cup-bearer the **chalice of immortal life**, that all wisdom may be thine, and that thou mayest hearken unto the mystic voice calling from the

realm of the invisible. Cry aloud, ye that are of low aim! Wherefore have ye turned away from My holy and immortal wine unto evanescent water?  
(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Persian Hidden Words*, #62)

4. In the utterances of the divine Luminaries the term “heaven” hath been applied to many and divers things; such as the “heaven of Command,” the “heaven of Will,” the “heaven of the divine Purpose,” the “heaven of divine Knowledge,” the “heaven of Certitude,” the “heaven of Utterance,” the “heaven of Revelation,” the “heaven of Concealment,” and the like. In every instance, He hath given the term “heaven” a special meaning, the significance of which is revealed to none save those that have been initiated into the divine mysteries, and have drunk from the **chalice of immortal life**. (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 67.)
5. O Lord! Thou beholdest this lifeless one before Thy face; suffer him, through Thy generosity and bountiful favour, not to be deprived of the **chalice of immortal life**. And Thou seest this afflicted one standing before Thy throne; turn him not away from the ocean of Thy healing. I entreat Thee to enable me at all times and under all conditions to remember Thee, to magnify Thy Name and to serve Thy Cause, though I am well aware that whatever proceedeth from a servant cannot transcend the limitations of his soul, nor beseem Thy Lordship, nor be worthy of the court of Thy glory and Thy majesty. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 112.)
6. The first meeting of Mulla Ali with the Báb, which was analogous to the meeting with Mulla Husayn, differed only in this respect, that whereas at the previous meeting the proofs and testimonies of the Báb's mission had been critically scrutinised and expounded, at this one all argument had been set aside and nothing but the spirit of intense adoration and of close and ardent fellowship prevailed. The entire chamber seemed to have been vitalised by that celestial potency which emanated from His inspired utterance. Everything in that room seemed to be vibrating with this testimony: “Verily, verily, the dawn of a new Day has broken. The promised One is enthroned in the hearts of men. In His hand He holds the mystic cup, the **chalice of immortality**. Blessed are they who drink therefrom!” (Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 69.)

In the verse, “...**a Revelation to which the heart of Sinai hath been attracted, and in whose name the Burning Bush is calling: ‘Unto God, the Lord of Lords, belong the kingdoms of earth and heaven.’**” It recalls the explanation given by the Guardian when asked about the Speaker on Sinai who spoke to Moses through the Burning Bush.

1. Bahá'u'lláh is not the intermediary between other Manifestations and God. Each has His own relation to the Primal Source. But in the sense that Bahá'u'lláh is the greatest Manifestation to yet appear, the One who consummates the Revelation of Moses, He was the One Moses conversed with in the Burning Bush. In other

words, Bahá'u'lláh identifies the glory of the God-Head on that occasion with Himself. No distinction can be made amongst the Prophets in the sense that They all proceed from one Source, and are of one essence. But Their stations and functions in this world are different. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 19, 1947; cited in *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community*, p. 447.)

Personal thoughts on the verse, “...**the City of God that hath descended from heaven...**”

1. As stated before the City of God in this passage refers to the Shrine of the Báb. It intrigued me as to how the Shrine of the Báb has descended from heaven. Obviously the actual physical structure of the Shrine and the Physical Remains of the Báb have not descended from heaven. So what can this phrase indicate as to the reality of the Shrine of the Báb. Perhaps this verse testifies to the spiritual Presence of the Báb which invigorated the soul of every yearning heart that visits that Most Exalted Spot and which is from heaven and not this earthly existence. It is the true relationship between that of the lover and his Beloved that one can breath from the very air of the Shrine of the Báb and this eternal fragrance comes from heaven and not the marble and cement that makes up the Shrine. This line of thought is well illustrated by the following story: