

ALL ABIDE BY HIS BIDDING – the Universal Law of God

The Manifestation of God represents God Himself during His sojourn on earth, and the words He reveals, the teachings and laws He promulgates, the institutions He establishes are the Will of God, the Word of God, the Spirit of God for all of humanity. While the Manifestation invites all of humanity to embrace His revelation, whether or not an individual does so consciously and deliberately, the teachings and laws the Manifestation has set forth constitute the blueprint of the Creator for His creation. In the West we have become accustomed to regard virtually every thing in our lives as optional, as a matter of personal choice and preference, and we celebrate the liberty of the individual to make his own decision and downplay the counsel to every human being to obey divine law and to live in conscious and deliberate harmony with the Will of his Creator. Baha'u'llah allows that it is for the individual to choose, but He sets forth criteria whereby the individual may discover the right choice, affirms that every man and woman is capable of discerning the right choice, holds each of us accountable for making that right choice...and sticking with it all the way. This paper will examine the universal law of God as depicted by Baha'u'llah in some of His Tablets, that is, the applicability of the revealed law to all of humanity. It will not examine the House of Justice, which is the generator and enforcer of much of this universal law, but only the law itself. The House of Justice will be discussed in a separate paper.

Baha'u'llah makes numerous references to this principle of universal law in His Writings. For example, in a Tablet revealed to the Baha'is of Khurasan, He writes:

“It is incumbent in this Day, upon every man to place his whole trust in the manifold bounties of God, and arise to disseminate, with the utmost wisdom, the verities of His Cause. Then, and only then, will the whole earth be enveloped with the morning light of His Revelation.”
(Gleanings, X, pp. 13-14)

This quotation, in itself, may appear to be ambiguous in meaning, but when correlated with other passages, it clearly points out that “every man” is called upon by the Manifestation of God “in this Day...to place his whole trust in the manifold bounties of God” –to submit his will to the divine Will—and to “disseminate, with the utmost wisdom, the verities of His Cause.” This is the work “incumbent in this Day, upon every man”, not just the men who choose this path but all men. It is “only then”, when the divine law is promulgated by “every man” that “the whole earth” will “be enveloped with the morning light of His Revelation”—the promised era when human civilization will be “enveloped with the morning light of His Revelation”. Not one tribe, one nation, one region, but “the whole earth”.

In the “Lawh-i-Ridvan”, Baha'u'llah speaks not only of all humanity embracing His teachings, but also detaching ourselves from all things but Him (Gleanings, XIV, p. 33):

“O peoples of the world! Cast away, in My name that transcendeth all other names, the things ye possess, and immerse yourselves in this Ocean in whose depths lay

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hidden the pearls of wisdom and of utterance, an ocean that surgeth in My name, the All-Merciful.”

Elsewhere, Baha'u'llah calls upon all of humanity to “cast away...the things ye possess, and immerse yourselves” in His teachings:

“Blessed are they that have soared on the wings of detachment and attained the station which, as ordained by God, overshadoweth the entire creation, whom neither the vain imaginations of the learned, nor the multitude of the hosts of the earth have succeeded in deflecting from His Cause. Who is there among you, O people, who will renounce the world, and draw nigh unto God, the Lord of all names? Where is he to be found who, through the power of My name that transcendeth all created things, will cast away the things that men possess, and cling, with all his might, to the things which God, the Knower of the unseen and of the seen, hath bidden him observe?” (Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 34)

“Put away, therefore, the things ye have devised and to which ye cleave, and take firm hold on the precepts of God, that happily ye may attain that which He hath purposed for you, and be of them that pursue a right course.” (Gleanings, p. 127)

“Cast away, therefore, the mere conceit thou dost follow, for mere conceit can never take the place of truth. Be thou of them that have truly repented and returned to God, the God Who hath created thee, Who hath nourished thee, and made thee a minister among them that profess thy faith.” (Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 220)

“Cleave ye to that which your imaginations have devised, and cast behind your backs the commandments of God, the Most Exalted, the Inaccessible, the All-Compelling, the Almighty? Cast away the things ye possess, and cling to that which God hath bidden you observe. Seek ye His grace, for he that seeketh it treadeth His straight Path.” (Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, pp. 247-248)

“Cleanse yourselves thoroughly, O people of Baha, from the defilement of the world, and of all that pertaineth unto it. God Himself beareth Me witness. The things of the earth ill beseem you. Cast them away unto such as may desire them, and fasten your eyes upon this most holy and effulgent Vision.” (Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 304)

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“The peoples of the world are fast asleep. Were they to wake from their slumber, they would hasten with eagerness unto God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. They would cast away everything they possess, be it all the treasures of the earth, that their Lord may remember them to the extent of addressing to them but one word. Such is the instruction given you by Him Who holdeth the knowledge of things hidden, in a Tablet the eye of creation hath not seen, and which is revealed to none except His own Self, the omnipotent protector of all worlds. So bewildered are they in the drunkenness of their evil desires, that they are powerless to recognize the Lord of all being, Whose voice calleth aloud from every direction: "There is none other God but Me, the Mighty, the All-Wise." (Kitab-i-Aqdas, K39; in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, pp. 137-138)

“O peoples of the earth! God, the Eternal Truth, is My witness that streams of fresh and soft-flowing waters have gushed from the rocks, through the sweetness of the words uttered by your Lord, the Unconstrained; and still ye slumber. Cast away that which ye possess, and, on the wings of detachment, soar beyond all created things. Thus biddeth you the Lord of creation, the movement of Whose Pen hath revolutionized the soul of mankind.” (Kitab-i-Aqdas, K54; in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 139)

“We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge; and yet, behold how ye have allowed your learning to shut you out, as by a veil, from Him Who is the Day Spring of this Light, through Whom every hidden thing hath been revealed. Could ye but discover the source whence the splendor of this utterance is diffused, ye would cast away the peoples of the world and all that they possess, and would draw nigh unto this most blessed Seat of glory.” (Kitab-i-Aqdas, K102; in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 199)

“Cast away, O peoples of the earth, that which ye have and take fast hold of that which ye are bidden by the All-Powerful, He Who is the Bearer of the Trust of God.” (Lawh-i-Aqdas, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 12)

“Great is the blessedness of him who hath in this Day cast away the things current amongst men and hath clung unto that which is ordained by God, the Lord of Names and the Fashion-

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er of all created things, He Who is come from the heaven of eternity through the power of the Most Great Name, invested with so invincible an authority that all the powers of the earth are unable to withstand Him. Unto this beareth witness the Mother Book, calling from the Most Sublime Station.” (Tajalliyat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 48)

“The people of Baha burn brightly amidst the gatherings even as a candle and hold fast unto that which God hath purposed. This station standeth supreme above all stations. Well is it with him who hath cast away the things that the people of the world possess, yearning for that which pertaineth unto God, the Sovereign Lord of eternity.” (Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 58)

“Cast away the things current amongst men and take fast hold on that whereunto ye are bidden by virtue of the Will of the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days.” (Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih, TB, p. 78)

“Abandon the things current amongst you and adopt that which the faithful Counselor biddeth you. Deprive not yourselves of the bounties which have been created for your sake.” (Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 71)

“O foolish one! Know thou that he is truly learned who hath acknowledged My Revelation, and drunk from the Ocean of My knowledge, and soared in the atmosphere of My love, and cast away all else besides Me, and taken firm hold on that which hath been sent down from the Kingdom of My wondrous utterance.” (Lawh-i-Burhan, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 211)

“Say: O concourse of the foolish! If ye reject Him, by what evidence can ye prove your allegiance to the former Messengers of God or vindicate your belief in that which He hath sent down from His mighty and exalted Kingdom? What benefit do your possessions bestow upon you? What protection can your treasures afford you? None, I swear by the Spirit of God that pervadeth all that are in the heavens and on the earth. Cast away that which ye have put together with the hands of idle fancy and vain imaginings and take fast hold of the Book of God which hath been sent down by virtue of His all-compelling and inviolable authority.” (Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pp. 248-249)

“Beware lest the veils deter you from the outpourings of His

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bounty in this Day. Cast away the things that keep you back from God and persevere on this far-stretching Way. We desire naught for you but that which profiteth you as hath been recorded in His Preserved Tablet.” (Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 266)

“Wert thou to give ear to My voice, thou wouldst cast away all thy possessions, and wouldst set thy face towards the Spot wherein the ocean of wisdom and of utterance hath surged, and the sweet savors of the loving-kindness of thy Lord, the Compassionate, have wafted.” (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 19)

“It behooveth thee when thou hearest His Voice calling from the seat of glory to cast away all that thou possessest, and cry out: 'Here am I, O Lord of all that is in heaven and all that is on earth!'" (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 51)

“Cast away all that is on earth, and attire the head of thy kingdom with the crown of the remembrance of Thy Lord, the All-Glorious. He, in truth, hath come unto the world in His most great glory, and all that hath been mentioned in the Gospel hath been fulfilled.” (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 59)

“Happy that one who hath cast away his vain imaginings, when He Who was hid came with the standards of His signs. We, verily, have announced unto men this Most Great Revelation, and yet the people are in a state of strange stupor” (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 78)

“"Know thou that he is truly learned who hath acknowledged My Revelation, and drunk from the Ocean of My knowledge, and soared in the atmosphere of My love, and cast away all else besides Me, and taken firm hold on that which hath been sent down from the Kingdom of My wondrous utterance.” (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 82)

“Your sciences shall not profit you in this day, nor your arts, nor your treasures, nor your glory. Cast them all behind your backs, and set your faces towards the Most Sublime Word through which the Scriptures and the Books and this lucid Tablet have been distinctly set forth. Cast away, O people, the things ye have composed with the pen of your idle fancies and vain imaginings. By God! The Daystar of Knowledge hath shone forth above the horizon of certitude.” (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp. 97-98)

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In Kitab-i-Iqan, Baha'u'llah explains what happens when humanity does not heed His counsels and does not “cast away...the things ye possess”:

“Unto every discerning observer it is evident and manifest that had these people in the days of each of the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth sanctified their eyes, their ears, and their hearts from whatever they had seen, heard, and felt, they surely would not have been deprived of beholding the beauty of God, nor strayed far from the habitations of glory. But having weighed the testimony of God by the standard of their own knowledge, gleaned from the teachings of the leaders of their faith, and found it at variance with their limited understanding, they arose to perpetrate such unseemly acts.” (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 14; Gleanings, pp. 18-19)

In other Tablets He reiterates this summons:

“O peoples of the world! Cast away, in My name that transcendeth all other names, the things ye possess, and immerse yourselves in this Ocean in whose depths lay hidden the pearls of wisdom and of utterance, an ocean that surgeth in My name, the All-Merciful. Thus instructeth you He with Whom is the Mother Book.”
(Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, XIV, pp. 33-34)

“Who is there among you, O people, who will renounce the world, and draw nigh unto God, the Lord of all names? Where is he to be found who, through the power of My name that transcendeth all created things, will cast away the things that men possess, and cling, with all his might, to the things which God, the Knower of the unseen and of the seen, hath bidden him observe?”
(Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, XIV, p. 34)

“No refuge will ye find in this day, and no one to protect you, save those upon whom God hath bestowed the favour of His mercy. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. Say: O people,! Forsake all that ye possess, and enter beneath the shadow of your Lord, the All-Merciful. Better is this for you than all your works of the past and of the future.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 19)

“Say: O people! Cast away, before the splendours of this Revelation, the things that ye possess, and cleave to that which God hath bidden you observe. Such is His command unto you, and He, verily, is best able to command.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 42)

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“Say: Still your pens, O concourse of divines, for lo, the shrill voice of the Pen of Glory hath been lifted up between earth and heaven. Cast away all that ye possess and take fast hold of that which We have revealed unto you with power and authority.”

(Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 57)

“Think ye that the things ye possess shall profit you? Soon others will possess them and ye will return unto the dust with none to help or succour you. What advantage is there in a life that can be overtaken by death, or in an existence that is doomed to extinction, or in a prosperity that is subject to change? Cast away the things that ye possess and set your faces toward the favours of God which have been sent down in this wondrous Name.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 87)

He reiterates this theme in the Suriy-i-Muluk:

“Cleave ye to that which your imaginations have devised, and cast behind your backs the commandments of God, the Most Exalted, the Inaccessible, the All-Compelling, the Almighty? Cast away the things ye possess, and cling to that which God hath bidden you observe. Seek ye His grace, for he that seeketh it treadeth His straight Path.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 194; *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, pp. 247-248)

In Kitab-i-Aqdas we find it again:

“Cast away that which ye possess, and, on the wings of detachment, soar beyond all created things. Thus biddeth you the Lord of creation, the movement of Whose Pen hath revolutionized the soul of mankind.” (Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, K54, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, LXXII, p. 139)

“Could ye but discover the source whence the splendor of this utterance is diffused, ye would cast away the peoples of the world and all that they possess, and would draw nigh unto this most blessed Seat of glory.” (Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, K102, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, LCVIII, p. 199)

He likewise counsels us all to “immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words”:

“Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths.” (*Kitab-i-Aqdas*, K182; and *Gleanings*

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from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 136)

“Quaff then, O My brother, from the living waters that We have caused to flow in the oceans of these words. Methinks the seas of grandeur are surging within them, and the gems of divine virtue are shining within and upon them. Divest then thyself of that which debarreth thee from this fathomless crimson sea, and to the cry of "In the name of God and by His grace!" immerse thyself therein. Let the fear of no one dismay thee. Trust in the Lord, thy God, for He is sufficient unto whosoever trusteth in Him. He, verily, shall protect thee, and in Him shalt thou abide in safety.” (Gems of Divine Mysteries, p. 60)

Baha'u'llah explains the reason why what has been revealed is of such consequence, why all of humanity needs to “cast away...the things ye possess, and immerse yourselves” in the teachings and laws He has revealed:

“Verily I say, whatever is sent down from the heaven of the Will of God is the means for the establishment of order in the world and the instrument for promoting unity and fellowship among its peoples.” (Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih, in TB, p. 67)

“Each one of the ordinances We have revealed is a mighty stronghold for the preservation of the world of being. Verily, this Wronged One desireth naught but your security and elevation.” (Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih, in TB, p. 69)

“Every man of insight will, in this day, readily admit that the counsels which the Pen of this Wronged One hath revealed constitute the supreme animating power for the advancement of the world and the exaltation of its peoples.” (Lawh-i-Dunya, in TB, p. 86)

“From the heaven of God’s Will, and for the purpose of ennobling the world of being and of elevating the minds and souls of men, hath been sent down that which is the most effective instrument for the education of the whole human race. The highest essence and most perfect expression of whatsoever the peoples of old have either said or written hath, through this most potent Revelation, been sent down from the heaven of the Will of the All-Possessing, the Ever-Abiding God.” (Lawh-i-Dunya, in TB, p. 87)

“Whilst in the Prison of ‘Akka, We revealed in the Crimson

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Book that which is conducive to the advancement of mankind and to the reconstruction of the world. The utterances set forth therein by the Pen of the Lord of creation include the following which constitute the fundamental principles for the administration of the affairs of men...” (Lawh-i-Dunya, in TB, p. 89)

“Concerning this We have previously revealed that which is the means of the reconstruction of the world and the unity of nations. Blessed are they that attain thereunto. Blessed are they that act accordingly.” (Ishraqat, in TB, p. 128)

“...every atom in existence is moved to testify that such means as lead to the elevation, the advancement, the education, the protection and the regeneration of the peoples of the earth have been clearly set forth by Us and are revealed in the Holy Books and Tablets by the Pen of Glory.” (Ishraqat, in TB, p. 130)

“The beginning of Wisdom and the origin thereof is to acknowledge whatsoever God hath clearly set forth, for through its potency the foundation of statesmanship, which is a shield for the preservation of the body of mankind, hath been firmly established. Ponder a while that ye may perceive what My most exalted Pen hath proclaimed in this wondrous Tablet. Say, every matter related to state affairs which ye raise for discussion falls under the shadow of one of the words sent down from the heaven of His glorious and exalted utterance.” (Lawh-i-Hikmat, in TB, p. 151)

“The Great Being, wishing to reveal the prerequisites of the peace and tranquility of the world and the advancement of its peoples, hath written...” (Lawh-i-Maqsud, in TB, p. 165)

“...were men but to take heed they would readily appreciate that whatever hath streamed forth from and is set down by the Pen of Glory is even as the sun for the whole world and that therein lie the welfare, security and true interests of all men; otherwise the earth will be tormented by a fresh calamity every day and unprecedented commotions will break out.” (Lawh-i-Maqsud, in TB, p. 166)

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Sometimes, Baha'u'llah adopts a gentle tone, and invites obedience to His teachings and laws, without demanding obedience from all of humanity in explicit language:

“Incline your ears to the counsels which this Servant giveth you for the sake of God.” (Gleanings, p. 127)

“Were men to strictly observe that which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed in the Crimson Book, they could then well afford to dispense with the regulations which prevail in the world.” (Lawh-i-Dunya, in TB, p. 90)

“Well is it with him who giveth ear unto whatsoever My Pen of Glory hath proclaimed and observeth that whereunto he is bidden by the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days.” (Lawh-i-Dunya, in TB, p. 93)

“Graciously assist then Thy servants, O my God, to do that which will serve to exalt Thy Cause and will enable them to observe whatsoever Thou hast revealed in Thy Book.” (Ishraqat, in TB, p. 117)

“For were men to abide by and observe the divine teachings, every trace of evil would be banished from the face of the earth.” (Lawh-i-Maqsud, in TB, p. 176)

In other passages of His Tablets, Baha'u'llah makes a more uncompromising statement, however it is veiled in language that is susceptible to various interpretations, and which might therefore be interpreted in a less uncompromising manner:

“Incline your ears to the Voice of this Wronged One and safeguard the integrity of your stations. It is highly necessary and imperative that everyone should observe this matter.” (Lawh-i-Dunya, in TB, p. 96)

“While in prison We have revealed a Book which We have entitled 'The Most Holy Book'. We have enacted laws therein and adorned it with the commandments of thy Lord, Who exerciseth authority over all that are in the heavens and on the earth. Say: Take hold of it, O people, and observe that which hath been sent down in it of the wondrous precepts of your Lord, the Forgiving, the Bountiful. It will truly prosper you both in this world and in the next and will purge you of whatsoever ill beseemeth you. He is indeed the Ordainer, the Expounder, the Giver, the Generous, the Gracious, the All-Praised.” (TB, p. 262)

“Moreover, We announce unto everyone the joyful tidings

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concerning that which We have revealed in Our Most Holy Book -- a Book from above whose horizon the day-star of My commandments shineth upon every observer and every observed one. Hold ye fast unto it and fulfil that which is revealed therein. Indeed better is this for you than whatsoever hath been created in the world, did ye but know it.”

(Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 266)

However, in other passages, Baha'u'llah uses very emphatic and straightforward language, indicating that the law of God has been revealed for the guidance of all humanity, and that it is incumbent upon all to observe that law and to act in accordance with His teachings:

“Were He to decree as lawful the thing which from time immemorial had been forbidden, and forbid that which had, at all times, been regarded as lawful, to none is given the right to question His authority. Whoso will hesitate, though it be for less than a moment, should be regarded as a transgressor.” (Kitab-i-Aqdas, #162, p. 77; in Gleanings, p. 87)

“Follow, O people, what hath been prescribed unto you in Our Tablets, and walk not after the imaginations which the sowers of mischief have devised, they that commit wickedness and impute it to God, the Most Holy, the All-Glorious, the Most Exalted.” (Gleanings, p. 307)

“Whatsoever the Creator commandeth His creatures to observe, the same must they diligently, and with the utmost joy and eagerness, arise and fulfil. They should in no wise allow their fancy to obscure their judgment, neither should they regard their own imaginings as the voice of the Eternal.” (Gleanings, p. 337)

“The summons and the message which We gave were never intended to reach or to benefit one land or one people only. Mankind in its entirety must firmly adhere to whatsoever hath been revealed and vouchsafed unto it. Then and only then will it attain unto true liberty.” (Lawh-i-Dunya, in TB, p. 89; Gleanings, p. 96)

“He [the Manifestation] is come from the invisible heaven, bearing the banner ‘He doeth whatsoever He willeth’ and is accompanied by hosts of power and authority while it is the duty of all besides Him to strictly observe whatever laws and ordinances have been enjoined upon them, and should anyone deviate therefrom, even to the extent of a

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hair's breadth, his work would be brought to naught.”
(Ishraqat, in TB, p. 108)

“It is incumbent upon everyone to obey Him in whatsoever God hath ordained; and whosoever denieth Him hath disbelieved in God, in His verses, in His Messengers and in His Books.” (Ishraqat, in TB, p. 109)

“Unto no one is given the right to deviate from the laws and ordinances of God. Whoso deviateth therefrom is reckoned with the trespassers in the Book of God, the Lord of the Mighty Throne.” (Ishraqat, in TB, p. 109)

“Know of a certainty that the Will of God is not limited by the standards of the people, and God doth not tread in their ways. Rather is it incumbent upon everyone to firmly adhere to God's straight Path.” (Ishraqat, in TB, p. 109)

“It is incumbent upon everyone to observe God's holy commandments, inasmuch as they are the wellspring of life unto the world.” (Ishraqat, in TB, p. 126)

“It is incumbent upon everyone to firmly adhere to and observe that which hath streamed froth from Our Most Exalted Pen.” (Ishraqat, in TB, p. 130)

“These things are obligatory and absolutely essential. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action.” (Lawh-i-Maqsud, in TB, p. 166)

“Know thou of a truth that whatsoever hath been prescribed in the Book is indeed the truth, no doubt is there about it, and it is incumbent upon everyone to observe that which hath been sent down by Him Who is the Revealer, the All-Knowing. Were a man to put them away despite his being aware thereof, God would truly be clear of such a one and We too would be clear of him, inasmuch as His ordinances constitute the fruits of the divine Tree and none other than the heedless and the wayward will deviate therefrom.” (Suriy-i-Vafa, in TB, pp. 188-189)

He summons the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Pius IX to abandon his worldly realms and follow Him and His Law:

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“O Supreme Pontiff! Incline thine ear unto that which the Fashioner of mouldering bones counselleth thee, as voiced by Him Who is His Most Great Name. Sell all the embellished ornaments thou dost possess, and expend them in the path of God, Who causeth the night to return upon the day, and the day to return upon the night. Abandon thy kingdom unto the kings, and emerge from thy habitation, with thy face set towards the Kingdom, and, detached from the world, then speak forth the praises of thy Lord betwixt earth and heaven.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 61)

Included among those who are bidden to observe the divine commandments, and singled out in particular by Baha'u'llah in some of His Tablets, are the kings and their ministers, the governments of the world:

“O King! Wert thou to incline thine ear unto the shrill of the Pen of Glory and the cooing of the Dove of Eternity which, on the branches of the Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing, uttereth praises to God, the Maker of all names and Creator of earth and heaven, thou wouldst attain unto a station from which thou wouldst behold in the world of being naught save the effulgence of the Adored One, and wouldst regard thy sovereignty as the most contemptible of thy possessions, abandoning it to whosoever might desire it, and setting thy face toward the Horizon aglow with the light of His countenance. Neither wouldst thou ever be willing to bear the burden of dominion save for the purpose of helping thy Lord, the Exalted, the Most High. Then would the Concourse on high bless thee. O how excellent is this most sublime station, couldst thou ascend thereunto through the power of a sovereignty recognized as derived from the Name of God!” (Suriy-i-Haykal, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 99)

“I swear by God, O King! Wert thou to incline thine ear to the melodies of that Nightingale which warbleth in manifold accents upon the mystic bough as bidden by thy Lord, the All-Merciful, thou wouldst cast away thy sovereignty and set thy face towards this Scene of transcendent glory, above whose horizon shineth the Book of the Dawntide,¹⁶ and wouldst expend all that thou possessest in thine eagerness to obtain the things of God. Then wouldst thou find thyself raised up to the summit of exaltation and glory, and elevated to the pinnacle of majesty and independence. Thus hath the decree been recorded in the Mother Book by the Pen of the All-Merciful. Of what avail are the things which

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are yours today and which tomorrow others shall possess? Choose for thyself that which God hath chosen for His elect, and God shall grant thee a mighty sovereignty in His Kingdom. We beseech God to aid thy Majesty to hearken unto that Word whose radiance hath enveloped the whole world, and to protect thee from such as have strayed far from the court of His presence.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, pp. 102-103)

“O concourse of kings! Follow, therefore, that which I speak unto you, and hearken unto it with your hearts, and be not of such as have turned aside. For your glory consisteth not in your sovereignty, but rather in your nearness unto God and your observance of His command as sent down in His holy and preserved Tablets. Should any one of you rule over the whole earth, and over all that lieth within it and upon it, its seas, its lands, its mountains, and its plains, and yet be not remembered by God, all these would profit him not, could ye but know it. “Know ye that a servant's glory resideth in his nearness unto God, and that, unless he draweth nigh unto Him, naught else can ever profit him, even should he hold sway over the entire creation.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 187)

“Lay not aside the fear of God, O kings of the earth, and beware that ye transgress not the bounds which the Almighty hath fixed. Observe the injunctions laid upon you in His Book, and take good heed not to overstep their limits. Be vigilant, that ye may not do injustice to anyone, be it to the extent of a grain of mustard seed. Tread ye the path of justice, for this, verily, is the straight path.” (Suriy-i-Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 188; *Gleanings*, p. 250)

“If ye pay no heed unto the counsels which, in peerless and unequivocal language, We have revealed in this Tablet, Divine chastisement shall assail you from every direction, and the sentence of His justice shall be pronounced against you. On that day ye shall have no power to resist Him, and shall recognize your own impotence. Have mercy on yourselves and on those beneath you, and judge ye between them according to the precepts prescribed by God in His most holy and exalted Tablet, a Tablet wherein He hath assigned to each and every thing its settled measure, in which He hath given, with distinctness, an explanation of all things, and which is in itself a monition unto them that believe in Him.” (Suriy-i-

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Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, pp. 189-190)

“Nay, by Him Who holdeth in His grasp the kingdom of the entire creation! Nowhere doth your true and abiding glory reside except in your firm adherence unto the precepts of God, your wholehearted observance of His laws, your resolution to see that they do not remain unenforced, and to pursue steadfastly the right course.” (Baha'u'llah, *Suriy-i-Muluk*, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, pp. 190-191; *Gleanings*, p. 253)

“Thy days shall pass away, thy ministry shall come to an end, and thy possessions shall vanish and be no more. Then, in the presence of the almighty King, thou shalt be called to answer for that which thy hands have wrought. How many the ministers who came before thee into this world, men who exceeded thee in power, excelled thee in station, and surpassed thee in wealth, and yet returned to dust, leaving upon the face of the earth neither name nor trace, and are now plunged in grievous remorse. Amongst them were those who failed in their duty towards God, followed their own desires, and trod the path of lust and wickedness. And amongst them were those who observed that which hath been prescribed in the verses of God, judged with fairness by the divine guidance that overshadowed them, and entered beneath the shelter of the mercy of their Lord.” (Baha'u'llah, *Suriy-i-Muluk*, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 193)

“God hath committed into your hands the reins of the government of the people, that ye may rule with justice over them, safeguard the rights of the down-trodden, and punish the wrong-doers. If ye neglect the duty prescribed unto you by God in His Book, your names shall be numbered with those of the unjust in His sight. Grievous, indeed, will be your error. Cleave ye to that which your imaginations have devised, and cast behind your backs the commandments of God, the Most Exalted, the Inaccessible, the All-Compelling, the Almighty? Cast away the things ye possess, and cling to that which God hath bidden you observe. Seek ye His grace, for he that seeketh it treadeth His straight Path.” (*Suriy-i-Muluk*, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 194; *Gleanings*, pp. 247-248)

“It behoveth you, O Ministers of State, to keep the precepts of God, and to forsake your own laws and

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regulations, and to be of them who are guided aright. Better is this for you than all ye possess, did ye but know it. If ye transgress the commandment of God, not one jot or one tittle of all your works shall be acceptable in His sight. Ye shall, ere long, discover the consequences of that which ye shall have done in this vain life, and shall be repaid for them. This, verily, is the truth, the undoubted truth.”

(Suriy-i-Haykal, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 196; *Gleanings*, p. 123)

“Hearken, O King (Sultan ‘Abdu’l-‘Aziz), to the speech of Him that speaketh the truth, Him that doth not ask thee to recompense Him with the things God hath chosen to bestow upon thee, Him Who unerringly treadeth the straight Path. He it is Who summoneth thee unto God, thy Lord, Who showeth thee the right course, the way that leadeth to true felicity, that haply thou mayest be of them with whom it shall be well.” (Suriy-i-Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 209; *Gleanings*, p. 232)

“Wert thou to incline thine ear unto My speech and observe My counsel, God would exalt thee to so eminent a position that the designs of no man on the whole earth can ever touch or hurt thee. Observe, O King, with thine inmost heart and with thy whole being, the precepts of God, and walk not in the paths of the oppressor.” (Suriy-i-Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 211; *Gleanings*, pp. 233-234)

“Set before thine eyes God’s unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life.” (Suriy-i-Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 213; *Gleanings*, p. 236)

“Thou art God's shadow on earth. Strive, therefore, to act in such a manner as befitteth so eminent, so august a station. If thou dost depart from following the things We have caused to descend upon thee and taught thee, thou wilt, assuredly, be derogating from that great and priceless honor. Return, then, and cleave wholly unto God, and cleanse thine heart from the world and all its vanities, and suffer not the love of any stranger to enter and dwell therein. Not until thou dost purify thine heart

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from every trace of such love can the brightness of the light of God shed its radiance upon it, for to none hath God given more than one heart. This, verily, hath been decreed and written down in His ancient Book. And as the human heart, as fashioned by God, is one and undivided, it behoveth thee to take heed that its affections be, also, one and undivided. Cleave thou, therefore, with the whole affection of thine heart, unto His love, and withdraw it from the love of any one besides Him, that He may aid thee to immerse thyself in the ocean of His unity, and enable thee to become a true upholder of His oneness.” (Suriy-i-Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, pp. 214-215; *Gleanings*, pp. 237-238)

“In the day time and in the night season, at even and at morn, We pray to God on thy behalf, that He may graciously aid thee to be obedient unto Him and to observe His commandment, that He may shield thee from the hosts of the evil ones. Do, therefore, as it pleaseth thee, and treat Us as befitteth thy station and beseemeth thy sovereignty. Be not forgetful of the law of God in whatever thou desirest to achieve, now or in the days to come.” (Suriy-i-Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 219; *Gleanings*, p. 240)

“Ye are but vassals, O kings of the earth! He Who is the King of Kings hath appeared, arrayed in His most wondrous glory, and is summoning you unto Himself, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Take heed lest pride deter you from recognizing the Source of Revelation, lest the things of this world shut you out as by a veil from Him Who is the Creator of heaven. Arise, and serve Him Who is the Desire of all nations, Who hath created you through a word from Him, and ordained you to be, for all time, the emblems of His sovereignty.

“By the righteousness of God! It is not Our wish to lay hands on your kingdoms. Our mission is to seize and possess the hearts of men. Upon them the eyes of Baha are fastened. To this testifieth the Kingdom of Names, could ye but comprehend it. Whoso followeth his Lord will renounce the world and all that is therein; how much greater, then, must be the detachment of Him Who holdeth so august a station! Forsake your palaces, and haste ye to gain admittance into His Kingdom. This, indeed, will profit you both in this world and in the next. To this testifieth the Lord of the realm on high, did ye but know it.”

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(Kitab-i-Aqdas, #82-83, pp. 49-50)

Baha'u'llah envisions a new race of men through whom the Kingdom of God will be established upon earth:

“Erelong shall We raise up, through the aid of Thy hand, other hands endued with power, with strength and might, and shall establish through them Our dominion over all that dwell in the realms of revelation and creation. Thus will the servants of God recognize the truth that there is none other God beside Me, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 18)

“Erelong shall God draw forth, out of the bosom of power, the hands of ascendancy and might, and shall raise up a people who will arise to win victory for this Youth and who will purge mankind from the defilement of the outcast and the ungodly. These hands will gird up their loins to champion the Faith of God, and will, in My name the Self-Subsistent, the Mighty, subdue the peoples and kindreds of the earth. They will enter the cities and will inspire with fear the hearts of all their inhabitants. Such are the evidences of the might of God; how fearful, how vehement is His might, and how justly doth He wield it! He, verily, ruleth and transcendeth all who are in the heavens and on the earth, and revealeth what He desireth according to a prescribed measure.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 20)

“Erelong shall God raise up, through Thee, those with hands of indomitable strength and arms of invincible might, who will come forth from behind the veils, will render the All-Merciful victorious amongst the peoples of the world, and will raise so mighty a cry as to cause all hearts to tremble with fear. Thus hath it been decreed in a Written Tablet. Such shall be the ascendancy which these souls will evince that consternation and dismay will seize all the dwellers of the earth.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 22)

“Say: Lordship is My Name, whereof I have created manifestations in the world of being, while We Ourselves remain sanctified above them, would ye but ponder this truth. And Godhead is My Name, whereof We have created exponents whose power shall encompass the people of the earth and make them true worshippers of God, could ye but recognize it. Thus should ye regard all Our Names, if ye be endued with insight.” (Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 24)

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Baha'u'llah takes this a step further, translating this principle from the future into the present, from a promise to an imperative—He calls upon the kings and rulers to enforce the law of God amongst their subjects:

“Seize thou, and hold firmly within the grasp of thy might, the reins of the affairs of thy people, and examine in person whatever pertaineth unto them. Let nothing escape thee, for therein lieth the highest good. “Render thanks unto God for having chosen thee out of the whole world, and made thee king over them that profess thy faith. It well beseemeth thee to appreciate the wondrous favors with which God hath favored thee, and to magnify continually His name. Thou canst best praise Him if thou lovest His loved ones, and dost safeguard and protect His servants from the mischief of the treacherous, that none may any longer oppress them. Thou shouldst, moreover, arise to enforce the law of God amongst them, that thou mayest be of those who are firmly established in His law.” (Suriy-i-Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 211; *Gleanings*, p. 234)

“Nowhere doth your true and abiding glory reside except in your firm adherence unto the precepts of God, your wholehearted observance of His laws, your resolution to see that they do not remain unenforced, and to pursue steadfastly the right course.” (Suriy-i-Muluk, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 190; *Gleanings*, p. 253)

“Your people are your treasures. Beware lest your rule violate the commandments of God, and ye deliver your wards to the hands of the robber. By them ye rule, by their means ye subsist, by their aid ye conquer.” (Suriy-i-Haykal, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 93; *Gleanings*, p. 254)

“How great the blessedness that awaiteth the king who will arise to aid My Cause in My kingdom, who will detach himself from all else but Me! Such a king is numbered with the companions of the Crimson Ark -- the Ark which God hath prepared for the people of Baha. All must glorify his name, must reverence his station, and aid him to unlock the cities with the keys of My Name, the omnipotent Protector of all that inhabit the visible and invisible kingdoms. Such a king is the very eye of mankind, the luminous ornament on the

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brow of creation, the fountainhead of blessings unto the whole world. Offer up, O people of Baha, your substance, nay your very lives, for his assistance.” (Kitab-i-Aqdas, #84, p. 50)

“We earnestly beseech God—exalted be His glory—to aid the rulers and sovereigns, who are the exponents of power and the daysprings of glory, to enforce His laws and ordinances. He is in truth the Omnipotent, the All-Powerful, He Who is wont to answer the call of men.” (Bisharat, in TB, p. 29)

“Certain exhortations have repeatedly streamed forth from the Pen of the Most High that perchance the manifestations of power and the dawning-places of might may, sometime, be enabled to enforce them.” (Lawh-i-Dunya, in TB, p. 90)

“We have enjoined upon all mankind to establish the Most Great Peace -- the surest of all means for the protection of humanity. The sovereigns of the world should, with one accord, hold fast thereunto, for this is the supreme instrument that can ensure the security and welfare of all peoples and nations. They, verily, are the manifestations of the power of God and the daysprings of His authority. We beseech the Almighty that He may graciously assist them in that which is conducive to the well-being of their subjects.” (Ishraqat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 125)

“The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind. It behoveth the chiefs and rulers of the world, and in particular the Trustees of God's House of Justice, to endeavour to the utmost of their power to safeguard its position, promote its interests and exalt its station in the eyes of the world. In like manner it is incumbent upon them to enquire into the conditions of their subjects and to acquaint themselves with the affairs and activities of the divers communities in their dominions. We call upon the manifestations of the power of God -- the sovereigns and rulers on earth -- to bestir themselves and do all in their power that haply they

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may banish discord from this world and illumine it with the light of concord.” (Ishraqat, in TB, pp. 129-130)

“If the rulers and kings of the earth, the symbols of the power of God, exalted be His glory, arise and resolve to dedicate themselves to whatever will promote the highest interests of the whole of humanity, the reign of justice will assuredly be abolished amongst the children of men, and the effulgence of its light will envelop the whole earth. The Great Being saith: The structure of world stability and order hath been reared upon, and will continue to be sustained by, the twin pillars of reward and punishment. And in another connection He hath uttered the following in the eloquent tongue: [Arabic] Justice hath a mighty force at its command. It is none other than reward and punishment for the deeds of men. By the power of this force the tabernacle of order is established throughout the world, causing the wicked to restrain their natures for fear of punishment.

“In another passage He hath written: Take heed, O concourse of the rulers of the world! There is no force on earth that can equal in its conquering power the force of justice and wisdom. I, verily, affirm that there is not, and hath never been, a host more mighty than that of justice and wisdom. Blessed is the king who marcheth with the ensign of wisdom unfurled before him, and the battalions of justice massed in his rear. He verily is the ornament that adorneth the brow of peace and the countenance of security. There can be no doubt whatever that if the day-star of justice, which the clouds of tyranny have obscured, were to shed its light upon men, the face of the earth would be completely transformed.” (Lawh-i-Maqsud, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pp. 164-165; selections in Gleanings, pp. 218-219)

So far all of these counsels have been addressed to kings and the ministers of kings. What of the representational form of government? In the Suriy-i-Haykal, Baha'u'llah addresses “the elected representatives of the people in every land”:

“O ye the elected representatives of the people in every land! Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind, and bettereth the condition thereof, if ye be of them that scan heedfully.” (Suriy-i-Haykal, in The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, pp. 90-91; Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 62; Gleanings, p. 254)

It might appear that in this Tablet, He is simply calling upon these “elected representatives” to take counsel together, and to make decisions that would address the

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problems of the world. Consider though that He follows up the first-cited passage with these counsels:

“Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay its sickness waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their personal desires, and have erred grievously. And if, at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before. Thus informeth you the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. “We behold it, in this day, at the mercy of rulers so drunk with pride that they cannot discern clearly their own best advantage, much less recognize a Revelation so bewildering and challenging as this. And whenever any one of them hath striven to improve its condition, his motive hath been his own gain, whether confessedly so or not; and the unworthiness of this motive hath limited his power to heal or cure.” (Suriy-i-Haykal, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 91; *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 62; *Gleanings*, pp. 254-255)

This passage makes it clear that Baha’u’llah does not regard the efforts heretofore essayed as having succeeded in addressing the “grave disorders and maladies” of the body politic of humanity. He then proceeds to the solution to all of these maladies:

“That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician. This, verily, is the truth, and all else naught but error.” (Suriy-i-Haykal, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 91; *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 62; *Gleanings*, p. 253)

*When we consider that He has called upon these “elected representatives” to take “counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind, and bettereth the condition thereof”, it is apparent that having pointed out the insufficiency of human remedies, and then having indicated that “the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith” that these “representatives” are being counseled to recognize and then to put into practice that remedy. He is even more explicit in His appeal to these “elected representatives” in a passage from the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*:*

“Hearken ye, O Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein, unto that which the Dove is warbling on the

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Branch of Eternity: "There is none other God but Me, the Ever-Abiding, the Forgiving, the All-Bountiful." Adorn ye the temple of dominion with the ornament of justice and of the fear of God, and its head with the crown of the remembrance of your Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Thus counselleth you He Who is the Dayspring of Names, as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. The Promised One hath appeared in this glorified Station, whereat all beings, both seen and unseen, have rejoiced. Take ye advantage of the Day of God. Verily, to meet Him is better for you than all that whereon the sun shineth, could ye but know it. O concourse of rulers! Give ear unto that which hath been raised from the Dayspring of Grandeur: "Verily, there is none other God but Me, the Lord of Utterance, the All-Knowing." Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise." (Kitab-i-Aqdas, K88, p. 52)

The role of the House of Justice, an institution established by Baha'u'llah for the generation of supplemental divine law and for the enforcement and realization of divine law generally is discussed in a separate paper.

It is evident from a fair-minded perusal of the above, that Baha'u'llah called for the governance of humanity according to divine law, and inasmuch as this form of government is generally called "theocracy", we must admit that He approved of "theocracy". It should be noted that this does not imply His approval of any of the present or past forms of "theocracy" associated with the various religions of the world, whether the caliphate of Sunni Islam or the viceregency of the Ayat'u'llah on behalf of the Imam Mahdi of Imami Shi'i Islam, whether the Papacy and Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church or the President and Elders of the Mormons, whether the Sanhedron of the ancient Hebrews or the Puritans of Plymouth Colony. In our own times many think of "theocracy" as outdated, patriarchal and authoritarian, or worse, as cultish, mind-destroying and potentially life-destroying, like the People's Temple of Jim Jones, the Branch Davidians of David Koresh, Order of the Solar Temple of Joseph Di Mambro, and the Aum Shinrikyo of Shoko Asahara. While Baha'u'llah is harshly critical of those who presume to assume the role of God's chosen legislator and governor of mankind, He does not then reject the very notion of the Kingdom of God on earth. While Jesus counseled His followers to seek and find that Kingdom of God within themselves, Baha'u'llah invites all of mankind to participate in this Kingdom of God, to establish it first within their hearts and then in all of their actions, private and communal. It is evident from the study of His words cited in this paper that Baha'u'llah does not separate the personal and the communal, the call to each soul from the call to every soul, and that His mission is more particularly addressed to the totality of mankind rather than merely to individuals or groups.

In the Suriy-i-Haykal, Baha'u'llah writes, comparing His message to the message of Jesus:

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“Verily, He said: "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." In this day, however, We say: "Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become quickeners of mankind." Thus hath the decree been inscribed in this Tablet by the Pen of Revelation.”

(Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 66-67)

(Paper compiled and with commentary by Peter Terry 2007)