

SELECTIONS FROM BAHÁ'Í SCRIPTURE

Compiled and Edited

by

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LONDON

BAHÁ'Í PUBLISHING TRUST

46 Bloomsbury Street, W.C.1

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Approved by
The Reviewing Committee
of the
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís
of the British Isles

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

P R E F A C E

THE great turning points in human history mark the decline of one social order and the rise of a new one. Few will doubt that we are experiencing such a crisis to-day.

The new society, which rises from the old, takes its inspiration and its shape from that outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which, in the form of a Gospel, the Almighty Creator confers upon us in each Dispensation. The gift is made through the life, teaching, and sacrifice of a Great One; Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, Buddha. It is made to-day by Bahá'u'lláh, Whose universal principles have already so established themselves in human consciousness, that we begin to see the brotherhood of man in terms of social, as well as spiritual reality.

Our compilation has been made for the express purpose of making available to the enquirer the creative Word of the new Revelation. The power and all-embracing nature of Bahá'í Scripture may be discerned from this selection, but the student will require, in addition to biographical and historical data, complete editions of the various works from which essential passages have been taken. The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh already translated into English, are but a portion of His Revelation. This book therefore contains only a drop from the great ocean of His utterance. But the ocean may be seen in a drop and the universe in an atom.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, in numberless talks and letters, gave His inspired and authorized interpretation of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings. He answered the questions of all those who approached Him, and continually encouraged His friends to follow the example of the disciples of Jesus, "who made the world another world." This, He told us, was our task to-day. He showed us how to do

Preface

it by deed, and word, but again the selection is but fragmentary.

Some western scholars have voiced the fear that the Bahá'ís "neglect" the Báb. Such a charge, if true, would be grave. For the Bahá'í Faith recognizes the Báb as an independent Manifestation of God, the Author of a Book, and the Lord of His Own Dispensation. Why then, it may be asked, is there in this compilation so short a selection from the whole of His Writings. The answer is to be found in the fact that the Báb Himself constantly declared His Own Revelation to be preparatory to that of Bahá'u'lláh, and made His Book subject to the "good pleasure" of "Him Whom God shall manifest." Lest there be any doubt of the attitude of the Bahá'ís to the Báb, the following points are mentioned. Some of the best loved, and most widely used prayers, among the Bahá'ís, are revealed by the Báb; His tragic and heroic story, as told by Nabíl, has been translated into English by the Guardian of the Faith himself, and published superbly by the American Bahá'í community; the calendar inaugurated by the Báb is observed throughout the Bahá'í world; three of the major feast days of the Bahá'í year are associated with the birth, declaration, and martyrdom of the Báb; personal declaration of faith upon which membership in the Bahá'í community is given, must contain an acknowledgment of the station of the Báb as an independent Manifestation of God.

Wherever possible, translations made by the Guardian of the Faith have been used. Thanks and acknowledgment are due to those publishers, compilers, and translators of other books of Bahá'í Scripture, whose work has greatly simplified the present task. This is particularly true of the translation of Bahá'í Scripture in general, and of the collecting and verifying of manuscripts, and the indexing of the talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Without this the present compiler's work could not have been done.

DAVID HOFMAN.

MANCHESTER, *October* 1941.

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WRITINGS
OF
BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

O MY brother, when a true seeker determines to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy. He must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay, from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments. He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth. Even as thou dost witness in this day how most of the people, because of such love and hate, are bereft of the immortal Face, have strayed far from the Embodiments of the divine mysteries, and, shepherdless, are roaming through the wilderness of oblivion and error. That seeker must at all times put his trust in God, must renounce the peoples of the earth, detach himself from the world of dust, and cleave unto Him Who is the Lord of Lords. He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vain-glory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence, and refrain from idle talk. For the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endure a century.

That seeker should also regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul. He should be content with little, and be freed from all inordinate desire. He should treasure the companionship of those that have renounced the world, and regard avoidance of boastful and worldly people a precious benefit. At the dawn of every day he should commune with God, and with all his soul persevere in the quest of his Beloved. He should consume every wayward thought with the flame of His loving mention, and, with the swiftness of lightning, pass by all else save Him. He should succour the dispossessed, and never withhold his favour from the destitute. He should show kindness to animals, how much more unto his fellow-man, to him who is endowed with the power of utterance. He should not hesitate to offer up his life for his Beloved, nor allow the censure of the people to turn him away from the Truth. He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil. With all his heart should the seeker avoid fellowship with evil doers, and pray for the remission of their sins. He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. How often hath a sinner, at the hour of death, attained to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the celestial Concourse. And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire. Our purpose in revealing these convincing and weighty utterances is to impress upon the seeker that he should regard all else beside God as transient, and count all things save Him, Who is the Object of all adoration, as utter nothingness.

These are among the attributes of the exalted, and constitute the hall-mark of the spiritually-minded. They have already been mentioned in connection with the requirements of the wayfarers that tread the Path of Positive Knowledge. When the detached wayfarer and sincere seeker hath fulfilled these essential conditions, then and only then can he be called a true seeker. Whensoever he hath fulfilled the conditions implied in

the verse: "Whoso maketh efforts for Us,"¹ he shall enjoy the blessing conferred by the words: "In Our ways shall We assuredly guide him."²

Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker's heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being. At that hour will the mystic Herald, bearing the joyful tidings of the Spirit, shine forth from the City of God resplendent as the morn, and, through the trumpet-blast of knowledge, will awaken the heart, the soul, and the spirit from the slumber of negligence. Then will the manifold favours and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul. Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of divine Revelation and the evidences of an everlasting manifestation.

I swear by God! Were he that treadeth the path of guidance and seeketh to scale the heights of righteousness to attain unto this glorious and supreme station, he would inhale at a distance of a thousand leagues the fragrance of God, and would perceive the resplendent morn of a divine Guidance rising above the day-spring of all things. Each and every thing, however small, would be to him a revelation, leading him to his Beloved, the Object of his quest. So great shall be the discernment of this seeker that he will discriminate between truth and falsehood even as he doth distinguish the sun from shadow. If in the uttermost corners of the East the sweet savours of God be wafted, he will assuredly recognize and inhale their fragrance, even though he be dwelling in the uttermost ends of the West.

¹Qur'án 29:69.

²*Ibid.*

He will likewise clearly distinguish all the signs of God—His wondrous utterances, His great works, and mighty deeds—from the doings, words and ways of men, even as the jeweller who knoweth the gem from the stone, or the man who distinguisheth the spring from autumn and heat from cold. When the channel of the human soul is cleansed of all worldly and impeding attachments, it will unfailingly perceive the breath of the Beloved across immeasurable distances, and will, led by its perfume, attain and enter the City of Certitude. Therein he will discern the wonders of His ancient wisdom, and will perceive all the hidden teachings from the rustling leaves of the Tree—which flourisheth in that City. With both his inner and his outer ear he will hear from its dust the hymns of glory and praise ascending unto the Lord of Lords, and with his inner eye will he discover the mysteries of “return” and “revival.” How unspeakably glorious are the signs, the tokens, the revelations, and splendours which He who is the King of names and attributes hath destined for that City! The attainment of this City quencheth thirst without water, and kindleth the love of God without fire. Within every blade of grass are enshrined the mysteries of an inscrutable wisdom, and upon every rose-bush a myriad nightingales pour out, in blissful rapture, their melody. Its wondrous tulips unfold the mystery of the Burning Bush, and its sweet savours of holiness breathe the perfume of the Messianic Spirit. It bestoweth wealth without gold, and conferreth immortality without death. In every leaf ineffable delights are treasured, and within every chamber unnumbered mysteries lie hidden.

They that valiantly labour in quest of God’s will, when once they have renounced all else but Him, will be so attached and wedded to that City that a moment’s separation from it would to them be unthinkable. They will hearken unto infallible proofs from the Hyacinth of that assembly, and receive the surest testimonies from the beauty of its Rose and the melody of its Nightingale. Once in about a thousand years shall this City be renewed and re-adorned.

Wherefore, O my friend, it behooveth Us to exert the highest endeavour to attain unto that City, and, by the grace of God

Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

and His loving-kindness, rend asunder the "veils of glory"; so that, with inflexible steadfastness, we may sacrifice our drooping souls in the path of the New Beloved. We should with tearful eyes, fervently and repeatedly, implore Him to grant us the favour of that grace. That City is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation. In the days of Moses it was the Pentateuch; in the days of Jesus the Gospel; in the days of Muḥammad the Messenger of God the Qur'án; in this day the Bayán; and in the dispensation of Him Whom God will make manifest His own Book—the Book unto which all the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book which standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme. In these cities spiritual sustenance is bountifully provided, and incorruptible delights have been ordained. The food they bestow is the bread of heaven, and the Spirit they impart is God's imperishable blessing. Upon detached souls they bestow the gift of Unity, enrich the destitute, and offer the cup of knowledge unto them who wander in the wilderness of ignorance. All the guidance, the blessings, the learning, the understanding, the faith, and certitude, conferred upon all that is in heaven and on earth, are hidden and treasured within these Cities.

(From the Kitáb-i-Íqán, The Book of Certitude)

THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD

TO every discerning and illumined heart it is evident that God, the unknowable Essence, the divine Being, is immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress. Far be it from His glory that human tongue should adequately recount His praise, or that human heart comprehend His fathomless mystery. He is and hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and will remain in His Reality everlastingly hidden from the sight of men. "No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision; He is the Subtile, the All-Perceiving."¹ No tie of direct intercourse can possibly bind Him to His creatures. He standeth exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness. No sign can indicate His presence or His absence; inasmuch as by a word of His command all that are in heaven and on earth have come to exist, and by His wish, which is the Primal Will itself, all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being, the world of the visible.

Gracious God! How could there be conceived any existing relationship or possible connection between His Word and they that are created of it? The verse: "God would have you beware of Himself"² unmistakably beareth witness to the reality of Our argument, and the words: "God was alone; there was none else beside Him" are a sure testimony of its truth. All the Prophets of God and their chosen Ones, all the divines, the sages, and the wise of every generation, unanimously

¹ Qur'án 6:103.

² Qur'án 3:28.

recognize their inability to attain unto the comprehension of that Quintessence of all truth, and confess their incapacity to grasp Him, Who is the inmost Reality of all things.

The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to His saying: "His grace hath transcended all things; My grace hath encompassed them all" hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence. These sanctified Mirrors, these Day-springs of ancient glory are one and all the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the light that can never fade. Even as He hath said: "There is no distinction whatsoever between Thee and Them; except that they are Thy servants, and are created of Thee." This is the significance of the tradition: "I am He, Himself, and He is I, myself."

The traditions and sayings that bear direct reference to Our theme are divers and manifold; We have refrained from quoting them for the sake of brevity. Nay, whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God, inasmuch as within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that most great Light. Methinks, but for the potency of that revelation, no being could ever exist. How resplendent the luminaries of knowledge that shine in an atom, and how vast the oceans of wisdom that surge within a drop! To a supreme degree is this true of man, who, among all created things, hath been invested with the robe of such gifts, and hath been singled out for the

glory of such distinction. For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God to a degree that no other created being hath excelled or surpassed. All these names and attributes are applicable to him. Even as He hath said: "Man is My mystery, and I am his mystery." Manifold are the verses that have been repeatedly revealed in all the heavenly Books and the holy Scriptures, expressive of this most subtle and lofty theme. Even as He hath revealed: "We will surely show them Our signs in the world and within themselves."¹ Again He saith: "And also in your own selves: will ye not then behold the signs of God?"² And yet again He revealeth: "And be ye not like those who forget God, and whom He hath therefore caused to forget their own selves."³ In this connection, He Who is the eternal King—may the souls of all that dwell within the mystic Tabernacle be a sacrifice unto Him—hath spoken: "He hath known God who hath known himself."

I swear by God, O esteemed and honoured friend! Shouldst thou ponder these words in thine heart, thou wilt of a certainty find the doors of divine wisdom and infinite knowledge flung open before thy face.

From that which hath been said it becometh evident that all things, in their inmost reality, testify to the revelation of the names and attributes of God within them. Each according to its capacity, indicateth, and is expressive of, the knowledge of God. So potent and universal is this revelation, that it hath encompassed all things, visible and invisible. Thus hath He revealed: "Hath aught else save Thee a power of revelation which is not possessed by Thee, that it could have manifested Thee? Blind is the eye which doth not perceive Thee." Likewise, hath the eternal King spoken: "No thing have I perceived, except that I perceived God within it, God before it, or God after it." Also in the tradition of Kumayl it is written: "Behold, a light hath shone forth out of the Morn of eternity, and lo! its waves have penetrated the inmost reality of all men." Man, the noblest and most perfect of all created things, excelleth them all in the intensity of this revelation, and is a fuller

¹ Qur'án 41:53.

² Qur'án 59:19.

³ Qur'án 51:21.

expression of its glory. And of all men, the most accomplished, the most distinguished and the most excellent are the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth. Nay, all else besides these Manifestations, live by the operation of their Will, and move and have their being through the outpourings of their grace. "But for Thee, I would have not created the heavens." Nay, all in their holy presence fade into utter nothingness, and are a thing forgotten. Human tongue can never befittingly sing their praise, and human speech can never unfold their mystery. These Tabernacles of holiness, these primal Mirrors which reflect the light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles. By the revelation of these gems of divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty and grace, are made manifest.

These attributes of God are not and have never been vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favoured, His holy, and chosen Messengers, are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light. Even as He hath revealed: "Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel the others."¹ It hath therefore become manifest and evident that within the tabernacles of these Prophets and chosen Ones of God the light of His infinite names and exalted attributes hath been reflected, even though the light of some of these attributes may or may not be outwardly revealed from these luminous Temples to the eyes of men. That a certain attribute of God hath not been outwardly manifested by these Essences of Detachment doth in no wise imply that they Who are the Day-springs of God's attributes and the Treasuries of His holy names did not actually possess it. Therefore, these illuminated Souls, these beauteous Countenances have, each and every one of them, been endowed with all the attributes of God, such as sovereignty, dominion, and the like, even though to outward seeming they be shorn of all earthly majesty. To every discerning eye

¹ Qur'án 2:253.

this is evident and manifest; it requireth neither proof nor evidence.

Furthermore, it is evident to thee that the Bearers of the trust of God are made manifest unto the peoples of the earth as the Exponents of a new Cause and the Bearers of a new Message. Inasmuch as these Birds of the Celestial Throne are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they therefore are regarded as one soul and the same person. For they all drink from the one Cup of the love of God, and all partake of the fruit of the same Tree of Oneness. These Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity. In this respect, if thou callest them all by one name, and dost ascribe to them the same attribute, thou hast not erred from the truth. Even as He hath revealed: "No distinction do We make between any of His Messengers!"¹ For they one and all summon the people of the earth to acknowledge the Unity of God, and herald unto them the Kawthar of an infinite grace and bounty. They are all invested with the robe of Prophethood, and honoured with the mantle of glory. Thus hath Muḥammad, the Point of the Qur'án, revealed: "I am all the Prophets." Likewise, He saith: "I am the first Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus." Similar statements have been made by 'Alí. Sayings such as this, which indicate the essential unity of those Exponents of Oneness, have also emanated from the Channels of God's immortal utterance, and the Treasuries of the gems of divine knowledge, and have been recorded in the scriptures. These Countenances are the recipients of the Divine Command, and the day-springs of His Revelation. This Revelation is exalted above the veils of plurality and the exigencies of number. Thus He saith: "Our Cause is but one."² Inasmuch as the Cause is one and the same, the Exponents thereof also must needs be one and the same. Likewise, the Imáms of the Muḥammadan Faith, those lamps of certitude, have said: "Muḥammad is our first, Muḥammad our last, Muḥammad our all."

¹ Qur'án 2:285.

² Qur'án 54:50.

It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. Such is the unity of those Essences of being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendour. Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: "I am the return of all the Prophets," He verily speaketh the truth. In like manner, in every subsequent Revelation, the return of the former Revelation is a fact, the truth of which is firmly established. Inasmuch as the return of the Prophets of God, as attested by verses and traditions, hath been conclusively demonstrated, the return of their chosen ones also is therefore definitely proven. This return is too manifest in itself to require any evidence or proof. For instance, consider that among the Prophets was Noah. When He was invested with the robe of Prophethood, and was moved by the Spirit of God to arise and proclaim His Cause, whoever believed in Him and acknowledged His Faith, was endowed with the grace of a new life. Of him it could be truly said that he was reborn and revived, inasmuch as previous to his belief in God and his acceptance of His Manifestation, he had set his affections on the things of the world, such as attachment to earthly goods, to wife, children, food, drink, and the like, so much so that in the day-time and in the night season his one concern had been to amass riches and procure for himself the means of enjoyment and pleasure. Aside from these things, before his partaking of the reviving waters of faith, he had been so wedded to the traditions of his forefathers, and so passionately devoted to the observance of their customs and laws, that he would have preferred to suffer death rather than violate one letter of those superstitious forms and manners current amongst his people. Even as the people have cried: "Verily we found our fathers with a faith, and verily, in their footsteps we follow."¹

¹Qur'án 43:22.

The other is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation and to the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined Revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfils a definite Mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation. Even as He saith: "Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel the others. To some God hath spoken, some He hath raised and exalted. And to Jesus, Son of Mary, We gave manifest signs, and We strengthened Him with the Holy Spirit."¹

It is because of this difference in their station and mission that the words and utterances flowing from these Well-springs of divine knowledge appear to diverge and differ. Otherwise, in the eyes of them that are initiated into the mysteries of divine wisdom, all their utterances are in reality but the expressions of one Truth. As most of the people have failed to appreciate those stations to which We have referred, they therefore feel perplexed and dismayed at the varying utterances pronounced by Manifestations that are essentially one and the same.

It hath ever been evident that all these divergences of utterance are attributable to differences of station. Thus, viewed from the standpoint of their oneness and sublime detachment, the attributes of Godhead, Divinity, Supreme Singleness, and Inmost Essence, have been and are applicable to those Essences of being, inasmuch as they all abide on the throne of divine Revelation, and are established upon the seat of divine Concealment. Through their appearance the Revelation of God is made manifest, and by their countenance the Beauty of God is revealed. Thus it is that the accents of God Himself have been heard uttered by these Manifestations of the divine Being.

Viewed in the light of their second station—the station of distinction, differentiation, temporal limitations, characteristics and standards—they manifest absolute servitude, utter destitution and complete self-effacement. Even as He saith: "I am the servant of God. I am but a man like you."

¹ Qur'án 2:253.

From these incontrovertible and fully demonstrated statements strive thou to apprehend the meaning of the questions thou hast asked, that thou mayest become steadfast in the Faith of God, and not be dismayed by the divergencies in the utterances of His Prophets and Chosen Ones.

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: "I am God!" He verily speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His name and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. Thus, He hath revealed: "Those shafts were God's, not Thine!"¹ And also He saith: "In truth, they who plighted fealty unto thee, really plighted that fealty unto God."² And were any of them to voice the utterance: "I am the Messenger of God," He also speaketh the truth, the indubitable truth. Even as He saith: "Muḥammad is not the father of any man among you, but He is the Messenger of God." Viewed in this light, they are all but Messengers of that ideal King, that unchangeable Essence. And were they all to proclaim: "I am the Seal of the Prophets," they verily utter but the truth, beyond the faintest shadow of doubt. For they are all but one person, one soul, one spirit, one being, one revelation. They are all the manifestation of the "Beginning" and the "End," the "First" and the "Last," the "Seen" and "Hidden" —all of which pertain to Him Who is the innermost Spirit of Spirits and eternal Essence of Essences. And were they to say: "We are the servants of God,"³ this also is a manifest and indisputable fact. For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain. Thus in moments in which these Essences of being were deep immersed beneath the oceans of ancient and everlasting holiness, or when they soared to the loftiest summits of divine mysteries, they claimed their utterance to be the Voice of Divinity, the Call of God Himself. Were the eye of discernment to be opened, it would recognize that in this very state, they have considered themselves utterly

¹ Qur'án 8:17.

² Qur'án 48:10.

³ Qur'án 33:40.

effaced and non-existent in the face of Him Who is the All-Pervading, the Incorruptible. Methinks, they have regarded themselves as utter nothingness, and deemed their mention in that Court an act of blasphemy. For the slightest whisperings of self, within such a Court, is an evidence of self-assertion and independent existence. In the eyes of them that have attained unto that Court, such a suggestion is itself a grievous transgression. How much more grievous would it be, were aught else to be mentioned in that Presence, were man's heart, his tongue, his mind, or his soul, to be busied with anyone but the Well-Beloved, were his eyes to behold any countenance other than His beauty, were his ear to be inclined to any melody but His voice, and were his feet to tread any way but His way.

In this day the breeze of God is wafted, and His Spirit hath pervaded all things. Such is the outpouring of His grace that the pen is stilled and the tongue is speechless.

By virtue of this station, they have claimed for themselves the Voice of Divinity and the like, whilst by virtue of their station of Messengership, they have declared themselves the Messengers of God. In every instance they have voiced an utterance that would conform to the requirements of the occasion, and have ascribed all these declarations to Themselves, declarations ranging from the realm of divine Revelation to the realm of creation, and from the domain of Divinity even unto the domain of earthly existence. Thus it is that whatsoever be their utterance, whether it pertain to the realm of Divinity, Lordship, Prophethood, Messengership, Guardianship, Apostleship or Servitude, all is true, beyond the shadow of a doubt. Therefore, these sayings which We have quoted in support of Our argument must be attentively considered, that the divergent utterances of the Manifestations of the Unseen and Day-springs of Holiness may cease to agitate the soul and perplex the mind.

Those words uttered by the Luminaries of Truth must needs be pondered, and should their significance be not grasped, enlightenment should be sought from the Trustees of the depositories of Knowledge, that these may expound their meaning, and unravel their mystery. For it behooveth no man

to interpret the holy words according to his own imperfect understanding, nor, having found them to be contrary to his inclination and desires, to reject and repudiate their truth. For such, to-day, is the manner of the divines and doctors of the age, who occupy the seats of knowledge and learning, and who have named ignorance knowledge, and called oppression justice. Were these to ask the Light of Truth concerning those images which their idle fancy hath carved, and were they to find His answer inconsistent with their own conceptions and their own understanding of the Book, they would assuredly denounce Him Who is the Mine and Wellhead of all Knowledge as the very negation of understanding. Such things have happened in every age.

(From the Kitáb-i-Íqán, The Book of Certitude)

INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

No man shall attain the shores of the ocean of true understanding except he be detached from all that is in heaven and on earth. Sanctify your souls, O ye peoples of the world, that haply ye may attain that station which God hath destined for you and enter thus the tabernacle which, according to the dispensations of Providence, hath been raised in the firmament of the Baydn.

THE essence of these words is this: they that tread the path of faith, they that thirst for the wine of certitude, must cleanse themselves of all that is earthly—their ears from idle talk, their minds from vain imaginings, their hearts from worldly affections, their eyes from that which perisheth. They should put their trust in God, and, holding fast unto Him, follow in His way. Then will they be made worthy of the effulgent glories of the sun of divine knowledge and understanding, and become the recipients of a grace that is infinite and unseen, inasmuch as man can never hope to attain unto the knowledge of the All-Glorious, can never quaff from the stream of divine knowledge and wisdom, can never enter the abode of immortality, nor partake of the cup of divine nearness and favour, unless and until he ceases to regard the words and deeds of mortal men as a standard for the true understanding and recognition of God and His Prophets.

Consider the past. How many, both high and low, have, at all times, yearningly awaited the advent of the Manifestations of God in the sanctified persons of His chosen Ones. How often have they expected His coming, how frequently have they prayed that the breeze of divine mercy might blow, and the

promised Beauty step forth from behind the veil of concealment, and be made manifest to all the world. And whensoever the portals of grace did open, and the clouds of divine bounty did rain upon mankind, and the light of the Unseen did shine above the horizon of celestial might, they all denied Him, and turned away from His face—the face of God Himself. Refer ye, to verify this truth, to that which hath been recorded in every sacred Book.

Ponder for a moment, and reflect upon that which hath been the cause of such denial on the part of those who have searched with such earnestness and longing. Their attack hath been more fierce than tongue or pen can describe. Not one single Manifestation of Holiness hath appeared but He was afflicted by the denials, the repudiation, and the vehement opposition of the people around Him. Thus it hath been revealed: “O the misery of men! No Messenger cometh unto them but they laugh Him to scorn.”¹ Again He saith: “Each nation hath plotted darkly against their Messenger to lay violent hold on Him, and disputed with vain words to invalidate the truth.”²

In like manner, those words that have streamed forth from the source of power and descended from the heaven of glory are innumerable and beyond the ordinary comprehension of man. To them that are possessed of true understanding and insight the Súrah of Húd surely sufficeth. Ponder a while those holy words in your heart, and, with utter detachment, strive to grasp their meaning. Examine the wondrous behaviour of the Prophets, and recall the defamations and denials uttered by the children of negation and falsehood, perchance you may cause the bird of the human heart to wing its flight away from the abodes of heedlessness and doubt unto the nest of faith and certainty, and drink deep from the pure waters of ancient wisdom, and partake of the fruit of the tree of divine knowledge. Such is the share of the pure in heart of the bread that hath descended from the realms of eternity and holiness.

Should you acquaint yourself with the indignities heaped upon the Prophets of God, and apprehend the true causes of

¹ Qur'án 36:30.

² Qur'án 40:5.

the objections voiced by their oppressors, you will surely appreciate the significance of their position. Moreover, the more closely you observe the denials of those who have opposed the Manifestations of the divine attributes, the firmer will be your faith in the Cause of God. Accordingly, a brief mention will be made in this Tablet of divers accounts relative to the Prophets of God, that they may demonstrate the truth that throughout all ages and centuries the Manifestations of power and glory have been subjected to such heinous cruelties that no pen dare describe them. Perchance this may enable a few to cease to be perturbed by the clamour and protestations of the divines and the foolish of this age, and cause them to strengthen their confidence and certainty.

And now, ponder upon these things. What could have caused such contention and conflict? Why is it that the advent of every true Manifestation of God hath been accompanied by such strife and tumult, by such tyranny and upheaval? This notwithstanding the fact that all the Prophets of God, whenever made manifest unto the peoples of the world, have invariably foretold the coming of yet another Prophet after them, and have established such signs as would herald the advent of the future Dispensation. To this the records of all sacred books bear witness. Why then is it that despite the expectation of men in their quest of the Manifestations of Holiness, and in spite of the signs recorded in the sacred books, should such acts of violence, of oppression and cruelty, have been perpetrated in every age and cycle against all the Prophets and chosen Ones of God? Even as He hath revealed: "As oft as an Apostle cometh unto you with that which your souls desire not, ye swell with pride, accusing some of being impostors and slaying others."¹

Reflect, what could have been the motive for such deeds? What could have prompted such behaviour towards the Revealers of the beauty of the All-Glorious? Whatever in days gone by hath been the cause of the denial and opposition of those people hath now led to the perversity of the people of this age. To maintain that the testimony of Providence was incomplete, that it hath therefore been the cause of the denial of the

¹ Qur'án 2:87.

people, is but open blasphemy. How far from the grace of the All-Bountiful and from His loving providence and tender mercies it is to single out a soul from amongst all men for the guidance of His creatures, and, on one hand, to withhold from Him the full measure of His divine testimony, and, on the other, inflict severe retribution on His people for having turned away from His chosen One! Nay, the manifold bounties of the Lord of all beings have, at all times, through the Manifestations of His divine Essence, encompassed the earth and all that dwell therein. Not for a moment hath His grace been withheld, nor have the showers of His loving-kindness ceased to rain upon mankind. Consequently, such behaviour can be attributed to naught save the petty-mindedness of such souls as tread the valley of arrogance and pride, are lost in the wilds of remoteness, walk in the ways of their idle fancy, and follow the dictates of the leaders of their faith. Their chief concern is mere opposition; their sole desire is to ignore the truth. 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.

Leaders of religion, in every age, have hindered their people from attaining the shores of eternal salvation, inasmuch as they held the reins of authority in their mighty grasp. Some for the lust of leadership, others through want of knowledge and understanding, have been the cause of the deprivation of the people. By their sanction and authority, every Prophet of God hath drunk from the chalice of sacrifice, and winged His flight unto the heights of glory. What unspeakable cruelties they that have occupied the seats of authority and learning have inflicted upon the true Monarchs of the world, those Gems of divine virtue! Content with a transitory dominion, they have deprived

themselves of an everlasting sovereignty. Thus, their eyes beheld not the light of the countenance of the Well-Beloved, nor did their ears hearken unto the sweet melodies of the Bird of Desire. For this reason, in all sacred books mention hath been made of the divines of every age. Thus He saith: "O people of the Book! Why disbelieve the signs of God to which ye yourselves have been witnesses?"¹ And also He saith: "O people of the Book! Why clothe ye the truth with falsehood? Why wittingly hide the truth?"² Again, He saith: "Say, O people of the Book, Why repel believers from the way of God?"³ It is evident that by the "people of the Book," who have repelled their fellow-men from the straight path of God is meant none other than the divines of that age, whose names and character have been revealed in the sacred books, and alluded to in the verses and traditions recorded therein, were you to observe with the eye of God.

With fixed and steady gaze, born of the unerring eye of God, scan for a while the horizon of divine knowledge, and contemplate those words of perfection which the Eternal hath revealed, that haply the mysteries of divine wisdom, hidden ere now beneath the veil of glory and treasured within the tabernacle of His grace, may be made manifest unto you. The denials and protestations of these leaders of religion have, in the main, been due to their lack of knowledge and understanding. Those words uttered by the Revealers of the beauty of the one true God, setting forth the signs that should herald the advent of the Manifestation to come, they never understood nor fathomed. Hence they raised the standard of revolt, and stirred up mischief and sedition. It is obvious and manifest that the true meaning of the utterances of the Birds of Eternity is revealed to none except those that manifest the Eternal Being, and the melodies of the Nightingale of Holiness can reach no ear save that of the denizens of the everlasting realm. The Copt of tyranny can never partake of the cup touched by the lips of the Sept of justice, and the Pharaoh of unbelief can never hope to recognize the hand of the Moses of truth. Even as He saith: "None

¹ Qur'án 3:70.

² Qur'án 3:99.

³ Qur'án 3:71.

knoweth the meaning thereof except God and them that are well-grounded in knowledge.”¹ And yet, they have sought the interpretation of the Book from those that are wrapt in veils, and have refused to seek enlightenment from the fountain-head of knowledge.

And when the days of Moses were ended, and the light of Jesus, shining forth from the day-spring of the Spirit, encompassed the world, all the people of Israel arose in protest against Him. They clamoured that He Whose advent the Bible had foretold must needs promulgate and fulfil the laws of Moses, whereas this youthful Nazarene, who laid claim to the station of the divine Messiah, had annulled the law of divorce and of the sabbath day—the most weighty of all the laws of Moses. Moreover, what of the signs of the Manifestation yet to come? These people of Israel are even unto the present day still expecting that Manifestation which the Bible hath foretold! How many Manifestations of Holiness, how many Revealers of the light everlasting, have appeared since the time of Moses, and yet Israel, wrapt in the densest veils of satanic fancy and false imaginings, is still expectant that the idol of her own handiwork will appear with such signs as she herself hath conceived! Thus hath God laid hold of them for their sins, hath extinguished in them the spirit of faith, and tormented them with the flames of the nethermost fire. And this for no other reason except that Israel refused to apprehend the meaning of such words as have been revealed in the Bible concerning the signs of the coming Revelation. As she never grasped their true significance, and, to outward seeming, such events never came to pass, she, therefore, remained deprived of recognizing the beauty of Jesus and of beholding the face of God. ~And they still await His coming! From time immemorial even unto this day, all the kindreds and peoples of the earth have clung to such fanciful and unseemly thoughts, and thus have deprived themselves of the clear waters streaming from the springs of purity and holiness.

In unfolding these mysteries, We have, in Our former Tablets which were addressed to a friend in the melodious language of

¹ Qur’án 3:7.

Hijáz, cited a few of the verses revealed unto the Prophets of old. And now, responding to your request, We again shall cite, in these pages, those same verses, uttered this time in the wondrous accents of 'Iráq, that haply the sore athirst in the wilds of remoteness may attain unto the ocean of the divine presence, and they that languish in the wastes of separation be led unto the home of eternal reunion. Thus the mists of error may be dispelled, and the all-resplendent light of divine guidance dawn forth above the horizon of human hearts. In God We put Our trust, and to Him We cry for help, that haply there may flow from this pen that which shall quicken the souls of men, that they may all arise from their beds of heedlessness and hearken unto the rustling of the leaves of Paradise, from the tree which the hand of divine power hath, by the permission of God, planted in the Riḍván of the All-Glorious.

To them that are endowed with understanding, it is clear and manifest that when the fire of the love of Jesus consumed the veils of Jewish limitations, and His authority was made apparent and partially enforced, He the Revealer of the unseen Beauty, addressing one day His disciples, referred unto His passing, and, kindling in their hearts the fire of bereavement, said unto them: "I go away and come again unto you." And in another place He said: "I go and another will come Who will tell you all that I have not told you, and will fulfil all that I have said." Both these sayings have but one meaning, were you to ponder upon the Manifestations of the Unity of God with divine insight.

Every discerning observer will recognize that in the Dispensation of the Qur'án both the Book and the Cause of Jesus were confirmed. As to the matter of names, Muḥammad, Himself, declared: "I am Jesus." He recognized the truth of the signs, prophecies, and words of Jesus, and testified that they were all of God. In this sense, neither the person of Jesus nor His writings hath differed from that of Muḥammad and of His holy Book, inasmuch as both have championed the Cause of God, uttered His praise, and revealed His commandments. Thus it is that Jesus, Himself, declared: "I go away and come again

unto you." Consider the sun. Were it to say now, "I am the sun of yesterday," it would speak the truth. And should it, bearing the sequence of time in mind, claim to be other than that sun, it still would speak the truth. In like manner, if it be said that all the days are but one and the same, it is correct and true. And if it be said, with respect to their particular names and designations, that they differ, that again is true. For though they are the same, yet one doth recognize in each a separate designation, a specific attribute, a particular character. Conceive accordingly the distinction, variation, and unity characteristic of the various Manifestations of holiness, that thou mayest comprehend the allusions made by the creator of all names and attributes to the mysteries of distinction and unity, and discover the answer to thy question as to why that everlasting Beauty should have, at sundry times, called Himself by different names and titles.

Afterwards, the companions and disciples of Jesus asked Him concerning those signs that must needs signalize the return of His manifestation. When, they asked, shall these things be? Several times they questioned that peerless Beauty, and, every time He made reply, He set forth a special sign that should herald the advent of the promised Dispensation. To this testify the records of the four Gospels.

This wronged One will cite but one of these instances, thus conferring upon mankind, for the sake of God, such bounties as are yet concealed within the treasury of the hidden and sacred Tree, that haply mortal men may not remain deprived of their share of the immortal fruit, and attain to a dewdrop of the waters of everlasting life which, from Baghdád, the "Abode of Peace," are being vouchsafed unto all mankind. We ask for neither meed nor reward. "We nourish your souls for the sake of God; we seek from you neither recompense nor thanks."¹ This is the food that conferreth everlasting life upon the pure in heart and the illumined in spirit. This is the bread of which it is said: "Lord, send down upon us Thy bread from heaven."² This bread shall never be withheld from them that deserve it,

¹ Qur'án 76:9.

² Qur'án 5:117.

nor can it ever be exhausted. It groweth everlastingly from the tree of grace; it descendeth at all seasons from the heavens of justice and mercy. Even as He saith: "Seest thou not to what God likeneth a good word? To a good tree; its root firmly fixed, and its branches reaching unto heaven: yielding its fruit in all seasons."¹

O the pity! that man should deprive himself of this goodly gift, this imperishable bounty, this everlasting life. It behooveth him to prize this food that cometh from heaven, that perchance, through the wondrous favours of the Sun of Truth, the dead may be brought to life, and withered souls be quickened by the infinite Spirit. Make haste, O my brother, that while there is yet time our lips may taste of the immortal draught, for the breeze of life, now blowing from the city of the Well-Beloved, cannot last, and the streaming river of holy utterance must needs be stilled, and the portals of the Ridván cannot for ever remain open. The day will surely come when the Nightingale of Paradise will have winged its flight away from its earthly abode unto its heavenly nest. Then will its melody be heard no more, and the beauty of the rose cease to shine. Seize the time, therefore, ere the glory of the divine springtime hath spent itself, and the Bird of Eternity ceased to warble its melody, that thy inner hearing may not be deprived of hearkening unto its call. This is My counsel unto thee and unto the beloved of God. Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away. God, verily, is independent of him and of that which he may see and witness.

These are the melodies, sung by Jesus, Son of Mary, in accents of majestic power in the Ridván of the Gospel, revealing those signs that must needs herald the advent of the Manifestation after Him. In the first Gospel according to Matthew it is recorded: And when they asked Jesus concerning the signs of His coming, He said unto them: "Immediately after the oppression² of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from

¹ Qur'án 14:24.

² The Greek word used (Thlipses) has two meanings: pressure and oppression.

heaven, and the powers of the earth shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet."¹ Rendered into the Persian tongue,² the purport of these words is as follows: When the oppression and afflictions that are to befall mankind will have come to pass, then shall the sun be withheld from shining, the moon from giving light, the stars of heaven shall fall upon the earth, and the pillars of the earth shall quake. At that time, the signs of the Son of man shall appear in heaven, that is, the promised Beauty and Substance of life shall, when these signs have appeared, step forth out of the realm of the invisible into the visible world. And He saith: at that time, all the peoples and kindreds that dwell on earth shall bewail and lament, and they shall see that divine Beauty coming from heaven, riding upon the clouds with power, grandeur, and magnificence, sending His angels with a great sound of a trumpet. Similarly, in the three other Gospels, according to Luke, Mark, and John, the same statements are recorded. As We have referred at length to these in Our Tablets revealed in the Arabic tongue, We have made no mention of them in these pages, and have confined Ourselves to but one reference.

Inasmuch as the Christian divines have failed to apprehend the meaning of these words, and did not recognize their object and purpose, and have clung to the literal interpretation of the words of Jesus, they therefore became deprived of the streaming grace of the Muḥammadan Revelation and its showering bounties. The ignorant among the Christian community, following the example of the leaders of their faith, were likewise prevented from beholding the beauty of the King of glory, inasmuch as those signs which were to accompany the dawn of the sun of the Muḥammadan Dispensation did not actually come to pass. Thus, ages have passed and centuries

¹ Matthew 24:29-31.

² The passage is quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in Arabic and interpreted in Persian.

rolled away, and that most pure Spirit hath repaired unto the retreats of its ancient sovereignty. Once more hath the eternal Spirit breathed into the mystic trumpet, and caused the dead to speed out of their sepulchres of heedlessness and error unto the realm of guidance and grace. And yet, that expectant community still crieth out: When shall these things be? When shall the promised One, the object of our expectation, be made manifest, that we may arise for the triumph of His Cause, that we may sacrifice our substance for His sake, that we may offer up our lives in His path? In like manner, have such false imaginings caused other communities to stray from the Kawthar of the infinite mercy of Providence, and to be busied with their own idle thoughts.

Beside this passage, there is yet another verse in the Gospel wherein He saith: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away."¹ Thus it is that the adherents of Jesus maintained that the law of the Gospel shall never be annulled, and that whensoever the promised Beauty is made manifest and all the signs are revealed, He must needs re-affirm and establish the law proclaimed in the Gospel, so that there may remain in the world no faith but His faith. This is their fundamental belief. And their conviction is such that were a person to be made manifest with all the promised signs and to promulgate that which is contrary to the letter of the law of the Gospel, they must assuredly renounce him, refuse to submit to his law, declare him an infidel, and laugh him to scorn. This is proved by that which came to pass when the sun of the Muḥammadan Revelation was revealed. Had they sought with a humble mind from the Manifestations of God in every Dispensation the true meaning of these words revealed in the sacred books—words the misapprehension of which hath caused men to be deprived of the recognition of the Sadratu'l-Muntahá, the ultimate Purpose—they surely would have been guided to the light of the Sun of Truth, and would have discovered the mysteries of divine knowledge and wisdom.

This servant will now share with thee a dewdrop out of the fathomless ocean of the truths treasured in these holy words,

¹ Luke 21:33.

that haply discerning hearts may comprehend all the allusions and the implications of the utterances of the Manifestations of Holiness, so that the overpowering majesty of the Word of God may not prevent them from attaining unto the ocean of His names and attributes, nor deprive them of recognizing the Lamp of God which is the seat of the revelation of His glorified Essence.

As to the words—"Immediately after the oppression of those days"—they refer to the time when men shall become oppressed and afflicted, the time when the lingering traces of the Sun of Truth and the fruit of the Tree of knowledge and wisdom will have vanished from the midst of men, when the reins of mankind will have fallen into the grasp of the foolish and ignorant, when the portals of divine unity and understanding—the essential and highest purpose in creation—will have been closed, when certain knowledge will have given way to idle fancy, and corruption will have usurped the station of righteousness. Such a condition as this is witnessed in this day when the reins of every community have fallen into the grasp of foolish leaders, who lead after their own whims and desire. On their tongue the mention of God hath become an empty name; in their midst His holy Word a dead letter. Such is the sway of their desires, that the lamp of conscience and reason hath been quenched in their hearts, and this although the fingers of divine power have unlocked the portals of the knowledge of God, and the light of divine knowledge and heavenly grace hath illumined and inspired the essence of all created things, in such wise that in each and every thing a door of knowledge hath been opened, and within every atom traces of the sun hath been made manifest. And yet, in spite of all these manifold revelations of divine knowledge, which have encompassed the world, they still vainly imagine the door of knowledge to be closed, and the showers of mercy to be stilled. Clinging unto idle fancy, they have strayed far from the 'Urvatu'l-Vuthqá of divine knowledge. Their hearts seem not to be inclined to knowledge and the door thereof, neither think they of its manifestations, inasmuch as in idle fancy they have found the door that leadeth unto earthly riches, whereas in the manifestation of the Revealer

of knowledge they find naught but the call to self-sacrifice. They therefore naturally hold fast unto the former, and flee from the latter. Though they recognize in their hearts the Law of God to be one and the same, yet from every direction they issue a new command, and in every season proclaim a fresh decree. No two are found to agree on one and the same law, for they seek no God but their own desire, and tread no path but the path of error. In leadership they have recognized the ultimate object of their endeavour, and account pride and haughtiness as the highest attainments of their heart's desire. They have placed their sordid machinations above the divine decree, have renounced resignation unto the will of God, busied themselves with selfish calculation, and walked in the way of the hypocrite. With all their power and strength they strive to secure themselves in their petty pursuits, fearful lest the least discredit undermine their authority or blemish the display of their magnificence. Were the eye to be anointed and illumined with the collyrium of the knowledge of God, it would surely discover that a number of voracious beasts have gathered and preyed upon the carrion of the souls of men.

What "oppression" is greater than that which hath been recounted? What "oppression" is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it? For opinions have sorely differed, and the ways unto the attainment of God have multiplied. This "oppression" is the essential feature of every Revelation. Unless it cometh to pass, the Sun of Truth will not be made manifest. For the break of the morn of divine guidance must needs follow the darkness of the night of error. For this reason, in all chronicles and traditions reference hath been made unto these things, namely that iniquity shall cover the surface of the earth and darkness shall envelop mankind. As the traditions referred to are well known, and as the purpose of this servant is to be brief, He will refrain from quoting the text of these traditions.

Were this "oppression" (which literally meaneth pressure) to be interpreted that the earth is to become contracted, or were men's idle fancy to conceive similar calamities to befall man-

kind, it is clear and manifest that no such happenings can ever come to pass. They will assuredly protest that this pre-requisite of divine revelation hath not been made manifest. Such hath been and still is their contention. Whereas, by "oppression" is meant the want of capacity to acquire spiritual knowledge and apprehend the Word of God. By it is meant that when the Day-star of Truth hath set, and the mirrors that reflect His light have departed, mankind will become afflicted with "oppression" and hardship, knowing not whither to turn for guidance. Thus We instruct thee in the interpretation of the traditions, and reveal unto thee the mysteries of divine wisdom, that haply thou mayest comprehend the meaning thereof, and be of them that have quaffed the cup of divine knowledge and understanding.

And now, concerning His words—"The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give light, and the stars shall fall from heaven." By the terms "sun" and "moon," mentioned in the writings of the Prophets of God, is not meant solely the sun and moon of the visible universe. Nay rather, manifold are the meanings they have intended for these terms. In every instance they have attached to them a particular significance. Thus, by the "sun" in one sense is meant those Suns of Truth Who rise from the day-spring of ancient glory, and fill the world with a liberal effusion of grace from on high. These Suns of Truth are the universal Manifestations of God in the worlds of His attributes and names, even as the visible sun that assisteth, as decreed by God, the true One, the Adored, in the development of all earthly things, such as the trees, the fruits, and colours thereof, the minerals of the earth, and all that may be witnessed in the world of creation, so do the divine Luminaries, by their loving care and educative influence, cause the trees of divine unity, the fruits of His oneness, the leaves of detachment, the blossoms of knowledge and certitude, and the myrtles of wisdom and utterance, to exist and be made manifest. Thus it is that through the rise of these Luminaries of God the world is made new, the waters of everlasting life stream forth, the billows of loving-kindness surge, the clouds of grace are gathered, and the breeze of bounty bloweth upon all created things.

It is the warmth that these Luminaries of God generate, and the undying fires they kindle, which cause the light of the love of God to burn fiercely in the heart of humanity. It is through the abundant grace of these Symbols of Detachment that the Spirit of life everlasting is breathed into the bodies of the dead. Assuredly the visible sun is but a sign of the splendour of that Day-star of Truth, that Sun Which can never have a peer, a likeness, or rival. Through Him all things live, move, and have their being. Through His grace they are made manifest, and unto Him they all return. From Him all things have sprung, and unto the treasures of His revelation they all have repaired. From Him all created things did proceed, and to the depositories of His law they did revert.

That these divine Luminaries seem to be confined at times to specific designations and attributes, as you have observed and are now observing, is due solely to the imperfect and limited comprehension of certain minds. Otherwise, they have been at all times, and will through eternity continue to be, exalted above every praising name, and sanctified from every descriptive attribute. The quintessence of every name can hope for no access unto their court of holiness, and the highest and purest of all attributes can never approach their kingdom of glory. Immeasurably high are the Prophets of God exalted above the comprehension of men, who can never know them except by their own Selves. Far be it from His glory that His chosen Ones should be magnified by any other than their own persons. Glorified are they above the praise of men; exalted are they above human understanding!

The term "suns" hath many a time been applied in the writings of the "immaculate Souls" unto the Prophets of God, those luminous Emblems of Detachment. Among those writings are the following words recorded in the "Prayer of Nudbih":¹ "Whither are gone the resplendent Suns? Whereunto have departed those shining Moons and sparkling Stars?" Thus, it hath become evident that the terms "sun," "moon," and "stars" primarily signify the Prophets of God, the saints, and their companions, those Luminaries, the light of Whose knowledge

¹ "Lamentation" written by the Imám 'Alí.

hath shed illumination upon the worlds of the visible and the invisible.

In another sense, by these terms is intended the divines of the former Dispensation, who live in the days of the subsequent Revelations, and who hold the reins of religion in their grasp. If these divines be illumined by the light of the latter Revelation they will be acceptable unto God, and will shine with a light everlasting. Otherwise, they will be declared as darkened, even though to outward seeming they be leaders of men, inasmuch as belief and unbelief, guidance and error, felicity and misery, light and darkness, are all dependent upon the sanction of Him Who is the Day-star of Truth. Whosoever among the divines of every age receiveth, in the Day of Reckoning, the testimony of faith from the Source of true knowledge, he verily becometh the recipient of learning, of divine favour, and of the light of true understanding. Otherwise, he is branded as guilty of folly, denial, blasphemy, and oppression.

It is evident and manifest unto every discerning observer that even as the light of the star fadeth before the effulgent splendour of the sun, so doth the luminary of earthly knowledge, of wisdom, and understanding vanish into nothingness when brought face to face with the resplendent glories of the Sun of Truth, the Day-star of divine enlightenment.

That the term "sun" hath been applied to the leaders of religion is due to their lofty position, their fame, and renown. Such are the universally recognized divines of every age, who speak with authority, and whose fame is securely established. If they be in the likeness of the Sun of Truth, they will surely be accounted as the most exalted of all luminaries; otherwise, they are to be recognized as the focal centres of hellish fire. Even as He saith: "Verily, the sun and the moon are both condemned to the torment of infernal fire."¹ You are no doubt familiar with the interpretation of the term "sun" and "moon" mentioned in this verse; no need therefore to refer unto it. And whosoever is of the element of this "sun" and "moon," that is, followeth the example of these leaders in setting his face towards falsehood and in turning away from the truth he

¹ Qur'an 55:5.

undoubtedly cometh out of infernal gloom and returneth thereunto.

And now, O seeker, it behooveth us firmly to cling unto the 'Urvatu'l-Vuḥqá, that perchance we may leave behind the darksome night of error, and embrace the dawning light of divine guidance. Shall we not flee from the face of denial, and seek the sheltering shadow of certitude? Shall we not free ourselves from the horror of satanic gloom, and hasten towards the rising light of the heavenly Beauty? In such wise, we bestow upon you the fruit of the Tree of divine knowledge, that ye may gladly and joyously abide in the Riḍván of divine wisdom.

In another sense, by the terms 'sun,' 'moon,' and 'stars' are meant such laws and teachings as have been established and proclaimed in every Dispensation, such as the laws of prayer and fasting. These have, according to the law of the Qur'án, been regarded, when the beauty of the Prophet Muḥammad had passed beyond the veil, as the most fundamental and binding laws of His dispensation. To this testify the texts of the traditions and chronicles, which, on account of their being widely known, need not be referred to here. Nay rather, in every Dispensation the law concerning prayer hath been emphasized and universally enforced. To this testify the recorded traditions ascribed to the lights that have emanated from the Day-star of Truth, the essence of the Prophet Muḥammad.

The traditions established the fact that in all Dispensations the law of prayer hath constituted a fundamental element of the Revelation of all the Prophets of God—a law the form and the manner of which hath been adapted to the varying requirements of every age. Inasmuch as every subsequent Revelation hath abolished the manners, habits, and teachings that have been clearly, specifically, and firmly established by the former Dispensation, these have accordingly been symbolically expressed in terms of 'sun' and 'moon.' "That He might prove you, which of you excel in deeds."¹

Moreover, in the traditions the terms "sun" and "moon" have been applied to prayer and fasting, even as it is said:

¹ Qur'án 67:2.

“Fasting is illumination, prayer is light.” One day, a well-known divine came to visit Us. While We were conversing with him, he referred to the above-quoted tradition. He said: “Inasmuch as fasting causeth the heat of the body to increase, it hath therefore been likened unto the light of the sun; and as the prayer of the night-season refresheth man, it hath been compared unto the radiance of the moon.” Thereupon We realized that that poor man had not been favoured with a single drop of the ocean of true understanding, and had strayed far from the burning Bush of divine wisdom. We then politely observed to him saying: “The interpretation your honour hath given to this tradition is the one current amongst the people. Could it not be interpreted differently?” He asked Us: “What could it be?” We made reply: “Muḥammad, the Seal of the Prophets, and the most distinguished of God’s chosen Ones, hath likened the Dispensation of the Qur’án unto heaven, by reason of its loftiness, its paramount influence, its majesty, and the fact that it comprehendeth all religions. And as the sun and moon constitute the brightest and most prominent luminaries in the heavens, similarly in the heaven of the religion of God two shining orbs have been ordained—fasting and prayer. Islám is heaven; fasting is its sun, prayer, its moon.”

This is the purpose underlying the symbolic words of the Manifestations of God. Consequently, the application of the terms “sun” and “moon” to the things already mentioned hath been demonstrated and justified by the text of the sacred verses and the recorded traditions. Hence, it is clear and manifest that by the words “the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven” is intended the waywardness of the divines, and the annulment of laws firmly established by divine Revelation, all of which, in symbolic language, have been foreshadowed by the Manifestation of God. None except the righteous shall partake of this cup, none but the godly can share therein. “The righteous shall drink of a cup tempered at the camphor fountain.”¹

¹ Qur’án 76:5.

It is unquestionable that in every succeeding Revelation the "sun" and "moon" of the teachings, laws, commandments, and prohibitions which have been established in the preceding Dispensation, and which have overshadowed the people of that age, become darkened, that is, are exhausted, and cease to exert their influence. Consider now, had the people of the Gospel recognized the meaning of the symbolic terms "sun" and "moon," had they sought, unlike the froward and perverse, enlightenment from Him Who is the Revealer of divine knowledge, they would have surely comprehended the purpose of these terms, and would not have become afflicted and oppressed by the darkness of their selfish desires. Yea, but since they have failed to acquire true knowledge from its very Source, they have perished in the perilous vale of waywardness and misbelief. They still have not awakened to perceive that all the signs foretold have been made manifest, that the promised Sun hath risen above the horizon of divine Revelation, and that the "sun" and "moon" of the teachings, the laws, and learning of a former Dispensation have darkened and set.

And now, with fixed gaze and steady wings enter thou the way of certitude and truth. "Say: It is God; then leave them to entertain themselves with their cavillings."¹ Thus, wilt thou be accounted of those companions of whom He saith: "They that say 'Our Lord is God,' and continue steadfast in His way, upon them, verily, shall the angels descend."² Then shalt thou witness all these mysteries with thine own eyes.

O my brother! Take thou the step of the spirit, so that, swift as the twinkling of an eye, thou mayest flash through the wilds of remoteness and bereavement, attain the Ridván of everlasting reunion, and in one breath commune with the heavenly Spirits. For with human feet thou canst never hope to traverse these immeasurable distances, nor attain thy goal. Peace be upon him whom the light of truth guideth unto all truth, and who, in the name of God, standeth in the path of His Cause, upon the shore of true understanding.

¹ Qur'án 6:91.

² Qur'án 41:30.

This is the meaning of the sacred verse: "But nay! I swear by the Lord of the Easts and the Wests,"¹ inasmuch as the "Suns" referred to have each their own particular rising and setting place. And as the commentators of the Qur'án have failed to grasp the symbolic meaning of these "Suns," they therefore were at pains to interpret the above-quoted verse. Some of them maintained that owing to the fact that the sun each day rises from a different point, the terms "east" and "west" have been mentioned in the plural. Others have written that by this verse the four seasons of the year are intended, inasmuch as the dawning and setting points of the sun vary with the change of the seasons. Such is the depth of their understanding! None the less, they persist in imputing error and folly to those Gems of knowledge, those irreproachable and purest Symbols of wisdom.

In like manner, strive thou to comprehend from these lucid, these powerful, conclusive, and unequivocal statements the meaning of the "cleaving of the heaven"—one of the signs that must needs herald the coming of the last Hour, the Day of Resurrection. As He hath said: "When the heaven shall be cloven asunder."² By "heaven" is meant the heaven of divine Revelation, which is elevated with every Manifestation, and rent asunder with every subsequent one. By "cloven asunder" is meant that the former Dispensation is superseded and annulled. I swear by God! That this heaven being cloven asunder is, to the discerning, an act mightier than the cleaving of the skies! Ponder a while. That a divine Revelation which for years hath been securely established; beneath whose shadow all who have embraced it have been reared and nurtured; by the light of whose law generations of men have been disciplined; the excellency of whose word men have heard recounted by their fathers; in such wise that human eye hath beheld naught but the pervading influence of its grace, and mortal ear hath heard naught but the resounding majesty of its command—what act is mightier than that such a Revelation should, by the power of God, be "cloven asunder" and be abolished at the

¹ Qur'án 70:40.

² Qur'án 82:1.

appearance of one soul? Reflect, is this a mightier act than that which these abject and foolish men have imagined the "cleaving of the heaven" to mean?

Moreover, consider the hardships and the bitterness of the lives of those Revealers of the divine Beauty. Reflect, how single-handed and alone they faced the world and all its peoples, and promulgated the Law of God! No matter how severe the persecutions inflicted upon those holy, those precious, and tender Souls, they still remained, in the plenitude of their power, patient, and, despite their ascendancy, they suffered and endured.

In like manner, endeavour to comprehend the meaning of the "changing of the earth." Know thou, that upon whatever hearts the bountiful showers of mercy, raining from the "heaven" of divine Revelation, have fallen, the earth of those hearts hath verily been changed into the earth of divine knowledge and wisdom. What myrtles of unity hath the soil of their hearts produced! What blossoms of true knowledge and wisdom hath their illumined bosoms yielded! Were the earth of their hearts to remain unchanged, how could such souls who have not been taught one letter, have seen no teacher, and entered no school, utter such words and display such knowledge as none can apprehend? Methinks they have been moulded from the clay of infinite knowledge, and kneaded with the water of divine wisdom. Therefore, hath it been said: "Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth." It is this kind of knowledge which is and hath ever been praiseworthy, and not the limited knowledge that hath sprung forth from veiled and obscured minds. This limited knowledge they even stealthily borrow one from the other, and vainly pride themselves therein!

Would that the hearts of men could be cleansed from these man-made limitations and obscure thoughts imposed upon them! haply they may be illumined by the light of the Sun of true knowledge, and comprehend the mysteries of divine wisdom. Consider now, were the parched and barren soil of these hearts to remain unchanged, how could they ever become the Recipients of the revelation of the mysteries of God, and

the Revealers of the divine Essence? Thus hath He said: "On the day when the earth shall be changed into another earth."¹

The breeze of the bounty of the King of creation hath caused even the physical earth to be changed, were ye to ponder in your hearts the mysteries of divine Revelation.

And now, comprehend the meaning of this verse: "The whole earth shall on the Resurrection Day be but His handful, and in His right hand shall the heavens be folded together. Praise be to Him! and high be He uplifted above the partners they join with him!"² And now, be fair in thy judgment. Were this verse to have the meaning which men suppose it to have, of what profit, one may ask, could it be to man? Moreover, it is evident and manifest that no such hand as could be seen by human eye could accomplish such deeds, or could possibly be ascribed to the exalted Essence of the one true God. Nay, to acknowledge such a thing is naught but sheer blasphemy, an utter perversion of the truth. And should it be supposed that by this verse are meant the Manifestations of God, Who will be called upon, on the Day of Judgment, to perform such deeds, this too seemeth far from the truth, and is surely of no profit. On the contrary, by the term "earth" is meant the earth of understanding and knowledge, and by "heavens" the heavens of divine Revelation. Reflect thou, how, in one hand, He hath, by His mighty grasp, turned the earth of knowledge and understanding, previously unfolded, into a mere handful, and, on the other, spread out a new and highly exalted earth in the hearts of men, thus causing the freshest and loveliest blossoms, and the mightiest and loftiest trees to spring forth from the illumined bosom of man.

In like manner, reflect how the elevated heavens of the Dispensations of the past have, in the right hand of power, been folded together, how the heavens of divine Revelation have been raised by the command of God, and been adorned by the sun, the moon, and stars of His wondrous commandments. Such are the mysteries of the Word of God, which have been unveiled and made manifest, that haply thou mayest

¹ Qur'án 14:48.

² Qur'án 39:67.

apprehend the morning light of divine guidance, mayest quench, by the power of reliance and renunciation, the lamp of idle fancy, of vain imaginings, of hesitation, and doubt, and mayest kindle, in the inmost chamber of thine heart, the new-born light of divine knowledge and certitude.

Know verily that the purpose underlying all these symbolic terms and abstruse allusions, which emanate from the Revealers of God's holy Cause, hath been to test and prove the peoples of the world; that thereby the earth of the pure and illuminated hearts may be known from the perishable and barren soil. From time immemorial such hath been the way of God amidst His creatures, and to this testify the records of the sacred books.

Were you to ponder, but for a while, these utterances in your heart, you would surely find the portals of understanding unlocked before your face, and would behold all knowledge and the mysteries thereof unveiled before your eyes. Such things take place only that the souls of men may develop and be delivered from the prison-cage of self and desire. Otherwise, that ideal King hath, throughout eternity, been in His Essence independent of the comprehension of all beings, and will continue, for ever, in His own Being to be exalted above the adoration of every soul. A single breeze of His affluence doth suffice to adorn all mankind with the robe of wealth; and one drop out of the ocean of His bountiful grace is enough to confer upon all beings the glory of everlasting life. But inasmuch as the divine Purpose hath decreed that the true should be known from the false, and the sun from the shadow, He hath, therefore, in every season sent down upon mankind the showers of tests from His realm of glory.

Were men to meditate upon the lives of the Prophets of old, so easily would they come to know and understand the ways of these Prophets that they would cease to be veiled by such deeds and words as are contrary to their own worldly desires, and thus consume every intervening veil with the fire burning in the Bush of divine knowledge, and abide secure upon the throne of peace and certitude. For instance, consider Moses, son of 'Imrán, one of the exalted Prophets and Author of a divinely-revealed Book. Whilst passing, one day, through the

market, in His early days, ere His ministry was proclaimed, He saw two men engaged in fighting. One of them asked the help of Moses against his opponent. Whereupon, Moses intervened and slew him. To this testifieth the record of the sacred Book. Should the details be cited, they will lengthen and interrupt the course of the argument. The report of this incident spread throughout the city, and Moses was full of fear, as is witnessed by the text of the Book. And when the warning: "O Moses! of a truth, the chiefs take counsel to slay Thee"¹ reached His ears, He went forth from the city, and sojourned in Midian in the service of Shoeb. While returning, Moses entered the holy vale, situate in the wilderness of Sinai, and there beheld the vision of the King of glory from the "Tree that belongeth neither to the East nor to the West." There He heard the soul-stirring Voice of the Spirit speaking from out of the kindled Fire, bidding Him to shed upon Pharaohic souls the light of divine guidance; so that, liberating them from the shadows of the valley of self and desire, He might enable them to attain the meads of heavenly delight, and delivering them, through the Salsabíl of renunciation, from the bewilderment of remoteness, cause them to enter the peaceful city of the divine presence. When Moses came unto Pharaoh and delivered unto him, as bidden by God, the divine Message, Pharaoh spoke insultingly saying: "Art thou not he that committed murder, and became an infidel?" Thus recounted the Lord of majesty as having been said by Pharaoh unto Moses: "What a deed is that which Thou hast done! Thou art one of the ungrateful. He said: 'I did it indeed, and I was one of those who erred. And I fled from you when I feared you, but My Lord hath given Me wisdom, and hath made Me one of His Apostles.'"²

And now ponder in thy heart the commotion which God stirreth up. Reflect upon the strange and manifold trials with which He doth test His servants. Consider how He hath suddenly chosen from among His servants, and entrusted with the exalted mission of divine guidance Him Who was known as guilty of homicide, Who, Himself, had acknowledged His

¹ Qur'án 28:20.

² Qur'án 26:19.

cruelty, and Who for well-nigh thirty years had, in the eyes of the world, been reared in the home of Pharaoh and been nourished at his table. Was not God, the omnipotent King, able to withhold the hand of Moses from murder, so that manslaughter should not be attributed unto Him, causing bewilderment and aversion among the people?

Likewise, reflect upon the state and condition of Mary. So deep was the perplexity of that most beautiful countenance, so grievous her case, that she bitterly regretted she had ever been born. To this beareth witness the text of the sacred verse wherein it is mentioned that after Mary had given birth to Jesus, she bemoaned her plight and cried out: "O would that I had died ere this, and been a thing forgotten, forgotten quite!"¹ I swear by God! Such lamenting consumeth the heart and shaketh the being. Such consternation of soul, such despondency, could have been caused by no other than the censure of the enemy and the cavillings of the infidel and perverse. Reflect, what answer could Mary have given to the people around her? How could she claim that a Babe Whose father was unknown had been conceived of the Holy Ghost? Therefore did Mary, that veiled and immortal Countenance, take up her Child and return unto her home. No sooner had the eyes of the people fallen upon her than they raised their voice saying: "O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of wickedness, nor unchaste thy mother."²

And now, meditate upon this most great convulsion, this grievous test. Notwithstanding all these things, God conferred upon that essence of the Spirit, Who was known amongst the people as fatherless, the glory of Prophethood, and made Him His testimony unto all that are in heaven and on earth.

Behold how contrary are the ways of the Manifestations of God, as ordained by the King of creation, to the ways and desires of men! As thou comest to comprehend the essence of these divine mysteries, thou wilt grasp the purpose of God, the divine Charmer, the Best-Beloved. Thou wilt regard the words and the deeds of that almighty Sovereign as one and the

¹ Qur'án 19:22.

² Qur'án 19:28.

same; in such wise that whatsoever thou dost behold in His deeds, the same wilt thou find in His sayings, and whatsoever thou dost read in His sayings, that wilt thou recognize in His deeds. Thus it is that outwardly such deeds and words are the fire of vengeance unto the wicked, and inwardly the waters of mercy unto the righteous. Were the eye of the heart to open, it would surely perceive that the words revealed from the heaven of the will of God are at one with, and the same as, the deeds that have emanated from the Kingdom of divine power.

And now, take heed, O brother! If such things be revealed in this Dispensation, and such incidents come to pass, at the present time, what would the people do? I swear by Him Who is the true Educator of mankind and the Revealer of the Word of God that the people would instantly and unquestionably pronounce Him an infidel and would sentence Him to death. How far are they from hearkening unto the voice that declareth: Lo! a Jesus hath appeared out of the breath of the Holy Ghost, and a Moses summoned to a divinely-appointed task! Were a myriad voices to be raised, no ear would listen if We said that upon a fatherless Child hath been conferred the mission of Prophethood, or that a murderer hath brought from the flame of the burning Bush the message of "Verily, verily, I am God!"

If the eye of justice be opened, it will readily recognize, in the light of that which hath been mentioned, that He, Who is the Cause and ultimate Purpose of all these things, is made manifest in this day. Though similar events have not occurred in this Dispensation, yet the people still cling to such vain imaginings as are cherished by the reprobate. How grievous the charges brought against Him! How severe the persecutions inflicted upon Him—charges and persecutions the like of which men have neither seen nor heard!

Great God! When the stream of utterance reached this stage, We beheld, and lo! the sweet savours of God were being wafted from the day-spring of Revelation, and the morning breeze was blowing out of the Sheba of the Eternal. Its tidings rejoiced anew the heart, and imparted immeasurable gladness to the soul. It made all things new, and brought unnumbered and inestimable gifts from the unknowable Friend. The robe

of human praise can never hope to match Its noble stature, and Its shining figure the mantle of utterance can never fit. Without word It unfoldeth the inner mysteries, and without speech it revealeth the secrets of the divine sayings. It teacheth lamentation and moaning to the nightingales warbling upon the bough of remoteness, and bereavement, instructeth them in the art of love's ways, and showeth them the secret of heart-surrender. To the flowers of the Ridván of heavenly reunion It revealeth the endearments of the impassioned lover, and unveileth the charm of the fair. Upon the anemones of the garden of love It bestoweth the mysteries of truth, and within the breasts of lovers It entrusteth the symbols of the innermost subtleties. At this hour, so liberal is the outpouring of Its grace that the holy Spirit itself is envious! It hath imparted to the drop the waves of the sea, and endowed the mote with the splendour of the sun. So great are the overflowings of Its bounty that the foulest beetle hath sought the perfume of the musk, and the bat the light of the sun. It hath quickened the dead with the breath of life, and caused them to speed out of the sepulchres of their mortal bodies. It hath established the ignorant upon the seats of learning, and elevated the oppressor to the throne of justice.

The universe is pregnant with these manifold bounties, awaiting the hour when the effects of Its unseen gifts will be made manifest in this world, when the languishing and sore athirst will attain the living Kawthar of their Well-Beloved, and the erring wanderer, lost in the wilds of remoteness and nothingness, will enter the tabernacle of life, and attain reunion with his heart's desire. In the soil of whose heart will these holy seeds germinate? From the garden of whose soul will the blossoms of the invisible realities spring forth? Verily, I say, so fierce is the blaze of the Bush of love, burning in the Sinai of the heart, that the streaming waters of holy utterance can never quench its flame. Oceans can never allay this Leviathan's burning thirst, and this Phoenix of the undying fire can abide nowhere save in the glow of the countenance of the Well-Beloved. Therefore, O brother! kindle with the oil of wisdom the lamp of the spirit within the innermost chamber of thy

heart, and guard it with the globe of understanding, that the breath of the infidel may extinguish not its flame nor dim its brightness. Thus have We illuminated the heavens of utterance with the splendours of the Sun of divine wisdom and understanding, that thy heart may find peace, that thou mayest be of those who, on the wings of certitude, have soared unto the heaven of the love of their Lord, the All-Merciful.

And now, concerning His words: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." By these words it is meant that when the sun of the heavenly teachings hath been eclipsed, the stars of the divinely-established laws have fallen, and the moon of true knowledge—the educator of mankind—hath been obscured; when the standards of guidance and felicity have been reversed, and the morn of truth and righteousness hath sunk in night, then shall the sign of the Son of man appear in heaven. By "heaven" is meant the visible heaven, inasmuch as when the hour draweth nigh on which the Day-star of the heaven of justice shall be made manifest, and the Ark of divine guidance shall sail upon the sea of glory, a star will appear in the heaven, heralding unto its people the advent of that most great light. In like manner, in the invisible heaven a star shall be made manifest who, unto the peoples of the earth, shall act as a harbinger of the break of that true and exalted Morn. These twofold signs, in the visible and the invisible heaven, have announced the Revelation of each of the Prophets of God, as is commonly believed.

Among the Prophets was Abraham, the Friend of God. Ere He manifested Himself, Nimrod dreamed a dream. Thereupon, he summoned the soothsayers, who informed him of the rise of a star in the heaven. Likewise, there appeared a herald who announced throughout the land the coming of Abraham.

After Him came Moses, He Who held converse with God. The soothsayers of His time warned Pharaoh in these terms: "A star hath risen in the heaven, and lo! it foreshadoweth the conception of a Child Who holdeth your fate and the fate of your people in His hand." In like manner, there appeared a sage who, in the darkness of the night, brought tidings of joy unto the people of Israel, imparting consolation to their souls,

and assurance to their hearts. To this testify the records of the sacred books. Were the details to be mentioned, this epistle would swell into a book. Moreover, it is not Our wish to relate the stories of the days that are past. God is Our witness that what We even now mention is due solely to Our tender affection for thee, that haply the poor of the earth may attain the shores of the sea of wealth, the ignorant be led unto the ocean of divine knowledge, and they that thirst for understanding partake of the Salsabíl of divine wisdom. Otherwise, this servant regardeth the consideration of such records a grave mistake and a grievous transgression.

In like manner, when the hour of the Revelation of Jesus drew nigh, a few of the Magi, aware that the star of Jesus had appeared in heaven, sought and followed it, till they came unto the city which was the seat of the Kingdom of Herod. The sway of his sovereignty in those days embraced the whole of that land.

These Magi said: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him!"¹ When they had searched, they found out that in Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, the Child had been born. This was the sign that was manifested in the visible heaven. As to the sign in the invisible heaven—the heaven of divine knowledge and understanding—it was Yaḥyá, son of Zachariah, who gave unto the people the tidings of the Manifestation of Jesus. Even as He hath revealed: "God announceth Yaḥyá to thee, who shall bear witness unto the Word from God, and a great one and chaste."² By the term "Word" is meant Jesus, Whose coming Yaḥyá foretold. Moreover, in the heavenly Scriptures it is written: "John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."³ By John is meant Yaḥyá.

Likewise, ere the beauty of Muḥammad was unveiled, the signs of the visible heaven were made manifest. As to the signs of the invisible heaven, there appeared four men who successively announced unto the people the joyful tidings of the rise

¹ Matthew 2:2.

² Matthew 3:1-2.

³ Qur'án 3:39.

of that divine Luminary. Rúz-bih, later named Salmán, was honoured by being in their service. As the end of one of these approached, he would send Rúz-bih unto the other, until the fourth who, feeling his death to be nigh, addressed Rúz-bih saying: "O Rúz-bih! when thou hast taken up my body and buried it, go to Hġjáz for there the Day-star of Muġammad will arise. Happy art thou, for thou shalt behold His face!"

And now concerning this wondrous and most exalted Cause. Know thou verily that many an astronomer hath announced the appearance of its star in the visible heaven. Likewise, there appeared on earth Aġmad and Kázim,¹ those twin resplendent lights—may God sanctify their resting-place!

From all that We have stated it hath become clear and manifest that before the revelation of each of the Mirrors reflecting the divine Essence, the signs heralding their advent must needs be revealed in the visible heaven as well as in the invisible, wherein is the seat of the sun of knowledge, of the moon of wisdom, and of the stars of understanding and utterance. The sign of the invisible heaven must needs be revealed in the person of that perfect man who, before each Manifestation appeareth, educateth, and prepareth the souls of men for the advent of the divine Luminary, the Light of the unity of God amongst men.

And now, with reference to His words: "And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." These words signify that in those days men will lament the loss of the Sun of the divine beauty, of the Moon of knowledge, and of the Stars of divine wisdom. Thereupon, they will behold the countenance of the promised One, the adored Beauty, descending from heaven and riding upon the clouds. By this is meant that the divine Beauty will be made manifest from the heaven of the will of God, and will appear in the form of the human temple. The term "heaven" denoteth loftiness and exaltation, inasmuch as it is the seat of the revelation of those Manifestations of Holiness, the Day-springs of ancient glory. These ancient Beings, though delivered from the womb of their mother, have in reality descended from the heaven of

¹ Shaykh Aġmad-i-Aġsá'i and Siyyid Kázim-i-Rasġtí.

the will of God. Though they be dwelling on this earth, yet their true habitations are the retreats of glory in the realms above. Whilst walking amongst mortals, they soar in the heaven of the divine presence. Without feet they tread the path of the spirit, and without wings they rise unto the exalted heights of divine unity. With every fleeting breath they cover the immensity of space, and at every moment traverse the kingdoms of the visible and the invisible. Upon their thrones is written: "Nothing whatsoever keepeth Him from being occupied with any other thing"; and on their seats is inscribed: "Verily, His ways differ every day."¹ They are sent forth through the transcendent power of the Ancient of Days, and are raised up by the exalted will of God, the most mighty King. This is what is meant by the words: "coming in the clouds of heaven."

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. For example, He saith: "The heaven hath sustenance for you, and it containeth that which you are promised":² whereas it is the earth that yieldeth such sustenance. Likewise, it hath been said: "The names come down from heaven"; whereas they proceed out of the mouth of men. Wert thou to cleanse the mirror of thy heart from the dust of malice, thou wouldst apprehend the meaning of the symbolic terms revealed by the all-embracing Word of God made manifest in every Dispensation, and wouldst discover the mysteries of divine knowledge. Not, however, until thou consumest with the flame of utter detachment those veils of idle learning, that are current amongst men, canst thou behold the resplendent morn of true knowledge.

¹ Qur'án 55:29.

² Qur'án 51:22.

And now regarding His words, that the Son of man shall "come in the clouds of heaven." By the term "clouds" is meant those things that are contrary to the ways and desires of men. Even as He hath revealed in the verse already quoted: "As oft as an Apostle cometh unto you with that which your souls desire not, ye swell with pride, accusing some of being impostors and slaying others."¹ These "clouds" signify, in one sense, the annulment of laws, the abrogation of former Dispensations, the repeal of rituals and customs current amongst men, the exalting of the illiterate faithful above the learned opposers of the Faith. In another sense, they mean the appearance of that immortal Beauty in the image of mortal man, with such human limitations as eating and drinking, poverty and riches, glory and abasement, sleeping and waking, and such other things as cast doubt in the minds of men, and cause them to turn away. All such veils are symbolically referred to as "clouds."

These are the "clouds" that cause the heavens of the knowledge and understanding of all that dwell on earth to be cloven asunder. Even as He hath revealed: "On that day shall the heaven be cloven by the clouds."² Even as the clouds prevent the eyes of men from beholding the sun, so do these things hinder the souls of men from recognizing the light of the divine Luminary. To this beareth witness that which hath proceeded out of the mouth of the unbelievers as revealed in the sacred Book: "And they have said: 'What manner of apostle is this? He eateth food, and walketh the streets. Unless an angel be sent down and take part in His warnings, we will not believe.'"³ Other Prophets, similarly, have been subject to poverty and afflictions, to hunger, and to the ills and chances of this world. As these holy Persons were subject to such needs and wants, the people were, consequently, lost in the wilds of misgivings and doubts, and were afflicted with bewilderment and perplexity. How, they wondered, could such a person be sent down from God, assert His ascendancy over all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and claim Himself to be the goal of all creation,—

¹ Qur'án 2:87.

² Qur'án 25:7.

³ Qur'án 25:25.

even as He hath said: "But for Thee, I would not have created all that are in heaven and on earth,"—and yet be subject to such trivial things? You must undoubtedly have been informed of the tribulations, the poverty, the ills, and the degradation that have befallen every Prophet of God and His companions. You must have heard how the heads of their followers were sent as presents unto different cities, how grievously they were hindered from that whereunto they were commanded. Each and every one of them fell a prey to the hands of the enemies of His Cause, and had to suffer whatsoever they decreed.

It is evident that the changes brought about in every Dispensation constitute the dark clouds that intervene between the eye of man's understanding and the divine Luminary which shineth forth from the day-spring of the divine Essence. Consider how men for generations have been blindly imitating their fathers, and have been trained according to such ways and manners as have been laid down by the dictates of their Faith. Were these men, therefore, to discover suddenly that a Man, Who hath been living in their midst, Who, with respect to every human limitation, hath been their equal, had risen to abolish every established principle imposed by their Faith—principles by which for centuries they have been disciplined, and every opposer and denier of which they have come to regard as infidel, profligate and wicked,—they would of a certainty be veiled and hindered from acknowledging His truth. Such things are as "clouds" that veil the eyes of those whose inner being hath not tasted the Salsabíl of detachment, nor drunk from the Kawthar of the knowledge of God. Such men, when acquainted with these circumstances, become so veiled that without the least question, they pronounce the Manifestation of God an infidel, and sentence Him to death. You must have heard of such things taking place all down the ages, and are now observing them in these days.

It behooveth us, therefore, to make the utmost endeavour, that, by God's invisible assistance, these dark veils, these clouds of Heaven-sent trials, may not hinder us from beholding the beauty of His shining Countenance, and that we may recognize Him only by His own Self. And should we ask for a testimony

of His truth, we should content ourselves with one, and only one; that thereby we may attain unto Him Who is the Fountain-head of infinite grace, and in Whose presence all the world's abundance fadeth into nothingness, that we may cease to cavil at Him every day and to cleave unto our own idle fancy.

Gracious God! Notwithstanding the warning which, in marvellously symbolic language and subtle allusions, hath been uttered in days past, and which was intended to awaken the peoples of the world and to prevent them from being deprived of their share of the billowing ocean of God's grace, yet such things as have already been witnessed have come to pass! Reference to these things hath also been made in the Qur'án, as witnessed by this verse: "What can such expect but that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds?"¹ A number of the divines, who hold firmly to the letter of the Word of God, have come to regard this verse as one of the signs of that expected resurrection which is born of their idle fancy. This, notwithstanding the fact that similar references have been made in most of the heavenly Books, and have been recorded in all the passages connected with the signs of the coming Manifestation.

Likewise, He saith: "On the day when the heaven shall give out a palpable smoke, which shall enshroud mankind: this will be an afflictive torment."² The All-Glorious hath decreed these very things, that are contrary to the desires of wicked men, to be the touchstone and standard whereby He proveth His servants, that the just may be known from the wicked, and the faithful distinguished from the infidel. The symbolic term "smoke" denotes grave dissensions, the abrogation and demolition of recognized standards, and the utter destruction of their narrow-minded exponents. What smoke more dense and overpowering than the one which hath now enshrouded all the peoples of the world, which hath become a torment unto them, and from which they hopelessly fail to deliver themselves, however much they strive? So fierce is this fire of self burning within them, that at every moment they seem to be afflicted

¹ Qur'án 2:210.

² Qur'án 44:10.

with fresh torments. The more they are told that this wondrous Cause of God, this Revelation from the Most High, hath been made manifest to all mankind, and is waxing greater and stronger every day, the fiercer groweth the blaze of the fire in their hearts. The more they observe the indomitable strength, the sublime renunciation, the unwavering constancy of God's holy companions, who, by the aid of God, are growing nobler and more glorious every day, the deeper the dismay which ravageth their souls. In these days, praise be to God, the power of His Word hath obtained such ascendancy over men, that they dare breathe no word. Were they to encounter one of the companions of God who, if he could, would, freely and joyously, offer up ten thousand lives as a sacrifice for his Beloved, so great would be their fear, that they forthwith would profess their faith in Him, whilst privily they would vilify and execrate His name! Even as He hath revealed: "And when they meet you, they say, 'We believe'; but when they are apart, they bite their fingers' ends at you, out of wrath. Say: 'Die in your wrath!'"¹ God truly knoweth the very recesses of your breasts."

Ere long, thine eyes will behold the standards of divine power unfurled throughout all regions, and the signs of His triumphant might and sovereignty manifest in every land. As most of the divines have failed to apprehend the meaning of these verses, and have not grasped the significance of the Day of Resurrection, they therefore have foolishly interpreted these verses according to their idle and faulty conception. The one true God is My witness! Little perception is required to enable them to gather from the symbolic language of these two verses all that We have purposed to propound, and thus to attain, through the grace of the All-Merciful, the resplendent morn of certitude. Such are the strains of celestial melody which the immortal Bird of Heaven, warbling upon the Sadrih of Bahá, poureth out upon thee, that, by the permission of God, thou mayest tread the path of divine knowledge and wisdom.

And now, concerning His words: "And He shall send His angels. . . ." By "angels" is meant those who, reinforced by the power of the spirit, have consumed, with the fire of the love

¹ Qur'án 3:119.

of God, all human traits and limitations, and have clothed themselves with the attributes of the most exalted Beings and of the Cherubim. That holy man, Sádiq,¹ in his eulogy of the Cherubim, saith: "There stand a company of our fellow-Shi'ahs behind the Throne." Divers and manifold are the interpretations of the words "behind the Throne." In one sense, they indicate that no true Shi'ahs exist. Even as he hath said in another passage: "A true believer is likened unto the philosopher's stone." Addressing subsequently his listener, he saith: "Hast thou ever seen the philosopher's stone?" Reflect, how this symbolic language, more eloquent than any speech, however direct, testifieth to the non-existence of a true believer. Such is the testimony of Sádiq. And now consider, how unfair and numerous are those who, although they themselves have failed to inhale the fragrance of belief, have condemned as infidels those by whose word belief itself is recognized and established.

And now, inasmuch as these holy beings have sanctified themselves from every human limitation, have become endowed with the attributes of the spiritual, and have been adorned with the noble traits of the blessed, they therefore have been designated as "angels." Such is the meaning of these verses, every word of which hath been expounded by the aid of the most lucid texts, the most convincing arguments, and the best established evidences.

As the adherents of Jesus have never understood the hidden meaning of these words, and as the signs which they and the leaders of their Faith have expected have failed to appear, they therefore refused to acknowledge, even until now, the truth of those Manifestations of Holiness that have since the days of Jesus been made manifest. They have thus deprived themselves of the outpourings of God's holy grace, and of the wonders of His divine utterance. Such is their low estate in this, the Day of Resurrection! They have even failed to perceive that were the signs of the Manifestation of God in every age to appear in the visible realm in accordance with the text of established traditions, none could possibly deny or turn away,

¹ The sixth Imám of the Shi'ahs.

nor would the blessed be distinguished from the miserable, and the transgressor from the God-fearing. Judge fairly: Were the prophecies recorded in the Gospel to be literally fulfilled; were Jesus, Son of Mary, accompanied by angels, to descend from the visible heaven upon the clouds; who would dare to disbelieve, who would dare to reject the truth, and wax disdainful? Nay, such consternation would immediately seize all the dwellers of the earth that no soul would feel able to utter a word, much less to reject or accept the truth. It was owing to their misunderstanding of these truths that many a Christian divine hath objected to Muḥammad, and voiced his protest in such words: "If Thou art in truth the promised Prophet, why then art Thou not accompanied by those angels our sacred Books foretold, and which must needs descend with the promised Beauty to assist Him in His Revelation and act as warners unto His people?" Even as the All-Glorious hath recorded their statement: "Why hath not an angel been sent down to him, so that he should have been a warner with Him?"¹

Such objections and differences have persisted in every age and century. The people have always busied themselves with such specious discourses, vainly protesting: "Wherefore hath not this or that sign appeared?" Such ills befell them only because they have clung to the ways of the divines of the age in which they lived, and blindly imitated them in accepting or denying these Essences of Detachment, these holy and divine Beings. These leaders, owing to their immersion in selfish desires, and their pursuit of transitory and sordid things, have regarded these divine Luminaries as being opposed to the standards of their knowledge and understanding, and the opponents of their ways and judgments. As they have literally interpreted the Word of God, and the sayings and traditions of the Letters of Unity, and expounded them according to their own deficient understanding, they have therefore deprived themselves and all their people of the bountiful showers of the grace and mercies of God. And yet they bear witness to this well-known tradition: "Verily Our Word is abstruse, bewilderingly abstruse." In another instance, it is said: "Our Cause is

¹ Qur'án 25:7.

sorely trying, highly perplexing; none can bear it except a favourite of heaven, or an inspired Prophet, or he whose faith God hath tested." These leaders of religion admit that none of these three specified conditions is applicable to them. The first two conditions are manifestly beyond their reach; as to the third, it is evident that at no time have they been proof against those tests that have been sent by God, and that when the divine Touchstone appeared, they have shown themselves to be naught but dross.

Great God! Notwithstanding their acceptance of the truth of this tradition, these divines who are still doubtful of, and dispute about, the theological obscurities of their faith, yet claim to be the exponents of the subtleties of the law of God, and the expounders of the essential mysteries of His holy Word. They confidently assert that such traditions as indicate the advent of the expected Qá'im have not yet been fulfilled, whilst they themselves have failed to inhale the fragrance of the meaning of these traditions, and are still oblivious of the fact that all the signs foretold have come to pass, that the way of God's holy Cause hath been revealed, and the concourse of the faithful, swift as lightning, are, even now, passing upon that way, whilst these foolish divines wait expecting to witness the signs foretold. Say, O ye foolish ones! Wait ye even as those before you are waiting!

Were they to be questioned concerning those signs that must needs herald the revelation and rise of the sun of the Muḥamadan Dispensation, to which We have already referred, none of which have been literally fulfilled, and were it to be said to them: "Wherefore have ye rejected the claims advanced by Christians and the peoples of other faiths and regard them as infidels," knowing not what answer to give, they will reply: "These Books have been corrupted and are not, and never have been, of God." Reflect: the words of the verses themselves eloquently testify to the truth that they are of God. A similar verse hath been also revealed in the Qur'án, were ye of them that comprehend. Verily I say, throughout all this period they have utterly failed to comprehend what is meant by corrupting the text.

Yea, in the writings and utterances of the Mirrors reflecting the sun of the Muḥammadan Dispensation mention hath been made of "Modification by the exalted beings" and "alteration by the disdainful." Such passages, however, refer only to particular cases. Among them is the story of Ibn-i-Şúríyá. When the people of Khaybar asked the focal centre of the Muḥammadan Revelation concerning the penalty of adultery committed between a married man and a married woman, Muḥammad answered and said: "The law of God is death by stoning." Whereupon they protested saying: "No such law hath been revealed in the Pentateuch." Muḥammad answered and said: "Whom do ye regard among your rabbis as being a recognized authority and having a sure knowledge of the truth?" They agreed upon Ibn-i-Şúríyá. Thereupon Muḥammad summoned him and said: "I adjure thee by God Who clove the sea for you, caused manna to descend upon you, and the cloud to overshadow you, Who delivered you from Pharaoh and his people, and exalted you above all human beings, to tell us what Moses hath decreed concerning adultery between a married man and a married woman." He made reply: "O Muḥammad! death by stoning is the law." Muḥammad observed: "Why is it then that this law is annulled and hath ceased to operate among the Jews?" He answered and said: "When Nebuchadnezzar delivered Jerusalem to the flames, and put the Jews to death, only a few survived. The divines of that age, considering the extremely limited number of the Jews, and the multitude of the Amalekites, took counsel together, and came to the conclusion that were they to enforce the law of the Pentateuch, every survivor who hath been delivered from the hand of Nebuchadnezzar would have to be put to death according to the verdict of the Book. Owing to such considerations, they totally repealed the penalty of death." Meanwhile Gabriel inspired Muḥammad's illumined heart with these words: "They pervert the text of the Word of God."¹

This is one of the instances that have been referred to. Verily by "perverting" the text is not meant that which these foolish and abject souls have fancied, even as some maintain that

¹ Qur'án 4:45.

Jewish and Christian divines have effaced from the Book such verses as extol and magnify the countenance of Muḥammad, and instead thereof have inserted the contrary. How utterly vain and false are these words! Can a man who believeth in a book, and deemeth it to be inspired by God, mutilate it? Moreover, the Pentateuch had been spread over the surface of all the earth, and was not confined to Mecca and Medina, so that they could privily corrupt and pervert its text. Nay, rather, by corruption of the text is meant that in which all Muslim divines are engaged to-day, that is the interpretation of God's holy Book in accordance with their idle imaginings and vain desires. And as the Jews, in the time of Muḥammad, interpreted those verses of the Pentateuch, that referred to His Manifestation, after their own fancy, and refused to be satisfied with His holy utterance, the charge of "perverting" the text was therefore pronounced against them. Likewise, it is clear, how in this day, the people of the Qur'án have perverted the text of God's holy Book, concerning the signs of the expected Manifestation, and interpreted it according to their inclination and desires.

In yet another instance, He saith: "A part of them heard the Word of God, and then, after they had understood it, distorted it, and knew that they did so."¹ This verse, too, doth indicate that the meaning of the Word of God hath been perverted, not that the actual words have been effaced. To the truth of this testify they that are sound of mind.

Again in another instance, He saith: "Woe unto those who, with their own hands, transcribe the Book corruptly, and then say: 'This is from God,' that they may sell it for some mean price."² This verse was revealed with reference to the divines and leaders of the Jewish Faith. These divines, in order to please the rich, acquire worldly emoluments, and give vent to their envy and misbelief, wrote a number of treatises, refuting the claims of Muḥammad, supporting their arguments with such evidences as it would be improper to mention, and claimed that these arguments were derived from the text of the Pentateuch.

¹ Qur'án 2:75.

² Qur'án 2:79.

The same may be witnessed to-day. Consider how abundant are the denunciations written by the foolish divines of this age against this most wondrous Cause! How vain their imaginings that these calumnies are in conformity with the verses of God's sacred Book, and in consonance with the utterances of men of discernment!

Our purpose in relating these things is to warn you that were they to maintain that those verses wherein the signs referred to in the Gospel are mentioned have been perverted, were they to reject them, and cling instead to other verses and traditions, you should know that their words were utter falsehood and sheer calumny. Yea "corruption" of the text, in the sense We have referred to, hath been actually effected in particular instances. A few of these We have mentioned, that it may become manifest to every discerning observer that unto a few untutored holy Men hath been given mastery of human learning, so that the malevolent opposer may cease to contend that a certain verse doth indicate "corruption" of the text, and insinuate that We, through lack of knowledge, have made mention of such things. Moreover, most of the verses that indicate "corruption" of the text have been revealed with reference to the Jewish people, were ye to explore the isles of Qur'anic Revelation.

We have also heard a number of the foolish of the earth assert that the genuine text of the heavenly Gospel doth not exist amongst the Christians, that it hath ascended unto heaven. How grievously they have erred! How oblivious of the fact that such a statement imputeth the gravest injustice and tyranny to a gracious and loving Providence! How could God, when once the Day-star of the beauty of Jesus had disappeared from the sight of His people, and ascended unto the fourth heaven, cause His holy Book, His most great testimony amongst His creatures, to disappear also? What would be left to that people to cling to from the setting of the day-star of Jesus until the rise of the sun of the Muḥammadan Dispensation? What law could be their stay and guide? How could such people be made the victims of the avenging wrath of God, the omnipotent Avenger? How could they be afflicted with the scourge of chastisement

by the heavenly King? Above all, how could the flow of the grace of the All-Bountiful be stayed? How could the ocean of His tender mercies be stilled? We take refuge with God, from that which His creatures have fancied about Him! Exalted is He above their comprehension!

Dear friend! Now when the light of God's everlasting Morn is breaking; when the radiance of His holy words: "God is the light of the heavens and of the earth"¹ is shedding illumination upon all mankind; when the inviolability of His tabernacle is being proclaimed by His sacred utterance: "God hath willed to perfect His light";² and the Hand of omnipotence, bearing His testimony: "In His grasp He holdeth the kingdom of all things," is being outstretched unto all the peoples and kindreds of the earth; it behooveth us to gird up the loins of endeavour, that haply, by the grace and bounty of God, we may enter the celestial City: "Verily, we are God's," and abide within the exalted habitation: "And unto Him we do return." It is incumbent upon thee, by the permission of God, to cleanse the eye of thine heart from the things of the world, that thou mayest realize the infinitude of divine knowledge, and mayest behold Truth so clearly that thou wilt need no proof to demonstrate His reality, nor any evidence to bear witness unto His testimony.

O affectionate seeker! Shouldst thou soar in the holy realm of the spirit, thou wouldst recognize God manifest and exalted above all things, in such wise that thine eyes would behold none else but Him. "God was alone; there was none else besides Him." So lofty is this station that no testimony can bear it witness, neither evidence do justice to its truth. Wert thou to explore the sacred domain of truth, thou wilt find that all things are known only by the light of His recognition, that He hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, known through Himself. And if thou dwellest in the land of testimony, content thyself with that which He, Himself, hath revealed: "Is it not enough for them that We have sent down unto Thee the Book?"³ This is the testimony which He, Himself, hath

¹ Qur'án 24:35.

² Qur'án 29:51.

³ Qur'án 9:33.

ordained; greater proof than this there is none, nor ever will be: "This proof is His Word; His own Self, the testimony of His truth."

And now, We beseech the people of the Bayán, all the learned, the sages, the divines, and witnesses amongst them, not to forget the wishes and admonitions revealed in their Book. Let them, at all times, fix their gaze upon the essentials of His Cause, lest when He, Who is the Quintessence of truth, the inmost Reality of all things, the Source of all light, is made manifest, they cling unto certain passages of the Book, and inflict upon Him that which was inflicted in the Dispensation of the Qur'án. For, verily, powerful is He, the King of divine might, to extinguish with one letter of His wondrous words, the breath of life in the whole of the Bayán and the people thereof, and with one letter bestow upon them a new and everlasting life, and cause them to arise and speed out of the sepulchres of their vain and selfish desires. Take heed, and be watchful; and remember that all things have their consummation in belief in Him, in attainment unto His day, and in the realization of His divine presence. "There is no piety in turning your faces toward the east or toward the west, but he is pious who believeth in God and the 'Last Day.'"¹ Give ear, O people of the Bayán, unto the truth whereunto We have admonished you, that haply ye may seek the shelter of the shadow extended, in the Day of God, upon all mankind.

You will readily recognize that the terms sovereignty, wealth, life, death, judgment and resurrection, spoken of by the scriptures of old, are not what this generation hath conceived and vainly imagined. Nay, by sovereignty is meant that sovereignty which in every dispensation resideth within, and is exercised by, the person of the Manifestation, the Day-star of Truth. That sovereignty is the spiritual ascendancy which He exerciseth to the fullest degree over all that is in heaven and on earth, and which in due time revealeth itself to the world in direct proportion to its capacity and spiritual receptiveness. Even as the sovereignty of Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, is to-day apparent and manifest amongst the people.

¹ Qur'án 2:176.

You are well aware of what befell His Faith in the early days of His dispensation. What woeful sufferings did the hand of the infidel and erring, the divines of that age and their associates, inflict upon that spiritual Essence, that most pure and holy Being! How abundant the thorns and briars which they have strewn over His path! It is evident that wretched generation, in their wicked and satanic fancy, regarded every injury to that immortal Being as a means to the attainment of an abiding felicity; inasmuch as the recognized divines of that age, such as 'Abdu'lláh-i-Ubayy, Abú'Ámir, the hermit, Ka'b-Ibn-i-Ashraf, and Naḍr-Ibn-i-Háriḥ, all treated Him as an impostor, and pronounced Him a lunatic and a calumniator. Such sore accusations they brought against Him that in recounting them God forbiddeth the ink to flow, Our pen to move, or the page to bear them. These malicious imputations provoked the people to arise and torment Him. And how fierce that torment if the divines of the age be its chief instigators, if they denounce Him to their followers, cast Him out from their midst, and declare Him a miscreant! Hath not the same befallen this Servant, and been witnessed by all?

For this reason did Muḥammad cry out: "No Prophet of God hath suffered such harm as I have suffered." And in the Qur'án are recorded all the calumnies and reproaches uttered against Him, as well as all the afflictions which He suffered. Refer ye thereunto, that haply ye may be informed of that which hath befallen His Revelation. So grievous was His plight, that for a time all ceased to hold intercourse with Him and His companions. Whoever associated with Him fell a victim to the relentless cruelty of His enemies.

We shall cite in this connection only one verse of that Book. Shouldst thou observe it with a discerning eye, thou wilt, all the remaining days of thy life, lament and bewail the injury of Muḥammad, that wronged and oppressed Messenger of God. That verse was revealed at a time when Muḥammad languished weary and sorrowful beneath the weight of the opposition of the people, and of their unceasing torture. In the midst of His agony, the Voice of Gabriel, calling from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá, was heard saying: "But if their opposition be grievous to

Thee—if Thou canst, seek out an opening into the earth or a ladder into heaven.”¹ The implication of this utterance is that His case had no remedy, that they would not withhold their hands from Him unless He should hide Himself beneath the depths of the earth, or take His flight unto heaven.

Consider, how great is the change to-day! Behold, how many are the Sovereigns who bow the knee before His name! How numerous the nations and kingdoms who have sought the shelter of His shadow, who bear allegiance to His Faith, and pride themselves therein! From the pulpit-top there ascendeth to-day the words of praise which, in utter lowliness, glorify His blessed name; and from the heights of minarets there resoundeth the call that summoneth the concourse of His people to adore Him. Even those Kings of the earth who have refused to embrace His Faith and to put off the garment of unbelief, none the less confess and acknowledge the greatness and overpowering majesty of that Day-star of loving kindness. Such is His earthly sovereignty, the evidences of which thou dost on every side behold. This sovereignty must needs be revealed and established either in the lifetime of every Manifestation of God or after His ascension unto His true habitation in the realms above. What thou dost witness to-day is but a confirmation of this truth. That spiritual ascendancy, however, which is primarily intended, resideth within, and revolveth around Them from eternity even unto eternity. It can never for a moment be divorced from Them. Its dominion hath encompassed all that is in heaven and on earth.

The following is an evidence of the sovereignty exercised by Muḥammad, the Day-star of Truth. Hast thou not heard how with one single verse He hath sundered light from darkness, the righteous from the ungodly, and the believing from the infidel? All the signs and allusions concerning the Day of Judgment, which thou hast heard, such as the raising of the dead, the Day of Reckoning, the Last Judgment, and others have been made manifest through the revelation of that verse. These revealed words were a blessing to the righteous who on hearing them exclaimed: “O God our Lord, We have heard,

¹ Qur’án 6:35.

and obeyed." They were a curse to the people of iniquity who, on hearing them affirmed: "We have heard and rebelled." Those words, sharp as the sword of God, have separated the faithful from the infidel, and severed father from son. Thou hast surely witnessed how they that have confessed their faith in Him and they that rejected Him have warred against each other, and sought one another's property. How many fathers have turned away from their sons; how many lovers have shunned their beloved! So mercilessly trenchant was this wondrous sword of God that it cleft asunder every relationship! On the other hand, consider the welding power of His Word. Observe, how those in whose midst the Satan of self had for years sown the seeds of malice and hate became so fused and blended through their allegiance to this wondrous and transcendent Revelation that it seemed as if they had sprung from the same loins. Such is the binding force of the Word of God, which uniteth the hearts of them that have renounced all else but Him, who have believed in His signs, and quaffed from the Hand of glory the Kawthar of God's holy grace. Furthermore, how numerous are those peoples of divers beliefs, of conflicting creeds, and opposing temperaments, who, through the reviving fragrance of the Divine springtime, breathing from the Ridván of God, have been arrayed with the new robe of divine Unity, and have drunk from the cup of His singleness!

This is the significance of the well-known words: "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together."¹ Behold the ignorance and folly of those who, like the nations of old, are still expecting to witness the time when these beasts will feed together in one pasture! Such is their low estate. Methinks, never have their lips touched the cup of understanding, neither have their feet trodden the path of justice. Besides, of what profit would it be to the world were such a thing to take place? How well hath He spoken concerning them: "Hearts have they, with which they understand not, and eyes have they with which they see not!"²

Consider how with this one verse which hath descended from the heaven of the Will of God, the world and all that is therein

¹ Isaiah 65:25.

² Qur'án 7:178.

have been brought to a reckoning with Him. Whosoever acknowledged His truth and turned unto Him, his good works outweighed his misdeeds, and all his sins were remitted and forgiven. Thereby is the truth of these words concerning Him made manifest: "Swift is He in reckoning." Thus God turneth iniquity into righteousness, were ye to explore the realms of divine knowledge, and fathom the mysteries of His wisdom. In like manner, whosoever partook of the cup of love, obtained his portion of the ocean of eternal grace and of the showers of everlasting mercy, and entered into the life of faith—the heavenly and everlasting life. But he that turned away from that cup was condemned to eternal death. By the terms "life" and "death," spoken of in the scriptures, is intended the life of faith and the death of unbelief. The generality of the people, owing to their failure to grasp the meaning of these words, rejected and despised the person of the Manifestation, deprived themselves of the light of His divine guidance, and refused to follow the example of that immortal Beauty.

When the light of Qur'anic Revelation was kindled within the chamber of Muhammad's holy heart, He passed upon the people the verdict of the Last Day, the verdict of resurrection, of judgment, of life, and of death. Thereupon the standards of revolt were hoisted, and the doors of derision opened. Thus hath He, the Spirit of God, recorded, as spoken by the infidels: "And if thou shouldst say, 'After death ye shall surely be raised again,' the infidels will certainly exclaim, 'This is nothing but manifest sorcery.'"¹ Again He speaketh: "If ever thou dost marvel, marvellous surely is their saying, 'What! When we have become dust, shall we be restored in a new creation?'"² Thus, in another passage, He wrathfully exclaimeth: "Are We wearied out with the first creation? Yet are they in doubt with regard to a new creation!"³

As the commentators of the Qur'án and they that follow the letter thereof misapprehended the inner meaning of the words of God and failed to grasp their essential purpose, they sought to demonstrate that, according to the rules of grammar, when-

¹ Qur'án 11:7.

³ Qur'án 50:15.

² Qur'án 13:5.

ever the term "idhá" (meaning "if" or "when") precedeth the past tense, it invariably hath reference to the future. Later, they were sore perplexed in attempting to explain those verses of the Book wherein that term did not actually occur. Even as He hath revealed: "And there was a blast on the trumpet,—lo! it is the threatened Day! And every soul is summoned to a reckoning,—with him an impeller and a witness."¹ In explaining this and similar verses, they have in some cases argued that the term "idhá" is implied. In other instances, they have idly contended that whereas the Day of Judgment is inevitable, it hath therefore been referred to as an event not of the future but of the past. How vain their sophistry! How grievous their blindness! They refuse to recognize the trumpet-blast which so explicitly in this text was sounded through the revelation of Muḥammad. They deprive themselves of the regenerating Spirit of God that breathed into it, and foolishly expect to hear the trumpet-sound of the Seraph of God who is but one of His servants! Hath not the Seraph himself, the angel of the Judgment Day, and his like been ordained by Muḥammad's own utterance? Say: What! Will ye give that which is for your good in exchange for that which is evil? Wretched is that which ye have falsely exchanged! Surely ye are a people, evil, in grievous loss.

Nay, by "trumpet" is meant the trumpet-call of Muḥammad's Revelation, which was sounded in the heart of the universe, and by "resurrection" is meant His own rise to proclaim the Cause of God. He bade the erring and wayward arise and speed out of the sepulchres of their bodies, arrayed them with the beauteous robe of faith, and quickened them with the breath of a new and wondrous life. Thus at the hour when Muḥammad, that divine Beauty, purposed to unveil one of the mysteries hidden in the symbolic terms "resurrection," "judgment," "paradise," and "hell," Gabriel, the Voice of Inspiration, was heard saying: "Erelong will they wag their heads at Thee, and say, 'When shall this be?' Say: 'Perchance it is nigh.'"² The implications of this verse alone suffice the peoples of the world, were they to ponder it in their hearts.

¹ Qur'án 50:20.

² Qur'án 17:51.

Gracious God! How far have that people strayed from the way of God! Although the Day of Resurrection was ushered in through the Revelation of Muḥammad, although His light and tokens had encompassed the earth and all that is therein, yet that people derided Him, gave themselves up to those idols which the divines of that age, in their vain and idle fancy, had conceived, and deprived themselves of the light of heavenly grace and of the showers of divine mercy. Yea, the abject beetle can never scent the fragrance of holiness, and the bat of darkness can never face the splendour of the sun.

Such things have come to pass in the days of every Manifestation of God. Even as Jesus said: "Ye must be born again."¹ Again He saith: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."² The purport of these words is that whosoever in every dispensation is born of the Spirit and is quickened by the breath of the Manifestation of Holiness, he verily is of those that have attained unto "life" and "resurrection" and have entered into the "paradise" of the love of God. And whosoever is not of them, is condemned to "death" and "deprivation," to the "fire" of unbelief, and to the "wrath" of God. In all the scriptures, the books and chronicles, the sentence of death, of fire, of blindness, of want of understanding and hearing, hath been pronounced against those whose lips have tasted not the ethereal cup of true knowledge, and whose hearts have been deprived of the grace of the holy Spirit in their day. Even as it hath been previously recorded: "Hearts have they with which they understand not."³

In another passage of the Gospel it is written: "And it came to pass that on a certain day the father of one of the disciples of Jesus had died. That disciple reporting the death of his father unto Jesus, asked for leave to go and bury him. Whereupon, Jesus, that Essence of Detachment, answered and said: 'Let the dead bury their dead'.⁴"

In like manner, two of the people of Kúfih went to 'Alí, the Commander of the Faithful. One owned a house and wished

¹ John 3:7.

² John 3:5-6.

³ Qur'án 7:178.

⁴ Luke 9:60.

to sell it; the other was to be the purchaser. They had agreed that this transaction should be effected and the contract be written with the knowledge of 'Alí. He, the exponent of the law of God, addressing the scribe, said: "Write thou: 'A dead man hath bought from another dead man a house. That house is bounded by four limits. One extendeth toward the tomb, the other to the vault of the grave, the third to the Sirát, the fourth to either Paradise or hell.'" Reflect, had these two souls been quickened by the trumpet-call of 'Alí, had they risen from the grave of error by the power of his love, the judgment of death would certainly not have been pronounced against them.

In every age and century, the purpose of the Prophets of God and their chosen ones hath been no other but to affirm the spiritual significance of the terms "life," "resurrection," and "judgment." If one will ponder but for a while this utterance of 'Alí in his heart, one will surely discover all mysteries hidden in the terms "grave," "tomb," "sirát," "paradise" and "hell." But oh! how strange and pitiful! Behold, all the people are imprisoned within the tomb of self, and lie buried beneath the nethermost depths of worldly desire! Wert thou to attain to but a dewdrop of the crystal waters of divine knowledge, thou wouldst readily realize that true life is not the life of the flesh but the life of the spirit. For the life of the flesh is common to both men and animals, whereas the life of the spirit is possessed only by the pure in heart who have quaffed from the ocean of faith and partaken of the fruit of certitude. This life knoweth no death, and this existence is crowned by immortality. Even as it hath been said: "He who is a true believer liveth both in this world and in the world to come." If by "life" be meant this earthly life, it is evident that death must needs overtake it.

Similarly, the records of all the scriptures bear witness to this lofty truth and this most exalted word. Moreover, this verse of the Qur'án, revealed concerning Hamzih, the "Prince of Martyrs,"¹ and Abú-Jahl, is a luminous evidence and sure testimony of the truth of Our saying: "Shall the dead, whom We have quickened, and for whom We have ordained a light

¹ Title of the uncle of Muḥammad.

whereby he may walk among men, be like him, whose likeness is in the darkness, whence he will not come forth?"¹ This verse descended from the heaven of the Primal Will at a time when Hamzih had already been invested with the sacred mantle of faith, and Abú-Jahl had waxed relentless in his opposition and unbelief. From the Wellspring of omnipotence and the Source of eternal holiness, there came the judgment that conferred everlasting life upon Hamzih, and condemned Abú-Jahl to eternal damnation. This was the signal that caused the fires of unbelief to glow with the hottest flame in the heart of the infidels, and provoked them openly to repudiate His truth. They loudly clamoured: "When did Hamzih die? When was he risen? At what hour was such a life conferred upon him?" As they understood not the significance of these noble sayings, nor sought enlightenment from the recognized expounders of the Faith, that these might confer a sprinkling of the Kawthar of divine knowledge upon them, therefore such fires of mischief were kindled amongst men.

Thou dost witness to-day how, notwithstanding the radiant splendour of the Sun of divine knowledge, all the people, whether high or low, have clung to the ways of those abject manifestations of the Prince of Darkness. They continually appeal to them for aid in unravelling the intricacies of their Faith, and, owing to lack of knowledge, they make such replies as can in no wise damage their fame and fortune. It is evident that these souls, vile and miserable as the beetle itself, have had no portion of the musk-laden breeze of eternity, and have never entered the Ridván of heavenly delight. How, therefore, can they impart unto others the imperishable fragrance of holiness? Such is their way, and such will it remain for ever. Only those will attain to the knowledge of the Word of God that have turned unto Him, and repudiated the manifestations of Satan. Thus God hath reaffirmed the law of the day of His Revelation, and inscribed it with the pen of power upon the mystic Tablet hidden beneath the veil of celestial glory. Wert thou to heed these words, wert thou to ponder their outward and inner meaning in thy heart, thou wouldst seize the significance of all

¹ Qur'án 6:122.

the abstruse problems which, in this day, have become insuperable barriers between men and the knowledge of the Day of Judgment. Then wilt thou have no more questions to perplex thee. We fain would hope that, God willing, thou wilt not return, deprived and still athirst, from the shores of the ocean of divine mercy, nor come back destitute from the imperishable Sanctuary of thy heart's desire. Let it now be seen what thy search and endeavours will achieve.

To resume: Our purpose in setting forth these truths hath been to demonstrate the sovereignty of Him Who is the King of kings. Be fair: Is this sovereignty which, through the utterance of one Word, hath manifested such pervading influence, ascendancy, and awful majesty, is this sovereignty superior, or is the worldly dominion of these kings of the earth who, despite their solicitude for their subjects and their help of the poor, are assured only of an outward and fleeting allegiance, while in the hearts of men they inspire neither affection nor respect? Hath not that sovereignty, through the potency of one word, subdued, quickened, and revitalized the whole world? What! Can the lowly dust compare with Him Who is the Lord of Lords? What tongue dare utter the immensity of difference that lieth between them? Nay, all comparison falleth short in attaining the hallowed sanctuary of His sovereignty. Were man to reflect, he would surely perceive that even the servant of His threshold ruleth over all created things! This hath already been witnessed, and will in future be made manifest.

This is but one of the meanings of the spiritual sovereignty which We have set forth in accordance with the capacity and receptiveness of the people. For He, the Mover of all beings, that glorified Countenance, is the source of such potencies as neither this wronged One can reveal, nor this unworthy people comprehend. Immensely exalted is He above men's praise of His sovereignty; glorified is He beyond that which they attribute unto Him!

And now, ponder this in thine heart: Were sovereignty to mean earthly sovereignty and worldly dominion, were it to imply the subjection and external allegiance of all the peoples and kindreds of the earth—whereby His loved ones should be

exalted and be made to live in peace, and His enemies be abased and tormented—such form of sovereignty would not be true of God Himself, the Source of all dominion, Whose majesty and power all things testify. For, dost thou not witness how the generality of mankind is under the sway of His enemies? Have they not all turned away from the path of His good-pleasure? Have they not done that which He hath forbidden, and left undone, nay repudiated and opposed, those things which He hath commanded? Have not His friends ever been the victims of the tyranny of His foes? All these things are more obvious than even the splendour of the noon-tide sun.

In such wise We recount unto thee the wonders of the Cause of God, and pour out into thine ears the strains of heavenly melody, that haply thou mayest attain unto the station of true knowledge, and partake of the fruit thereof. Therefore, know thou of a certainty that these Luminaries of heavenly majesty, though their dwelling be in the dust, yet their true habitation is the seat of glory in the realms above. Though bereft of all earthly possessions, yet they soar in the realms of immeasurable riches. And whilst sore tried in the grip of the enemy, they are seated on the right hand of power and celestial dominion. Amidst the darkness of their abasement there shineth upon them the light of unfading glory, and upon their helplessness are showered the tokens of an invincible sovereignty.

Thus Jesus, Son of Mary, whilst seated one day and speaking in the strain of the Holy Spirit, uttered words such as these: "O people! My food is the grass of the field, wherewith I satisfy my hunger. My bed is the dust, my lamp in the night the light of the moon, and my steed my own feet. Behold, who on earth is richer than I?" By the righteousness of God! Thousands of treasures circle round this poverty, and a myriad kingdoms of glory yearn for such abasement! Shouldst thou attain to a drop of the ocean of the inner meaning of these words, thou wouldst surely forsake the world and all that is therein, and, as the Phoenix wouldst consume thyself in the flames of the undying Fire.

In like manner, it is related that on a certain day, one of the companions of Šádiq complained of his poverty before him.

Whereupon, Şádiq, that immortal beauty, made reply: "Verily thou art rich, and hast drunk the draught of wealth." That poverty-stricken soul was perplexed at the words uttered by that luminous countenance, and said: "Where are my riches, I who stand in need of a single coin?" Şádiq thereupon observed: "Dost thou not possess our love?" He replied: "Yea, I possess it, O thou scion of the Prophet of God!" And Şádiq asked him saying: "Exchangest thou this love for one thousand dinars?" He answered: "Nay, never will I exchange it, though the world and all that is therein be given me!" Then Şádiq remarked: "How can he who possesses such a treasure be called poor?"

This poverty and these riches, this abasement and glory, this dominion, power, and the like, upon which the eyes and hearts of these vain and foolish souls are set,—all these things fade into utter nothingness in that Court! Even as He hath said: "O men! Ye are but paupers in need of God; but God is the Rich, the Self-Sufficing."¹ By 'riches' therefore is meant independence of all else but God, and by 'poverty' the lack of things that are of God.

Similarly, call thou to mind the day when the Jews, who had surrounded Jesus, Son of Mary, were pressing Him to confess His claim of being the Messiah and Prophet of God, so that they might declare Him an infidel and sentence Him to death. Then, they led Him away, He Who was the Day-star of the heaven of divine Revelation, unto Pilate and Caiaphas, who was the leading divine of that age. The chief priests were all assembled in the palace, also a multitude of people who had gathered to witness His sufferings, to deride and injure Him. Though they repeatedly questioned Him, hoping that He would confess His claim, yet Jesus held His peace and spake not. Finally, an accursed of God arose and, approaching Jesus, adjured Him saying: "Didst thou not claim to be the Divine Messiah? Didst thou not say, 'I am the King of Kings, My word is the Word of God, and I am the breaker of the Sabbath day?' " Thereupon Jesus lifted up His head and said: "Beholdest thou not the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and

¹ Qur'án 35:15.

might?" These were His words, and yet consider how to outward seeming He was devoid of all power except that inner power which was of God and which had encompassed all that is in heaven and on earth. How can I relate all that befell Him after He spoke these words? How shall I describe their heinous behaviour towards Him? They at last heaped on His blessed Person such woes that He took His flight unto the fourth Heaven.

It is also recorded in the Gospel according to St. Luke, that on a certain day Jesus passed by a Jew who was sick of the palsy, and lay upon a couch. When the Jew saw Him, he recognized Him, and cried out for His help. Jesus said unto him: "Arise from thy bed; thy sins are forgiven thee." Certain of the Jews, standing by, protested, saying: "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" And immediately He perceived their thoughts, Jesus answering said unto them: "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, arise, and take up thy bed, and walk; or to say, thy sins are forgiven thee? that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."¹ This is the real sovereignty, and such is the power of God's chosen Ones! All these things which We have repeatedly mentioned, and the details which We have cited from divers sources, have no other purpose but to enable thee to grasp the meaning of the allusions in the utterances of the chosen Ones of God, lest certain of these utterances cause thy feet to falter and thy heart to be dismayed.

Thus with steadfast steps we may tread the Path of certitude, that perchance the breeze that bloweth from the meads of the good-pleasure of God may waft upon us the sweet savours of divine acceptance, and cause us, vanishing mortals that we are, to attain unto the Kingdom of everlasting glory. Then wilt thou comprehend the inner meaning of sovereignty and the like, spoken of in the traditions and scriptures. Furthermore, it is already evident and known unto thee that those things to which the Jews and the Christians have clung, and the cavillings which they heaped upon the Beauty of Muḥammad, the same have in this day been upheld by the people of the Qur'án, and

¹ Mark 2:3-12.

been witnessed in their denunciations of the "Point of the Bayán"—may the souls of all that dwell within the kingdom of divine Revelations be a sacrifice unto Him! Behold their folly: they utter the selfsame words, uttered by the Jews of old, and know it not! How well and true are His words concerning them: "Leave them to entertain themselves with their cavillings!"¹ "As Thou livest, O Muḥammad! they are seized by the frenzy of their vain fancies."²

When the Unseen, the Eternal, the divine Essence, caused the Day-star of Muḥammad to rise above the horizon of knowledge, among the cavils which the Jewish divines raised against Him was that after Moses no Prophet should be sent of God. Yea, mention hath been made in the scriptures of a Soul Who must needs be made manifest and Who will advance the Faith, and promote the interests of the people, of Moses, so that the Law of the Mosaic Dispensation may encompass the whole earth. Thus hath the King of eternal glory referred in His Book to the words uttered by those wanderers in the vale of remoteness and error: "'The hand of God,' say the Jews, 'is chained up.' Chained up be their own hands! And for that which they have said, they were accursed. Nay, outstretched are both His hands!"³ "The hand of God is above their hands."⁴

Although the commentators of the Qur'án have related in divers manners the circumstances attending the revelation of this verse, yet thou shouldst endeavour to apprehend the purpose thereof. He saith: How false is that which the Jews have imagined! How can the hand of him Who is the King in truth, Who caused the countenance of Moses to be made manifest, and conferred upon Him the robe of Prophethood—how can the hand of such a One be chained and fettered? How can He be conceived as powerless to raise up yet another Messenger after Moses? Behold the absurdity of their saying; how far it hath strayed from the path of knowledge and understanding! Observe how in this day also, all these people have occupied themselves with such foolish absurdities. For over a

¹ Qur'án 6:91.

² Qur'án 15:72.

³ Qur'án 5:67.

⁴ Qur'án 48:10.

thousand years they have been reciting this verse, and unwittingly pronouncing their censure against the Jews, utterly unaware that they themselves, openly and privily, are voicing the sentiments and belief of the Jewish people! Thou art surely aware of their idle contention, that all Revelation is ended, that the portals of Divine mercy are closed, that from the day-springs of eternal holiness no sun shall rise again, that the Ocean of everlasting bounty is forever stilled, and that out of the Tabernacle of ancient glory the Messengers of God have ceased to be made manifest. Such is the measure of the understanding of these small-minded, contemptible people. These people have imagined that the flow of God's all encompassing grace and plenteous mercies, the cessation of which no mind can contemplate, has been halted. From every side they have risen and girded up the loins of tyranny, and exerted the utmost endeavour to quench with the bitter waters of their vain fancy the flame of God's burning Bush, oblivious that the globe of power shall within its own mighty stronghold protect the Lamp of God. The utter destitution into which this people have fallen doth surely suffice them, inasmuch as they have been deprived of the recognition of the essential Purpose and the knowledge of the Mystery and Substance of the Cause of God. For the highest and most excelling grace bestowed upon men is the grace of "attaining unto the Presence of God" and of His recognition, which has been promised unto all people. This is the utmost degree of grace vouchsafed unto man by the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days, and the fulness of His absolute bounty upon His creatures. Of this grace and bounty none of this people hath partaken, neither have they been honoured with this most exalted distinction. How numerous are those revealed verses which explicitly bear witness unto this most weighty truth and exalted Theme! And yet they have rejected it, and, after their own desire, misconstrued its meaning. Even as He hath revealed: "As for those who believe not in the signs of God, or that they shall ever meet Him, these of My mercy shall despair, and for them doth a grievous chastisement await."¹ Also He saith: "They who bear in mind that

¹ Qur'án 29:23.

they shall attain unto the Presence of their Lord, and that unto Him shall they return.”¹ Also in another instance He saith: “They who held it as certain that they must meet God, said, ‘How oft, by God’s will, hath a small host vanquished a numerous host!’”² In yet another instance He revealeth: “Let him then who hopeth to attain the presence of his Lord work a righteous work.”³ And also He saith: “He ordereth all things. He maketh His signs clear, that ye may have firm faith in attaining the presence of your Lord.”⁴

This people have repudiated all these verses, that unmistakably testify to the reality of “attainment unto the divine Presence.” No theme hath been more emphatically asserted in the holy scriptures. Notwithstanding, they have deprived themselves of this lofty and most exalted rank, this supreme and glorious station. Some have contended that by “attainment unto the Divine Presence” is meant the “Revelation” of God in the Day of Resurrection. Should they assert that the “Revelation” of God signifieth a “Universal Revelation,” it is clear and evident that such revelation already existeth in all things. The truth of this We have already established, inasmuch as We have demonstrated that all things are the recipients and revealers of the splendours of that ideal King, and that the signs of the revelation of that Sun, the Source of all splendour, exist and are manifest in the mirrors of beings. Nay, were man to gaze with the eye of divine and spiritual discernment, he will readily recognize that nothing whatsoever can exist without the revelation of the splendour of God, the ideal King. Consider how all created things eloquently testify to the revelation of that inner Light within them. Behold how within all things the portals of the Ridván of God are opened, that seekers may attain the cities of understanding and wisdom, and enter the gardens of knowledge and power. Within every garden they will behold the mystic bride of inner meaning enshrined within the chambers of utterance in the utmost grace and fullest adornment. Most of the verses of the Qur’án indicate, and bear witness to, this spiritual theme. The verse: “Neither is

¹ Qur’án 2:46.

² Qur’án 2:249.

³ Qur’án 18:111.

⁴ Qur’án 13:2.

there aught which doth not celebrate His praise"¹ is eloquent testimony thereto; and "We noted all things and wrote them down,"² a faithful witness thereof. Now, if by "attainment unto the Presence of God" is meant attainment unto the knowledge of such revelation, it is evident that all men have already attained unto the presence of the unchangeable Countenance of that peerless King. Why, then, restrict such revelation to the Day of Resurrection?

And were they to maintain that by "divine Presence" is meant the "Specific Revelation of God," expressed by certain Súfis as the "Most Holy Outpouring," if this be in the Essence Itself, it is evident that it hath been eternally in the divine Knowledge. Assuming the truth of this hypothesis, "attainment unto the divine Presence" is in this sense obviously possible to no one, inasmuch as this revelation is confined to the innermost Essence, unto which no man can attain. "The way is barred, and all seeking rejected." The minds of the favourites of heaven, however high they soar, can never attain this station, how much less the understanding of obscured and limited minds.

And were they to say that by "divine Presence" is meant the "Secondary Revelation of God," interpreted as the "Holy Outpouring," this is admittedly applicable to the world of creation, that is, in the realm of the primal and original manifestation of God. Such revelation is confined to His Prophets and chosen Ones, inasmuch as none mightier than they hath come to exist in the world of being. This truth all recognize, and bear witness thereto. These Prophets and chosen Ones of God are the recipients and revealers of all the unchangeable attributes and names of God. They are the mirrors that truly and faithfully reflect the light of God. Whatsoever is applicable to them is in reality applicable to God, Himself, Who is both the Visible and the Invisible. The knowledge of Him, Who is the Origin of all things, and attainment unto Him, are impossible save through knowledge of, and attainment unto, these luminous Beings who proceed from the Sun of Truth.

¹ Qur'án 17:44.

² Qur'án 78:29.

By attaining, therefore, to the presence of these holy Luminaries, the "Presence of God" Himself is attained. From their knowledge, the knowledge of God is revealed, and from the light of their countenance, the splendour of the Face of God is made manifest. Through the manifold attributes of these Essences of Detachment, Who are both the first and the last, the seen and the hidden, it is made evident that He Who is the Sun of Truth is "the First and the Last, the Seen, and the Hidden."¹ Likewise the other lofty names and exalted attributes of God. Therefore, whosoever, and in whatever Dispensation, hath recognized and attained unto the presence of these glorious, these resplendent and most excellent Luminaries, hath verily attained unto the "Presence of God" Himself, and entered the city of eternal and immortal life. Attainment unto such presence is possible only in the Day of Resurrection, which is the Day of the rise of God Himself through His all-embracing Revelation.

This is the meaning of the "Day of Resurrection," spoken of in all the scriptures, and announced unto all people. Reflect, can a more precious, a mightier, and more glorious day than this be conceived, so that man should willingly forego its grace, and deprive himself of its bounties, which like unto vernal showers are raining from the heaven of mercy upon all mankind? Having thus conclusively demonstrated that no day is greater than this Day, and no revelation more glorious than this Revelation, and having set forth all these weighty and infallible proofs which no understanding mind can question, and no man of learning overlook, how can man possibly, through the idle contention of the people of doubt and fancy, deprive himself of such a bountiful grace? Have they not heard the well-known tradition: "When the Qá'im riseth, that day is the Day of Resurrection?" In like manner, the Imáms, those unquenchable lights of divine guidance, have interpreted the verse: "What can such expect but that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds,"²—a sign which they have unquestionably regarded as one of the features of the Day of Resurrection—as referring to Qá'im and His manifestation.

¹ Qur'án 57:3.

² Qur'án 2:210.

Strive, therefore, O my brother, to grasp the meaning of "Resurrection," and cleanse thine ears from the idle sayings of these rejected people. Shouldst thou step into the realm of complete detachment, thou wilt readily testify that no day is mightier than this Day, and that no resurrection more awful than this Resurrection can ever be conceived. One righteous work performed in this Day, equalleth all the virtuous acts which for myriads of centuries men have practised—nay, We ask forgiveness of God for such a comparison! For verily the reward which such a deed deserveth is immensely beyond and above the estimate of men. Inasmuch as these undiscerning and wretched souls have failed to apprehend the true meaning of "Resurrection" and of the "attainment unto the divine Presence," they therefore have remained utterly deprived of the grace thereof. Although the sole and fundamental purpose of all learning, and the toil and labour thereof, is attainment unto, and the recognition of, this station, yet they are all immersed in the pursuit of their material studies. They deny themselves every moment of leisure, and utterly ignore Him, Who is the Essence of all learning, and the one Object of their quest! Methinks, their lips have never touched the cup of divine Knowledge, nor do they seem to have attained even a dewdrop of the showers of heavenly grace.

Consider, how can he that faileth in the day of God's Revelation to attain unto the grace of the "Divine Presence" and to recognize His Manifestation, be justly called learned, though he may have spent æons in the pursuit of knowledge, and acquired all the limited and material learning of men? It is surely evident that he can in no wise be regarded as possessed of true knowledge. Whereas the most unlettered of all men, if he be honoured with this supreme distinction, he verily is accounted as one of those divinely-learned men whose knowledge is of God; for such a man hath attained the acme of knowledge, and hath reached the furthest summit of learning.

This station is also one of the signs of the Day of Revelation; even as it is said: "The abased amongst you, He shall exalt; and they that are exalted, He shall abase." And likewise, He hath revealed in the Qur'án: "And We desire to show favour

to those who were brought low in the land, and to make them spiritual leaders among men, and to make of them Our heirs."¹ It hath been witnessed in this day how many of the divines, owing to their rejection of the Truth, have fallen into, and abide within, the uttermost depths of ignorance, and whose names have been effaced from the scroll of the glorious and learned. And how many of the ignorant who, by reason of their acceptance of the Faith, have soared aloft and attained the high summit of knowledge, and whose names have been inscribed by the Pen of Power upon the Tablet of divine Knowledge. Thus, "What He pleaseth will God abrogate or confirm: for with Him is the Source of Revelation."² Therefore, it hath been said: "To seek evidence, when the Proof hath been established is but an unseemly act, and to be busied with the pursuit of knowledge when the Object of all learning hath been attained is truly blameworthy." Say O people of the earth! Behold this flamelike-Youth that speedeth across the limitless profound of the Spirit, heralding unto you the tidings: "Lo: the Lamp of God is shining," and summoning you to heed His Cause which, though hidden beneath the veils of ancient splendour, shineth in the land of 'Irâq above the day-spring of eternal holiness.

O my friend, were the bird of thy mind to explore the heavens of the Revelation of the Qur'ân, were it to contemplate the realm of divine knowledge unfolded therein, thou wouldst assuredly find unnumbered doors of knowledge set open before thee. Thou wouldst certainly recognize that all these things which have in this day hindered this people from attaining the shores of the ocean of eternal grace, the same things in the Muḥammadan Dispensation prevented the people of that age from recognizing that divine Luminary, and from testifying to His truth. Thou wilt also apprehend the mysteries of "return" and "revelation," and wilt securely abide within the loftiest chambers of certitude and assurance.

And it came to pass that on a certain day a number of the opponents of that peerless Beauty, those that had strayed far

¹ Qur'ân 28:5.

² Qur'ân 13:41.

from God's imperishable Sanctuary, scornfully spoke these words unto Muḥammad: "Verily, God hath entered into a covenant with us that we are not to credit an apostle until he present us a sacrifice which fire out of heaven shall devour."¹ The purport of this verse is that God hath covenanted with them that they should not believe in any messenger unless he work the miracle of Abel and Cain, that is, offer a sacrifice, and the fire from heaven consume it; even as they had heard it recounted in the story of Abel, which story is recorded in the scriptures. To this, Muḥammad, answering, said: "Already have Apostles before me come to you with sure testimonies, and with that of which ye speak. Wherefore slew ye them? Tell me, if ye are men of truth."² And now, be fair: How could those people living in the days of Muḥammad have existed, thousands of years before, in the age of Adam or other Prophets? Why should Muḥammad, that Essence of truthfulness, have charged the people of His day with the murder of Abel or other Prophets? Thou hast none other alternative except to regard Muḥammad as an impostor or a fool—which God forbid!—or to maintain that those people of wickedness were the self-same people who in every age opposed and cavilled at the Prophets and Messengers of God, till they finally caused them all to suffer martyrdom.

Ponder this in thine heart, that the sweet gales of divine knowledge, blowing from the meads of mercy, may waft upon thee the fragrance of the Beloved's utterance, and cause thy soul to attain the Ridván of understanding. As the wayward of every age have failed to fathom the deeper import of these weighty and pregnant utterances, and imagined the answer of the Prophets of God to be irrelevant to the questions they asked them, they therefore have attributed ignorance and folly to those Essences of knowledge and understanding.

(From the Kitáb-i-Íqán, The Book of Certitude)

¹ Qur'án 3:183.

² Qur'án 3:182.

THE DAY OF GOD

THE Revelation which, from time immemorial, hath been acclaimed as the Purpose and Promise of all the Prophets of God, and the most cherished Desire of His Messengers, hath now, by virtue of the pervasive Will of the Almighty and at His irresistible bidding, been revealed unto men. The advent of such a Revelation hath been heralded in all the sacred Scriptures. Behold how, notwithstanding such an announcement, mankind hath strayed from its path and shut out itself from its glory.

Say: O ye lovers of the One true God! Strive, that ye may truly recognize and know Him, and observe befittingly His precepts. This is a Revelation, under which, if a man shed for its sake one drop of blood, myriads of oceans will be his recompense. Take heed, O friends, that ye forfeit not so inestimable a benefit, or disregard its transcendent station. Consider the multitude of lives that have been, and are still being, sacrificed in a world deluded by a mere phantom which the vain imaginations of its peoples have conceived. Render thanks unto God, inasmuch as ye have attained unto your heart's Desire, and been united to Him Who is the Promise of all nations. Guard ye, with the aid of the one true God—exalted be His Glory—the integrity of the station which ye have attained, and cleave to that which shall promote His Cause. He, verily, enjoineth on you what is right and conducive to the exaltation of man's station. Glorified be the All-Merciful, the Revealer of this wondrous Tablet.

This is the Day in which God's most excellent favours have

been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness. It behoveth them to cleave to whatsoever will, in this Day, be conducive to the exaltation of their stations, and to the promotion of their best interests. Happy are those whom the all-glorious Pen was moved to remember, and blessed are those men whose names, by virtue of Our inscrutable decree, We have preferred to conceal.

Beseech ye the one true God to grant that all men may be graciously assisted to fulfil that which is acceptable in Our sight. Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth, and is the Knower of things unseen.

This is the Day whereon the Ocean of God's mercy hath been manifested unto men, the Day in which the Day-Star of His loving-kindness hath shed its radiance upon them, the Day in which the clouds of His bountiful favour have overshadowed the whole of mankind. Now is the time to cheer and refresh the downcast through the invigorating breeze of love and fellowship, and the living waters of friendliness and charity.

They who are the beloved of God, in whatever place they gather and whomsoever they may meet, must evince, in their attitude towards God, and in the manner of their celebration of His praise and glory, such humility and submissiveness that every atom of the dust beneath their feet may attest the depth of their devotion. The conversation carried by these holy souls should be informed with such power that these same atoms of dust will be thrilled by its influence. They should conduct themselves in such manner that the earth upon which they tread may never be allowed to address them such words as these: "I am to be preferred above you. For witness, how patient I am in bearing the burden which the husbandman

layeth upon me. I am the instrument that continually imparteth unto all beings the blessings with which He Who is the Source of all grace hath entrusted me. Notwithstanding the honour conferred upon me, and the unnumbered evidences of my wealth—a wealth that supplieth the needs of all creation—behold the measure of my humility, witness with what absolute submissiveness I allow myself to be trodden beneath the feet of men. . . .”

Show forbearance and benevolence and love to one another. Should any one among you be incapable of grasping a certain truth, or be striving to comprehend it, show forth, when conversing with him, a spirit of extreme kindness and goodwill. Help him to see and recognize the truth, without esteeming yourself to be, in the least, superior to him, or to be possessed of greater endowments.

The whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of grace which God poureth forth for him. Let none, therefore, consider the largeness or smallness of the receptacle. The portion of some might lie in the palm of a man's hand, the portion of others might fill a cup, and of others even a gallon-measure.

Every eye, in this Day, should seek what will best promote the Cause of God. He, Who is the Eternal Truth, beareth Me witness! Nothing whatever can, in this Day, inflict a greater harm upon this Cause than dissension and strife, contention, estrangement and apathy, among the loved ones of God. Flee them, through the power of God and His sovereign aid, and strive ye to knit together the hearts of men, in His Name, the Unifier, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Beseech ye the one true God to grant that ye may taste the savour of such deeds as are performed in His path, and partake of the sweetness of such humility and submissiveness as are shown for His sake. Forget your own selves, and turn your eyes towards your neighbour. Bend your energies to whatever may foster the education of men. Nothing is, or can ever be, hidden from God. If ye follow in His way, His incalculable and imperishable blessings will be showered upon you. This is the luminous Tablet, whose verses have streamed from the moving

Pen of Him Who is the Lord of all worlds. Ponder it in your hearts, and be ye of them that observe its precepts.

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

Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness. The soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted for this wondrous Day. All the divers kindreds of the earth have, likewise, yearned to attain it. No sooner, however, had the Day Star of His Revelation manifested itself in the heaven of God's Will, than all, except those whom the Almighty was pleased to guide, were found dumbfounded and heedless.

O thou that hast remembered Me! The most grievous veil hath shut out the peoples of the earth from His glory, and hindered them from hearkening to His call. God grant that the light of unity may envelop the whole earth, and that the seal, "the Kingdom is God's," may be stamped upon the brow of all its peoples.

The time fore-ordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, have all been fulfilled. Out of Zion hath gone forth the Law of God, and Jerusalem, and the hills and land thereof, are filled with the glory of His Revelation. Happy is the man that pondereth in his heart that which hath been revealed in the Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Meditate upon this, O ye beloved of God, and let your ears be attentive unto His Word, so that ye may, by His

grace and mercy, drink your fill from the crystal waters of constancy, and become as steadfast and immovable as the mountain in His Cause.

In the Book of Isaiah it is written: "Enter unto the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty." No man that meditateth upon this verse can fail to recognize the greatness of this Cause, or doubt the exalted character of this Day—the Day of God Himself. This same verse is followed by these words: "And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day." This is the Day which the Pen of the Most High hath glorified in all the holy Scriptures. There is no verse in them that doth not declare the glory of His holy Name, and no Book that doth not testify unto the loftiness of this most exalted theme. Were We to make mention of all that hath been revealed in these heavenly Books and holy Scriptures concerning this Revelation, this Tablet would assume impossible dimensions. 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.

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 honoured me with Thy footsteps, and for having quickened my soul through the vitalizing fragrance of Thy Day and the thrilling 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 treasures 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 honoured 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 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. O 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.

Say: O men! This is a matchless Day. Matchless must, likewise, be the tongue that celebrateth the praise of the Desire of all nations, and matchless the deed that aspireth to be acceptable in His sight. The whole human race hath longed for this Day, that perchance it may fulfil that which well beseemeth its station, and is worthy of its destiny. Blessed is the man whom the affairs of the world have failed to deter from recognizing Him Who is the Lord of all things.

So blind hath become the human heart that neither the disruption of the city, nor the reduction of the mountain in dust, nor even the cleaving of the earth, can shake off its torpor. The allusions made in the Scriptures have been unfolded, and the signs recorded therein have been revealed, and the prophetic cry is continually being raised. And yet all, except such as God was pleased to guide, are bewildered in the drunkenness of their heedlessness!

Witness how the world is being afflicted with a fresh calamity every day. Its tribulation is continually deepening. From the moment the Súriy-i-Ra'ís (Tablet to Ra'ís) was revealed until the present day, neither hath the world been tranquillized, nor have the hearts of its people been at rest. At one time it hath been agitated by contentions and disputes, at another it hath been convulsed by wars, and fallen a victim to inveterate diseases. Its sickness is approaching the stage of utter hopelessness, inasmuch as the true Physician is debarred from administering the remedy, whilst unskilled practitioners are regarded with favour, and are accorded full freedom to act. . . . The dust of sedition hath clouded the hearts of men, and blinded their eyes. Ere long, they will perceive the consequences of what their hands have wrought in the Day of God. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Informed, as bidden by One Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty.

By Him Who is the Great Announcement! The All-Merciful is come invested with undoubted sovereignty. The Balance hath been appointed, and all them that dwell on earth have been gathered together. The Trumpet hath been blown, and lo, all eyes have stared up with terror, and the hearts of all who are in the heavens and on the earth have trembled, except them whom the breath of the verses of God hath quickened, and who have detached themselves from all things.

This is the Day whereon the earth shall tell out her tidings. The workers of iniquity are her burdens, could ye but perceive it. The moon of idle fancy hath been cleft, and the heaven hath given out a palpable smoke. We see the people laid low, awed with the dread of thy Lord, the Almighty, the Most Powerful. The Crier hath cried out, and men have been torn away, so great hath been the fury of His wrath. The people of the left hand sigh and bemoan. The people of the right abide in noble habitations: they quaff the Wine that is life indeed, from the hands of the All-Merciful, and are, verily, the blissful.

The earth hath been shaken, and the mountains have passed away, and the angels have appeared, rank on rank, before Us.

Most of the people are bewildered in their drunkenness and wear on their faces the evidences of anger. Thus have We gathered together the workers of iniquity. We see them rushing on towards their idol. Say: None shall be secure this Day from the decree of God. This indeed is a grievous Day. We point out to them those that led them astray. They see them, and yet recognize them not. Their eyes are drunken; they are indeed a blind people. Their proofs are the calumnies they uttered; condemned are their calumnies by God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. The Evil One hath stirred up mischief in their hearts, and they are afflicted with a torment that none can avert. They hasten to the wicked, bearing the register of the workers of iniquity. Such are their doings.

Say: The heavens have been folded together, and the earth is held within His grasp, and the corrupt doers have been held by their forelock, and still they understand not. They drink of the tainted water, and know it not. Say: The shout hath been raised, and the people have come forth from their graves, and arising are gazing around them. Some have made haste to attain the court of the God of Mercy, others have fallen down on their faces in the fire of Hell, while still others are lost in bewilderment. The verses of God have been revealed, and yet they have turned away from them. His proof hath been manifested, and yet they are unaware of it. And when they behold the face of the All-Merciful, their own faces are saddened, while they are disporting themselves. They hasten forward to Hell Fire, and mistake it for light. Far from God be what they fondly imagine! Say: Whether ye rejoice or whether ye burst for fury, the heavens are cleft asunder, and God hath come down, invested with radiant sovereignty. All created things are heard exclaiming: "The Kingdom is God's, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."

Know thou, moreover, that We have been cast into an afflictive Prison, and are encompassed with the hosts of tyranny, as a result of what the hands of the infidels have wrought. Such is the gladness, however, which the Youth hath tasted that no earthly joy can compare unto it. By God! The harm He suffereth at the hands of the oppressor can never grieve His

heart, nor can He be saddened by the ascendancy of such as have repudiated His truth.

Say: Tribulation is a horizon unto My Revelation. The day-star of grace shineth above it, and sheddeth a light which neither the clouds of men's idle fancy nor the vain imaginations of the aggressor can obscure.

Follow thou the footsteps of thy Lord, and remember His servants even as He doth remember thee, undeterred by either the clamour of the heedless ones or the sword of the enemy. . . . Spread abroad the sweet savours of thy Lord, and hesitate not, though it be for less than a moment, in the service of His Cause. The day is approaching when the victory of thy Lord, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bountiful, will be proclaimed.

Say: We have caused the rivers of Divine utterance to proceed out of Our throne, that the tender herbs of wisdom and understanding may spring forth from the soil of your hearts. Will ye not be thankful? They who disdain to worship their Lord shall be of those who are cast off. And oft as Our verses are rehearsed unto them, they persist in proud disdain, and in their gross violation of His law, and know it not. As for them who have disbelieved in Him, they shall be in the shadow of a black smoke. "The Hour" hath come upon them, while they are disporting themselves. They have been seized by their forelock, and yet know it not.

The thing that must come hath come suddenly; behold how they flee from it! The inevitable hath come to pass; witness how they have cast it behind their backs! This is the Day whereon every man will fly from himself, how much more from his kindred, could ye but perceive it. Say: By God! The blast hath been blown on the trumpet, and lo, mankind hath swooned away before us! The Herald hath cried out, and the Summoner raised His voice saying: "The Kingdom is God's, the Most Powerful, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting."

This is the Day on which all eyes shall stare up with terror, the Day in which the hearts of them that dwell on earth shall

tremble, save them whom thy Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, pleaseth to deliver. All faces have turned black except those to whom the God of Mercy hath vouchsafed a radiant heart. Drunken are the eyes of those men that have openly refused to behold the face of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised.

Say: Perused ye not the Qur'án? Read it, that haply ye may find the Truth, for this Book is verily the Straight Path. This is the Way of God unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth. If ye have been careless of the Qur'án, the Bayán cannot be regarded to be remote from you. Behold it opens before your eyes. Read ye its verses, lest perchance ye desist from committing that which will cause the Messengers of God to mourn and lament.

Speed out of your sepulchres. How long will ye sleep? The second blast hath been blown on the trumpet. On whom are ye gazing? This is your Lord, the God of Mercy. Witness how ye gainsay His signs! The earth hath quaked with a great quaking, and cast forth her burdens. Will ye not admit it? Say: Will ye not recognize how the mountains have become like flocks of wool, how the people are sore vexed at the awful majesty of the Cause of God? Witness how their houses are empty ruins, and they themselves a drowned host.

This is the Day whereon the All-Merciful hath come down in the clouds of knowledge, clothed with manifest sovereignty. He well knoweth the actions of men. He it is Whose glory none can mistake, could ye but comprehend it. The heaven of every religion hath been rent, and the earth of human understanding been cleft asunder, and the angels of God are seen descending. Say: This is the Day of mutual deceit; whither do ye flee? The mountains have passed away, and the heavens have been folded together, and the whole earth is held within His grasp, could ye but understand it. Who is it that can protect you? None, by Him Who is the All-Merciful! None, except God, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the Beneficent. Every woman that hath had a burden in her womb hath cast her burden. We see men drunken in this Day, the Day in which men and angels have been gathered together.

Say: Is there any doubt concerning God? Behold how He hath come down from the heaven of His grace, girded with power and invested with sovereignty. Is there any doubt concerning His signs? Open ye your eyes, and consider His clear evidence. Paradise is on your right hand, and hath been brought nigh unto you, while Hell hath been made to blaze. Witness its devouring flame. Haste ye to enter into Paradise, as a token of Our mercy unto you, and drink ye from the hands of the All-Merciful the Wine that is life indeed.

Drink with healthy relish, O people of Bahá. Ye are indeed they with whom it shall be well. This is what they who have near access to God have attained. This is the flowing water ye were promised in the Qur'án, and later in the Bayán, as a recompense from your Lord, the God of Mercy. Blessed are they that quaff it.

O My servant that hath turned thy face towards Me! Render thanks unto God for having sent down unto thee this Tablet in this Prison, that thou mayest remind the people of the days of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the All-Knowing. Thus have We established for thee, through the waters of Our wisdom and utterance, the foundations of thy belief. This, verily, is the water whereon the Throne of thy Lord hath been raised. "His Throne had stood upon the waters." Ponder this in thine heart, that thou mayest comprehend its meaning. Say: Praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.

The Divine Springtime is come, O Most Exalted Pen, for the Festival of the All-Merciful is fast approaching. Bestir thyself, and magnify, before the entire creation, the name of God, and celebrate His praise, in such wise that all created things may be regenerated and made new. Speak, and hold not thy peace. The day star of blissfulness shineth above the horizon of Our name, the Blissful, inasmuch as the kingdom of the name of God hath been adorned with the ornament of the name of thy Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Arise before the nations of the earth, and arm thyself with the power of this Most Great Name, and be not of those who tarry.

Methinks that thou hast halted and movest not upon My Tablet. Could the brightness of the Divine Countenance have bewildered thee, or the idle talk of the froward filled thee with grief and paralyzed thy movement? Take heed lest anything deter thee from extolling the greatness of this Day—the Day whereon the Finger of majesty and power hath opened the seal of the Wine of Reunion, and called all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth. Preferrest thou to tarry when the breeze announcing the Day of God hath already breathed over thee, or art thou of them that are shut out as by a veil from Him?

No veil whatever have I allowed, O Lord of all names and Creator of the heavens, to shut me from the recognition of the glories of Thy Day—the Day which is the lamp of guidance unto the whole world, and the sign of the Ancient of Days unto all them that dwell therein. My silence is by reason of the veils that have blinded Thy creatures' eyes to Thee, and my muteness is because of the impediments that have hindered Thy people from recognizing Thy truth. Thou knowest what is in me, but I know not what is in Thee. Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. By Thy name that excelleth all other names! If Thy overruling and all-compelling behest should ever reach me, it would empower me to revive the souls of all men, through Thy most exalted Word, which I have heard uttered by Thy Tongue of power in Thy Kingdom of glory. It would enable me to announce the revelation of Thy effulgent countenance wherethrough that which lay hidden from the eyes of men hath been manifested in Thy name, the Perspicuous, the sovereign Protector, the Self-Subsisting.

Canst thou discover any one but Me, O Pen, in this Day? What hath become of the creation and the manifestations thereof? What of the names and their kingdom? Whither are gone all created things, whether seen or unseen? What of the hidden secrets of the universe and its revelations? Lò, the entire creation hath passed away! Nothing remaineth except My Face, the Ever-Abiding, the Resplendent, the All-Glorious.

This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendours of the Light that shineth from the face of Thy Lord,

the Gracious, the Most Bountiful. Verily, We have caused every soul to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty. We have, then, called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men. I am, verily, the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days.

This is the Day whereon the unseen world crieth out: "Great is thy blessedness, O earth, for thou hast been made the footstool of thy God, and been chosen as the seat of His mighty throne." The realm of glory exclaimeth: "Would that my life could be sacrificed for thee, for He Who is the Beloved of the All-Merciful hath established His sovereignty upon thee, through the power of His Name that hath been promised unto all things, whether of the past or of the future. This is the Day whereon every sweet smelling thing hath derived its fragrance from the smell of My garment—a garment that hath shed its perfume upon the whole of creation. This is the Day whereon the rushing waters of everlasting life have gushed out of the Will of the All-Merciful. Haste ye, with your hearts and souls, and quaff your fill, O Concurrence of the realms above!"

Say: He it is Who is the Manifestation of Him Who is the Unknowable, the Invisible of the Invisibles, could ye but perceive it. He it is Who hath laid bare before you the hidden and treasured Gem, were ye to seek it. He it is Who is the one Beloved of all things, whether of the past or of the future. Would that ye might set your hearts and hopes upon Him!

We have heard the voice of thy pleading, O Pen, and excuse thy silence. What is it that hath so sorely bewildered thee?

The inebriation of Thy presence, O Well-Beloved of all worlds, hath seized and possessed me.

Arise, and proclaim unto the entire creation the tidings that He Who is the All-Merciful hath directed His steps towards the Ridván and entered it. Guide, then, the people unto the garden of delight which God hath made the Throne of His Paradise. We have chosen thee to be our most mighty Trumpet, whose blast is to signalize the resurrection of all mankind.

Say: This is the Paradise on whose foliage the wine of utterance hath imprinted the testimony: "He that was hidden from the eyes of men is revealed, girded with sovereignty and power!"

This is the Paradise, the rustling of whose leaves proclaims: "O ye that inhabit the heavens and the earth! There hath appeared what hath never previously appeared. He Who, from everlasting, had concealed His Face from the sight of creation is now come." From the whispering breeze that wafteth amidst its branches there cometh the cry: "He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is made manifest. The Kingdom is God's," while from its streaming waters can be heard the murmur: "All eyes are gladdened, for He Whom none hath beheld, Whose secret no one hath discovered, hath lifted the veil of glory, and uncovered the countenance of Beauty."

Within this Paradise, and from the heights of its loftiest chambers, the Maids of Heaven have cried out and shouted: "Rejoice, ye dwellers of the realms above, for the fingers of Him Who is the Ancient of Days are ringing, in the name of the All-Glorious, the Most Great Bell, in the midmost heart of the heavens. The hands of bounty have borne round the cups of everlasting life. Approach, and quaff your fill. Drink with healthy relish, O ye that are the very incarnations of longing, ye who are the embodiments of vehement desire!"

This is the Day whereon He Who is the Revealer of the names of God hath stepped out of the Tabernacle of glory, and proclaimed unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth: "Put away the cups of Paradise and all the life-giving waters they contain, for lo, the people of Bahá have entered the blissful abode of the Divine Presence, and quaffed the wine of reunion, from the chalice of the beauty of their Lord, the All-Possessing, the Most High."

Forget the world of creation, O Pen, and turn thou towards the face of thy Lord, the Lord of all names. Adorn, then, the world with the ornament of the favours of thy Lord, the King of everlasting days. For We perceive the fragrance of the Day whereon He Who is the Desire of all nations hath shed upon the kingdoms of the unseen and of the seen the splendour of the light of His most excellent names, and enveloped them with the radiance of the luminaries of His most gracious favours—favours which none can reckon except Him, Who is the omnipotent Protector of the entire creation.

Look not upon the creatures of God except with the eye of kindness and of mercy, for Our loving providence hath pervaded all created things, and Our grace encompassed the earth and the heavens. This is the Day whereon the true servants of God partake of the life-giving waters of reunion, the Day whereon those that are nigh unto Him are able to drink of the soft-flowing river of immortality, and they who believe in His unity the wine of His Presence, through their recognition of Him Who is the Highest and Last End of all, in Whom the Tongue of Majesty and Glory voiceth the call: "The Kingdom is Mine. I, Myself, am, of Mine own right, its Ruler."

Attract the hearts of men, through the call of Him the one alone Beloved. Say: This is the Voice of God, if ye do but hearken. This is the Day-Spring of the Revelation of God, did ye but know it. This is the Dawning-Place of the Cause of God, were ye to recognize it. This is the Source of the commandment of God, did ye but judge it fairly. This is the manifest and hidden Secret; would that ye might perceive it. 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.

The Best-Beloved is come. In His right hand is the sealed Wine of His name. Happy is the man that turneth unto Him, and drinketh his fill, and exclaimeth: "Praise be to Thee, O Revealer of the signs of God!" By the righteousness of the Almighty! Every hidden thing hath been manifested through the power of truth. All the favours of God have been sent down, as a token of His grace. The waters of everlasting life have, in their fullness, been proffered unto men. Every single cup hath been borne round by the hand of the Well-Beloved. Draw near, and tarry not, though it be for one short moment.

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? Thus hath His bounty been sent down unto men, His testimony fulfilled, and His proof shone forth above the Horizon of mercy. Rich is the prize that shall be won by him who hath believed and exclaimed: "Lauded art Thou, O Beloved of all worlds! Magnified be Thy name, O Thou the Desire of every understanding heart!"

Rejoice with exceeding gladness, O people of Bahá, as ye call to remembrance the Day of supreme felicity, the Day whereon the Tongue of the Ancient of Days hath spoken, as He departed from His House, proceeding to the Spot from which He shed upon the whole of creation the splendours of His name, the All-Merciful. God is Our witness. Were We to reveal the hidden secrets of that Day, all they that dwell on earth and in the heavens would swoon away and die, except such as will be preserved by God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Such is the inebriating effect of the words of God upon Him Who is the Revealer of His undoubted proofs, that His Pen can move no longer. With these words He concludeth His Tablet: "No God is there but Me, the Most Exalted, the Most Powerful, the Most Excellent, the All-Knowing."

(From Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh)

THE MOST GREAT PEACE

THE Great Being, wishing to reveal the prerequisites of the peace and tranquillity of the world and the advancement of its peoples, hath written: The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men. Such a peace demandeth that the Great Powers should resolve, for the sake of the tranquillity of the peoples of the earth, to be fully reconciled among themselves. Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him. If this be done, the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal order within their territories. This will ensure the peace and composure of every people, government and nation. We fain would hope that the kings and rulers of the earth, the mirrors of the gracious and almighty name of God, may attain unto this station, and shield mankind from the onslaught of tyranny. . . . The day is approaching when all the peoples of the world will have adopted one universal language and one common script. When this is achieved, to whatsoever city a man may journey, it shall be as if he were entering his own home. 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. . . . That one indeed is a man who, to-day, dedicateth himself

to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth. In another passage He hath proclaimed: It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.

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.

Compose your differences, and reduce your armaments, that the burden of your expenditures may be lightened, and that your minds and hearts may be tranquillized. Heal the dissensions that divide you, and ye will no longer be in need of any armaments except what the protection of your cities and territories demandeth. Fear ye God, and take heed not to outstrip the bounds of moderation, and be numbered among the extravagant.

We have learned that you are increasing your outlay every year, and are laying the burden thereof on your subjects. This, verily, is more than they can bear, and is a grievous injustice. Decide justly between men, and be ye the emblems of justice amongst them. This, if ye judge fairly, is the thing that behoveth you, and beseemeth your station.

Beware not to deal unjustly with any one that appealeth to you, and entereth beneath your shadow. Walk ye in the fear of God, and be ye of them that lead a godly life. Rest not on your power, your armies, and treasures. Put your whole trust and confidence in God, Who hath created you, and seek ye His help in all your affairs. Succour cometh from Him alone. He succoureth whom He will with the hosts of the heavens and of the earth.

Know ye that the poor are the trust of God in your midst. Watch that ye betray not His trust, that ye deal not unjustly with them and that ye walk not in the ways of the treacherous. Ye will most certainly be called upon to answer for His trust on the day when the Balance of Justice shall be set, the day when unto every one shall be rendered his due, when the doings of all men, be they rich or poor, shall be weighed.

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. 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.

Examine Our Cause, inquire into the things that have befallen Us, and decide justly between Us and Our enemies, and be ye of them that act equitably towards their neighbour. If ye stay not the hand of the oppressor, if ye fail to safeguard the rights of the downtrodden, what right have ye then to vaunt yourselves among men? What is it of which ye can rightly boast? Is it on your food and your drink that ye pride yourselves, on the riches ye lay up in your treasures, on the diversity and the cost of the ornaments with which ye deck yourselves? If true glory were to consist in the possession of such perishable things, then the earth on which ye walk must needs vaunt itself over you, because it supplieth you, and bestoweth upon you, these very things, by the decree of the Almighty. In its bowels are contained, according to what God hath ordained, all that ye possess. From it, as a sign of His mercy, ye derive your riches. Behold then your state, the thing in which ye glory! Would that ye could perceive it!

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.

O ye rulers of the earth! Wherefore have ye clouded the radiance of the Sun, and caused it to cease from shining? Harken unto the counsel given you by the Pen of the Most High, that haply both ye and the poor may attain unto tranquillity and peace. We beseech God to assist the kings of the earth to establish peace on earth. He, verily, doth what He willeth.

O kings of the earth! We see you increasing every year your expenditures, and laying the burden thereof on your subjects. This, verily, is wholly and grossly unjust. Fear the sighs and tears of this Wronged One, and lay not excessive burdens on your peoples. Do not rob them to rear palaces for yourselves; nay rather choose for them that which ye choose for yourselves. Thus We unfold to your eyes that which profiteth you, if ye but perceive. 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. Yet, how disdainfully ye look upon them! How strange, how very strange!

Now that ye have refused the Most Great Peace, hold ye fast unto this, the Lesser Peace, that haply ye may in some degree better your own condition and that of your dependents.

O rulers of the earth! Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions. Beware lest ye disregard the counsel of the All-Knowing, the Faithful.

Be united, O kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you, and your peoples find rest, if ye be of them that comprehend. Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice.

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. 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.

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.

Hearken, O King (Sultán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz), 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.

Beware, O King, that thou gather not around thee such ministers as follow the desires of a corrupt inclination, as have cast behind their backs that which hath been committed into

their hands and manifestly betrayed their trust. Be bounteous to others as God hath been bounteous to thee, and abandon not the interests of thy people to the mercy of such ministers as these. Lay not aside the fear of God, and be thou of them that act uprightly. Gather around thee those ministers from whom thou canst perceive the fragrance of faith and of justice, and take thou counsel with them, and choose whatever is best in thy sight, and be of them that act generously.

Know thou for a certainty that whoso disbelieveth in God is neither trustworthy nor truthful. This, indeed, is the truth, the undoubted truth. He that acteth treacherously towards God will, also, act treacherously towards his king. Nothing whatever can deter such a man from evil, nothing can hinder him from betraying his neighbour, nothing can induce him to walk uprightly.

Take heed that thou resign not the reins of the affairs of thy state into the hands of others, and repose not thy confidence in ministers unworthy of thy trust, and be not of them that live in heedlessness. Shun them whose hearts are turned away from thee, and place not thy confidence in them, and entrust them not with thy affairs and the affairs of such as profess thy faith. Beware that thou allow not the wolf to become the shepherd of God's flock, and surrender not the fate of His loved ones to the mercy of the malicious. Expect not that they who violate the ordinances of God will be trustworthy or sincere in the faith they profess. Avoid them, and preserve strict guard over thyself, lest their devices and mischief hurt thee. Turn away from them, and fix thy gaze upon God, thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful. He that giveth up himself wholly to God, God shall, assuredly, be with him; and he that placeth his complete trust in God, God shall, verily, protect him from whatsoever may harm him, and shield him from the wickedness of every evil plotter.

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. 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 favours with which God hath favoured 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.

Shouldst thou cause rivers of justice to spread their waters amongst thy subjects, God would surely aid thee with the hosts of the unseen and of the seen, and would strengthen thee in thine affairs. No God is there but Him. All creation and its empire are His. Unto Him return the works of the faithful.

Place not thy reliance on thy treasures. Put thy whole confidence in the grace of God, thy Lord. Let Him be thy trust in whatever thou doest, and be of them that have submitted themselves to His Will. Let Him be thy helper and enrich thyself with His treasures, for with Him are the treasuries of the heavens and of the earth. He bestoweth them upon whom He will, and from whom He will He withholdeth them. There is none other God but Him, the All-Possessing, the All-Praised. All are but paupers at the door of His mercy; all are helpless before the revelation of His sovereignty, and beseech His favours.

Overstep not the bounds of moderation, and deal justly with them that serve thee. Bestow upon them according to their needs, and not to the extent that will enable them to lay up riches for themselves, to deck their persons, to embellish their homes, to acquire the things that are of no benefit unto them, and to be numbered with the extravagant. Deal with them with undeviating justice, so that none among them may either suffer want, or be pampered with luxuries. This is but manifest justice.

Allow not the abject to rule over and dominate them who are noble and worthy of honour, and suffer not the high-minded to be at the mercy of the contemptible and worthless, for this is what We observed upon Our arrival in the City (Constantinople), and to it We bear witness. We found among its inhabitants some who were possessed of an affluent fortune and lived in the midst of excessive riches, while others were in dire want and abject poverty. This ill beseemeth thy sovereignty, and is unworthy of thy rank.

Let My counsel be acceptable to thee, and strive thou to rule with equity among men, that God may exalt thy name and spread abroad the fame of thy justice in all the world. Beware lest thou aggrandize thy ministers at the expense of thy subjects. Fear the sighs of the poor and of the upright in heart who, at every break of day, bewail their plight, and be unto them a benignant sovereign. They, verily, are thy treasures on earth. It behoveth thee, therefore, to safeguard thy treasures from the assaults of them who wish to rob thee. Inquire into their affairs, and ascertain, every year, nay every month, their condition, and be not of them that are careless of their duty.

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. Bring thyself to account ere thou art summoned to a reckoning, on the Day when no man shall have strength to stand for fear of God, the Day when the hearts of the heedless ones shall be made to tremble.

It behoveth every king to be as bountiful as the sun, which fostereth the growth of all beings, and giveth to each its due, whose benefits are not inherent in itself, but are ordained by Him Who is the Most Powerful, the Almighty. The King should be as generous, as liberal in his mercy as the clouds, the outpourings of whose bounty are showered upon every land, by the behest of Him Who is the Supreme Ordainer, the All-Knowing.

Have a care not to entrust thine affairs of state entirely into another's hands. None can discharge thy functions better than thine own self. Thus do We make clear unto thee Our words of wisdom, and send down upon thee that which can enable thee to pass over from the left hand of oppression to the right hand

of justice, and approach the resplendent ocean of His favours. Such is the path which the kings that were before thee have trodden, they that acted equitably towards their subjects, and walked in the ways of undeviating justice.

Behold the disturbances which, for many a long year, have afflicted the earth, and the perturbation that hath seized its peoples. It hath either been ravaged by war, or tormented by sudden and unforeseen calamities. Though the world is encompassed with misery and distress, yet no man hath paused to reflect what the cause or source of that may be. Whenever the True Counsellor uttered a word in admonishment, lo, they all denounced Him as a mover of mischief and rejected His claim. How bewildering, how confusing is such behaviour! No two men can be found who may be said to be outwardly and inwardly united. The evidences of discord and malice are apparent everywhere, though all were made for harmony and union. The Great Being saith: O well-beloved ones! The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. We cherish the hope that the light of justice may shine upon the world and sanctify it from tyranny. 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 established 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. . . . 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. . . . 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.

O Kamál! The heights which, through the most gracious favour of God, mortal man can attain, in this Day, are as yet unrevealed to his sight. The world of being hath never had, nor doth it yet possess the capacity for such a revelation. The day, however, is approaching when the potentialities of so great a favour will, by virtue of His behest, be manifested unto men. Though the forces of the nations be arrayed against Him, though the kings of the earth be leagued to undermine His Cause, the power of His might shall stand unshaken. He, verily, speaketh the truth, and summoneth all mankind to the way of Him Who is the Incomparable, the All-Knowing.

All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. The Almighty beareth Me witness: To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Say: O friends! Drink your fill from this crystal stream that floweth through the heavenly grace of Him Who is the Lord of Names. Let others partake of its waters in My name, that the leaders of men in every land may fully recognize the purpose for which the Eternal Truth hath been revealed, and the reason for which they themselves have been created.

The Great Being saith: O ye children of men! The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity. This is the straight Path, the fixed and immovable foundation. Whatsoever is raised on this foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength, nor will the revolution of countless centuries under-

mine its structure. Our hope is that the world's religious leaders and the rulers thereof will unitedly arise for the reformation of this age and the rehabilitation of its fortunes. Let them, after meditating on its needs, take counsel together and, through anxious and full deliberation, administer to a diseased and sorely-afflicted world the remedy it requires. . . . It is incumbent upon them who are in authority to exercise moderation in all things. Whatsoever passeth beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence. Consider for instance such things as liberty, civilization and the like. However much men of understanding may favourably regard them, they will, if carried to excess, exercise a pernicious influence upon men. . . . Please God, the peoples of the world may be led, as the result of the high endeavours exerted by their rulers and the wise and learned amongst men, to recognize their best interests. How long will humanity persist in its waywardness? How long will injustice continue? How long is chaos and confusion to reign amongst men? How long will discord agitate the face of society? The winds of despair are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appeareth to be lamentably defective. I beseech God, exalted be His glory, that He may graciously awaken the peoples of the earth, may grant that the end of their conduct may be profitable unto them, and aid them to accomplish that which beseemeth their station.

O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together, and for the sake of God resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention amongst you. Then will the effulgence of the world's great Luminary envelop the whole earth, and its inhabitants become the citizens of one city, and the occupants of one and the same throne. This wronged One hath, ever since the early days of His life, cherished none other desire but this, and will continue to entertain

no wish except this wish. There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God. The difference between the ordinances under which they abide should be attributed to the varying requirements and exigencies of the age in which they were revealed. All of them, except a few which are the outcome of human perversity, were ordained of God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Arise and, armed with the power of faith, shatter to pieces the gods of your vain imaginings, the sowers of dissension amongst you. Cleave unto that which draweth you together and uniteth you. This, verily, is the most exalted Word which the Mother Book hath sent down and revealed unto you. To this beareth witness the Tongue of Grandeur from His habitation of glory.

The purpose underlying the revelation of every heavenly Book, nay of every divinely-revealed verse, is to endue all men with righteousness and understanding, so that peace and tranquillity may be firmly established amongst them. Whatsoever instilleth assurance into the hearts of men, whatsoever exalteth their station or promoteth their contentment, is acceptable in the sight of God. How lofty is the station which man, if he but chooseth to fulfil his high destiny, can attain! To what depths of degradation he can sink, depths which the meanest of creatures have never reached! Seize, O friends, the chance which this Day offereth you, and deprive not yourselves of the liberal effusions of His grace. I beseech God that He may graciously enable every one of you to adorn himself, in this blessed Day, with the ornament of pure and holy deeds. He, verily, doeth whatsoever He willeth.

(From Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh)

“We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer-up of strife and sedition

worthy of bondage and banishment. . . . That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this? . . . Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come. . . . Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold? . . . Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind? These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family. Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."

(Words spoken to Edward Granville Browne, April 1890)

MORAL AND SOCIAL TEACHINGS

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. Arise, O people, and, by the power of God's might, resolve to gain the victory over your own selves, that haply the whole earth may be freed and sanctified from its servitude to the gods of its idle fancies—gods that have inflicted such loss upon, and are responsible for the misery of, their wretched worshippers. These idols form the obstacle that impedeth man in his efforts to advance in the path of perfection. We cherish the hope that the Hand of Divine power may lend its assistance to mankind, and deliver it from its state of grievous abasement.

In one of the Tablets these words have been revealed: O people of God! Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men. This can best be achieved through pure and holy deeds, through a virtuous life and a goodly behaviour. Valiant acts will ensure the triumph of this Cause, and a saintly character will reinforce its power. Cleave unto righteousness, O people of Bahá! This, verily, is the commandment which this wronged One hath given unto you, and the first choice of His unrestrained Will for every one of you.

O friends! It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favours which in this Divine, this soul-stirring Spring time are being showered upon you. The Day-Star of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the

clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty, nor failed to recognize the beauty of his Best-Beloved in this, His new attire. Watch over yourselves, for the Evil One is lying in wait, ready to entrap you. Gird yourselves against his wicked devices, and, led by the light of the name of the All-Seeing God, make your escape from the darkness that surroundeth you. Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self. The Evil One is he that hindereth the rise and obstructeth the spiritual progress of the children of men.

It is incumbent upon every man, in this Day, to hold fast unto whatsoever will promote the interests, and exalt the station, of all nations and just governments. Through each and every one of the verses which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed, the doors of love and unity have been unlocked and flung open to the face of men. We have erewhile declared—and Our Word is the truth:—“Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. Whatsoever hath led the children of men to shun one another, and hath caused dissensions and divisions amongst them, hath, through the revelation of these words, been nullified and abolished. 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. Of old it hath been revealed: “Love of one’s country is an element of the Faith of God.” The Tongue of Grandeur hath, however, in the day of His manifestation proclaimed: “It is not his to boast who loveth his country, but it is his who loveth the world.” Through the power released by these exalted words He hath lent a fresh impulse, and set a new direction, to the birds of men’s hearts, and hath obliterated every trace of restriction and limitation from God’s holy Book.

O people of Justice! Be as brilliant as the light, and as splendid as the fire that blazed in the Burning Bush. The brightness of the fire of your love will no doubt fuse and unify the contending peoples and kindreds of the earth, whilst the fierceness of the flame of enmity and hatred cannot but result in strife and ruin. We beseech God that He may shield His creatures from the evil designs of His enemies. He verily hath power over all things.

All-praise be to the one true God—exalted be His glory—inasmuch as He hath, through the Pen of the Most High, unlocked the doors of men's hearts. Every verse which this Pen hath revealed is a bright and shining portal that discloseth the glories of a saintly and pious life, of pure and stainless deeds. 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. The whole earth is illuminated with the resplendent glory of God's Revelation. In the year sixty He Who heralded the light of Divine Guidance—may all creation be a sacrifice unto Him—arose to announce a fresh revelation of the Divine Spirit, and was followed, twenty years later, by Him through Whose coming the world was made the recipient of this promised glory, this wondrous favour. Behold how the generality of mankind hath been endued with the capacity to hearken unto God's most exalted Word—the Word upon which must depend the gathering together and spiritual resurrection of all men. . . .

In the prison of 'Akká, We have revealed in the Red Epistle that which is conducive to the elevation of men and to the well-being of countries. Among others, these Utterances have been revealed therein, from the Pen of the King of Existence.

The greatest foundations upon which depend the administration of people are the following:

First: The Ministers of the House of Justice must promote the Most Great Peace, in order that the world may be freed from onerous expenditures. This matter is obligatory and indispensable; for warfare and conflict are the foundation of trouble and distress.

Second: Languages must be reduced to one, and that one language must be taught in all the schools of the world.

Third: All must adhere to the means which are conducive to Love and Unity.

Fourth: Men and women must place a part of what they earn by trade, agriculture or other business, in charge of a trustworthy person, to be spent in the education and instruction of the children. That deposit must be invested in the education of the children, under the advice of the Trustees of the House of Justice.

Fifth: Complete regard should be had to the matter of Agriculture. Although this matter is mentioned in the fifth, yet in reality it is endowed with the first station. Agriculture is greatly developed in foreign countries, but in Írán it has still remained unheeded. It is hoped that the Sháh—May God assist him!—will concern himself with this great and important matter.

The deniers and contradictors hold to four words:

First: Destroying men's lives.

Second: Burning the Books.

Third: Shunning other nations.

Fourth: Exterminating other communities.

Now, by the Grace and Authority of the Word of God, these four great barriers have been demolished. These four manifest decrees have been effaced from the Book, and God hath changed brutal manners into spiritual qualities. Glorified is His Will! Exalted is His Power! Great is His Dominion!

O people of God! Hearken unto that which is conducive to the deliverance, tranquillity, security, exaltation and loftiness of all men.

Certain laws and principles are necessary and indispensable for Írán; but it is suitable that these should be accomplished in accord with the wish of His Majesty the Sháh—May God assist him!—the eminent doctors and the great state authorities. Under their advice a place must be appointed, and they must

assemble together in that place, and hold fast to the rope of Consultation, and decide upon and execute that which is conducive to the people's security, affluence, welfare and tranquillity. For, if this matter be managed otherwise, it would lead to discord and tumult. In the principal Laws and Commandments which have, ere this, been revealed in the Book of Aqdas and other Tablets affairs have been placed in charge of just kings and chiefs, and of the trustees of the House of Justice. Upon reflection, men of equity and discernment will witness, with outward and inward eyes, the effulgence of the orb of Justice in all that We have revealed. At present that form of government followed by the British nation seems good; for that nation is illuminated both with the light of kingdom and consultation.

In our laws and principles a chapter has been devoted to the Law of Retaliation (for homicide, *etc.*) which is the cause of the protection and preservation of people; but the people's dread of that law withholds them *only outwardly* from committing base and unseemly deeds. But that which prevents and guards men both outwardly and inwardly from base deeds is the Fear of God.

The Fear of God is the real guardian and the ideal protector. Men must adhere and hold fast unto that which is conducive to the appearance of this great Gift. Blessed is he who hearkens unto what My Supreme Pen hath uttered, and acts in accord with that which is commanded on the part of the Ancient Commander.

O people of God! Hearken unto the Exhortations of the Unique Friend with the ear of the soul. The Word of God is like unto a tree: its planting-ground must be the hearts of the people: cultivate it through the Kawthar of Wisdom and Utterance, so that its roots may become firm, and its branches surpass the Firmament.

O ye people of the world! The virtue of this Most Great Manifestation is that We have effaced from the Book whatever was the cause of difference, corruption and discord, and recorded therein that which leads to Unity, Harmony and Accord. Joy unto those who practice!

We have repeatedly exhorted the friends to avoid, nay, to flee from that which savours of corruption and sedition. The world is in confusion, and the opinions of men are discordant. I beg of God to adorn them with the light of His Justice, and to make known unto them that which will profit them under all circumstances. Verily, He is the Self-sufficient, the Most High!

O people of God! The rightly guided men of learning, who engage in enlightening the people and are protected and preserved from the temptations of inordinate desire—such men are accounted of the stars of the Heaven of Knowledge, before God, the Object of all the world. To respect them is obligatory. They are the flowing fountains, the shining stars, the fruits of the Blessed Tree, the Signs of the Divine Power, and the Seas of the Eternal Wisdom. Blessed is he who adheres to them. Verily, he is of those who have attained, in the Book of God, the Lord of the Great Throne!

Glory from the Presence of God, the Lord of the Throne and Dust, be upon you, O people of Bahá', and O companions of the Red Ark! And glory be upon those who hear your sweet voice and practice that whereunto they are commanded in this Tablet, the Mighty, the Wonderful!

(From the Tablet of the World)

The Word of God, as described and recorded by the Pen of Abhá on the First Leaf of the Exalted Paradise:

Truly, I say, the Fear of God hath ever been the perspicuous protection and solid fortress for the whole community of the world. It is the greatest means for the protection of mankind, and the chief cause of the preservation of humanity. Yea, there exists a sign in the being of man which guards and protects him from that which is unworthy and unbecoming. That sign is called Modesty. But this virtue is assigned to a few; for all are not endowed with this station.

The Word of God in the Second Leaf of the Exalted Paradise:

At this moment the Supreme Pen exhorts the day-springs of power and dawning-places of authority, *to wit*: kings, rulers,

chiefs, princes, learned men of religion, and mystics, and commands them to hold fast to Religion. Religion is the greatest instrument for the order of the world and the tranquillity of all existent beings. The weakness of the pillars of religion has encouraged the ignorant and rendered them audacious and arrogant. Truly, I say, whatever lowers the lofty station of religion will increase heedlessness in the wicked, and finally result in anarchy. Hear, O ye possessors of perception! Then be admonished, O ye who are endowed with sight!

The Word of God in the Third Leaf of the Exalted Paradise:
O Son of Man! If thou lookest toward Mercy, regard not that which benefits thee, and hold to that which will benefit the people: If thou lookest toward Justice, choose thou for others what thou chooseth for thyself. Verily, through meekness, man is elevated to the heaven of power; and again, pride degrades him to the lowest station of humiliation and abasement. O people of God! The Day is Great, and the Call is Mighty! In one of the Tablets this exalted Word is revealed from the heaven of Will: "Were the power of the (human) soul entirely transformed into the sense of hearing, then it could be said that it were able to hear this Call which is raised from the Supreme Horizon, otherwise these polluted ears are not worthy to hear it." Blessed are those who hear, and woe unto them who are heedless!

The Word of God in the Fourth Leaf of the Exalted Paradise:
O people of God!—Exalted is His Glory!—Ask God to guard the sources of power and authority against the evil of egotism and lust, and to illumine them with the lights of justice and guidance.

A king whom the pride of authority and independence does not withhold from being just, and whom benefits, opulence, glory, hosts and legions do not deprive of the splendours of the Orb of Equity—such a king shall possess a lofty station and an exalted rank in the Supreme Concourse: it is incumbent on all to assist and love such a blessed being. Blessed is the ruler who controls the reins of the ego, and overcomes his wrath; who prefers justice to oppression and equity to tyranny!

The Word of God in the Fifth Leaf of the Exalted Paradise: The greatest gift and the highest blessing, in the primary station, is Wisdom. It is the Protector of Existence, and its Support and Helper. Wisdom is the Messenger of the Merciful One, and the Manifestor of the Divine Name, the "All-Wise." Through Wisdom the station of man is evident and manifest. It is the Knower and the First Teacher in the School of Existence, and it is the Guide, the possessor of a lofty rank. Under the auspices of its training the element earth was endowed with pure soul and surpassed the firmament.¹ Wisdom is the first Orator in the City of Justice; and in the "year nine"² it illuminated the world with the Glad-tidings of the Manifestation. Wisdom is the peerless Knower who, in the beginning of the world, ascended the ladder of Significances; and when, by the Divine Will, it occupied the pulpit of Utterance, it spoke in two words. From the first word appeared the glad tidings of Promise (of reward), and from the second the fear of Threat (of punishment). From Promise and Threat, Fear and Hope became manifest, and by these two the foundation of the order of the world was established and consolidated. Exalted is the Wise One, the Possessor of Great Bounty!

The Word of God in the Sixth Leaf of the Exalted Paradise: The light of men is Justice; quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among people.) In this exalted Word, the sea of God's wisdom is moving: all the books of the world are not sufficient to contain its interpretation.

If the world is adorned with this mantle, the sun of the saying—"On that day God will satisfy them all with His Abundance"—will appear and shine from the horizon of the heaven of the world. Know ye the station of this Utterance, for it is from the

¹ Man was purified by the power of Wisdom.

² *i.e.*, the "year nine" of this New Dispensation, beginning with the year 1844, the year when the Báb declared his Mission. The "year nine" was prophesied by the Báb in reference to Bahá'u'lláh and his Mission, though Bahá'u'lláh did not make his public Declaration until the time of his removal from Baghdád to Constantinople in fulfilment of another prophecy made by the Báb concerning the "year nineteen."

loftiest fruits of the Tree of the Supreme Pen. Happy is he who heareth and attaineth!

Truly, I say, all that has descended from the Heaven of the Divine Will is conducive to the order of the world, and to the furtherance of unity and harmony among its people. Thus hath the tongue of this Wronged One spoken in His Great Prison [‘Akká]!

The Word of God in the Seventh Leaf of the Exalted Paradise:
O ye wise men among nations! Turn your eyes away from foreignness and gaze unto Oneness, and hold fast unto the means which conduce to the tranquillity and security of the people of the whole world. This span-wide world is but one native land and one locality. Abandon that glory which is the cause of discord, and turn unto that which promotes harmony. To the people of Bahá’ glory is in knowledge, good deeds, good morals and wisdom—not in native land, or station. O people of the earth; appreciate the worth of this heavenly Word, for it is like unto a ship for the sea of Knowledge, and is as the sun to the universe of Perception.

The Word of God in the Eighth Leaf of the Exalted Paradise:
Schools must first train the children in the principles of Religion, so that the *Promise* and the *Threat*, recorded in the Books of God, may prevent them from the things forbidden and adorn them with the mantle of the commandments. But this in such a measure that it may not injure the children by resulting in ignorant fanaticism and bigotry.

“It is incumbent upon the Trustees of the House of Justice to take counsel together regarding such laws as have not been expressly revealed in the Book. Of these whatever they deem advisable and proper that must they enforce.” Verily, God will inspire them with that which He willeth, and He is the Ruler, the Knower! We have formerly declared that speech was decreed to be in two languages,¹ and that there should be an effort to reduce it into one. So, likewise, should it be with the

¹ *i.e.*, in this Manifestation. For Bahá’u’lláh revealed His Tablets and spoke in the two languages of Persian and Arabic.

See also the *Third Glad Tidings*, page 130, *Tablet of the World*, page 114.

writings of the world, in order that people may not waste and lavish their lives in the study of various languages, and that the whole earth may be considered as one city and one land.¹

The Word of God in the Ninth Leaf of the Exalted Paradise:
Truly I say: Moderation is desirable in every affair, and when it is exceeded it leads to detriment. Consider the civilization of the people of the Occident—how it has occasioned commotion and agitation to the people of the world. There has appeared an infernal instrument, and such atrocity is displayed in the destruction of life, the like of which was not seen by the eye of the world, nor heard by the ears of nations. It is impossible to remove these violent, overwhelming evils, except the peoples of the world become united in affairs, or in One Religion. Harken ye unto the Voice of this Oppressed One, and adhere to the Most Great Peace!

A strange and wonderful instrument exists in the earth; but it is concealed from minds and souls. It is an instrument which has the power to change the atmosphere of the whole earth, and its infection causes destruction.

O people of Bahá'! Each one of the revealed Commands is a strong fortress for the protection of the world. Verily, this Oppressed One only wishes your security and elevation.

We exhort the men of the House of Justice, and command them to guard and protect the servants, maid-servants and children. They must, under all circumstances, have regard for the interests of the people. Blessed is the prince who succours a captive, the rich one who favours the needy, the just man who secures the right of a wronged one from the oppressor, and the trustee who performs what he is commanded on the part of the Pre-existent Commander!

The Word of God in the Tenth Leaf of the Exalted Paradise:
O people of the earth! A solitary life and severe discipline do not meet with God's approval. The possessors of perception and knowledge should look unto the means which are conducive to joy and fragrance. Such practices come forth and proceed

¹ Everyone should learn two languages, their native tongue and the international one.

from the loins of superstition and the womb of fancy, and are not worthy the people of knowledge. Some of the people of the past and of later times dwelt in mountain caves, and others frequented the tombs during the night. Say: Harken to the advice of this Oppressed One. Abandon that which ye hold, and adhere unto what the Trustworthy Counsellor commands. Deprive not yourselves of that which is created for you.

Charity is beloved and acceptable before God, and is accounted the chief among all good deeds. Consider, and then remember that which the Merciful One has revealed in the Qur'án: "But they prefer them (the poor) before themselves, although there be indigence among them. He who is preserved from the covetousness of his own soul, such shall surely prosper." Indeed, this blessed Word is, in this connection, a sun among words: Blessed is he who prefers his brother before himself: Such an one is of the people of Bahá', in the Red Ark,¹ on the part of God, the Knower, the Wise!

The Word of God in the Eleventh Leaf of the Exalted Paradise: We command the appearance of Names and Attributes [*i.e.*, holy souls who teach the Truth] to adhere henceforth unto that which has been revealed in this Most Great Manifestation, and not to become a cause of discord, and to look into the horizon of this Luminous Word, as revealed in this Epistle, unto the end beyond which there is no end. Discord is the cause of bloodshed and entails revolution among the people. Harken to the Voice of this Wronged One, and depart not therefrom.

If one ponders over that which is revealed in this Manifestation from the Supreme Pen, he will know for a certainty that, in all that this Wronged One hath spoken, He has had no intention to establish any position or rank for Himself. But it has been our aim to uplift men through exalted Words unto the Supreme

¹ The "Red Ark" is the spiritual ark in which those who attain to the highest station in the Love of God are saved from the tempests of the world. This also refers to the state of "Martyrdom" which is the highest state to attain in the Cause of God. "Red Ark" also symbolizes the "Covenant," and those, who are firm and steadfast therein in this Day, are of the people of Salvation.

Horizon, and prepare them to hearken unto that which conduces to the sanctifying and purifying of the people of the world from the strife and discord which result from differences in religions. Whereunto My Heart and My Pen, My Manifest and My Hidden Being bear witness. God willing, they all will turn unto the treasures which are deposited within themselves.

O people of Bahá'! The Reflective Faculty is the depository of crafts, arts and sciences. Exert yourselves, so that the gems of knowledge and wisdom may proceed from this ideal mine, and conduce to the tranquillity and union of the different nations of the world.

Under all circumstances—whether in adversity or comfort, in glory or affliction—this Wronged One has commanded all to show forth love and affection, compassion and union. Whenever any exaltation and loftiness appeared in the Cause, those hidden behind coverings would come forth and speak calumniating words which were sharper than a sword. They cling to false and rejected words, and are deprived and withheld from the sea of the Divine Verses. If such coverings had not intervened Írán would have been subdued by the Divine Utterance in hardly more than two years, the position of both the State and the people would have become exalted, and the intended Aim would have appeared in its fullest manifestation without concealment or covering.

In brief, We have said all that was necessary to be said, formerly by allusion, and recently in explicit words. And after Írán had been reformed, then the fragrances of the Word would have been diffused in other countries. For all that has flowed from the Supreme Pen has been and is conducive to the elevation, exaltation and training of all the people of the world, and is the greatest antidote for all diseases—were they to understand and perceive.

(From the Words of Paradise)

The First *Ṭaráz*¹

and the First *Tajallí*,² which has risen from the horizon of the Mother-Book³ is that man should know his own self, and know those things which lead to loftiness or to baseness, to shame or to honour, to affluence or to poverty. After man has realized his own being and become mature, then for him wealth (or competence) is needed. If this wealth is acquired through a craft and profession, it is approvable and worthy of praise to men of wisdom, especially to those servants who arise to train the world and beautify the souls of nations. These are the cup-bearers of the *Kawthar* of Knowledge and the guides to the Ideal Path. They direct the people of the whole world unto the Right Path, and instruct them in that which is conducive to the elevation and progress of being.

The Right Path is a path which leads man to the day-spring of Perception and dawning-place of Knowledge and directs him to that which is the cause of honour and glory and greatness. We hope that, by the providence of the Wise Physician, the dust will be removed from his eyes and the clearness of his sight will increase; so that he may discover that for which he has been created. In this Day that which will decrease blindness and increase sight is worthy of attention. To the possessors of wisdom this (spiritual) sight is the minister and guide of knowledge. The apprehension of knowledge is due to the power of seeing [insight]. The people of Bahá' must, in all cases, act and advise in that which is worthy.

¹ *Ṭaráz* literally means ornament or an ornamented mantle. As a robe is adorned by ornaments, so likewise man is adorned by practising these Words.

² *Tajallyát* is the plural of "*Tajallí*" and literally means splendours or rays of light. As the light illumines the body of the world, so the light of these Words and Commands illumines the inner heart of man.

³ "*Mother-Book*," or "*Mother of the Book*," is an expression in the *Qur'án*. It means the Manifestation of God from whom all Books and Teachings proceed.

The Second Ṭaráz

is to consort with the people of religions with joy and fragrance; to show forth in deeds that which is declared by the Speaker of the Mount; and to render justice in affairs. The followers of Sincerity and Faithfulness must consort with all the people of the world with joy and fragrance; for association is always conducive to union and harmony, and union and harmony are the cause of the order of the world and the life of nations. Blessed are they who hold fast to the rope of Compassion and Kindness and are detached from animosity and hatred!

This Oppressed One exhorts the people of the world to Forbearance and Benevolence. These are as two lights for the darkness of the world and as two teachers to lead nations to knowledge. Blessed are those who attain thereto, and woe unto those who are heedless!

The Third Ṭaráz

is concerning Good Character. Good Character is, verily, the best mantle for men on the part of God; by this, God adorns the temples of His friends. By My Life, the light of good character surpasses the light of the sun and its effulgence. He who attains thereto is accounted as the essence of men. Upon this the honour and glory of the world are based and are dependent. Good character is the means of guiding men to the Right Path and the Great Message. Blessed is he who is adorned with the attributes and virtues of the Supreme Concurrence!

Gaze toward Justice and Equity under all circumstances. This exalted Utterance has been revealed, from the Pen of Abhá, in the "Hidden Words":

"O Son of Spirit!

"The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behoveth thee to be.

Verily, justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes."

The possessors of Justice and Equity occupy the highest station and loftiest rank: the lights of Righteousness and Piety radiate and shine from such souls. It is hoped that nations and countries may not be deprived of the lights of these two orbs.

The Fourth Taráz

is on Trustworthiness. Verily, this is the door of tranquillity to all in the world, and the sign of glory from the presence of the Merciful One. Whosoever attains thereto has attained to treasuries of wealth and affluence. Trustworthiness is the greatest door to the security and tranquillity of mankind. The stability of every affair always depends on it, and the worlds of honour, glory and affluence are illuminated by its light.

Sometime since, this sweet Utterance was revealed from the Supreme Pen:

"Verily, We mention unto thee Trustworthiness and the place it occupies before God, thy Lord and the Lord of the Great Throne. One day We repaired unto our Green Island.¹ When We entered therein, We found its streams flowing, its trees in full foliage, and the sun playing through the interstices of their branches.

"Turning our Face to the right, We beheld that which the pen fails to describe, nor can it set forth that which was witnessed by the Eye of the Lord of Mankind in that Place, which is the Most Pure, the Most Honoured, the Most Blessed, the Most Lofty.

"We then advanced toward the left. There We beheld one of the Countenances of the Exalted Paradise, standing on a pillar of Light, and calling out in the loudest voice, saying: 'O ye concourse of heaven and earth, gaze upon my beauty, my light, my appearance and my effulgence. By God, the True One, I am Trustworthiness, its manifestation and its beauty, and I am the Reward to him who clings thereto, who knoweth the loftiness of its rank and position and holdeth fast unto its hem. I am the most great ornament to the people of Bahá', and the

¹ The garden of Ridván outside 'Akká.

mantle of honour to all in the Kingdom of Emanation. I am the greatest cause for the affluence of the world, and the horizon of tranquillity to the people of existence.' Thus have We revealed unto thee that which will draw mankind near unto the Lord of Creation!

"O people of Bahá'! Trustworthiness is the best garment for your temples and the most splendid crown for your heads. Adhere thereto by the command of the Omnipotent Commander!"

The Fifth Ṭaráz

regards the preservation and protection of the stations of the servants of God. They must not make light of any matter, but speak in Truthfulness and Sincerity. The people of Bahá' must not refuse to discharge the due reward of any one, and must respect possessors of talent; and they must not stain their tongues with slander like unto the former community. In this Day the sun of arts and crafts is manifest from the horizon of the heaven of the Occident, and the river of skill is flowing from the sea of that part. One must speak with justice and recognize the worth of benefits. By the Life of God, the word Justice is shining and luminous like unto the sun: We beg of God to illuminate all with its lights. Verily, He is Powerful in all things and He is the Bestower!

In these days, Truthfulness and Sincerity are captive in the claws of falsehood, and Justice is oppressed by the scourges of injustice. The smoke of corruption has so enveloped the world that naught is seen from any direction save armies, and naught is heard from any region except the clashing of swords. We beg of God to assist the appearances of His power [rulers, *et al.*] in that which is conducive to the reformation of the world and the welfare of nations.

The Sixth Ṭaráz

Knowledge is one of the greatest benefits of God. To acquire knowledge is incumbent on all. These visible arts and means

are the products of His Knowledge and Wisdom, which have been revealed from the Supreme Pen. The Supreme Pen is that Pen from the treasury of which the gems of Wisdom and Utterance, and the arts of all the world have appeared and become manifest. In this Day the mysteries of this earth are unfolded and visible before the eyes, and the pages of swiftly appearing newspapers are indeed the mirror of the world; they display the doings and actions of the different nations; they both illustrate them and cause them to be heard. Newspapers are as a mirror which is endowed with hearing, sight and speech; they are a wonderful phenomenon and a great matter. But it behooveth the writers thereof to be sanctified from the prejudice of egotism and desire and to be adorned with the ornament of Equity and Justice; they must inquire into matters as much as possible, in order that they may be informed of the real facts, and commit the same to writing.

Concerning this Oppressed One, whatever the newspapers have mentioned is mostly devoid of truth. Good speech and Truthfulness are, in loftiness of position and rank, like unto the sun which hath risen from the horizon of the heaven of knowledge. The waves of this Sea are visible before the faces of all in the world, and the traces of the Pen of Wisdom and Utterance are manifest.

(From the Tablet of Tarázáf)

I testify that verily there is no God save He! and He who hath come is verily the Hidden Mystery, the Concealed Secret, the Most Great Book for the nations, and the Heaven of Beneficence to the world: He is the Mighty Sign among mankind, and the Dawning-place of Highest Attributes in the world of emanation. Through Him hath appeared that which was concealed from all eternity and was hidden from men of discernment. Verily, He is the One whose Manifestation was announced by the Books of God in former and in latter times.

Whoever acknowledges Him, His signs, and His evidences hath verily acknowledged that which the Tongue of Grandeur

hath uttered before the creation of heaven and earth, and before the appearance of the Kingdom of Names. Through Him the sea of Knowledge hath moved among mankind, and the running water of Wisdom hath flowed from the presence of God, the King of Days. Blessed is the discerning one who witnessed and perceived, the hearing one who heard His sweet voice, and the hand that took hold of the Book through the power of its Lord, the King of this world and of the world to come! Blessed is the hastener who hastened toward His Supreme Horizon, and the strong one whom neither the influence of princes nor the clamour of the doctors of religion did weaken! But woe unto him who disbelieved the Grace of God and His Bounty, His Mercy and His Power! Verily, such an one is of those who reject the Proof of God and His Argument throughout all eternity.

Joy unto him who, in this Day, casts away that which is possessed by the people, and holds fast to that which is commanded on the part of God, the King of Names and the Creator of things, *viz.*: The One who hath come from the Heaven of Pre-existence with the Greatest Name, and with a power that the hosts of the earth fail to withstand—whereunto testifies the Mother-Book in the highest station.

The First Tajallí

which hath shone forth from the Sun of Truth is the Knowledge of God—Exalted is His Glory!—and the knowledge of the King of Pre-existence cannot be attained except by knowing the Greatest Name. He is the Speaker of the Mount who is established and seated upon the Throne of Manifestation, and He is the Hidden, Invisible One, the Concealed Mystery.

All the former and later Books of God are adorned with His commemoration and speak His praise. Through Him the standard of knowledge is planted in the world, and the banner of unity is hoisted among nations. The Meeting of God cannot be obtained except through meeting Him. Through Him appeared all that was hidden and invisible from all eternity.

Verily, He hath appeared in Truth, and hath uttered a Word whereby "all in the heavens and earth—except those whom God wished—are stunned." Faith in God, and the knowledge of Him cannot be fully realized except through believing in all that hath proceeded from Him [the Manifestation], and by practising all that He hath commanded and all that is revealed in the Book from the Supreme Pen. Those submerged in the sea of Divine Utterance must at all times observe the commands and prohibitions of God. His Commandments are the greatest fortress for the protection of the world and for the preservation of mankind. Light is upon those who confess and acknowledge them, and fire is on those who reject and oppose them.

The Second Tajallí

is Steadfastness in the Cause of God and in His Love—Exalted is His Glory! This cannot be attained except through knowledge of Him, and a perfect knowledge of Him cannot be obtained except by confessing the blessed Word: "GOD DOETH THAT WHICH HE WILLETH." He who adheres to this exalted Word, and drinks from the Kawthar of Divine Utterance which is deposited therein, will find himself so steadfast that all the books of the world shall not withhold him from the Mother-Book. Great is this lofty Station, exalted Position, and Furthermost End!

The Third Tajallí

is concerning Sciences, Crafts and Arts. Knowledge is like unto wings for the being of man, and is as a ladder for rising to lofty heights. To acquire knowledge is incumbent on all, but of those sciences which may profit the people of the earth, and not such sciences as begin in mere words, and end in mere words. The possessors of sciences and arts have a great right among the people of the world. Whereunto testifies the Source of Utterance in the Day of Return. Joy unto those who hear!

Indeed, the real treasury of man is his knowledge. Knowledge is the means of honour, prosperity, joy, gladness, happiness and

exultation. Thus hath the Tongue of Grandeur spoken in this Great Prison!

The Fourth Tajallí

concerns Divinity, Lordship, and the like. Were one endowed with perception to gaze upon this evident, blessed Tree, and upon its Fruits, he would verily become independent of all else save It, and would acknowledge that which the Speaker of the Mount hath uttered on the throne of Manifestation.

(From the Tablet of Tajallyát)

O people of the earth!

The First Glad Tidings

which is conferred in this Most Great Manifestation on all the people of the world, from the Mother-Book, is the abolishing of the decree of religious warfare from the Book. Exalted is the Beneficent One, the Possessor of Great Bounty—the One through whom the door of Grace is opened before all in the Heaven and earth!

The Second Glad Tidings

It is sanctioned that all the nations of the world consort with each other with joy and fragrance. Consort ye, O people, with all religions with joy and fragrance! Thus hath the Orb of Permission and Desire shone forth from the horizon of the Heaven of the Command of God, the Lord of the creatures!

The Third Glad Tidings

is the study of various languages. This command hath formerly flowed from the Supreme Pen. Their Majesties, the Kings—May God assist them—or the Counsellors of the earth must

consult together, and appoint one of the existing languages, or a new language, and instruct the children therein, in all the schools of the world; and the same must be done in respect to writing also. In such case the earth will be considered as one. Blessed is he who heareth the Voice and fulfileth that which is commanded on the part of God, the Lord of the Great Throne!

The Fourth Glad Tidings

The Bahá'ís must precede one another in serving and showing love unto any of the kings—may God strengthen them—who rises to protect and assist this oppressed community. This matter is obligatory upon all. Blessed are those who practise.

The Fifth Glad Tidings

In every country or government where any of this community reside, they must behave toward that government with faithfulness, trustfulness and truthfulness. This is that which is revealed from the Presence of the Ancient Commander! It is obligatory and incumbent on the people of the world in general, to assist this most Great Cause—which has descended from the Heaven of the Will of the King of Pre-existence—that perchance the fire of animosity which is ablaze in the hearts of some of the nations, may be quenched through the water of Divine Wisdom and Lordly Commands and Exhortations, and that the light of union and accord may irradiate and illuminate the regions of the world. It is hoped that through the favour of the appearances of the Power of God [*i.e.*, Kings and Rulers] the armaments of the world will be changed into Peace and corruption and conflict will vanish from among men.

The Sixth Glad Tidings

is the Most Great Peace, the account of which has been formerly revealed from the Supreme Pen. Joy unto whosoever adhereth thereto and practises that whereunto he is commanded on the part of God, the Knower, the Wise!

The Seventh Glad Tidings

Men are permitted to have their choice in the manner of habiliment, and in the cut of the beard and its dressing. But, beware, O people, not to make yourselves as playthings to the ignorant!

The Eighth Glad Tidings

The pious practices of the monks and priests among the people of His Holiness the Spirit [*i.e.*, Christ]—Upon Him is the Peace of God and His Glory!—are remembered before God; but, in this Day, they must abandon solitude for open places [*i.e.*, the society of men], and engage in that which may profit both themselves and other men. We have conferred permission on them all to engage in matrimony, so that there may appear from them those who [*i.e.*, children] may celebrate the praise of God, the Lord of the Seen and Unseen and the Lord of the Lofty Throne!

The Ninth Glad Tidings

The sinner, when in a state wherein he finds himself free and severed from all else save God, must beg for God's forgiveness and pardon. It is not allowable to declare one's sins and transgressions before any man, inasmuch as this has not been, nor is conducive to securing God's forgiveness and pardon. At the same time such confession before the creatures leads to one's humiliation and abasement, and God—Exalted is His Glory!—does not wish for the humiliation of His servants. Verily He is Compassionate and Beneficent!

A sinner must, between himself and God, beg for mercy from the Sea of Mercy and ask forgiveness from the Heaven of Beneficence, and then say:

Oh my God! Oh my God! I beg of Thee—by the blood of Thy lovers, who were so attracted by Thy sweet Utterance that they betook themselves unto the lofty summit, the place of Great Martyrdom, and by the mysteries concealed in Thy

Knowledge, and by the pearls deposited in the Sea of Thy Bestowal—to forgive me, and my father and my mother. Verily Thou art the Most Merciful of the Merciful! There is no God but Thee, the Forgiving, the Beneficent!

Oh, my Lord! Thou beholdest the essence of error advancing toward the sea of Thy Gift, and the weak one toward the kingdom of Thy Power, and the poor one toward the sun of Thy Wealth. Oh, my Lord! Disappoint him not of Thy Generosity and Bounty; deprive him not of the Graces of Thy Days, and turn him not away from Thy door which Thou hast opened before all in Thy Heaven and earth.

Alas! Alas! My transgressions have prevented me from drawing nigh unto the Court of Thy Sanctity, and my trespasses have kept me afar from turning unto the tents of Thy Glory. I have indeed wrought that which Thou hast forbidden me; I have neglected that which Thou has commanded me! I beg of Thee by the King of Names to decree for me from the Pen of Grace and Bestowal that which will draw me near unto Thee and will purify me from my sins which have intervened between me and Thy Forgiveness and Pardon. Verily, Thou art the Powerful, the Bounteous! There is no God but Thee, the Mighty, the Gracious!

The Tenth Glad Tidings

We have removed from the Epistles and Tablets the decree of effacing the books¹ as a favour from the Presence of God, the Sender of this Great Message!

The Eleventh Glad Tidings

To study sciences and arts of all descriptions is allowable; but such sciences as are profitable, which lead and conduce to the elevation of mankind. Thus has the matter been decreed on the part of God, the Commander, the Wise!

¹ This refers to certain religions whose authorities do not allow any book to be studied or held to, outside their own particular religious book.

The Twelfth Glad Tidings

It is made incumbent on every one of you to engage in some one occupation, such as arts, trades, and the like. We have made this—your occupation—identical with the worship of God, the True One. Reflect, O people, upon the mercy of God and upon His favours, then thank Him in mornings and evenings.

Waste not your time in idleness and indolence, and occupy yourselves with that which will profit yourselves and others besides yourself. Thus hath the matter been decreed in this Tablet from the Horizon of which the Sun of Wisdom and Divine Utterance is gleaming! The most despised of men before God is he who sits and begs. Cling unto the rope of means, relying upon God, the Causer of Causes. Every soul who occupies himself in an art or trade—this will be accounted an act of worship before God. Verily this is from no other than His great and abundant favour!

The Thirteenth Glad Tidings

The affairs of the people are placed in charge of the members of the House of Justice of God. They are the trustees of God among His servants and the day-springs of Command in His countries.

O people of God! The trainer of the world is Justice, for it has two pillars: Reward and Retribution. These two pillars are two fountains for the life of the people of the world. Inasmuch as for each time and day a particular decree and order is expedient, affairs are therefore entrusted to the ministers of the House of Justice, so that they may execute that which they deem advisable at the time. Those souls who arise to serve the Cause sincerely to please God will be inspired by the divine, invisible inspirations. It is incumbent upon all to obey.

Administrative affairs are all in charge of the House of Justice; but acts of worship must be observed according as they are revealed in the Book.

O people of Bahá'! Ye are day-springs of the love, and dawning-places of the providence of God. Defile not the tongue with

cursing or execrating any one and guard your eyes against that which is not worthy. Show forth that which ye possess [*i.e.*, the Truth]. If it is accepted, the aim is attained, and, if not, interference (or rebuke of those who reject it) is not allowable, but leave them to themselves and advance toward God, the Protector, the Self-subsistent.

Be not the cause of sorrow, how much less of sedition and strife. It is hoped that ye may be trained under the Shadow of the Tree of Divine Providence, and act in that which is desired by God. Ye are all leaves of one tree and drops of one sea.

The Fourteenth Glad Tidings

To undertake journeys for the sake of visiting the tombs of the dead is not necessary. If those who have means and wealth should give to the House of Justice the amount which would otherwise be expended on such journeys, this would be acceptable and agreeable before God. Happy are those who practise!

The Fifteenth Glad Tidings

Although a republican form of government profits all the people of the world, yet the majesty of Kingship is one of the signs of God. We do not wish that the countries of the world should be deprived thereof. If statesmen combine the two into one form, their reward will be great before God.

Agreeable to the requirements of former times, the former religions confirmed and commanded religious warfare, prohibited association and intercourse with other peoples, and forbade the reading of certain books, but in this Most Great Manifestation and Mighty Message, favours and gifts of God have pervaded all and the Irrefutable Command is revealed in that which already has been mentioned from the horizon of the Will of the Lord of Pre-existence. We praise God—exalted and glorified is He!—for that which He hath revealed in this Day, the Blessed, the Mighty, the Wonderful! Were all the people of the world each to possess a hundred thousand tongues and speak in God's praise and glorification until the day which hath

no end, verily all their thanks will not equal what is due even a single one of the favours mentioned in this Epistle!—whereunto testifies every man of knowledge and discernment and every man of wisdom and understanding. I beg of God—Exalted is His Glory!—and entreat Him to enable the Kings and Sovereigns, who are dawning-places of power and day-springs of might, to execute His precepts and Commands.

Verily, He is the Powerful, the Mighty, and the Bestower!

(From the Glad Tidings)

Say: O people of God! Adorn your temples with the mantle of trustworthiness and integrity; then assist your Lord with the hosts of good deeds and morals. Verily, We have forbidden you sedition and strife, in My Books and Epistles, in My Writings and Tablets; and by this We have desired only your loftiness and exaltation. Whereunto testify the heaven and its stars, the sun and its effulgence, the trees and their leaves, the seas and their waves, the earth and its treasures! We beg of God to assist His friends and to strengthen them in that which is worthy of them, in this station, the blessed, the mighty, the wonderful! And We beg of Him to enable those around Me to practise that whereunto they are commanded by My Supreme Pen.

O Jabeel!¹ Upon thee be My Glory and Providence! Verily, We have commanded the servants to (do) that which is just, and they have done that by reason of which My heart and My pen lamented! Hearken unto that which hath been revealed from the Heaven of My Will and the Kingdom of My Desire: My affliction is not My imprisonment, nor that which hath befallen Me from My enemies; nay, it is from those who relate themselves unto My Person and commit that by which My lamentation is being raised and My tears flow. We have indeed exhorted them by manifold Utterances in manifold Tablets. We beg of God to assist them, to draw them nigh unto Him and to strengthen them in that whereby the hearts may be

¹ The name of the person to whom this Tablet was addressed.

tranquillized and the souls composed; and to withhold them from that which is not worthy His Days.

Say: O my friends in My lands! Harken unto the advice of One who exhorteth you sincerely for the sake of God. Verily, He hath created you and manifested unto you that which will elevate you, profit you and make known unto you His Right Path and Great Message.

O Jabeel! Exhort the servants to the piety of God. In Truth, piety is the first leader among the armies of thy Lord; and its hosts are pleasing morals and pure deeds. By these are the cities of hearts and minds conquered in all ages and centuries and the standards of victory and triumph are planted on the loftiest places.

The First *Ishráq*¹

When the sun of Wisdom dawned from the horizon of Administration, it spoke in these exalted words:

The people of wealth and men of honour and power must have the highest regard for the sanctity of Religion. Religion is a manifest light and a strong fortress for the protection and tranquillity of the people of the world. For the fear of God commands people to do that which is just and forbids them that which is evil. If the lamp of Religion remain concealed agitation and anarchy would prevail, and the orb of Justice and Equity and the sun of Peace and Tranquillity would be withheld from giving light. Every man of discernment testifies to that which is mentioned.

The Second *Ishráq*

We have commanded the Most Great Peace, which is the greatest means for the protection of mankind. The rulers of the world must, with one accord, adhere to this Command which is the main cause for the security and tranquillity of the world. They are day-springs of the Power and dawning-places of the Authority of God. We beg of God to assist them in that which is conducive to the peace of the peoples.

¹ Effulgence.

The account of this subject has been previously revealed from the Supreme Pen. Blessed are those who act accordingly!

The Third Ishráq

commands the executing of the penal laws, for this is the primary means for the maintenance of the world. The heaven of Divine Wisdom is illumined and shining with two orbs—Consultation and Kindness. And the tent of the order of the world is hoisted and established on two pillars—Reward and Retribution.

The Fourth Ishráq

In this Manifestation, victorious hosts are worthy deeds and morals, and the leader and commander of these hosts is God-like piety. This comprehends all and rules over all!

The Fifth Ishráq

is that governments must be acquainted with the conditions of the officials and must confer upon them dignity and positions in accord with their due measure and merit. To have regard for this matter is obligatory and incumbent on every chief and ruler. Thus, perchance, traitors shall not usurp the place of trustworthy men, or spoilers occupy the seat of guardians.

In this Most Great Prison, among the officials formerly and recently appointed, some have been—Praise be to God!—adorned with the ornament of Justice; but some others of them—We take refuge in God! We beg of God that He may guide them all, perchance they may not be deprived of the fruits of the Tree of Trustworthiness and Integrity, nor withheld from the Lights of the sun of Equity and Justice.

The Sixth Ishráq

is concerning union and harmony among mankind. Through union the regions of the world have ever been illuminated with

the light of the Divine Cause. The greatest means for this end is that the peoples should be familiar with each other's writing and language.

We have formerly commanded, in the Tablets, that the trustees of the House of Justice must select one tongue out of the present languages, or a new language, and likewise select one among the various writings and teach them to children in the schools of the world, so that the whole world may thereby be considered as one native land and one part.

The most splendid fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is this exalted Word: Ye are all fruits of one tree and leaves of one branch. Glory is not his who loves his own country, but glory is his who loves his kind.

In this connection We have formerly revealed that which is the means for the prosperity of the world and the unification of nations. Blessed are those who attain! Blessed are those who practise!

The Seventh Ishráq

The Supreme Pen enjoins upon all to instruct and educate the children. Upon Our arrival in the Prison ('Akká), the following Verses have in this connection been revealed in the Book of Aqdas, from the Heaven of the Divine Will: It is decreed that every father must educate his sons and daughters in learning and in writing, and also in that which hath been ordained in the Tablet. He who neglects that which hath been commanded in this matter, if he is rich, it is incumbent on the trustees of the House of Justice to recover from him the amount required for the education of the children; otherwise, if the parent is not capable, the matter shall devolve on the House of Justice. Verily We have made it an asylum for the poor and needy.

He who educates his son, or any other's children, it is as though he hath educated one of My children. Upon such an one be My Bahá', My Providence and My Mercy, which hath embraced all in the world!

The Eighth Ishráq

This passage is written, at this time, by the Supreme Pen and is accounted of the Book of Aqdas. The affairs of the people are in charge of the men of the House of Justice of God. They are the trustees of God among His servants and the sources of command in His countries.

O people of God! The trainer of the world is Justice for it consists of two pillars, Reward and Retribution. These two pillars are two fountains for the life of the people of the world.

Inasmuch as for each day and time a particular decree or order is expedient, affairs are therefore entrusted to the House of Justice, so that it may execute that which it deems advisable at the time. Those souls who arise to serve the Cause sincerely, to please God, shall be inspired by the invisible Inspiration of God. It is incumbent upon all to obey (*i.e.*, the House of Justice).

Administrative affairs are all in charge of the House of Justice, and devotional acts must be observed according as they are revealed in the Book.

The Ninth Ishráq

The Religion of God and the Creed of God hath been revealed and made manifest from the heaven of the Will of the King of Pre-existence for the sake of union and harmony among the people of the world; make it not a means for disagreement and discord!

The Religion of God and His Law is the greatest cause and mightiest means for the appearance and effulgence of the Orb of Unity. The development of the world, the training of nations, the tranquillity of the servants and the security of the people of all lands, have been due to the Divine Precepts and Ordinances. Religion is the greatest cause for the appearance of this great gift. It bestows the cup of vitality, confers immortal life and imparts eternal benefit to the people. The Rulers of the earth, especially the trustees of the House of Justice, must make abundant effort to preserve this station and guard and

promote it. Likewise it is necessary that they should inquire into the conditions of the subjects and be acquainted with the deeds and affairs of every one in the communities.

We ask the manifestors of the Divine Power, that is, kings and leaders, to endeavour, perchance discord may vanish and the world be illumined with the light of accord. All must adhere to and practise that which hath been revealed from the Supreme Pen. The True One testifies and the atoms of the universe bear witness that We have spoken and revealed in Tablets and Epistles from the Supreme Pen that which is conducive to the exaltation, elevation, training, protection and progress of the people of the earth. We beg of God to strengthen the servants. What this Oppressed One requires of all is Justice and Equity. Let them not satisfy themselves with mere hearing, but *reflect* upon that which hath proceeded from this Oppressed One. I swear by the Sun of Divine Utterance which hath arisen from the horizon of the Kingdom of the Clement One, that were there an exponent or speaker to be found We would not have made ourself an object of censure, derision and calumnies on the part of the people.

As to thy question concerning the interest and profit of gold and silver:

Some years ago, the following Utterance was revealed from the Kingdom of the Merciful One. . . . This is His exalted saying: Most of the people are found to be in need of this matter; for if no interest be allowed, affairs will be hindered and obstructed. A person who may be willing to treat his kind, countryman or brother, with consideration and have regard for him (in business matters) is to be found very seldom; that is, a person is rarely found who would loan money to anyone upon the principle of "Qard-i-Hasan."¹ Consequently, out of favour to the servants, We have appointed "profit on money" to be current, among other business transactions which are in force among people. That is, from this moment when this manifest Ordinance is being sent down from the Heaven of Will, it is allowable, lawful and pure to charge interest on their money,

¹ *Literally*, "good loan"; *i.e.*, money advanced without interest and repaid at the pleasure of the borrower.

in order that the people of the earth may engage in praising the Beloved One of all the creatures with the utmost joy and fragrance, happiness and exultation. Verily, He ordereth in whatsoever way He willeth; and He makes "interest on money" lawful, even as He had formerly made it unlawful. The Kingdom of Command is in His Grasp; He doeth and ordereth, and He is the Commander, the Knower!

But this matter must be conducted with moderation and justice. The Supreme Pen has withheld itself from laying down its limits, as a wisdom from His Presence and as a convenience for His servants. We exhort the friends of God to act with justice and equity and in such a way that the mercy of His beloved ones, and their compassion, may be manifested toward each other. Verily, He is the Adviser, the Compassionate, the Beneficent!

God willing, all may succeed in doing that which hath flowed from the Tongue of the True One. If they practise that which has been mentioned, God—Exalted is His Glory—will indubitably bestow upon them, from the Heaven of Grace, double (the mercy they show each other in their dealings). Verily, He is the Gracious, the Forgiver, the Merciful!

Praise be to God, the Exalted, the Great!

But the execution of these matters has been placed in charge of the men of the House of Justice, in order that they may act in accord with the exigencies of time and wisdom.

Again, We exhort all to justice, equity, love and good will. Verily they are the people of Bahá' and the companions of the Red Ark. Upon them be the Peace of God, the Lord of Names and the Maker of Heaven!

(From the Tablet of Ishráqát)

MAN

THOU hast asked Me whether man, as apart from the Prophets of God and His chosen ones, will retain, after his physical death, the self-same individuality, personality, consciousness, and understanding that characterise his life in this world. If this should be the case, how is it, thou hast observed, that whereas such slight injuries to his mental faculties as fainting and severe illness deprive him of his understanding and consciousness, his death, which must involve the decomposition of his body and the dissolution of its elements, is powerless to destroy that understanding and extinguish that consciousness? How can any one imagine that man's consciousness and personality will be maintained, when the very instruments necessary to their existence and function will have completely disintegrated?

Know thou that the soul of man is exalted above, and is independent of all infirmities of body or mind. That a sick person showeth signs of weakness is due to the hindrances that interpose themselves between his soul and his body, for the soul itself remaineth unaffected by any bodily ailments. Consider the light of the lamp. Though an external object may interfere with its radiance, the light itself continueth to shine with undiminished power. In like manner, every malady afflicting the body of man is an impediment that preventeth the soul from manifesting its inherent might and power. When it leaveth the body, however, it will evince such ascendancy, and reveal such influence as no force on earth can equal. Every pure, every refined and sanctified soul will be endowed with tremendous power, and shall rejoice with exceeding gladness.

Consider the lamp which is hidden under a bushel. Though its light be shining, yet its radiance is concealed from men. Likewise, consider the sun which hath been obscured by the clouds. Observe how its splendour appeareth to have diminished, when in reality the source of that light hath remained unchanged. The soul of man should be likened unto this sun, and all things on earth should be regarded as his body. So long as no external impediment interveneth between them, the body will, in its entirety, continue to reflect the light of the soul, and to be sustained by its power. As soon as, however, a veil interposeth itself between them, the brightness of that light seemeth to lessen.

Consider again the sun when it is completely hidden behind the clouds. Though the earth is still illumined with its light, yet the measure of light which it receiveth is considerably reduced. Not until the clouds have dispersed, can the sun shine again in the plenitude of its glory. Neither the presence of the cloud nor its absence can, in any way, affect the inherent splendour of the sun. The soul of man is the sun by which his body is illumined, and from which it draweth its sustenance, and should be so regarded.

Consider, moreover, how the fruit, ere it is formed, lieth potentially within the tree. Were the tree to be cut into pieces, no sign nor any part of the fruit, however small, could be detected. When it appeareth, however, it manifesteth itself, as thou hast observed, in its wondrous beauty and glorious perfection. Certain fruits, indeed, attain their fullest development only after being severed from the tree.

And now concerning thy question regarding the soul of man and its survival after death. Know thou of a truth that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress until it attaineth the presence of God, in a state and condition which neither the revolution of ages and centuries, nor the changes and chances of this world, can alter. It will endure as long as the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His dominion and power will endure. It will manifest the signs of God and

His attributes, and will reveal His loving kindness and bounty. The movement of My Pen is stilled when it attempteth to befittingly describe the loftiness and glory of so exalted a station. The honour with which the Hand of Mercy will invest the soul is such as no tongue can adequately reveal, nor any other earthly agency describe. Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world. Such a soul liveth and moveth in accordance with the Will of its Creator, and entereth the all-highest Paradise. The Maids of Heaven, inmates of the loftiest mansions, will circle around it, and the Prophets of God and His chosen ones will seek its companionship. With them that soul will freely converse, and will recount unto them that which it hath been made to endure in the path of God, the Lord of all worlds. If any man be told that which hath been ordained for such a soul in the worlds of God, the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, his whole being will instantly blaze out in his great longing to attain that most exalted, that sanctified and resplendent station. . . . The nature of the soul after death can never be described, nor is it meet and permissible to reveal its whole character to the eyes of men. The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High. The light which these souls radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples. They are like unto leaven which leaveneth the world of being, and constitute the animating force through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Through them the clouds rain their bounty upon men, and the earth bringeth forth its fruits. All things must needs have a cause, a motive power, an animating principle. These souls and symbols of detachment have provided, and will continue to provide, the supreme moving impulse in the world of being. The world beyond is as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while still in the

womb of its mother. When the soul attaineth the Presence of God, it will assume the form that best befitteth its immortality and is worthy of its celestial habitation. Such an existence is a contingent and not an absolute existence, inasmuch as the former is preceded by a cause, whilst the latter is independent thereof. Absolute existence is strictly confined to God, exalted be His glory. Well is it with them that apprehend this truth. Wert thou to ponder in thine heart the behaviour of the Prophets of God, thou wouldst assuredly and readily testify that there must needs be other worlds besides this world. The majority of the truly wise and learned have, throughout the ages, as it hath been recorded by the Pen of Glory in the Tablet of Wisdom, borne witness to the truth of that which the holy Writ of God hath revealed. Even the materialists have testified in their writings to the wisdom of these divinely-appointed Messengers, and have regarded the references made by the Prophets to Paradise, to hell fire, to future reward and punishment, to have been actuated by a desire to educate and uplift the souls of men. Consider, therefore, how the generality of mankind, whatever their beliefs or theories, have recognized the excellence, and admitted the superiority, of these Prophets of God. These Gems of Detachment are acclaimed by some as the embodiments of wisdom, while others believe them to be the mouthpiece of God Himself. How could such Souls have consented to surrender themselves unto their enemies if they believed all the worlds of God to have been reduced to this earthly life? Would they have willingly suffered such afflictions and torments as no man hath ever experienced or witnessed?

Thou hast asked Me concerning the nature of the soul. Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will, eventually,

return unto Him. If it fail, however, in its allegiance to its Creator, it will become a victim to self and passion, and will, in the end, sink in their depths.

Whoso hath, in this Day, refused to allow the doubts and fancies of men to turn him away from Him Who is the Eternal Truth, and hath not suffered the tumult provoked by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities to deter him from recognizing His Message, such a man will be regarded by God, the Lord of all men, as one of His mighty signs, and will be numbered among them whose names have been inscribed by the Pen of the Most High in His Book. Blessed is he that hath recognized the true stature of such a soul, that hath acknowledged its station, and discovered its virtues.

Much hath been written in the books of old concerning the various stages in the development of the soul, such as concupiscence, irascibility, inspiration, benevolence, contentment, Divine good-pleasure, and the like; the Pen of the Most High, however, is disinclined to dwell upon them. Every soul that walketh humbly with its God, in this Day, and cleaveth unto Him, shall find itself invested with the honour and glory of all goodly names and stations.

When man is asleep, his soul can, in no wise, be said to have been inherently affected by any external object. It is not susceptible of any change in its original state or character. Any variation in its functions is to be ascribed to external causes. It is to these external influences that any variations in its environment, its understanding, and perception should be attributed.

Consider the human eye. Though it hath the faculty of perceiving all created things, yet the slightest impediment may so obstruct its vision as to deprive it of the power of discerning any object whatsoever. Magnified be the name of Him Who hath created, and is the Cause of, these causes, Who hath ordained that every change and variation in the world of being be made dependent upon them. Every created thing in the whole universe is but a door leading into His knowledge, a sign of His sovereignty, a revelation of His names, a symbol of His majesty, a token of His power, a means of admittance into His straight Path. . . .

Verily I say, the human soul is, in its essence, one of the signs of God, a mystery among His mysteries. It is one of the mighty signs of the Almighty, the harbinger that proclaimeth the reality of all the worlds of God. Within it lieth concealed that which the world is now utterly incapable of apprehending. Ponder in thine heart the revelation of the Soul of God that pervadeth all His Laws, and contrast it with that base and appetitive nature that hath rebelled against Him, that forbiddeth men to turn unto the Lord of Names, and impelleth them to walk after their lusts and wickedness. Such a soul hath, in truth, wandered far in the path of error. . . .

Thou hadst, moreover, asked Me concerning the state of the soul after its separation from the body. Know thou, of a truth, that if the soul of man hath walked in the ways of God, it will, assuredly, return and be gathered to the glory of the Beloved. By the righteousness of God! It shall attain a station such as no pen can depict, or tongue describe. The soul that hath remained faithful to the Cause of God, and stood unwaveringly firm in His Path shall, after his ascension, be possessed of such power that all the worlds which the Almighty hath created can benefit through him. Such a soul provideth, at the bidding of the Ideal King and Divine Educator, the pure leaven that leaveneth the world of being, and furnisheth the power through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Consider how meal needeth leaven to be leavened with. Those souls that are the symbols of detachment are the leaven of the world. Meditate on this, and be of the thankful.

In several of Our Tablets We have referred to this theme, and have set forth the various stages in the development of the soul. Verily I say, the human soul is exalted above all egress and regress. It is still, and yet it soareth; it moveth, and yet it is still. It is, in itself, a testimony that beareth witness to the existence of a world that is contingent, as well as to the reality of a world that hath neither beginning nor end. Behold how the dream thou hast dreamed is, after the lapse of many years, re-enacted before thine eyes. Consider how strange is the mystery of the world that appeareth to thee in thy dream.

Ponder in thine heart upon the unsearchable wisdom of God, and meditate on its manifold revelations. . . .

Witness the wondrous evidences of God's handiwork, and reflect upon its range and character. He Who is the Seal of the Prophets hath said: "Increase my wonder and amazement at Thee, O God!"

As to thy question whether the physical world is subject to any limitations, know thou that the comprehension of this matter dependeth upon the observer himself. In one sense, it is limited; in another, it is exalted beyond all limitations. The one true God hath everlastingly existed, and will everlastingly continue to exist. His creation, likewise, hath had no beginning, and will have no end. All that is created, however, is preceded by a cause. This fact, in itself, establisheth, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the unity of the Creator.

Thou hadst, moreover, asked Me concerning the nature of the celestial spheres. To comprehend their nature, it would be necessary to inquire into the meaning of the allusions that have been made in the Books of old to the celestial spheres and the heavens, and to discover the character of their relationship to this physical world, and the influence which they exert upon it. Every heart is filled with wonder at so bewildering a theme, and every mind is perplexed by its mystery. God, alone, can fathom its import. The learned men, that have fixed at several thousand years the life of this earth, have failed, throughout the long period of their observation, to consider either the number or the age of the other planets. Consider, moreover, the manifold divergencies that have resulted from the theories propounded by these men. Know thou that every fixed star hath its own planets, and every planet its own creatures, whose number no man can compute.

O thou that hast fixed thine eyes upon My countenance! The Day Spring of Glory hath, in this Day, manifested its radiance, and the Voice of the Most High is calling. We have formerly uttered these words: "This is not the day for any man to question his Lord. It behoveth whosoever hath hearkened to the Call of God, as voiced by Him Who is the Day-Spring of Glory, to arise and cry out: 'Here am I, here am I, O Lord of

all Names; here am I, here am I, O Maker of the heavens! I testify that, through Thy Revelation, the things hidden in the Books of God have been revealed, and that whatsoever hath been recorded by Thy Messengers in the sacred Scriptures hath been fulfilled.' ”

Consider the rational faculty with which God hath endowed the essence of man. Examine thine own self, and behold how thy motion and stillness, thy will and purpose, thy sight and hearing, thy sense of smell and power of speech, and whatever else is related to, or transcendeth, thy physical senses or spiritual perceptions, all proceed from, and owe their existence to, this same faculty. So closely are they related unto it, that if in less than the twinkling of an eye its relationship to the human body be severed, each and every one of these senses will cease immediately to exercise its function, and will be deprived of the power to manifest the evidences of its activity. It is indubitably clear and evident that each of these aforementioned instruments has depended, and will ever continue to depend, for its proper functioning on this rational faculty, which should be regarded as a Sign of the revelation of Him Who is the sovereign Lord of all. Through its manifestation all these Names and Attributes have been revealed, and by the suspension of its action they are all destroyed and perish.

It would be wholly untrue to maintain that this faculty is the same as the power of vision, inasmuch as the power of vision is derived from it and acteth in dependence upon it. It would, likewise, be idle to contend that this faculty can be identified with the sense of hearing, as the sense of hearing receiveth from the rational faculty the requisite energy for performing its functions.

This same relationship bindeth this faculty with whatsoever hath been the recipient of these names and attributes within the human temple. These diverse names and revealed attributes have been generated through the agency of this Sign of God. Immeasurably exalted is this Sign, in its essence and reality, above all such names and attributes. Nay, all else besides it

will, when compared with its glory, fade into utter nothingness and become a thing forgotten.

Wert thou to ponder in thine heart, from now until the end that hath no end, and with all the concentrated intelligence and understanding which the greatest minds have attained in the past or will attain in the future, this divinely ordained and subtle Reality, this Sign of the revelation of the All-Abiding, All-Glorious God, thou wilt fail to comprehend its mystery or to appraise its virtue. Having recognized thy powerlessness to attain to an adequate understanding of that Reality which abideth within thee, thou wilt readily admit the futility of such efforts as may be attempted by thee, or by any of the created things, to fathom the mystery of the Living God, the Day-Star of unfading glory, the Ancient of everlasting days. This confession of helplessness which mature contemplation must eventually impel every mind to make is in itself the acme of human understanding, and marketh the culmination of man's development.

Know thou that, according to what thy Lord, the Lord of all men, hath decreed in His Book, the favours vouchsafed by Him unto mankind have been, and will ever remain, limitless in their range. First and foremost among these favours, which the Almighty hath conferred upon man, is the gift of understanding. His purpose in conferring such a gift is none other except to enable His creature to know and recognize the one true God—exalted be His glory. This gift giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation. Next in rank, is the power of vision, the chief instrument whereby his understanding can function. The senses of hearing, of the heart, and the like, are similarly to be reckoned among the gifts with which the human body is endowed. Immeasurably exalted is the Almighty Who hath created these powers, and revealed them in the body of man.

Every one of these gifts is an undoubted evidence of the majesty, the power, the ascendancy, the all-embracing

knowledge of the one true God—exalted be His glory. Consider the sense of touch. Witness how its power hath spread itself over the entire human body. Whereas the faculties of sight and of hearing are each localised in a particular centre, the sense of touch embraceth the whole human frame. Glorified be His power, magnified be His sovereignty!

These gifts are inherent in man himself. That which is pre-eminent above all other gifts, is incorruptible in nature, and pertaineth to God Himself, is the gift of Divine Revelation. Every bounty conferred by the Creator upon man, be it material or spiritual, is subservient unto this. It is, in its essence, and will ever so remain, the Bread which cometh down from Heaven. It is God's supreme testimony, the clearest evidence of His truth, the sign of His consummate bounty, the token of His all-encompassing mercy, the proof of His most loving providence, the symbol of His most perfect grace. He hath, indeed, partaken of this highest gift of God who hath recognized His Manifestation in this Day.

Render thanks unto thy Lord for having vouchsafed unto thee so great a bounty. Lift up thy voice and say: All praise be to Thee, O Thou, the Desire of every understanding heart!

Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom. If any man were to meditate on that which the Scriptures, sent down from the heaven of God's holy Will, have revealed, he will readily recognize that their purpose is that all men shall be regarded as one soul, so that the seal bearing the words "The Kingdom shall be God's" may be stamped on every heart, and the light of Divine bounty, of grace, and mercy may envelop all mankind. The one true

God, exalted be His glory, hath wished nothing for Himself. The allegiance of mankind profiteth Him not, neither doth its perversity harm Him. The Bird of the Realm of Utterance voiceth continually this call: "All things have I willed for thee, and thee, too, for thine own sake." If the learned and worldly-wise men of this age were to allow mankind to inhale the fragrance of fellowship and love, every understanding heart would apprehend the meaning of true liberty, and discover the secret of undisturbed peace and absolute composure. Were the earth to attain this station and be illumined with its light it could then be truly said of it: "Thou shall see in it no hollows or rising hills."

The All-Merciful hath conferred upon man the faculty of vision, and endowed him with the power of hearing. Some have described him as the "lesser world," when, in reality, he should be regarded as the "greater world." The potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested in this promised Day of God.

All praise to the unity of God, and all honour to Him, the sovereign Lord, the incomparable and all-glorious Ruler of the universe, Who, out of utter nothingness, hath created the reality of all things, Who, from naught, hath brought into being the most refined and subtle elements of His creation, and Who, rescuing His creatures from the abasement of remoteness and the perils of ultimate extinction, hath received them into His Kingdom of incorruptible glory. Nothing short of His all-encompassing grace, His all-pervading mercy, could have possibly achieved it. How could it, otherwise, have been possible for sheer nothingness to have acquired by itself the worthiness and capacity to emerge from its state of non-existence into the realm of being?

Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained

and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him—a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation. . . . Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favour, so enduring a bounty.

These energies with which the Day-Star of Divine bounty and Source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man lie, however, latent within him, even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp. The radiance of these energies may be obscured by worldly desires even as the light of the sun can be concealed beneath the dust and dross which cover the mirror. Neither the candle nor the lamp can be lighted through their own unaided efforts, nor can it ever be possible for the mirror to free itself from its dross. It is clear and evident that until a fire is kindled the lamp will never be ignited, and unless the dross is blotted out from the face of the mirror it can never represent the image of the sun nor reflect its light and glory.

All-praise and glory be to God Who, through the power of His might, hath delivered His creation from the nakedness of non-existence, and clothed it with the mantle of life. From among all created things He hath singled out for His special favour the pure, the gem-like reality of man, and invested it with a unique capacity of knowing Him and of reflecting the greatness of His glory. This twofold distinction conferred upon him hath cleansed away from his heart the rust of every vain desire, and made him worthy of the vesture with which his Creator hath deigned to clothe him. It hath served to rescue his soul from the wretchedness of ignorance.

This robe with which the body and soul of man hath

been adorned is the very foundation of his well-being and development. O, how blessed the day when, aided by the grace and might of the one true God, man will have freed himself from the bondage and corruption of the world and all that is therein, and will have attained unto true and abiding rest beneath the shadow of the Tree of Knowledge!

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God, inasmuch as within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that Most Great Light. Methinks, but for the potency of that revelation, no being could ever exist. How resplendent the luminaries of knowledge that shine in an atom, and how vast the oceans of wisdom that surge within a drop! To a supreme degree is this true of man, who, among all created things, hath been invested with the robe of such gifts, and hath been singled out for the glory of such distinction. For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God to a degree that no other created being hath excelled or surpassed. All these names and attributes are applicable to him. Even as He hath said: "Man is My mystery, and I am his mystery." Manifold are the verses that have been repeatedly revealed in all the Heavenly Books and the Holy Scriptures, expressive of this most subtle and lofty theme. Even as He hath revealed: "We will surely show them Our signs in the world and within themselves." Again He saith: "And also in your own selves: will ye not, then, behold the signs of God?" And yet again He revealeth: "And be ye not like those who forget God, and whom He hath therefore caused to forget their own selves." In this connection, He Who is the eternal King—may the souls of all that dwell within the mystic Tabernacle be a sacrifice unto Him—hath spoken: "He hath known God who hath known himself."

. . . From that which hath been said it becometh evident that all things, in their inmost reality, testify to the revelation of the names and attributes of God within them. Each according to

its capacity, indicateth, and is expressive of, the knowledge of God. So potent and universal is this revelation, that it hath encompassed all things visible and invisible. Thus hath He revealed: "Hath aught else save Thee a power of revelation which is not possessed by Thee, that it could have manifested Thee? Blind is the eye which doth not perceive Thee." Likewise hath the eternal King spoken: "No thing have I perceived, except that I perceived God within it, God before it, or God after it." Also in the tradition of Kumayl it is written: "Behold, a light hath shone forth out of the morn of eternity, and lo, its waves have penetrated the inmost reality of all men." Man, the noblest and most perfect of all created things, excelleth them all in the intensity of this revelation, and is a fuller expression of its glory. And of all men, the most accomplished, the most distinguished, and the most excellent are the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth. Nay, all else besides these Manifestations, live by the operation of their Will, and move and have their being through the outpourings of their grace.

THE SEVEN VALLEYS

IN the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful! Praise be unto God, who caused existence to appear from non-existence, inscribed the mysteries of pre-existence on the tablet of man, and taught him the explanation of that which he knoweth not; made him a manifest book to such as believed and obeyed, enabled him to witness the creation of all things during this gloomy, disastrous age, and caused him to give utterance on the apex of immortality to a wonderful melody in the "Most Excellent Temple"; so that every one may testify in himself, by himself, in the seat of the Manifestation of his Lord, that "verily, there is no God save Him"; and that all may thereby reach the summit of truth, until no one shall behold anything whatsoever, but that he may see God therein.

And I bless and salute the First Sea, branched out from the sea of the Divine Essence, the First Morn dawned forth from the horizon of Unity, the First Sun risen in the heaven of Eternity, the First Fire ignited from the lamp of pre-existence in the niche of Oneness; the one who is Aḥmad in the kingdom of the worlds, is Muḥammad in the Concourse of the Chosen, and is Maḥmūd in the realm of the sincere ones. "By whatsoever name ye invoke Him, it is the same; for He hath names" in the hearts of the knowing! Abundant, everlasting and eternal peace be on his household and companions!

By my life, O friend, wert thou to taste these fruits from the verdure of these hyacinths which are planted in the fields of knowledge, near the reflection of the lights of the Essence in the mirrors of Names and Attributes, yearning will seize the reins of patience and fortitude from thy grasp, thy soul will stir

through the flashes of light, will uplift thee out of the earthly abode unto the original, divine abode in the centre of significances; and will cause thee to ascend unto such a state that thou wilt fly away in the air just as thou wouldst walk on the earth, and run on the water even as thou wouldst on the ground. May it do good unto me, unto thee, unto whosoever may ascend to the heaven of knowledge, and to him whose heart is fascinated by the zephyr of assurance wafting upon the garden of his innate heart, from the Sheba of the Merciful!

Peace be unto those who follow guidance!

The stages of the journey of travellers from the earthly dwelling to the divine home have been designated to be seven; some have spoken of these as "Seven Valleys," and others as "Seven Cities." And they have said: "Not until the traveller migrates from self and accomplishes these journeys, will he arrive at the sea of nearness and union, or taste of the peerless wine." The first is

THE VALLEY OF SEARCH

The steed upon which to journey through this valley is patience.

In this journey, the traveller will reach no destination without patience, nor will he attain to his aim. He must never become dejected. Were he to endeavour for a hundred thousand years and see not the beauty of the Friend, he must not be down-hearted!

It is conditional upon these servants to purify their hearts—which are the source of the divine treasury—from every blemish, to turn away from blind imitation which is a trace of forefathers and ancestors; and to close the doors of friendship and enmity to all the people of the earth. In this journey the seeker reaches such a station that he finds all the existent beings bewildered in search of the Friend. Many a Jacob he sees wandering in quest of Joseph. A world of friends he beholds, who are running in search of the desired one, and a universe of lovers he finds, who are journeying after the beloved. At every moment, he perceives a new matter, and at every hour he

becomes informed of a mystery; for he has lifted his heart from both worlds, and intended to attain the Ka'aba¹ of the Beloved.

In this journey, the traveller sits on every soil and dwells in every land, and seeks the beauty of the Friend in every face. He searches for the Beloved One in every country; he joins every multitude and associates with every mind; perchance, he may discover the mystery of the Beloved One in some mind, or behold the beauty of the Desired in some countenance.

If, through the assistance of God, he find, in this journey, a trace of the traceless Friend and breathe the perfume of the lost Joseph from the Divine Herald, he will immediately step into

THE VALLEY OF LOVE

and become melted with the fire of devotion. In this valley the heaven of attraction is lifted up, the world-illuminating sun of longing dawns forth and the fire of love becomes ablaze. And when the fire of love is become ablaze, the harvest of reason will be wholly consumed.

At this time, the traveller is unconscious, both of himself and of aught else save himself. He knows neither knowledge nor ignorance, neither doubt nor certainty; neither does he recognize the morn of guidance, nor the eve of error.

The steed of this valley is pain; and without pain this journey will never be accomplished. In this stage the lover has no thought but of the Beloved, and seeks no shelter but the Desired. At every moment he freely gives a hundred lives in the path of the Beloved, and at every step he throws a thousand heads at the feet of the Friend.

O my brother! Not until thou enterest the Egypt of the Spirit, wilt thou attain to the Joseph of the beauty of the Friend; not until thou, like Jacob, give up thine outer eye, wilt thou open thine inner eye; and not until thou art ablaze with the fire of love wilt thou associate with the friend of ecstasy! A lover fears nothing, and no loss can do him harm. Thou wilt see him cool in fire, and find him dry even in the sea.

¹ Literally the holy shrine at Mecca. Here it means "court," "goal."

Love accepts not any existence, nor wishes any life. He finds life in death and glory in shame. Much wit is needed to make one worthy of the ardour of love; and many a head is required to be fit for the noose of the Friend. Blessed is the neck which falleth into His noose, and happy is the head which is dropped on the dust in the path of His love!

Therefore, O friend! be alien to the self, that thou mayest find thy way to the Incomparable One; abandon the mortal earth that thou mayest take residence in the divine nest. Nothingness is needed until thou canst kindle the fire of existence and become acceptable in the path of love. "Love does not accept a soul alive to its own desires: a falcon preys not on a dead mouse!"

If, by the assistance of the Creator, the lover is released in safety from the claws of the falcon of love, he will then arrive in the realms of

THE VALLEY OF KNOWLEDGE

He will be led from doubt to certainty and directed from the darkness of the error of worldly desire to the light of guidance of piety. His inner eye will be opened, and he will engage in close communion with his Beloved. He will open the portal of truth and devotion, and close the doors of superficiality. In this state he will yield to the divine decree, will see war as peace, find the significance of life in death, perceive the mysteries of the "other world" in the regions of creation and in the souls of the servants with the outward and inward eye; and, with the spiritual heart, he will behold the eternal wisdom in the infinite manifestations of God. In an ocean he will see a drop, and in a drop he will detect the mysteries of an ocean! "The core of whatever mote thou mayest split, therein thou wilt find a sun."

In this valley, through absolute vision, a traveller sees in God's creation neither difference nor contradiction; and at every moment he will say: "Thou canst not perceive any difference in the creation of the most Merciful. Turn thou thine eyes, whether thou canst behold any flaws!"¹ He will see justice in injustice and witness grace in justice; he will find many a

¹ Qur'án.

knowledge concealed in ignorance, and realize a hundred thousand wisdoms, manifest and evident, in knowledge. He will break the cage of body and desire, and be attached to the spirit of the people of immortality.

If he experiences any oppression he will endure it with patience, and if he sees any wrath he will show forth affection.

It is recorded that a lover for long years was pining in remoteness from his beloved and burning in the fire of separation. By the urge of love, his heart was bereft of patience and his body tired of life. He accounted life without her as hypocrisy and found the world a consuming fire. Longing made his nights restless and pain lengthened his weary days. His ailing body bewailed his fate and his grieved heart was full of woe. Fain would he offer up his whole being for but a drop from the cup of union, but it availed him not. Physicians despaired of healing him and friends shunned his fellowship. Indeed, physicians know no cure for one ailing with love, unless the favour of the beloved relieves him.

At last, the tree of his hope yielded the fruit of despair and the fire of his longing smouldered. Wherefore, one night, tired of life, he left his dwelling for the market-place. Of a sudden, a patrol pursued him; he hurrying on while the patrol hastened from behind. At length the watchmen gathered in numbers and barred the way to that restless soul. In his helplessness, he was lamenting and running hither and yon, and saying to himself: "This patrol is, forsooth, the Angel of Death who is pursuing me in such haste; or he is a tyrant who seeks to oppress men."

Wherefore, that victim of love continued running and lamenting until he reached a garden wall and scaled it with untold pain and hardship, as it proved to be very high. Then disregarding his safety, he threw himself into the garden below. Whereupon, lo! he beheld his beloved, lamp in hand, seeking her lost ring! When the forlorn lover saw the bewitching object of his love, he sighed in relief and raised his hands in prayer: "O God! Confer glory upon this watchman and bless him with riches, and bestow upon him long life. Was he Gabriel who guided this ailing one or the Angel of Life who quickened this lowly one?"

His words were indeed true, for he realized what great justice was concealed in this seeming injustice wrought by the watchman, and what pure mercy was veiled in his harsh act. By his wrath, he drove the thirsty one in the desert of love to the sea of the Beloved and dispelled the gloom of separation with the light of union! He led a remote one to the garden of nearness and guided an ailing one to a healer of hearts!

Now, if the lover had had foresight, he would at the beginning have blessed the watchman and prayed for him, and he would have seen justice in his injustice. Being veiled from the end, at the beginning he burst into lamentation and complaint. But since the wayfarers in the garden-land of knowledge foresee the end in the beginning, they see peace in war and friendship in wrath.

This is the condition of the people of this valley. But the people of the valley beyond this see the beginning and the end as one; nay, rather they see no beginning and no end. For they have travelled through the worlds of names, and passed over the worlds of attributes with the swiftness of lightning. As it is said: "A perfect realization of 'Divine Unity' is to strip it from all attributes."¹

Nay, they pass even beyond this station, as it is said: "Love is a screen between the lover and the Beloved." To say more than this I have not permission. At this time, the morn of knowledge hath dawned, and the lamps of travelling and way-faring are put out.

If thou art a man of prayer and supplication, fly on the wings of saintly effort, so that thou mayest see the mysteries of the Friend, and attain to the lights of the Beloved. "We are God's, and unto Him shall we surely return."²

After journeying through the Valley of Knowledge, which is the last station of limitation, the traveller reaches the first stage of

THE VALLEY OF UNITY

He drinks from the cup of abstraction and gazes on the manifestations of singleness. In this station he rends away the

¹ Attributed to 'Alí, the successor of Muḥammad.

² Qur'án.

veils of plurality, flies away from the worlds of lust, and ascends to the heaven of oneness. He hears with divine ears, and beholds the mysteries of the creation of the Eternal One with the eyes of God. He steps into the retreat of the Friend, and becomes an intimate in the pavilion of the Beloved. He stretches forth the hand of the True One from the bosom of omnipotence, and shows forth the mysteries of power. He sees no commendation, name or dignity of himself; he sees his own commendation in the commendation of the True One, and beholds the name of the True One in his own name. He will know "all voices to be from the King," and hear all melodies as from Him. He will be established on the throne of—"Say, all is from God," and rest on the carpet of—"There is no power nor might but through God alone." He will look upon things with the view of oneness; he will find the splendour of the divine Sun from the invisible Day-spring shining equally upon all the contingent beings, and see the lights of unity manifest and present in all existent things!

All the differences which the traveller sees in the world of Being, during the various stages of his journey, are due to the perception of the traveller himself.

Consider the phenomenal sun which shines forth on all existent and contingent beings with the same effulgence, and pours light upon all things by the command of the King of Manifestation. But its appearance in every place, and the light it sheds thereon, is in accord with the degree of capacity of the place itself. For instance—in a mirror it reflects as forms and discs, and this is due to the clearness of the mirror itself. It creates fire in the crystal, while in other things only the effect of its reflection is manifest and not its disc; and, through that effect, it develops everything according to its capacity, by the command of the Causer of effects, even as you see. Likewise, colours also appear with respect to the condition of the place; even as in a yellow glass the splendour is yellow, in a white one the ray is white, and in a red one it is red. These differences are therefore due to the place and not to the effulgence of light; and if the place is confronted by an obstacle such as walls or ceiling, that place is entirely bereft of the splendour of the sun, and the sun shines not thereon.

Thus, some of the weak souls, having enclosed the ground of knowledge within the wall of self and desire and within the veil of heedlessness and blindness, are therefore screened from the effulgence of the Sun of Significances and the mysteries of the Eternal Beloved—are kept afar from the gems of wisdom of the manifest religion of the Lord of the Messengers, deprived of the sacred home of beauty, and separated from the Ka'aba¹ of glory. This is the state of the people of the age!

And if a Nightingale² soars above the clay of self and dwells in the rosebush of the heart and in Arabian melodies and sweet Persian songs, reveals divine mysteries—one word of which vouchsafes new life to all dead bodies and confers the Holy Spirit upon the mouldering bones of existence—many a vulture of envy and rancour will attack Him and will aim at His destruction with all its might! Indeed, to the beetle a sweet scent is repulsive, and to a head suffering from cold the fragrant odour is useless. Wherefore, it is said for the guidance of the ignorant: "Cure thy head from catarrh, so that the breath of God may fill thy nostrils."³

When the gaze of the traveller is restricted to a limited place, that is, when he looks as through a coloured glass, he then sees (the limitations of) yellow, red or white. It is due to such a view of things that conflict is stirred up among the servants, and a gloomy dust, rising from men of limitation, hath enveloped the world.

Some, however, extend their gaze to the effulgence of the light; and others have drunk from the wine of oneness, and therefore see nothing but the Sun itself. Thus, because of journeying in these three different stations, travellers differ in their understanding and explanation of things. That is why the sign of difference is manifest in the world; for some dwell in the plane of oneness and speak in the world of oneness; some stand in the worlds of limitation, others in the stages of the self, and still others are totally veiled. Therefore the ignorant of the age, who have gained no portion from the splendour of the Beautiful

¹ See note, page 159.

² Refers to Bahá'u'lláh.

³ *Mathnaví* of Rúmí, a famous Persian poem.

One, speak in certain words, and in every time and age they inflict upon the people of unity that which only is worthy of and befits their own selves. "If God should punish men for their iniquity, He would not leave on earth any moving thing; but He giveth them respite unto an appointed time."

O my brother! A pure heart is like unto a mirror; polish it with the purity of love and severance from all else save God, until the ideal sun may reflect therein, and the eternal morn may dawn. Then wilt thou find clear and manifest the meaning of: "Neither doth My earth nor My heaven occupy Me, but the heart of My faithful servant occupieth Me"¹—and wilt take thy life in thy hands and sacrifice it, with a thousand longings, to the new Beloved.

When the lights of the splendour of the King of Oneness are seated on the throne of the heart and soul, His light becomes manifest in all the parts and members. Then will the mystery of the well-known tradition emerge from the veil of obscurity:

"A servant always draws near unto Me with prayers, until I respond unto him. And when I have responded unto him, then I become his ear wherewith he heareth. . . ."² For the Owner of the house becomes manifest in His house, and the pillars of the house are all illumined and effulgent through His light. The action and effect of the light is from the Giver of Light; this is why all move through Him and arise by His desire. This is that Fountain whereof those shall drink who are near unto God.

Let no one suppose these explanations to be anthropomorphic, or indicative of a degrading or restricting of the worlds of the True One; for God, in His essence, is sanctified above ascent or descent, entrance or exit. He has been and will be everlastingly independent of the attributes of the creatures: no one has known Him, and no soul has found out His substance. All the sages are bewildered in the valley of His knowledge, and all the saints are perplexed in their endeavour to comprehend His essence. He is purified from being comprehended by all men of comprehension, and is exalted above the knowing of men of knowledge.

¹ Qur'án.

² One of the sacred traditions of Islám.

"The road is barred, and search therefor is rejected. His evidence is His signs, and His being is His proof."¹

Yea, all that has been said concerning the stages of knowledge apply only to the knowledge of the manifestations of that Sun of Truth, become manifest in the Mirrors. The reflection of that light is within the hearts; but it is veiled through sensual coverings and material conditions, as is the case with a light enclosed within an iron lantern. When the lantern is removed the radiance of the light will appear. Likewise, when one rends asunder the illusive veils from the face of the heart, the lights of Oneness will dawn therein. Wherefore it is known that even for the Splendours there is no entrance nor exit; how much less for that Essence of Beings and that Mystery of the Desired One!

Mysteries are many, and strangers are countless. Books are not sufficient for the mystery of the Beloved, nor can it be exhausted in these Tablets, although the mystery is but one word and one allegory. "Knowledge is but one point, but the ignorant have multiplied it."

The journeys in the path of Love have been counted as four: From the creatures to the True One. From the True One to the creatures. From the creatures to the creatures. From the True One to the True One.

Consider how you are the first in relation to your son, and the last in relation to your father; how, outwardly, you bear evidence of the inward mysteries which, as a divine gift, are deposited within you. Consequently, being the first, the last, the manifest, the hidden, becomes true of you in the sense (of the four classes of worlds), so that in these four grades bestowed upon you, you may comprehend the grades of the Divine, and that the nightingale of the heart may call out on all the branches of the rose garden of Existence, both invisible and visible, in this melody: "Verily, He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden!"

These statements are made in a relative sense due to the limitations of the multitude. For, otherwise, those men who, with a single step, have traversed the world of relativity and limitation and dwell in the pleasing court of abstraction and

¹ 'Alí, successor to Muḥammad; the first Imám.

have raised their tents upon the planes of authority and command—have consumed all such relations with a single flame and effaced all such words with a mere drop. They swim on the sea of spirit and soar in the holy ether of light. On this plane, words have no being, how much less the “first” or the “last” or other terms may be found or mentioned. In this state, the first is the last itself and the last is but the first. “Kindle a fire with the love of the Beloved One, and burn all thought and words.”¹

Peace be on whosoever accomplisheth this supreme journey, and followeth the True One through the lights of guidance.

After crossing the stages of this lofty, exalted journey, the traveller arrives at

THE VALLEY OF CONTENTMENT

In this valley he discovers the breezes of divine contentment, which waft from the desert of the spirit and consume the veils of poverty. There he witnesses the Day wherein “God will make all independent out of His abundance” with his outer and inner eye in the visible and invisible parts of things; he passes from sorrow to happiness, returns from sadness to joy, and changes depression and dejection into gladness and cheerfulness.

Though the travellers in this valley outwardly dwell on the lowly earth, yet inwardly they recline on the lofty couch of significances, and partake of ideal, imperishable benefits, and quaff pure, spiritual wine. The tongue is unable to give an account of these three valleys, and utterance falls exceeding short.

Concerning these states the nightingale of the heart has other melodies and mysteries which set the heart in agitation and the spirit in uproar. But this enigma of significance must be revealed only from heart to heart, and confided from breast to breast.

O friend! Not until thou reachest the garden of these significances wilt thou taste of the immortal wine of this valley. If thou tastest thereof thou wilt close thine eyes to all strangers,

¹ *Mathnavi* of Rûmî.

and drink from the wine of contentment; thou wilt sever thyself from all, and become united with Him, give up thy life in His way, and pour out thy soul freely—although there is no stranger in this station, that thou shouldst close thine eye. “There was God, but there was nothing with Him.” Because in this stage the traveller beholds the beauty of the Friend in everything. In fire he sees the face of the Beloved, in unreality perceives the sign of reality, and through the attributes he witnesses the mystery of the divine substance, for he has consumed the veils with a mere sigh, and removed the coverings with a single gaze. He looks upon the new creation with a discerning sight, and comprehends subtle signs with a pure heart. “At that Day We will make thy sight discerning”¹ is an evidence of this saying, and is sufficient for this instance.

After traversing the valley of Pure Contentment the traveller reaches

THE VALLEY OF ASTONISHMENT

He plunges in the seas of grandeur, and at every moment his amazement increases. Now he sees the body of affluence as indigence itself, and the essence of independence as impotence. Now he becomes astonished at the beauty of the All-glorious, and now he loathes his own being. Many are the trees of significance uprooted by the blast of astonishment, and many are the souls it has exhausted. For this valley sets the traveller in agitation. But such appearances are highly beloved and esteemed in the eye of one who has attained. At every moment he witnesses a wonderful world and a new creation, he adds astonishment upon astonishment, and he becomes dazed at the new creation of the King of Oneness.

Yea, O brother, if we reflect upon any of the creations we shall behold a hundred thousand consummate wisdoms and learn a hundred thousand knowledges. One of these worlds is that of sleep. Consider what mysteries are deposited therein, what wisdoms are therein stored! You sleep in a certain house, the doors of which are closed. All at once you find yourself in a

¹ Qur'án.

remote city; you enter it without motion of the feet or exhaustion of the body; you see without troubling the eyes, you hear without distressing the ears, and you speak without the use of the tongue. There are occasions when it will happen that, ten years afterwards, you will witness outwardly in the world of time that same thing you have seen this night in dream.

Now, there are many wisdoms visible in this dream; but others than the people of this valley cannot comprehend them as they are. First, what is that world wherein, without eye, ear, hand or tongue, one realizes the purpose of these senses? Secondly, this day thou seest in the world of reality the effect of a dream which thou hast experienced in the world of dreams ten years ago. Reflect upon the differences between these two worlds, and the mysteries deposited therein, so that thou mayest attain unto the confirmations and revelations of the Glorified One, and enter into the world of holiness.

God, the Exalted, has placed these signs within the creatures, so that philosophers may not deny the mysteries of the after life, and not make light of that whereunto they have been promised. For some have clung to reason, and deny whatever cannot be grasped by reason, although the feeble reason can never comprehend these same conditions which have been mentioned, but only the Universal, Supreme Reason can do so.

All these worlds will present themselves in the Valley of Astonishment, and at every moment the traveller seeks for an increase of such worlds without becoming exhausted.

Likewise, ponder over the completeness of the creation of man: all these worlds and all these grades are enveloped and concealed within him. "Dost thou think thy body a small thing, while in thee is enfolded the universe?" Then an effort is needed that we annihilate the animal condition, in order that the meaning of the human may become manifest.

O friend! The heart is a store of divine mysteries; make it not a receptacle for mortal thoughts; and consume not the capital of this precious life by occupying thyself with the evanescent world. Thou art of the world of holiness; attach not thy heart unto the earth. Thou art a denizen of the court of nearness; choose not an earthly home.

Naught shall befall us, save that which God hath decreed unto us! Peace be upon those who follow guidance!

After ascending the lofty heights of astonishment, the traveller arrives at

THE VALLEY OF ABSOLUTE POVERTY
AND ANNIHILATION

This is the station of dying from self, and living through God, of being poor of one's self, and rich in the Desired One. In this station poverty is mentioned as meaning one's indigence in all that is of the world of creation, and one's affluence in all that is of the world of the True One.

For when a sincere lover and agreeable friend attains to the meeting of the Beloved One, a fire is enkindled from the radiance of the beauty of the Beloved and the burning of the heart of the lover, which consumes all coverings and veils: nay, whatever is with him, his very being, will thereby be burnt, and naught remain except the Friend. "When the attributes of the Ancient became manifest, then the Interlocutor consumed the attributes of all contingent things."

In this station the one who has attained is sanctified from all that pertaineth to the world. If, therefore, those who have attained to the sea of union do not possess any of the limited things of this mortal world, be these things of material belongings or of selfish thoughts, there is no harm in that. For whatever is possessed by men is confined within its own limits, whereas that which is God's is sanctified from every limitation.

Much reflection should be given this explanation in order that the end may become manifest. "Verily, the just shall drink of a cup mixed with camphor." If the meaning of "Camphor" be understood the real aim will become evident. This station is that of poverty, of which it is said, "Poverty is my glory." Many are the meanings and grades of the outward and inward poverty, which I do not deem appropriate to mention in this place, and which I therefore reserve for some other time, if God will and the divine decree ordain.

It is in this stage that the traces of all things are destroyed in the traveller, and the beauty of the Face reveals itself from the orient of the eternal world, and the meaning of "Everything is mortal save the face of God,"¹ becomes manifest.

O my friend! Hearken to the melodies of the Spirit with all thy heart and soul, and preserve them as the sight of thine eyes; for the divine enlightments will not always flow, like the vernal rain, upon the soil of human hearts. Although the bounty of the Bountiful One is continual and free from interruption, yet for every time and age a certain portion is determined and a certain benefit is ordained; and these are bestowed according to a certain quantity and measure. "There is no one thing but the storehouses thereof are in Our Hands, and we distribute not the same save in a determinate measure."²

The cloud of mercy of the Beloved One will pour down only on the garden of the soul, and it will not bestow this bounty except in times of spring. Other seasons have no portion of this mightiest grace, and barren souls have no share in this favour.

Therefore, so long as the Nightingale of the ideal paradise hath not returned to the divine Rose Garden, and the Lights of the spiritual dawn have not returned to the Sun of Reality, make an effort—perchance in this mortal land thou mayest inhale a fragrance from the immortal Rose Garden, and rest forever under the shade of the people of this City. Then thou hast abandoned the drop of life, and reached the ocean of the Beloved One! This is the goal which thou hast demanded; God willing, thou mayest attain thereto.

In this City even the veils of light are rent asunder, and vanish! "To His Beauty there are no veils but Light, and His Face hath no covering save Manifestation." How wonderful that the Well Beloved is manifest as the sun, while strangers are in search of vanities and riches. Yea, He is concealed by the intensity of manifestation, and He is hidden by the ardour of emanation. "The True One hath become manifest, like unto the shining sun. Pity that He hath come to the city of the blind!"

¹ Qur'án.

² Qur'án.

The condition of Ecstasy can penetrate this saying, but not controversy nor conflict. He who hath chosen an abode in this meeting, or discovereth a breeze from this garden, knoweth what I say.

Although these journeys have no visible termination in the world of time, yet, if the Invisible Assistance be vouchsafed to a devoted traveller, and if the Guardian of the Command help him, he will traverse these seven stages in only seven steps, nay, even in a single breath, if God will or desire. "This is through His bounty to whomsoever He willeth."¹

Those who soar in the ether of oneness, and those who have attained the sea of abstraction, have counted this state of "living in God," in this city, the uttermost state of knowers, and the ultimate home of lovers. But to this humble one of the sea of significances, this station is but the first gate of the city of the heart, namely, man's first entry into the citadel of the heart.

¹ Qur'án.

THE COVENANT

WHOSO layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying impostor. We pray God that He may graciously assist him to retract and repudiate such claim. Should he repent, God will no doubt forgive him. If, however, he persists in his error, God will assuredly send down one who will deal mercilessly with him. Terrible indeed is God in punishing!

Whosoever interpreteth this verse otherwise than its obvious meaning is deprived of the Spirit of God and of His mercy which encompasseth all created things.

When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root. When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.

(From the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book)

It is incumbent upon the Aghsán,¹ the Afnán² and My kindred to turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most Mighty Branch. Consider that which We have revealed in Our Most Holy Book: "When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward

¹ Descendants of Bahá'u'lláh.

² Descendants of the family of the Báb.

Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root." The object of this sacred verse is none except the Most Mighty Branch ('Abdu'l-Bahá). Thus have We graciously revealed unto you our potent Will, and I am verily the Gracious, the All-Powerful.

(From the Book of the Covenant)

There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness; well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow. Verily the Limb of the Law of God hath sprung forth from this Root which God hath firmly implanted in the Ground of His Will, and Whose Branch hath been so uplifted as to encompass the whole of creation. Magnified be He, therefore, for this sublime, this blessed, this mighty, this exalted Handiwork! . . . A Word hath, as a token of Our grace, gone forth from the Most Great Tablet—a Word which God hath adorned with the ornament of His own Self, and made it sovereign over the earth and all that is therein, and a sign of His greatness and power among its people. . . . Render thanks unto God, O people, for His appearance; for verily He is the most great Favour unto you, the most perfect bounty upon you; and through Him every mouldering bone is quickened. Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God, and whoso turneth away from Him hath turned away from My Beauty, hath repudiated My Proof, and transgressed against Me. He is the Trust of God amongst you, His charge within you, His manifestation unto you and His appearance among His favoured servants. . . . We have sent Him down in the form of a human temple. Blest and sanctified be God Who createth whatsoever He willeth through His inviolable, His infallible decree. They who deprive themselves of the shadow of the Branch, are lost in the wilderness of error, are consumed by the heat of worldly desires, and are of those who will assuredly perish.

(From the Tablet of the Branch)

WRITINGS AND RECORDED TALKS
OF
'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

We have made Thee a shelter for all mankind, a shield unto all who are in heaven and on earth, a stronghold for whosoever hath believed in God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. God grant that through Thee He may protect them, may enrich and sustain them, that He may inspire Thee with that which shall be a well-spring of wealth unto all created things, an ocean of bounty unto all men, and the dayspring of mercy unto all peoples.

Bahá'u'lláh

Do you know in what Day you are living? Do you realize in what Dispensation you are alive? Have you not heard in the Holy Scriptures that at the consummation of the ages there shall appear a Day which is the Sun of all the past Days? This is the Day in which the Lord of Hosts has come down from heaven on the clouds of glory! This is the Day in which the inhabitants of all the world shall enter under the shelter of the Word of God.

This is the Day whose real sovereign is His Highness the Almighty. This is the Day when the East and the West shall embrace each other like unto two lovers. This is the Day in which war and contention shall be forgotten. This is the Day in which nations and governments will enter into an eternal bond of amity and conciliation. This Century is the fulfilment of the Promised Century.

This Day is the dawn of the appearances of the traces of the glorious visions of the past prophets and sages.

Now is the dawn; ere long the effulgent Sun shall rise and station itself in the meridian of its majesty. Then you shall observe the effects of the Sun. Then you shall behold what heavenly illumination has become manifest. Then you shall comprehend that these are the infinite bestowals of God! Then you shall see that this world has become another world. Then you shall perceive that the Teachings of God have universally spread.

Rest ye assured that this darkness shall be dispelled and these impenetrable clouds which have darkened the horizon shall be scattered, and the Sun of Reality shall appear in its full

splendour. Its rays shall melt the icebergs of hatred and differences which have transformed the moving sea of humanity into hard frozen immensity. The vices of the world of nature shall be changed into praiseworthy attributes, and the lights of the excellences of the Divine realm shall appear.

The principles of Bahá'u'lláh, like unto the spirit, shall penetrate the dead body of the world, and the Love of God, like unto an artery, shall beat through the heart of the five continents.

The East shall become illumined, the West perfumed, and the children of men shall enter beneath the all-embracing canopy of the oneness of the world of humanity.

In this Day the rest of the people are asleep. Praise be to God that you are awakened! They are all uninformed, but praise be to God you are informed of the mysteries of God! Thank ye God that in this arena you have preceded others. I hope that each one of you may become a pillar of the palace of the oneness of the world of humanity. May each one of you become a luminous star of this heaven, thus lighting the path of those who are seeking the goal of human perfection. (*Talk given in Paris, March 10th, 1913.*)

In the divine Holy Books there are unmistakable prophecies giving the Glad Tidings of a certain Day in which the promised One of all the Books would appear, a radiant Dispensation be established, the banner of the Most Great Peace and reconciliation be hoisted, and the oneness of the world of humanity proclaimed. Among the various nations and peoples of the world no enmity or hatred would remain. All hearts were to be connected one with another. These things are recorded in the Taurat or Old Testament, in the Gospel, in the Qur'án, in the Z̄end Avesta, in the Books of Buddha and in the Book of Confucius. In brief, all the Holy Books contain these Glad Tidings. In all of them it is announced that after the world has been surrounded by darkness, then radiance shall appear. For just as the night, when it becomes excessively dark, precedes the

dawn of a new day, so likewise when the darkness of religious apathy and heedlessness overtakes the world, when human souls become negligent of God, when materialistic ideas overshadow idealism and spirituality, when nations become submerged in the world of matter and forget God—at such a time as this shall the Divine Sun shine forth and the Radiant Morn appear. (*Talk given in New York, July 5th, 1912.*)

O noble friends, seekers after God! Praise be to God! To-day the light of Truth is shining upon the world in its abundance; the breezes of the heavenly garden are blowing throughout all regions; the call of the Kingdom is heard in all lands, and the breath of the Holy Spirit is felt in all hearts that are faithful. The Spirit of God is giving eternal life. In this wonderful age the East is enlightened, the West is fragrant, and everywhere the soul inhales the holy perfume. The sea of the unity of mankind is lifting up its waves with joy, for there is real communication between the hearts and minds of men. The banner of the Holy Spirit is uplifted, and men see it, and are assured with the knowledge that this is a new day.

This is a new cycle of human power. All the horizons of the world are luminous, and the world will become indeed as a garden and a paradise. It is the hour of unity of the sons of men and of the drawing together of all races and all classes. You are loosed from ancient superstitions which have kept men ignorant, destroying the foundations of true humanity.

The gift of God to this enlightened age is the knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental oneness of religion. War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers.

In the days of old an instinct for warfare was developed in the struggle with wild animals; this is no longer necessary; nay, rather, co-operation and mutual understanding are seen to produce the greatest welfare of mankind. Enmity is now the result of prejudice only.

In the "Hidden Words" Bahá'u'lláh says, "Justice is to be loved above all." Praise be to God, in this country the standard of justice has been raised; a great effort is being made to give all souls an equal and a true place. This is the desire of all noble natures; this is to-day the teaching for the East and for the West; therefore the East and the West will understand each other and reverence each other, and embrace like long-parted lovers who have found each other.

There is one God; mankind is one; the foundations of religion are one. Let us worship Him, and give praise for all His great Prophets and Messengers who have manifested His brightness and glory.

The blessing of the Eternal One be with you in all its richness, that each soul according to his measure may take freely of Him. Amen. (*Talk given in the City Temple, London, September 15th, 1911.*)

THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH: ITS HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES

TO-NIGHT I wish to tell you something of the history of the Bahá'í Revelation.

The Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh, belonged to the royal family of Persia. From earliest childhood He was distinguished among His relatives and friends. They said "This child has extraordinary power." In wisdom, intelligence, and as a source of new knowledge He was advanced beyond His age and superior to His surroundings. All who knew Him were astonished at His precocity. It was usual for them to say "Such a child will not live," for it is commonly believed that precocious children do not reach maturity. During the period of youth the Blessed Perfection did not enter school. He was not willing to be taught. This fact is well established among the Persians of Tíhrán. Nevertheless He was capable of solving the difficult problems of all who came to Him. In whatever meeting, scientific assembly or theological discussion, He was found, He became the authority of explanation upon intricate and abstruse questions presented.

Until His father passed away Bahá'u'lláh did not seek position or political station notwithstanding His connection with the government. This occasioned surprise and comment. It was frequently said "How is it that a young man of such keen intelligence and subtle perception does not seek lucrative appointments? As a matter of fact every position is open to Him." This is a historical statement fully attested by the people of Persia.

He was most generous, giving abundantly to the poor. None who came to Him were turned away. The doors of His house were open to all. He always had many guests. This unbounded generosity was conducive to greater astonishment from the fact that He sought neither position nor prominence. In commenting upon this His friends said He would become impoverished, for His expenses were many and His wealth becoming more and more limited. "Why is He not thinking of His own affairs?" they inquired of each other; but some who were wise declared "This personage is connected with another world; He has something sublime within him that is not evident now; the day is coming when it will be manifested." In truth the Blessed Perfection was a refuge for every weak one, a shelter for every fearing one, kind to every indigent one, lenient and loving to all creatures.

He became well known in regard to these qualities before the Báb appeared. Then Bahá'u'lláh declared the Báb's mission to be true and promulgated His teachings. The Báb announced that the greater manifestation would take place after Him and called the promised one "Him whom God would manifest," saying that nine years later the reality of His own mission would become apparent. In His writings He stated that in the ninth year this expected one would be known; in the ninth year they would attain to all glory and felicity; in the ninth year they would advance rapidly. Between Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb there was communication privately. The Báb wrote a letter containing three hundred and sixty derivatives of the root "Bahá." The Báb was martyred in Tabríz, and Bahá'u'lláh, exiled into 'Iráq in 1852, announced Himself in Baghdád. For the Persian Government had decided that as long as He remained in Persia the peace of the country would be disturbed; therefore He was exiled in the expectation that Persia would become quiet. His banishment, however, produced the opposite effect. New tumult arose and the mention of His greatness and influence spread everywhere throughout the country. The proclamation of His manifestation and mission was made in Baghdád. He called His friends together there and spoke to them of God. Afterwards He left the city

and went alone into the mountains of Kurdistán, where He made his abode in caves and grottoes. A part of this time He lived in the city of Sulaymáníyyih. Two years passed, during which neither His friends nor family knew just where He was.

Although solitary, secluded and unknown in His retirement, the report spread throughout Kurdistán that this was a most remarkable and learned personage, gifted with a wonderful power of attraction. In a short time Kurdistán was magnetized with His love. During this period Bahá'u'lláh lived in poverty. His garments were those of the poor and needy. His food was that of the indigent and lowly. An atmosphere of majesty haloed Him as the sun at midday. Everywhere He was greatly revered and beloved.

After two years He returned to Baghdád. Friends he had known in Sulaymáníyyih came to visit Him. They found Him in His accustomed environment of ease and affluence, and were astonished at the appointments of one who had lived in seclusion under such frugal conditions in Kurdistán.

The Persian government believed the banishment of the Blessed Perfection from Persia would be the extermination of His cause in that country. These rulers now realized that it spread more rapidly. His prestige increased, His teachings became more widely circulated. The chiefs of Persia then used their influence to have Bahá'u'lláh exiled from Baghdád. He was summoned to Constantinople by the Turkish authorities. While in Constantinople He ignored every restriction, especially the hostility of ministers of state and clergy. The official representatives of Persia again brought their influence to bear upon the Turkish authorities and succeeded in having Bahá'u'lláh banished from Constantinople to Adrianople, the object being to keep Him as far away as possible from Persia and render His communication with that country more difficult. Nevertheless the cause still spread and strengthened.

Finally they consulted together and said, "We have banished Bahá'u'lláh from place to place, but each time He is exiled His cause is more widely extended, His proclamation increases in power and day by day His lamp is becoming brighter. This is due to the fact that we have exiled Him to large cities and

populous centres. Therefore we will send Him to a penal colony as a prisoner so that all may know He is the associate of murderers, robbers and criminals; in a short time He and His followers will perish." The sultán of Turkey then banished Him to the prison of 'Akká in Syria.

When Bahá'u'lláh arrived at 'Akká, through the power of God He was able to hoist His banner. His light at first had been a star; now it became a mighty sun and the illumination of His cause expanded from the east to the west. Inside prison walls He wrote epistles to all the kings and rulers of nations summoning them to arbitration and Universal Peace. Some of the kings received His words with disdain and contempt. One of these was the sultán of the Ottoman kingdom. Napoleon III of France did not reply. A second epistle was addressed to him. It stated "I have written you an epistle before this, summoning you to the cause of God, but you are of the heedless. You have proclaimed that you were the defender of the oppressed; now it hath become evident that you are not. Nor are you kind to your own suffering and oppressed people. Your actions are contrary to your own interests and your kingly pride must fall. Because of your arrogance God shortly will destroy your sovereignty. France will flee away from you and you will be overwhelmed by a great conquest. There will be lamentation and mourning, women bemoaning the loss of their sons." This arraignment of Napoleon III was published and spread.

Read it and consider: One prisoner, single and solitary, without assistant or defender, a foreigner and stranger imprisoned in the fortress of 'Akká writing such letters to the emperor of France and sultán of Turkey. Reflect upon this, how Bahá'u'lláh upraised the standard of His cause in prison. Refer to history. It is without parallel. No such thing has happened before that time nor since; a prisoner and an exile advancing his cause and spreading his teachings broadcast so that eventually he became powerful enough to conquer the very king who banished him.

His cause spread more and more. The Blessed Perfection was a prisoner twenty-five years. During all this time He was subjected to the indignities and revilement of the people. He

was persecuted, mocked, and put in chains. In Persia His properties were pillaged and His possessions confiscated. First, banishment from Persia to Baghdád; then to Constantinople; then to Adrianople; finally from Roumelia to the prison fortress of 'Akká.

During His lifetime He was intensely active. His energy was unlimited. Scarcely one night was passed in restful sleep. He bore these ordeals, suffered these calamities and difficulties in order that a manifestation of selflessness and service might become apparent in the world of humanity; that the "Most Great Peace" should become a reality; that human souls might appear as the angels of heaven; that heavenly miracles would be wrought among men; that human faith should be strengthened and perfected; that the precious, priceless bestowal of God—the human mind—might be developed to its fullest capacity in the temple of the body; and man become the reflection and likeness of God, even as it hath been revealed in the Bible "We shall create man in our own image."

Briefly; the Blessed Perfection bore all these ordeals and calamities in order that our hearts might become enkindled and radiant, our spirits be glorified, our faults become virtues, our ignorance transformed into knowledge; in order that we might attain the real fruits of humanity and acquire heavenly graces; although pilgrims upon earth we should travel the road of the heavenly kingdom; although needy and poor we might receive the treasures of life eternal. For this has He borne these difficulties and sorrows.

Trust all to God. The lights of God are resplendent. The blessed epistles are spreading. The blessed teachings are promulgated throughout the east and west. Soon you will see that the heavenly words have established the oneness of the world of humanity. The banner of the "Most Great Peace" has been unfurled and the "great community" is appearing. (*Talk given in New York, April 18th, 1912.*)

Every age requires a central impetus or movement. In this age, the boundaries of terrestrial things have extended; minds

have taken on a broader range of vision; realities have been unfolded and the secrets of being have been brought into the realm of visibility. What is the spirit of this age, what is its focal point? It is the establishment of Universal Peace, the establishment of the knowledge that humanity is one family. Think on the conditions in this world of humanity. Nations have become like unto armed camps waiting to be ignited by the combustion of war.

Whereas in reality God has created man for love's sake. God has endowed man with creation so that He may illumine the world with the flame of brotherhood and express the utmost state of unity and accord. This state would express God's good pleasure; this would be the prosperity of the world of humanity. A thousand times, alas! this glorious century has been besmeared with war and strife, hatred and rancour. Blood-thirsty wolves are tearing the sheep of God. Destruction is more widespread than in all the ages of the past.

We hear on every side praises of the wonders of this cycle, its achievements, its refinements, its genius; calling the past the age of mediæval horror. What mediæval age held the horror of a Krupp gun, a Mauser rifle, or a shrapnel shell that kills a whole camp? On the sea we have the submarine and the dreadnought. If you compare the past with this age, impartial judgment will call this the age of human fratricide.

All the religions are revealed for the sake of good fellowship. The fundamentals, the foundations, of all are fellowship, unity and love. The heavenly books were revealed and divine love bestowed to bring about peace. What has man made of religion? He has made it the cause of bloodshed and strife; enmity and hatred. Religion was destined to be a remedy for the sickness of humanity; an illumination for the darkness of uncertainty. Have we then forgotten the divine teachings, cast aside the heavenly books, created imaginary thoughts and illusions and made them the basis of rancour and strife? The Bible commands the practice of peace and justice. God desires love. In the Gospel we find the golden statement that man should be expressive of love even unto his enemy; he should be expressive of love to his ill-wishers; he should be expressive of

love to all his fellow men. He must have an eye to pardon: he must have an eye to benevolence. All the divine books invite men to these teachings. All the divine prophets suffered that man might realize these teachings. Consider what Christ endured, how many vicissitudes He underwent, every day tasting a new poison, finally sacrificing His own life, so that the tent of love and concord might be raised over the world of humanity so that this dark world might be invested with divine light. Alas! that all the travail of these holy souls and sanctified prophets should be wasted. The world of humanity is in a stupor of sleep and it cannot grasp the realities. The horizons of the minds are still beclouded and the hearts are occupied with phantasmal longings. We seem never to think of the reason of creation; never to strive to proclaim those principles which enlighten humanity. In the sea of materialism we are sinking and of the Kingdom of God we know nothing. We are not living in accord with those precious teachings of God.

Nearly sixty years ago, when the horizon of the Orient was in a state of the utmost gloom, warfare existed and there was enmity between the various creeds, darkness brooded over the children of men and foul clouds of ignorance hid the sky—at such a time Bahá'u'lláh arose from the horizon of Persia like unto a shining sun. He boldly proclaimed peace, writing to the kings of the earth and calling upon them to arise and assist in the hoisting of this banner. In order to bring peace out of the chaos, he established certain precepts or principles:

Investigation of Truth

The first principle Bahá'u'lláh urged was the independent investigation of truth. “Each individual,” He said, “is following the faith of his ancestors who themselves are lost in the maze of tradition. Reality is steeped in dogmas and doctrines. If each investigate for himself, he will find that Reality is one; does not admit of multiplicity; is not divisible. All will find the same foundation and all will be at peace.”

The Oneness of Mankind

The second principle of Bahá'u'lláh proclaims the oneness of the human race. He states that humanity constitutes the sheep of God. God is the real shepherd. When this shepherd is compassionate and kind, why should the sheep quarrel amongst themselves? Addressing all humanity, Bahá'u'lláh says: "Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch. All the nations, peoples and tongues are the branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits of this great tree of humanity." God created all; protects all; provides for all and is kind to all; why should you be unkind? If God had not loved humanity He would not have created it. Creation presupposes love. God is the real father; all are His children. All the creatures are equal in this one family of God save whosoever is more kind, more compassionate—he is nearer to God.

International Peace

The third principle of the religion of Bahá'u'lláh is in regard to international peace. There must be peace between the fatherlands; peace between the religions. In this period of evolution the world of humanity is in danger. Every war is against the good pleasure of the Lord of mankind. Man is the edifice of God. War destroys the divine edifice. Peace is the stay of life; war the cause of death. If an active, actual peace is brought about, the human world will attain to the utmost serenity and composure. Wolves will be transformed into lambs; devils into angels and terrors into divine splendours in less than the twinkling of an eye.

Religion must Conform to Science and Reason

The fourth principle declares that religion must be in conformity to science and reason. If a religion does not agree with the postulates of science, nor accord with the regulations of reason, it is a bundle of superstitions; a phantasm of the brain. Science and religion are realities, and if that religion to which

we adhere be a reality it must needs conform to the fundamental reality of all things.

Prejudice must be Forever Banished

The fifth principle of Bahá'u'lláh is this: that religious, racial, political and patriotic prejudice are the destroyers of human society. As long as these prejudices last the world of humanity will not attain to poise and perfection. As long as these threatening clouds are in the sky of humanity, the sun of reality cannot dawn.

Equality of Sexes

The sixth principle of Bahá'u'lláh regards the equality of men and women. The male and female of the human kingdom are equal before God. God is no respecter of gender. Whosoever practises more faith, whosoever practises more humanitarianism, is nearer to God; but between the male and female there is no innate difference, because they share in common all the faculties. The world of humanity has two wings, one the male; the other the female. When both wings are reinforced with the same impulse the bird will be enabled to wing its flight heavenward to the summit of progress. Woman must be given the same opportunities as man for perfecting herself in the attainments of learning, science and arts. God has created the man and the woman equal, why should she be deprived of exercising the fullest opportunities afforded by life? Why should we ever raise the question of superiority and inferiority? In the animal kingdom the male and female enjoy suffrage and in the vegetable kingdom the plants all enjoy equal suffrage. In the human kingdom, which claims to be the realm of brotherhood and solidarity, why should we raise this question?

The Social Plan

The seventh teaching suggests a plan whereby all the individual members may enjoy the utmost comfort and welfare. The

degrees of society must be preserved. The farmer will continue to till the soil, the artist pursue his art, the banker to finance the nation. An army has need of its general, captain, and private soldiers. The degrees varying with the pursuits are essential. But in this Bahá'í plan there is no class hatred. Each is to be protected and each individual member of the body politic is to live in the greatest comfort and happiness. Work is to be provided for all, and there will be no needy ones seen in the streets.

The Parliament of Man

The eighth principle declares that there must needs be established the parliament of man or court of last appeals for international questions. The members of this arbitral court of justice will be representatives of all the nations. In each nation the members must be ratified by the government and the king or ruler, and this international parliament will be under the protection of the world of humanity. In it all international difficulties will be settled.

Universal Education

The ninth admonition is in regard to education. All the children must be educated so that there will not remain one single individual without an education. In cases of inability on the part of the parents through sickness, death, etc., the state must educate the child. In addition to this widespread education, each child must be taught a profession or trade so that each individual member of the body politic will be enabled to earn his own living and at the same time serve the community. Work done in the spirit of service is worship. From this universal system of education misunderstandings will be expelled from amongst the children of men.

Universal Language

The tenth principle is the establishment of a universal language so that we shall not have to acquire so many languages in the

future. In the schools they will study two, the mother tongue and the international auxiliary language. The use of an international auxiliary language will become a great means of dispelling the differences between nations.

There are many other teachings. I have given you but a few. Praise be to God! that day by day we are advancing and every day we see some new blessing descending. Let all of us render thanksgiving to our generous Lord that He may bless our eyes with sight and give unto our hearts understanding. May we become resuscitated with the breath of the Holy Spirit. May we be enabled to leave behind the world of matter in beholding the bounties of God. The divine table is spread, the heavenly illumination is all-encircling; eternal life is provided for all; divine food is prepared for all! Therefore let us practise the divine essence of love, and love each other from our very hearts and souls, so that the East and West shall embrace each other and realize that all are the sheep of God. God is the good shepherd—then shall we gather under the tabernacle of His mercy! (*Talk given in Bristol, January 16th, 1913.*)

TRUE CIVILIZATION

THE past age was an age of wondrous achievements. All the inventions were perfected; new discoveries created; new fields of human activity developed; new undertakings gave deeper significance to the law of co-operation; new arts helped to make life more beautiful; and new international laws are now in process of formation to bind all nations of the earth together. The international tribunal of justice will soon be organized in accordance with the principles of Bahá'u'lláh, and then all the differences will be adjusted before the members of that impartial tribunal.

Therefore, as a result of these changes in the outer world, it has become part of the heavenly wisdom in the inner world to create a new spiritual plan for the propagation of the religion of God. Thus the divine believers may obtain a new joy and a new happiness and display an extraordinary effort in the promotion of the reality of the religions of God, to deliver the nations from old, superannuated prejudices, and diffuse the fragrances of the flowers of the primal Truth; to unfurl the flag of love, amity, unity and the oneness of the world of humanity and remove the international misunderstandings from amongst the nations of the world.

True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of distinguished sovereigns of lofty aims—the shining exemplars of devotion and determination—shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise with a firm resolve and clear vision to establish the

cause of Universal Peace. They must make the cause of Peace the object of universal consultation, and seek by every means in their power to convene a conference of the governments of the world. They must conclude a firm treaty, and establish a covenant the provision of which shall be sound, clear, and definite. They must promulgate it to the world, and cause it to be ratified by the unanimous decision of the whole human race.

This great and noble undertaking—the real source of the tranquillity of all the world—should be regarded as sacred by all who dwell on earth. All peoples and nations should bend their efforts to insure the stability and permanence of this supreme Covenant. In this universal treaty the limits and frontiers of all nations should be definitely fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments expressly stated, and all inter-governmental agreements, relationships and obligations ascertained and clearly set forth.

In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparation for war and the fighting forces of any government advance and increase, the suspicions of other governments will be aroused. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Agreement should be so fixed that if one of the governments of the world should later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth would arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve with every power at its disposal to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, humanity will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain safe and secure for all time. . . . Reflect that, under such conditions of life, no government or kingdom would need to prepare and accumulate war materials, or would need to pay heed to the invention of new weapons of offence for the vexation and hurt of mankind. On the contrary, they would only require a few soldiers, as a means of assuring the safety of the state and punishing the wicked and rebellious and preventing the growth of civil sedition. Not more than these few would be needed. In the first place, therefore, the servants of God—that is to say, all the inhabitants of a state—would be freed from bearing the

burden of the tremendous expense of an army; in the second, the many persons who now devote their lives to the invention of fresh instruments of war would no longer waste their time upon such work, which but encourages ferocity and bloodthirstiness, and is repugnant to the universal ideal of humanity—on the contrary, they would then employ their natural gifts in the cause of the general well-being, and would contribute towards the peace and salvation of mankind. All the rulers of the world will then be settled on peaceful thrones amid the glory of a perfect civilization, and all the nations and peoples will rest in the cradle of peace and comfort.

A few, unaware how much man can do if he will but try, regard this matter as really impracticable, and even beyond the range of human ability. Such is not the case, however. On the contrary, thanks to the unfailing grace of the Lord, to the loving-kindness of the favoured of God, to the extraordinary endeavours of wise and capable souls, and to the thoughts and ideas of the peerless leaders of the times, nothing whatsoever can be regarded as unattainable. Nothing short of the highest endeavour and the firmest determination can possibly achieve this end. Many a cause, which past ages have regarded as a mere dream and fiction of the fancy, has proved in these days to be practicable and easy of achievement. How then can this most great and lofty cause—the day-star in the firmament of true civilization and the cause of glory, the advancement, the well-being and the success of all humanity—be regarded as an impossibility? Of a surety, the day will come when its beauteous light shall illuminate the assemblage of man. (*From the Mysterious Forces of Civilization.*)

The time has arrived for the world of humanity to hoist the standard of the oneness of the human world, so that solidarity and unity may bind together all the nations of the world, so that dogmatic formulas and superstitions may end, so that the essential reality underlying all the religions founded by the Prophets may be revealed.

That reality is one.

It is the love of God, the progress of the world, the oneness of humanity.

That reality is the bond which can unite all the human race.

That reality is the attainment of the benefits of the most great peace, the discarding of warfare.

That reality is progressiveness, the undertaking of the colossal tasks in life, the oneness of public opinion.

Therefore strive, O ye people! and put forth your efforts, that this reality may overcome the lesser forces in life, that this king of reality may alone rule all humanity.

Thus may the world of mankind be reformed. Thus may a new springtime be ushered in and a fresh spirit may resuscitate mankind.

The individuals of humanity, like refreshed plants, will put forth leaves and blossoms and fruit, so that the face of the earth will become the long promised and delectable paradise, so that the great bestowal, the supreme virtues of man will glisten over the face of the earth. Then shall the world of existence have attained maturity.

This is my message.

In the contingent world there are many collective centres which are conducive to association and unity between the children of men. For example, patriotism is a collective centre; nationalism is a collective centre; identity of interests is a collective centre; political alliance is a collective centre; the union of ideals is a collective centre, and the prosperity of the world of humanity is dependent upon the organization and promotion of the collective centres. Nevertheless, all the above institutions are in reality, the matter and not the substance, accidental and not eternal—temporary and not everlasting. With the appearance of great revolutions and upheavals, all these collective centres are swept away. But the Collective Centre of the Kingdom, embodying the Institutes and Divine Teachings, is the eternal Collective Centre. It establishes relationship between the East and the West, organizes the

oneness of the world of humanity, and destroys the foundation of differences. It overcomes and includes all the other collective centres. Like unto the ray of the sun, it dispels entirely the darkness, encompassing all the regions, bestows ideal life, and causes the effulgence of divine illumination. Through the breaths of the Holy Spirit it performs miracles; the Orient and the Occident embrace each other, the North and South become intimates and associates; conflicting and contending opinions disappear; antagonistic aims are brushed aside, the law of the struggle for existence is abrogated, and the canopy of the oneness of the world of humanity is raised on the apex of the globe, casting its shade over all the races of men. Consequently, the real Collective Centre is the body of the divine teachings, which include all the degrees and embrace all the universal relations and necessary laws of humanity.

Consider! The people of the East and the West were in the utmost strangeness. Now to what a high degree they are acquainted with each other and united together! How far are the inhabitants of Persia from the remotest countries of America! And now observe how great has been the influence of the heavenly power, for the distance of thousands of miles has become identical with one step! How various nations that have had no relations or similarity with each other are now united and agreed through this divine potency! Indeed to God belongs power in the past and in the future! And verily God is powerful over all things!

Consider! When the rain, the heat, the sun and the gentle zephyrs co-operate with each other, what beautiful gardens are produced! How the various kinds of hyacinths, flowers, trees and plants associate with each other and are conducive to the adornment and charm of one another! Hence the oneness of the bounty of the sun, the oneness of rain and the oneness of the breeze have so overcome all other considerations that the variety of hues, fragrances and tastes have increased the adornment, the attraction and sweetness of the whole. In a similar manner, when the divine collective centre and the outpouring of the Sun of Reality and the breaths of the Holy Spirit are brought together, the variety of races and the differences existing

between countries will become the cause of the embellishment, decoration and elegance of the world of humanity. (*From Letter to "The Assemblies and Meetings of the believers of God and the maidservants of the Merciful in the United States and Canada" March 8th, 1917.*)

In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved. Continents remained widely divided, nay, even among the peoples of one and the same continent, association and interchange of thought were well nigh impossible. Consequently intercourse, understanding, and unity amongst all the peoples and kindreds of the earth were unattainable. In this day, however, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one. . . . In like manner all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century—the century of light—has been endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man.

Behold how its light is now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon. The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the corner-stone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be

revealed in all its splendour. The fifth candle is the unity of nations—a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races, making of all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity of language, *i.e.*, the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse. Each and every one of these will inevitably come to pass, inasmuch as the power of the Kingdom of God will aid and assist in their realization.

The disease which afflicts the body politic is lack of love and absence of altruism. In the hearts of men no real love is found, and the condition is such that unless their susceptibilities are quickened by some power so that unity, love, and accord develop within them, there can be no healing, no relief among mankind. Love and unity are the needs of the body politic to-day. Without these no progress nor prosperity can be attained. Therefore the friends of God must adhere to that Power which will create this love and unity in the hearts of the sons of men. Science cannot cure the illness of the body politic. Science cannot create amity and fellowship in human hearts. Neither can patriotism or racial prejudice effect a remedy. It can be accomplished solely through the divine bounties and the spiritual bestowals which have descended from God in this Day for that very purpose.

This is an exigency of the times, and the divine remedy has been provided. The spiritual Teachings of the Religion of God alone can create this love, unity, and accord in human hearts. Therefore, hold to these heavenly agencies which God has provided so that through the love of God this soul-tie may be established, this heart-attachment realized, the light of the reality of unity be reflected from you throughout the universe.

This period of time is the Promised Age, the assembling of the human race to the "Resurrection Day," and now is the

great "Day of Judgment." Soon the whole world, as in spring, will change its garb. The turning and falling of the autumn leaves is past; the bleakness of the winter time is done. The new year hath appeared and the spiritual springtime is at hand. The black earth is becoming a verdant garden; the deserts and mountains are teeming with red flowers; while the birds are singing among the rose branches like the angels in the highest heavens, announcing the glad tidings of that spiritual spring, and the sweet music of their voices is causing the real essence of all things to move and quiver.

O my spiritual friend! Dost thou know from what airs emanate the notes sung by these birds? They are from the melodies of peace and reconciliation, of love and unity, of justice and security, of concord and agreement. In a short time this heavenly singing will intoxicate all humanity; the foundations of enmity shall be destroyed; unity and affection shall be witnessed in every assembly; and the lovers of the love of God at these great festivals shall behold their splendour.

Therefore, contemplate what a spirit of life God hath given that the body of the whole earth may attain life everlasting! The Paradise of El-Abhá will soon spread a pavilion from the pole-star of the world, under whose shelter the beloved shall rejoice and the pure hearts repose in peace.

O people of the world!

The dawn of the Sun of Reality is assuredly for the illumination of the world and for the manifestation of mercy. In the assemblage of the family of Adam results and fruits are praiseworthy, and the holy bestowals of every bounty are abundant. It is an absolute mercy and a complete bounty, the illumination of the world, fellowship and harmony, love and union; nay, rather, mercifulness and oneness, the elimination of discord and the unity of whosoever are on the earth in the utmost of freedom and dignity. The Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] said: "All are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch." He likened the world of existence to one tree and all the souls to leaves, blossoms and fruits. Therefore all the branches, leaves,

blossoms and fruits must be in the utmost of freshness, and the bringing about of this delicacy and sweetness depends upon union and fellowship. Therefore they must assist each other with all their power and seek everlasting life. Thus the friends of God must manifest the mercy of the Compassionate Lord in the world of existence and must show forth the bounty of the visible and invisible King. They must purify their sight, and look upon mankind as the leaves, blossoms and fruits of the tree of creation, and must always be thinking of doing good to someone, of love, consideration, affection and assistance to somebody. They must see no enemy and count no one as an ill wisher. They must consider every one on the earth as a friend; regard the stranger as an intimate, and the alien as a companion. They must not be bound by any tie, nay, rather, they should be free from every bond. In this day the one who is favoured in the threshold of grandeur is the one who offers the cup of faithfulness and bestows the pearl of gift to the enemies, even to the fallen oppressor, lends a helping hand, and considers every bitter foe as an affectionate friend.

These are the commands of the Blessed Beauty, these are the counsels of the Greatest Name. O ye dear friends! The world is engaged in war and struggle, and mankind is in the utmost conflict and danger. The darkness of unfaithfulness has enshrouded the earth and the illumination of faithfulness has become concealed. All nations and tribes of the world have sharpened their claws and are warring and fighting with each other. The edifice of man is shattered. Thousands of families are wandering disconsolate. Thousands of souls are besmeared with dust and blood in the arena of battle and struggle every year, and the tent of happiness and life is overthrown. The prominent men become commanders and boast of bloodshed, and glory in destruction. One says: "I have severed with my sword the necks of a nation," and one: "I have levelled a kingdom to the dust"; and another: "I have overthrown the foundation of a government." This is the pivot around which the pride and glory of mankind are revolving. In all regions friendship and uprightness are denounced and reconciliation and regard for truth are despised. The herald of peace, reformation,

love and reconciliation is the Religion of the Blessed Beauty which has pitched its tent on the apex of the world and proclaimed its summons to the people.

Then, O ye friends of God! Appreciate the value of this precious Revelation, move and act in accordance with it and walk in the straight path and the right way. Show it to the people. Raise the melody of the Kingdom and spread abroad the teachings and ordinances of the loving Lord so that the world may become another world, the darkened earth may become illumined and the dead body of the people may obtain new life. Every soul may seek everlasting life through the breath of the Merciful. Life in this mortal world will quickly come to an end, and this earthly glory, wealth, comfort and happiness will soon vanish and be no more. Summon ye the people to God and call the souls to the manners and conduct of the Supreme Concourse. To the orphans be ye kind fathers, and to the unfortunate a refuge and shelter. To the poor be a treasure of wealth, and to the sick a remedy and healing. Be a helper of every oppressed one, the protector of every destitute one, be ye ever mindful to serve any soul of mankind. Attach no importance to self-seeking, rejection, arrogance, oppression and enmity. Heed them not. Deal in the contrary way. Be kind in truth, not only in appearance and outwardly. Every soul of the friends of God must concentrate his mind on this, that he may manifest the mercy of God and the bounty of the Forgiving One. He must do good to every soul whom he encounters, and render benefit to him, becoming the cause of improving the morals and correcting the thoughts so that the light of guidance may shine forth and the bounty of His Holiness the Merciful One may encompass. Love is light in whatsoever house it may shine and enmity is darkness in whatsoever abode it dwell.

O friends of God! Strive ye so that this darkness may be utterly dispelled and the Hidden Mystery may be revealed and the realities of things made evident and manifest. (*Appended to the Tablet in the Central Organisation for a Durable Peace, The Hague, December 17th, 1919.*)

Prayer for all Nations

“O Thou kind Lord! Thou hast created all humanity from the same parents. Thou hast destined that all belong to the same household, and in Thy holy presence all are Thy servants, and all mankind is sheltered beneath Thy Tabernacle. Thy children are gathered at Thy table of bounty and have become radiant through the light of Thy providence. O God! Thou art kind to all, Thou hast provided for all, Thou dost harbour all. Thou conferest life upon all, Thou hast endowed each humble being with ability and talent and submerged all mankind in the ocean of Thy mercy.”

“O Thou generous Lord! Unite Thy servants in every land, suffer the diverse religions to be in harmony, make of the nations a single nation, so they may see each other as one family, denizens of one country. May mankind associate with perfect amity and unity.”

“O God! Raise the banner of the oneness of humankind. O God! Establish the Most Great Peace. O God! Weld our hearts into one heart. O Thou kind father! Exhilarate us through the fragrance of Thy love; brighten our eyes through the light of Thy guidance; cheer our ears with the melody of Thy Word, and shelter us in the shelter of Thy Providence.”

GOVERNMENT

THE ministers, and even the lowest officers of state, must be completely purified from all suspicion, and must assume the garment of chastity, and of pure life. And the improved condition we so earnestly desire will not have been attained until the regulation of public and private manners reach such a degree of perfection that it becomes impossible for any man to swerve one hair's breadth from the right path, even should he endeavour to do so; so that all government may be administered according to the laws of equity and justice, and that the responsible ministers find it impossible to swerve to the right or to the left, and of necessity pursue the way of righteousness.

All partiality and perversion of justice by bribery, for personal liking or hatred, must be abolished, and both sides should be heard without favour; neither should the wicked be justified, nor the innocent condemned.

The ways and means of producing happiness and good are capable of gross abuse; and much dependeth upon the opinion, capability, piety, truthfulness, benevolence, and the extent of zeal of the governed and their rulers.

And if these persons retain the robe of chastity and pureness, and do not contaminate the hem thereof with baseness, the assistance of the Almighty will not fail them, but will make them a source of blessing to the whole world. He will cause all manner of benefits to flow both from their tongues and pens, so that the cities of Persia will shine with the light of justice, which, like a flaming torch, will illuminate the habitable globe. "This is nothing but the work of the Almighty God."

But if these persons behave otherwise, evil results will be made manifest; and this, indeed, has been the case, and seen of men's eyes in certain foreign countries, that, after the establishment of a Parliament, this very Assembly became the cause of public confusion, and the good innovations brought forth great catastrophes.

The establishment of Councils, and the foundation of deliberative Assemblies are the solid basis of politics; but there are some rules which are necessary in order firmly to establish such organizations.

Firstly: The elected members must be religious persons, God-fearing, high-minded and followers of the law.

Secondly: They should have an accurate knowledge of the divine Commandments, of the most important fundamental matters and of the rules of the loosing and binding of domestic affairs and foreign relations; they should possess a knowledge of the sciences and arts, necessary to civilization, and finally be contented with the income derived from their personal property.¹

It must not be imagined that to find members possessed of these qualities would be an impossible, or even a difficult matter; and by the help of God and his saints, and the earnest endeavour of zealous men, all obstacles may be surmounted.

“The difficulties of those, who make difficulties in all things, can be overcome, as in the twinkling of an eye.”

But if, on the contrary, the members are mean, ignorant, having no knowledge of political economy, wanting in ambition, lacking in zeal, foolish, slothful, and seeking their personal or private advantages, then no good can possibly result from Assemblies so formed. Whereas, in former times, a poor man had to give a gratuity to one individual in order to obtain his rights, he might now be obliged to satisfy the demands of the entire body.

¹ Lack of personal income does not debar a man or woman from being elected, but those elected must not be job seekers. The chief aim is to remove bribery, which was very rife in Persia at the time this letter was addressed to its people.

After close consideration, it will be obviously manifest that the chief cause of oppression, injustice, and the mismanagement of affairs is owing to the dearth of true piety, and the absence of public instruction.

Take, for example, a people truly pious, proficient in reading, writing, and possessed of a variety of sciences; should an action be perpetrated contrary to the justice of God and of their Sovereign, they must first of all appeal to the local government, and then, if no redress be obtained, they must carry the question in dispute to the High Court, explaining the deviation of their local government from the paths of justice. The High Court should then demand explanations from that locality.

Certainly the person who discovered the error and corruption undermining the local government, should be entitled to gratitude and reward from the public; but the majority of the people, owing to their want of instruction, are unable to make their requirements understood; moreover, there are people, who, from the obscurity of their rank and their lack of education, have not yet experienced the delights of well-being and of true justice; and indeed they have not drunk from the pure water of good intention, and consequently do not appreciate, and have no gratitude for, the exposure of public wrong. They have not yet understood that the greatest glory of man, the universal happiness of the world, consists in the joys of soul, high ambition, good intention, virtue and chastity.

Unhappily they imagine that greatness and glory follow on the accumulation of worldly riches and similar vanities. Now clearly consider! If a man give a thought, he will see, that the Omnipotent God has distinguished him from amongst his creatures by the dress of honour, of virtue and intelligence. "Verily we have created man in the image of God." He has been made to shine forth from the morning of unity by the blessings of divine manifestations.

Man has become the spring of divine wonders and the centre of the mysteries of the heavenly Kingdom.

Now why should he pollute this pure mantle with the stain of selfish desires, and exchange this eternal honour for the lowest depths of baseness?

“Dost thou think thy body a small thing, while in thee is enfolded the great universe?”

If it were not my chief object to shorten this treatise, I would write briefly concerning several matters of spiritual interest, and explain the high dignity and sublime glory of true humanity. We will, however, leave this for a later occasion.

In the centre of the world of being, the greatest dignity and the highest honour, both outward and inward, and in the beginning and the end, belong to the prophets of God, although poverty indeed has at all times been their chief possession; and for a like cause universal honour is ascribed to the saints and the beloved of God. They did not seek wealth or self-advancement, neither did those kings and rulers whose fame for just government and greatness filled the world occupy themselves only with their personal ambition and the acquirement of riches, but accounted the general weal and the increase of the inhabitants of their countries and of the public treasure as their greatest care. Their glory was not bought with gold or silver, but was purchased by the soundness of their principles and the nobility of their aspirations.

Those great ministers who place God's will before their own have been burning lamps of science among men of learning; they employ their wisdom for the general good of their countrymen.

They prove themselves worthy examples of honest and virtuous endeavour, and with small hope of reward give their lives to the increase of public good. And in their wisdom deliver just ordinances to the people, setting the palm of peace among the nations; thus they attain the highest pinnacle of the mountain of glory and of honour.

The hidden treasures of kings cannot be compared with a drop of the water of science; nor with the smallest cup of their learning; and the heaped-up talents of gold and silver cannot be equal to the solution of the least abstruse of their problems.

Those learned men consider the pleasures of foreign nations as the playthings of children, and account riches and worldly

pomp the fit reward of the mean and ignorant. Like the birds, they are content with a few grains for their sustenance, but the melody of their wisdom and their knowledge will excite the astonishment of the intelligent and discerning among the sages of the world. Such are those rulers who are benevolent and wise, whose dignity and real happiness lie in the well-being of the public, whose ambition consists in diligently searching after such things as will justify them and their wealth, and will bring happiness and peace upon the people.

There can be no true satisfaction or contentment apart from the general prosperity.

Consider, for example, the great men of a country, those who are wise and pure in heart, and notable for the excellence of their natural perception, and all other qualities leading to happiness in this world and the next, in honour, dignity and nobility;—does their greatness consist in their true and faithful service, their zeal and anxiety to do God's will, to please the king and to satisfy the hearts of the people? Or, in luxury of habit, in extravagant feasting, and in every kind of sensual pleasure, leading to the ultimate ruination of the people; injury to the hearts of the servants of God; their banishment from the Court of the Almighty; in estrangement from the potent majesty of the king; and in the hatred and scorn of their countrymen?

Verily, the decayed bones in the sepulchre are better than the like of these! Of what use are they—they who have not tasted the heavenly manna of virtue, nor drunk of the pure spring of human kindness?

It is clearly shown that the establishment of such assemblies will lead to justice and piety. Of this there can be no doubt.

But what can bring the purposes of the ministers and elected members to light? If they be men of sincere intention, good results and unexpected improvements should certainly follow, as a natural consequence; but if, on the other hand, they are unworthy of their trust, evil results must ensue.

“A thousand clouds gather together, but occasion no damage. Should they however burst forth, what destruction would be caused!”

However, by the details which we have already explained, we have endeavoured to show that the glory, happiness, honour and peace of man do not consist in personal wealth, but on the contrary, in sublimity of soul, nobility of resolution, extension of education and in the solution of the problem of life.

“Upon me is a garment which the merchant would refuse at a farthing. Yet therein lies a soul unsuspected of the onlookers.”

“Verily in the souls of men lieth their only glory!”

It seems to me, right, that the election of temporary members of the assemblies of the kingdom should depend upon the choice and satisfaction of the public, for members elected by the people are pledged to carry out their will, and to follow out their instructions.

Consequently they are careful to administer impartial justice, and to live according to true religion, so that they may establish a good reputation and keep their dignity in the eyes of the people.

But it must not be imagined from these words, that it is intended to condemn riches or to belaud poverty and need.

On the contrary, riches are earned by personal effort with divine assistance, in various trades, agriculture and the arts, and, rightly administered, are justly deserving of praise, forasmuch as if a wise and discerning man acquire them, they become a ready means of benefit to the state.

And than this, there is no greater ambition, for it is, and has been, of all things, the most acceptable in God's sight.

A man should be a constant source of well-being and contentment, and a ready help to prosperity for multitudes of people.

Yea verily, wealth and riches are worthy of praise if they be justly partitioned amongst the nation, but if some few be possessed of great riches, and many be reduced to poverty, then is the rich man's gold deprived of all its worth.

But if great wealth be employed in the propagation of science, in the establishment of schools and colleges, in the nurture of arts, and in the education of orphans and the care of the needy,

in brief, for the public benefit, then shall its possessor be accounted great, both in the sight of God and man.

Moreover two things are most urgently necessary to the political realm:

1. The Legislative Power.
2. The Executive Power.

The centre of the executive power is the government, and the legislative power lies in the hands of thoughtful and wise men. On the other hand, if these strong pillars and firm foundations are not complete and comprehensive, how can it be supposed that there will be safety and salvation for the nation?

But as, in these latter days, such excellency is rare, the government and the whole body of the nation are in sore need of just and discerning direction. Thus it is of the utmost importance to establish an assembly of learned men, who, being proficient in the different sciences and capable of dealing with all the present and future requirements, will settle the questions in accordance with forbearance and firmness.

The second characteristic of progress and self-perfecting consists in the observance of justice and righteousness.

There must be no respecting of personal advantage and no seeking after personal profit, but, without regarding anyone, a man must keep the just laws and recognize himself as a member of the body of God's people. Except, so far as concerns his spiritual growth, he should not keep aloof from the people, but should reckon the common good, his own. In short, he should think of the whole people as one man, and of himself merely as one of the members of that body.

There should be no diversity of opinion in the body,¹ but all the members should have the same care for one another's welfare, knowing from the beginning, for certain, that, if one member is suffering, it may be a cause of suffering to the whole body.

The third characteristic of progress consists in the earnest and sincere development of public education, in the teaching of all

¹ It is not meant that all should think alike, but that there should be no enmity.

the useful sciences and in encouraging the people to adopt the modern inventions, in extending the spheres of the arts and commerce, and in endeavouring to induce them to adopt the methods by which the country may be enriched. For the majority of the people are ignorant of those valuable and most important remedies which act as an immediate cure for long-standing disease of the body politic.

The other characteristics of progress are, the fear of God, the love of God in the love of his servants, mankind in general, long-suffering, steadfastness, truth, compassion, generosity, bravery, boldness, perseverance, activity, purity, cheerfulness, modesty, zeal, resolution, highmindedness, the cherishing of righteousness and similar feelings; and the lack of these humane characteristics and good feelings is a terrible deficiency.

The growth of the world of politics is like unto the growth of human beings, who primarily spring from the seed, then develop gradually to the stages of coagulated blood and the foetus in the womb, after which come the bones and the flesh, evolving a living being which at last grows up to be the finest production of the whole creation. Such as these are the necessary beginnings of created life and are founded on the Universal Wisdom.

In like manner also the evolution of politics cannot be developed at once from the depth of inefficiency and weakness to the zenith of fitness and perfection; yea, it is necessary that the perfect soul should study and assimilate day and night those methods which would advance the cause of progress, in order that the nation and the state may, day by day, yea, moment by moment, advance and grow in all directions.

When three things are realized on earth by the divine favour, the earth will be endowed with new life, with measureless refinement and beauty; the first is the blowing of the Spring Winds. Secondly, the overflowing mercy of the Showers of Nissan (April). Thirdly, the heat of the bright Sun. When

these three gifts are granted by the Infinite Divine Bounty then, by God's permission, the faded trees and branches, gradually becoming green and flourishing, will be ornamented with every sort of bud, blossom and fruit. In like manner, when the sincere purposes and the justice of the sovereign, the knowledge and perfect political efficiency of the ministers of state and the ambition and enthusiasm of the people are all realized at the same time, then, indeed, the millennium of progress and human perfection, the consummation of the glory and the prosperity of state and nation, will be accomplished.

But if, by delay, is meant that in every generation only a small proportion of the required social advances should be introduced, it is nothing but the old slothfulness and purposelessness over again, and in such a case no result can be the outcome except the repetition of futile discussions. If haste is harmful, purposelessness and slowness are a hundred thousand times more so. Yea, the middle procedure is the best and worthy of praise. Thus, it has been said, "Do you lie between good and bad," which points to the limitation of excess and superfluity. Also, "Do not chain your hand over your neck, and do not stretch it straight out, but act between the two ways."

The most important of all the matters in question, and that with which it is most specially necessary to deal effectively, is the promotion of education. And no freedom or salvation could be imagined in the case of any nation which had not progressed in this greatest and most important point; just as the greatest cause of degradation and decadency of every nation is bigotry and ignorance.

The dissemination of high thoughts is the motive power in the arteries of this transitory world; yea, it is the soul of all peoples. Thoughts are infinite as the sea, and the ways and manners of life are like embankments and dykes against the waves; and not until the sea moves do the waves rise up and cast on shore the pearls of wisdom.

"O Brother, thou art wholly in essence thought;
What is the rest of thee but bones and sinews?"

The thoughts of the people should be turned to whatsoever thing is to-day worthy and deserving of attention. And this cannot be done except by means of the most careful explanations of things, combined with the clearest proof of statements. For the poor people are ignorant of the world, and though no doubt they seek and desire to arrive at prosperity and well-being, they are blinded by the veils of ignorance and remain powerless.

Let it be closely considered, accordingly, that both governments and peoples owe their glory and well-being and freedom to education and civilization. Hence it is necessary that many schools should be opened in all the cities of Persia,¹ even in the villages and small towns, in order that everyone may in every possible way be encouraged to see that the children be taught reading and writing. If necessary, make this even compulsory, for, not until the veins and tendons of the nation stir with life, will any study and adoption of improvements be of any avail; because the nation is like unto the body, zeal and resolution are like unto the soul, so that the soulless body cannot move. (*From "The Mysterious Forces of Civilization"*.)

All the civic affairs and the legislation of material laws for the increasing needs of the enlightened humanity belong to the House of Justice. This, the House of Justice, will be not only a body for the legislation of laws according to the spirit and requirement of the time, but a board of arbitration for the settlement of all disputes arising between peoples. When the Universal House of Justice is organized, the members will do their utmost for the realization of greater cordiality and comity amongst the nations. The laws of Bahá'u'lláh are the unchangeable, organic laws of the Universal House of Justice. They are the very foundation upon which the structure of additional legislation is built. . . . As regards the places for the convening

¹ The treatise from which most of this chapter is taken was addressed to the people of Írán.

of such a general body, it will be decided by the members. The Universal House of Justice has only the legislative function; the executive power belongs to the administrative department of government. At first, National Houses of Justice will be established in every country, and they will elect in turn members to the Universal House of Justice. Again I repeat, the House of Justice, whether National or Universal, has only legislative power, and not executive power. For example, in Europe and America the Parliament or Congress enacts laws, while the Government executes these laws. The House of Justice cannot fulfil two functions at the same time—legislative and executive . . .

Friends of God! Set forth the example of Justice! Justice is a universal quality. From the highest to the lowest, justice should be sacred; from the sovereign to the merchant, the minister of state to the artisan, all must be just. Be just, respect the rights of each man—"do unto others what you would have them do unto you." A workman who commits an injustice is as much to blame as a tyrant. Each one of us can choose between justice and injustice. I hope that you will be just in your relations with others, that you will never harm your fellows, that you will respect the rights of all men and, above all, consider the rights of others before your own. (*From "Star of the West," Vol. 7, No. 15*).

ECONOMICS

ECONOMY is the foundation of human prosperity. The spendthrift is always in trouble. Prodigality on the part of any person is an unpardonable sin. We must never live on others like a parasitic plant. Every person must have a profession, whether it be literary or manual, and must live a clean, manly, honest life, an example of purity to be imitated by others. It is more kingly to be satisfied with a crust of stale bread than to enjoy a sumptuous dinner of many courses, the money for which comes out of the pockets of others. The mind of a contented person is always peaceful and his heart at rest. He is like a monarch ruling over the whole world. How happily such a man helps himself to his frugal meals! How joyfully he takes his walks, how peacefully he sleeps!

The solution of this problem is one of the fundamental principles of Bahá'u'lláh. But it must be solved with justice and not with force. If this problem is not solved lovingly it will result in war. Perfect communism and equality are an impossibility because they would upset the affairs and the order of the world. But there is a fair method which will not leave the poor in such need, nor the rich in such wealth. The poor and the rich, according to their degrees, can live happily, with ease and tranquillity. The first person in the world who had this idea was the king of Sparta. He sacrificed his kingdom for this work. He lived before Alexander the Great was born. This thought came to his mind, that he could render a service which would be higher than all services and become the cause of happiness

to many. Thus he divided the people of Sparta into three divisions. One division consisted of the ancient inhabitants, and they were the farmers. Another division consisted of the industrial people; another were the Greeks, who were originally from Phœnicia. The name of this king was Lycurgus. He desired real equality among these three divisions, and in this manner established a just government. He said that the ancient people, who were the farmers, were free from any obligation except that they had to pay one-tenth of their products and no more. The people of industry and commerce had to pay yearly taxes and nothing else. The third class, who were the nobles and descendants of the rulers, whose occupations were in politics, war, and the defence of the country, had all the land of Sparta. He measured the whole land and divided it equally among them. For example, there were nine thousand of them. He divided all the land in nine thousand equal parts and gave one part to each one of them. He gave one-tenth of the product of each piece of land to the one who owned it. He also made other laws and ordinances for the citizens. When he found that he had accomplished what he wanted, he said: "I am going to Syria, but I am afraid that after I go away you will change my laws. Therefore take an oath that you will not make any change before my return." They took an oath in the temple and assured him that they would never make any change and that they would maintain these laws always until the return of the king. But the king left the temple, travelled and never returned. He gave up his kingdom in order that these laws might be preserved. This equality of distribution, in a short time, became the cause of discord, because one of the men had five children, another three children, and another two children. Differences accrued and the whole thing was upset. Therefore the matter of equality is an impossibility.

But here is the real solution. The rich should be merciful to the poor, but with their free-will, not with force. Should it be with force it would be useless. It should be according to law and not by violence, so that through a general law every one might know his duty. For example, a rich person has a large income and a poor person a small income. To put it in a more

explicit way: a rich person has ten thousand kilos of products, and a poor person has ten kilos. Now is it fair to tax them equally? Nay, rather, the poor person in this case must be exempt from taxes. If the poor person gives one-tenth of his income and the rich person one-tenth of his income, it will be unjust. Thus in this way a law should be made that the poor person who has only ten kilos and needs them all for his necessary food, be exempt from paying taxes. But if the rich person, who has ten thousand kilos, pays one-tenth or two-tenths taxes on his products, it will not be a hardship to him. For example, if he gives two thousand kilos, he will still have eight thousand kilos. If a person has fifty thousand kilos, even though he gives ten thousand kilos he will still have forty thousand kilos. Therefore, laws must be made in this way. These laws must do away with the present system of wages and earnings. If to-day the owners of factories increase the wages of their employees, after a month or a year, they will again cry and strike and ask for more increase. This work has no end.

Now I want to tell you about the law of God. According to the divine law no wages should be given to the employee. Nay, rather, indeed they are partners in every work. For example, the farmers plant near a village. They get products from their cultivation. They take one-tenth from the rich and the poor according to their income. A general store may be built in that village for all the incomes and products to be brought therein. Then it will be considered who is rich and who is poor. The farmers whose incomes are sufficient only for their food and expenses must be free from paying taxes. All products and incomes gathered and collected must be put in the general store. If there is a helpless one in that village his daily needs must be given to him. On the other hand a rich person who needs only fifty kilos of products and still has five hundred thousand kilos, after all his expenses are paid, should be taxed two-tenths and at the end of the year whatever remains in the store should be distributed for the general expenses.

The question of socialization is very important. It will not be solved by strikes for wages. All the governments of the world must be united and organize an assembly, the members of

which should be elected from the parliaments and the nobles of the nations. These must plan, with the utmost wisdom and power, so that neither the capitalists suffer from enormous losses, nor the labourers become needy. In the utmost moderation they should make the law, then announce to the public that the rights of the working people are to be strongly preserved. Also the rights of the capitalists are to be protected. When such a general plan is adopted by the will of both sides, should a strike occur, all the governments of the world collectively should resist it. Otherwise, the work will lead to much destruction, especially in Europe. Terrible things will take place. One of the several causes of a universal European war will be this question. For instance, the owners of properties, mines, and factories should share their incomes with their employees, and give a certain fair percentage of their products to their workingmen, in order that the employees may receive, besides their wages, some of the general income of the factory, so that the employee may strive with his soul in the work.

No more trusts will remain in the future. The question of the trusts will be wiped away entirely. Also, every factory that has ten thousand shares, will give two thousand shares of these ten thousand to its employees, and will write them in their names so that they may have them, and the rest will belong to the capitalists. Then at the end of the month, or year, whatever they may earn, after the expenses and wages are paid, according to the number of shares, should be divided among both. In reality, so far, great injustice has befallen the common people. Laws must be made because it is impossible for the labourers to be satisfied with the present system. They will strike every month and every year. Finally the capitalists will lose. In the ancient times a strike occurred among the Turkish soldiers. They said to the government: "Our wages are very small and they should be increased." The government was forced to give them their demands. Shortly afterwards they struck again. Finally all the incomes went to the pockets of the soldiers, to the extent that they killed the king, saying: "Why didst thou not increase the income so that we might have received more?"

It is impossible for a country to live easily without laws. To solve this problem strong laws must be made, so that all the governments of the world may be the protectors thereof.

The essence of this matter is that strikes are conducive to destruction, but laws are the cause of life. Laws must be framed. Demands should be according to the laws, and not with strikes, force and harshness. To-night you have spoken of politics, but we are not accustomed to talk on politics. We speak about the world of spirit. We speak of the wealth of the kingdom, not of the wealth of the nether world. (*From "Star of the West," Vol. 7, No. 9.*)

Economics must commence with the farmer and thence reach out and embrace the other classes, inasmuch as the number of farmers is greater than that of other groups. Therefore it is becoming that the economic problem be solved for the farmer first, for the farmer is the first active agent in the body politic.

In brief: from among the wise men of every village a Board should be organized, and the affairs of that village should be under the control of the Board. Likewise, a general storehouse should be founded and a secretary appointed for it. At the time of the harvest, with the approval of the members of the Board, a determined percentage of the entire harvest should be appropriated for the storehouse.

This storehouse is to have seven revenues: tithes, taxes on animals, wealth without inheritors, all things whose owner cannot be discovered, a third of all treasure found in the ground, a third of the output of the mines, and voluntary contributions.

On the other hand, there are seven expenditures. First, the general running expenses of the institution, salaries, etc., and the administration of public safety, including a department of hygiene. Second, tithes to the general government. Third, taxes on animals for the State. Fourth, support of an orphanage. Fifth, support of cripples and incurables. Sixth, support

of educational institutions. Seventh, supplying any deficiency in the expenses of the poor.

If anything is left in the storehouse, that must be transferred to the general treasury of the nation for general national expenses.

When such a system is established, each individual member of the body politic will live in the utmost comfort and happiness, and the degrees will be preserved. There will be no disturbance of these degrees whatsoever, for they are the essential needs of the body politic.

The body politic is like an army. An army needs a commander-in-chief, colonel, captain, lieutenant, and private. It is impossible for all to enjoy the same rank; preservation of degrees is necessary, but each member of that arm must live in the utmost comfort and ease.

Likewise a city is in need of a mayor, judge, merchant, banker, artisan and farmers. Undoubtedly these degrees should be preserved, otherwise the public order would be disturbed.

The government of a country should make laws which conform to the *divine* law.

You have questioned me about strikes. This question is, and will be for a long time, the subject of great difficulties. Strikes are due to two causes. One is the extreme sharpness and rapacity of the capitalists and manufacturers; the other, the excesses, the avidity and ill-will of the workmen and artisans. It is therefore necessary to remedy these two causes.

But the principal cause of these difficulties lies in the laws of the present civilization; for they lead to a small number of individuals accumulating incomparable fortunes, beyond their needs, whilst the greater number remains destitute, stripped and in the greatest misery. This is contrary to justice, to humanity, to equity; it is the height of iniquity, the opposite to what causes divine satisfaction.

This contrast is peculiar to the world of man; with other creatures, that is to say with nearly all animals, there is a kind of justice and equality. Thus in a shepherd's flock of sheep, in a

troop of deer in the country, among the birds of the prairie, of the plain, of the hill or of the orchard, almost every animal receives a just share based on equality. With them such a difference in the means of existence is not to be found: so they live in the most complete peace and joy.

It is quite otherwise with the human species, which persists in the greatest error, and in absolute iniquity. Consider an individual who has amassed treasures by colonizing a country for his profit: he has obtained an incomparable fortune, and has secured profits and incomes which flow like a river, whilst a hundred thousand unfortunate people, weak and powerless, are in need of a mouthful of bread. There is neither equality nor brotherhood. So you see that general peace and joy are destroyed, the welfare of humanity is partially annihilated, and that collective life is fruitless. Indeed, fortune, honours, commerce, industry, are in the hands of some industrialists, whilst other people are submitted to quite a series of difficulties and to limitless troubles: they have neither advantages nor profits, nor comforts, nor peace.

Then rules and laws should be established to regulate the excessive fortunes of certain private individuals, and limit the misery of millions of the poor masses; thus a certain moderation would be obtained. However, absolute equality is just as impossible, for absolute equality in fortunes, honours, commerce, agriculture, industry would end in a want of comfort, in discouragement, in disorganisation of the means of existence, and in universal disappointment: the order of the community would be quite destroyed. Thus, there is a great wisdom in the fact that equality is not imposed by law: it is, therefore, preferable for moderation to do its work. The main point is, by means of laws and regulations to hinder the constitution of the excessive fortunes of certain individuals, and to protect the essential needs of the masses. For instance, the manufacturers and the industrialists heap up a treasure each day, and the poor artisans do not gain their daily sustenance: that is the height of iniquity, and no just man can accept it. Therefore, laws and regulations should be established which would permit the workmen to receive from the factory owner their wages and a share

in the fourth or the fifth part of the profits, according to the wants of the factory; or in some other way the body of workmen and the manufacturers should share equitably the profits and advantages. Indeed, the direction and administration of affairs come from the owner of the factory, and the work and labour from the body of the workmen. In other words, the workmen should receive wages which assure them an adequate support, and when they cease work, becoming feeble or helpless, they should receive from the owner of the factory a sufficient pension. The wages should be high enough to satisfy the workmen with the amount they receive, so that they may be able to put a little aside for days of want and helplessness.

When matters will be thus fixed, the owner of the factory will no longer put aside daily a treasure which he has absolutely no need of (without taking into consideration that if the fortune is disproportionate, the capitalist succumbs under a formidable burden, and gets into the greatest difficulties and troubles; the administration of an excessive fortune is very difficult, and exhausts man's natural strength). And, the workmen and artisans will no longer be in the greatest misery and want, they will no longer be submitted to the worst privations at the end of their life.

It is, then, clear and evident that the repartition of excessive fortunes amongst a small number of individuals, while the masses are in misery is an iniquity and an injustice. In the same way, absolute equality would be an obstacle to life, to welfare, to order and to the peace of humanity. In such a question a just medium is preferable. It lies in the capitalists being moderate in the acquisition of their profits, and in their having a consideration for the welfare of the poor and needy; that is to say, that the workmen and artisans receive a fixed and established daily wage, and have a share in the general profits of the factory.

It would be well, with regard to the social rights of manufacturers, workmen and artisans, that laws be established, giving moderate profits to manufacturers, and to workmen the necessary means of existence and security for the future. Thus, when they become feeble and cease working, get old and

helpless, and die leaving children under age, these children will not be annihilated by excess of poverty. And it is from the income of the factory itself, to which they have a right, that they will derive a little of the means of existence.

In the same way, the workmen should no longer rebel and revolt, nor demand beyond their rights; they should no longer go out on strike, they should be obedient and submissive, and not ask for impudent wages. But the mutual rights of both associated parties will be fixed and established according to custom by just and impartial laws. In case one of the two parties should transgress, the courts of justice would have to give judgment, and by an efficacious fine put an end to the transgression; thus order will be re-established, and the difficulties settled. The interference of courts of justice and of the Government in difficulties pending between manufacturers and workmen is legal, for the reason that current affairs between workmen and manufacturers cannot be compared with ordinary affairs between private persons, which do not concern the public, and with which the Government should not occupy itself. In reality, although they appear to be matters between private persons, these difficulties between patrons and workmen produce a general detriment; for commerce, industry, agriculture and the general affairs of the country are all intimately linked together. If one of these suffers an abuse, the detriment affects the mass. Thus the difficulties between workmen and manufacturers become a cause of general detriment.

The court of justice and the Government have therefore the right of interference. When a difficulty occurs between two individuals with reference to private rights, it is necessary for a third to settle the question: this is the part of the Government: then the question of strikes—which cause troubles in the country and are often connected with the excessive vexations of the workmen, as well as with the rapacity of manufacturers—how could it remain neglected?

Good God! is it possible that, seeing one of his fellow-creatures starving, destitute of everything, a man can rest and live comfortably in his luxurious mansion? He who meets another in the greatest misery, can he enjoy his fortune? That is why, in

the Religion of God, it is prescribed and established that wealthy men each year give over a certain part of their fortunes for the maintenance of the poor and unfortunate. That is the foundation of the Religion of God, and the most essential of the Commandments.

As now man is not forced nor obliged by the Government, if by the natural tendency of his good heart, with the greatest spirituality, he goes to this expense for the poor, this will be a thing very much praised, approved and pleasing.

Such is the meaning of the good works in the Divine Books and Tablets. (*From "Some Answered Questions"*)

The question has been asked "Will the spiritual progress of the world equal and keep pace with material progress in the future?" In a living organism the full measure of its development is not known or realized at the time of its inception or birth. Development and progression imply gradual stages or degrees. For example, spiritual advancement may be likened to the light of the early dawn. Although this dawn light is dim and pale, a wise man who views the march of the sunrise at its very beginning can foretell the ascendancy of the sun in its full glory and effulgence. He knows for a certainty that it is the beginning of its manifestation and that later it will assume great power and potency. Again, for example, if he takes a seed and observes that it is sprouting, he will know assuredly that it will ultimately become a tree. Now is the beginning of the manifestation of the power spiritual, and inevitably its potency of life forces will assume greater and greater proportions. Therefore this twentieth century is the dawn or beginning of spiritual illumination, and it is evident that day by day it will advance. It will reach such a degree that spiritual effulgences will overcome the physical, so that divine susceptibilities will overpower material intelligence and the heavenly light dispel and banish earthly darkness. Divine healing shall purify all ills and the cloud of mercy will pour down its rain. The Sun of Reality will shine and all the earth shall put on its beautiful

green carpet. Among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form, the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs and human equality will be universally established. The poor will receive a great bestowal and the rich attain eternal happiness. For although at the present time the rich enjoy the greatest luxury and comfort, they are nevertheless deprived of eternal happiness; for eternal happiness is contingent upon giving and the poor are everywhere in the state of abject need. Through the manifestation of God's great equity the poor of the world will be rewarded and assisted fully, and there will be a readjustment in the economic conditions of mankind so that in the future there will not be the abnormally rich nor the abject poor. The rich will enjoy the privilege of this new economic condition as well as the poor, for owing to certain provision and restriction they will not be able to accumulate so much as to be burdened by its management, while the poor will be relieved from the stress of want and misery. The rich will enjoy his palace and the poor will have his comfortable cottage.

The essence of the matter is that divine justice will become manifest in human conditions and affairs, and all mankind will find comfort and enjoyment in life. It is not meant that all will be equal, for inequality in degree and capacity is a property of nature. Necessarily there will be rich people and also those who will be in want of their livelihood, but in the aggregate community there will be equalization and readjustment of values and interests. In the future there will be no very rich nor extremely poor. There will be an equilibrium of interests, and a condition will be established which will make both rich and poor comfortable and content. This will be an eternal and blessed outcome of the glorious twentieth century which will be realized universally. The significance of it is that the glad tidings of great joy revealed in the promises of the holy books will be fulfilled. Await ye this consummation.

(Talk given at Brotherhood Church, Jersey City, N.J., May 19th, 1912)

The Bahá'í Cause covers all economic and social questions under the heading and ruling of its laws. The essence of the Bahá'í spirit is that in order to establish a better social order and economic condition, there must be allegiance to the laws and principles of government. Under the laws which are to govern the world, the Socialists may justly demand human rights but without resort to force and violence. The governments will enact these laws, establishing just legislation and economics in order that all humanity may enjoy full measure of welfare and privilege; but this will always be according to legal protection and procedure. Without legislative administration, rights and demands fail and the welfare of the commonwealth cannot be realized. To-day the method of demand is the strike and resort to force which is manifestly wrong and destructive of human foundations. Rightful privilege and demand must be set forth in laws and regulations.

While thousands are considering these questions, we have more essential purposes. The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine in nature and are associated with the world of the heart and spirit. This is fully explained in the Bahá'í teaching, and without knowledge of its principles no improvement in the economic state can be realized. The Bahá'ís will bring about this improvement and betterment, but not through sedition and appeal to physical force; not through warfare, but welfare. Hearts must be so cemented together, love must become so dominant, that the rich shall most willingly extend assistance to the poor and take steps to establish these economic adjustments permanently. If it is accomplished in this way it will be most praiseworthy, because then it will be for the sake of God and in the pathway of his service. For example, it will be as if the rich inhabitants of a city should say, "It is neither just nor lawful that we should possess great wealth while there is abject poverty in this community," and then willingly give their wealth to the poor, retaining only as much as will enable them to live comfortably.

Strive therefore to create love in the hearts in order that they may become glowing and radiant. When that love is shining, it will permeate other hearts even as this electric light illumines

its surroundings. When the love of God is established, everything else will be realized. This is the true foundation of all economics. Reflect upon it. Endeavour to become the cause of the attraction of souls rather than to enforce minds. Manifest true economics to the people. Show what love is, what kindness is, what true severance is and generosity. This is the important thing for you to do. Act in accordance with the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. All His books will be translated. Now is the time for you to live in accordance with His words. Let your deeds be the real translation of their meaning. Economic questions will not attract hearts. The love of God alone will attract them. Economic questions are most interesting, but the power which moves, controls and attracts the hearts of men is the love of God. (*Talk given at Hotel Victoria, Boston, Mass., July 23rd, 1912.*)

MAN

MAN in the world of existence has traversed certain degrees until he has arrived at the world of manhood. In every degree he has attained the capacity for advancement to the next degree. While in the mineral kingdom he was attaining the capacity for promotion into the vegetable kingdom. In the vegetable kingdom he has received preparation and capacity for the animal kingdom. He has come from the vegetable kingdom to the animal and then on to the human kingdom.

In the beginning of his life man was in the matrix world. In the world of the matrix he obtained capacity and preparation for this world. The forces and powers necessary for this world he attained there. In this world he needed eyes; he received them potentially, in the other. He needed ears; therefore he obtained them in the world of the matrix. All the powers he needed in this world he attained potentially in the world of the matrix. In the world of the matrix, therefore, he was prepared for this world; so that when he came to this world he found that all the necessary forces were ready—all his needs for material sustenance were provided.

Therefore in this world also he must prepare himself and get ready for the life hereafter. That of which he is in need in the world of the Kingdom he must obtain here. Just as he prepared himself by acquiring the forces necessary in this world in the world of the matrix, so likewise it is necessary that all needful in the Kingdom, all the forces of the Kingdom—must be acquired in this world.

What is he in need of in the Kingdom after he is transferred from this world to the other world? That world is a world of

sanctity, therefore it is necessary that he acquire sanctity in this world. In that world there is need of radiance, therefore radiance must be acquired in this world. In that world there is need of spirituality. In this world he must acquire spirituality. In that world faith and assurance, the knowledge of God, the love of God, are needed. These he must acquire in this world so that after he ascends from this mortal to that immortal world he shall find all that is needful in that life eternal ready for him.

It is self-evident that that world is a world of Lights; therefore there is need for illumination. That world is a world of Love! hence love of God is needed. That world is a world of perfections; virtues or perfections must be acquired. That world is a world of the Breaths of the Holy Spirit and in this world must they be acquired. That world is a world of the Life Eternal. In this world must he acquire it. But how can he? By what means can he acquire these things? How is he to obtain these merciful powers?

First,—through the knowledge of God. Second,—through the love of God. Third,—through faith. Fourth,—through philanthropic deeds. Fifth,—through self-sacrifice. Sixth,—through severance from this world. Seventh,—through sanctity and holiness. Unless he obtain these forces, unless he attain to these requirements, surely he will be deprived of the Life Eternal. But if he attain the knowledge of God, becomes ignited through the fire of the love of God, witnesses the great and mighty signs, becomes the cause of love among mankind and lives in the utmost state of sanctity and holiness, surely he shall attain to second birth, will be baptized through the Holy Spirit and witness the Life Eternal.

There are in the world of humanity three degrees; those of the body, the soul, and spirit.

The body is the physical or animal degree of man. From the bodily point of view man is a sharer of the animal kingdom. The bodies alike of men and animals are composed of elements held together by the law of attraction.

Like the animal, man possesses the faculties of the senses, is

subject to heat, cold, hunger, thirst, etc.; unlike the animal, man has a rational soul, the human intelligence.

This intelligence of man is the intermediary between his body and his spirit.

When man allows the spirit, through his soul, to enlighten his understanding, then does he contain all creation; because man, being the culmination of all that went before and thus superior to all previous evolutions, contains all the lower world within himself. Illumined by the spirit through the instrumentality of the soul, man's radiant intelligence makes him the crowning-point of creation.

But on the other hand, when man does not open his mind and heart to the blessing of the spirit, but turns his soul towards the material side, towards the bodily part of his nature, then is he fallen from his high place and he becomes inferior to the inhabitants of the lower animal kingdom. In this case the man is in a sorry plight! For if the spiritual qualities of the soul, open to the breath of the divine spirit, are never used, they become atrophied, enfeebled, and at last incapable; whilst the soul's material qualities alone being exercised, they become terribly powerful—and the unhappy, misguided man becomes more savage, more unjust, more vile, more cruel, more malevolent than the lower animals themselves. All his aspirations and desires being strengthened by the lower side of the soul's nature, he becomes more and more brutal, until his whole being is in no way superior to that of the beasts that perish. Men such as this plan to work evil, to hurt and to destroy; they are entirely without the spirit of divine compassion, for the celestial quality of the soul has been dominated by that of the material. If, on the contrary, the spiritual nature of the soul has been so strengthened that it holds the material side in subjection, then does the man approach the divine; his humanity becomes so glorified that the virtues of the celestial assembly are manifested in him; he radiates the mercy of God, he stimulates the spiritual progress of mankind, for he becomes a lamp to show light on their path.

You perceive how the soul is the intermediary between the body and the spirit. In like manner is this tree the intermediary between the seed and the fruit. When the fruit of the tree

appears and becomes ripe, then we know that the tree is perfect; if the tree bore no fruit it would be merely a useless growth, serving no purpose.

When a soul has in it the life of the spirit, then does it bring forth good fruit and become a divine tree. I wish you to try to understand this example. I hope that the unspeakable goodness of God will so strengthen you that the celestial quality of your soul, which relates it to the spirit, will for ever dominate the material side, so entirely ruling the senses that your soul will approach the perfection of the heavenly Kingdom. May your faces, being steadfastly set towards the divine light, become so luminous that all your thoughts, words, and actions will shine with the spiritual radiance dominating your souls, so that in the gatherings of the world you will show perfection in your life.

Some men's lives are solely occupied with the things of this world; their minds are so circumscribed by exterior manners and traditional interests that they are blind to any other realm of existence, to the spiritual significance of all things. They think and dream of earthly fame, of material progress. Sensuous delights and comfortable surroundings bound their horizon, their highest ambitions centre in successes of worldly conditions and circumstances. They curb not their lower propensities; they eat, drink, and sleep. Like the animal, they have no thought beyond their own physical well-being. It is true that these necessities must be despatched. Life is a load which must be carried on while we are on earth, but the cares of the lower things of life should not be allowed to monopolize all the thoughts and aspirations of a human being. The heart's ambitions should ascend to a more glorious goal, mental activity should rise to higher levels. Men should hold in their souls the vision of celestial perfection, and there prepare a dwelling-place for the inexhaustible bounty of the divine spirit.

Let your ambition be the achievement on earth of a heavenly civilization! I ask for you the supreme blessing, that you may be so filled with the vitality of the heavenly spirit that you may be the cause of life to the world.

(Talk given in Paris, November 17th, 1913.)

Some one desires an explanation of the terms soul, mind and spirit. The terminology of ancient and modern philosophers differs. According to the great ancient philosophers the words soul, mind and spirit implied the underlying principles of life; the essence was expressed under different names, and these three terms designated the various functions of the absolute reality, or the operations of the one single essence; for instance, when they dealt with the sensation of emotion they called it the soul; when they desired to express that power which discovers the reality of phenomena they gave it the appellation of mind, and when they discussed the consciousness which pervades the world of creation they gave it the title of spirit.

A man sees, hears, or speaks—seeing, hearing and speaking being the different functions of the same power or reality which animates him; the eye being the organ of sight, the ear of hearing and the tongue of speech. The one invisible primal essence had various names, but this in brief is the synopsis of the ancient philosophy.

We make a differentiation in these subjects. When we speak of the soul we mean the motive power of this physical body which lives under its entire control in accordance with its dictates. If the soul identifies itself with the material world it remains dark, for in the natural world there is corruption, aggression, struggles for existence, greed, darkness, transgression and vice. If the soul remains in this station and moves along these paths it will be the recipient of this darkness; but if it becomes the recipient of the graces of the world of mind, its darkness will be transformed into light, its tyranny into justice, its ignorance into wisdom, its aggression into loving kindness, until it reach the apex. Then there will not remain any struggle for existence. Man will become free from egotism; he will be released from the material world; he will become the personification of justice and virtue, for a sanctified soul illumines humanity and is an honour to mankind, conferring life upon the children of men and suffering all nations to attain to the station of perfect unity. Therefore, we can apply the name “holy soul” to such a one.

There is, however, a faculty in man which unfolds to his vision the secrets of existence. It gives him a power whereby he may investigate the reality of every object. It leads man on and on to the luminous station of divine sublimity and frees him from all the fetters of self, causing him to ascend to the pure heaven of sanctity. This is the power of the mind, for the soul is not, of itself, capable of unrolling the mysteries of phenomena; but the mind can accomplish this and therefore it is a power superior to the soul.

There is still another power which is differentiated from that of the soul and mind. This third power is the spirit which is an emanation from the divine Bestower; it is the effulgence of the sun of reality, the radiation of the celestial world, the spirit of faith, the spirit His Holiness the Christ refers to when he says, "Those that are born of the flesh are flesh, and those that are born of the spirit are spirit." The spirit is the axis round which the eternal life revolves. It is conducive to everlasting glory and is the cause of the exaltation of humanity.

In another instance His Holiness the Christ says, "Whosoever has not received a portion of the spirit is as dead. Let the dead bury their dead." This means that although the souls of humanity are living, yet if they are deprived of contact with the spirit they are as dead. In another place Christ says, "You must be baptized with the spirit." This spirit of faith is the flame of reality, the life of humanity and the cause of eternal illumination. It inspires man to attain the virtues and perfections of the divine world.

It is my hope that each one of you may become conscious of this flame.

Absolute repose does not exist in nature. All things either make progress or lose ground. Everything moves forward or backward, nothing is without motion. From his birth, a man progresses physically until he reaches maturity, then, having arrived at the prime of his life, he begins to decline, the strength and powers of his body decrease, and he gradually arrives at the hour of death. Likewise a plant progresses from the seed to

maturity, then its life begins to lessen until it fades and dies. A bird soars to a certain height and, having reached the highest possible point in its flight, begins its descent to earth.

Thus it is evident that movement is essential to all existence. All material things progress to a certain point, then begin to decline. This is the law which governs the whole physical creation.

Now let us consider the soul. We have seen that movement is essential to existence; nothing that has life is without motion. All creation, whether of the mineral, vegetable or animal kingdom, is compelled to obey the law of motion; it must either ascend or descend. But with the human soul, there is no decline. Its only movement is towards perfection; growth and progress alone constitute the motion of the soul.

Divine perfection is infinite, therefore the progress of the soul is also infinite. From the very birth of a human being the soul progresses, the intellect grows and knowledge increases. When the body dies the soul lives on. All the differing degrees of created physical beings are limited, but the soul is limitless.

In all religions the belief exists that the soul survives the death of the body. Intercessions are sent up for the beloved dead, prayers are said for their progress and for the forgiveness of their sins. If the soul perished with the body all this would have no meaning. Further, if it were not possible for the soul to advance towards perfection after it had been released from the body, of what avail are all these loving prayers of devotion?

We read in the sacred writings that "all good works are found again."¹ Now, if the soul did not survive, this also would mean nothing.

The very fact that our spiritual instinct, surely never given in vain, prompts us to pray for the welfare of those, our loved ones, who have passed out of the material world; does it not bear witness to the continuance of their existence?

In the world of spirit there is no retrogression. The world of mortality is a world of contradictions, of opposites; motion being compulsory everything must either go forward or retreat. In the realm of spirit there is no retreat possible, all movement is bound to be towards a perfect state. "Progress" is the

¹ *i.e.*—All good actions bring their own reward.

expression of spirit in the world of matter. The intelligence of man, his reasoning powers, his knowledge, his scientific achievements, all these, being manifestations of the spirit, partake of the inevitable law of spiritual progress and are, therefore, of necessity, immortal.

My hope for you is that you will progress in the world of spirit, as well as in the world of matter; that your intelligence will develop, your knowledge will augment, and your understanding be widened.

You must ever press forward, never standing still; avoid stagnation, the first step to a backward movement, to decay.

The whole physical creation is perishable. These material bodies are composed of atoms; when these atoms begin to separate decomposition sets in, then comes what we call death. This composition of atoms, which constitutes the body or mortal element of any created being, is temporary. When the power of attraction, which holds these atoms together, is withdrawn, the body, as such, ceases to exist.

With the soul it is different. The soul is not a combination of elements, it is not composed of many atoms, it is of one indivisible substance and therefore eternal. It is entirely out of the order of the physical creation; it is immortal.

Scientific philosophy has demonstrated that a *simple* element ("simple," meaning "not composed") is indestructible, eternal. The soul, not being a composition of elements, is, in character, as a simple element, and therefore cannot cease to exist.

The soul, being of that one indivisible substance, can suffer neither disintegration nor destruction, therefore there is no reason for its coming to an end. All things living show signs of their existence, and it follows that these signs could not of themselves exist if that which they express or to which they testify had no being. A thing which does not exist, can, of course, give no sign of its existence. The manifold signs of the existence of the spirit are for ever before us.

The traces of the spirit of Jesus Christ, the influence of His divine teaching, is present with us to-day, and is everlasting.

A non-existent thing, it is agreed, cannot be seen by signs. In order to write a man must exist—one who does not exist cannot

write. Writing is, in itself, a sign of the writer's soul and intelligence. The Sacred Writings (with ever the same teaching) prove the continuity of the spirit.

Consider the aim of creation; is it possible that all is created to evolve and develop through countless ages with this small goal in view—a few years of a man's life on earth? Is it not unthinkable that this should be the final aim of existence?

The mineral evolves till it is absorbed in the life of the plant, the plant progresses till finally it loses its life in that of the animal; the animal, in its turn, forming part of the food of man, is absorbed into human life.

Thus, man is shown to be the sum of all creation, the superior of all created beings, the goal to which countless ages of existence have progressed.

At the best, man spends four-score years and ten in this world—a short time indeed!

Does a man cease to exist when he leaves the body? If his life comes to an end, then all the previous evolution is useless, all has been for nothing. Can one imagine that creation has no greater aim than this?

The soul is eternal, immortal.

Materialists say, "Where is the soul? What is it? We cannot see it, neither can we touch it."

This is how we must answer them:—However much the mineral may progress, it cannot comprehend the vegetable world. Now, that lack of comprehension does not prove the non-existence of the plant.

To however great a degree the plant may have evolved, it is unable to understand the animal world; this ignorance is no proof that the animal does not exist.

The animal, be he ever so highly developed, cannot imagine the intelligence of man, neither can he realize the nature of his soul. But, again, this does not prove that man is without intellect, or without soul. It only demonstrates this, that one form of existence is incapable of comprehending a form superior to itself.

This flower may be unconscious of such a being as man, but the fact of its ignorance does not prevent the existence of humanity.

In the same way, if materialists do not believe in the existence of the soul, their unbelief does not prove that there is no such realm as the world of spirit. The very existence of man's intelligence proves his immortality; moreover, darkness proves the presence of light, for without light there would be no shadow. Poverty proves the existence of riches, for, without riches, how could we measure poverty? Ignorance proves that knowledge exists, for without knowledge how could there be ignorance?

Therefore the idea of mortality presupposes the existence of immortality—for if there were no life eternal, there would be no way of measuring the life of this world.

If the spirit were not immortal, how could the Manifestations of God endure such terrible trials?

Why did Christ Jesus suffer the fearful death on the cross?

Why did Muḥammad bear persecutions?

Why did the Báb make the supreme sacrifice and why did Bahá'u'lláh pass the years of his life in prison?

Why should all this suffering have been, if not to prove the everlasting life of the spirit?

Christ suffered, he accepted all His trials because of the immortality of His spirit. If a man reflects he will understand the spiritual significance of the law of progress; how all moves from the inferior to the superior degree.

It is only a man without intelligence who, after considering these things, can imagine that the great scheme of creation should suddenly cease to progress, that evolution should come to such an inadequate end!

Materialists who reason in this way, and contend that we are unable to *see* the world of spirit, or to perceive the blessings of God, are surely like the animals who have no understanding; having eyes they see not, ears they have, but do not hear. And this lack of sight and hearing is a proof of nothing but their own inferiority; of whom we read in the Qur'án, "They are men who are blind and deaf to the spirit." They do not use that great gift of God, the power of the understanding, by which they might see with the eyes of the spirit, hear with spiritual ears and also comprehend with a divinely enlightened heart.

The inability of the materialistic mind to grasp the idea of the life eternal is no proof of the non-existence of that life.

The comprehension of that other life depends on our spiritual birth.

My prayer for you is that your spiritual faculties and aspirations may daily increase, and that you will never allow the material senses to veil from your eyes the glories of the heavenly illumination. (*Talk given in Paris, November 10th, 1913.*)

In man there are two natures; his spiritual or higher nature and his material or lower nature. In one he approaches God, in the other he lives for the world alone. Signs of both these natures are to be found in men. In his material aspect he expresses untruth, cruelty and injustice; all these are the outcome of his lower nature. The attributes of his divine nature are shown forth in love, mercy, kindness, truth and justice, one and all being expressions of his higher nature. Every good habit, every noble quality belongs to man's spiritual nature, whereas all his imperfections and sinful actions are born of his material nature. If a man's divine nature dominates his human nature, we have a saint.

Man has the power both to do good and to do evil; if his power for good predominates and his inclinations to do wrong are conquered, then man in truth may be called a saint. But if, on the contrary, he rejects the things of God and allows his evil passions to conquer him, then he is no better than a mere animal.

Saints are men who have freed themselves from the world of matter and who have overcome sin. They live in the world but are not of it, their thoughts being continually in the world of the spirit. Their lives are spent in holiness, and their deeds show forth love, justice and godliness. They are illumined from on high; they are as bright and shining lamps in the dark places of the earth. These are the saints of God. The apostles, who were the disciples of Jesus Christ, were just as other men are; they, like their fellows, were attracted by the things of the

world, and each thought only of his own advantage. They knew little of justice, nor were the divine perfections found in their midst. But when they followed Christ and believed in Him, their ignorance gave place to understanding, cruelty was changed to justice, falsehood to truth, darkness into light. They had been worldly, they became spiritual and divine. They had been children of darkness, they became sons of God, they became saints. Strive therefore to follow in their steps, leaving all worldly things behind, and striving to attain to the spiritual kingdom.

Pray to God that He may strengthen you in divine virtue, so that you may be as angels in the world, and beacons of light to disclose the mysteries of the Kingdom to those with understanding hearts.

God sent His prophets into the world to teach and enlighten man, to explain to him the mystery of the power of the Holy Spirit, to enable him to reflect the light, and so, in his turn, to be the source of guidance to others. The Heavenly Books, the Bible, the Qur'án, and the other holy writings have been given by God as guides into the paths of divine virtue, love, justice and peace.

Therefore I say unto you that you should strive to follow the counsels of these blessed Books, and so order your lives that you may, following the examples set before you, become yourselves the saints of the Most High! (*Talk given in Paris, November 1st, 1913.*)

Will is the centre or focus of human understanding. We must will to know God, just as we must will in order to possess the life He has given us. The human will must be subdued and trained into the will of God. It is a great power to have a strong will, but a greater power to give that will to God. The will is what we do, the understanding is what we know. Will and understanding must be one in the Cause of God.

Man is not a pre-existent being, but a newly produced and created being, consisting of two aspects or portions, the spiritual

and material, which may be likened to hell and paradise; and he does not know whether he will be in hell or paradise. For instance, man is composed of evil as well as good, of darkness as well as light, of guidance as well as misleading; the most evil character is to be found in man, while the greatest and most excellent character is also found in him. We must see that the good qualities gain victory over the bad. If so, the man will become an "angel," but if the bad qualities conquer the good ones, then he will become a "devil." If the light conquers the darkness in man, of course he will be true light, and if the darkness conquers the light, he will be of the material.

Just as the earth attracts everything to the centre of gravity, and every object thrown upward into space will come down, so also material ideas and worldly thoughts attract man to the centre of self. Anger, passion, ignorance, prejudice, greed, envy, covetousness, jealousy and suspicion prevent man from ascending to the realms of holiness, imprisoning him in the claws of self and the cage of egotism. The physical man, unassisted by the divine power, trying to escape from one of these invisible enemies, will unconsciously fall into the hands of another. No sooner does he attempt to soar upward than the density of the love of self, like the power of gravity, draws him to the earth. The only power that is capable of delivering man from this captivity is the power of the breaths of the Holy Spirit. The attraction of the power of the Holy Spirit is so effective that it keeps man ever on the path of upward ascension. The malevolent forces of no enemy will touch those sanctified souls who have made this universal power their guide. With tranquil heart and assured spirit they are flying upward day and night, journeying through the illimitable space of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

God's greatest gift to man is that of intellect, or understanding.

The understanding is the power by which man acquires his knowledge of the several kingdoms of creation, and of various stages of existence, as well as of much which is invisible.

Possessing this gift, he is, in himself, the sum of earlier creations—he is able to get into touch with those kingdoms; and by this gift, he can frequently, through his scientific knowledge, reach out with prophetic vision.

Intellect is, in truth, the most precious gift bestowed upon man by the divine bounty. Man alone, among created beings, has this wonderful power.

All creation, preceding man, is bound by the stern law of nature. The great sun, the multitudes of stars, the oceans and seas, the mountains, the rivers, the trees, and all animals, great or small—none are able to evade obedience to nature's law.

Man alone has freedom, and, by his understanding or intellect, has been able to gain control of and adapt some of those natural laws to his own needs. By the power of his intellect he has discovered means by which he not only traverses great continents in express trains and crosses vast oceans in ships, but, like the fish, he travels under water in submarines, and, imitating the birds, he flies through the air in airships.

Man has succeeded in using electricity in several ways—for light, for motive power, for sending messages from one end of the earth to the other—and by electricity he can even hear a voice many miles away.

By this gift of understanding or intellect he has also been able to use the rays of the sun to picture people and things, and even to capture the form of distant heavenly bodies.

We perceive in what numerous ways man has been able to bend the powers of nature to his will.

How grievous it is to see how man has used his God-given gift to frame instruments of war, for breaking the commandment of God, "Thou shalt not kill," and for defying Christ's injunction to "Love one another."

God gave this power to man that it might be used for the advancement of civilization, for the good of humanity, to increase love and concord and peace. But man prefers to use this gift to destroy instead of to build, for injustice and

oppression, for hatred and discord and devastation, for the destruction of his fellow-creatures, whom Christ has commanded that he should love as himself!

I hope that you will use *your* understanding to promote the unity and tranquillity of mankind, to give enlightenment and civilization to the people, to produce love in all around you, and to bring about the Universal Peace.

Study the sciences, acquire more and more knowledge. Assuredly one may learn to the end of one's life! Use your knowledge always for the benefit of others; so may war cease from the face of this beautiful earth, and a glorious edifice of peace and concord be raised. Strive that your high ideals may be realized in the Kingdom of God, on earth, as they will be in heaven. (*Talk given in Paris, October 26th, 1913.*)

According to divine philosophy, there are two important and universal conditions in the world of material phenomena; one which concerns life, the other concerning death; one relative to existence, the other non-existence; one manifest in composition, the other in decomposition. Some define existence as the expression of reality or being, and non-existence as non-being, imagining that death is annihilation. This is a mistaken idea, for total annihilation is an impossibility. At most, composition is ever subject to decomposition or disintegration; that is to say, existence implies the grouping of material elements in a form or body, and non-existence is simply the decomposing of these groupings. This is the law of creation in its endless forms and infinite variety of expression. Certain elements have formed the composite creature man. This composite association of the elements in the form of a human body is therefore subject to disintegration which we call death, but after disintegration the elements themselves persist unchanged. Therefore total annihilation is an impossibility, and existence can never become non-existence. This would be equivalent to saying that light can become darkness, which is manifestly untrue and impossible.

As existence can never become non-existence, there is no death for man; nay, rather, man is everlasting and everliving. The rational proof of this is that the atoms of the material elements are transferable from one form of existence to another, from one degree and kingdom to another, lower or higher. For example, an atom of the soil or dust of earth may traverse the kingdoms from mineral to man by successive incorporations into the bodies of the organisms of those kingdoms. At one time it enters into the formation of the mineral or rock; it is then absorbed by the vegetable kingdom and becomes a constituent of the body and fibre of a tree; again it is appropriated by the animal, and at a still later period is found in the body of man. Throughout these degrees of its traversing the kingdoms from one form of phenomenal being to another, it retains its atomic existence and is never annihilated nor relegated to non-existence.

Non-existence therefore is an expression applied to change of form, but this transformation can never be rightly considered annihilation, for the elements of composition are ever present and existent as we have seen in the journey of the atom through successive kingdoms, unimpaired; hence there is no death; life is everlasting. So to speak, when the atom entered into the composition of the tree, it died to the mineral kingdom, and when consumed by the animal, it died to the vegetable kingdom, and so on until its transference or transmutation into the kingdom of man; but throughout its traversing it was subject to transformation and not annihilation. Death therefore is applicable to a change or transference from one degree or condition to another. In the mineral realm there was a spirit of existence; in the world of plant life and organisms it reappeared as the vegetative spirit; thence it attained the animal spirit and finally aspired to the human spirit. These are degrees and changes but not obliteration; and this is a rational proof that man is everlasting, everliving. Therefore death is only a relative term implying change. For example, we will say that this light before me, having reappeared in another incandescent lamp, has died in the one and lives in the other. This is not death in reality. The perfections of the mineral are translated into the vegetable and from thence into

the animal, the virtue always attaining a plus or superlative degree in the upward change. In each kingdom we find the same virtues manifesting themselves more fully, proving that the reality has been transferred from a lower to a higher form and kingdom of being. Therefore non-existence is only relative and absolute non-existence inconceivable. This rose in my hand will become disintegrated and its symmetry destroyed, but the elements of its composition remain changeless; nothing affects their elemental integrity. They cannot become non-existent; they are simply transferred from one state to another.

Through his ignorance, man fears death; but the death he shrinks from is imaginary and absolutely unreal; it is only human imagination.

The bestowal and grace of God have quickened the realm of existence with life and being. For existence there is neither change nor transformation; existence is ever existence; it can never be translated into non-existence. It is gradation; a degree below a higher degree is considered as non-existence. This dust beneath our feet, as compared with our being is non-existent. When the human body crumbles into dust we can say it has become non-existent; therefore its dust in relation to living forms of human being is as non-existent, but in its own sphere it is existent, it has its mineral being. Therefore it is well proved that absolute non-existence is impossible; it is only relative.

The purpose is this:—that the everlasting bestowal of God vouchsafed to man is never subject to corruption. Inasmuch as He has endowed the phenomenal world with being, it is impossible for that world to become non-being, for it is the very genesis of God; it is in the realm of origination; it is a creational and not a subjective world, and the bounty descending upon it is continuous and permanent. Therefore man, the highest creature of the phenomenal world, is endowed with that continuous bounty bestowed by divine generosity without cessation. For instance, the rays of the sun are continuous, the heat of the sun emanates from it without cessation; no discontinuance of it is conceivable. Even so the bestowal of God is descending upon the world of humanity, never ceasing, continuous, forever. If we say that the bestowal of existence ceases or falters,

it is equivalent to saying that the sun can exist with cessation of its effulgence. Is this possible? Therefore the effulgences of existence are ever-present and continuous.

The conception of annihilation is a factor in human degradation, a cause of human debasement and lowliness, a source of human fear and abjection. It has been conducive to the dispersion and weakening of human thought, whereas the realization of existence and continuity has upraised man to sublimity of ideals, established the foundations of human progress and stimulated the development of heavenly virtues; therefore it behoves man to abandon thoughts of non-existence and death, which are absolutely imaginary and see himself ever living, everlasting in the divine purpose of his creation. He must turn away from ideas which degrade the human soul, so that day by day and hour by hour he may advance upward and higher to spiritual perception of the continuity of the human reality. If he dwells upon the thought of non-existence he will become utterly incompetent; with weakened will-power his ambition for progress will be lessened and the acquisition of human virtues will cease.

Therefore you must thank God that He has bestowed upon you the blessing of life and existence in the human kingdom. Strive diligently to acquire virtues befitting your degree and station. Be as lights of the world which cannot be hid and which have no setting in horizons of darkness. Ascend to the zenith of an existence which is never beclouded by the fears and forebodings of non-existence. When man is not endowed with inner perception he is not informed of these important mysteries. The retina of outer vision, though sensitive and delicate, may nevertheless be a hindrance to the inner eye which alone can perceive. The bestowals of God which are manifest in all phenomenal life are sometimes hidden by intervening veils of mental and mortal vision which render man spiritually blind and incapable, but when those scales are removed and the veils rent asunder, then the great signs of God will become visible and he will witness the eternal light filling the world. The bestowals of God are all and always manifest. The promises of heaven are ever present. The favours of God are all-surrounding, but should the conscious

eye of the soul of man remain veiled and darkened, he will be led to deny these universal signs and remain deprived of these manifestations of divine bounty. Therefore we must endeavour with heart and soul in order that the veil covering the eye of inner vision may be removed, that we may behold the manifestations of the signs of God, discern His mysterious graces, and realize that material blessings as compared with spiritual bounties are as nothing. The spiritual blessings of God are greatest. When we were in the mineral kingdom, although endowed with certain gifts and powers, they were not to be compared with the blessings of the human kingdom. In the matrix of the mother we were the recipients of endowments and blessings of God, yet these were as nothing compared to the powers and graces bestowed upon us after birth into this human world. Likewise if we are born from the matrix of this physical and phenomenal environment into the freedom and loftiness of the life and vision spiritual, we shall consider this mortal existence and its blessings as worthless by comparison.

In the spiritual world, the divine bestowals are infinite, for in that realm there is neither separation nor disintegration which characterise the world of material existence. Spiritual existence is absolute immortality, completeness and unchangeable being. Therefore we must thank God that He has created for us both material blessings and spiritual bestowals. He has given us material gifts and spiritual graces, outer sight to view the lights of the sun and inner vision by which we may perceive the glory of God. He has designed the outer ear to enjoy the melodies of sound and the inner hearing wherewith we may hear the voice of our Creator. We must strive with energies of heart, soul and mind, to develop and manifest the perfections and virtues latent within the realities of the phenomenal world, for the human reality may be compared to a seed. If we sow the seed, a mighty tree appears from it. The virtues of the seed are revealed in the tree; it puts forth branches, leaves, blossoms, and produces fruits. All these virtues were hidden and potential in the seed. Through the blessing and bounty of cultivation these virtues became apparent. Similarly the merciful God our Creator has deposited within human realities certain virtues latent and

potential. Through education and culture, these virtues deposited by the loving God will become apparent in the human reality even as the unfoldment of the tree from within the germinating seed. I will pray for you.

O thou kind Lord! These are Thy servants who have gathered in this meeting, turned unto Thy kingdom and are in need of Thy bestowal and blessing. O thou God! Manifest and make evident the signs of Thy oneness which have been deposited in all the realities of life. Reveal and unfold the virtues which Thou hast made latent and concealed in these human realities. O God! We are as plants and Thy bounty is as the rain. Refresh and cause these plants to grow through Thy bestowal. We are Thy servants; free us from the fetters of material existence. We are ignorant; make us wise. We are dead; make us alive. We are material; endow us with spirit. We are deprived; make us the intimates of Thy mysteries. We are needy; enrich and bless us from Thy boundless treasury. O God! Resuscitate us, give us sight, give us hearing. Familiarize us with the mysteries of life, so that the secrets of Thy kingdom may become revealed to us in this world of existence and we may confess Thy oneness. Every bestowal emanates from Thee; every benediction is Thine. Thou art mighty! Thou art powerful! Thou art the giver and Thou art the ever-bounteous! (*Talk given to the Theosophical Society, Chicago, May 4th, 1912.*)

As to progress after death: know that after death it is the divine world. Progress is possible, but it depends upon the generosity of God, and not upon the efforts and struggles of man. In other words, progress becomes possible only through grace, because the progress from one rank to another depends entirely upon divine generosity, whereas on the contrary, progress toward perfection is obtainable through man's effort. For example, the progress of a mineral reality to the rank of a vegetable is to be obtained only through generosity; likewise the passage of a vegetable reality to the rank of animal is obtained only through generosity; the passage of an animal

reality to the rank of the human is also due to mercy and generosity; likewise the passage of a human reality to the world of the Kingdom depends entirely upon generosity. What I mean to say is this: that the passage from one rank to another depends wholly upon grace, whereas the acquiring of perfections is dependent upon man's efforts and struggles. Take mankind: God created man, and from the mineral enabled him to attain to his present station; now by his efforts and struggles, he can acquire human perfections and seek to increase in virtue and purity. It is therefore clear that the passage from one rank to a higher rank depends entirely on generosity, whereas the acquiring of virtues is possible through effort and will-power. In consequence, after the passage through this corporeal world into the divine world, the traversing of ranks is possible, but only through the grace and bounty of God.

PRAYER

THERE is nothing sweeter in the world of existence than prayer.

Man must live in a state of prayer. The most blessed condition is the condition of prayer and supplication. Prayer is conversation with God. The greatest attainment or the sweetest state is none other than conversation with God. It creates spirituality, creates mindfulness and celestial feelings, begets new attractions of the Kingdom and engenders the susceptibilities of the higher intelligence. The highest attribute given Moses is the following verse: "God conducted a conversation with Moses."

What is prayer? It is conversation with God. While man prays he sees himself in the presence of God. If he concentrates his attention he will surely at the time of prayer realize that he is conversing with God. Often at night I do not sleep, and the thoughts of this world weigh heavily on my mind. I toss uneasily in my bed. Then in the darkness of the night I get up and pray—converse with God. It is most sweet and uplifting.

Prayer and supplication are so effective that they inspire one's heart for the whole day with high ideals and supreme sanctity and calmness. One's heart must be sensitive to the music of prayer. He must feel the effect of prayer. He must not be like an organ from which softest notes stream forth without having consciousness of sensation in itself.

Prayer and supplication are two wings whereby man soars toward the heavenly mansion of the True One. However, verbal repetition of prayer does not suffice. One must live in a continual attitude of prayer. When man is spiritually free his

mind becomes the altar of prayer and his heart the sanctuary of prayer. Then the meaning of the verse, "We will lift up from before his eyes the veil," will become fulfilled in him.

We should speak in the language of heaven—in the language of the spirit—for there is a language of the spirit and heart. It is as different from our language as our own language is different from that of the animals, who express themselves only by cries and sounds.

When we pray to God a feeling fills our hearts. This is the language of the spirit which speaks to God.

When in prayer we are freed from all outward things and turn to God, then it is as if in our hearts we heard the voice of God. Without words we speak, we communicate, we converse with God and hear the answer. It is said that Moses in the wilderness heard the voice of God. But that wilderness, that holy land was His own heart. All of us when we attain to a true spiritual condition can hear the voice of God speaking to us in that wilderness. We must strive to attain to that condition by being separated from all things and from the people of the world and by turning to God alone. It will take some effort on the part of man to attain to that condition, but he must work for it, strive for it. We can attain to it by thinking and caring less for material things and more for the spiritual. The further we go from the one, the nearer we are to the other—the choice is ours!

Our spiritual perception, our inward sight must be opened so that we can see the signs and traces of God's spirit in everything. Everything can reflect to us the light of the spirit.

"If one friend feels love for another he will wish to say so. Though he knows that the friend is aware that he loves him, he will still wish to say so. If there is anyone that you love do you not seek an opportunity to speak with him, to speak lovingly with him, to bring him gifts, to write him letters? If you do not feel such a desire it would be that you did not love your friend. God knows the wishes of all hearts. But the impulse to pray is a natural one springing from man's love to God.

"If there be no love, if there be no pleasure or spiritual enjoyment in prayer, do not pray. Prayer should spring from love, from the desire of the person to commune with God. Just as the lover never ceases from wishing to communicate with the beloved so does the lover of God always wish for constant communication with the Deity.

"Prayer need not be in words, but in thought and attitude. But if this love and this desire are lacking it is useless to try to force them. Words without love mean nothing. If a person talks to you as an unpleasant duty with no love or pleasure in his meeting with you, do you wish to converse with him? Efforts should first be made to make attachment to God."

When asked how this attachment is to be made, how the love of God is to be obtained, since there are many people in the world who admit the existence of a Deity but without any emotion, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

"Knowledge is love. Study, listen to exhortations, think, try to understand the wisdom and greatness of God. . . . The soil must be fertilized before the seed be sown."

Man becomes like a stone unless he continually supplicates to God. The heart of man is like a mirror which is covered with dust and to cleanse it one must continually pray to God that it may become clean. The act of supplication is the polish which erases all worldly desires. The delight of supplicating and entreating before God cuts one's heart from the world. When the taste of man is nourished by honey he never likes to taste any other sweetmeat. Therefore, prayer is a key by which the doors of the kingdom are opened. There are many subjects which are difficult for man to solve. But during prayer and supplication they are unveiled and there is nothing that man cannot find out. Muḥammad said: "Prayer is a ladder by which every one can ascend to heaven." If one's heart is cut from the world his prayer is the ascension to heaven.

In the highest prayer men pray only for the love of God, not because they fear Him or hell or hope for bounty or heaven. Thus the souls in whose hearts the fire of love is enkindled are attracted by supplication. True supplication to God must

therefore be actuated by love to God only. . . . When a man falls in love with a human being it is impossible for him to keep from mentioning the name of his beloved. How much more difficult is it to keep from mentioning the name of God, when one has come to love Him. One can pray for the dead and by so doing their spiritual condition will become better. The spiritual man finds no delight in anything save in commemoration of God. When one is confirmed his heart becomes rejoiced through the commemoration of God.

O thou daughter of the Kingdom! Know thou that supplication and prayer is the Water of Life. It is the cause of the vivification of existence and brings glad tidings and joy to the soul. Show thou attention to this matter as far as thou canst and summon others to prayer and supplication.

Prayer is both attitude and word, it depends upon the soul-condition. It is like a song; both words and music make the song. Sometimes the melody will move us, sometimes the words.

The prayerful attitude is attained by two means. Just as a man who is going to deliver a lecture prepares therefor and his preparation consists of certain meditations and notations, so the preparation for the prayerful attitude is detaching one's mind from all other thoughts save the thought of God at the time of prayer and then praying when the prayerful attitude shall be attained.

Supplication to God at morn and eve is conducive to the joy of hearts, and prayer causes spirituality and fragrance. Thou shouldst necessarily continue therein.

Neglect not praying and communing in the gloomy midnights and morn and eve and offer glory unto thy Lord, the Supreme.

Know that nothing will benefit thee in this life save supplication and invocation unto God, service in His vineyard,

and, with a heart full of love, to be in constant servitude unto Him.

Draw nigh unto God and persevere in communion with thy Lord so that the fire of God's love may glow more luminously in the heart, its heat grow stronger and give warmth to that region and its sound reach the Supreme Concourse.

Supplicate unto Him and beseech in the middle of the night and at early morn just as a needy and captive one beseeches. It is incumbent upon thee to turn unto the kingdom of God and to pray, supplicate and invoke during all times. This is the means by which thy soul shall ascend upward to the apex of the gift of God.

O thou spiritual friend! Thou hast asked the wisdom of prayer. Know thou that prayer is indispensable and obligatory and man under no pretext whatsoever is excused therefrom unless he be mentally unsound or an insurmountable obstacle prevent him.

The wisdom of prayer is this, that it causes a connection between the servant and the True One because in that state of prayer man with all his heart and soul turns his face towards His Highness the Almighty, seeking His association and desiring His love and compassion. The greatest happiness for a lover is to converse with his beloved, and the greatest gift for a seeker is to become familiar with the object of his longing. That is why the greatest hope of every soul who is attracted to the Kingdom of God is to find an opportunity to entreat and supplicate at the ocean of His utterance, goodness and generosity.

Besides all this, prayer and fasting is the cause of awakening and mindfulness and is conducive to protection and preservation from tests.

As to thy question, "Why pray? What is the wisdom thereof, for God has established everything and executes all affairs after the best order and He ordains everything according to a becoming measure and puts things in their places with the greatest

propriety and perfection—therefore what is the wisdom in beseeching and supplicating and in stating one's wants and seeking help?" Know thou, verily, it is becoming of a weak one to supplicate to the strong One and it behoveth a seeker of bounty to beseech the glorious, bountiful One. When one supplicates to his Lord, turns to Him and seeks bounty from His ocean, this supplication is by itself a light to his heart, an illumination to his sight, a life to his soul and an exaltation to his being.

Therefore, during thy supplications to God and thy reciting, "Thy name is my healing," consider how thine heart is cheered, thy soul delighted by the spirit of the love of God and thy mind attracted to the Kingdom of God! By these attractions one's ability and capacity increase. When the vessel is widened the water increaseth and when the thirst grows the bounty of the cloud becomes agreeable to the taste of man. This is the mystery of supplication and the wisdom of stating one's wants.

Man is eternally in a state of communion and prayer with the source of all good. The highest and most elevating state is the state of prayer. Prayer is communion with God. . . . Its efficacy is conditional upon the freedom of the heart from extraneous suggestions and mundane thoughts. The worshipper must pray with a detached spirit, unconditional surrender of the will, concentrated attention and a magnetic spiritual passion. His innermost being must be stirred with the ethereal breeze of holiness. If the mirror of his life is polished from the dross of all desires, the heavenly pictures and star-like images of the Kingdom of God will become fully reflected therein. Then he will be given power to translate these celestial forms into his own daily life and the lives of many thousands.

Automatic, formalistic prayers which do not touch the core of the heart are of no avail. How sweet, how delicious, how satisfying, how spiritual is prayer in the middle of the night! While all the eyes are closed the eyes of the worshipper are wide open. While all the ears are stopped the ears of the suppliant are attuned to the subtle music of God. While the majority of the

people are fast asleep the adorer of the Ideal Beloved is wakeful. All around him there is a rare and delicate silence, deep, airy, ethereal silence, calm, magical and subtle—and there is the worshipper, communing with nature and the Author of nature.

Christ said, "Go into thy chamber and shut the door, and pray to thy Father which is in heaven." Why did He say this? It is with the tongue that man expresses his feelings to another man. But with the language of the heart man prays to God. Though God is within the heart of man, is ever present in every place, yet man lifts up his eyes to heaven and prays as if God were there, seated upon a throne. Surely this is pure superstition! Why should he utter the words, "O heavenly Father"? Why should it be necessary for him to repeat prayers aloud and with the tongue? One reason for this is that if the heart alone is speaking the mind can be more easily disturbed. But repeating the words so that the tongue and heart act together enables the mind to become concentrated. Then the whole man is surrounded by the spirit of prayer and the act is more perfect.

Another reason is that by the outward signs of entering into his room and praying, the attention of others is attracted and they begin to ask, "Why does he do this?" and are aroused to enquire about the truth.

Man may say, "I can pray to God whenever I wish, when the feelings of my heart are drawn to God; when I am in the wilderness, when I am in the city, or wherever I may be. Why should I go where others are gathered upon a special day, at a certain hour, to unite my prayers with theirs when I may not be in a frame of mind for praying?" To think in this way is useless imagination, for where many are gathered together their force is greater. Separate soldiers fighting alone and individually have not the force of a united army. If all the soldiers in this spiritual war gather together then their united spiritual feelings help each other and their prayers become more acceptable.

If every man knew what was best for his health, if every man could teach himself, if every soldier knew how to fight by himself, if every passenger could sail the ship, what need would

there be for the doctor, for the teacher, for the general or for the captain? As he has not this wisdom he must first ascertain their truth and then follow their directions. Until he does this he cannot advance.

Thou hast asked what shouldst thou do and what prayer shouldst thou offer in order to become informed of the mysteries of God. Pray thou with an attracted heart and supplicate thou with a spirit stirred by the glad-tidings of God. Then the doors of the kingdom of mysteries shall be opened before thy face and thou shalt comprehend the realities of all things.

Supplication and prayer on behalf of others will surely be effective. When hearts are united, when faces are turned towards the kingdom of Abhá, surely enlightenment will be the result.

In answer to the question, "Why should one pray through Christ as the Christians do, or through another Manifestation of God, and why should we not pray to God direct?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá said:

"If we wish to pray we must have some object upon which to concentrate. If we turn to God we must direct our hearts to a certain centre. If man worships God otherwise than through his Manifestation he must first form a conception of God and that conception is created by his own mind. As the finite cannot comprehend the Infinite so God is not to be comprehended in this fashion. That which man conceives with his own mind he comprehends. That which he can comprehend is not God. That conception of God which a man has is but a phantasm, an image, an imagination, an illusion. There is no connection between such a conception and the Supreme Being.

"If a man wishes to know God he must find Him in the perfect mirror, Christ or Bahá'u'lláh. In either of these mirrors he will see reflected the Sun of Divinity.

"As we know the physical sun by its splendour, by its light and heat, so we know God, by the spiritual sun, when He shines

forth from the temple of Manifestation by His attributes of perfection, by the beauty of His qualities and by the splendour of His light. The Manifestations of God are the focal centres of the world. . . .

“The epitome of all worship is the worship of the attributes of Christ, not His personality.”

Turn thy face sincerely towards God; be severed from all save God; be ablaze with the fire of the love of God; be purified and sanctified, and beseech and supplicate unto God. Verily, He responds unto those who invoke Him, is near unto those who pray unto Him. And He is thy companion in every loneliness, and befriends every exile.

Regarding thy question about the morning prayer. Both meanings are included in the word dawn—the natural dawn, and the dawn of the Kingdom. When a soul rises in the morning from sleep, before everything else, he must commemorate the name of God in order that he may obtain spirituality and illumination. (*From the compilation “The Divine Art of Living”.*)

About one thousand years ago a Society was formed in Persia called the Society of the Friends, who gathered together for silent communion with the Almighty.

They divided Divine Philosophy into two parts: one part the knowledge of which can be acquired through lectures and study in schools, and the second part that sought by the Illuminati, or followers of the Inner Light. The schools of this Philosophy were held in silence. Meditating, and turning their faces to the Source of Light, the mysteries of the Kingdom were reflected from that central Light into their hearts. All the divine problems were solved by this power of illumination.

This Society of Friends increased greatly in Persia, and their meetings take place even at the present time. Many books and epistles were written by their leaders. When the Friends

assemble in their Meeting House, they sit in silence and contemplate. Their leader proposes a certain problem, saying to the assembly, "This is the problem on which to meditate." Then, freeing their minds from everything else, they sit quietly and reflect, and before long the answer is revealed to them. Many abstruse divine questions are solved by means of this illumination.

Some of the great questions unfolding from the rays of the Sun of Reality upon the minds of men are: the problem of the reality of the spirit of man; of the origin of the spirit; of its birth from this world into the world of God; the question of the inner life of the spirit and its fate after ascension from the body.

They also meditate upon the scientific questions of the day, and these are likewise solved.

These people, who are called "Followers of the Inner Light," attain to a superlative degree of power, and are entirely freed from blind dogmas and imitations. Men rely on the statements of these people; by themselves, within themselves, they solve all mysteries.

If they find a solution through the assistance of the Inner Light, they accept it, and afterwards declare it; otherwise they would consider it a matter of blind imitation. They go so far as to reflect upon the essential nature of the Divinity, of the divine Revelation, of the Manifestation of the Deity, in this world. All the divine and scientific questions are solved by them through the power of the spirit.

Bahá'u'lláh says there is a sign from God in every phenomenon. The sign of the intellect is contemplation, and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for a man to do two things at once—he cannot both speak and meditate.

It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and reality is revealed.

You cannot apply the name "man" to any being devoid of this faculty of meditation; without it man is a mere animal, lower than the beasts.

Through the faculty of meditation man attains to eternal life; through it he receives the breath of the Holy Spirit—the bestowals of the Spirit are given during reflection and meditation.

The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives divine inspiration, and through it he partakes of heavenly food.

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself; in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective condition he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things in themselves. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight: when the power of insight is being used the power of outward vision does not function.

This faculty of meditation frees man from the animal nature, discerns the reality of things, puts man in touch with God.

This faculty brings forth the sciences and arts from the invisible plane. Through the meditative faculty inventions are made possible, colossal undertakings are carried out. Through it governments can run smoothly. Through this faculty man enters into the very Kingdom of God.

Nevertheless some thoughts are useless to man: they are like waves moving in the sea without result. But if the faculty of meditation is bathed in the Inner Light and characterized with divine attributes, the results will be confirmed.

The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror: if you put it before earthly objects, it will reflect the earthly objects. Therefore if the spirit of man is contemplating earthly objects he will become informed of these.

But if you turn the mirror of your spirit heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained.

Therefore let us keep this faculty rightly directed—turning it to the divine Sun and not to earthly objects—so that we may comprehend the allegories of the Bibles, the mysteries of the Spirit, and discover the hidden secrets of the Kingdom.

May we indeed become mirrors reflecting the divine realities and may we become so pure as to reflect the stars of heaven!
*(Talk given at Friends' Meeting House, St. Martin's Lane, London,
January 12th, 1913.)*

You have asked concerning approval of Christian Science treatment and healing. Spirit has influence; prayer has spiritual effect. Therefore we pray "O God! heal this sick one!" Perchance God will answer. Does it matter who prays? God will answer the prayer of every servant if that prayer is urgent. His mercy is vast, illimitable. He answers the prayers of all His servants. He answers the prayer of this plant. The plant prays potentially "O God! send me rain!" God answers the prayer and the plant grows. God will answer any one. He answers prayers potentially. Before we were born into this world did we not pray "O God! give me a mother; give me two fountains of bright milk; purify the air for my breathing; grant me rest and comfort; prepare food for my sustenance and living?" Did we not pray potentially for these needed blessings before we were created? When we came into this world did we not find our prayers answered? Did we not find mother, father, food, light, home and every other necessity and blessing, although we did not actually ask for them? Therefore it is natural that God will give to us when we ask Him. His mercy is all-encircling.

But we ask for things which the divine wisdom does not desire for us and there is no answer to our prayer. His wisdom does not sanction what we wish. We pray "O God! make me wealthy!" If this prayer were universally answered human affairs would be at a standstill. There would be none left to work in the streets, none to till the soil, none to build, none to run the trains. Therefore it is evident that it would not be well for us if all prayers were answered. The affairs of the world would be interfered with, energies crippled and progress hindered. But whatever we ask for which is in accord with divine wisdom, God will answer. Assuredly!

For instance, a very feeble patient may ask the doctor to give him food which would be positively dangerous to his life and condition. He may beg for roast meat. The doctor is kind and wise. He knows it would be dangerous to his patient so he refuses to allow it. The doctor is merciful; the patient ignorant. Through the doctor's kindness the patient recovers; his life is saved. Yet the patient may cry out that the doctor is unkind, not good, because he refuses to answer his pleading.

God is merciful. In His mercy He answers the prayers of all His servants when according to His supreme wisdom it is necessary. (*Talk given at Dublin, New Hampshire, August 5th, 1912.*)

DIVINE PHILOSOPHY

God and The Universe

BY materialists,¹ whose belief with regard to Divinity hath been explained, is not meant philosophers in general, but rather that group of materialists of narrow vision that worship that which is sensed, that depend upon the five senses only, and whose criterion of knowledge is limited to that which can be perceived by the senses. All that can be sensed is to them real, whilst whatever falleth not under the power of the senses is either unreal or doubtful. The existence of the Deity they regard as wholly doubtful.

It is as thou hast written, not philosophers in general but narrow-minded materialists that are meant. As to deistic philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, they are indeed worthy of esteem and of the highest praise, for they have rendered distinguished services to mankind. In like manner we regard the materialistic, accomplished, moderate philosophers, that have been of service (to mankind).

We regard knowledge and wisdom as the foundation of the progress of mankind, and extol philosophers that are endowed with broad vision. Peruse carefully the San Francisco University Journal that the truth may be revealed to thee.

Now concerning mental faculties, they are in truth of the inherent properties of the soul, even as the radiation of light is the essential property of the sun. The rays of the sun are renewed but the sun itself is ever the same and unchanged. Consider how the human intellect develops and weakens, and may at times come to naught, whereas the soul changeth not.

¹ See Evolution, page 290.

For the mind to manifest itself, the human body must be whole; and a sound mind cannot be but in a sound body, whereas the soul dependeth not upon the body. It is through the power of the soul that the mind comprehendeth, imagineth and exerteth its influence, whilst the soul is a power that is free. The mind comprehendeth the abstract by the aid of the concrete, but the soul hath limitless manifestations of its own. The mind is circumscribed, the soul limitless. It is by the aid of such senses as those of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, that the mind comprehendeth, whereas, the soul is free from all agencies. The soul as thou observest, whether it be in sleep or waking, is in motion and ever active. Possibly it may, whilst in a dream, unravel an intricate problem, incapable of solution in the waking state. The mind, moreover, understandeth not whilst the senses have ceased to function, and in the embryonic stage and in early infancy the reasoning power is totally absent, whereas the soul is ever endowed with full strength. In short, the proofs are many that go to show that despite the loss of reason, the power of the soul would still continue to exist. The spirit, however, possesseth various grades and stations.

As to the existence of spirit in the mineral: it is indubitable that minerals are endowed with a spirit and life according to the requirements of that stage. This unknown secret, too, hath become known unto the materialists who now maintain that all beings are endowed with life, even as He saith in the Qur'án, "All things are living."

In the vegetable world, too, there is the power of growth, and that power of growth is the spirit. In the animal world there is the sense of feeling, but in the human world there is an all-embracing power. In all the preceding stages the power of reason is absent, but the soul existeth and revealeth itself. The sense of feeling understandeth not the soul, whereas the reasoning power of the mind proveth the existence thereof.

In like manner the mind proveth the existence of an unseen Reality that embraceth all beings, and that existeth and revealeth itself in all stages, the essence whereof is beyond the grasp of the mind. Thus the mineral world understandeth neither the nature nor the perfections of the vegetable world;

the vegetable world understandeth not the nature of the animal world, neither the animal world the nature of the reality of man that discovereth and embraceth all things.

The animal is the captive of nature and cannot transgress the rules and laws thereof. In man, however, there is a discovering power that transcendeth the world of nature and controlleth and interfereth with the laws thereof. For instance, all minerals, plants and animals are captives of nature. The sun itself with all its majesty is so subservient to nature that it hath no will of its own and cannot deviate a hair's-breadth from the laws thereof. In like manner all other beings, whether of the mineral, the vegetable or the animal world, cannot deviate from the laws of nature, nay, all are the slaves thereof. Man, however, though in body the captive of nature, is yet free in his mind and soul, and hath the mastery over nature.

Consider: according to the law of nature man liveth, moveth and hath his being on earth, yet his soul and mind interfere with the laws thereof, and, even as the bird he flieth in the air, saileth speedily upon the seas and as the fish soundeth the deep and discovereth the things therein. Verily this is a grievous defeat inflicted upon the laws of nature.

So is the power of electrical energy: this unruly violent force that cleaveth mountains is yet imprisoned by man within a globe! This is manifestly interfering with the laws of nature. Likewise man discovereth those hidden secrets of nature that in conformity with the laws thereof must remain concealed, and transfereth them from the invisible plane to the visible. This, too, is interfering with the law of nature. In the same manner he discovereth the inherent properties of things that are the secrets of nature. Also he bringeth to light the past events that have been lost to memory, and foreseeth by his power of induction future happenings that are as yet unknown. Furthermore, communication and discovery are limited by the laws of nature to short distances, whereas man, through that inner power of his that discovereth the reality of all things, connecteth the East with the West. This, too, is interfering with the laws of nature. Similarly, according to the law of nature all shadows are fleeting, whereas man fixeth them upon the plate, and this,

too, is interference with a law of nature. Ponder and reflect: all sciences, arts, crafts, inventions and discoveries, have been once the secrets of nature and in conformity with the laws thereof must remain hidden; yet man through his discovering power interfereth with the laws of nature and transfereth these hidden secrets from the invisible to the visible plane. This again is interfering with the laws of nature.

In fine, that inner faculty in man, unseen of the eye, wresteth the sword from the hands of nature, and giveth it a grievous blow. All other beings, however great, are bereft of such perfections. Man hath the powers of will and understanding, but nature hath them not. Nature is constrained, man is free. Nature is bereft of understanding, man understandeth. Nature is unaware of past events, but man is aware of them. Nature forecasteth not the future; man by his discerning power seeth that which is to come. Nature hath no consciousness of itself, man knoweth about all things.

Should any one suppose that man is but a part of the world of nature, and he being endowed with these perfections, these being but manifestations of the world of nature, and thus nature is the originator of these perfections and is not deprived therefrom, to him we make reply and say:—the part dependeth upon the whole; the part cannot possess perfections whereof the whole is deprived.

By nature is meant those inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things. And these realities of things, though in the utmost diversity, are yet intimately connected one with the other. For these diverse realities an all-unifying agency is needed, that shall link them all one to the other. For instance, the various organs and members, the parts and elements, that constitute the body of man, though at variance, are yet all connected one with the other by that all-unifying agency known as the human soul, that causeth them to function in perfect harmony and with absolute regularity, thus making the continuation of life possible. The human body, however, is utterly unconscious of that all-unifying agency, and yet acteth with regularity and dischargeth its functions according to its will.

Now concerning philosophers, they are of two schools. Thus Socrates the wise believed in the unity of God and the existence of the soul after death; as his opinion was contrary to that of the narrow-minded people of his time, that divine sage was poisoned by them. All divine philosophers and men of wisdom and understanding, when observing these endless beings, have considered that in this great and infinite universe all things end in the mineral kingdom, that the outcome of the mineral kingdom is the vegetable kingdom, the outcome of the vegetable kingdom is the animal kingdom and the outcome of the animal kingdom the world of man. The consummation of this limitless universe with all its grandeur and glory hath been man himself, who in this world of being toiled and suffereth for a time, with diverse ills and pains, and ultimately disintegrates, leaving no trace and no fruit after him. Were it so, there is no doubt that this infinite universe with all its perfections has ended in shame and delusion with no result, no fruit, no permanence and no effect. It would be utterly without meaning. They (the philosophers) were thus convinced that such is not the case, that this Great Workshop with all its power, its bewildering magnificence and endless perfections, cannot eventually come to naught. That still another life should exist is thus certain, and, just as the vegetable kingdom is unaware of the world of man, so we, too, know not of the Great Life hereafter that followeth the life of man here below. Our non-comprehension of that life, however, is no proof of its non-existence. The mineral world, for instance, is utterly unaware of the world of man and cannot comprehend it, but the ignorance of a thing is no proof of its non-existence. Numerous and conclusive proofs exist that go to show that this infinite world cannot end with this human life.

Now concerning the essence of Divinity: in truth it is on no account determined by anything apart from its own nature, and can in no wise be comprehended. For whatsoever can be conceived by man is a reality that hath limitations and is not unlimited; it is circumscribed, not all-embracing. It can be comprehended by man, and is controlled by him. Similarly it is certain that all human conceptions are contingent, not

absolute; that they have a mental existence, not a material one. Moreover, differentiation of stages in the contingent world is an obstacle to understanding. How then can the contingent conceive the Reality of the absolute? As previously mentioned, differentiation of stages in the contingent plane is an obstacle to understanding. Minerals, plants, and animals are bereft of the mental faculties of man that discover the realities of all things, but man himself comprehendeth all the stages beneath him. Every superior stage comprehendeth that which is inferior and discovereth the reality thereof, but the inferior one is unaware of that which is superior and cannot comprehend it. Thus man cannot grasp the Essence of Divinity, but can, by his reasoning power, by observation, by his intuitive faculties and the revealing power of his faith, believe in God, discover the bounties of His Grace. He becometh certain that though the Divine Essence is unseen of the eye, and the existence of the Deity is intangible, yet conclusive (spiritual) proofs assert the existence of that unseen Reality. The Divine Essence as it is in itself is, however, beyond all description. For instance, the nature of ether is unknown, but that it existeth is certain by the effects it produceth; heat, light and electricity being the waves thereof. By these waves the existence of ether is thus proven. And as we consider the outpourings of Divine Grace we are assured of the existence of God. For instance, we observe that the existence of beings is conditioned upon the coming together of various elements and their non-existence upon the decomposition of their constituent elements. For decomposition causes the dissociation of the various elements. Thus, as we observe the coming together of elements giveth rise to the existence of beings, and knowing that beings are infinite, they being the effect, how can the Cause be finite?

Now, formation is of three kinds and of three kinds only: accidental, necessary, and voluntary. The coming together of the various constituent elements of beings cannot be accidental, for unto every effect there must be a cause. It cannot be compulsory, for then the formation must be an inherent property of the constituent parts and the inherent property of a thing can in nowise be dissociated from it, such as light that is

the revealer of things, heat that causeth the expansion of elements and the (solar) rays which are the essential property of the sun. Thus under such circumstances the decomposition of any formation is impossible, for the inherent properties of a thing cannot be separated from it. The third formation remaineth and that is the voluntary one, that is, an unseen force described as the Ancient Power, causeth these elements to come together, every formation giving rise to a distinct being.

As to the attributes and perfections such as will, knowledge, power and other ancient attributes that we ascribe to that Divine Reality, these are the signs that reflect the existence of beings in the visible plane and not the absolute perfections of the Divine Essence that cannot be comprehended. For instance, as we consider created things we observe infinite perfections, and the created things being in the utmost regularity and perfection we infer that the Ancient Power on whom dependeth the existence of these beings, cannot be ignorant; thus we say He is All-Knowing. It is certain that it is not impotent, it must be the All-Powerful; it is not poor, it must be All-Possessing; it is not non-existent, it must be Ever-Living. The purpose is to show that these attributes and perfections that we recount for that Universal Reality are only in order to deny imperfections, rather than to assert the perfections that the human mind can conceive. Thus we say His attributes are unknowable.

In fine, that universal Reality with all its qualities and attributes that we recount is holy and exalted above all minds and understandings. As we, however, reflect with broad minds upon this infinite universe, we observe that motion without a motive force, and an effect without a cause are both impossible; that every being hath come to exist under numerous influences and continually undergoeth reaction. These influences, too, are formed under the action of still other influences. For instance, plants grow and flourish through the outpourings of vernal showers, whilst the cloud itself is formed under various other agencies, and these agencies in their turn are reacted upon by still other agencies. For example, plants and animals grow and develop under the influence of what the philosophers of

our day designate as hydrogen and oxygen and are reacted upon by the effects of these two elements; and these in turn are formed under still other influences. The same can be said of other beings whether they affect other things or be affected. Such process of causation goes on, and to maintain that this process goes on indefinitely is manifestly absurd. Thus such a chain of causation must of necessity lead eventually to Him who is the Ever-Living, the All-Powerful, who is Self-Dependent and the Ultimate Cause. This Universal Reality cannot be sensed, it cannot be seen. It must be so of necessity, for it is All-Embracing, not circumscribed, and such attributes qualify the effect and not the cause.

And as we reflect, we observe that man is like unto a tiny organism contained within a fruit; this fruit hath developed out of the blossom, the blossom hath grown out of the tree, the tree is sustained by the sap, and the sap formed out of earth and water. How then can this tiny organism comprehend the nature of the garden, conceive of the gardener and comprehend his being? That is manifestly impossible. Should that organism understand and reflect, it would observe that this garden, this tree, this blossom, this fruit would in no wise have come to exist by themselves in such order and perfection. Similarly the wise and reflecting soul will know of a certainty that this infinite universe with all its grandeur and (perfect) order could not have come to exist by itself.

Similarly in the world of being there exist forces unseen of the eye, such as the force of ether previously mentioned, that cannot be sensed, that cannot be seen. However from the effects it produceth, that is from its waves and vibrations, light, heat, electricity appear and are made evident. In like manner is the power of growth, of feeling, of understanding, of thought, of memory, of imagination and of discernment; all these inner faculties are unseen of the eye and cannot be sensed, yet all are evident by the effects they produce.

Now as to the (infinite) Power that knoweth no limitations; limitation itself proveth the existence of the unlimited, for the limited is known through the unlimited, just as weakness itself proveth the existence of wealth. Without wealth there would

be no poverty, without knowledge no ignorance, without light no darkness. Darkness itself is a proof of the existence of light, for darkness is the absence of light.

Now concerning nature, it is but the essential properties and the necessary relations inherent in the realities of things. And though these infinite realities are diverse in their character, yet they are in the utmost harmony and closely connected together. As one's vision is broadened and the matter observed carefully, it will be made certain that every reality is but an essential requisite of other realities. Thus to connect and harmonize these diverse and infinite realities an all-unifying Power is necessary, that every part of existent being may in perfect order discharge its own function. Consider the body of man, and let the part (*i.e.*, the human body) be an indication of the whole. Consider how these diverse parts and members of the human body are closely connected and harmoniously united one with the other. Every part is the essential requisite of all other parts and has a function by itself. It is the mind that is the all-unifying agency that so uniteth all the component parts one with the other that each dischargeth its specific function in perfect order, and thereby co-operation and reaction are made possible. All parts function under certain laws that are essential to existence. Should that all-unifying agency that directeth all these parts be harmed in any way, there is no doubt that the constituent parts and members will cease functioning properly; and though that all-unifying agency in the temple of man be not sensed or seen and the reality thereof be unknown, yet by its effects it manifesteth itself with the greatest power.

Thus it hath been proven and made evident that these infinite beings in this wondrous universe will discharge their functions properly only when directed and controlled by that Universal Reality, so that order may be established in the world. For example, interaction and co-operation between the constituent parts of the human body are evident and indisputable, yet this does not suffice; an all-unifying agency is necessary that shall direct and control the component parts, so that these through interaction and co-operation may discharge in perfect order their necessary and respective functions.

You are well aware, praised be the Lord, that both interaction and co-operation are evident and proven amongst all beings, whether large or small. In the case of large bodies interaction is as manifest as the sun, whilst in the case of small bodies, though interaction be unknown, yet the part is an indication of the whole. All these interactions therefore are connected with that all-embracing power which is their pivot, their centre, their source and their motive power.

For instance, as we have observed, co-operation among the constituent parts of the human body is clearly established, and these parts and members render services unto all the component parts of the body. For instance, the hand, the foot, the eye, the ear, the mind, the imagination all help the various parts and members of the human body, but all these interactions are linked by an unseen, all-embracing power, that causeth these interactions to be produced with perfect regularity. This is the inner faculty of man, that is his spirit and his mind, both of which are invisible.

In like manner consider machinery and workshops and the interaction existing among the various component parts and sections, and how connected they are one with the other. All these relations and interactions, however, are connected with a central power which is their motive force, their pivot and their source. This central power is either the power of steam or the skill of the master-mind.

It hath therefore been made evident and proved that interaction, co-operation and interrelation amongst beings are under the direction and will of a motive Power which is the origin, the motive force, and the pivot of all interactions in the universe.

Likewise every arrangement and formation that is not perfect in its order we designate as accidental, and that which is orderly, regular, perfect in its relations and every part of which is in its proper place and is the essential requisite of the other constituent parts, this we call a composition formed through will and knowledge. There is no doubt that these infinite beings, and the association of these diverse elements arranged in countless forms, must have proceeded from a Reality that

could in no wise be bereft of will or understanding. This is clear and proven to the mind and no one can deny it. It is not meant, however, that that Universal Reality or the attributes thereof have been comprehended. Neither its Essence nor its true attributes hath any one comprehended. We maintain, however, that these infinite beings, these necessary relations, this perfect arrangement, must of necessity have proceeded from a source that is not bereft of will and understanding, and this infinite composition cast into infinite forms must have been caused by an all-embracing Wisdom. This none can dispute save he that is obstinate and stubborn, and denieth the clear and unmistakable evidence, and becometh the object of the blessed Verse: "(They are) deaf, (they are) dumb, (they are) blind and shall return no more."

Now regarding the question whether the faculties of the mind and the human soul are one and the same. These faculties are but the inherent properties of the soul, such as the power of imagination, of thought, of understanding; powers that are the essential requisites of the reality of man, even as the solar ray is the inherent property of the sun. The temple of man is like unto a mirror, his soul is as the sun, and his mental faculties even as the rays that emanate from that source of light. The ray may cease to fall upon the mirror, but it can in no wise be dissociated from the sun.

In short, the point is this, that the world of man is supernatural in its relation to the vegetable kingdom, though in reality it is not so. Relatively to the plant, the reality of man, his power of hearing and sight, are all supernatural, and for the plant to comprehend that reality and the nature of the powers of man's mind is impossible. In like manner for man to comprehend the Divine Essence and the nature of the great Hereafter is in no wise possible. The merciful outpourings of that Divine Essence, however, are vouchsafed unto all beings, and it is incumbent upon man to ponder in his heart upon the effusions of the Divine Grace, the soul (of man) being counted as one (sign of it), rather than upon the Divine Essence itself. This is the utmost limit for human understanding. As it hath previously been mentioned, these attributes and perfections

that we recount of the Divine Essence, these we have derived from the existence and observation of beings, and it is not that we have comprehended the essence and perfection of God. When we say that the Divine Essence understandeth and is free, we do not mean that we have discovered the Divine Will and Purpose, but rather that we have acquired knowledge of them through the Divine Grace revealed and manifested in the realities of things.

Now concerning our social principles, namely the teachings of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh spread far and wide fifty years ago, they verily comprehend all other teachings. It is clear and evident that without these teachings progress and advancement for mankind are in no wise possible. Every community in the world findeth in these Divine Teachings the realization of its highest aspirations. These teachings are even as the tree that beareth the best fruits of all trees. Philosophers, for instance, find in these heavenly teachings the most perfect solution of their social problems, and similarly a true and noble exposition of matters that pertain to philosophical questions. In like manner men of faith behold the reality of religion manifestly revealed in these heavenly teachings, and clearly and conclusively prove them to be the real and true remedy for the ills and infirmities of all mankind. Should these sublime teachings be diffused, mankind shall be freed from all perils, from all chronic ills and sicknesses. In like manner are the Bahá'í economic principles the embodiment of the highest aspirations of all wage-earning classes and of economists of various schools.

In short, all sections and parties have their aspirations realized in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. As these teachings are declared in churches, in mosques and in other places of worship, whether those of the followers of Buddha or of Confucius, in political circles or amongst materialists, all shall bear witness that these teachings bestow a fresh life upon mankind and constitute the immediate remedy for all the ills of social life. None can find fault with any of these teachings, nay rather, once declared they will all be acclaimed, and all will confess their vital necessity, exclaiming, "Verily this is the truth and naught is there beside the truth but manifest error."

In conclusion, these few words are written, and unto everyone they will be a clear and conclusive evidence of the truth. Ponder them in thine heart. The will of every sovereign prevaieth during his reign, the will of every philosopher findeth expression in a handful of disciples during his lifetime, but the Power of the Holy Spirit shineth radiantly in the realities of the Messengers of God, and strengtheneth their will in such wise as to influence a great nation for thousands of years and to regenerate the human soul and revive mankind. Consider how great is this power! It is an extraordinary Power, an all-sufficient proof of the truth of the mission of the Prophets of God, and a conclusive evidence of the power of a Divine Inspiration.

The Glory of Glories rest upon thee. (*Letter to Dr. Auguste Forel, 1921.*)

When we ponder over the reality of the microcosm, we discover that in the microcosm there are deposited three realities. Man is endowed with an outer or physical reality. It belongs to the material realm, the animal kingdom, because it has sprung from the material world. This animalistic reality of man he shares in common with the animals.

The human body is like animals subject to nature's laws. But man is endowed with a second reality, the rational or intellectual reality; and the intellectual reality of man predominates over nature.

All these sciences which we enjoy were the hidden and recondite secrets of nature, unknowable to nature, but man was enabled to discover these mysteries, and out of the plane of the unseen he brought them into the plane of the seen. Thus while man's physical reality is captive to nature, man is the governor of nature through this intellectual power.

Yet there is a third reality in man, the spiritual reality. Through its medium one discovers spiritual revelations, a celestial faculty which is infinite as regards the intellectual as well as physical realms. That power is conferred upon man

through the breath of the Holy Spirit. It is an eternal reality, an indestructible reality, a reality belonging to the divine, supernatural kingdom; a reality whereby the world is illumined, a reality which grants unto man eternal life. This third, spiritual reality it is which discovers past events and looks along the vistas of the future. It is the ray of the Sun of Reality. The spiritual world is enlightened through it, the whole of the Kingdom is being illumined by it. It enjoys the world of beatitude, a world which had no beginning and which shall have no end.

That celestial reality, the third reality of the microcosm, delivers man from the material world. Its power causes man to escape from nature's world. Escaping, he will find an illuminating reality, transcending the limited reality of man and causing him to attain to the infinitude of God, abstracting him from the world of superstitions and imaginations, and submerging him in the sea of the rays of the Sun of Reality.

This fact is proved from scientific as well as spiritual evidence.

When we ponder over the conditions of phenomena, we observe that all phenomena are composed of single elements. This singular cell-element travels and has its coursings through all the grades of existence. I wish you to ponder carefully over this. This cellular element has at some time been in the mineral kingdom. While staying in the mineral kingdom it has had its coursings and transformations through myriads of images and forms. Having perfected its journey in the mineral kingdom, it has ascended to the vegetable kingdom; and in the vegetable kingdom it has again had its journeys and transformations through myriads of conditions. Having accomplished its functions in the vegetable kingdom, the cellular element ascends to the animal kingdom.

In the animal kingdom again it goes through the composition of myriads of images, and then we have it in the human kingdom. In the human kingdom likewise it has its transformations and coursings through multitudes of forms. In short, this single primordial atom has had its great journeys through every stage of life, and in every stage it was endowed with a special and particular virtue or characteristic.

Consequently, the great divine philosophers have had the following epigram: *All things are involved in all things*. For every single phenomenon has enjoyed the postulates of God, and in every form of these infinite electrons it has had its characteristics of perfection.

Thus this flower once upon a time was of the soil. The animal eats the flower or its fruit, and it thereby ascends to the animal kingdom. Man eats the meat of the animal, and there you have its ascent into the human kingdom, because all phenomena are divided into that which eats and that which is eaten. Therefore, every primordial atom of these atoms, singly and indivisibly, has had its courings throughout all the sentient creation, going constantly into the aggregation of the various elements. Hence do you have the conservation of energy and the infinity of phenomena, the indestructibility of phenomena, changeless and immutable, because life cannot suffer annihilation but only change.

The apparent annihilation is this: that the form, the outward image, goes through all these changes and transformations. Let us again take the example of this flower. The flower is indestructible. The only thing that we can see, this outer form is indeed destroyed, but the elements, the indivisible elements which have gone into the composition of this flower, are eternal and changeless. Therefore the realities of all phenomena are immutable. Extinction or mortality is nothing but the transformation of pictures and images, so to speak—the reality back of these images is eternal. And every reality of the realities is one of the bounties of God.

Some people believe that the divinity of God had a beginning. They say that before this particular beginning man had no knowledge of the divinity of God. With this principle they have limited the operation of the influences of God.

For example, they think there was a time when man did not exist, and that there will be a time in the future when man will not exist. Such a theory circumscribes the power of God, because how can we understand the divinity of God except through scientifically understanding the manifestations of the attributes of God?

How can we understand the nature of fire except from its heat, its light? Were not heat and light in this fire, naturally we could not say that the fire existed.

Thus, if there was a time when God did not manifest His qualities, then there was no God, because the attributes of God presuppose the creation of phenomena. For example, by present consideration we say that God is the *creator*. Then there must always have been a creation—since the quality of creator cannot be limited to the moment when some man or men realize this attribute. The attributes that we discover one by one—these attributes themselves necessarily anticipated our discovery of them. Therefore, God has no beginning and no ending; nor is His creation limited ever as to degree. Limitations of time and degree pertain to things created, never to creation as a whole. They pertain to the forms of things, not to their realities. The effulgence of God cannot be suspended. The sovereignty of God cannot be interrupted.

As long as the sovereignty of God is immemorial, therefore the creation of our world throughout infinity is presupposed. When we look at the reality of this subject, we see that the bounties of God are infinite, without beginning and without end.

The greatest bounties of God in this phenomenal world are His Manifestations. This is the greatest postulate. These Manifestations are the Suns of Reality. For it is through the Manifestation that the *reality* becomes known and established for man. History proves to us that apart from the influence of the Manifestations, man sinks back into his animal condition, using even his intellectual power to subserve an animal purpose. Therefore there is no cessation whatsoever in the future for the appearance of the Manifestations of God, because God is infinite and His purpose cannot be limited in any way. If we ever dare to limit and circumscribe God's purpose within any bounds, then of necessity we have dared to set limitations to the omnipotence of God. The created has dared to define his Creator!

Consequently, the perfect man ever beholds the rays of the Sun of Truth. The perfect man ever awaits and expects the coming of the effulgence of God, he ever ponders over the

methods and purposes of God, knowing that of certainty the realities of the Divine are not finite, the Divine names and attributes are not finite. God's graces and bounties are without limit, and the coming of the Manifestations of God are not circumscribed by time. Were you to enter any Bahá'í gathering of the East, it would be difficult to tell who is Christian, who is Jew—they are like so many flames that have become one mighty flame. All these separate channels, thanks to Bahá'u'lláh, are converging into one world-stream! (*Talk given at The White Lodge, Wimbledon, January 3rd, 1913.*)

Standards of Judgment

During my visit to London and Paris last year I had many talks with the materialistic philosophers of Europe. The basis of all their conclusions is that the acquisition of knowledge of phenomena is according to a fixed, invariable law,—a law mathematically exact in its operation through the senses. For instance, the eye sees a chair; therefore there is no doubt of the chair's existence. The eye looks up into the heavens and beholds the sun; I see flowers upon this table; I smell their fragrance; I hear sounds outside, etc., etc. This, they say, is a fixed mathematical law of perception and deduction, the operation of which admits of no doubt whatever; for inasmuch as the universe is subject to our sensing, the proof is self-evident that our knowledge of it must be gained through the avenues of the senses. That is to say, the materialists announce that the criterion and standard of human knowledge is sense perception. Among the Greeks and Romans the criterion of knowledge was reason; that whatever is provable and acceptable by reason must necessarily be admitted as true. A third standard or criterion is the opinion held by theologians that traditions or prophetic statement and interpretations constitute the basis of human knowing. There is still another, a fourth criterion, upheld by religionists and metaphysicians who say that the source and channel of all human penetration into the unknown is through inspiration. Briefly, then, these four criterions

according to the declarations of men are: First—Sense Perception; Second—Reason; Third—Traditions; Fourth—Inspiration.

In Europe I told the philosophers and scientists of materialism that the criterion of the senses is not reliable. For instance, consider a mirror and the images reflected in it. These images have no actual corporeal existence. Yet if you had never seen a mirror you would firmly insist and believe that they were real. The eye sees a mirage upon the desert as a lake of water, but there is no reality in it. As we stand upon the deck of a steamer the shore appears to be moving, yet we know the land is stationary and we are moving. The earth was believed to be fixed and the sun revolving about it, but, although this appears to be so, the reverse is now known to be true. A whirling torch makes a circle of fire appear before the eye, yet we realize there is but one point of light. We behold a shadow moving upon the ground but it has no material existence, no substance. In deserts the atmospheric effects are particularly productive of illusions which deceive the eye. Once I saw a mirage in which a whole caravan appeared travelling upward into the sky. In the far north other deceptive phenomena appear and baffle human vision. Sometimes three or four suns called by scientists "mock suns" will be shining at the same time, whereas we know the great solar orb is one and that it remains fixed and single. In brief, the senses are continually deceived and we are unable to separate that which is reality from that which is not.

As to the second criterion—reason—this likewise is unreliable and not to be depended upon. This human world is an ocean of varying opinions. If reason is the perfect standard and criterion of knowledge, why are opinions at variance and why do philosophers disagree so completely with each other? This is a clear proof that human reason is not to be relied upon as an infallible criterion. For instance, great discoveries and announcements of former centuries are continually upset and discarded by the wise men of to-day. Mathematicians, astronomers, chemical scientists continually disprove and reject the conclusions of the ancients; nothing is fixed, nothing final; everything continually changing because human reason is progressing along new roads of investigation and arriving at new conclusions every day. In

the future much that is announced and accepted as true now will be rejected and disproved. And so it will continue *ad infinitum*.

When we consider the third criterion—traditions—upheld by theologians as the avenue and standard of knowledge, we find this source equally unreliable and unworthy of dependence. For religious traditions are the report and record of understanding and interpretation of the Book. By what means has this understanding, this interpretation been reached? By the analysis of human reason. When we read the Book of God the faculty of comprehension by which we form conclusions is reason. Reason is mind. If we are not endowed with perfect reason, how can we comprehend the meanings of the Word of God? Therefore human reason, as already pointed out, is by its very nature finite and faulty in conclusions. It cannot surround the Reality Itself, the Infinite Word. Inasmuch as the source of traditions and interpretations is human reason, and human reason is faulty, how can we depend upon its findings for real knowledge?

The fourth criterion I have named is inspiration, through which it is claimed the reality of knowledge is attainable. What is inspiration? It is the influx of the human heart. But what are satanic promptings which afflict mankind? They are the influx of the heart also. How shall we differentiate between them? The question arises, How shall we know whether we are following inspiration from God or satanic promptings of the human soul? Briefly, the point is that in the human material world of phenomena these four are the only existing criterions or avenues of knowledge, and all of them are faulty and unreliable. What then remains? How shall we attain the reality of knowledge? By the breaths and promptings of the Holy Spirit which is light and knowledge Itself. Through it the human mind is quickened and fortified into true conclusions and perfect knowledge. This is conclusive argument showing that all available human criterions are erroneous and defective, but the divine standard of knowledge is infallible. Therefore man is not justified in saying, "I know because I perceive through my senses"; or "I know because it is proved through

my faculty of reason"; or "I know because it is according to tradition and interpretation of the holy book"; or "I know because I am inspired." All human standard of judgment is faulty, finite. (*Talk given at Hotel Ansonia, New York, April 17th, 1912.*)

The Oneness of Mankind

To-day I wish to speak to you upon the subject of "Oneness of Humanity," for in this great century the most important accomplishment is the unity of mankind. Although in former centuries and times this subject received some measure of mention and consideration, it has now become the paramount issue and question in the religious and political conditions of the world. History shows that throughout the past there has been continual warfare and strife among the various nations, peoples and sects, but now, Praise be to God! in this century of illumination, hearts are inclined toward agreement and fellowship, and minds are thoughtful upon the question of the unification of mankind. There is an emanation of the universal consciousness to-day which clearly indicates the dawn of a great unity.

In the investigation of a subject the right method of approach is to carefully examine its premises. Therefore we must go back to the foundation upon which human solidarity rests, namely: that all are the progeny of Adam, the creatures and servants of one God; that God is the protector and provider; that all are submerged in the sea of divine mercy and grace and God is loving toward all.

Humanity shares in common the intellectual and spiritual faculties of a created endowment. All are equally subject to the various exigencies of human life and are similarly occupied in acquiring the means of earthly subsistence. From the viewpoint of creation human beings stand upon the same footing in every respect, subject to the same requirements and seeking the enjoyment and comfort of earthly conditions. Therefore the things humanity shares in common are numerous and

manifest. This equal participation in the physical, intellectual, and spiritual problems of human existence is a valid basis for the unification of mankind.

Consider how discord and dissension have prevailed in this great human family for thousands of years. Its members have ever been engaged in war and bloodshed. Up to the present time in history the world of humanity has neither attained nor enjoyed any measure of peace, owing to incessant conditions of hostility and strife. History is a continuous and consecutive record of warfare brought about by religious, sectarian, racial, patriotic and political causes. The world of humanity has found no rest. Mankind has always been in conflict, engaged in destroying the foundations, pillaging the properties and possessing the lands and territory of each other, especially in the earlier periods of savagery and barbarism, where whole races and peoples were carried away captive by their conquerors. Who shall measure or estimate the tremendous destruction of human life resulting from this hostility and strife? What human powers and forces have been employed in the prosecution of war and applied to inhuman purposes of battle and bloodshed! In this most radiant century it has become necessary to divert these energies and utilize them in other directions; to seek the new path of fellowship and unity; to unlearn the science of war and devote supreme human forces to the blessed arts of peace. After long trial and experience we are convinced of the harmful and satanic outcomes of dissension; now we must seek after means by which the benefits of agreement and concord may be enjoyed. When such means are found we must give them a trial.

Consider the harmful effect of discord and dissension in a family; then reflect upon the favours and blessings which descend upon that family when unity exists among its various members. What incalculable benefits and blessings would descend upon the great human family if unity and brotherhood were established! In this century when the beneficent results of unity and the ill effects of discord are so clearly apparent, the means for the attainment and accomplishment of human fellowship have appeared in the world. Bahá'u'lláh has

proclaimed and provided the way by which hostility and dissension may be removed from the human world. He has left no ground or possibility for strife and disagreement.

First, He has proclaimed the oneness of mankind and specialized religious teachings for existing human conditions. The first form of dissension arises from religious differences. Bahá'u'lláh has given full teachings to the world which are conducive to fellowship and unity in religion. Throughout past centuries each system of religious belief has boasted of its own superiority and excellence, abasing and scorning the validity of all others. Each has proclaimed its own belief as the light and all others as darkness. Religionists have considered the world of humanity as two trees, one divine and merciful, the other satanic; they themselves the branches, leaves and fruit of the divine tree, and all others who differ from them in belief, the product of the tree which is satanic. Therefore sedition and warfare, bloodshed and strife have been continuous among them. The greatest cause of human alienation has been religion, because each party has considered the belief of the other as anathema and deprived of the mercy of God.

The teachings specialized by Bahá'u'lláh are addressed to humanity, saying, "Ye are all the leaves of one tree." He does not say "Ye are the leaves of two trees,—one divine, the other satanic." He has declared that each individual member of the human family is a leaf or branch upon the Adamic tree; that all are sheltered beneath the protecting mercy and providence of God; that all are the children of God; fruit upon the one tree of his love. God is equally compassionate and kind to all the leaves, branches and fruit of this tree. Therefore there is no satanic tree whatever; "satan" being a product of human minds and of instinctive human tendencies toward error. God alone is Creator and all are Creatures of His might. Therefore we must love mankind as His creatures, realizing that all are growing upon the tree of His mercy, servants of His omnipotent will and manifestations of His good pleasure.

Even though we find a branch or leaf upon this tree of humanity defective or a blossom imperfect, it nevertheless belongs to this tree and not to another. Therefore it is our duty to protect

and cultivate this tree until it reaches perfection. If we examine its fruit and find it imperfect we must strive to make it perfect. There are souls in the human world who are ignorant; we must make them knowing. Some growing upon the tree are weak and ailing; we must assist them toward health and recovery. If they are as infants in development we must minister to them until they attain maturity. We should never detest and shun them as objectionable and unworthy. We must treat them with honour, respect and kindness, for God has created them and not satan. They are not manifestations of the wrath of God but evidences of His divine favour. God the Creator has endowed them with physical, mental, and spiritual qualities that they may seek to know and do His will; therefore they are not objects of His wrath and condemnation. In brief, all humanity must be looked upon with love, kindness and respect, for what we behold in them are none other than the signs and traces of God Himself. All are evidences of God; therefore how shall we be justified in debasing and belittling them, uttering anathema and preventing them from drawing near unto His mercy. This is ignorance and injustice, displeasing to God, for in His sight all are His servants.

Another cause of dissension and disagreement is the fact that religion has been pronounced at variance with science. Between scientists and the followers of religion there has always been controversy and strife, for the reason that the latter have proclaimed religion superior in authority to science and considered scientific announcement opposed to the teachings of religion. Bahá'u'lláh declared that religion is in complete harmony with science and reason. If religious belief and doctrine is at variance with reason, it proceeds from the limited mind of man and not from God; therefore it is unworthy of belief and not deserving of attention; the heart finds no rest in it and real faith is impossible. How can man believe that which he knows to be opposed to reason? Is this possible? Can the heart accept that which reason denies? Reason is the first faculty of man and the religion of God is in harmony with it. Bahá'u'lláh has removed this form of dissension and discord from among mankind and reconciled science with religion by revealing the pure teachings

of the Divine Reality. This accomplishment is specialized to Him in this day.

Still another cause of disagreement and dissension has been the formation of religious sects and denominations. Bahá'u'lláh said that God has sent religion for the purpose of establishing fellowship among humankind and not to create strife and discord, for all religion is founded upon the love of humanity. Abraham promulgated this principle; Moses summoned all to its recognition; Christ established it and Muḥammad directed mankind to its standard. This is the reality of religion. If we abandon hearsay and investigate the reality and inner significance of the heavenly teachings, we will find the same divine foundation of love for humanity. The purport is that religion is intended to be the cause of unity, love and fellowship, and not discord, enmity and estrangement. Man has forsaken the foundation of divine religion and adhered to blind imitations. Each nation has clung to its own imitations, and because these are at variance, warfare, bloodshed and destruction of the foundation of humanity have resulted. True religion is based upon love and agreement. Bahá'u'lláh has said, "If religion and faith are the causes of enmity and sedition, it is far better to be non-religious, and the absence of religion would be preferable; for we desire religion to be the cause of amity and fellowship. If enmity and hatred exist, irreligion is preferable." Therefore the removal of this dissension has been specialized by Bahá'u'lláh, for religion is the divine remedy for human antagonism and discord. But when we make the remedy the cause of the disease, it would be better to do without the remedy.

Other sources of human dissension are political, racial and patriotic prejudices. These have been removed by Bahá'u'lláh. He has said and has guarded His statement by rational proofs from the holy books, that the world of humanity is one race, the surface of the earth one place of residence, and that these imaginary racial barriers and political boundaries are without right or foundation. Man is degraded in becoming the captive of his own illusions and suppositions. The earth is one earth and the same atmosphere surrounds it. No difference or preference has been made by God for its human inhabitants;

but man has laid the foundation of prejudice, hatred and discord with his fellow-man by considering nationalities separate in importance and races different in rights and privileges.

Diversity of languages has been a fruitful cause of discord. The function of language is to convey the thought and purpose of one to another. Therefore it matters not what language man speaks or employs. Sixty years ago Bahá'u'lláh advocated one language as the greatest means of unity and the basis of international conference. He wrote to the kings and rulers of the various nations recommending that one language should be sanctioned and adopted by all governments. According to this, each nation should acquire the universal language in addition to its natal tongue. The world would then be in close communication, consultation would become general, and dissensions due to diversity of speech would be removed.

Another teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is in relation to Universal Peace; that all mankind must be awakened to and become conscious of the harm of war; that they should be brought to realize the benefits of peace and know that peace is from God while warfare is satanic. Man must emulate the merciful God and turn away from satanic promptings in order that universal inclination shall be toward peace, love and unity, and the discord of war vanish.

Lack of equality between man and woman is likewise a cause of human dissension. Bahá'u'lláh has named this as an important factor of discord and separation, for so long as humankind remains unequally divided, male and female in right and importance, no unity can be established. In a perfect human body it is not possible for one organ to be complete and another defective. In the great body of human society it is impossible to establish unity and co-ordination if one factor is considered perfect and the other imperfect. When the perfect functions of both factors are in operation harmony will prevail. God has created man and woman equal as to faculties. He has made no distinction between them. Woman has not reached the level of man in human accomplishment because of the lack of opportunity and education. If educational opportunities were made equal and similar the two factors man and woman would

equalize in attainment. God has intended no difference between them that should be productive of discord. He has endowed all with human faculties and all are manifestations of His mercy. If we say man and woman differ in creational endowment it is contrary to divine justice and intention. Both are human. If God has created one perfect and the other defective He is unjust. But God is just; all are perfect in His intention and creative endowment. To assume imperfection in the creature is to presuppose imperfection in the Almighty Creator. The soul that excels in attainment of His attributes and graces is most acceptable before God.

We are considering the divine plan for the reconciliation of the religious systems of the world. Bahá'u'lláh has said that if one intelligent member be selected from each of the varying religious systems, and these representatives come together seeking to investigate the reality of religion, they would establish an interreligious body before which all disputes and differences of belief could be presented for consideration and settlement. Such questions could then be weighed and viewed from the standpoint of reality and all imitations be discarded. By this method and procedure all sects, denominations, and systems would become one.

Do not question the practicability of this and be not astonished. It has been accomplished and effected in Persia. In that country the various religionists have conjoined in investigating the reality and have united in complete fellowship and love. No traces of discord or differences remain among them; now affection and unity are manifest instead. They live together in harmony and accord like a single family. Antagonism and strife have passed away; love and agreement have taken the place of hatred and animosity. Furthermore, those souls who have followed Bahá'u'lláh and attained this condition of fellowship and affiliation are Muḥammadans, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Nestorians, Sunnís, Shí'íhs and others. No discord exists among them. This is a proof of the possibility of unification among the religionists of the world through practical means. Imitations and prejudices which have held men apart have been discarded, and the reality of religion

envelops them in a perfect unity. When reality envelops the soul of man love is possible. The divine purpose in religion is pure love and agreement. The Prophets of God manifested complete love for all. Each one announced the glad tidings of His successor and each subsequent one confirmed the teachings and prophecies of the Prophet who preceded Him. There was no disagreement or variance in the reality of their teaching and mission. Discord has arisen among their followers who have lost sight of the reality and hold fast to imitations. If imitations be done away with and the radiant shining reality dawn in the souls of men, love and unity must prevail. In this way humanity will be rescued from the strife and wars which have prevailed for thousands of years; dissensions will pass away and the illumination of unity dawn. Consider how all the Prophets of God were persecuted and what hardships they experienced. Jesus Christ endured affliction and accepted martyrdom upon the cross in order to summon mankind to unity and love. What sacrifice could be greater? He brought the religion of love and fellowship into the world. Shall we make use of it to create discord, violence, and hatred among mankind?

Moses was persecuted and driven out into the desert. Abraham was banished; Muḥammad took refuge in caves; the Báb was killed and Bahá'u'lláh was exiled and imprisoned forty years. Yet all of them desired fellowship and love among men. They endured hardships, suffered persecution and death for our sakes that we might be taught to love one another and be united and affiliated instead of discordant and at variance. Enough of these long centuries which have brought such vicissitudes and hardships into the world through strife and hatred! Now in this radiant century let us try to do the will of God that we may be rescued from these things of darkness and come forth into the boundless illumination of heaven, shunning division and welcoming the divine oneness of humanity. Perchance, God willing, this terrestrial world may become as a mirror celestial upon which we may behold the imprint of the traces of divinity, and the fundamental qualities of a new creation may be reflected from the reality of love shining in human hearts. From the light and semblance of God in us may it be indeed

proved and witnessed that God has created man after His own image and likeness.

O my God! O my God! Verily I invoke Thee and supplicate before Thy threshold asking Thee that all Thy mercies may descend upon these souls. Specialize them for Thy favour and Thy truth. O Lord! unite and bind together the hearts, join in accord all the souls and exhilarate the spirits through the signs of Thy sanctity and oneness. O Lord! make these faces radiant through the light of Thy oneness. Strengthen the loins of Thy servants in the service of Thy kingdom. O Lord, Thou possessor of infinite mercy! O Lord of forgiveness and pardon! forgive our sins, pardon our shortcomings and cause us to turn to the kingdom of Thy clemency, invoking the kingdom of might and power, humble at Thy shrine and submissive before the glory of Thy evidences. O Lord God! make us as waves of the sea, as flowers of the garden, united, agreed through the bounties of Thy love. O Lord! dilate the breasts through the signs of Thy oneness and make all mankind as stars shining from the same height of glory, as perfect fruits growing upon Thy tree of life. Verily Thou art the Almighty, the Self-subsistent, the Giver, the Forgiving, the Pardoner, the Omniscient, the One Creator! (*Talk given at All Souls' Unitarian Church, New York, July 14th, 1912.*)

Evolution

Although I was feeling indisposed this evening, yet owing to the love I entertain for you I have attended this meeting. For I have heard that this is an open forum, investigating reality; that you are free from blind imitations, desiring to arrive at the truth of things, and that your endeavours are lofty. Therefore I have thought it expedient to discourse upon the subject of "Philosophy," which is alike interesting to the east and the west, enabling us to consider the analogies and differences between the philosophical teachings of the Orient and Occident.

The criterion of judgment in the estimation of western philosophers¹ is sense perception. They consider that which is

¹ See "God and the Universe," page 263.

tangible or perceptible to the senses to be a reality; that there is no doubt of its existence. For example, we prove the existence of this light through the sense of sight; we visualize this room; we see the sun, the green fields; we use our sense of sight to observe them. The opinion of these philosophers is that such perception is reality; that the senses are the highest standard of perception and judgment, in which there can neither be doubt nor uncertainty. In the estimation of the philosophers of the Orient, especially those of Greece and Persia, the standard of judgment is the intellect. They are of the opinion that the criterion of the senses is defective, and their proof is that the senses are often deceived and mistaken. That which is liable to mistake cannot be infallible, cannot be a true standard of judgment.

Among the senses, the most powerful and reliable is that of sight. This sense views a mirage as a body of water and is positive as to its character, whereas a mirage is non-existent. The sense of vision or sight sees reflected images in a mirror as verities when reason declares them to be non-existent. The eye sees the sun and planets revolving around the earth, whereas in reality the sun is stationary, central, and the earth revolves upon its own axis. The sense of sight sees the earth as a plane, whereas the faculty of reason discovers it to be spherical. The eye views the heavenly bodies in boundless space as small and insignificant, whereas reason declares them to be colossal suns. The sense of sight beholds a whirling spark of fire as a circle of light and is without doubt as to it, whereas such a circle is non-existent. A man sailing in a ship sees the banks on either side as if they were moving, whereas the ship is moving. Briefly, there are many instances and evidences which disprove the assertion that tangibilities and sense impressions are certainties, for the senses are misleading and often mistaken. How then can we rightly declare that they prove reality when the standard or criterion itself is defective?

The philosophers of the east consider the perfect criterion to be reason or intellect, and according to that standard the realities of all objects can be proved, for, they say, the standard of reason and intellect is perfect and everything provable

through reason is veritable. Therefore those philosophers consider all philosophical deductions to be correct when weighed according to the standard of reason, and they state that the senses are the assistants and instruments of reason, and that although the investigation of realities may be conducted through the senses, the standard of knowing and judgment is reason itself. In this way the philosophers of the east and west differ and disagree. The materialistic philosophers of the west declare that man belongs to the animal kingdom, whereas the philosophers of the east such as Plato, Aristotle and the Persians divide the world of existence or phenomena of life into two general categories or kingdoms,—one the animal kingdom or world of nature; the other the human kingdom or world of reason.

Man is distinguished above the animals through his reason. The perceptions of man are of two kinds,—tangible or sensible, and reasonable, whereas the animal perceptions are limited to the senses, the tangible only. The tangible perceptions may be likened to this candle, the reasonable perceptions to the light. Calculations of mathematical problems and determining the spherical form of the earth are through the reasonable perceptions. The centre of gravity is a hypothesis of reason. Reason itself is not tangible, perceptible to the senses. Reason is an intellectual verity or reality. All qualities are ideal realities, not tangible realities. For instance, we say this man is a scholarly man. Knowledge is an ideal attainment not perceptible to the senses. When you see this scholarly man your eye does not see his knowledge, your ear cannot hear his science nor can you sense it by taste. It is not a tangible verity. Science itself is an ideal verity. It is evident therefore that the perceptions of man are twofold, the reasonable and the tangible or sensible.

As to the animal it is endowed only with sense perception. It is minus the perception reasonable. It cannot apprehend ideal realities. The animal cannot conceive of the earth as a sphere. The intelligence of an animal located in Europe could never have planned the discovery of the continent of America. The animal kingdom is incapable of discovering the latent mysteries of nature such as electricity, and bringing them forth from the

invisible to the plane of visibility. It is evident that the discoveries and inventions transcend the animal intelligence. The animal cannot penetrate the secrets of genesis and creation. Its mind is incapable of conceiving the verity of ether. It cannot know the mysteries of magnetism because the bestowals of abstract reason and intellect are absent in its endowment. That is to say, the animal in its creation is a captive of the senses. Beyond the tangibilities and impressions of the senses it cannot accept anything. It denies everything. It is incapable of ideal perception and therefore a captive of the senses.

Virtue or perfection belong to man, who possesses both the capacity of the senses and ideal perception. For instance, astronomical discoveries are man's accomplishments. He has not gained this knowledge through his senses. The greater part of it has been attained through intellect, through the ideal senses. Man's inventions have appeared through the avenue of his reasonable faculties. All his scientific attainments have come through the faculty of reason. Briefly, the evidences of intellect or reason are manifest in man. By them he is differentiated from the animal. Therefore the animal kingdom is distinct and inferior to the human kingdom. Notwithstanding this, the philosophers of the west have certain syllogisms or demonstrations whereby they endeavour to prove that man had his origin in the animal kingdom; that although he is now a vertebrate, he originally lived in the sea; from thence he was transferred to the land and became vertebrate; that gradually his feet and hands appeared in his anatomical development; then he began to walk upon all fours, after which he attained to human stature, walking erect. They find that his anatomy has undergone successive changes, finally assuming human form, and that these intermediate forms or changes are like links connected. Between man and the ape, however, there is one link missing, and to the present time scientists have not been able to discover it. Therefore the greatest proof of this Western theory of human evolution is anatomical, reasoning that there are certain vestiges of organs found in man which are peculiar to the ape and lower animals, and setting forth the conclusion that man at some time in his upward progression has possessed these organs which are

no longer functioning, but appear now as mere rudiments and vestiges.

For example, a serpent has a certain appendage which indicates that at one time it was possessed of long limbs, but as this creature began to find its habitation in the holes of the earth these limbs, no longer needed, became atrophied and shrunk, leaving but a vestige or appendage as an evidence of the time when they were lengthy and serviceable. Likewise it is claimed man had a certain appendage which shows that there was a time when his anatomical structure was different from his present organism, and that there has been a corresponding transformation or change in that structure. The coccyx or extremity of the human spinal column is declared to be the vestige of a tail which man formerly possessed, but which gradually disappeared when he walked erect and its utility ceased. These statements and demonstrations express the substance of western philosophy upon the question of human evolution.

The philosophers of the Orient in reply to those of the western world say—let us suppose that the human anatomy was primordially different from its present form, that it was gradually transformed from one stage to another until it attained its present likeness, that at one time it was similar to a fish, later an invertebrate and finally human. This anatomical evolution or progression does not alter or affect the statement that the development of man was always human in type and biological in progression. For the human embryo, when examined microscopically, is at first a mere germ or worm. Gradually as it develops it shows certain divisions; rudiments of hands and feet appear; that is to say, an upper and a lower part are distinguishable. Afterwards it undergoes certain distinct changes until it reaches its actual human form and is born into this world. But at all times, even when the embryo resembled a worm, it was human in potentiality and character, not animal. The forms assumed by the human embryo in its successive changes do not prove that it is animal in its essential character. Throughout this progression there has been a transference of type, a conservation of species or kind. Realizing this, we may acknowledge the fact that at one time man was an inmate of

the sea, at another period an invertebrate, then a vertebrate, and finally a human being standing erect. Though we admit these changes, we cannot say man is an animal. In each one of these stages are signs and evidences of his human existence and destination. Proof of this lies in the fact that in the embryo man still resembles a worm. This embryo still progresses from one state to another, assuming different forms until that which was potential in it, namely, the human image, appears. Therefore in the protoplasm, man is man. Conservation of species demands it.

The "lost link" of Darwinian theory is itself a proof that man is not an animal. How is it possible to have all the links present and that important link absent? Its absence is an indication that man has never been an animal. It will never be found.

The significance is this:—that the world of humanity is distinct from the animal kingdom. This is the teaching of the philosophers of the Orient. They have a proof for it. The proof is that the animals are captives of nature. All existence and phenomena of the lower kingdoms are captives of nature—the mighty sun, the numberless stars, the kingdoms of the vegetable and mineral, none of these can deviate one hair's breadth from the limitation of nature's laws. They are, as it were, arrested by nature's hands. But man breaks the laws of nature and makes them subservient to his uses. For instance, man is an animate earthly being in common with the animals. The exigency of nature demands that he should be restricted to the earth, but he, by breaking the laws of nature, soars in the atmosphere high above it. By the application of his intellect he overcomes natural law and dives beneath the seas in submarines or sails across them in ships. He arrests a mighty force of nature such as electricity and imprisons it in an incandescent lamp. According to the law of nature he should be able to communicate at a distance of, say, one thousand feet, but through his inventions and discoveries he communicates with the east and with the west in a few moments. This is breaking the laws of nature. Man arrests the human voice and reproduces it in a phonograph. At most his voice should be heard only a few hundred feet away, but he invents an instrument which transmits it one

thousand miles. In brief, all the present arts and sciences, inventions and discoveries man has brought forth were once mysteries which nature had decreed should remain hidden and latent, but man has taken them out of the plane of the invisible and brought them into the plane of the visible. This is contrary to nature's laws. Electricity should be a latent mystery, but man discovers it and makes it his servant. He wrests the sword from nature's hand and uses it against nature, proving that there is a power in him which is beyond nature, for it is capable of breaking and subduing the laws of nature. If this power was not supernatural and extraordinary, man's accomplishments would not have been possible.

Furthermore it is evident that in the world of nature conscious knowledge is absent. Nature is minus knowing, whereas man is conscious. Nature is devoid of memory; man possesses memory. Nature is minus perception and volition; man possesses both. It is evident that virtues are inherent in man which are not present in the world of nature. This is provable from every standpoint.

If it be claimed that the intellectual reality of man belongs to the world of nature:—that it is a part of the whole, we ask is it possible for the part to contain virtues which the whole does not possess? For instance, is it possible for the drop to contain virtues of which the aggregate body of the sea is deprived? Is it possible for a leaf to be imbued with virtues which are lacking in the whole tree? Is it possible that the extraordinary faculty of reason in man is animal in character and quality? On the other hand it is evident and true, though most astounding, that in man there is present this supernatural force or faculty which discovers the realities of things and which possesses the power of idealization or intellection. It is capable of discovering scientific laws, and science we know is not a tangible reality. Science exists in the mind of man as an ideal reality. The mind itself, reason itself, is an ideal reality and not tangible.

Notwithstanding this, some of the sagacious men declare—we have attained to the superlative degree of knowledge; we have penetrated the laboratory of nature, studying sciences and arts; we have attained the highest station of knowledge in the human

world; we have investigated the facts as they are and have arrived at the conclusion that nothing is rightly acceptable except the tangible, which alone is a reality worthy of credence; all that is not tangible is imagination and nonsense.

Strange indeed that after twenty years' training in colleges and universities man should reach such a station wherein he will deny the existence of the ideal or that which is not perceptible to the senses. Have you ever stopped to think that the animal already has graduated from such a university? Have you ever realized that the cow is already a professor emeritus of that university? For the cow, without hard labour and study, is already a philosopher of the superlative degree in the school of nature. The cow denies everything that is not tangible, saying "I can see! I can eat! Therefore I believe only in that which is tangible!"

Then why should we go to the colleges? Let us go to the cow.
(*Talk given at the Open Forum, San Francisco, October 10th, 1912.*)

The Meaning of Scripture

The people of Christianity have clung to literal interpretation of the statement in the gospel that Christ came from heaven. The Jews likewise at the time of His manifestation held to outward and visible expectation of the fulfilment of the prophecies. They said, "Messiah shall appear from heaven; this man came from Nazareth; we know His house; we know His parents and people; it is only hearsay that He descended from heaven; this cannot be proved."

The text of the gospel states that He came from heaven although physically born of the mother. The meaning is that the divine reality of Christ was from heaven, but the body was born of Mary. Therefore He came according to the prophecies of the holy book and likewise according to natural law; His reality from heaven; His body earthly. As He came before, so must He come this time in the same way. But some arise with objections, saying, "We must have literal proof of this through the senses."

The reality of Christ was always in heaven and will always be. This is the intention of the text of the gospel. For while Jesus Christ walked upon the earth, He said, "The Son of Man is in heaven." Therefore holding to literal interpretation and visible fulfilment of the text of the holy books is simply imitation of ancestral forms and beliefs; for when we perceive the reality of Christ these texts and statements become clear and perfectly reconcilable with each other. Unless we perceive the reality, we cannot understand the meanings of the holy books, for these meanings are symbolical and spiritual, such as, for instance, the raising of Lazarus, which has spiritual interpretation. We must first establish the fact that the power of God is infinite, unlimited, and that it is within that power to accomplish anything.

Secondly, we must understand the interpretation of Christ's words concerning "the dead." A certain disciple came to His Holiness and asked permission to go and bury his father. His Holiness answered, "Let the dead bury their dead." Therefore Christ designated as "dead" some who were still living; that is, let the living "dead," the spiritually "dead," bury your father. They were dead because they were not believers in Christ. Although physically alive they were dead spiritually. This is the meaning of Christ's words, "That which is born of flesh is flesh; that which is born of spirit is spirit." He meant that those who were simply born of the human body were dead spiritually, while those quickened by the breaths of the Holy Spirit were living and eternally alive. These are the interpretations of Christ Himself. Reflect upon them and the meanings of the holy books will become clear as the sun at midday.

The holy books have their special terminologies which must be known and understood. Physicians have their own peculiar terms; architects, philosophers have their characteristic expressions; poets have their phrases, and scientists their nomenclature. In the scripture we read that Zion is dancing. It is evident that this has other than literal interpretation. The meaning is that the people of Zion shall rejoice. The Jews said Christ was not Messiah, but antichrist, because one of the signs of the Messiah's coming was the dancing of Mount Zion, which had not yet come to pass. In reality, when His Holiness

appeared, not only Mount Zion, but all Palestine danced and rejoiced. Again in scriptures it is said, "The trees shall clap their hands." This is symbolical. There are terms and expressions of usage in every language which cannot be taken literally. For instance, in oriental countries it is customary to say, "When my friend entered the house the doors and walls began to sing and dance." In Persia they say, "Get at the head," meaning engage in the matter according to its own terms and usages. All these have other and inner meanings.¹ (*Talk given at Dublin, New Hampshire, August 5th, 1912.*)

Message to Theosophists²

I am greatly pleased with these expressions of kindly feeling and evidences of spiritual susceptibility. To-night I am very happy in the realization that our aims and purposes are the same, our desires and longings are one. This is a reflection and evidence of the oneness of the world of humanity and the intention toward accomplishment of the "Most Great Peace." Therefore we are united in will and purpose. In the world of existence there are no greater questions than these. Oneness of the world of humanity insures the glorification of man. International peace is the assurance of the welfare of all human kind. There are no greater motives and purposes in the human soul. As we are agreed upon them, the certainty of unity and concord between Bahá'ís and Theosophists is most hopeful. Their purposes are one, their desires one, and spiritual susceptibilities are common to both. Their attention is devoted to the divine kingdom; they partake alike of its bounty.

To-day the human world is in need of a great power by which these glorious principles and purposes may be executed. The cause of peace is a very great cause; it is the cause of God, and all the forces of the world are opposed to it. Governments, for instance, consider militarism as the step to human progress, that division among men and nations is the cause of patriotism

¹ See page 18.

² See also pages 243-248.

and honour, that if one nation attack and conquer another, gaining wealth, territory and glory thereby, this warfare and conquest, this bloodshed and cruelty are the cause of that victorious nation's advancement and prosperity. This is an utter mistake. Compare the nations of the world to the members of a family. A family is a nation in miniature. Simply enlarge the circle of the household and you have the nation. Enlarge the circle of nations and you have all humanity. The conditions surrounding the family surround the nation. The happenings in the family are the happenings in the life of the nation. Would it add to the progress and advancement of a family if dissensions should arise among its members, fighting, pillaging each other, jealous and revengeful of injury, seeking selfish advantage? Nay, this would be the cause of the effacement of progress and advancement. So it is in the great family of nations, for nations are but an aggregate of families. Therefore as strife and dissension destroy a family and prevent its progress, so nations are destroyed and advancement hindered.

All the heavenly books, divine prophets, sages and philosophers agree that warfare is destructive to human development, and peace constructive. They agree that war and strife strike at the foundations of humanity. Therefore a power is needed to prevent war and to proclaim and establish the oneness of humanity.

But knowledge of the need of this power is not sufficient. Realizing that wealth is desirable is not becoming wealthy. The admission that scientific attainment is praiseworthy does not confer scientific knowledge. Acknowledgment of the excellence of honour does not make a man honourable. Knowledge of human conditions and the needed remedy for them is not the cause of their betterment. To admit that health is good does not constitute health. A skilled physician is needed to remedy existing human conditions. As a physician is required to have complete knowledge of pathology, diagnosis, therapeutics and treatment, so this world physician must be wise, skilful, and capable before health will result. His mere knowledge is not health; it must be applied and the remedy carried out.

The attainment of any object is conditioned upon knowledge, volition and action. Unless these three conditions are forthcoming there is no execution or accomplishment. In the erection of a house it is first necessary to know the ground and design the house suitable for it; second, to obtain the means or funds necessary for the construction; third, to actually build it. Therefore a power is needed to carry out and execute what is known and admitted to be the remedy for human conditions; namely, the unification of mankind. Furthermore, it is evident that this cannot be realized through material process and means. The accomplishment of this unification cannot be through racial power, for races are different and diverse in tendencies. It cannot be through patriotic power, for nationalities are unlike. Nor can it be effected through political power, since the policies of governments and nations are various. That is to say, any effort toward unification through these material means would benefit one and injure another because of unequal and individual interests. Some may believe this great remedy can be found in dogmatic insistence upon imitations and interpretations. This would likewise be without foundation and result. Therefore it is evident that no means but an ideal means, a spiritual power, divine bestowals and the breaths of the Holy Spirit will heal this world sickness of war, dissension and discord. Nothing else is possible; nothing can be conceived of. But through spiritual means and the divine power it is possible and practicable.

Consider history. What has brought unity to nations, morality to peoples and benefits to mankind? If we reflect upon it we will find that establishing the divine religions has been the greatest means toward accomplishing the oneness of humanity. The foundation of divine reality in religion has done this; not imitations of ancestral religious forms. Imitations are opposed to each other and have ever been the cause of strife, enmity, jealousy and war. The divine religions are collective centres in which diverse standpoints may meet, agree and unify. They accomplish oneness of naticities, races and policies. For instance, Christ united various nations, brought peace to warring peoples and established the oneness of human kind. The conquering Greeks and Romans, the prejudiced Egyptians

and Assyrians were all in a condition of strife, enmity and war, but His Holiness gathered these varied peoples together and removed the foundations of discord; not through racial, patriotic or political power, but through divine power, the power of the Holy Spirit. This was not otherwise possible. All other efforts of men and nations remain as mere mention in history, without accomplishment.

As this great result is contingent upon divine power and bestowals, where shall the world obtain that power? God is eternal and ancient; not a new God. His sovereignty is of old, not recent; not merely existent these five or six thousand years. This infinite universe is from everlasting. The sovereignty, power, names and attributes of God are eternal, ancient. His names presuppose creation and predicate His existence and will. We say God is Creator. This name Creator appears when we connote creation. We say God is the Provider. This name presupposes and proves the existence of the provided. God is Love. This name proves the existence of the beloved. In the same way God is Mercy, God is Justice, God is Life, etc., etc. Therefore as God is Creator, eternal and ancient, there were always creatures and subjects existing and provided for. There is no doubt that divine sovereignty is eternal. Sovereignty necessitates subjects, ministers, trustees and others subordinate to sovereignty. Could there be a king without country, subjects and armies? If we conceive of a time when there were no creatures, no servants, no subjects of divine lordship, we dethrone God and predicate a time when God was not. It would be as if He had been recently appointed and man had given these names to Him. The divine sovereignty is ancient, eternal. God from everlasting was Love, Justice, Power, Creator, Provider, the Omniscient, the Bountiful.

As the divine entity is eternal, the divine attributes are co-existent, co-eternal. The divine bestowals are therefore without beginning, without end. God is infinite; the works of God are infinite; the bestowals of God are infinite. As His divinity is eternal, His lordship and perfections are without end. As the bounty of the Holy Spirit is eternal, we can never say that His bestowals terminate, else He terminates. If we think of the sun

and then try to conceive of the cessation of the solar flame and heat, we have predicated the non-existence of the sun. For separation of the sun from its rays and heat is inconceivable. Therefore if we limit the bestowals of God we limit the attributes of God and limit God.

Let us then trust in the bounty and bestowal of God. Let us be exhilarated with the divine breath, illumined and exalted by the heavenly glad-tidings. God has ever dealt with man in mercy and kindness. He who conferred the divine spirit in former times is abundantly able and capable at all times and periods to grant the same bestowals. Therefore let us be hopeful. The God who gave to the world formerly will do so now and in the future. God who breathed the breath of the Holy Spirit upon His servants will breathe it upon them now and hereafter. There is no cessation to His bounty. The divine spirit is penetrating from eternity to eternity, for it is the bounty of God, and the bounty of God is eternal. Can you conceive of limitation of the divine power in atomic verities or cessation of the divine bounty in existing organisms? Could you conceive the power now manifest in this glass in cohesion of its atoms, becoming non-existent? The energy by which the water of the sea is constituted, failing to exert itself and the sea disappearing? A shower of rain to-day and no more showers afterward? The effulgence of the sun terminated and no more light or heat?

When we observe that in the kingdom of minerals the divine bounties are continuous, how much more shall we expect and realize in the divine spiritual kingdom! How much greater the radiation of the lights of God and the bounty of life everlasting upon the soul of man! As the body of the universe is continuous, indestructible, the bounties and bestowals of the divine spirit are everlasting.

I praise God that I am privileged to be present in this revered assembly, which is quickened with spiritual susceptibilities and heavenly attraction; its members investigating the reality; their utmost hope the establishment of international peace and their greatest purpose service to the world of humanity.

When we observe the world of created phenomena we discover that each atom of the atoms of substance is moving through the

various degrees and kingdoms of organic life. For instance, consider the ethereal element which is penetrating and traveling through all the contingent realities. When there is vibration or movement in the ethereal element, the eye is affected by that vibration and beholds what is known as light.

In the same manner the bestowals of God are moving and circulating throughout all created things. This illimitable divine bounty has no beginning and will have no ending. It is moving, circulating, and becomes effective wherever capacity is developed to receive it. In every station there is a specialized capacity. Therefore we must be hopeful that through the bounty and favour of God, this spirit of life infusing all created beings shall quicken humanity and from its bestowals the human world become a divine world, this earthly kingdom the mirror of the realm of divinity, the virtues and perfections of the world of humanity become unveiled and the image and likeness of God be reflected from this temple.

I am most grateful to the President of this Society and express my most respectful greetings to him. It is my hope that all of you may be assisted in attaining the good pleasure of God. The spiritual susceptibility of those present has made me very happy, and I beg of God assistance and confirmation for all. (*Talk given at Theosophical Lodge, New York, May 30th, 1912.*)

As to the coming of the Great Master. His appearance is dependent upon the realization of certain conditions. Investigate the reality, and in whomsoever those conditions are fulfilled, know ye of a certainty that He is the Great Master.

First. The Great Master will be the educator of the world of humanity.

Second. His teachings must be universal and confer illumination upon mankind.

Third. His knowledge must be innate and spontaneous, and not acquired knowledge.

Fourth. He must answer the questions of all the sages, solve all the difficult problems of humanity, and be able to withstand all the persecutions and sufferings heaped upon Him.

Fifth. He must be a joy-bringer and the herald of the Kingdom of happiness.

Sixth. His knowledge must be infinite and His wisdom all-comprehensive.

Seventh. The penetration of His word and the potency of His influence must be so great as to humble even His worst enemies.

Eighth. Sorrows and tribulations must not vex Him. His courage and conviction must be godlike. Day by day He must become firmer and more zealous.

Ninth. He must be the establisher of universal civilization, the unifier of religions, the standard-bearer of universal peace and the embodiment of all the highest and noblest virtues of the world of humanity.

Wherever you find these conditions realized in a human temple, turn to Him for guidance and illumination. (*Talk given to Theosophical Society, Budapest, April 12th, 1913.*)

The Oneness of Religion

The greatest bestowal of God in the world of humanity is religion; for assuredly the divine teachings of religion are above all other sources of instruction and development to man. Religion confers upon man eternal life and guides his footsteps in the world of morality. It opens the doors of unending happiness and bestows everlasting honour upon the human kingdom. It has been the basis of all civilization and progress in the history of mankind.

We will therefore investigate religion, seeking from an unprejudiced standpoint to discover whether it is the source of illumination, the cause of development and the animating impulse of all human advancement. We will investigate independently, free from the restrictions of dogmatic beliefs, blind imitations of ancestral forms, and the influence of mere human opinion; for as we enter this question we will find some who declare that religion is a cause of uplift and betterment in the world, while others assert just as positively that it is a detriment and a source of degradation to mankind. We must give

these questions thorough and impartial consideration, so that no doubt or uncertainty may linger in our minds regarding them.

How shall we determine whether religion has been the cause of human advancement or retrogression?

We will first consider the founders of the religions—the Prophets—review the story of their lives, compare the conditions preceding their appearance with those subsequent to their departure, following historical records and irrefutable facts instead of relying upon traditionary statements which are open to both acceptance and denial.

Among the great Prophets was Abraham, who being an iconoclast and a herald of the oneness of God, was banished from His native land. He founded a family upon which the blessing of God descended; and it was owing to this religious basis and ordination that the Abrahamic house progressed and advanced. Through the divine benediction, noteworthy and luminous prophets issued from the lineage of His Holiness. There appeared Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David and Solomon. The Holy Land was conquered by the power of the Covenant of God with Abraham, and the glory of the Solomonic wisdom and sovereignty dawned. All this was due to the religion of God which this blessed lineage established and upheld. It is evident that throughout the history of Abraham and His posterity, this was the source of their honour, advancement and civilization. Even to-day the descendants of His household and lineage are found throughout the world.

There is another and more significant aspect to this religious impulse and impetus. The children of Israel were in bondage and captivity in the land of Egypt four hundred years. They were in an extreme state of degradation and slavery under the tyranny and oppression of the Egyptians. While they were in the condition of abject poverty, in the lowest degree of abasement, ignorance and servility, Moses suddenly appeared among them. Although He was but a shepherd, such majesty, grandeur, and efficiency became manifest in Him through the power of religion, that His influence continues to this day. His prophet-hood was established throughout the land and the law of His Word became the foundation of the laws of the nations. This

unique personage, single and alone, rescued the children of Israel from bondage through the power of religious training and discipline. He led them to the Holy Land and founded there a great civilization which has become permanent and renowned, and under which these people attained the highest degree of honour and glory. He freed them from bondage and captivity. He imbued them with qualities of progressiveness and capability. They proved to be a civilizing people with instincts toward education and scholastic attainment. Their philosophy became renowned; their industries were celebrated throughout the nations. In all lines of advancement which characterize a progressive people, they achieved distinction. In the splendour of the reign of Solomon their sciences and arts advanced to such a degree that even the Greek philosophers journeyed to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of the Hebrew sages and acquire the basis of Israelitish law. According to eastern history this is an established fact. Even Socrates visited the Jewish doctors in the Holy Land, consorting with them and discussing the principles and basis of their religious belief. After his return to Greece he formulated his philosophical teaching of divine unity and advanced his belief in the immortality of the spirit beyond the dissolution of the body. Without doubt Socrates absorbed these verities from the wise men of the Jews with whom he came in contact. Hippocrates and other philosophers of the Greeks likewise visited Palestine and acquired wisdom from the Jewish prophets, studying the basis of ethics and morality, returning to their country with contributions which have made Greece famous.

When a movement fundamentally religious makes a weak nation strong, changes a nondescript tribal people into a mighty and powerful civilization, rescues them from captivity and elevates them to sovereignty, transforms their ignorance into knowledge and endows them with an impetus of advancement in all degrees of development—(this is not theory, but historical fact)—it becomes evident that religion is the cause of man's attainment to honour and sublimity.

But when we speak of religion we mean the essential foundation or reality of religion, not the dogmas and blind imitations

which have gradually encrusted it and which are the cause of the decline and effacement of a nation. These are inevitably destructive and a menace and hindrance to a nation's life—even as it is recorded in the Torah and confirmed in history, that when the Jews became fettered by empty forms and imitations the wrath of God became manifest. When they forsook the foundations of the law of God, Nebuchadnezzar came and conquered the Holy Land. He killed and made captive the people of Israel, laid waste the country and populous cities, and burned the villages. Seventy thousand Jews were carried away captive to Babylon. He destroyed Jerusalem, despoiled the great temple, desecrated the holy of holies and burned the Torah, the heavenly book of scriptures. Therefore we learn that allegiance to the essential foundation of the divine religions is ever the cause of development and progress, whereas the abandonment and beclouding of that essential reality through blind imitations and adherence to dogmatic beliefs is the cause of a nation's debasement and degradation. After their conquest by the Babylonians, the Jews were successively subjugated by the Greeks and Romans. Under the Roman general Titus, A.D. 70, the Holy Land was stripped and pillaged, Jerusalem razed to its foundations, and the Israelites scattered broadcast throughout the world. So complete was their dispersion that they have continued without a country and government of their own to the present day.

From this review of the history of the Jewish people we learn that the foundation of the religion of God laid by Moses was the cause of their eternal honour and national prestige, the animating impulse of their advancement and racial supremacy and the source of that excellence which will always command the respect and reverence of those who understand their peculiar destiny and outcome. The dogmas and blind imitations which gradually obscured the reality of the religion of God proved to be Israel's destructive influences, causing the expulsion of these chosen people from the Holy Land of their Covenant and promise.

What then is the mission of the divine prophets? Their mission is the education and advancement of the world of humanity.

They are the real teachers and educators, the universal instructors of mankind. If we wish to discover whether any one of these great souls or messengers was in reality a prophet of God, we must investigate the facts surrounding his life and history; and the first point of our investigation will be the education he bestowed upon mankind. If he has been an educator, if he has really trained a nation or people, causing it to rise from the lowest depths of ignorance to the highest station of knowledge, then we are sure that he was a prophet. This is a plain and clear method of procedure, proof that is irrefutable. We do not need to seek after other proofs. We do not need to mention miracles, saying that out of rock water gushed forth, for such miracles and statements may be denied and refused by those who hear them. The deeds of Moses are conclusive evidences of His prophethood. If a man be fair, unbiased and willing to investigate reality, he will undoubtedly testify to the fact that Moses was verily a man of God and a great personage.

In further consideration of this subject, I wish you to be fair and reasonable in your judgment, setting aside all religious prejudices. We should earnestly seek and thoroughly investigate realities, recognizing that the purpose of the religion of God is the education of humanity and the unity and fellowship of mankind. Furthermore we will establish the point that the foundations of the religions of God are one foundation. This foundation is not multiple for it is reality itself. Reality does not admit of multiplicity, although each of the divine religions is separable into two divisions. One concerns the world of morality and the ethical training of human nature. It is directed to the advancement of the world of humanity in general; it reveals and inculcates the knowledge of God and makes possible the discovery of the verities of life. This is ideal and spiritual teaching, the essential quality of divine religion and not subject to change or transformation. It is the one foundation of all the religions of God. Therefore the religions are essentially one and the same.

The second classification or division comprises social laws and regulations applicable to human conduct. This is not the essential spiritual quality of religion. It is subject to change and

transformation according to the exigencies and requirements of time and place. For instance, in the time of Noah certain requirements made it necessary that all sea foods be allowable or lawful. During the time of the Abrahamic prophethood it was considered allowable because of a certain exigency that a man should marry his aunt, even as Sarah was the sister of Abraham's mother. During the cycle of Adam it was lawful and expedient for a man to marry his own sister, even as Abel, Cain and Seth, the sons of Adam, married their sisters. But in the law of the Pentateuch revealed by Moses, these marriages were forbidden and their custom and sanction abrogated. Other laws formerly valid were annulled during the time of Moses. For example, it was lawful in Abraham's cycle to eat the flesh of the camel, but during the time of Jacob this was prohibited. Such changes and transformations in the teaching of religion are applicable to the ordinary conditions of life, but they are not important or essential. His Holiness Moses lived in the wilderness of Sinai, where crime necessitated direct punishment. There were no penitentiaries or penalties of imprisonment. Therefore according to the exigency of the time and place it was a law of God that an eye should be given for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It would not be practicable to enforce this law at the present time; for instance to blind a man who accidentally blinded you. In the Torah there are many commands concerning the punishment of a murderer. It would not be allowable or possible to carry out these ordinances to-day. Human conditions and exigencies are such that even the question of capital punishment—the one penalty which most nations have continued to enforce for murder—is now under discussion by wise men who are debating its advisability. In fact, laws for the ordinary conditions of life are only valid temporarily. The exigencies of the time of Moses justified cutting off a man's hand for theft, but such a penalty is not allowable now. Time changes conditions, and laws change to suit conditions. We must remember that these changing laws are not the essentials; they are the accidentals of religion. The essential ordinances established by a Manifestation of God are spiritual; they concern moralities, the ethical development of

man and faith in God. They are ideal and necessarily permanent; expressions of the one foundation and not amenable to change or transformation. Therefore the fundamental basis of the revealed religion of God is immutable, unchanging throughout the centuries, not subject to the varying conditions of the human world.

Christ ratified and proclaimed the foundation of the law of Moses. Muhammad and all the Prophets have revoiced that same foundation of reality. Therefore the purposes and accomplishments of the divine messengers have been one and the same. They were the source of advancement to the body-politic and the cause of the honour and divine civilization of humanity, the foundation of which is one and the same in every dispensation. It is evident then that the proofs of the validity and inspiration of a Prophet of God are the deeds of beneficent accomplishment and greatness emanating from him. If he proves to be instrumental in the elevation and betterment of mankind, he is undoubtedly a valid and heavenly messenger.

I wish you to be reasonable and just in your consideration of the following statements:

At the time when the Israelites had been dispersed by the power of the Roman empire and the national life of the Hebrew people had been effaced by their conquerors—when the law of God had seemingly passed from them and the foundation of the religion of God was apparently destroyed—Jesus Christ appeared. When He arose among the Jews, the first thing He did was to proclaim the validity of the manifestation of Moses. He declared that the Torah, the old testament, was the Book of God and that all the Prophets of Israel were valid and true. He extolled the mission of Moses, and through His proclamation the name of Moses was spread throughout the world. Through Christianity the greatness of Moses became known among all nations. It is a fact that before the appearance of Christ, the name of Moses had not been heard in Persia. In India they had no knowledge of Judaism, and it was only through the Christianizing of Europe that the teachings of the old testament became spread in that region. Throughout Europe there was not a copy of the old testament; but consider this carefully and

judge it aright:—through the instrumentality of Christ, through the translation of the new testament, the little volume of the gospel, the old testament, the Torah, has been translated into six hundred languages and spread everywhere in the world. The names of the Hebrew prophets became household words among the nations, who believed that the children of Israel were verily the chosen people of God, a holy nation under the especial blessing and protection of God, and that therefore the prophets who had arisen in Israel were the day-springs of revelation and brilliant stars in the heaven of the will of God.

Therefore Christ really promulgated Judaism, for He was a Jew and not opposed to the Jews. He did not deny the prophethood of Moses; on the contrary He proclaimed and ratified it. He did not invalidate the Torah; He spread its teachings. That portion of the ordinances of Moses which concerned transactions and unimportant conditions underwent transformation, but the essential teachings of Moses were revoiced and confirmed by Christ without change. He left nothing unfinished or incomplete. Likewise through the supreme efficacy and power of the Word of God He united most of the nations of the east and the west. This was accomplished at a time when these nations were opposed to each other in hostility and strife. He led them beneath the overshadowing tent of the oneness of humanity. He educated them until they became united and agreed, and through His spirit of conciliation the Roman, Greek, Chaldean and Egyptian were blended in a composite civilization. This wonderful power and extraordinary efficacy of the Word prove conclusively the validity of Christ. Consider how His heavenly sovereignty is still permanent and lasting. Verily this is conclusive proof and manifest evidence.

From another horizon we see Muḥammad the Prophet of Arabia appearing. You may not know that the first address of Muḥammad to His tribe was the statement, "Verily Moses was a Prophet of God, and the Torah is a book of God. Verily O ye people, ye must believe in the Torah, in Moses and the prophets. Ye must accept all the prophets of Israel as valid." In the Qur'án, the Muḥammadan bible, there are seven statements or repetitions of the Mosaic narrative, and in all the historic

accounts Moses is praised. Muḥammad announced that Moses was the greatest prophet of God, that God guided Him in the wilderness of Sinai, that through the light of guidance Moses hearkened to the summons of God, that He was the Interlocutor of God and the bearer of the tablet of the ten commandments, that all the contemporary nations of the world arose against Him and that eventually Moses conquered them, for falsehood and error are ever overcome by truth. There are many other instances of Muḥammad's confirmation of Moses. I am mentioning but a few. Consider that Muḥammad was born among the savage and barbarous tribes of Arabia, lived among them and was outwardly illiterate and uninformed of the holy books of God. The Arabian people were in the utmost ignorance and barbarism. They buried their infant daughters alive, considering this to be an evidence of a valorous and lofty nature. They lived in bondage and serfdom under the Persian and Roman governments, and were scattered throughout the desert engaged in continual strife and bloodshed. When the light of Muḥammad dawned, the darkness of ignorance was dispelled from the deserts of Arabia. In a short period of time those barbarous peoples attained a superlative degree of civilization which, with Baghdád as its centre, extended as far westward as Spain, and afterward influenced the greater part of Europe. What proof of prophethood could be greater than this, unless we close our eyes to justice and remain obstinately opposed to reason?

To-day the Christians are believers in Moses, accept Him as a prophet of God and praise Him most highly. The Muḥammadans are likewise believers in Moses, accept the validity of His prophethood, at the same time believing in Christ. Could it be said that the acceptance of Moses by the Christians and Muḥammadans has been harmful and detrimental to those people? On the contrary it has been beneficial to them, proving that they have been fair-minded and just. What harm could result to the Jewish people then if they in return should accept Christ and acknowledge the validity of the prophethood of Muḥammad? By this acceptance and praiseworthy attitude, the enmity and hatred which have afflicted mankind so many centuries would be dispelled, fanaticism and bloodshed pass

away and the world be blessed by unity and agreement. Christians and Muhammadans believe and admit that Moses was the Interlocutor of God. Why do you not say that Christ was the Word of God? Why do you not speak these few words that will do away with all this difficulty? Then there will be no more hatred and fanaticism, no more warfare and bloodshed in the Land of Promise. Then there will be peace among you forever.

Verily I now declare to you that Moses was the Interlocutor of God and a most noteworthy prophet; that Moses revealed the fundamental law of God and founded the real ethical basis of the civilization and progress of humanity. What harm is there in this? Have I lost anything by saying this to you and believing it as a Bahá'í? On the contrary it benefits me, and Bahá'u'lláh the founder of the Bahá'í movement confirms me, saying, "You have been fair and just in your judgment; you have impartially investigated the truth and arrived at a true conclusion; you have announced your belief in Moses, a prophet of God, and accepted the Torah, the book of God." Inasmuch as it is possible for me to sweep away all evidences of prejudice by such a liberal and universal statement of belief, why is it not possible for you to do likewise? Why not put an end to this religious strife and establish a bond of connection between the hearts of men? Why should not the followers of one religion praise the founder or teacher of another? The other religionists extol the greatness of Moses and admit that He was the founder of Judaism. Why do the Hebrews refuse to praise and accept the other great Messengers who have appeared in the world? What harm could there be in this? What rightful objection? None whatever. You would lose nothing by such action and statement. On the contrary you would contribute to the welfare of mankind. You would be instrumental in establishing the happiness of the world of humanity. The eternal honour of man depends upon the liberalism of this modern age. Inasmuch as our God is one God and the Creator of all mankind, He provides for and protects all. We acknowledge Him as a God of kindness, justice and mercy. Why then should we His children and followers war and fight, bringing sorrow and grief into the

hearts of each other? God is loving and merciful. His intention in religion has ever been the bond of unity and affinity between humankind.

Praise be to God! the mediæval ages of darkness have passed away and this century of radiance has dawned—this century wherein the reality of things is becoming evident—wherein science is penetrating the mysteries of the universe, the oneness of the world of humanity is being established and service to mankind is the paramount motive of all existence. Shall we remain steeped in our fanaticisms and cling to our prejudices? Is it fitting that we should still be bound and restricted by ancient fables and superstitions of the past; be handicapped by superannuated beliefs and the ignorances of dark ages, waging religious wars, fighting and shedding blood, shunning and anathematizing each other? Is this becoming? Is it not better for us to be loving and considerate toward each other? Is it not preferable to enjoy fellowship and unity; join in anthems of praise to the most high God and extol all His prophets in the spirit of acceptance and true vision? Then, indeed, this world will become a paradise and the promised Day of God will dawn. Then, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, the wolf and the lamb will drink from the same stream, the owl and the vulture will nest together in the same branches, and the lion and the calf pasture in the same meadow. What does this mean? It means that fierce and contending religions, hostile creeds and divergent beliefs will reconcile and associate, notwithstanding their former hatreds and antagonism. Through the liberalism of human attitude demanded in this radiant century they will blend together in perfect fellowship and love. This is the spirit and meaning of Isaiah's words. There will never be a day when this prophecy will come to pass literally, for these animals by their natures cannot mingle and associate in kindness and love. Therefore this prophecy symbolizes the unity and agreement of races, nations, and peoples who will come together in attitudes of intelligence, illumination and spirituality.

The age has dawned when human fellowship will become a reality.

The century has come when all religions shall be unified.

The dispensation is at hand when all nations shall enjoy the blessings of International Peace.

The cycle has arrived when racial prejudice will be abandoned by tribes and peoples of the world.

The epoch has begun wherein all nationalities will be conjoined in one great human family.

For all mankind shall dwell in peace and security beneath the shelter of the great tabernacle of the one living God. (*Talk given in Temple Emmanu-El, San Francisco, October 12th, 1912.*)

THE COVENANT

O YE that stand fast in the Covenant! When the hour cometh that this wronged and broken winged bird will have taken its flight unto the celestial concourse, when it will have hastened to the Realm of the Unseen and its mortal frame will have been either lost or hidden neath the dust, it is incumbent upon the Afnán, that are steadfast in the Covenant of God, and have branched from the Tree of Holiness; the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God (the glory of the Lord rest upon them), and all the friends and loved ones, one and all to bestir themselves and arise with heart and soul and in one accord, to diffuse the sweet savours of God, to teach His Cause and to promote His Faith. It behoveth them not to rest for a moment, neither to seek repose. They must disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime and travel throughout all regions. Bestirred, without rest and steadfast to the end they must raise in every land the triumphal cry, "O Thou the Glory of Glories!" (Yá-Bahá'-u'l-Abhá), must achieve renown in the world wherever they go, must burn brightly even as a candle in every meeting and must kindle the flame of Divine love in every assembly; that the light of truth may rise resplendent in the midmost heart of the world, that throughout the East and throughout the West a vast concourse may gather under the shadow of the Word of God, that the sweet savours of holiness may be diffused, that faces may shine radiantly, hearts be filled with the Divine spirit and souls be made heavenly.

In these days, the most important of all things is the guidance of the nations and peoples of the world. Teaching the Cause is of utmost importance, for it is the head corner-stone of the

foundation itself. This wronged servant has spent his days and nights in promoting the Cause and urging the peoples to service. He rested not a moment, till the fame of the Cause of God was noised abroad in the world and the celestial strains from the Abhá Kingdom roused the East and the West. The beloved of God must also follow the same example. This is the secret of faithfulness, this is the requirement of servitude to the Threshold of Bahá!

The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion, and with absolute detachment scattered far and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the Divine Guidance, till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth, and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that Beloved One of God. Finally, in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps!

O my loving friends! After the passing away of this wronged one, it is incumbent upon the Aghşán (Branches), the Afnán (Twigs) of the Sacred Lote-Tree, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God and the loved ones of the Abhá Beauty to turn unto Shoghi Effendi—the youthful branch branched from the two hallowed and sacred Lote-Trees and the fruit grown from the union of the two offshoots of the Tree of Holiness,—as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, he unto whom all the Aghşán, the Afnán, the Hands of the Cause of God and His loved ones must turn. He is the expounder of the words of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendants.

O ye beloved of the Lord! It is incumbent upon the guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own lifetime him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing. He that is appointed must manifest in himself detachment from all worldly things, must be the essence of purity, must show in himself the fear of God, knowledge, wisdom and learning. Thus, should the first-born of the guardian of the Cause of God not manifest in himself the truth of the words:—“The child is the secret essence of its sire,” that

is, should he not inherit of the spiritual within him (the guardian of the Cause of God) and his glorious lineage not be matched with a goodly character, then must he (the guardian of the Cause of God) choose another branch to succeed him.

The Hands of the Cause of God must elect from their own number, nine persons that shall at all times be occupied in the important services in the work of the guardian of the Cause of God. The election of these nine must be carried either unanimously or by majority from the company of the Hands of the Cause of God and these, whether unanimously or by a majority vote, must give their assent to the choice of the one whom the guardian of the Cause of God hath chosen as his successor. This assent must be given in such wise as the assenting and dissenting voices may not be distinguished. (Secret ballot.)

(From the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.)

PRAYERS
AND
DEVOTIONS

REVEALED BY BAHÁ'U'LLÁH¹

O MY God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavour, and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God, leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their helper and their Lord.

Thy name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succour in both this world and the world to come. Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Words of Wisdom

The source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment in His holy will and pleasure.

The essence of wisdom is the fear of God, the dread of His scourge and the apprehension of His justice and decree.

The essence of religion is to testify unto that which the Lord hath revealed, and follow that which He hath ordained in His mighty Book.

The source of all glory is acceptance of whatsoever the Lord hath bestowed, and contentment with that which God hath ordained.

¹ See pages 132-133.

The essence of love is for man to turn his heart to the Beloved One, and sever himself from all else but God, and desire naught save that which is the desire of his Lord.

True remembrance is to make mention of the Lord, the All-Praised, and forget all else besides Him.

True reliance is for the servant to pursue his profession and calling in this world, to hold fast unto the Lord, to seek naught but His grace, inasmuch as in His hands is the destiny of all His servants.

The essence of detachment is for man to turn his face toward the courts of the Lord, to enter His presence, behold His countenance, and stand as witness before Him.

The essence of understanding is to testify to one's poverty, and submit to the will of the Lord, the Sovereign, the Gracious, the All-Powerful.

The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God, and steadfastness in His Love.

The essence of charity is for the servant to recount the blessings of his Lord, and to render thanks unto Him at all times, and under all conditions.

The essence of wealth is love for Me. Whoso loveth Me is the possessor of all things, and he that loveth Me not is, indeed, of the poor and needy. This is that which the Finger of Glory and Splendour hath revealed. . . .

The essence of faith is fewness of words and abundance of deeds; he whose words exceed his deeds, know verily his death is better than his life. . . .

The source of all evil is for man to turn away from his Lord and set his heart on things ungodly.

The most burning fire is to question the signs of God, to dispute idly that which He hath revealed, to deny Him and carry one's self proudly before Him.

The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His Glory, and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His Divine Manifestation.

The essence of abasement is to pass from under the shadow of the Merciful, and seek the shelter of the Evil One.

The source of error is to disbelieve in the one true God, rely upon aught else but Him, and flee from His decree.

True loss is for him whose days have been spent in utter ignorance of his true self.

The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.

Thus have We instructed thee, manifested unto thee words of wisdom, that thou mayest be thankful unto the Lord, thy God, and glory therein amidst all peoples.

The Word of God

The Sun of Truth is the Word of God, upon which depends the training of the people of the country of thought. It is the spirit of reality and the water of life. All things owe their existence to it. Its manifestation is ever according to the capacity and colouring of the mirror through which it may reflect. For example: its light, when cast on the mirrors of the wise, gives expression to wisdom; when reflected from the minds of artists, it produces manifestations of new and beautiful arts; when it shines through the minds of students, it reveals knowledge and unfolds mysteries.

All things of the world arise through man and are manifest in him, through whom they find life and development; and man is dependent for his spiritual existence upon the sun of the Word of God. All the good names and lofty deeds are of the Word. The Word is the fire of God, which, glowing in the hearts of people, burns away all things that are not of God. The minds of the lovers are ever aflame with this fire. It is the essence of water, which has manifested itself in the form of fire. Outwardly it is the burning fire, but inwardly it is calm light. This is the water that gives light to all things.

We beg of God that we may partake of this life-giving water of heaven and quaff from the spiritual chalice of rest, and thus

be free from all that tends to withhold us from approaching His love.

Glory be upon the people of Glory!

Victory Tablet

He is God, exalted is He!

It has been known that God, glorious is His mention, is sanctified from the world and what is therein, and that the meaning of victory is not this, that anyone should fight or strive with another. The Lord of "He doeth what He willeth" has committed the kingdom of creation, both land and sea, into the hand of kings, and they are the manifestations of the divine power according to the degrees of their ranks; verily, He is the Potent, the Sovereign. But that which God, glorious is His mention, has desired for Himself, is the hearts of His servants which are treasures of praise and love of the Lord and stores of divine knowledge and wisdom.

The will of the Eternal King has ever been to purify the hearts of His servants from the promptings of the world and what is therein, so that they may be prepared for illumination by the effulgences of the Lord of the Names and Attributes. Therefore must no stranger find his way into the city of the heart, so that the Incomparable Friend may come unto His own place—that is, the effulgence of His Names and Attributes, not His Essence, exalted is He—for that peerless King has been and will be holy from everlasting above ascent or descent.

Therefore to-day, victory neither has been nor will ever be opposition to any one, nor strife with any person; but rather what is well-pleasing is that the cities of men's hearts, which are under the dominion of the hosts of selfishness and lust, should be subdued by the sword of the word of wisdom and of exhortation. Everyone then, who desires victory, must first subdue the city of his own heart with the sword of spiritual truth and of the Word, and must protect it from remembering aught besides God; afterwards, let him turn his efforts toward the citadel of the hearts of others. This is what is intended by

victory; sedition has never been, nor will ever be, pleasing to God, and that which certain ignorant persons formerly wrought was never approved by God. If you are slain for His good pleasure, verily it is better for you than that you should slay.

To-day the friends of God must appear in such wise among God's servants that by their actions they may lead all unto the pleasure of the Lord of Glory. I swear by the Sun of the Horizon of Holiness that the friends of God never have regarded, nor will regard, the earth or its transitory riches.

God has ever regarded the hearts of His servants, and this, too, by reason of His most great favour, that perchance mortal souls may be cleansed and sanctified from earthly states and may attain unto the everlasting places. But that Real King is in Himself sufficient unto Himself and independent of all; neither does any advantage accrue to Him from the love of contingent beings, nor does any hurt befall Him from their hatred. All earthly places appear through Him and unto Him return, and God singly and alone abideth in His own place, which is holy above space and time, mention and utterance, sign, description and definition, height and depth. And no one knows this save Him and whosoever has knowledge of the Book.

There is no God but Him, the Mighty, the Bountiful!

REVEALED BY THE BÁB

*Farewell Address to "The Letters of The Living"*¹

O MY beloved friends! You are the bearers of the name of God in this Day. You have been chosen as the repositories of His mystery. It behoves each one of you to manifest the attributes of God, and to exemplify by your deeds and words the signs of His righteousness, His power and glory. The very members of your body must bear witness to the loftiness of your purpose, the integrity of your life, the reality of your faith, and the exalted character of your devotion. For verily I say, this is the Day spoken of by God in His Book: "On that day will We set a seal upon their mouths; yet shall their hands speak unto Us, and their feet shall bear witness to that which they shall have done." Ponder the words of Jesus addressed to His disciples, as He sent them forth to propagate the Cause of God. In words such as these, He bade them arise and fulfil their mission: "Ye are even as the fire which in the darkness of the night has been kindled upon the mountain-top. Let your light shine before the eyes of men. Such must be the purity of your character and the degree of your renunciation, that the people of the earth may through you recognize and be drawn closer to the heavenly Father who is the Source of purity and grace. For none has seen the Father who is in heaven. You who are His spiritual children must by your deeds exemplify His virtues, and witness to His glory. You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? Such must be the degree of your detachment, that into

¹ The first nineteen disciples of the Báb were called the Letters of the Living.

whatsoever city you enter to proclaim and teach the Cause of God, you should in no wise expect either meat or reward from its people. Nay, when you depart out of that city, you should shake the dust from off your feet. As you have entered it pure and undefiled, so must you depart from that city. For verily I say, the heavenly Father is ever with you and keeps watch over you. If you be faithful to Him, He will assuredly deliver into your hands all the treasures of the earth, and will exalt you above all the rulers and kings of the world." O My Letters! Verily I say, immensely exalted is this Day above the days of the Apostles of old. Nay, immeasurable is the difference! You are the witnesses of the Dawn of the promised Day of God. You are the partakers of the mystic chalice of His Revelation. Gird up the loins of endeavour, and be mindful of the words of God as revealed in His Book:¹ "Lo, the Lord thy God is come, and with Him is the company of His angels arrayed before Him." Purge your hearts of worldly desires, and let angelic virtues be your adorning. Strive that by your deeds you may bear witness to the truth of these words of God, and beware lest, by "turning back," He may "change you for another people," who "shall not be your like," and who shall take from you the Kingdom of God. The days when idle worship was deemed sufficient are ended. The time is come when naught but the purest motive, supported by deeds of stainless purity, can ascend to the throne of the Most High and be acceptable unto Him. "The good word riseth up unto Him, and the righteous deed will cause it to be exalted before Him." You are the lowly, of whom God has thus spoken in His Book:¹ "And We desire to show favour to those who were brought low in the land, and to make them Our heirs." You have been called to this station; you will attain to it, only if you arise to trample beneath your feet every earthly desire, and endeavour to become those "honoured servants of His who speak not till He hath spoken, and who do His bidding." You are the first Letters that have been generated from the Primal Point,² the first Springs that have welled out from the Source of this

¹ The Qur'án.

² One of the titles of the Báb.

Revelation. Beseech the Lord your God to grant that no earthly entanglements, no worldly affections, no ephemeral pursuits, may tarnish the purity, or embitter the sweetness, of that grace which flows through you. I am preparing you for the advent of a mighty Day. Exert your utmost endeavour that, in the world to come, I, who am now instructing you, may, before the mercy-seat of God, rejoice in your deeds and glory in your achievements. The secret of the Day that is to come is now concealed. It can neither be divulged nor estimated. The newly-born babe of that Day excels the wisest and most venerable men of this time, and the lowliest and most unlearned of that period shall surpass in understanding the most erudite and accomplished divines of this age. Scatter throughout the length and breadth of this land, and, with steadfast feet and sanctified hearts, prepare the way for His coming. Heed not your weaknesses and frailty; fix your gaze upon the invincible power of the Lord, your God, the Almighty. Has He not, in past days, caused Abraham, in spite of his seeming helplessness, to triumph over the forces of Nimrod? Has He not enabled Moses, whose staff was his only companion, to vanquish Pharaoh and his hosts. Has He not established the ascendancy of Jesus, poor and lowly as He was in the eyes of men, over the combined forces of the Jewish people? Has He not subjected the barbarous and militant tribes of Arabia to the holy and transforming discipline of Muḥammad, His Prophet? Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.

Prayers

Is there any remover of difficulties save God! Say, Praise be to God! He is God! All are His servants and all are standing by His command.

Say, God suffices all things above all things, and nothing in the heavens or in the earth but God suffices. Verily,

He is in Himself the knower, the sustainer, the omnipotent!

In the Name of God, the victor of the most victorious, proclaim: God will assist all those who arise to serve Him. No one is able to deprive Him of His majesty, His dominion, His sovereignty, for in the heaven and the earth and in all the realms of God He is the victorious and the conqueror!

REVEALED BY 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ¹

The Army of Life

O ARMY of Life! East and West have joined to worship stars of faded splendour, and have turned in prayer unto darkened horizons. Both have utterly neglected the broad foundation of God's sacred laws, and have grown unmindful of the merits and virtues of His religion. They have regarded certain customs and conventions as the basis of the Divine faith, and have firmly established themselves therein. They have imagined themselves as having attained a glorious pinnacle of achievement and prosperity, when in reality they have touched the innermost depths of heedlessness and deprived themselves wholly of God's bounteous gifts.

The cornerstone of the religion of God is the acquisition of divine perfections and the sharing in His manifold bestowals. The essential purpose of faith and belief is to ennoble the inner being of man with the outpourings of grace from on high. If this be not attained, it is, indeed, deprivation. It is the realization of this deprivation that is the true eternal fire.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon all Bahá'ís to ponder this delicate and vital matter in their hearts, that, unlike other religions, they may not content themselves with the noise, the clamour, the hollowness of religious doctrine. Nay, rather, they should exemplify in every aspect of their lives the attributes and virtues that are born of God, and should arise to distinguish themselves by their goodly behaviour. They should justify their claim to be Bahá'ís by deeds, not by name.

¹ See pages 204, 248, 290.

He is a true Bahá'í who strives by day and by night to progress and advance along the path of human endeavour, whose cherished desire is so to live and act as to enrich and illumine the world; whose source of inspiration is the Essence of Divine perfection; whose aim in life is to conduct himself so as to be the cause of infinite progress. Only when he attains unto such perfect gifts can it be said of him that he is a Bahá'í.

In this holy dispensation, the crowning glory of bygone ages and cycles, faith is no mere acknowledgment of the unity of God, but rather the living of a life that manifests the virtues and perfections implied in such belief.

His Holiness the exalted One, may my life be a sacrifice to Him, has shown us the way of behaviour, has guided us to the path of self-sacrifice, has taught us how to despise earthly rest and comfort, and how to lay down our lives for each other. That sanctified Being, despite the loftiness of His position and the exaltation of His spirit, chose to be chained and fettered that we might obtain the light of divine guidance. All the days of His life He rested not for a moment. He sought no repose nor laid His head upon the couch of ease and security. His days were passed amid afflictions and suffering. How can we follow Him and yet remain idle and at ease?

O my friends, arise to tend the pure and widely-scattered seed planted in the hearts of men. Dedicate yourselves wholly to the service of humanity. Then will the world be turned into a paradise; then will the surface of the earth mirror forth the glory of the Abhá Kingdom. Should you fail in this, great will be your deprivation and grievous your loss.

O servant of truth, wouldst thou obtain the sovereignty of earth and heaven? Seek nought but true servitude upon the threshold of the Abhá Beauty. Wouldst thou win the joy of liberty in this world and the next? Desire but submission unto His holy will. Wouldst thou discover the true way to God? Follow the path of His covenant. Wouldst thou behold the light of eternal splendour? Fix thy gaze upon His bountiful grace vouchsafed from the Abhá Kingdom.

Marriage Tablet

The bond that unites hearts most perfectly is loyalty. True lovers once united must show forth the utmost faithfulness one to another. You must dedicate your knowledge, your talents, your fortunes, your titles, your bodies and your spirits to God, to Bahá'u'lláh and to each other. Let your hearts be spacious, as spacious as the universe of God!

Allow no trace of jealousy to creep between you, for jealousy, like unto poison, vitiates the very essence of love. Let not the ephemeral incidents and accidents of this changeful life cause a rift between you. When differences present themselves, take counsel together in secret, lest others magnify a speck into a mountain. Harbour not in your hearts any grievance, but rather explain its nature to each other with such frankness and understanding that it will disappear, leaving no remembrance. Choose fellowship and amity and turn away from jealousy and hypocrisy.

Your thoughts must be lofty, your ideals luminous, your minds spiritual, so that your souls may become a dawning-place for the Sun of Reality. Let your hearts be like unto two pure mirrors reflecting the stars of the heaven of love and beauty.

Together make mention of noble aspirations and heavenly concepts. Let there be no secrets one from another. Make your home a haven of rest and peace. Be hospitable, and let the doors of your house be open to the faces of friends and strangers. Welcome every guest with radiant grace and let each feel that it is his own home.

No mortal can conceive the union and harmony which God has designed for man and wife. Nourish continually the tree of your union with love and affection, so that it will remain ever green and verdant throughout all seasons and bring forth luscious fruits for the healing of the nations.

O beloved of God, may your home be a vision of the paradise of Abhá, so that whosoever enters there may feel the essence of purity and harmony, and cry out from the heart: "Here is the home of love! Here is the palace of love! Here is the nest of love! Here is the garden of love!"

Be like two sweet-singing birds perched upon the highest branches of the tree of life, filling the air with songs of love and rapture.

Lay the foundation of your affection in the very centre of your spiritual being, at the very heart of your consciousness, and let it not be shaken by adverse winds.

And when God gives you sweet and lovely children, consecrate yourselves to their instruction and guidance, so that they may become imperishable flowers of the divine rose-garden, nightingales of the ideal paradise, servants of the world of humanity, and the fruit of the tree of your life.

Live in such harmony that others may take your lives for an example and may say one to another: "Look how they live like two doves in one nest, in perfect love, affinity and union. It is as though from all eternity God had kneaded the very essence of their beings for the love of one another."

Attain the ideal love that God has destined for you, so that you may become partakers of eternal life forthwith. Quaff deeply from the fountain of truth, and dwell all the days of your life in a paradise of glory, gathering immortal flowers from the garden of divine mysteries.

Be to each other as heavenly lovers and divine beloved ones dwelling in a paradise of love. Build your nest on the leafy branches of the tree of love. Soar into the clear atmosphere of love. Sail upon the shoreless sea of love. Walk in the eternal rose-garden of love. Bathe in the shining rays of the sun of love. Be firm and steadfast in the path of love. Perfume your nostrils with the fragrance from the flowers of love. Attune your ears to the soul-entrancing melodies of love. Let your aims be as generous as the banquets of love, and your words as a string of white pearls from the ocean of love. Drink deeply of the elixir of love, so that you may live continually in the reality of Divine Love.

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