

“He hath known God who hath known himself”:
A Deepening Course on the Bahá’í Revelation

A COMPILATION
FROM THE
BAHÁ’Í SACRED WRITINGS

Compiled by
Barbara Ives Reich Kochmann
during the years
1963 – 1977

Edited and Expanded by
Richard Kochmann
1982 – 2017

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"Man is My mystery, and I am his mystery."

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 101; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 177)

In the Old Testament we read that God said, ‘Let us make man in Our own image’.

In the Gospel, Christ said, ‘I am in the Father, and the Father in Me’. [St. John xiv, II]

In the Qur’án, God says, ‘Man is my Mystery and I am his’.

Bahá’u’lláh writes that God says,

‘Thy heart is My home; purify it for My descent.

Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation’.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 23)



To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Bahá’u’lláh and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give it to others in its pure form. There are many who have some superficial idea of what the Cause stands for. They, therefore, present it together with all sorts of ideas that are their own. As the Cause is still in its early days we must be most careful lest we fall into this error and injure the Movement we so much adore. There is no limit to the study of the Cause. The more we read the Writings, the more truths we can find in them, the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous.

(Shoghi Effendi, cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a letter dated May 27, 1966, entitled “*Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice*, found in *Wellspring of Guidance*, pp. 88-89, and subsequent publications of “Messages” from the Universal House of Justice for similar or additional years...)



The Center for the Study of the Sacred Texts

Dedication

This compilation is dedicated to the inspiring presence and loving and enduring memory of Barbara Ives Reich Kochmann, (1925, New York, New York – 1977, Pine Hill, New Mexico), beloved granddaughter of Howard Colby Ives, (and mother to Erica, Jan, Nancy Sue, Barbara Ann, and Philip Reich, and Martin Kochmann), whose precious, supportive and determined example, indefatigable spirit, diligent effort and undeviating devotion in plummeting the depths of intensive and codified research into the sacred texts of the Bahá'í Revelation have all resulted in the present expanded version of this, her original course about man's knowledge of God, the station of the Manifestations (and progressive revelation), the dynamics of the Covenant (including different aspects of several forms of the Bahá'í Covenant), and of the calling and station of the true believer/s everywhere (arising in conformity to the Covenant and the teachings for this Day), entitled:

“He hath known God who hath known himself.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 102)

Based on what she was discovering through her vast research, Barbara wanted to develop a facility dedicated to the study of the Bahá'í Revelation, and this she deemed “Temerity II”, modeled after Temerity Ranch set in the Colorado Rockies, a center for the training of international teachers of the Bahá'í Faith in compliance with assisting in fulfilling the goals of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, in the late 1940's. She believed these essential dynamics, spiritual principles and interrelationships contained within the revealed Word for this Age to be instrumental in a new approach to learning, and in the training and transformation of future teachers of the Faith, in the challenging years that lay ahead.

Nowadays a lot of training and research is characteristically web-driven, as in distance learning and web-based education, sometimes interational but for the most part, self-instructional. That is why the idea of Temerity II, a platform for immersion in the Bahá'í Writings, has now taken on the identity and provenance of becoming one of many such web-based resources for plunging further and delving deeper into the ocean of Bahá'í revelation, found for the time being at: http://bahai-library.com/kochmann_deepening_course_compilation in English, French, and Spanish.

“Know assuredly that just as thou firmly believest that the Word of God, exalted be His glory, endureth for ever, thou must, likewise, believe with undoubting faith that its meaning can never be exhausted...”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 175)

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ATTRIBUTION

This compilation represents the “life work” of several researchers in a family of Bahá’í scholars, each successive generation plummeting the depths of the Ocean of Baha’u’llah’s Revelation to better grasp the inner significances, hidden meanings and dynamic operations of the Covenant. Its original creator, chief compiler and progenitor was Barbara Ives Reich Kochmann, inspired by her grandfather, Howard Colby Ives, who had begun a preliminary examination of these subjects in his masterful study, “The Ocean of His Utterances”. Inspired by his approach, method of research and doting, loving example — and a continuing appreciation of the closeness of his spirit and guidance — Barbara was determined in her pursuit of delving deeper into an understanding of the dynamic operations of the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh and of the Holy Spirit — leading to the penetration of the cities of human hearts, and the transformation of individual souls, as we advance toward the unification of mankind and achieve the Kingdom of God on earth — all in conformity to His own revealed terms, conditions, definitions, admonitions and explanations — as contained in and confined to the Sacred Texts.

The original version of this study, which Barbara chose to refer to as “The Course” — consisted of twenty-five typed pages, whittled down to pithy references to accommodate groups engaged in weekend long study institutes ~ which were dedicated, in her view, to the formal, spiritual yet “conscious knowledge” training of the “Teachers of the teachers” in firmness to the Covenant and confirmed service.

Following her death in 1977, several texts were released with new (previously unpublished or unauthenticated) references, which her husband Richard decided needed to be included at that time in an updated version of the course. This revised edition of the course was completed in 1982, and served for many years as a basis for intense individual study (one on one) into the sacred Writings. At that time, Richard also expanded the course to include many of the other discoveries that characterized Barbara’s understanding of the “divine science” of the Word of God, of the pearls concealed in the depths, and confirmed teaching methodologies and certain spiritual dynamics and principles, which had not yet appeared in the concise original version.

In her continuing research, Barbara maintained a persistent interest in such research topics as the human heart (“Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation” and “Earth and heaven cannot contain Me; what can alone contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me, and is faithful to My Cause”), the rational faculty (“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”), on becoming one of those “honored servants” whose “feet do not slip”, who drink their

fill “from the crystal clear waters of constancy” and become as immovable as “the mountain in His Cause”, who “stand in the station of the Manifestation” speaking “not till He hath spoken” and act in accord to His commandment to “do His bidding”. As Howard would paraphrase it in his major poetic treatise “The Song Celestial” ~ “Peace be upon him who followeth the Right Path!”

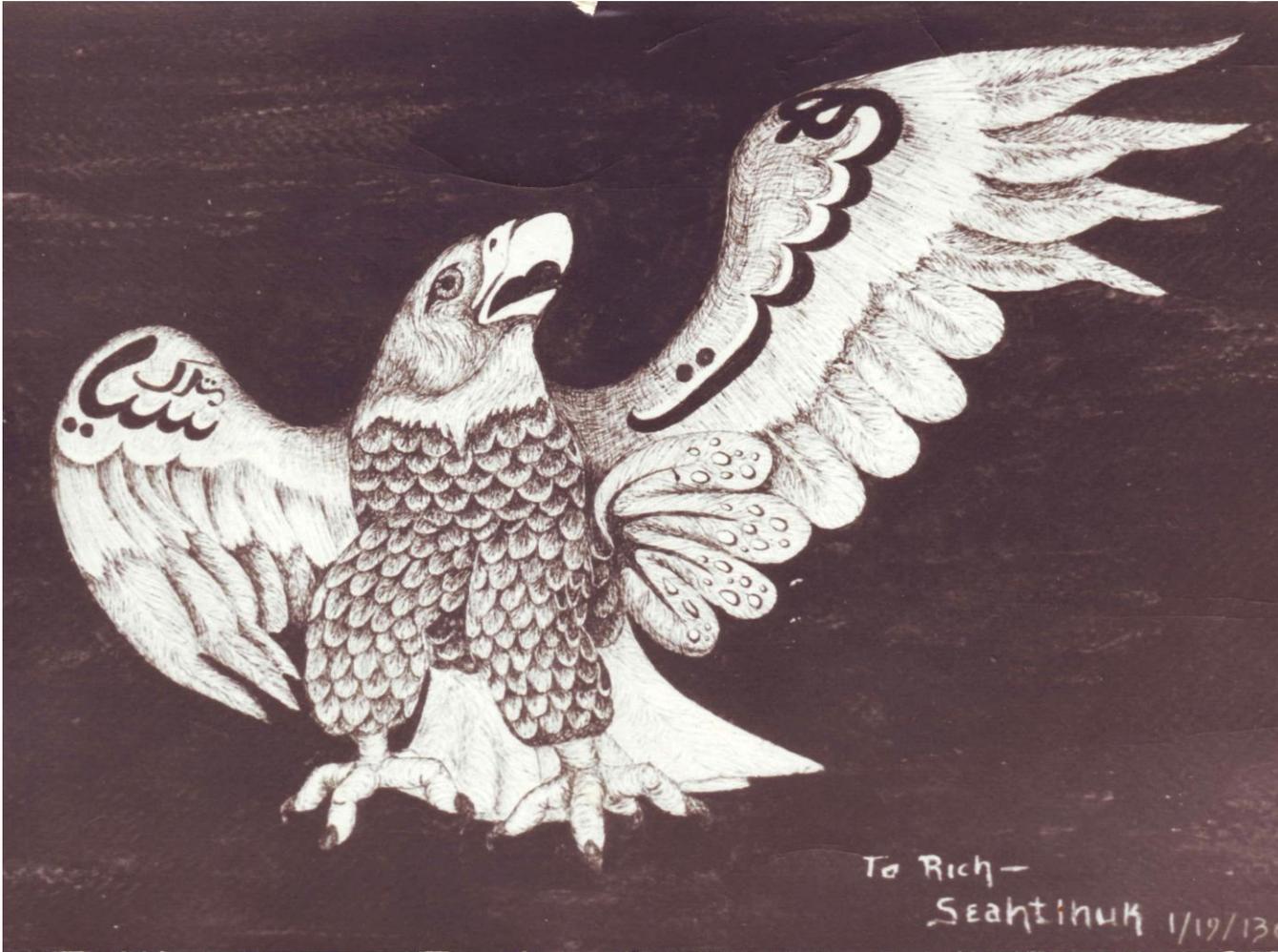
Barbara was especially motivated to achieve a greater understanding of the station, symbolism, inner significance and operation/s of the Maids of Heaven (the Huris of hidden meaning or inner significance and essence of the Names and Attributes of God) which, according to Bahá'u'lláh's own explanations of the dynamic operations of the Eternal and Everlasting Covenant, are summoned from beyond the Sadratu'l Muntaha (The Tree Beyond Which There Is No Passing), descending on the wings of the Spirit [or are “They”/“It” the “Spirit”???)] down through the Station of the Manifestation/s and into the very hearts of the true believers and servants everywhere — as they [who are steadfast and confirmed in the Covenant] strive to penetrate the citadels of all men's hearts throughout the world — with an illumined character, radiant qualities, spiritual utterance and confirmed actions and deeds! (These dynamics are all covered in the “course” which follows...).

This present version has been expanded greatly (including references from even more recent texts released by the World Centre) – thanks in large measure to the ease with which Bahá'í researchers and “compilers” can now gain access to the Revealed Word, via the unique search program gifted to the Bahá'í World by Chad Jones, known simply as “Ocean”.

Expanded topics include references regarding the need for opposition and negation in the onward unfoldment, propagation and mission of the Faith, and the promised appearance of a new race of men, the “People of Bahá”, who (as designated throughout eternity) would appear at an appointed hour in countless numbers from behind the veils of concealment, arising under full allegiance to and the tutelage, protection, confirmations and guidance of Bahá'u'lláh Himself, to transform the world and summon the hearts of every pure and sincere one, and who would enter every city and be afraid of no one -- speaking not until He hath spoken, to do His bidding. [For more detail on this subject please consider in particular: Sections Part III E5 (“The People of Baha”) and Part III H (“Ascendancy of...His Independent Sovereignty...”), as well as other related references to holy ones, angels, heavenly armies, and hands (sic), appearing throughout the course.]

Other than a few brief sections containing “Dictionary Definitions” — this course of study has no personal opinion or contextual references that are not directly resourced from the revealed Word of God for this Age, its appointed Interpreters, divinely conceived and designated Institutions, and occasionally the remembrances of those serving closest to the Central Figures and the Guardian of the Faith, along with various respected Bahá'í historians and scholars – with each identified as such – at a time and in this glorious Day – when all the remaining “letters of knowledge” have been revealed, in “the fullness of Revelation”. “Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power.”

Respectfully transmitted - Richard Kochmann, Ciudad Cariari, Belen, Heredia Province, Costa Rica



Pen and ink painting commissioned by late Native American artist Gary Hillaire for Barbara's grave stone. In calligraphy on the wings are the words "Temerity Is" or Temerity Be".

In honor of Barbara's intensive research and spirit, herein follows her favorite prayer, published in a number of early prayer books, and for which an authentic or original text source has not been located. [See next section, regarding Citing of References]:

"O our God, we beg of Thee by the King of Names and Maker of heaven and earth, by the rustling of the leaves of the Tree of Life and by Thine utterances, through which the realities of things are drawn unto us, to grant that unity in the Love of God may be speedily established throughout the world; that Thou wilt guide us always and unmistakably to whatever Thou wouldst have us to do, and that we may ever be strong and fully prepared to render instant, exact and complete obedience."

(Attributed to Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Scriptures*, p. 186; *Bahá'í Prayers* [1929], p. 33; and *Covenant and Administration*, p. 38, but for which no original, authentic or verifiable source has yet been discovered, hence to be regarded as "*pilgrims' note*".)

CITING OF REFERENCES

References included in this compilation are primarily from extant and authenticated sources. When a reference is from an obscure, “out of print” – or otherwise questionable source, recourse has been made to the Research Department at the Bahá’í World Centre for identification and verification. In some very few cases, references from earlier published Bahá’í sources (such as the *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Abbas*, volumes 1, 2 and 3, certain other earlier reference materials [when no more contemporary translation has superseded their inclusion], and various editions of *Star of the West* magazine [1910-1924]), or the anecdotal recordings of those who were in the Master’s or the Guardian’s presence (found in various books, pamphlets or diaries and the like) which seem to aid in or enhance the general flow of understanding of the material being presented have been included but in each case identified as such. Those recordings of early tablets, letters, utterances or statements of either ‘Abdu’l-Bahá or Shoghi Effendi (and others) — for which no identifiable original text exists for verification and authentication – are labeled as “pilgrims’ note” or “attributed to”, and as such, are not to be regarded as authentic, revealed or sacred text. They (along with the citing of references from ‘secondary’ resources) have been included only in those exceptional cases where they seem to amplify or aid in the general understanding of a particular section or passage. (For further clarification and explanation of this subject — the reader is respectfully directed to Hornby’s *Lights of Guidance*, Section XXXVIII, entitled “Pilgrims’ note”, numbered 1431 through 1439, [Bahá’í Publishing Trust of India, 1994], pp. 439-441 respectively; and a letter from the Universal House of Justice, dated 22 October, 1996, entitled: “Authenticity and Authority” regarding earlier anthologies (collections) of the Bahá’í Writings – both found in the Appendices at the back of this course, beginning on page 391 and following.) Normally a reference is followed by the name of the Central Figure or Head of Faith revealing or making the statement excerpted or quoted, its contemporary published source, followed by page references. References from other Bahá’í sources are contained within [] brackets and denoted by outside marginal borders in grey.

["Example: selections from other Bahá’í sources, e.g. Taherzadeh, look like this."]

Additionally, once an authoritative reference has been initially introduced in the course, at times when it has been re-quoted, it will appear in the new context in brackets or with marginal borders, as a “reminder” of something apropos to the new content, but “out of context” and/or “already cited”. Also, all editorial notes or comments will also appear in [] brackets.

Finally, minor subsection divisions (not part of the main outline of the course) are demarcated wherever necessary by the insertion of a non-alphabetic/non-numerical “symbol” – to honor and maintain the appropriate ordering of references from the Central Figures and various Institutions of the Faith according to the prominence or rank of the author/source cited, and look like this:

❖ “*That which harmeth me...*”



The Collins Gate (the view with the path to the Qiblih)

PRELUDE

❖ “*That which harmeth me...*”

‘My imprisonment doeth Me no harm, nor do the things that have befallen Me at the hands of My enemies. That which harmeth Me is the conduct of my loved ones who, though they bear My name, yet commit that which maketh My heart and My pen to lament.’

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 70)

We heard that which the person in question hath mentioned regarding certain teachers of the Faith. Indeed he hath spoken truly. Some heedless souls roam the lands in the name of God, actively engaged in ruining His Cause, and call it promoting and teaching the Word of God; and this notwithstanding that the qualifications of the teachers of the Faith, like unto stars, shine resplendent throughout the heavens of the divine Tablets.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 58)

❖ “[*T*]he qualifications of the teachers...”

But regarding the qualifications of the teachers, they are revealed in the divine Tablets.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. V, No. 14, p. 215)

❖ “*Arise, O people...*”

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....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 86)

Thy day of service is now come. Countless Tablets bear the testimony of the bounties vouchsafed unto thee. Arise for the triumph of My Cause, and, through the power of thine utterance, subdue the hearts of men.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 92)

Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring balance....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 198)

❖ “*The principles...should be carefully studied...*”

The principles of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 22)

❖ “*...behold My Revelation through Mine eyes...*”

Cast the idle tales behind your backs and behold My Revelation through Mine eyes....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 241)

There can be no doubt whatever that, in consequence of the efforts which every man may consciously exert and as a result of the exertion of his own spiritual faculties, this mirror can be so cleansed from the dross of earthly defilements and purged from satanic fancies as to be able to draw nigh unto the meads of eternal holiness and attain the courts of everlasting fellowship. In pursuance, however, of the principle that for every thing a time hath been fixed, and for every fruit a season hath been ordained, the latent energies of such a bounty can best be released, and the vernal glory of such a gift can only be manifested, in the Days of God....

It is for this reason that, in those days, no man shall ever stand in need of his neighbor. It hath already been abundantly demonstrated that in that divinely-appointed Day the majority of them that have sought and attained His holy court have revealed such knowledge and wisdom, a drop of which none else besides these holy and sanctified souls, however long he may have taught or studied, hath grasped or will ever comprehend. It is by virtue of this power that the beloved of God have, in the days of the Manifestation of the Day Star of Truth, been exalted above, and made independent of, all human learning. Nay, from their hearts and the springs of their innate powers hath gushed out unceasingly the inmost essence of human learning and wisdom.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, passim, pp. 262-263)

❖ “*Do not disrupt Bahá'í unity...*”

Do not disrupt Bahá'í unity, and know that this unity cannot be maintained save through faith in the Covenant of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 214)

No one save a severed soul or a sincere heart finds response from God.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 44, “pilgrims’ note”)

❖ “*To assist Me...*”

To assist Me is to teach My Cause.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 196)

Praise be to God Who hath made being to come forth from nothingness; graven upon the tablet of man the secrets of preexistence; taught him from the mysteries of divine utterance that which he knew not; made him a Luminous Book unto those who believed and surrendered themselves; caused him to witness the creation of all things (*Kullu Shay’*) in this black and ruinous age, and to speak forth from the apex of eternity with a wondrous voice in the Excellent Temple [1]: to the end that every man may testify, in himself, by himself, *in the station of the Manifestation of his Lord*, that verily there is no God save Him, and that every man may thereby win his way to the summit of realities, until none shall contemplate anything whatsoever but that he shall see God therein. [1. The Manifestation.] [Italics added –ed.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 1-2)

Thus will these mysteries be unravelled, not by the aid of acquired learning, but solely through the assistance of God and the outpourings of His grace. “Ask ye, therefore, of them that have the custody of the Scriptures, if ye know it not.” [Qur’án 16:43.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 191)



When the victory arriveth, every man shall profess himself as believer and shall hasten to the shelter of God's Faith. Happy are they who in the days of world-encompassing trials have stood fast in the Cause and refused to swerve from its truth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 319)

PREFACE

To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give it to others in its pure form. There are many who have some superficial idea of what the Cause stands for. They, therefore, present it together with all sorts of ideas that are their own. As the Cause is still in its early days we must be most careful lest we fall into this error and injure the Movement we so much adore. There is no limit to the study of the Cause. The more we read the Writings, the more truths we can find in them, the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous.

(Shoghi Effendi, cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a letter dated May 27, 1966, entitled "Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice")



Eagle denoting the sacred resting place of Shoghi Effendi, Beloved Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, New Southgate Cemetery, London.

A. In the beginning was the Word...

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”

(Cf. John 1:1, Matthew 6:9, and Luke 11:2)

❖ “As regards thine assertions about the beginning of creation...”

As regards thine assertions about the beginning of creation, this is a matter on which conceptions vary by reason of the divergences in men’s thoughts and opinions. Wert thou to assert that it hath ever existed and shall continue to exist, it would be true; or wert thou to affirm the same concept as is mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, no doubt would there be about it, for it hath been revealed by God, the Lord of the worlds. Indeed He was a hidden treasure. This is a station that can never be described nor even alluded to...

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 140)

The entire creation hath been called into being through the Will of God, magnified by His glory, and peerless Adam hath been fashioned through the agency of His all-compelling Word, a Word which is the source, the wellspring, the repository, and the dawning-place of the intellect. From it all creation hath proceeded, and it is the channel of God’s primal grace. None can grasp the reality of the origin of creation save God, exalted by His glory, Whose knowledge embraceth all things both before and after they come into being. Creation hath neither beginning nor end, and none hath ever unraveled its mystery. Its knowledge hath ever been, and shall remain, hidden and persevered with those Who are the Repositories of divine knowledge.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section II, verse 2.48, p. 47)

It is clear and evident, therefore, that the first bestowal of God is the Word, and its discoverer and recipient is the power of understanding. This Word is the foremost instructor in the school of existence and the revealer of Him Who is the Almighty. All that is seen is visible only through the light of wisdom. All that is manifest is but a token of knowledge. All names are but its name, and the beginning and end of all matters must needs depend upon it.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section I, verse 1.2, p. 4)

And in the station of ‘I did wish to make Myself known’, God was, and His creation had ever existed beneath His shelter from the beginning that hath no beginning, apart from its being preceded by a Firstness which cannot be regarded as firstness and originated by a Cause inscrutable even unto all men of learning.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 140)

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.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 165-166) [Italics added –ed.]

❖ *“In the beginning was the Word”*

In the world of God there is no past, present, or future: All of these are one. So when Christ said, “In the beginning was the Word,” [Cf. John 1:1]—He meant that it was, is, and shall be; for in the world of God there is no time. Time holds sway over the creatures but not over God. So in the prayer where Christ says, “Hallowed be Thy name”, [Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2] the meaning is that Thy name was, is, and shall be hallowed. Again, morning, noon, and evening exist in relation to the earth, but in the sun there is neither morning, nor noon, nor evening.

‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 39, Section 7, p. 178)

❖ *“Know thou, moreover...”*

Know thou, moreover, that the Word of God -- exalted be His glory -- is higher and far superior to that which the senses can perceive, for it is sanctified from any property or substance. It transcendeth the limitations of known elements and is exalted above all the essential and recognized substances. It became manifest without any syllable or sound and is none but the Command of God which pervadeth all created things. It hath never been withheld from the world of being. It is God's all-pervasive grace, from which all grace doth emanate. It is an entity far removed above all that hath been and shall be.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 140-141)

❖ “[I]ts meaning can never be exhausted...”

Know assuredly that just as thou firmly believest that the Word of God, exalted be His glory, endureth for ever, thou must, likewise, believe with undoubting faith that its meaning can never be exhausted. They who are its appointed interpreters, they whose hearts are the repositories of its secrets, are, however, the only ones who can comprehend its manifold wisdom. Whoso, while reading the Sacred Scriptures, is tempted to choose therefrom whatever may suit him with which to challenge the authority of the Representative of God among men, is, indeed, as one dead, though to outward seeming he may walk and converse with his neighbors, and share with them their food and their drink.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 175-176)

❖ “For the Word of God is...”

For the Word of God is collective wisdom, absolute knowledge and eternal truth.

Consider the statement recorded in the first chapter of the book of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This statement is brief but replete with the greatest meanings. [Italics and underlining added for emphasis –ed.]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 154)



B. Divine Unity

Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. *This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth.* Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 59) [Italics added –ed.]

The essence of belief in Divine unity consisteth in regarding Him Who is the Manifestation of God and Him Who is the invisible, the inaccessible, the unknowable Essence as one and the same.... *This is the loftiest station to which a true believer in the unity of God can ever hope to attain.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 167) [Italics added –ed.]

❖ *“The spirit of unity exists in the Divine Words...”*

‘Abdu’l Bahá is the interpreter of the aims, intents, and purposes of the Words of the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'o'lláh) [sic] and is the interpreter of his [sic] own written words, and none can say that this or that is the intention conveyed therein, save ‘Abdu’l Bahá. *The spirit of unity exists in the Divine Words, and one who interprets them in such wise as to create a division and discord is indeed one who errs.*

Were not the Revelation of Bahá'o'lláh [sic] one adaptable to the entire world and its diverse nations, it could not be a unique and universal Revelation, but its elasticity adapts itself to all conditions, and its spirit is one that moulds itself into every vehicle and need for the accomplishment of the divine plan of unity.

(Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, No. 6, pp. 43-45, considered as “pilgrims’ note”) [Italics added –ed.]

C. Progressive Revelation

Contemplate with thine inward eye the chain of successive Revelations that hath linked the Manifestation of Adam with that of the Báb. I testify before God that each one of these Manifestations hath been sent down through the operation of the Divine Will and Purpose, that each hath been the bearer of a specific Message, that each hath been entrusted with a divinely-revealed Book and been commissioned to unravel the mysteries of a mighty Tablet. The measure of the Revelation with which every one of them hath been identified had been definitely fore-ordained. *This, verily, is a token of Our favor unto them, if ye be of those that comprehend this truth....*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 74-75) [Italics added –ed.]

“They Who are the Luminaries of Truth and the Mirrors reflecting the light of Divine Unity,” Bahá'u'lláh explains in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, “in whatever age and cycle they are sent down from their invisible habitations of ancient glory unto this world to educate the souls of men and endue with grace all created things, are invariably endowed with an all-compelling power and invested with invincible sovereignty.... 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... Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the light that can never fade.... Human tongue can never befittingly sing their praise, and human speech can never unfold their mystery.” “Inasmuch as these Birds of the celestial Throne,” He adds, “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... They all abide in the same tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech, and proclaim the same Faith.... They only differ in the intensity of their revelation and the comparative potency of their light.... 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.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 114-115)

❖ *“I have yet many things to say unto you...”*

In the dispensations gone before, the feeble body of the world could not withstand a rigorous or powerful cure. For this reason did Christ say: *I have yet many things to say unto you, matters needing to be told, but ye cannot bear to hear them now. Howbeit when that Comforting Spirit, Whom the Father will send, shall come, He will make plain unto you the truth.*’ [John 15:26; 16:12-13]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 59) [Italics added –ed.]

❖ “*Consider that which hath been sent down unto Muhammad...*”

Consider that which hath been sent down unto Muhammad, the Apostle of God. The measure of the Revelation of which He was the bearer had been clearly foreordained by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Powerful. They that heard Him, however, could apprehend His purpose only to the extent of their station and spiritual capacity. He, in like manner, uncovered the Face of Wisdom in proportion to their ability to sustain the burden of His Message.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 76)

No sooner had mankind attained the stage of maturity, than the Word revealed to men’s eyes the latent energies with which it had been endowed—energies which manifested themselves in the plenitude of their glory when the Ancient Beauty appeared, in the year sixty, in the person of Ali-Muhammad, the Báb.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 76)

In the Íqán, Bahá’u’lláh, wishing to emphasize the transcendent character of this new Day of God, reinforces the strength of His argument by His reference to the text of a correct and authorized tradition, which reveals the following:

“Knowledge is twenty and seven letters. All that the Prophets have revealed are two letters thereof. No man thus far hath known more than these two letters. But when the Qá’im [refers to the Station of the Báb] shall arise, He will cause the remaining twenty and five letters to be made manifest.” And then immediately follow these confirming and illuminating words of Bahá’u’lláh: “Consider: He hath declared knowledge to consist of twenty and seven letters, and regarded all the prophets, from Adam even unto Muhammad, the ‘seal,’ as expounders of only two letters thereof. He also saith that the Qá’im will reveal all the remaining twenty and five letters. Behold from this utterance how great and lofty is His station! His rank excelleth that of all the prophets, and His revelation transcendeth the comprehension and understanding of all their chosen ones. A revelation, of which the prophets of God, His saints and chosen ones have either not been informed or which,

in pursuance of God's inscrutable decree, they have not disclosed — such a revelation, these vile and villainous people have sought to measure with their own deficient minds, their own deficient learning and understanding....”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 24-25; and [Bahá'u'lláh portion:] *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 243)

“*Know of a certainty,*” Bahá'u'lláh explains in this connection, “*that in every Dispensation the light of Divine Revelation hath been vouchsafed to men in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity. Consider the sun. How feeble its rays the moment it appeareth above the horizon. How gradually its warmth and potency increase as it approacheth its zenith, enabling meanwhile all created things to adapt themselves to the growing intensity of its light. How steadily it declineth until it reacheth its setting point. Were it all of a sudden to manifest the energies latent within it, it would no doubt cause injury to all created things.... In like manner, if the Sun of Truth were suddenly to reveal, at the earliest stages of its manifestation, the full measure of the potencies which the providence of the Almighty hath bestowed upon it, the earth of human understanding would waste away and be consumed; for men's hearts would neither sustain the intensity of its revelation, nor be able to mirror forth the radiance of its light. Dismayed and overpowered, they would cease to exist.*”

In the light of these clear and conclusive statements it is our clear duty to make it indubitably evident to every seeker after truth that from “*the beginning that hath no beginning*” the Prophets of the one, the unknowable God, including Bahá'u'lláh Himself, have all, as the channels of God's grace, as the exponents of His unity, as the mirrors of His light and the revealers of His purpose, been commissioned to unfold to mankind an ever-increasing measure of His truth, of His inscrutable will and Divine guidance, and will continue to “*the end that hath no end*” to vouchsafe still fuller and mightier revelations of His limitless power and glory...

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 117-118)

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 5)

“*This is the King of Days...the Day that hath seen the coming of the Best-Beloved, Him Who, through all eternity, hath been acclaimed the Desire of the World.*”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 167)

Magnified be Thy name, O my God, for that Thou hast manifested the Day which is the King of Days, the Day which Thou didst announce unto Thy chosen Ones and Thy Prophets in Thy most excellent Tablets, the Day whereon Thou didst shed the splendor of the glory of all Thy names upon all created things.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 117)

Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One.... Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness.... 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....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 10-11)

It is evident that every age in which a Manifestation of God hath lived is divinely ordained, and may, in a sense, be characterized as God's appointed Day. This Day, however, is unique, and is to be distinguished from those that have preceded it. The designation "Seal of the Prophets" [referring to the Dispensation of Muhammad] fully revealeth its high station. The Prophetic Cycle hath, verily, ended. The Eternal Truth is now come. He hath lifted up the Ensign of Power, and is now shedding upon the world the unclouded splendor of His Revelation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 59)

"In this most mighty Revelation," He, in categorical language, declares, "all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation. That which hath been made manifest in this preeminent, this most exalted Revelation, standeth unparalleled in the annals of the past, nor will future ages witness its like." [Cf. also, in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, beginning "Verily I say! No one hath apprehended the root of this Cause...", p. 77 ff. —ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 167)

❖ "*Centuries, nay ages, must pass away...*"

"Centuries, nay ages, must pass away...ere the Day-Star of Truth shineth again in its mid-summer splendor, or appeareth once more in the radiance of its vernal glory...."

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 110 and 167; and in *God Passes By*, p. 99)

❖ “[T]he state of maturity...”

...Bahá’u’lláh is not the intermediary between God and the other Manifestations, although these are under His shadow, for the simple reason that the Messengers of God are all inherently one; it is their Message that differs. Bahá’u’lláh, appearing at a time when the world has attained maturity, His message must necessarily surpass the message of all previous prophets. Not only so, but His message is potentially greater than any message which later prophets within His own cycle may reveal. This is because the state of maturity is the most momentous stage in the evolution of mankind.

(Shoghi Effendi, in a Letter dated 07-23-36; and cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated 12-15-77)

❖ “...the king of days...”

“This,” He furthermore declares, “is the king of days,” the “Day of God Himself,” the “Day which shall never be followed by night,” the “Springtime which autumn will never overtake,” “the eye to past ages and centuries,” for which “the soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted,” for which “all the divers kindreds of the earth have yearned,” through which “God hath proved the hearts of the entire company of His Messengers and Prophets, and beyond them those that stand guard over His sacred and inviolable Sanctuary, the inmates of the Celestial Pavilion and dwellers of the Tabernacle of Glory.” “In this most mighty Revelation,” He moreover, states, “all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation.” And again: “None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.” Referring to His own station He declares: “But for Him no Divine Messenger would have been invested with the Robe of Prophethood, nor would any of the sacred Scriptures have been revealed.”

And last but not least is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own tribute to the transcendent character of the Revelation identified with His Father: “Centuries, nay ages, must pass away, ere the Day-Star of Truth shineth again in its mid-summer splendor, or appeareth once more in the radiance of its vernal glory.” “The mere contemplation of the Dispensation inaugurated by the Blessed Beauty,” He furthermore affirms, “would have sufficed to overwhelm the saints of bygone ages—saints who longed to partake for one moment of its great glory.” “Concerning the Manifestations that will come down in the future ‘in the shadows of the clouds,’ know verily,” is His significant statement, “that in so far as their relation to the source of their inspiration is concerned they are under the shadow of the Ancient Beauty [Bahá’ulláh]. In their relation, however, to the age in which they appear, each

and every one of them ‘doeth whatsoever He willeth.’” And finally stands this, His illuminating explanation, setting forth conclusively the true relationship between the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh and that of the Bab: “The Revelation of the Báb may be likened to the sun, its station corresponding to the first sign of the Zodiac—the sign Aries—which the sun enters at the vernal equinox. The station of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, on the other hand, is represented by the sign Leo, the sun’s mid-summer and highest station. By this is meant that this holy Dispensation is illumined with the light of the Sun of Truth shining from its most exalted station, and in the plenitude of its resplendency, its heat and glory.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, pp. 98-100)

❖ “*The Bahá’í cycle is...incomparable in its greatness...*”

The Bahá’í cycle is, indeed, incomparable in its greatness. It includes not only the Prophets that will appear after Bahá’u’lláh but all those who have preceded Him since Adam. These should, indeed, be viewed as constituting but preliminary stages leading to the gradual appearance of this Supreme Manifestation of God.

After Bahá’u’lláh many Prophets will, no doubt, appear, but they will be all under His shadow. Although they may abrogate the laws of this Dispensation, they nevertheless draw their spiritual force from this mighty Revelation. The Faith of Bahá’u’lláh constitutes, indeed, the stage of maturity in the development of mankind. His appearance has released such spiritual force which will continue to animate, for many long years to come, the world in its development. Whatever progress may be achieved in later ages, after the unification of the whole human race is achieved, will be but an improvement in the machinery of the world. For the machinery itself has been already created by Bahá’u’lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi, in a Letter dated 11-14-35; and cited by the Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated 12-15-77)

He...was none other than the One Whom posterity will acclaim...as the Originator of a new “Universal Cycle”....

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 93-94; and *Guidance for Today and Tomorrow*, p. 11)

❖ “*...blinded by the dazzling intensity...*”

“Know verily that the veil hiding Our countenance hath not been completely lifted. We have revealed Our Self to a degree corresponding to the capacity of the people of Our age. Should the Ancient Beauty be unveiled in the fullness of His glory mortal eyes would be blinded by the dazzling intensity of His revelation.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 116)

❖ “[O]ne of its most cherished and fundamental principles...”

It should also be borne in mind that, great as is the power manifested by this Revelation and however vast the range of the Dispensation its Author has inaugurated, it emphatically repudiates the claim to be regarded as the final revelation of God's will and purpose for mankind. To hold such a conception of its character and functions would be tantamount to a betrayal of its cause and a denial of its truth. It must necessarily conflict with the fundamental principle which constitutes the bedrock of Bahá'í belief, the principle that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is orderly, continuous and progressive and not spasmodic or final. Indeed, the categorical rejection by the followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh of the claim to finality which any religious system inaugurated by the Prophets of the past may advance is as clear and emphatic as their own refusal to claim that same finality for the Revelation with which they stand identified. “To believe that all revelation is ended, that the portals of Divine mercy are closed, that from the daysprings 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” must constitute in the eyes of every follower of the Faith a grave, an inexcusable departure from one of its most cherished and fundamental principles.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 115-116)

D. The Word

“The Word of God is the king of words...”

O friend of mine! The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the realm of being. The Great Being saith: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked.... It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things. Every thing which can be perceived is but an emanation therefrom. High, immeasurably high is this sublime station, in whose shadow moveth the essence of loftiness and splendour, wrapt in praise and adoration.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 172-173)

❖ [*“To deepen in the Cause...”*]

“To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give it to others in its pure form...”

(Shoghi Effendi, *Op. Cit.*, in *“Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice”*)

❖ *“The spirit of unity exists in the Divine Words”*

...The spirit of unity exists in the Divine Words, and one who interprets them in such wise as to create a division and discord is indeed one who errs.

(Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, No. 6, pp. 43-45, considered as *“pilgrims’ note”*)

❖ *“[T]he Book itself is the unerring balance...”*

Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring balance....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 198)

❖ [*“...carefully studied, one by one...”*]

The principles of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 22)]

❖ “...behold My Revelation through Mine eyes.”

Cast the idle tales behind your backs and behold My Revelation through Mine eyes.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 241)

If it be your wish, O people, to know God and to discover the greatness of His might, look, then, upon Me with Mine own eyes, and not with the eyes of any one besides Me.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 272)

It hath been decreed by Us that the Word of God and all the potentialities thereof shall be manifested unto men in strict conformity with such conditions as have been foreordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. We have, moreover, ordained that its veil of concealment be none other except its own Self. Such indeed is Our Power to achieve Our Purpose. Should the Word be allowed to release suddenly all the energies latent within it, no man could sustain the weight of so mighty a Revelation. Nay, all that is in heaven and on earth would flee in consternation before it.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 76)

O My servants! Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean. I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine—words of consummate power and wisdom. I have, moreover, with the hand of divine power, unsealed the choice wine of My Revelation, and have wafted its holy, its hidden, and musk-laden fragrance upon all created things. Who else but yourselves is to be blamed if ye choose to remain unendowed with so great an outpouring of God’s transcendent and all-encompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy?....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 327-328)

It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion. Such are the unveiled traditions and the evident verses already mentioned. The other language is veiled and concealed, so

that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sadiq, son of Muhammad, spoken: “God verily will test them and sift them.” This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. *None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 254-255) [Italics added –ed.]

Inasmuch as it hath been clearly shown that only those who are initiated into the divine mysteries can comprehend the melodies uttered by the Bird of Heaven, it is therefore incumbent upon every one to seek enlightenment from the illumined in heart and from the Treasuries of divine mysteries regarding the intricacies of God's Faith and the abstruse allusions in the utterances of the Day-springs of Holiness. Thus will these mysteries be unravelled, not by the aid of acquired learning, but solely through the assistance of God and the outpourings of His grace....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 191)

❖ “*The penetration of the word...*”

“The penetration of the word of man dependeth upon the heat of the fire of the love of God. The more the splendors of the love of God become manifest in the heart, the greater will be the penetration of the Word.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 3, p. 699)

❖ “*Inspire then my soul...*”

Inspire then my soul, O my God, with Thy wondrous remembrance, that I may glorify Thy name. Number me not with them who read Thy words and fail to find Thy hidden gift which, as decreed by Thee, is contained therein, and which quickeneth the souls of Thy creatures and the hearts of Thy servants. Cause me, O my Lord, to be reckoned among them who have been so stirred up by the sweet savors that have been wafted in Thy days that they have laid down their lives for Thee and hastened to the scene of their death in their longing to gaze on Thy beauty and in their yearning to attain Thy presence. And were any one to say unto them on their way, “Whither go ye?” they would say, “Unto God, the All-Possessing, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting!”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 83)



“Souls will arise...”

“The beloved Guardian has stressed over and over again, that to effectively teach the Faith, the individual must study deeply, the Divine Word, imbibe Its life-giving waters, and feast upon Its glorious teachings. He should then /meditate/ on the import of the Word, and finding its spiritual depths, /pray/ for guidance and assistance. But most important, after prayer is /action/. After one has prayed and meditated, he must arise, relying fully on the guidance and confirmation of Bahá’u’lláh, to teach His Faith. /Perseverance/ in action is essential, just as wisdom and audacity are necessary for effective teaching. The individual must sacrifice all things to this great goal, and then the victories will be won.” [From a letter dated 30 May 1956 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Hands of the Cause in the United States]

(Compilations, *The Individual and Teaching - Raising the Divine Call*, p. 36)

❖ *“Whoso hath known God shall know none but Him...”*

“Whoso hath known God shall know none but Him, and he that feareth God shall be afraid of no one except Him, though the powers of the whole earth rise up and be arrayed against him. I speak naught except at His bidding, and follow not, through the power of God and His might, except His truth. He, verily, shall recompense the truthful.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 126)

❖ *“For in the realm of conscience naught but the ray of God’s light can command...”*

“For in the realm of conscience naught but the ray of God’s light can command and on the throne of the heart none but the pervading power of the King of Kings should rule.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *A Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 39)

“He hath known God who hath known himself.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 102)



“...Ere long
will God raise up
the treasures of the earth—
men who will aid Thee
through Thyself
and through Thy Name,
wherewith God hath revived
the hearts of such
as have recognized Him.”

(The Most Great Spirit, cited by Bahá'u'lláh, in *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 21;
and by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, p. 101)

O Pen of the Most High! Harken unto the Call of Thy Lord, raised from the Divine Lote-Tree in the holy and luminous Spot, that the sweet accents of Thy Lord, the All-Merciful, may fill Thy soul with joy and fervour, and that the breezes that waft from My name, the Ever-Forgiving, may dispel Thy cares and sorrows. Raise up, then, from this Temple, the temples of the Oneness of God, that they may tell out, in the kingdom of creation, the tidings of their Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, and be of them that are illumined by His light.

We, verily, have ordained this Temple to be the source of all existence in the new creation, that all may know of a certainty My power to accomplish that which I have purposed through My word “Be”, and it is! Beneath the shadow of every letter of this Temple We shall raise up a people whose number none can reckon save God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Erelong shall God bring forth from His Temple such souls as will remain unswayed by the insinuations of the rebellious, and who will quaff at all times of the cup that is life indeed. These, truly, are of the blissful.

These are servants who abide beneath the shelter of the tender mercy of their Lord, and who remain undeterred by those who seek to obstruct their path. Upon their faces may be seen the brightness of the light of the All-Merciful, and from their hearts may be heard the remembrance of Mine all-glorious and inaccessible Name. Were they to unloose their tongues to extol their Lord, the denizens of earth and heaven would join in their anthems of praise-yet how few are they who hear! And were they to glorify their Lord, all created things would join in their hymns of glory. Thus hath God exalted them above the rest of His creation, and yet the people remain unaware!

These are they who circle round the Cause of God even as the shadow doth revolve around the sun. Open, then, your eyes, O people of the Bayan, that haply ye may behold them! It is by virtue of their movement that all things are set in motion, and by reason of their stillness all things are brought to rest, would that ye might be assured thereof! Through them the believers in the Divine Unity have turned towards Him Who is the Object of the adoration of the entire creation, and by them the hearts of the righteous have found rest and composure, could ye but know it! Through them the earth hath been established, the clouds have rained down their bounty, and the bread of knowledge hath descended from the heaven of grace, could ye but perceive it!

These souls are the protectors of the Cause of God on earth, who shall preserve its beauty from the obscuring dust of idle fancies and vain imaginings. In the path of their Lord they shall not fear for their lives; rather will they sacrifice their all in their eagerness to behold the face of their Well-Beloved when once He hath appeared in this Name, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Glorious, the Most Holy.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “Súriy-i-Haykal”, verses 12-16, pp. 8-9)

O phoenix of that immortal flame kindled in the sacred Tree! Bahá'u'lláh—may my life, my soul, my spirit be offered up as a sacrifice unto His lowly servants—hath, during His last days on earth, given the most emphatic promise that, through the outpourings of the grace of God and the aid and assistance vouchsafed from His Kingdom on high, souls will arise and holy beings appear who, as stars, would adorn the firmament of divine guidance; illumine the dayspring of loving-kindness and bounty; manifest the signs of the unity of God; shine with the light of sanctity and purity; receive their full measure of divine inspiration; raise high the sacred torch of faith; stand firm as the rock and immoveable as the mountain; and grow to become luminaries in the heavens of His Revelation, mighty channels of His grace, means for the bestowal of God's bountiful care, heralds calling forth the name of the One true God, and establishers of the world's supreme foundation.

These shall labour ceaselessly, by day and by night, shall heed neither trials nor woe, shall suffer no respite in their efforts, shall seek no repose, shall disregard all ease and comfort, and, detached and unsullied, shall consecrate every fleeting moment of their lives to the diffusion of the divine fragrance and the exaltation of God's holy Word. Their faces will radiate heavenly gladness, and their hearts be filled with joy. Their souls will be inspired, and their foundation stand secure. They shall scatter in the world, and travel throughout all regions. They shall raise their voices in every assembly, and adorn and revive every gathering. They shall speak in every tongue, and interpret every hidden meaning. They shall reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom, and manifest unto everyone the signs of God. They shall burn brightly even as a candle in the heart of every assembly, and beam forth as a star upon every horizon. The gentle breezes wafted from the garden of their hearts shall perfume and revive the souls of men, and the revelations of their minds, even as showers, will reinvigorate the peoples and nations of the world.

I am waiting, eagerly waiting for these holy ones to appear; and yet, how long will they delay their coming? My prayer and ardent supplication, at eventide and at dawn, is that these shining stars may soon shed their radiance upon the world, that their sacred countenances may be unveiled to mortal eyes, that the hosts of divine assistance may achieve their victory, and the billows of grace, rising from His oceans above, may flow upon all mankind. Pray ye also and supplicate unto Him that through the bountiful aid of the Ancient Beauty these souls may be unveiled to the eyes of the world.

The glory of God rest upon thee, and upon him whose face is illumined with that everlasting light that shineth from His Kingdom of Glory.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 250-251)

...In this blessed period, when the light of the endless bounties is illuminating the dark world, some souls, like the butterfly, circled round the Divine Lamp and with perfect yearning sacrificed their lives.

I ask of God that thou mayest be one of those souls, so that the rays of knowledge will shine forth from thy face to those regions and will be the cause of guiding the seekers of Reality.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdu’l-Bahá Abbas*, v 2, p. 250)



Baghdad pot, decorated with the opening lines of the Arabic *Hidden Words*: “My first counsel is this....”

PRAYERS

❖ “*Assist me with the hosts of the Supreme Concourse...*”

O God! Assist me with the hosts of the Supreme Concourse and make me firm and steadfast in the Covenant and Testament. I am weak in the Covenant and Testament; confer upon me strength. I am poor; bestow upon me wealth from the treasures of the Kingdom. I am dead; breathe into me the Breath of Life. I am dumb; grant me an eloquent tongue, so that with a fluent expression I may raise the call of the Kingdom and quicken all of them in firmness to the Covenant. Thou are the Generous, the Giver and the Mighty!

(Prayer, Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by an American pilgrim to Dublin, NH [July 1912,], *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 17, p. 228; and Vol. 10, No. 14, p. 272; and *Covenant and Administration*, p. 36, “*pilgrims’ note*”)

❖ “*I beseech Thee, by Thy Most Great Name...*”

I beseech Thee, by Thy Most Great Name, to open the eyes of Thy servants, that they may behold Thee shining above the horizon of Thy majesty and glory, and that they may not be hindered by the croaking of the raven from hearkening to the voice of the Dove of Thy sublime oneness, nor be prevented by the corrupt waters from partaking of the pure wine of Thy bounty and the everlasting streams of Thy gifts.

Gather them, then, together around this Divine Law, the covenant of which Thou hast established with all Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, and Whose ordinances Thou hast written down in Thy Tablets and Thy Scriptures. Raise them up, moreover, to such heights as will enable them to perceive Thy Call.

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee. Thou art, verily, the Inaccessible, the All-Glorious.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 106)

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 endeavor, 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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 203) [Italics added –ed.]

O Lord! O Thou Whose bounty granteth wishes!
 I stand before Thee, all save Thee forgetting.
 Grant that the mote of knowledge in my spirit
 Escape desire and the lowly clay;
 Grant that Thine ancient gift, this drop of wisdom,
 Merge with Thy mighty sea.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 90)

Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! I yield Thee thanks for that Thou hast made me the target of divers tribulations and the mark of manifold trials, in order that Thy servants may be endued with new life and all Thy creatures may be quickened. I swear by Thy glory, O Thou the Best Beloved of the worlds and the Desire of all such as have recognized Thee! The one reason I wish to live is that I may reveal Thy Cause, and I seek the continuance of life only that I may be touched by adversity in Thy path.

I implore Thee, O Thou by Whose summons the hearts of all them who were nigh unto Thee have soared into the atmosphere of Thy presence, to send down upon Thy loved ones what will enable them to dispense with all else except Thee. Endue them, then, with such constancy that they will arise to proclaim Thy Cause, and will call on Thy name, before all that are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth, in such wise that the Pharaohic cruelties *inflicted by the oppressors among Thy servants* will not succeed in keeping them back from Thee.

Thou art, verily, the God of power, the God of glory, the God of strength and wisdom.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 146-147) [Italics added –ed.]

...Number me not with them who read Thy words and fail to find Thy hidden gift which, as decreed by Thee, is contained therein, and which quickeneth the souls of Thy creatures and the hearts of Thy servants. Cause me, O my Lord, to be reckoned among them who have been so stirred up by the sweet savors that have been wafted in Thy days that they have laid down their lives for Thee and hastened to the scene of their death in their longing to gaze on Thy beauty and in their yearning to attain Thy presence. And were any one to say unto them on their way, “Whither go ye?” they would say, “Unto God, the All-Possessing, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting!”

The transgressions committed by such as have turned away from Thee and have borne themselves haughtily towards Thee have not availed to hinder them from loving Thee, and from setting their faces towards Thee, and from turning in the direction of Thy mercy. These are they who are blessed by the Concourse on high, who are glorified by the denizens of the everlasting

Cities, and beyond them by those on whose foreheads Thy most exalted pen hath written: “These! The people of Bahá. Through them have been shed the splendors of the light of guidance.” Thus hath it been ordained, at Thy behest and by Thy will, in the Tablet of Thine irrevocable decree.

Proclaim, therefore, O my God, their greatness and the greatness of those who while living or after death have circled round them. Supply them with that which Thou hast ordained for the righteous among Thy creatures. Potent art Thou to do all things. There is no God but Thee, the All-Powerful, the Help in Peril, the Almighty, the Most Bountiful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 83-84)

I beg of Thee by the Most Great Infallibility which Thou hast chosen to be the dayspring of Thy Revelation, and by Thy most sublime Word through whose potency Thou didst call the creation into being and didst reveal Thy Cause, and by this Name which hath caused all other names to groan aloud and the limbs of the sages to quake, I beg of Thee to make me detached from all else save Thee, in such wise that I may move not but in conformity with the good-pleasure of Thy Will, and speak not except at the bidding of Thy Purpose, and hear naught save the words of Thy praise and Thy glorification....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 116-117)



INTRODUCTORY REFERENCES

Love Me, that I may love thee.

If thou lovest Me not,

My love can in no wise reach thee.

Know this, O servant.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic, #5)

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....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 65)

O MY FRIENDS! Have ye forgotten that true and radiant morn, when in those hallowed and blessed surroundings ye were all gathered in My presence beneath the shade of the tree of life, which is planted in the all-glorious paradise? Awe-struck ye listened as I gave utterance to these three most holy words: O friends! Prefer not your will to Mine, never desire that which I have not desired for you, and approach Me not with lifeless hearts, defiled with worldly desires and cravings. Would ye but sanctify your souls, ye would at this present hour recall that place and those surroundings, and the truth of My utterance should be made evident unto all of you.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian, #19)

Lo, the Nightingale of Paradise singeth upon the twigs of the Tree of Eternity, with holy and sweet melodies, proclaiming to the sincere ones the glad tidings of the nearness of God, calling the believers in the Divine Unity to the court of the Presence of the Generous One, informing the severed ones of the message which hath been revealed by God, the King, the Glorious, the Peerless, guiding the lovers to the seat of sanctity and to this resplendent Beauty....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Prayers*, pp. 208-209)

The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence. To this most excellent aim, this supreme objective, all the heavenly Books and the divinely-revealed and weighty Scriptures unequivocally bear witness. Whoso hath recognized the Day Spring of Divine guidance and entered His holy court hath drawn nigh unto God and attained His Presence, a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol. Such a man *hath attained the knowledge of the station of Him Who is “at the distance of two bows,” Who standeth beyond the Sadratu’l-Muntaha*. Whoso hath failed to recognize Him will have condemned himself to the misery of remoteness, a remoteness which is naught but utter nothingness and the essence of the nethermost fire. Such will be his fate, though to outward seeming he may occupy the earth’s loftiest seats and be established upon its most exalted throne. [Italics added –ed.] [Cf. pp. 95 and 97, ahead, in this compilation for “at the distance of two bows”...beyond the *Sadratu’l-Muntaha* – “the point beyond which there is no passing” –ed.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 70)

The first and foremost duty prescribed unto men, next to the recognition of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, is the duty of steadfastness in His Cause. Cleave thou unto it, and be of them whose minds are firmly fixed and grounded in God. No act, however meritorious, did or can ever compare unto it. It is the king of all acts, and to this thy Lord, the All-Highest, the Most Powerful, will testify....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 290)

It hath been decreed by Us that the Word of God and all the potentialities thereof shall be manifested unto men in strict conformity with such conditions as have been foreordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. We have, moreover, ordained that its veil of concealment be none other except its own Self. Such indeed is Our Power to achieve Our Purpose. Should the Word be allowed to release suddenly all the energies latent within it, no man could sustain the weight of so mighty a Revelation. Nay, all that is in heaven and on earth would flee in consternation before it.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 76)

O My servants! Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean. I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine—words of consummate power and wisdom. I have, moreover, with the hand of divine power, unsealed the choice wine of My Revelation, and have wafted its holy, its hidden, and musk-laden fragrance upon all created things. Who else but yourselves is to be blamed if ye choose to remain unendowed with so great an

outpouring of God’s transcendent and all-encompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy?....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 327-328)

Say: Step out of Thy holy chamber, O Maid of Heaven, inmate of the Exalted Paradise! Drape thyself in whatever manner pleaseth Thee in the silken Vesture of Immortality, and put on, in the name of the All-Glorious, the broidered Robe of Light. Hear, then, the sweet, the wondrous accent of the Voice that cometh from the Throne of Thy Lord, the Inaccessible, the Most High. Unveil Thy face, and manifest the beauty of the black-eyed Damsel, and suffer not the servants of God to be deprived of the light of Thy shining countenance. Grieve not if Thou hearest the sighs of the dwellers of the earth, or the voice of the lamentation of the denizens of heaven. Leave them to perish on the dust of extinction. Let them be reduced to nothingness, inasmuch as the flame of hatred hath been kindled within their breasts. Intone, then, before the face of the peoples of earth and heaven, and in a most melodious voice, the anthem of praise, for a remembrance of Him Who is the King of the names and attributes of God. Thus have We decreed Thy destiny. Well able are We to achieve Our purpose.

Beware that Thou divest not Thyself, Thou Who art the Essence of Purity, of Thy robe of effulgent glory. Nay, enrich Thyself increasingly, in the kingdom of creation, with the incorruptible vestures of Thy God, that the beauteous image of the Almighty may be reflected through Thee in all created things and the grace of Thy Lord be infused in the plenitude of its power into the entire creation.

If Thou smellest from any one the smell of the love of Thy Lord, offer up Thyself for him, for We have created Thee to this end, and have covenanted with Thee, from time immemorial, and in the presence of the congregation of Our well-favored ones, for this very purpose. Be not impatient if the blind in heart hurl down the shafts of their idle fancies upon Thee. Leave them to themselves, for they follow the promptings of the evil ones.

Cry out before the gaze of the dwellers of heaven and of earth: I am the Maid of Heaven, the Offspring begotten by the Spirit of Bahá. My habitation is the Mansion of His Name, the All-Glorious. Before the Concourse on high I was *adorned with the ornament of His names*....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 282-283) [Underlining and italics added, at end –ed.]

[“The appearance of the ‘Maid of Heaven’ mentioned in the Tablet of the Holy Mariner is allegorical. In the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, He has used the ‘Maid of Heaven’ to refer to Himself or to one of the attributes of God, and sometimes as the personification of the ‘Most Great Spirit’. He has also referred to Himself in this Tablet as the ‘exalted and glorious’ Youth ‘that hath been hidden

within the tabernacle of light', and Who 'hath remained lone and forlorn in the land of exile in the hands of the ungodly'."

(Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, v 1, pp. 242-243)]

O Son of Justice! In the night season the beauty of the immortal Being hath repaired from the emerald height of fidelity unto the Sadratu'l-Muntaha, and wept with such a weeping that the Concourse on high and the dwellers of the realms above wailed at His lamenting. Whereupon there was asked, Why the wailing and weeping? He made reply: As bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwell on earth the fragrance of fidelity. Then summoned to return I beheld, and lo! certain doves of holiness were sore tried within the claws of the dogs of earth. Thereupon the Maid of Heaven hastened forth unveiled and resplendent from Her mystic mansion, and asked of their names, and all were told but one. And when urged, the first letter thereof was uttered, whereupon the dwellers of the celestial chambers rushed forth out of their habitation of glory. And whilst the second letter was pronounced they fell down, one and all, upon the dust. At that moment a voice was heard from the inmost shrine: "Thus far and no farther." Verily, We bear witness unto that which they have done, and now are doing.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 91-92)

Justice is, in this day, bewailing its plight, and Equity groaneth beneath the yoke of oppression. The thick clouds of tyranny have darkened the face of the earth, and enveloped its peoples. Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 92-93)

Justice, which consisteth in rendering each his due, dependeth upon and is conditioned by two words: reward and punishment. From the standpoint of justice, every soul should receive the reward of his actions, inasmuch as the peace and prosperity of the world depend upon thereon, even as He saith, exalted be His glory: "The structure of the world stability and order hath been reared upon, and will continue to be sustained by, the twin pillars of reward and punishment." In brief, every circumstance requireth a different utterance and every occasion calleth for a different course of action. Blessed are they that have arisen to serve God, who speak forth wholly for His sake, and who return unto Him.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section II, pp. 40-41)

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p.156)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic, # 2)

If it be your wish, O people, to know God and to discover the greatness of His might, look, then, upon Me with Mine own eyes, and not with the eyes of any one besides Me. Ye will, otherwise, be never capable of recognizing Me, though ye ponder My Cause as long as My Kingdom endureth, and meditate upon all created things throughout the eternity of God, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Omnipotent, the Ever-Abiding, the All-Wise. Thus have We manifested the truth of Our Revelation, that haply the people may be roused from their heedlessness, and be of them that understand.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 272-273)

“...It is incumbent upon everyone, in this day, to perceive with the eye of God, and to hearken with His ear. Whoso beholdeth Me with an eye besides Mine own will never be able to know Me. None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 77)

Verily, justice is a lamp that guideth man aright amidst the darkness of the world and shieldeth him from every danger. It is indeed a shining lamp. God grant that the rulers of the earth may be illumined by its light. This servant further imploereth God to graciously aid all men to do His will and pleasure. He, in truth, is the Lord of this world and of the world to come. No God is there but Him, the Almighty, the Most-Powerful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section II, p. 54)

Justice is the one power that can translate the dawning consciousness of humanity's oneness into a collective will through which the necessary structures of global community life can be confidently erected....

At the individual level, justice is that faculty of the human soul that enables each person to distinguish truth from falsehood. In the sight of God, Bahá'u'lláh avers, justice is "the best beloved of all things" since it permits each individual to see with his own eyes rather than the eyes of others, to know through his own knowledge rather than the knowledge of his neighbor or his group. It calls for fair-mindedness in one's judgments, for equity in one's treatment of others, and is thus a constant if demanding companion in the daily occasions of life.

At the group level, a concern for justice is the indispensable compass in collective decision making, because it is the only means by which unity of thought and action can be achieved. Far from encouraging the punitive spirit that has often masqueraded under its name in past ages, justice is the practical expression of awareness that, in the achievement of human progress, the interests of the individual and those of society are inextricably linked.

(Bahá'í International Community, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, 1995, passim, Part II)

❖ "*Justice is a powerful force...*"

Justice is a powerful force. *It is, above all else, the conqueror of the citadels of the hearts and souls of men, and the revealer of the secrets of the world of being, and the standard-bearer of love and bounty.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 32) [Italics and underlining added –ed.]

...investigate and study the Holy Scriptures word by word so that you may attain knowledge of the mysteries hidden therein. Be not satisfied with words, but seek to understand the spiritual meanings hidden in the heart of the words.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 458)

❖ "*...I beg of Thee, by that Word...*"

I beg of Thee, by that Word through which Thy proof was perfected among Thy creatures and Thy testimony was fulfilled among Thy servants to strengthen Thy people in that whereby the face of the Cause will radiate in Thy dominion, the standards of Thy power will be planted among Thy servants, and the banners of Thy guidance will be raised throughout Thy dominions.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 33)

When the victory arriveth, every man shall profess himself as believer and shall hasten to the shelter of God's Faith. Happy are they who in the days of world-encompassing trials have stood fast in the Cause and refused to swerve from its truth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 319)

We dare not, in this Day, lift the veil that concealeth the exalted station which every true believer can attain, for the joy which such a revelation must provoke might well cause a few to faint away and die.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 9-10)

Whoso hath searched the depths of the oceans that lie hid within these exalted words, and fathomed their import, can be said to have discovered a glimmer of the unspeakable glory with which this mighty, this sublime, and most holy Revelation hath been endowed. From the excellence of so great a Revelation the honor with which its faithful followers must needs be invested can be well imagined. By the righteousness of the one true God! The very breath of these souls is in itself richer than all the treasures of the earth. Happy is the man that hath attained thereunto, and woe betide the heedless.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 10)

Inspire then my soul, O my God, with Thy wondrous remembrance, that I may glorify Thy name. Number me not with them who read Thy words and fail to find Thy hidden gift which, as decreed by Thee, is contained therein, and which quickeneth the souls of Thy creatures and the hearts of Thy servants. Cause me, O my Lord, to be reckoned among them who have been so stirred up by the sweet savors that have been wafted in Thy days that they have laid down their lives for Thee and hastened to the scene of their death in their longing to gaze on Thy beauty and in their yearning to attain Thy presence. And were any one to say unto them on their way, "Whither go ye?" they would say, "Unto God, the All-Possessing, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting!"

The transgressions committed by such as have turned away from Thee and have borne themselves haughtily towards Thee have not availed to hinder them from loving Thee, and from setting their faces towards Thee, and from turning in the direction of Thy mercy. These are they who are blessed by the Concourse on high, who are glorified by the denizens of the everlasting Cities, and beyond them by those on whose foreheads Thy most exalted pen hath written: "These! The people of Bahá. Through them have been shed the splendors of the light of guidance." Thus hath it been ordained, at Thy behest and by Thy will, in the Tablet of Thine irrevocable decree.

Proclaim, therefore, O my God, their greatness and the greatness of those who while living or after death have circled round them. Supply them with that which Thou hast ordained for the

righteous among Thy creatures. Potent art Thou to do all things. There is no God but Thee, the All-Powerful, the Help in Peril, the Almighty, the Most Bountiful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 83-84)

Inasmuch as it hath been clearly shown that only those who are initiated into the divine mysteries can comprehend the melodies uttered by the Bird of Heaven, it is therefore incumbent upon every one to seek enlightenment from the illumined in heart and from the Treasuries of divine mysteries regarding the intricacies of God's Faith and the abstruse allusions in the utterances of the Day-springs of Holiness. Thus will these mysteries be unravelled, not by the aid of acquired learning, but solely through the assistance of God and the outpourings of His grace. "Ask ye, therefore, of them that have the custody of the Scriptures, if ye know it not." [Qur'án 16:43.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 191)

O ye beloved of God, know that steadfastness and firmness in this new and wonderful Covenant is indeed the spirit that quickeneth the hearts which are overflowing with the love of the Glorious Lord; verily, it is the power which penetrates into the hearts of the people of the world! Your Lord hath assuredly promised His servants who are firm and steadfast to render them victorious at all times, to exalt their word, propagate their power, diffuse their lights, strengthen their hearts, elevate their banners, assist their hosts, brighten their stars, increase the abundance of the showers of mercy upon them, and enable the brave lions (or teachers) to conquer.

Hasten, hasten, O ye firm believers! Hasten, hasten, O ye steadfast! Abandon the heedless, set aside every ignorant, take hold of the strong rope, be firm in this Great Cause, draw light from this Evident Light, be patient and be steadfast in this wise Religion! Ye shall see the hosts of inspiration descending successively from the Supreme World, the procession of attraction falling incessantly from the heights of heaven, the abundance of the Kingdom of ABHA outpouring continually and the teachings of God penetrating with the utmost power, while the heedless are indeed in evident loss.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, pp. 442-443)



The beginning of all things is the knowledge of God, and the end of all things is strict observance of whatsoever hath been sent down from the empyrean of the Divine Will that pervadeth all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 5)

PART I:

Man's Knowledge of God

All that the sages and mystics have said or written have never exceeded, nor can they ever hope to exceed, the limitations to which man's finite mind hath been strictly subjected. To whatever heights the mind of the most exalted of men may soar, however great the depths which the detached and understanding heart can penetrate, such mind and heart can never transcend that which is the creature of their own conceptions and the product of their own thoughts. The meditations of the profoundest thinker, the devotions of the holiest of saints, the highest expressions of praise from either human pen or tongue, are but a reflection of that which hath been created within themselves, through the revelation of the Lord, their God. Whoever pondereth this truth in his heart will readily admit that there are certain limits which no human being can possibly transgress. Every attempt which, from the beginning that hath no beginning, hath been made to visualize and know God is limited by the exigencies of His own creation—a creation which He, through the operation of His own Will and for the purposes of none other but His own Self, hath called into being. Immeasurably exalted is He above the strivings of human mind to grasp His Essence, or of human tongue to describe His mystery. No tie of direct intercourse can ever bind Him to the things He hath created, nor can the most abstruse and most remote allusions of His creatures do justice to His being. Through His world-pervading Will He hath brought into being all created things. He is and hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His own exalted and indivisible Essence, and will everlastingly continue to remain concealed in His inaccessible majesty and glory. All that is in heaven and all that is in the earth have come to exist at His bidding, and by His Will all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being. How can, therefore, the creature which the Word of God hath fashioned comprehend the nature of Him Who is the Ancient of Days?

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 317-318)

A. The Unknowable Essence

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 97)

Every description by which they who adore Thy unity describe Thee, and every praise wherewith they who are devoted unto Thee praise Thee, are but the traces of the pen which the fingers of Thy strength and power have set in motion—fingers whose movement is controlled by the arm of Thy decree—the arm itself animated by the potency of Thy might.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 172)

All the Prophets of God and their chosen Ones, all the divines, the sages, and the wise of every generation, unanimously 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 99)

For God is, in His Essence, holy above ascent and descent, entrance and exit; He hath through all eternity been free of the attributes of human creatures, and ever will remain so. No man hath ever known Him; no soul hath ever found the pathway to His Being. Every mystic knower hath wandered far astray in the valley of the knowledge of Him; every saint hath lost his way in seeking to comprehend His Essence. Sanctified is He above the understanding of the wise; exalted is He above the knowledge of the knowing! The way is barred and to seek it is impiety....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 22-23)

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 98)

Know thou that the Divine Essence, which is called the Invisible of the Invisibles, never to be described, beyond the reach of mind—is sanctified above any mention, any definition or hint or allusion, any acclamation or praise. In the sense that It is that It is, the intellect can never grasp It, and the soul seeking knowledge of It is but a wanderer in the desert, and far astray. ‘No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision: He is the Subtile, the All-Informed.’ [Qur’án 6:103]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 41)

But that Essence of Essences, that Invisible of Invisibles, is sanctified above all human speculation, and never to be overtaken by the mind of man. Never shall that immemorial Reality lodge within the compass of a contingent being. His is another realm, and of that realm no understanding can be won. No access can be gained thereto; all entry is forbidden there. The utmost one can say is that Its existence can be proved, but the conditions of Its existence are unknown.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 53)

The Divine Reality is *Unthinkable*, Limitless, Eternal, Immortal and Invisible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 57) [Italics added. -ed.]

The invisible realm of the Divinity is sanctified and exalted above the comprehension of all beings...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 59, Section 7, p. 255)

The knowledge of the reality of the Divinity is in no wise possible...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 59, Section 9, p. 256)

❖ “...one and alone, without peer or equal...”

And now concerning thy reference to the existence of two Gods. Beware, beware, lest thou be led to join partners with the Lord, thy God. He is, and hath from everlasting been, one and alone, without peer or equal, eternal in the past, eternal in the future, detached from all things, ever-abiding, unchangeable, and self-subsisting....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 192)

...the reality of the Divinity lies hidden from all understanding and is concealed from the minds of all men, and to ascend to that station is in no wise possible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 Ed., Chapter 37, Section 3, p. 166)

The Infinite Reality cannot be said to ascend or descend. It is beyond the understanding of man, and cannot be described in terms which apply to the phenomenal sphere of the created world.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 57-58)

❖ “...*unknowable to anyone...*”

I have known Thee by Thy making known unto me that Thou art unknowable to anyone save Thyself. I have become apprised by the creation Thou hast fashioned out of sheer non-existence that the way to attain the comprehension of Thine Essence is barred to everyone. Thou art God, besides Whom there is none other God. No one except Thine Own Self can comprehend Thy nature. Thou art without peer or partner. From everlasting Thou hast been alone with no one else besides Thee and unto everlasting Thou wilt continue to be the same, while no created thing shall ever approach Thine exalted position.

(The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 196)

We testify...that Thou art God, and that there is no God besides Thee. From eternity Thou hast existed with none to equal or rival Thee, and wilt abide for ever the same. ...Thou art God alone, the Incomparable, the One, the Ever-Abiding. Thou hast had at no time any peer or partner.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 31)

This people, all of them, have pictured a god in the realm of the mind, and worship that image which they have made for themselves.... Consider then, how all the peoples of the world are bowing the knee to a fancy of their own contriving, how they have created a creator within their own minds, and they call it the Fashioner of all that is—whereas in truth it is but an illusion. Thus are the people worshipping only an error of perception.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 53-54; earlier translations found in *Tablets of ‘Abdul-Bahá*, v 3, pp. 561-562)

That which we imagine, is not the Reality of God; He, the Unknowable, the Unthinkable, is far beyond the highest conception of man.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 25)

B. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite

...For the divine Essence is an all-encompassing reality, and all created things are encompassed. The all-encompassing must assuredly be greater than that which is encompassed, and thus the latter can in no wise discover the former or comprehend its reality.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 37, Section 2, p. 165)

It is evident that if we attempt to conceive the reality of the Divinity, that conception would be encompassed and our mind would be that which encompasses it—and assuredly that which encompasses is greater than that which is encompassed! Thus it follows that any reality that we might conceive for the Divinity besides that of the holy Manifestations would be mere delusion, as there is no means of approach to that divine Reality which is entirely beyond the reach of the mind. And all that we might conceive is pure imagination.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 37, Section 9, p. 169)

No matter how far human minds may advance, even attaining the highest degree of human comprehension, the uttermost limit of this comprehension is to behold the signs and attributes of God in the world of creation and not in the realm of Divinity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 37, Section 2, p. 165)

...Inasmuch as in the creational world, which is phenomenal, difference of degree is an obstacle or hindrance to comprehension, how can the human being, which is a created exigency, comprehend the ancient divine Reality, which is essential? This is impossible because the reality of Divinity is sanctified beyond the comprehension of the created being, man.

Furthermore, that which man can grasp is finite to man, and man to it is as infinite. Is it possible then for the reality of Divinity to be finite and the human creature infinite? On the contrary, the reverse is true; the human is finite while the essence of Divinity is infinite.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 114)

Things which are understood by men cannot be outside their capacity for understanding, so that it is impossible for the heart of man to comprehend the nature of the Majesty of God. Our imagination can only picture that which it is able to create.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 24)

All these sacred words show us that man is made in God's image: yet the Essence of God is incomprehensible to the human mind, for the finite understanding cannot be applied to this infinite Mystery.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 23)

❖ “*The essence of understanding...*”

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 155-156)

We observe that every lower thing is incapable of comprehending the reality of that which is higher. Thus, no matter how far they may evolve, the stone, the earth, and the tree can never comprehend the reality of man or imagine the powers of sight, hearing, or the other senses, even though the former and the latter alike are created things. How then can man, a mere creature, comprehend the reality of the sanctified Essence of the Creator? No human understanding can approach this station, no utterance can unfold its truth, and no allusion can intimate its mystery. What has the speck of dust to do with the world of sanctity, and what relationship can ever hold between the limited mind and the expanse of the limitless realm? Minds are powerless to comprehend Him, and souls are bewildered as they attempt to describe His reality. “No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision, and He is the Subtile, the All-Informed!”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 37, Section 4, p. 166)

Just as the spirit of man is the cause of the life of his body, so is the whole world even as a body and man as its spirit. If man did not exist, if the perfections of the spirit were not manifested and the light of the mind were not shining in this world, it would be like a body without a spirit.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 52, Section 3, p. 232)

As the grace of God is limitless, so too are the perfections of man. If it were possible for the reality of anything to reach the very summit of perfection, then it would become independent of God and the contingent reality would attain to the station of the necessary reality. But every created thing has been assigned a degree which it can in no wise overpass. So he who occupies the degree of servitude, no matter how far he may progress and acquire endless perfections, can never reach the degree of divine Lordship. The same holds true of all other created things. No matter how far a mineral may progress, it can never acquire the power of growth in the mineral kingdom. No matter how far this flower may progress, it can never manifest the power of sensation while it is in the

vegetable kingdom. So this silver mineral can never gain sight or hearing; at most it can progress in its own degree and become a perfect mineral, but it cannot acquire the power of growth or sensation and can never become living: It can only progress in its own degree.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 62, Section 2, p. 265-266)

❖ “*The way is barred and to seek it is impiety...*”

...He hath through all eternity been free of the attributes of human creatures, and ever will remain so. No man hath ever known Him; no soul hath ever found the pathway to His Being. Every mystic knower hath wandered far astray in the valley of the knowledge of Him; every saint hath lost his way in seeking to comprehend His Essence. Sanctified is He above the understanding of the wise; exalted is He above the knowledge of the knowing! The way is barred and to seek it is impiety; His proof is His signs; His being is His evidence. [Sermon by Ali.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 22)

All that the sages and mystics have said or written have never exceeded, nor can they ever hope to exceed, the limitations to which man’s finite mind hath been strictly subjected.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 317)

All that man can hope to achieve is to comprehend the attributes of the Divinity, the light of which is manifest and resplendent in the world and within the souls of men.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 59, Section 7, p. 255)

...For the divine Essence is an all-encompassing reality, and all created things are encompassed. The all-encompassing must assuredly be greater than that which is encompassed, and thus the latter can in no wise discover the former or comprehend its reality. No matter how far human minds may advance, even attaining the highest degree of human comprehension, the uttermost limit of this comprehension is to behold the signs and attributes of God in the world of creation and not in the realm of Divinity. ... It is evident that if we attempt to conceive the reality of the Divinity, that conception would be encompassed and our mind would be that which encompasses it—and assuredly that which encompasses is greater than that which is encompassed! Thus it follows that any reality that we might conceive for the Divinity besides that of the holy Manifestations would be mere delusion, as there is no means of approach to that divine Reality which is entirely beyond the reach of the mind. And all that we might conceive is pure imagination.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 37, Sections 2 & 9, *passim.*, pp. 165-169)

Knowing God, therefore, means the comprehension and knowledge of His attributes and not of His Reality. And even this knowledge of His attributes extends only so far as human power and capacity permit, and remains totally inadequate.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 59, Section 7, pp. 254-255)

❖ “[T]he Unseen can in no wise incarnate His Essence and reveal it unto men...”

Know thou of a certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His Essence and reveal it unto men...He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 49) [Underlining added –ed.]

Thou hast asked regarding the phrase, “HE IS GOD!” written above the Tablets. By this word it is intended that no one hath any access to the Invisible Essence. The way is barred and the road is impassable. In this world all men must turn their faces toward “Him-whom God-shall-Manifest.” He is the “Dawning-place of Divinity” and the “Manifestation of Deity.” He is the “Ultimate Goal,” the “Adored One” of all and the “Worshipped One” of all. Otherwise, whatever flashes through the mind is not that Essence of essences and the Reality of realities; nay, rather it is pure imagination woven by man and is surrounded, not the surrounding. Consequently, it returns finally to the realm of suppositions and conjectures.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 3, p. 485)



O people! Dispute not concerning My Cause, for ye shall never fathom the manifold wisdom of your Lord, nor shall ye ever gauge the knowledge of Him Who is the All-Glorious, the All-Pervading. Whosoever layeth claim to have known His Essence is without doubt among the most ignorant of all people. Every atom in the universe would charge such a man with imposture, and to this beareth witness My tongue which speaketh naught but the truth....

O Living Temple! We have made Thee the Dayspring of each one of Our most excellent titles, the Dawning-Place of each one of Our most august attributes, and the Fountainhead of each one of Our manifold virtues unto the denizens of earth and heaven. Thereafter have We raised Thee up in Our own image betwixt the heavens and the earth, and ordained Thee to be the sign of Our glory unto all who are in the realms of revelation and creation, that My servants may follow in Thy footsteps, and be of them who are guided aright....

Say: We have made each one of Our Names a wellspring from which We have caused the streams of divine wisdom and understanding to gush forth and flow in the garden of Our Cause-streams whose number none can reckon save Thy Lord, the Most Holy, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the All-Wise. Say: We have generated all Letters from the Point and have caused them to return unto It, and We have sent It down again in the form of a human temple. All glory be unto the Author of this incomparable and wondrous handiwork! Erelong shall We unfold and expound It again, in Our name, the All-Glorious. This is indeed a token of Our grace, and I, truly, am the Most Bountiful, the Ancient of Days.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, passim, verses 71-73, pp. 37-39)

PART II:

Station of the Manifestations

And since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with His creation, and no resemblance whatever can exist between the transient and the Eternal, the contingent and the Absolute, He hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. Unto this subtle, this mysterious and ethereal Being He hath assigned a twofold nature; the physical, pertaining to the world of matter, and the spiritual, which is born of the substance of God Himself. He hath, moreover, conferred upon Him a double station. The first station, which is related to His innermost reality, representeth Him as One Whose voice is the voice of God Himself. To this testifieth the tradition: "Manifold and mysterious is My relationship with God. I am He, Himself, and He is I, Myself, except that I am that I am, and He is that He is." And in like manner, the words: "Arise, O Muhammad, for lo, the Lover and the Beloved are joined together and made one in Thee." He similarly saith: "There is no distinction whatsoever between Thee and Them, except that They are Thy Servants." The second station is the human station, exemplified by the following verses: "I am but a man like you." "Say, praise be to my Lord! Am I more than a man, an apostle?" These Essences of Detachment, these resplendent Realities are the channels of God's all-pervasive grace. Led by the light of unfailing guidance, and invested with supreme sovereignty, They are commissioned to use the inspiration of Their words, the effusions of Their infallible grace and the sanctifying breeze of Their Revelation for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitations. Then, and only then, will the Trust of God, latent in the reality of man, emerge, as resplendent as the rising Orb of Divine Revelation, from behind the veil of concealment, and implant the ensign of its revealed glory upon the summits of men's hearts.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 66-67)

A. Dictionary Definitions

MANIFEST: from ME, from MF or L; MF “manifested”, from L “manifestus”, literally “hit by the hand”, from “manus” + “-festus” (akin to L “infestus hostile”)—more at “dare”. Adjective: 1) Readily perceived by the senses and especially by the sight. 2) Easily understood or recognized by the mind. Synonym: obvious, see evident; Antonym: latent, constructive. Verb: To make evident or certain by showing or displaying. Synonym: see show. Noun: 1) Manifestation, indication. 2) Manifesto. 3) A list of passengers or an invoice of cargo for a ship or plane.

MANIFESTATION: Noun: 1) (a) The act, process, or an instance of manifesting. (b) Something that manifests. (c) One of the forms in which an individual is manifested. (d) An occult phenomenon; specifically “materialization”. 2) A public demonstration of power and purpose.

(Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary)

STATION: from L “statis”, a standing, post, station, from “status”, past participle of “stare”—to stand. Noun: 1) The act or manner of standing; attitude; posture; pose (rare). 2) The place where a person or thing stands or is located, especially an assigned post, position, or location; specifically, (a) the place where a person as a guard stands while on duty; (b) the post building, base or headquarters assigned to a group of people working together; as a police station, first-aid station, postal station, military government station; (c) in Australasia, a sheep or cattle ranch; (d) a place or region to which a naval fleet, ship, etc., is assigned for duty; (e) formerly, in India, the place of residence of British officials or military officers of a district. 3) (a) A regular stopping place, as on a bus line or a railroad; (b) the building or buildings at such a place, for passengers, etc. 4) Condition of life; social standing or position; rank; state; status. “He went his humble way, at peace with the world and himself; a man completely satisfied with his station in life.” – King. 5) Employment; occupation; business; sphere or department or duty. (Obsolete or rare). 6) In ecclesiastical usage and church history, (a) formerly in the Roman Catholic Church, the devotional fast on Wednesdays and Fridays; (b) a church in which a procession of the clergy halts on stated days to say stated prayers; (c) a stopping place in a monastic procession; (d) any one of the series of stopping places in the devotion of the stations of the cross; (e) in Ireland, the visitation of a priest, as on circuit, at places having no regular church or pastor. 7) A place equipped to transmit or receive radio waves; especially, the studios, offices and technical installations collectively of an establishment for radio and television transmission. 8) A fixed point from which measurements are made in surveying. 9) In biology, a habitat, especially the characteristic habitat of a given plant or animal. 10) The fact or condition of being stationary. (Archaic).

(Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary)

1) State of stillness (rare; “Whether in motion or in — - “); place held or appointed to be held by some person or used or destined for some purpose, rank in life, post of observation or defence or readiness, subordinate depot or office providing goods or attention for local needs, stopping-place for railway trains, etc., or building attached to it, (“people of high station — - ”, high social position; “take one’s — - ”, post oneself)... 2) “ — -s of the Cross”, a series of scenes from the Passion disposed round church and successively venerated by congregation. — -ary,...in — - , not in motion, remaining or designed to remain in one place, not locomotive or progressive or retrograde or shifting or fluctuating.

(Pocket Oxford Dictionary)

PRESENCE: 1) The fact or condition of being present. 2) (a) The part or space within one’s immediate vicinity; (b) the neighborhood of one of superior, especially royal, rank. 3) (Archaic) company (refer back to 2a). 4) One that is present, as (a) the actual person or thing that is present, (b) something present of a visible or concrete nature. 5) (a) The bearing, carriage, or air of a person; especially stately or distinguished bearing; (b) a quality of poise and effectiveness that enables a performer to achieve a close relationship with his audience. 6) Something (as in spirit) felt or believed to be present.

(Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary)

RECOGNIZE: modification of MF “reconnoiss-”, stem of “reconoistre” from L “recognoscere”, from “re-” prefix [ME, fr. OF, fr. L re-, red- back, again, against] 1: again : anew (retell) 2: back : backward (recall) + “cognoscere” to know—more at “cognition”. 1) (a) To perceive to something previously known (recognized the word); (b) to perceive clearly : realize. 2) To acknowledge or take notice of in some definite way : as (a) to acknowledge with a show of appreciation (— an act of bravery with the award of a medal); (b) to acknowledge acquaintance with (— an old crony with a nod); (c) to admit the fact of (— s his obligation). 3. To acknowledge formally : as (a) to admit as being lord or sovereign; (b) to admit as being of a particular status; (c) to admit as being one entitled to be heard; (d) to acknowledge de facto existence or the independence of.

(Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary)

B. References from the Sacred Writings

The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence. To this most excellent aim, this supreme objective, all the heavenly Books and the divinely-revealed and weighty Scriptures unequivocally bear witness. Whoso hath recognized the Day Spring of Divine guidance and entered His holy court hath drawn nigh unto God and attained His Presence, a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol. Such a man hath attained the knowledge of the station of Him Who is “at the distance of two bows,” Who standeth beyond the Sadratu’l-Muntaha. Whoso hath failed to recognize Him will have condemned himself to the misery of remoteness, a remoteness which is naught but utter nothingness and the essence of the nethermost fire. Such will be his fate, though to outward seeming he may occupy the earth’s loftiest seats and be established upon its most exalted throne.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 70-71)

[Notes regarding the above passage: Sadratu’l Muntahá: “Tree beyond which there is no passing”, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Section: Notes, p. 220, item #128; and “at the distance of two bows”, Cf. Surih 53, from the *Qur’an*, when the Angel Gabriel addressed Muhammed at the distance of “two bows”, addressed in greater detail beginning on pp. 94-98 up ahead, in this compilation –ed.]

[Further notes on this subject: “at the distance of two bows” refers to the appearance of the Angel Gabriel, “suspended in the air” at “the distance of two bows” beyond “the Sidrah Tree”, addressing the Prophet Muhammed, as described in Surih 53 of the Holy *Qur’an*. “Sadratul-Muntaha” refers to that tree, “the tree beyond which there is no passing” – which is the “Station of the Manifestation” Himself – covered further on in terms of the Angel Gabriel appearing before Muhammed; the Most Great Spirit, personified as a “Maiden” suspended in the air above Bahá’u’lláh, addressing Him in the Siyah Chal; and also the Voice of the Burning Bush addressing Moses. Cf. also: (1) “*Literally "the furthestmost Lote-Tree", translated by Shoghi Effendi as "the Tree beyond which there is no passing". This is used as a symbol in Islam...to delimit the bounds of divine knowledge as revealed to mankind. Hence it is often used in the Bahá’í Writings to designate the Manifestation of God Himself.*” and (2) “*The "sacred Lote-Tree" is a reference to the Sadratu’l-Muntaha, the "Tree beyond which there is no passing" ... It is used here symbolically to designate Bahá’u’lláh.*” (Notes from: *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, nn. # 124 y #164 respectively, pp. 220 and 235) –ed.]

[Also consider: “Say: The Holy Spirit Itself hath been generated through the agency of a single letter revealed by this Most Great Spirit, if ye be of them that comprehend..” (Bahá’u’lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “*Súriy-i-Hakal*”, verse 50, pp. 26-27) – ed.]

In all the Divine Books the promise of the Divine Presence hath been explicitly recorded. By this Presence is meant the Presence of Him Who is the Dayspring of the signs, and the Dawning-Place of the clear tokens, and the Manifestation of the Excellent Names, and the Source of the attributes, of the true God, exalted be His glory. God in His Essence and in His own Self hath ever been unseen, inaccessible, and unknowable. By Presence, therefore, is meant the Presence of the One Who is His Vicegerent amongst men. He, moreover, hath never had, nor hath He, any peer or likeness. For were He to have any peer or likeness, how could it then be demonstrated that His being is exalted above, and His essence sanctified from, all comparison and likeness? Briefly, there hath been revealed in the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* (Book of Certitude) concerning the Presence and Revelation of God that which will suffice the fair-minded. We beseech Him—exalted be He—to aid every one to become the essence of truthfulness, and to draw nigh unto Him....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 118-119)

The knowledge of the reality of the Divinity is in no wise possible, but the knowledge of the Manifestations of God is the knowledge of God, for the bounties, splendours, and attributes of God are manifest in Them. Thus, whoso attains to the knowledge of the Manifestations of God attains to the knowledge of God, and whoso remains heedless of Them remains bereft of that knowledge.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 59, Section 9, p. 256)

❖ “*The source of all learning is the knowledge of God...*”

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 156)

... all these names, attributes, laudations, and praises apply to the Manifestations of God Themselves, and...all that we may construe or conceive besides them is sheer delusion, for we can never find a path to the Invisible and Inaccessible.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 37, Section 8, p. 168)

❖ “*He it is Who is...*”

He it is Who is the Manifestation of Him Who is the Unknowable, the Invisible of the Invisibles, could ye but perceive it.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 30)

As the essence of Divinity transcends the comprehension of man, therefore God brings forth certain Manifestations of the divine Reality upon Whom He bestows heavenly effulgences in order that They may be intermediaries between humanity and Himself. These holy Manifestations...are as mirrors..., but the Sun does not descend from its high zenith and does not effect entrance within the mirror.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 114)

All the perfections, bounties, and splendours of the one true God are plainly visible in the realities of His Holy Manifestations, even as the light of the sun is fully reflected with all its perfections and bounties in a clear and spotless mirror.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 37, Section 5, p. 167)

❖ “*These attributes...have never been...withheld...*”

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.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 103; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 48)

The first Tajalli which hath dawned from the Day-Star of Truth is the knowledge of God—exalted be His glory. And the knowledge of the King of everlasting days can in no wise be attained save by recognizing Him Who is the Bearer of the Most Great Name. He is, in truth, the Speaker on Sinai Who is now seated upon the throne of Revelation. He is the Hidden Mystery and the Treasured Symbol. All the former and latter Books of God are adorned with His praise and extol His glory. Through Him the standard of knowledge hath been planted in the world and the ensign of the oneness of God hath been unfurled amidst all peoples. Attainment unto the Divine Presence can be realized solely by attaining His presence.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 50)

For each separate entity possesseth its allotted portion of the solar light and telleth of the Sun, but that Universal Reality in all Its splendour, that stainless Mirror Whose qualities are appropriate to the qualities of the Sun revealed within It—expresseth in their entirety the attributes of the Source of Glory. And that Universal Reality is Man, the divine Being, the Essence that abideth forever.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 42)

❖ “...[T]he *Well-guarded Treasure, and the Hidden Secret*...”

And He Who now speaketh is, in truth, *the Well-guarded Treasure, and the Hidden Secret, and the Preserved Tablet, and the Impenetrable Mystery, and the Sealed Book*. He, truly, is to be obeyed in whatsoever He commandeth, and decreeth, and revealeth, and is to be loved in everything He, through His sovereignty, enjoineeth, and, through His power, ordaineth. Whoso will hesitate for less than the twinkling of an eye, hath, verily, denied Thy right, and repudiated all that Thou hast revealed in Thy Books, and in Thy Scriptures, and sent down with Thy chosen Ones, and Thy Prophets, and Thy Messengers, and the Trustees of Thy Revelation.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 286) [Underlining and italics added –ed.]

...[T]he full splendour of the perfections, bounties, and attributes of the Divinity shines forth from the reality of the Perfect Man, that is, that unique Individual Who is the universal Manifestation of God. For the other beings have each received only a portion of that light, but the universal Manifestation of God is the mirror held before this Sun, and the latter manifests itself therein....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 59, Section 8, p. 255)

❖ “*Verily, verily, I am God*...”

Dwelling on the glorification of Him Whom God shall make manifest—exalted be His Manifestation—the Báb in the beginning of the Bayan saith: ‘He is the One Who shall proclaim under all conditions, “Verily, verily, I am God, no God is there but Me, the Lord of all created things. In truth all others except Me are My creatures. O, My creatures! Me alone do ye worship.”’

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 53)

However, let none construe these utterances to be anthropomorphism, nor see in them the descent of the worlds of God into the grades of the creatures....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 22)

And if it be said that the mirrors are the manifestations of the sun and the dawning-places of the daystar of the world, this is not meant to imply that the sun has descended from the heights of its sanctity or has become embodied in the mirror, or that that limitless Reality has been confined to this visible plane. God forbid! This is the belief of the anthropomorphists. No, all these descriptions,

all these expressions of praise and glory, refer to these holy Manifestations; that is, every description, praise, name, or attribute of God that we mention applies to Them. But no soul has ever fathomed the reality of the Essence of the Divinity so as to be able to intimate, describe, praise, or glorify it. Thus all that the human reality knows, discovers, and understands of the names, attributes, and perfections of God refers to these holy Manifestations and leads nowhere else: “The way is cut off, and all seeking rejected.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 37, Section 5, p. 167)

❖ “...*the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His Essence and reveal it unto men...*”

Know thou of a certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His Essence and reveal it unto men. He is, and hath ever been, immensely exalted beyond all that can either be recounted or perceived. From His retreat of glory His voice is ever proclaiming: “Verily, I am God; there is none other God besides Me, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. I have manifested Myself unto men, and have sent down Him Who is the Day Spring of the signs of My Revelation. Through Him I have caused all creation to testify that there is none other God except Him, the Incomparable, the All-Informed, the All-Wise.” He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation, and His Manifestation can adduce no greater proof of the truth of His Mission than the proof of His own Person.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 49)

❖ “*Briefly stated the comparison is this...*”

Briefly stated the comparison is this: God is the sun; the Holy Spirit are the rays of the sun; and Bahá’u’lláh is the mirror reflecting the rays of the sun.... Bahá’u’lláh refers to His station of identity with God, to His reality which is divine....it is really God speaking through Bahá’u’lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi, in a Letter dated 07-23-36; and cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated 12-15-77)

❖ “*Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: ‘I am God,’ ...*”

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 names and His attributes, are made manifest in the world.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 233; *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 178; and also in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 54)

GOD testifieth that there is none other God but Him and that He Who hath come from the heaven of divine revelation is the Hidden Secret, the Impenetrable Mystery, Whose advent hath been foretold in the Book of God and hath been heralded by His Prophets and Messengers. Through Him the mysteries have been unravelled, the veils rent asunder and the signs and evidences disclosed.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 231)

It is clear, then, that the essential reality of God is revealed in His perfections; and the sun, with its perfections, reflected in a mirror, is a visible thing, an entity clearly expressing the bounty of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 50)

❖ “Beware, O believers...”

Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth. Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Whoso maketh the slightest possible difference between their persons, their words, their messages, their acts and manners, hath indeed disbelieved in God, hath repudiated His signs, and betrayed the Cause of His Messengers.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 59-60)

It is evident that every age in which a Manifestation of God hath lived is divinely ordained, and may, in a sense, be characterized as God’s appointed Day. This Day, however, is unique, and is to be distinguished from those that have preceded it. The designation “Seal of the Prophets” fully revealeth its high station. The Prophetic Cycle hath, verily, ended. The Eternal Truth is now come. He hath lifted up the Ensign of Power, and is now shedding upon the world the unclouded splendor of His Revelation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 60)

“The foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá...is this: His holiness the exalted One (the Báb) is the Manifestation of the unity and oneness of God and the Forerunner of the Ancient Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh). His holiness, the Abhá Beauty (Bahá'u'lláh)...is the supreme Manifestation of God

and the Day-Spring of His most divine Essence.” “All others...are servants unto Him and do His bidding.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 128)

The greatness of the Cause is in this: that whereas in the previous Dispensations there was the appearance of only one prophet, in this glorious dispensation there is a twin manifestation, the second being infinitely greater than all the previous manifestations.

(Shoghi Effendi, in a Letter dated 10-19-47; and cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated 12-15-77)

Bahá’u’lláh is not the Intermediary between other Manifestations and God. Each has His own relation to the Primal Source. But in the sense that Bahá’u’lláh is the greatest Manifestation to yet appear, the One Who consummates the Revelation of Moses; He was the One Moses conversed with in the Burning Bush. In other words Bahá’u’lláh identifies the glory of the God-Head on that occasion with Himself. No distinction can be made amongst the Prophets in the sense that They all proceed from One Source, and are of one essence. But their stations and functions in this world are different.

(Shoghi Effendi, in a Letter dated 10-19-47; and cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated 12-15-77)

❖ [“*The essence of belief in Divine unity...*”

The essence of belief in Divine unity consisteth in regarding Him Who is the Manifestation of God and Him Who is the invisible, the inaccessible, the unknowable Essence as one and the same. By this is meant that whatever pertaineth to the former, all His acts and doings, whatever He ordaineth or forbiddeth, should be considered, in all their aspects, and under all circumstances, and without any reservation, as identical with the Will of God Himself.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 166)]

He...hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 49)

Briefly, Bahá’u’lláh says that “He Who is the Dawning-place of God’s Cause” is the manifestation of “He doeth whatsoever He willeth”, that this station is reserved to that sanctified Being, and that others receive no share of this essential perfection. That is, since the essential

infallibility of the universal Manifestations of God has been established, whatsoever proceeds from Them is identical with the truth and conformable to reality. They are not under the shadow of the former religion. Whatsoever They say is the utterance of God, and whatsoever They do is a righteous deed, and to no believer is given the right to object; rather must he show forth absolute submission in this regard, for the Manifestation of God acts with consummate wisdom, and human minds may be incapable of grasping the hidden wisdom of certain matters. Therefore, whatsoever the universal Manifestation of God says and does is the very essence of wisdom and conformable to reality.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 45, Section 5, p. 198)

The word Dayspring which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá uses in His Will when referring to Bahá’u’lláh is the same Manifestation.

(Shoghi Effendi, in a Letter dated 07-23-36; and cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated 12-15-77)

❖ *“The corporeal station is human in nature and is subject to disintegration....”*

But the individual reality of the Manifestations of the All-Merciful is a sanctified reality, and it is so because it surpasses in essence and in attributes all created things. It is like the sun, which, by virtue of its inherent disposition, must inevitably produce light, and cannot be compared to any satellite. For instance, the constituent parts of the sun can in no wise be compared to those of the moon. The composition and arrangement of the former necessarily produce rays, whereas the constituent parts of the latter require the acquisition, rather than the production, of light. So the other human realities are souls, which, like the moon, acquire their light from the sun, but that sanctified Reality is luminous in and of itself.

The third station is that of divine grace, the revelation of the beauty of the Ancient of Days and the effulgence of the lights of the ever-living and omnipotent Lord. The individual realities of the holy Manifestations cannot be separated from divine grace and revelation any more than the corporeal mass of the sun can be separated from its light. Thus the ascension of the holy Manifestations is simply the abandonment of Their elemental bodies. For example, consider the lamp that lights this niche. Its rays may cease to fall upon the niche if the latter is destroyed, but there is no interruption in the bounty of the lamp itself. The pre-existent grace of the holy Manifestations is even as the light, Their individual realities as the glass globe, and Their human temples as the niche: If the niche is destroyed, the lamp continues to burn. The Manifestations of God are like so many different mirrors, as They each have Their own distinct individuality, but that which is reflected in these mirrors is one and the same sun.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 39, Sections 2, 3 &4, passim, pp. 176-177)

We stated before that the Manifestations of God have three stations: first, the material reality, which pertains to the human body; second, the individual reality, that is, the rational soul; and third, the heavenly manifestation, which consists in the divine perfections and is the source of the life of the world, the education of the souls, the guidance of the people, and the enlightenment of all creation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 39, Section 1, p. 176)

A twofold nature... ”

Unto this subtle, this mysterious and ethereal Being He hath assigned a twofold nature; the physical, pertaining to the world of matter, and the spiritual, which is born of the substance of God Himself. He hath, moreover, conferred upon Him a double station. The first station, which is related to His innermost reality, representeth Him as One Whose voice is the voice of God Himself...The second station is the human station, exemplified by the following verses: “I am but a man like you.” “Say, praise be to my Lord! Am I more than a man, an apostle?”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 66-67)

❖ *“By the revelation of these gems of divine virtue all the names and attributes of God... are made manifest.”*

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 103; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 47-48)

❖ *“The names the Powerful, the Living, the Provider, the Creator....”*

The names the Powerful, the Living, the Provider, the Creator....

(Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 219)

❖ *“...the names and attributes of God, such as...”*

...the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty and grace....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 103; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 48)

“Justice and equity...have appeared arrayed in their mighty and sacred names....”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 28)

❖ “...names and attributes...”

...names and attributes...Creator, Resuscitator, Provider, the All-Present, Almighty, Omniscient and Giver.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 271-272)

❖ “I beseech Thee by Thy Name...”

I beseech Thee by Thy Name, the Restrainer, ...Thy Name, the All-Subduing, ...Thy title, the All-Glorious. ...Thy Name, the Chastiser, ...Thy Name, the Victorious, ...the Cleaver, ...the Restorer, ... the All-Knowing, ...the Withholder, ... the Preserver, ...the Conqueror....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 119-120) [Cf. also: *The Long Healing Prayer*, found in various Bahá'í Prayer Books...]

...all these names, attributes, laudations, and praises apply to the Manifestations of God Themselves, and that all that we may construe or conceive besides them is sheer delusion....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 37, Section 8, p. 168)

❖ “We have made each one of Our Names a wellspring...”

Say: We have made each one of Our Names a wellspring from which We have caused the streams of divine wisdom and understanding to gush forth and flow in the garden of Our Cause-streams whose number none can reckon save Thy Lord, the Most Holy, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the All-Wise....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, verse 73, p. 38)

Knowing God, therefore, means the comprehension and knowledge of His attributes and not of His Reality. And even this knowledge of His attributes extends only so far as human power and capacity permit, and remains wholly inadequate....

The knowledge of the reality of the Divinity is in no wise possible, but the knowledge of the Manifestations of God is the knowledge of God, for the bounties, splendours, and attributes of God are manifest in Them. Thus, whoso attains to the knowledge of the Manifestations of God attains to the knowledge of God, and whoso remains heedless of Them remains bereft of that knowledge. It is therefore clearly established that the Holy Manifestations are the focal centres of the heavenly bounties, signs, and perfections. Blessed are those who receive the light of divine bounties from those luminous Daysprings!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 59, Sections 7 & 9, passim, pp. 254, and 256)

❖ “...*the Manifestation of His own Self...*”

Know verily that whenever this Youth turneth His eyes towards His own self, he findeth it the most insignificant of all creation. When He contemplates, however, the bright effulgences He hath been empowered to manifest, lo, that self is transfigured before Him into a sovereign Potency permeating the essence of all things visible and invisible. Glory be to Him Who, through the power of truth, hath sent down the Manifestation of His own Self and entrusted Him with His message unto all mankind.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 102)

I would only venture to state very briefly and as adequately as present circumstances permit the principal factors that must be taken into consideration before deciding whether a person may be regarded a true believer or not. Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner, the Author, and the True Exemplar of the Bahá’í Cause, as set forth in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved’s sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present day Bahá’í Administration throughout the world—these I conceive to be the fundamental and primary considerations that must be fairly, discreetly and thoughtfully ascertained before reaching such a vital decision”

(Shoghi Effendi: *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 90)



At the time of the Revelation all men are equal in rank. By reason, however, of their acceptance or rejection, rise or fall, motion or stillness, recognition or denial, they come to differ thereafter. For instance, the one true God, magnified be His glory, speaking through the intermediary of His Manifestation, doth ask: “Am I not your Lord?” Every soul that answereth “Yea, verily!” is accounted among the most distinguished of all men in the sight of God. Our meaning is that ere the Word of God is delivered, all men are deemed equal in rank and their station is one and the same. It is only thereafter that differences appear, as thou hast no doubt observed.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section II, pp. 48-49)

In confirmation of the exalted rank of the true believer, referred to by Bahá'u'lláh, He reveals the following: “*The station which he who hath truly recognized this Revelation will attain is the same as the one ordained for such prophets of the house of Israel as are not regarded as Manifestations ‘endowed with constancy’.*”.... [Italics added –ed.]

“...Such is the station for the true believer that if to an extent smaller than a needle’s eye the glory of that station were to be unveiled to mankind, every beholder would be consumed away in his longing to attain it. For this reason it hath been decreed that in this earthly life the full measure of the glory of his own station should remain concealed from the eyes of such a believer.” “If the veil be lifted...and the full glory of the station of those who have turned wholly towards God, and in their love for Him renounced the world, be made manifest, the entire creation would be dumbfounded.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 108 and 111)



PART III

The Institution of the Covenant: an Instrument Divinely Ordained...

[Shoghi Effendi uses the term “an Instrument Divinely Ordained” when referring to the Covenant, in *God Passes By* (Chapter XIV, near the beginning, p. 238: “To direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-sent process, and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension, *an instrument divinely ordained*, invested with indisputable authority, organically linked with the Author of the Revelation Himself, was clearly indispensable. That instrument Bahá’u’lláh had expressly provided through *the institution of the Covenant*, an institution which He had firmly established prior to His ascension. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, passim, pp. 237-238)] [Italics added –ed.]

Thou art the One, O my God and my Ruler, Who hast sent down Thy Book that Thou mayest manifest my Cause, and glorify my Word. Through it Thou didst enter into a Covenant, concerning me, with all that hath been created in Thy realm. Thou seest, O Beloved of the world, how the rebellious among Thy creatures have made of that Covenant a bulwark for themselves, and through it have withdrawn from Thy Beauty, and repudiated Thy signs.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 284)

A. Dictionary Definition

A binding and solemn agreement by two or more persons or parties to do or keep from doing some specific thing; a contract. In theology, the promises of God to man, usually carrying with them conditions to be fulfilled by man. God's promise of a blessing to be fulfilled on the performance of a condition.

(Webster's Unabridged Dictionary)

B. References from the Sacred Writings

❖ “...*And this Covenant is the Ancient Covenant...*”

...And this Covenant is the Ancient Covenant, the Illuminator of the horizons.... It is the Testament and the Covenant and it is mentioned in...all the early Books and in the later tablets.... It is the holy fragrance of His Holiness, the Creator, and the Breaths of Life of the garden of the Creator. It is the strong fortress; therefore it is a sure shelter for all created beings, and in brief, it is the sum of all the sacred writings, ancient and modern!

(‘Abdul-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 16, pp. 213-214)

...The Greater Covenant into which, as affirmed in His [the Báb’s] writings, God had, from time immemorial, entered, through the Prophets of all ages, with the whole of mankind, regarding the newborn Revelation, had already been fulfilled. It had now to be supplemented by a Lesser Covenant which He felt bound to make with the entire body of His followers concerning the One Whose advent He characterized as the fruit and ultimate purpose of His Dispensation. Such a Covenant had invariably been the feature of every previous religion. It had existed, under various forms, with varying degrees of emphasis, had always been couched in veiled language, and had been alluded to in cryptic prophecies, in abstruse allegories, in unauthenticated traditions, and in the fragmentary and obscure passages of the sacred Scriptures. In the Bábí Dispensation, however, it was destined to be established in clear and unequivocal language, though not embodied in a separate document. Unlike the Prophets gone before Him, Whose Covenants were shrouded in mystery, unlike Bahá’u’lláh, Whose clearly defined Covenant was incorporated in a specially written Testament, and designated by Him as “the Book of My Covenant,” the Báb chose to intersperse His Book of Laws, the Persian Bayan, with unnumbered passages, some designedly obscure, mostly indubitably clear and conclusive, in which He fixes the date of the promised Revelation, extols its virtues, asserts its pre-eminent character, assigns to it unlimited powers and prerogatives, and tears down every barrier that might be an obstacle to its recognition.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 27-28)

A dynamic process, divinely propelled, possessed of undreamt-of potentialities, world-embracing in scope, world-transforming in its ultimate consequences, had been set in motion on that memorable night when the Báb communicated the purpose of His mission to Mulla Husayn in an obscure corner of Shiraz. It acquired a tremendous momentum with the first intimations of Bahá’u’lláh’s dawning Revelation amidst the darkness of the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran. It was further

accelerated by the Declaration of His mission on the eve of His banishment from Baghdad. It moved to a climax with the proclamation of that same mission during the tempestuous years of His exile in Adrianople. Its full significance was disclosed when the Author of that Mission issued His historic summonses, appeals and warnings to the kings of the earth and the world's ecclesiastical leaders. It was finally consummated by the laws and ordinances which He formulated, by the principles which He enunciated and by the institutions which He ordained during the concluding years of His ministry in the prison-city of 'Akká.

To direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-sent process, and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension, an instrument divinely ordained, invested with indisputable authority, organically linked with the Author of the Revelation Himself, was clearly indispensable. That instrument Bahá'u'lláh had expressly provided through the institution of the Covenant, an institution which He had firmly established prior to His ascension....

...Written entirely in His own hand....this unique and epoch-making Document, designated by Bahá'u'lláh as His "Most Great Tablet," and alluded to by Him as the "Crimson Book"...can find no parallel in the Scriptures of any previous Dispensation....

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, passim, pp. 237-238)

❖ *"There is no occasion for perturbation..."*

There is no occasion for perturbation for the Blessed Beauty has closed all doors of error and doubt and has entered with all the friends into a Covenant and Testament....

(Statement attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. X, No. 12, p. 234, for which no original text could be authenticated or verified, to be regarded as "*pilgrims' note*")

"Know thou," He has written, "that the 'Sure Handle' ['Uravatu'l-Vuthqá] mentioned from the foundation of the world in the Books, the Tablets and the Scriptures of old is naught else but the Covenant and the Testament."

('Abdu'l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 238; and in *A Basic Bahá'í Dictionary*, p. 233, Wendi Momen, Editor, and in *Bahá'í Glossary*, p. 52, Marzieh Gail)

"So firm and mighty is this Covenant," He Who is its appointed Center has affirmed, "that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like."

('Abdu'l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, p. 238)

For nowhere in the books pertaining to any of the world's religious systems, not even among the writings of the Author of the Bábí Revelation, do we find any single document establishing a Covenant endowed with an authority comparable to the Covenant which Bahá'u'lláh had Himself instituted.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 238)

❖ *“In this weighty and incomparable Document...”*

Extolled by the writer of the Apocalypse as “the Ark of His (God) Testament”; associated with the gathering beneath the “Tree of Anisa” (Tree of Life) mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh in the Hidden Words; glorified by Him, in other passages of His writings, as the “Ark of Salvation” and as “the Cord stretched betwixt the earth and the Abha Kingdom,” this Covenant has been bequeathed to posterity in a Will and Testament which, together with the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and several Tablets, in which the rank and station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are unequivocally disclosed, constitute the chief buttresses designed by the Lord of the Covenant Himself to shield and support, after His ascension, the appointed Center of His Faith and the Delineator of its future institutions.

In this weighty and incomparable Document its Author [Bahá'u'lláh] discloses the character of that “excellent and priceless heritage” bequeathed by Him to His “heirs”; proclaims afresh the fundamental purpose of His Revelation; enjoins the “peoples of the world” to hold fast to that which will “elevate” their “station”; announces to them that “God hath forgiven what is past”; stresses the sublimity of man's station; discloses the primary aim of the Faith of God; directs the faithful to pray for the welfare of the kings of the earth, “the manifestations of the power, and the daysprings of the might and riches, of God”; invests them with the rulership of the earth; singles out as His special domain the hearts of men; forbids categorically strife and contention; commands His followers to aid those rulers who are “adorned with the ornament of equity and justice”; and directs, in particular, the Aghsan (His sons) to ponder the “mighty force and the consummate power that lieth concealed in the world of being.” He bids them, moreover, together with the Afnan (the Báb's kindred) and His own relatives, to “turn, one and all, unto the Most Great Branch (Abdu’l-Bahá)”; identifies Him with “the One Whom God hath purposed,” “Who hath branched from this pre-existent Root,” referred to in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; ordains the station of the “Greater Branch” (Mirza Muhammad-'Alí) to be beneath that of the “Most Great Branch” (Abdu’l-Bahá); exhorts the believers to treat the Aghsan with consideration and affection; counsels them to respect His family and relatives, as well as the kindred of the Bab; denies His sons “any right to the property of others”; enjoins on them, on His kindred and on that of the Báb to “fear God, to do that which is meet and seemly” and to follow the things that will “exalt” their station; warns all men not to allow “the means of order to be made the cause of confusion, and the instrument of union an occasion for discord”; and concludes with an exhortation calling upon the faithful to “serve all nations,” and to strive for the “betterment of the world.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, pp. 239-240)

The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh is unbroken, its all-encompassing power inviolate. The two unique features which distinguish it from all religious covenants of the past are unchanged and operative. The revealed Word, in its original purity, amplified by the divinely guided interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, remains immutable, unadulterated by any man-made creeds or dogmas, unwarrantable inferences, or unauthorized interpretations. The channel of Divine guidance, providing flexibility in all the affairs of mankind, remains open through that institution which was founded by Bahá'u'lláh and endowed by Him with supreme authority and unfailing guidance, and of which the Master wrote: "Unto this body all things must be referred."

(The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated October 1963, cited in *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 13; and in *Messages 1963 to 1986*, p. 15)

❖ "...all the forces of the universe...serve the Covenant."

Today, the Lord of Hosts is the defender of the Covenant, the forces of the Kingdom protect it, heavenly souls tender their services, and heavenly angels promulgate and spread it broadcast. If it is considered with insight, it will be seen that all the forces of the universe, in the last analysis serve the Covenant.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. 11, No. 14, p. 242; and *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 228)

❖ "Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws..."

Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power. To this beareth witness that which the Pen of Revelation hath revealed. Meditate upon this, O men of insight!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 5, p. 21; and also in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 332-333)

C. The Religion of God consists of two parts; a twofold language

“The religion of God consists of two parts...”

...The religion of God consists of two parts: One is the very foundation and belongs to the spiritual realm; that is, it pertains to spiritual virtues and divine qualities. This part suffers neither change nor alteration: It is the Holy of Holies, which constitutes the essence of the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muḥammad, the Báb, and Bahá’u’lláh, and which will endure throughout all the prophetic Dispensations. It will never be abrogated, for it consists in spiritual rather than material truth....

These are divine qualities. These commandments will never be abrogated, but will remain in force and effect for all eternity....

Briefly, what is meant by the term “Holy of Holies” is that spiritual law which can never be changed or abrogated, and what is meant by the “Holy City” is the material law which may indeed be abrogated; and this material law—the Holy City—was to be trodden underfoot for 1,260 years.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Sections 7 & 11, passim, pp. 54-56)

❖ *“A two-fold language...”*

It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion. Such are the unveiled traditions and the evident verses already mentioned. The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sadiq, son of Muhammad, spoken: “God verily will test them and sift them.” This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 254-255)

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 49)

1. The First Part (the Holy of Holies)

“One is the very foundation and belongs to the spiritual realm.... It is the Holy of Holies.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Section 7, p. 54)

a. Spiritual, not material

It will never be abrogated, for it consists in spiritual rather than material truth. It is faith, knowledge, certitude, justice, piety, high-mindedness, trustworthiness, love of God, and charity. It is mercy to the poor, assistance to the oppressed, generosity to the needy, and upliftment of the fallen....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Section 7, p. 54)

b. From everlasting to everlasting

❖ “[T]he Coveant of Thy Lord shall continue to overshadow all regions...”

“Everything (in the world) is subject to corruption; but the Covenant of thy Lord shall continue to pervade all regions.” New translation: “All on earth shall pass away, but the Covenant of Thy Lord shall continue to overshadow all regions.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as originally translated, *Star of the West*, Vol. IV, No. 10, p. 170; new translation provided by the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre, circa 2003)

❖ “God hath sent down His Messengers...and He will continue to do so...”

“God hath sent down His Messengers to succeed to Moses and Jesus, and He will continue to do so till ‘the end that hath no end’; so that His grace may, from the heaven of Divine bounty, be continually vouchsafed to mankind.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 116)

...Such hath been God's method continued from everlasting to everlasting.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 68-69)

And now concerning thy question regarding the nature of religion. Know thou that they who are truly wise have likened the world unto the human temple. As the body of man needeth a garment to clothe it, so the body of mankind must needs be adorned with the mantle of justice and wisdom. Its robe is the Revelation vouchsafed unto it by God. Whenever this robe hath fulfilled its purpose, the Almighty will assuredly renew it. For every age requireth a fresh measure of the light of God....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 81)

Can one of sane mind ever seriously imagine that, in view of certain words the meaning of which he cannot comprehend, the portal of God's infinite guidance can ever be closed in the face of men? Can he ever conceive for these Divine Luminaries, these resplendent Lights either a beginning or an end? What outpouring flood can compare with the stream of His all-embracing grace, and what blessing can excel the evidences of so great and pervasive a mercy? There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be withheld from the world, it would completely perish. For this reason, from the beginning that hath no beginning the portals of Divine mercy have been flung open to the face of all created things, and the clouds of Truth will continue to the end that hath no end to rain on the soil of human capacity, reality and personality their favors and bounties. Such hath been God's method continued from everlasting to everlasting.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 68)

In the world of God there is no past, present, or future: All of these are one. So when Christ said, "In the beginning was the Word," [Cf. John 1:1]—He meant that it was, is, and shall be; for in the world of God there is no time. Time holds sway over the creatures but not over God. So in the prayer where Christ says, "Hallowed be Thy name", [Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2]]—the meaning is that Thy name was, is, and shall be hallowed. Again, morning, noon, and evening exist in relation to the earth, but in the sun there is neither morning, nor noon, nor evening.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 39, Section 7, p. 178)

❖ *"His creation hath ever existed..."*

His creation hath ever existed, and the Manifestations of His Divine glory and the Day Springs of eternal holiness have been sent down from time immemorial, and been commissioned to summon mankind to the one true God....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 174)

All else besides them are to be regarded as mirrors capable of reflecting the glory of these Manifestations Who are themselves the Primary Mirrors of the Divine Being, if ye be not devoid of understanding. No one hath ever escaped them, neither are they to be hindered from achieving their purpose. These Mirrors will everlastingly succeed each other, and will continue to reflect the light of the Ancient of Days. *They that reflect their glory will, in like manner, continue to exist for evermore*, for the Grace of God can never cease from flowing. This is a truth that none can disprove.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 74) [Italics added –ed.]

Know assuredly that just as thou firmly believest that the Word of God, exalted be His glory, endureth for ever, thou must, likewise, believe with undoubting faith that *its meaning can never be exhausted*. They who are its appointed interpreters, *they whose hearts are the repositories of its secrets*, are, however, the only ones who can comprehend its manifold wisdom....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 175) [Italics added –ed.]

“...And this Faith—the Faith of Him Whom God will make manifest—in its turn, together with all the Revelations gone before it, have as their object the Manifestation destined to succeed it. And the latter, no less than all the Revelations preceding it, prepare the way for the Revelation which is yet to follow. The process of the rise and setting of the Sun of Truth will thus indefinitely continue—a process that hath had no beginning and will have no end.”

(The Báb, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 117)

We, verily, believe in Him Who, in the person of the Báb, hath been sent down by the Will of the one true God, the King of Kings, the All-Praised. We, moreover, swear fealty to the One Who, in the time of Mustagháth, is destined to be made manifest, as well as to those Who shall come after Him till the end that hath no end.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 73)

[Notes: Mustagháth: "He Who is invoked". A reference to the appearance of the Promised One (Bahá'u'lláh) at the time specified by the Báb. (For more, consult W. Momen, *A Basic Baha'i Dictionary*, p. 166; and Marzieh Gail, *Bahá'í Glossary*, p. 37) –ed.] [Also: A very special supplication (known to the earliest believers) – to be used only in moments of extreme peril or great physical danger, to call *directly* and *immediately* on “the Blessed Beauty” Himself – is “Ya Iláh’ul’Mustagháth” (“O Thou Who art invoked!”); it has great power! –ed.]

Their appearances have been successive and correlated; each one has announced and extolled the one who was to follow and all laid the foundation of reality.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 14)

...Divine Revelation is orderly, continuous and progressive and not spasmodic or final.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 115)

c. Divine Revelation is continuous and progressive

The fundamental principle enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh ... is that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is a continuous and progressive process, that all the great religions of the world are divine in origin, that their basic principles are in complete harmony, that their aims and purposes are one and the same, that their teachings are but facets of one truth, that their functions are complementary, that they differ only in the nonessential aspects of their doctrines, and that their missions represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society....

...His mission is to proclaim that the ages of the infancy and of the childhood of the human race are past, that the convulsions associated with the present stage of its adolescence are slowly and painfully preparing it to attain the stage of manhood, and are heralding the approach of that Age of Ages when swords will be beaten into plowshares, when the Kingdom promised by Jesus Christ will have been established, and the peace of the planet definitely and permanently ensured. Nor does Bahá'u'lláh claim finality for His own Revelation, but rather stipulates that a fuller measure of the truth He has been commissioned by the Almighty to vouchsafe to humanity, at so critical a juncture in its fortunes, must needs be disclosed at future stages in the constant and limitless evolution of mankind....

The Bahá'í Faith upholds the unity of God, recognizes the unity of His Prophets, and inculcates the principle of the oneness and wholeness of the entire human race. It proclaims the

necessity and the inevitability of the unification of mankind, asserts that it is gradually approaching, and claims that nothing short of the transmuting spirit of God, working through His chosen Mouthpiece in this day, can ultimately succeed in bringing it about. It, moreover, enjoins upon its followers the primary duty of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all manner of prejudice and superstition, declares the purpose of religion to be the promotion of amity and concord, proclaims its essential harmony with science, and recognizes it as the foremost agency for the pacification and the orderly progress of human society....

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, pp. v-vi). [— for a more complete statement: Cf. also: Shoghi Effendi, extracted from “*Summary Statement - 1947, Special UN Committee on Palestine*”, cited in part in *The Promised Day is Come*, pp. v-viii, which follows beginning on pages 373 and 376, respectively, of this compilation –ed.]

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whose supreme mission is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations, should, if we be faithful to its implications, be regarded as signaling through its advent the *coming of age of the entire human race*. It should be viewed not merely as yet another spiritual revival in the ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelations, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic cycles, but rather as *marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet....*

That mystic, all-pervasive, yet indefinable change, which we associate with the stage of maturity inevitable in the life of the individual and the development of the fruit must, if we would correctly apprehend the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh, have its counterpart in the evolution of the organization of human society....

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 163-164) [Italics added –ed.]

❖ “...Similarly, there are periods and stages in the collective life of humanity....”

“...Similarly, there are periods and stages in the collective life of humanity. At one time it was passing through its stage of childhood, at another its period of youth, but now it has entered its long-predicted phase of maturity, the evidences of which are everywhere apparent... That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race can neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day, this period of newness and consummation. Humanity has emerged from its former state of limitation and preliminary training. Man must now become imbued with new virtues and powers, new moral standards, new capacities. New bounties, perfect bestowals, are awaiting and already descending upon him. The gifts and blessings of the period of youth, although timely and sufficient during the adolescence of mankind, are now incapable of meeting the requirements of its maturity.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 164)

❖ “...*This Day...is unique...*”

It is evident that every age in which a Manifestation of God hath lived is divinely ordained, and may, in a sense, be characterized as God’s appointed Day. This Day, however, is unique, and is to be distinguished from those that have preceded it. The designation “Seal of the Prophets” fully revealeth its high station. The Prophetic Cycle hath, verily, ended. The Eternal Truth is now come. He hath lifted up the Ensign of Power, and is now shedding upon the world the unclouded splendor of His Revelation.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 59)

“This is the King of Days...the Day that hath seen the coming of the Best-Loved, Him Who, through all eternity, hath been acclaimed the Desire of the World.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 167)

Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One....

Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness.... 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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 10-11)

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 5)

d. This universal cycle

The entire creation hath been called into being through the Will of God, magnified be His glory, and peerless Adam hath been fashioned through the agency of His all-compelling Word, a Word which is the source, the wellspring, the repository, and the dawning-place of the intellect.

From it all creation hath proceeded, and it is the channel of God's primal grace. None can grasp the reality of the origin of creation save God, exalted be His glory, Whose knowledge embraceth all things both before and after they come into being. Creation hath neither beginning nor end, and none hath ever unraveled its mystery. Its knowledge hath ever been, and shall remain, hidden and persevered with those Who are the Repositories of divine knowledge.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section II, verset 2.48, p. 47) [Italics added –ed.]

...life on this earth is very ancient—not one or two hundred thousand, or even one or two million years old: It is ancient indeed, and the records and traces of ancient times have been entirely obliterated.

Each of the Manifestations of God has likewise a cycle wherein His religion and His law are in full force and effect. When His cycle is ended through the advent of a new Manifestation, a new cycle begins. Thus, cycles are inaugurated, concluded, and renewed, until a universal cycle is completed in the world of existence and momentous events transpire which efface every record and trace of the past; then a new universal cycle begins in the world, for the realm of existence has no beginning. We have previously presented proofs and arguments concerning this subject, and there is no need for repetition.

Briefly, our claim is that a universal cycle in the world of existence comprises a vast span of time and countless ages and epochs. In such a cycle, the Manifestations of God shine forth in the visible realm until a universal and supreme Manifestation makes the world the focal centre of divine splendours and, through His revelation, brings it to the stage of maturity. The duration of the cycle He ushers in is very long indeed. Other Manifestations will arise in the course of that cycle under His shadow and will renew, according to the needs of the time, certain laws pertaining to material affairs and transactions, but They will remain under His shadow. We are in the cycle which began with Adam and whose universal Manifestation is Bahá'u'lláh.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 41, Sections 3-5, pp. 182-183)

❖ *“In every age and cycle He hath...recreated all things...”*

In every age and cycle He hath, through the splendid light shed by the Manifestations of His wondrous Essence, recreated all things, so that whatsoever reflecteth in the heavens and on the earth the signs of His glory may not be deprived of the outpourings of His mercy, nor despair of the showers of His favors. How all-encompassing are the wonders of His boundless grace! Behold how they have pervaded the whole of creation. ...So perfect and comprehensive is His creation that no mind nor heart, however keen or pure, can ever grasp the nature of the most insignificant of His creatures; much less fathom the mystery of Him Who is the Day Star of Truth, Who is the invisible and unknowable Essence.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 62)

It is evident that every age in which a Manifestation of God hath lived is divinely ordained, and may, in a sense, be characterized as God's appointed Day. This Day, however, is unique and is to be distinguished from those that have preceded it. The designation 'Seal of the Prophets' fully reveals and demonstrates its high station. The Prophetic Cycle hath, verily, ended. The Eternal Truth is now come. He hath lifted up the Ensign of Power, and is now shedding upon the world the unclouded splendor of His Revelation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 60; cited in part by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 106, and in entirety, p. 167)

"In this most mighty Revelation," He, in categorical language, declares, "all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation. That which hath been made manifest in this preeminent, this most exalted Revelation, standeth unparalleled in the annals of the past, nor will future ages witness its like."

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 167)

"Centuries, nay ages, must pass away...ere the Day-Star of Truth shineth again in its mid-summer splendor, or appeareth once more in the radiance of its vernal glory...."

('Abdu'l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 110 and 167; and in *God Passes By*, p. 99)

...Bahá'u'lláh is not the intermediary between God and the other Manifestations, although these are under His shadow, for the simple reason that the Messengers of God are all inherently one; it is their Message that differs. Bahá'u'lláh, appearing at a time when the world has attained maturity, His message must necessarily surpass the message of all previous prophets. Not only so, but His message is potentially greater than any message which later prophets within His own cycle may reveal. This is because the state of maturity is the most momentous stage in the evolution of mankind.

(Shoghi Effendi, in a Letter dated 07-23-36; and cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated 12-15-77)

❖ *"In this most mighty Revelation...all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation...."*

“In this most mighty Revelation...all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation. That which hath been made manifest in this preeminent, this most exalted Revelation, standeth unparalleled in the annals of the past, nor will future ages witness its like.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 167)

“This,” He furthermore declares, “is the king of days,” the “Day of God Himself,” the “Day which shall never be followed by night,” the “Springtime which autumn will never overtake,” “the eye to past ages and centuries,” for which “the soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted,” for which “all the divers kindreds of the earth have yearned,” through which “God hath proved the hearts of the entire company of His Messengers and Prophets, and beyond them those that stand guard over His sacred and inviolable Sanctuary, the inmates of the Celestial Pavilion and dwellers of the Tabernacle of Glory.” “In this most mighty Revelation,” He moreover, states, “all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation.” And again: “None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.” Referring to His own station He declares: *“But for Him no Divine Messenger would have been invested with the Robe of Prophethood, nor would any of the sacred Scriptures have been revealed.”*

And last but not least is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own tribute to the transcendent character of the Revelation identified with His Father: “Centuries, nay ages, must pass away, ere the Day-Star of Truth shineth again in its mid-summer splendor, or appeareth once more in the radiance of its vernal glory.” “The mere contemplation of the Dispensation inaugurated by the Blessed Beauty,” He furthermore affirms, “would have sufficed to overwhelm the saints of bygone ages—saints who longed to partake for one moment of its great glory.” *“Concerning the Manifestations that will come down in the future ‘in the shadows of the clouds,’ know verily,”* is His significant statement, *“that in so far as their relation to the source of their inspiration is concerned they are under the shadow of the Ancient Beauty. In their relation, however, to the age in which they appear, each and every one of them ‘doeth whatsoever He willeth.’”* And finally stands this, His illuminating explanation, setting forth conclusively the true relationship between the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and that of the Báb: “The Revelation of the Báb may be likened to the sun, its station corresponding to the first sign of the Zodiac—the sign Aries—which the sun enters at the vernal equinox. The station of Bahá'u'lláh’s Revelation, on the other hand, is represented by the sign Leo, the sun’s mid-summer and highest station. By this is meant that this holy Dispensation is illumined with the light of the Sun of Truth shining from its most exalted station, and in the plenitude of its resplendency, its heat and glory.”

(Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, respectively, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, pp. 98-100) [Italics added –ed.]

The Bahá'í cycle is, indeed, incomparable in its greatness. It includes not only the Prophets that will appear after Bahá'u'lláh but all those who have preceded Him since Adam. These should, indeed, be viewed as constituting but preliminary stages leading to the gradual appearance of this Supreme Manifestation of God.

After Bahá'u'lláh many Prophets will, no doubt, appear, but they will be all under His shadow. Although they may abrogate the laws of this Dispensation, they nevertheless draw their spiritual force from this mighty Revelation. The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh constitutes, indeed, the stage of maturity in the development of mankind. His appearance has released such spiritual force which will continue to animate, for many long years to come, the world in its development. Whatever progress may be achieved in later ages, after the unification of the whole human race is achieved, will be but an improvement in the machinery of the world. *For the machinery itself has been already created by Bahá'u'lláh.*

(Shoghi Effendi, in a Letter dated 11-14-35; and cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated 12-15-77) [Italics added –ed.]

He...was none other than the One Whom posterity will acclaim...as the Originator of a new “Universal Cycle”....

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 93-94; and *Guidance for Today and Tomorrow*, p. 11)

e. Covenant between the Manifestation and God

...it is our clear duty to make it indubitably evident to every seeker after truth that from “the beginning that hath no beginning” the Prophets of the one, the unknowable God, including Bahá'u'lláh Himself, have all, as the channels of God's grace, as the exponents of His unity, as the mirrors of His light and the revealers of His purpose, been commissioned to unfold to mankind an ever-increasing measure of His truth....

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 118)

❖ “Every Prophet Whom the Almighty and Peerless Creator hath purposed to send...”

Every Prophet Whom the Almighty and Peerless Creator hath purposed to send to the peoples of the earth hath been entrusted with a Message, and charged to act in a manner that would best meet the requirements of the age in which He appeared.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 79)

Every Divine Revelation hath been sent down in a manner that befitted the circumstances of the age in which it hath appeared.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 81)

It hath been decreed by Us that the Word of God and all the potentialities thereof shall be manifested unto men in strict conformity with such conditions as have been foreordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. *We have, moreover, ordained that its veil of concealment be none other except its own Self.* Such indeed is Our Power to achieve Our Purpose. Should the Word be allowed to release suddenly all the energies latent within it, no man could sustain the weight of so mighty a Revelation. Nay, all that is in heaven and on earth would flee in consternation before it.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 76-77) [Italics added –ed.]

Contemplate with thine inward eye the chain of successive Revelations that hath linked the Manifestation of Adam with that of the Báb. I testify before God that each one of these Manifestations hath been sent down through the operation of the Divine Will and Purpose, that each hath been the bearer of a specific Message, that each hath been entrusted with a divinely-revealed Book and been commissioned to unravel the mysteries of a mighty Tablet. *The measure of the Revelation with which every one of them hath been identified had been definitely fore-ordained.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 74) [Italics added –ed.]

Consider that which hath been sent down unto Muhammad, the Apostle of God. The measure of the Revelation of which He was the bearer had been clearly foreordained by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Powerful. They that heard Him, however, could apprehend His purpose only to the extent of their station and spiritual capacity. He, in like manner, uncovered the Face of Wisdom in proportion to their ability to sustain the burden of His Message. No sooner had mankind attained the stage of maturity, than the Word revealed to men's eyes the latent energies with which it had been endowed—energies which manifested themselves in the plenitude of their glory when the Ancient Beauty appeared, in the year sixty, in the person of Ali-Muhammad, the Báb.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 77)

And when this process of progressive Revelation culminated in the stage at which His peerless, His most sacred, and exalted Countenance was to be unveiled to men's eyes, He chose to hide His own Self behind a thousand veils, lest profane and mortal eyes discover His glory. This He did at a time when the signs and tokens of a divinely-appointed Revelation were being showered upon Him—signs and tokens which none can reckon except the Lord, your God, the Lord of all worlds. *And when the set time of concealment was fulfilled, We sent forth, whilst still wrapt within a*

myriad veils, an infinitesimal glimmer of the effulgent Glory enveloping the Face of the Youth, and lo, the entire company of the dwellers of the Realms above were seized with violent commotion and the favored of God fell down in adoration before Him. He hath, verily, manifested a glory such as none in the whole creation hath witnessed, inasmuch as He hath arisen to proclaim in person His Cause unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 75) [Italics added –ed.]

With each and every Prophet Whom We have sent down in the past, We have established a separate Covenant concerning the Remembrance of God and His Day.

(The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 68, and cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 126)

...The Greater Covenant into which, as affirmed in His [The Báb's] writings, God had, from time immemorial, entered, through the Prophets of all ages, with the whole of mankind, regarding the newborn Revelation, had already been fulfilled. It had now to be supplemented by a Lesser Covenant which He felt bound to make with the entire body of His followers concerning the One Whose advent He characterized as the fruit and ultimate purpose of His Dispensation [*]. Such a Covenant had invariably been the feature of every previous religion....

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 27)

[*Refers to the Appearance of Bahá'u'lláh in the years 9 and 19, and His Covenant and Administration after Him –ed.] [Note: Cf. also: *The Second Part (the Holy City)*, beginning on page 117 and following, further on in this course –ed.]

❖ “*The advent of such a Revelation...*”

The advent of such a Revelation hath been heralded in all the sacred Scriptures.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 5)

Behold, how the divers peoples and kindreds of the earth have been waiting for the coming of the Promised One. No sooner had He, Who is the Sun of Truth, been made manifest, than, lo, all turned away from Him, except them whom God was pleased to guide. We dare not, in this Day, lift the veil that concealeth the exalted station which every true believer can attain, for the joy which such a revelation must provoke might well cause a few to faint away and die.

He Who is the Heart and Center of the Bayan hath written: “The germ that holdeth within itself the potentialities of the Revelation that is to come is endowed with a potency superior to the

combined forces of all those who follow Me.” And, again, He saith: “Of all the tributes I have paid to Him Who is to come after Me, the greatest is this, My written confession, that no words of Mine can adequately describe Him, nor can any reference to Him in My Book, the Bayan, do justice to His Cause.”

Whoso hath searched the depths of the oceans that lie hid within these exalted words, and fathomed their import, can be said to have discovered a glimmer of the unspeakable glory with which this mighty, this sublime, and most holy Revelation hath been endowed. From the excellence of so great a Revelation the honor with which its faithful followers must needs be invested can be well imagined. By the righteousness of the one true God! The very breath of these souls is in itself richer than all the treasures of the earth. Happy is the man that hath attained thereunto, and woe betide the heedless.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 9-10)

“O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow. The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely. This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list. The evanescent is as nothing before Him Who is the Ever-Abiding. His all-compelling summons hath reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people. I was indeed as one dead when His behest was uttered. The hand of the will of thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful, transformed Me.” “By My Life!” He asserts in another Tablet, “Not of Mine own volition have I revealed Myself, but God, of His own choosing, hath manifested Me.” And again: “*Whenever I chose to hold My peace and be still, lo, the Voice of the Holy Spirit, standing on My right hand, aroused Me, and the Most Great Spirit appeared before My face, and Gabriel overshadowed Me, and the Spirit of Glory stirred within My bosom, bidding Me arise and break My silence.*” [Italics added –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in entirety by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By*, p. 102 and in *The Promised Day Is Come*, pp. 40-41; and in part by Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “Tablet to Násiri'd-Dín Sháh”, verse 192, p. 98, as well as in *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 11 and 39; and with another portion from Bahá'u'lláh, as found in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, Section: L, p. 103)

The Koran is no other than a revelation revealed to him:
 One terrible in power [2] taught it him,
 Endued with wisdom. With even balance stood he
 In the highest part of the horizon:
 Then came he nearer and approached,
 And was at the distance of two bows, or even closer,
 And he revealed to his servant what he revealed.
 His heart falsified not what he saw.
 What! [W]ill ye then dispute with him as to what he saw?
 He had seen him also another time,
 Near the Sidrah-tree, which marks the boundary [3].

[2] The Angel Gabriel, to the meaning of whose name, as “the strong one of God” these words probably allude;

[3] That is: Beyond which neither men nor angels can pass (“Dejal”).

[Also known as Sacred Lote Tree and Sadratu’l Muntahá, p. 220, Notes, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* –ed.]

(Muhammad, *Qur’án* - Rodwell, SURA LIII [53] – The Star Mecca, p. 69)

Wrapped in its stygian gloom, breathing its fetid air, numbed by its humid and icy atmosphere, His feet in stocks, His neck weighed down by a mighty chain, surrounded by criminals and miscreants of the worst order, oppressed by the consciousness of the terrible blot that had stained the fair name of His beloved Faith, painfully aware of the dire distress that had overtaken its champions, and of the grave dangers that faced the remnant of its followers—at so critical an hour and under such appalling circumstances the “Most Great Spirit,” as designated by Himself, and symbolized in the Zoroastrian, the Mosaic, the Christian, and Muhammadan Dispensations by the Sacred Fire, the Burning Bush, the Dove and the Angel Gabriel respectively, descended upon, and revealed itself, personated by a “Maiden,” to the agonized soul of Bahá’u’lláh.

“One night in a dream,” He Himself, calling to mind, in the evening of His life, the first stirrings of God’s Revelation within His soul, has written, “these exalted words were heard on every side: ‘Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Ere long will God raise up the treasures of the earth—men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name, wherewith God hath revived the hearts of such as have recognized Him.’” In another passage He

describes, briefly and graphically, the impact of the onrushing force of the Divine Summons upon His entire being—an experience vividly recalling the vision of God that caused Moses to fall in a swoon, and the voice of Gabriel which plunged Muhammad into such consternation that, hurrying to the shelter of His home, He bade His wife, Khadijih, envelop Him in His mantle. “During the days I lay in the prison of Tihiran,” are His own memorable words, “though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain. Every limb of My body would, as a result, be set afire. At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear.”

In His Suratu'l-Haykal (the Surih of the Temple) He thus describes those breathless moments when the Maiden, symbolizing the “Most Great Spirit” proclaimed His mission to the entire creation: “While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden—the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord—suspended in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good-pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the brightness of the All-Merciful. Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both My inward and outer being tidings which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God’s honored servants. Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: ‘By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His glory unto all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if ye be of them that perceive.’”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, passim, pp. 21- 22; also Bahá’u’lláh, in part, in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “*Súriy-i-Haykal*”, verses 6-7. pp. 8-9; and as cited in entirety by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, pp. 101-102)

We stated before that the Manifestations of God have three stations: first, the material reality, which pertains to the human body; second, the individual reality, that is, the rational soul; and third, the heavenly manifestation, which consists in the divine perfections and is the source of the life of the world, the education of the souls, the guidance of the people, and the enlightenment of all creation....

The third station is that of *divine grace, the revelation of the beauty of the Ancient of Days and the effulgence of the lights of the ever-living and omnipotent Lord.*

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 39, Sections 1 & 4, passim, pp. 176-177) [Italics added –ed.]

...the Holy Spirit...is the mediator between God and His creation. It is like a mirror facing the sun: Just as a spotless mirror receives the rays of the sun and reflects its bounty to others, so too is the Holy Spirit the mediator of the light of holiness, which it conveys from the Sun of Truth to sanctified souls. This Spirit is adorned with all the divine perfections. Whensoever it appears, the world is revived, a new cycle is ushered in, and the body of humanity is clothed in a fresh attire....

...It is with such a power that Christ renewed this cycle—whereupon the divine springtide pitched its tent, with utmost vitality and grace, in the realm of humanity and perfumed the senses of the enlightened souls with its life-giving breezes.

In the same way, the manifestation of Bahá’u’lláh was a new springtide which appeared... He established the throne of God’s sovereignty in the midmost heart of the world and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, revived the souls and ushered in a new cycle.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 36, Sections 7-9, pp. 163-164)

As to your question concerning the Holy Spirit and its relation to Bahá’u’lláh; the Holy Spirit may well be compared to the rays of the sun, and Bahá’u’lláh to a perfect mirror reflecting these rays which radiate from the sun. Briefly stated the comparison is this: God is the sun; the Holy Spirit are the rays of the sun; and Bahá’u’lláh is the mirror reflecting the rays of the sun....

(Shoghi Effendi, in a Letter dated 07-23-36; and cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated 12-15-77) [Underlining added –ed.]

❖ “Whoso hath...attained His Presence...which is the real Paradise...”

...Whoso hath recognized the Day Spring of Divine guidance and entered His holy court hath drawn nigh unto God and attained His Presence, a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol. *Such a man hath attained the knowledge of the station of Him Who is “at the distance of two bows,” Who standeth beyond the Sadratu’l-Muntahá* [*]....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 70) [Italics added –ed.]

[*Compare to *Sidrah-tree*, Rodwell, pp. 94-95 above. –ed]

When the stream of utterance reached this stage, We beheld, and lo! the sweet savours of God were being wafted from the dayspring 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.... Without word It unfoldeth the inner mysteries, and without speech It revealeth the secrets of the divine sayings.... 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....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 59-61)

f. Divine Law

It is certain that the whole contingent world is subject to an order and a law which it can never disobey....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 2, Section 5, p. 6)

“...the law and teachings of God will have spread throughout the earth, ...the sphere of influence of ...religion...will be established upon solid ground whereon the feet do not falter.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 13, Section 2, p. 76-77)

❖ “*Gather them...together around this Divine Law...*”

Gather them, then, together around this Divine Law, the covenant of which Thou hast established with all Thy Prophets and Thy Messengers, and Whose ordinances Thou hast written down in Thy Tablets and Thy Scriptures.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 106)

...grant that Thy servants may not be kept back from this Divine Law which, at Thy will and according to Thy pleasure, hath branched out from Thy most great Ocean.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 27)

Because man has stopped his ears to the Voice of Truth and shut his eyes to the Sacred Light, neglecting the Law of God, for this reason has the darkness of war and tumult, unrest and misery, desolated the earth.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 32)

1) Absolute, Eternal, Almighty and Universal Law

...[I]t is clear that nature, in its very essence, is in the grasp of God’s might, and that it is that Eternal and Almighty One Who subjects nature to ideal laws and organizing principles, and Who rules over it.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 1, Section 7, p. 4)

i. Order

Equality is a chimera! It is entirely impracticable! Even if equality could be achieved it could not continue—and if its existence were possible, the whole order of the world would be destroyed. The law of order must always obtain in the world of humanity. *Heaven has so decreed in the creation of man.*

Some are full of intelligence, others have an ordinary amount of it, and others again are devoid of intellect. In these three classes of men there is order but not equality. How could it be possible that wisdom and stupidity should be equal? Humanity, like a great army, requires a general, captains, under-officers in their degree, and soldiers, each with their own appointed duties. *Degrees are absolutely necessary to ensure an orderly organization.*

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 151) [Italics and underlining added for emphasis –ed.]

❖ *“It is...clear and evident that the minds of men have never been...of equal capacity.”*

It is...indisputably clear and evident that the minds of men have never been, nor shall they ever be, of equal capacity. The Perfect Intellect alone can provide true guidance and direction.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section II, verse 2.22, p. 29)

At the time of the Revelation all men are equal in rank. By reason, however, of their acceptance or rejection, rise or fall, motion or stillness, recognition or denial, they come to differ thereafter. For instance, the one true God, magnified be His glory, speaking through the intermediary of His Manifestation, doth ask: “Am I not your Lord?” Every soul that answereth “Yea, verily!” is accounted among the most distinguished of all men in the sight of God. Our meaning is that ere the Word of God is delivered, all men are deemed equal in rank and their station is one and the same. It is only thereafter that differences appear, as thou hast no doubt observed.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section II, pp. 48-49)

ii. Love

“Love is the most great law that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle...”

Love is the most great law that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle, the unique power that bindeth together the divers elements of this material world, the supreme magnetic force that directeth the movements of the spheres in the celestial realms. Love revealeth with unfailing and limitless power the mysteries latent in the universe. Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world, and the shedder of imperishable glory upon every high-aiming race and nation.

Whatsoever people is graciously favoured therewith by God, its name shall surely be magnified and extolled by the Concourse from on high, by the company of angels, and the denizens of the Abha Kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 27-28)

...the creative foundation in all its degrees and kingdoms is an expression or outcome of love.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 123; and *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 20)

Know thou of a certainty that Love is the secret of God’s holy Dispensation, the manifestation of the All-Merciful, the fountain of spiritual outpourings. Love is heaven’s kindly light, the Holy

Spirit's eternal breath that vivifieth the human soul. Love is the cause of God's revelation unto man, the vital bond inherent, in accordance with the divine creation, in the realities of things....

Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world, and the shedder of imperishable glory upon every high-aiming race and nation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 27 [and as above –ed.]

❖ “*Veiled in My immemorial being...I knew My love for thee...*”

Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 3)

Love Me, that I may love thee.

If thou lovest Me not,

My love can in no wise reach thee.

Know this, O servant.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 5) [Italics added –ed.]

Love is a veil betwixt the lover and the loved one;

More than this I am not permitted to tell.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 16 and 60)

“Love is a light that never dwelleth in a heart possessed by fear”. ... “And if he feareth not God, God will make him to fear all things; whereas all things fear him who feareth God.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 58-59) [Italics added –ed.]

[Cf.: “Whoso hath known God shall know none but Him, and he that feareth God shall be afraid of no one except Him, though the powers of the whole earth rise up and be arrayed against him....”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 126)]

...For the head raised up in the love of God will certainly fall by the sword, and the life that is kindled with longing will surely be sacrificed, and the heart which remembereth the Loved One will surely brim with blood. How well is it said:

Live free of love,
for its very peace is anguish;
its beginning is pain,
its end is death. [Arabian poem.]

Peace be upon him who followeth the Right Path!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 41-42)

[Cf. also: "For in the realm of conscience naught but the ray of God's light can command, and on the throne of the heart none but the pervading power of the King of Kings should rule."]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *A Traveller's Narrative*, p. 39)]

iii. Divine Unity

"...calling the believers in the Divine Unity to the court of the Presence of the Generous One...."

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 208)

Should we build up the Administrative World Order to a point of absolute perfection but at the same time allow it to be hampered or disconnected from the channels within, through which channels the Holy Spirit of the Cause pours forth, we would have nothing more than a perfected body out of touch with and cut off from the finer promptings of the soul or spirit. If, on the other hand, the influxes and goings forth of the spirit are scattered, diffused, and subjected wholly to the more or less imperfect guidance and interpretation of individual believers, lacking both the wisdom secured through consultation and also the lights of real unity which shine through consultative action and obedience thereto - a disordered and disorganized activity would be witnessed, which would but dimly reflect the divine purpose for this age, which is no less than the establishment of the reign of divine love, justice, and wisdom in the world, under and in conformity to the Divine Law.

In the body of a man, which is the true divine example or parallel, the spirit, when in ideal control of all the lesser parts of the organism, finds the utmost harmony throughout the whole body

- each part is in perfect reciprocity with the other parts. The commands and impulses of the spirit are obeyed by the body and the body in turn in its actions and functions identifies and determines the expression the spiritual impulses shall take. This is divine unity - and this law, being universal and found in every created object in the universe, has full application to the universal Bahá'í organism made up of believers everywhere, which has been established by the Manifestation of God.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 1-2; and *Guidance for Today and Tomorrow*, pp. 110-111)

❖ “*Beware, O believers in the Unity of God...*”

Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth. Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 59)

And since it hath been demonstrated that Thy most august Self is immeasurably exalted above all that hath been created in the world of being, and is far above the reach and ken of the apprehension of Thy chosen Ones and Thy loved Ones, the splendors of the light of Thy unity are therefore manifested, and it becometh evident unto every one, whether free or bond, that Thou art One in Thine own Self, one in Thy Cause, and one in Thy Revelation....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 274)

...Lo, the Nightingale of Paradise singeth upon the twigs of the Tree of Eternity, with holy and sweet melodies, proclaiming to the sincere ones the glad tidings of the nearness of God, calling the believers in the Divine Unity to the court of the Presence of the Generous One, informing the severed ones of the message which hath been revealed by God,...guiding the lovers to the seat of sanctity and to this Resplendent Beauty....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 208)

O Pen of the Most High! Harken unto the Call of Thy Lord, raised from the Divine Lote-Tree in the holy and luminous Spot, that the sweet accents of Thy Lord, the All-Merciful, may fill Thy soul with joy and fervour, and that the breezes that waft from My name, the Ever-Forgiving,

may dispel Thy cares and sorrows. Raise up, then, from this Temple, the temples of the Oneness of God, that they may tell out, in the kingdom of creation, the tidings of their Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, and be of them that are illumined by His light.

We, verily, have ordained this Temple to be the source of all existence in the new creation, that all may know of a certainty My power to accomplish that which I have purposed through My word “Be”, and it is! Beneath the shadow of every letter of this Temple We shall raise up a people whose number none can reckon save God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Erelong shall God bring forth from His Temple such souls as will remain unswayed by the insinuations of the rebellious, and who will quaff at all times of the cup that is life indeed. These, truly, are of the blissful.

These are servants who abide beneath the shelter of the tender mercy of their Lord, and who remain undeterred by those who seek to obstruct their path. Upon their faces may be seen the brightness of the light of the All-Merciful, and from their hearts may be heard the remembrance of Mine all-glorious and inaccessible Name. Were they to unloose their tongues to extol their Lord, the denizens of earth and heaven would join in their anthems of praise-yet how few are they who hear! And were they to glorify their Lord, all created things would join in their hymns of glory. Thus hath God exalted them above the rest of His creation, and yet the people remain unaware!

These are they who circle round the Cause of God even as the shadow doth revolve around the sun. Open, then, your eyes, O people of the Bayan, that haply ye may behold them! It is by virtue of their movement that all things are set in motion, and by reason of their stillness all things are brought to rest, would that ye might be assured thereof! Through them the believers in the Divine Unity have turned towards Him Who is the Object of the adoration of the entire creation, and by them the hearts of the righteous have found rest and composure, could ye but know it! Through them the earth hath been established, the clouds have rained down their bounty, and the bread of knowledge hath descended from the heaven of grace, could ye but perceive it!

These souls are the protectors of the Cause of God on earth, who shall preserve its beauty from the obscuring dust of idle fancies and vain imaginings. In the path of their Lord they shall not fear for their lives; rather will they sacrifice their all in their eagerness to behold the face of their Well-Beloved when once He hath appeared in this Name, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Glorious, the Most Holy.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “Suriy-i-Haykal”, verses 12-16, pp. 8-9)

[About this Surih, Taherzadeh writes: “One of the most momentous of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh is the Suriy-i-Haykal... (Surih of the Temple)...”

He continues: “To fully appreciate the majesty and power of this outstanding work of Bahá'u'lláh in the absence of a translation is impossible. Suffice it to say that every time He addresses the Haykal He unveils a new facet of God's Revelation, as if opening a new door leading to some mystery enshrined in His Writings, a mystery hitherto hidden from the eyes of men. If the pure in heart is enabled to have just a glimpse of this infinite realm of divine Revelation which is beyond his comprehension, such a glimpse can endow his soul with an insight which no human agency can ever hope to confer upon it....”

“Every word and letter uttered by the Manifestation of God assumes meaning and significance beyond the understanding of man.... It is difficult to convey these without having access to the words of Bahá'u'lláh. Bahá'u'lláh states that the Haykal is the source of the creation of the new race of men, that through each one of its letters, God will raise up wonderful beings whose numbers are known to none except Him and whose faces will shine with the radiance of their Lord. These souls will circle around the Cause of God as a shadow moves around the sun. They will protect the Faith from the onslaught of the deniers and will offer up their lives willingly for the promotion of His Cause among men. This Tablet is replete with glad-tidings of the appearance of a band of devoted believers whom Bahá'u'lláh refers to as the new race of men....” – Taherzadeh.

(Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, v 3, passim, pp. 132-135)]

[...And in which Surih their very purpose, qualities, responsibilities, powers, capacities and destiny are both amply revealed and confirmed, as in the passages immediately preceding this extract above, from *Summons...*, v 12-16, pp. 8-9 , and as also found on p. 36 of this compilation –ed.] [Also note: 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote in numerous Tablets revealed after the Martydom of the followers of the Báb, that he was waiting for the appearance of these holy souls who would manifest the divine qualities of this new race of men, not only as martyrs, but in other forms of heroism as well, sacrificing the substance and very comfort of their lives for promotion of the Cause in various and all ways. Cf: “I am waiting, eagerly waiting for these holy ones to appear; and yet, how long will they delay their coming? ...” as found on p. 37 of this compilation; as well as various references up ahead, in a number of selections referring to the appearance of “[t]hese, the People of Bahá” – their characteristics, what they would accomplish, and their rank and station”. –ed.]

He it is in Whose name the standard of Divine Unity hath been planted upon the Sinai of the visible and invisible worlds, proclaiming that there is none other God but Me, the Peerless, the Glorious, the Incomparable.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “Suriy-i-Haykal”, p. 50)

...And when this stage of the journey is completed and the wayfarer hath soared beyond this lofty station, he entereth the City of Divine Unity, and the garden of oneness, and the court of detachment. In this plane the seeker casteth away all signs, allusions, veils, and words, and beholdeth all things with an eye illumined by the effulgent lights which God Himself hath shed upon him. In his journey he seeth all differences return to a single word and all allusions culminate in a single point.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries*, p. 28)

Comprehend, in like manner, every station, sign, and allusion, that thou mayest perceive all things in their own place and consider all matters in their proper light. For in this station, the City of Divine Unity, are to be found those who have entered within the ark of divine guidance and journeyed through the heights of divine unity. Thou shalt behold the lights of beauty upon their faces and the mysteries of glory in their human temples. Thou shalt perceive the musk-laden fragrance of their words and behold the signs of His sovereignty in all their ways and doings. Nor wilt thou be veiled by the deeds of them that have failed to quaff from the crystal springs or to attain unto the cities of holiness, and who follow their selfish desires and spread disorder in the land, all the while believing themselves to be guided aright. It is indeed of them that it hath been said: "These are the abject and foolish, who follow every clamorous impostor and who bend with every changing wind." The stages of this journey, station, and abode are clear and manifest to thee and require no further explanation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries*, pp. 63-65)

iv. Spiritual Progress

Progress is of two kinds, material and spiritual. The former is attained through observation of the surrounding existence and constitutes the foundation of civilization. Spiritual progress is through the breaths of the Holy Spirit and is the awakening of the conscious soul of man to perceive the reality of divinity. Material progress insures the happiness of the human world. Spiritual progress insures the happiness and eternal continuance of the soul....

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 85; and *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 142)

“In the world of spirit there is no retrogression.”

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 90)

In this material world, time has changing cycles and place is subject to varying conditions. Seasons follow one another and individuals progress, regress, and develop.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 14, Section 1, p. 82)

Man is progressive; nature is stationary, without the power of progression or retrogression. Man is endowed with ideal virtues, for example intellection, volition,—among them faith, confession and acknowledgment of God, while nature is devoid of all these. The ideal faculties of man, including the capacity of scientific acquisition are beyond nature’s ken. These are powers whereby man is differentiated and distinguished from all other forms of life. This is the bestowal of divine idealism, the crown adorning human heads....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 51; and *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 61)

The significance is this: that the world of humanity is distinct from the animal kingdom. ...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. ...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.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 359)

The souls who bear the tests of God become the manifestations of great bounties; for the divine trials cause some souls to become entirely lifeless, while they cause the holy souls to ascend to the highest degree of love and solidity. They cause progress and they also cause retrogression.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, p. 324)

Desire and passion, like two unmanageable horses, have wrested the reins of control from him [man] and are galloping madly in the wilderness. This is the cause of the degradation of the world of humanity. This is the cause of its retrogression into the appetites and passions of the animal kingdom.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 183)

A tree can live solitary and alone, but this is impossible for man without retrogression. Therefore, every cooperative attitude and activity of human life is praiseworthy and foreintended by the will of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 338)

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 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.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 90-91)

2) Spiritual virtues/divine qualities/eternal commandments/inner meanings/essence

The religion of God consists of two parts: One is the very foundation and belongs to the spiritual realm; that is, it pertains to spiritual virtues and divine qualities. This part suffers neither change nor alteration: It is the Holy of Holies, which constitutes the essence of the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muḥammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, and which will endure throughout all the prophetic Dispensations. It will never be abrogated, for it consists in spiritual rather than material truth. It is faith, knowledge, certitude, justice, piety, high-mindedness, trustworthiness, love of God, and charity. It is mercy to the poor, assistance to the oppressed, generosity to the needy, and upliftment of the fallen.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Section 7, p. 54)

❖ “*The fourth Taraz concerneth trustworthiness...*”

The fourth Taraz concerneth trustworthiness. Verily it is the door of security for all that dwell on earth and a token of glory on the part of the All-Merciful...

Not long ago these sublime words were revealed from the Pen of the Most High:

‘We will now mention unto thee Trustworthiness and the station thereof in the estimation of God, thy Lord, the Lord of the Mighty Throne. One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island. Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst. Turning Our face to the right, We beheld what the pen is powerless to describe; nor can it set forth that which the eye of the Lord of Mankind witnessed in that most sanctified, that most sublime, that blest, and most exalted Spot. Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: “O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation....”’.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 37-38; and also [in part]: *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 136-137)

O PEOPLE of the earth! By the righteousness of the One true God, I am the Maid of Heaven begotten by the Spirit of Bahá, abiding within the Mansion hewn out of a mass of ruby, tender and vibrant; and in this mighty Paradise naught have I ever witnessed save that which proclaimeth the Remembrance of God by extolling the virtues of this Arabian Youth. Verily there is none other God but your Lord, the All-Merciful. Magnify ye, then, His station, for behold, He is poised in the

midmost heart of the All-Highest Paradise as the embodiment of the praise of God in the Tabernacle wherein His glorification is intoned.

At one time I hear His Voice as He acclaimeth Him Who is the Ever-Living, the Ancient of Days, and at another time as He speaketh of the mystery of His most august Name. And when He intoneth the anthems of the greatness of God all Paradise waileth in its longing to gaze on His Beauty, and when He chanteth words of praise and glorification of God all Paradise becomes motionless like unto ice locked in the heart of a frost-bound mountain. Methinks I visioned Him moving along a straight middle path wherein every paradise was His Own paradise, every heaven His Own heaven, while the whole earth and all that is therein appeared but as a ring upon the finger of His servants. Glorified be God, His Creator, the Lord of everlasting sovereignty. Verily He is none other but the servant of God, the Gate of the Remnant of God your Lord, the Sovereign Truth.

(The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 54-55)

Say: The Revelation sent down by God hath most surely been repeated, and the outstretched Hand of Our power hath overshadowed all that are in the heavens and all that are on the earth. We have, through the power of truth, the very truth, manifested an infinitesimal glimmer of Our impenetrable Mystery, and lo, they that have recognized the radiance of the Sinaic splendor expired, as they caught a lightening glimpse of this Crimson Light enveloping the Sinai of Our Revelation. Thus hath He Who is the Beauty of the All-Merciful come down in the clouds of His testimony, and the decree accomplished by virtue of the Will of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

Say: Step out of Thy holy chamber, O Maid of Heaven, inmate of the Exalted Paradise! Drape thyself in whatever manner pleaseth Thee in the silken Vesture of Immortality, and put on, in the name of the All-Glorious, the broidered Robe of Light. Hear, then, the sweet, the wondrous accent of the Voice that cometh from the Throne of Thy Lord, the Inaccessible, the Most High. Unveil Thy face, and manifest the beauty of the black-eyed Damsel, and suffer not the servants of God to be deprived of the light of Thy shining countenance. Grieve not if Thou hearest the sighs of the dwellers of the earth, or the voice of the lamentation of the denizens of heaven. Leave them to perish on the dust of extinction. Let them be reduced to nothingness, inasmuch as the flame of hatred hath been kindled within their breasts. Intone, then, before the face of the peoples of earth and heaven, and in a most melodious voice, the anthem of praise, for a remembrance of Him Who is the King of the names and attributes of God. Thus have We decreed Thy destiny. Well able are We to achieve Our purpose.

Beware that Thou divest not Thyself, Thou Who art the Essence of Purity, of Thy robe of effulgent glory. Nay, enrich Thyself increasingly, in the kingdom of creation, with the incorruptible vestures of Thy God, that the beauteous image of the Almighty may be reflected through Thee in all created things and the grace of Thy Lord be infused in the plenitude of its power into the entire creation.

If Thou smellest from any one the smell of the love of Thy Lord, offer up Thyself for him, for We have created Thee to this end, and have covenanted with Thee, from time immemorial, and in the presence of the congregation of Our well-favored ones, for this very purpose. Be not impatient if the blind in heart hurl down the shafts of their idle fancies upon Thee. Leave them to themselves, for they follow the promptings of the evil ones.

Cry out before the gaze of the dwellers of heaven and of earth: I am the Maid of Heaven, the Offspring begotten by the Spirit of Bahá. My habitation is the Mansion of His Name, the All-Glorious. Before the Concourse on high I was adorned with the ornament of His names. I was wrapt within the veil of an inviolable security, and lay hidden from the eyes of men. Methinks that I heard a Voice of divine and incomparable sweetness, proceeding from the right hand of the God of Mercy, and lo, the whole Paradise stirred and trembled before Me, in its longing to hear its accents, and gaze on the beauty of Him that uttered them. Thus have We revealed in this luminous Tablet, and in the sweetest of languages, the verses which the Tongue of Eternity was moved to utter in the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá'.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 283-284)

[Cf.: “Lauded be Thy name, O Thou Who art the Goal of my desire! I swear by Thy glory! How great is my wish to attain unto a detachment so complete that were there to appear before me those countenances which are hid within the chambers of chastity, and the beauty of which Thou didst veil from the entire creation, and whose faces Thou didst sanctify from the sight of all beings, and were they to unveil themselves in all the glory of the splendors of Thine incomparable beauty, I would refuse to look upon them, and *would behold them solely for the purpose of discerning the mysteries of Thy handiwork, which have perplexed the minds of such as have drawn nigh unto Thee, and awed the souls of all them that have recognized Thee. I would, by Thy power and Thy might, soar to such heights that nothing whatsoever would have the power to keep me back from the manifold evidences of Thy transcendent dominion, nor would any earthly scheme shut me out from the manifestations of Thy Divine holiness.*”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 338) [Italics added —ed.]]

O SON OF JUSTICE! In the night-season the beauty of the immortal Being hath repaired from the emerald height of fidelity unto the Sadratu'l-Muntaha, and wept with such a weeping that the concourse on high and the dwellers of the realms above wailed at His lamenting. Whereupon there was asked, Why the wailing and weeping? He made reply: As bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwell on earth the fragrance of fidelity. Then summoned to return I beheld, and lo! certain doves of holiness were sore tried within the claws of the dogs of earth. Thereupon the Maid of Heaven hastened forth unveiled and resplendent from Her mystic mansion, and asked of their names, and all were told but one. And when urged, the first

letter thereof was uttered, whereupon the dwellers of the celestial chambers rushed forth out of their habitation of glory. And whilst the second letter was pronounced they fell down, one and all, upon the dust. At that moment a voice was heard from the inmost shrine: “Thus far and no farther.” Verily We bear witness to that which they have done and now are doing.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian # 77; also cited in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 91-92)

Justice is, in this day, bewailing its plight, and Equity groaneth beneath the yoke of oppression. The thick clouds of tyranny have darkened the face of the earth, and enveloped its peoples. Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 92)

O My servants! Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean. I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine—words of consummate power and wisdom. I have, moreover, with the hand of divine power, unsealed the choice wine of My Revelation, and have wafted its holy, its hidden, and musk-laden fragrance upon all created things. Who else but yourselves is to be blamed if ye choose to remain unendowed with so great an outpouring of God's transcendent and all-encompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy?

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 327-328)

[It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion. Such are the unveiled traditions and the evident verses already mentioned. The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sadiq, son of Muhammad, spoken: “God verily will test them and sift them.” This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 254-255)]

From the foregoing passages and allusions it hath been made indubitably clear that in the kingdoms of earth and heaven there must needs be manifested a Being, an Essence Who shall act as a Manifestation and Vehicle for the transmission of the grace of the Divinity Itself, the Sovereign Lord of all. Through the Teachings of this Day Star of Truth every man will advance and develop until he attaineth the station at which he can manifest all the potential forces with which his inmost true self hath been endowed. It is for this very purpose that in every age and dispensation the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones have appeared amongst men, and have evinced such power as is born of God and such might as only the Eternal can reveal.

Can one of sane mind ever seriously imagine that, in view of certain words the meaning of which he cannot comprehend, the portal of God's infinite guidance can ever be closed in the face of men? Can he ever conceive for these Divine Luminaries, these resplendent Lights either a beginning or an end? What outpouring flood can compare with the stream of His all-embracing grace, and what blessing can excel the evidences of so great and pervasive a mercy? There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be withheld from the world, it would completely perish. For this reason, from the beginning that hath no beginning the portals of Divine mercy have been flung open to the face of all created things, and the clouds of Truth will continue to the end that hath no end to rain on the soil of human capacity, reality and personality their favors and bounties. Such hath been God's method continued from everlasting to everlasting.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 67-69)

...and it becometh evident unto every one, whether free or bond, that Thou art One in Thine own Self, one in Thy Cause, and one in Thy Revelation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 274)

[Cf. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

(John 1:1, Matthew 6:9, and Luke 11:2)]

[It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language...is unconcealed and unveiled... The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 254)]

...Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: ‘O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 136; and *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 38)

Beware that Thou divest not Thyself, Thou Who art the Essence of Purity....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 283)

Trustworthiness is the greatest portal leading unto the tranquillity and security of the people. In truth the stability of every affair hath depended and doth depend upon it. All the domains of power, of grandeur and of wealth are illumined by its light.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 37)

“Truthfulness...is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also be acquired.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 26)

Our meaning is that, in the sight of God, trustworthiness is the bedrock of His Faith and the foundation of all virtues and perfections. A man deprived of this quality is destitute of everything. What shall faith and piety avail if trustworthiness be lacking?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [from a Tablet translated from the Persian, but also found in the Arabic], cited in the *Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. II, p. 339)

❖ “*The essence of all that We have revealed for thee...*”

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 157)

The essence of detachment is for man to turn his face towards the courts of the Lord, to enter His Presence, behold His Countenance, and stand as witness before Him.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 155)

One is the very foundation and belongs to the spiritual realm; that is, it pertains to spiritual virtues and divine qualities. This part suffers neither change nor alteration: It is the Holy of Holies, which constitutes the essence of the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muḥammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, and which will endure throughout all the prophetic Dispensations. It will never be abrogated, for it consists in spiritual rather than material truth. It is faith, knowledge, certitude, justice, piety, high-mindedness, trustworthiness, love of God, and charity. It is mercy to the poor, assistance to the oppressed, generosity to the needy, and upliftment of the fallen. It is purity, detachment, humility, forbearance, patience, and constancy. These are divine qualities. These commandments will never be abrogated, but will remain in force and effect for all eternity. These human virtues are renewed in every Dispensation; for at the close of each Dispensation the spirit of the law of God, which consists in the human virtues, vanishes in substance and persists only in form.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Section 7, p. ...)

❖ “...*the names and attributes of God...*”

...the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty and grace....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 103; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 48)

...*Number me not with them who read Thy words and fail to find Thy hidden gift which, as decreed by Thee, is contained therein....*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 83)



1.22 *O Maid of inner meanings! Step out of the chamber of utterance by the leave of God, the Lord of the heavens and the earth. **Reveal, then, thyself adorned with the raiment of the celestial Realm, and proffer with thy ruby fingers the wine of the heavenly Dominion**, that haply the denizens of this world may perceive the light that shone forth from the Kingdom of God when the Daystar of eternity appeared above the horizon of glory. Perchance they may arise before the dwellers of earth and heaven to extol and magnify this Youth Who hath established Himself in the midmost heart of Paradise upon the throne of His name, the All-Sufficing Helper -- He from Whose countenance shineth the brightness of the All-Merciful, from Whose gaze appear the glances of the All-Glorious, and in Whose ways are revealed the tokens and evidences of God, the omnipotent Protector, the Almighty, the All-Loving.*

1.23 *Grieve not if none be found to accept the crimson wine proffered by Thy snow-white hand and to seize it in the name of Thy Lord, the Most Exalted, the Most High -- He Who hath appeared again in His name, the Most Glorious. Leave this people unto themselves, and repair unto the Tabernacle of majesty and glory, wherein **Thou shalt encounter a people whose faces shine as brightly as the sun in its noontide splendour**, and who praise and extol their Lord in this Name that hath arisen, in the plenitude of might and power, to assume the throne of independent sovereignty. From their lips Thou shalt hear naught but the strains of My glorification and praise; unto this Thy Lord beareth Me witness. **The existence of these people, however, hath remained concealed** from the eyes of all who, from everlasting, have been created through the Word of God. Thus have We made plain Our meaning and set forth Our verses, that perchance men may reflect upon the signs and tokens of their Lord.*

1.24 *These are they who, in truth, were not enjoined to prostrate themselves before Adam. They have never turned away from the countenance of Thy Lord, and partake at every moment of the gifts and delights of holiness. Thus hath the Pen of the All-Merciful set forth the secrets of all things, be they of the past or of the future. Would that the world might understand! **Erelong shall God make manifest this people upon the earth, and through them shall exalt His name, diffuse His signs, uphold His words, and proclaim His verses**, in spite of those that have repudiated His truth, gainsaid His sovereignty, and cavilled at His signs.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, "Súriy-i-Haykal", verses 22-24, pp. 13-15)
[Italics, bold and underlining added –ed.]

2. The Second Part (the Holy City)

“The second part of the religion of God, ...pertains to the material world.... Briefly, what is meant by the term “Holy of Holies” is that spiritual law which can never be changed or abrogated, and what is meant by the “Holy City” is the material law which may indeed be abrogated; and this material law—the Holy City—was to be trodden underfoot for 1,260 years. The second part...the material law is changed and altered in every prophetic Dispensation and may be abrogated...according to the exigencies of the time.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Sections 10 & 11, passim, pp. ...-...)

❖ *“The world’s equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order...”*

Anticipating the System which the irresistible power of His Law was destined to unfold in a later age, He [Bahá’u’lláh] writes: “The world’s equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind’s ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.” “The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, an enduring foundation. Storms of human strife are powerless to undermine its basis, nor will men’s fanciful theories succeed in damaging its structure.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 109)

[Note: For ease of focus and clarity of understanding, the following initial, consecutive passages from *Individual Rights and Freedoms* by the Universal House of Justice, have been separated into individual citations arranged as mini-paragraphs, below. —ed.:]

The vehicle in this resplendent Age for the practical fulfilment of these duties is the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh; it is, indeed, the potent instrument by which individual belief in Him is translated into constructive deeds.

The Covenant comprises divinely conceived arrangements necessary to preserve the organic unity of the Cause.

It therefore engenders a motivating power which, as the beloved Master tells us, “like unto the artery, beats and pulsates in the body of the world”.

“It is indubitably clear”, He asserts, “that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant.”

Through it the meaning of the Word, both in theory and practice, is made evident in the life and work of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the appointed Interpreter, the perfect Exemplar, the Centre of the Covenant.

Through it the processes of the Administrative Order—“this unique, this wondrous System”—are made to operate. [The passage continues...:]

In emphasizing its distinctiveness, Shoghi Effendi has pointed out that “this Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Bahá’u’lláh has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret His Word and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances”.

In another statement, he maintains that “It would be utterly misleading to attempt a comparison between this unique, divinely conceived Order and any of the diverse systems which the minds of men, at various periods of their history, have contrived for the government of human institutions.” “Such an attempt”, he felt, “would in itself betray a lack of complete appreciation of the excellence of the handiwork of its great Author.”

The lack of such appreciation will detract from the perspective of anyone who measures Bahá’í administrative processes against practices prevalent in today’s society. For notwithstanding its inclination to democratic methods in the administration of its affairs, and regardless of the resemblance of some of its features to those of other systems, the Administrative Order is not to be viewed merely as an improvement on past and existing systems; it represents a departure both in origin and in concept.

“This newborn Administrative Order”, as Shoghi Effendi has explained, “incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, without being in any sense a mere replica of any one of them, and without introducing within its machinery any of the objectionable features which they inherently possess. It blends and harmonizes, as no government fashioned by mortal hands has as yet accomplished, the salutary truths which each of these systems undoubtedly contains without vitiating the integrity of those God-given verities on which it is ultimately founded.”

(Shoghi Effendi, cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated December 29, 1988, “*Individual Rights and Freedoms*”, p. 2)

...A structure, at once massive, simple and imposing; nestling in the heart of Carmel, the “Vineyard of God”; flanked by the Cave of Elijah on the west, and by the hills of Galilee on the east; backed by the plain of Sharon, and facing the silver-city of ‘Akká, and beyond it the Most

Holy Tomb, the Heart and Qiblih of the Bahá'í world; overshadowing the colony of German Templars who, in anticipation of the “coming of the Lord,” had forsaken their homes and foregathered at the foot of that mountain, in the very year of Bahá'u'lláh's Declaration in Baghdad (1863), the mausoleum of the Bab had now, with heroic effort and in impregnable strength been established as “the Spot round which the Concourse on high circle in adoration.” Events have already demonstrated through the extension of the Edifice itself, through the embellishment of its surroundings, through the acquisition of extensive endowments in its neighborhood, and through its proximity to the resting-places of the wife, the son and daughter of Bahá'u'lláh Himself, that it was destined to acquire with the passing of the years a measure of fame and glory commensurate with the high purpose that had prompted its founding. Nor will it, as the years go by, and the institutions revolving around the World Administrative Center of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth are gradually established, cease to manifest the latent potentialities with which that same immutable purpose has endowed it. Resistlessly will this Divine institution flourish and expand, however fierce the animosity which its future enemies may evince, until the full measure of its splendor will have been disclosed before the eyes of all mankind.

“Haste thee, O Carmel!” Bahá'u'lláh, significantly addressing that holy mountain, has written, “for lo, the light of the Countenance of God ... hath been lifted upon thee... Rejoice, for God hath, in this Day, established upon thee His throne, hath made thee the dawning-place of His signs and the dayspring of the evidences of His Revelation. Well is it with him that 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.” “Call out to Zion, O Carmel!” He, furthermore, has revealed in that same Tablet, “and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendor is revealed. Beware lest thou hesitate or halt. Hasten forth and circumambulate the City of God that hath descended from heaven, the celestial Kaaba round which have circled in adoration the favored of God, the pure in heart, and the company of the most exalted angels.”

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 277-278)

a. Refers to the material world

The second part of the religion of God, which pertains to the material world and which concerns such things as fasting; prayer; worship; marriage; divorce; manumission [“freeing of slaves –ed.]; legal rulings; transactions; and penalties and punishments for murder, assault, theft, and injury, is changed and altered in every prophetic Dispensation and may be abrogated... according to the exigencies of the time. ...what is meant by the “Holy City” is the material law

which may indeed be abrogated; and this material law—the Holy City—was to be trodden underfoot for 1,260 years.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Sections 10 & 11, passim., pp. ...-...)

We have explained before that what the Sacred Scriptures most often mean by the Holy City or divine Jerusalem is the religion of God, which has at times been likened to a bride, or called “Jerusalem”, or depicted as the new heaven and the new earth. Thus in Revelation, chapter 21, it is said: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.”[

Consider how unmistakably “the first heaven” and “the first earth” refer to the outward aspects of the former religion. For it is said that “the first heaven and earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”. That is, the earth is the arena of the last judgement, and in this arena there will be no more sea, meaning that the law and teachings of God will have spread throughout the earth, all mankind will have embraced His Cause, and the earth will have been entirely peopled by the faithful. Thus there will be no more sea, for man dwells upon solid land and not in the sea—*that is, in that Dispensation the sphere of influence of that religion will encompass every land that man has trodden, and it will be established upon solid ground whereon the feet do not falter.*

Likewise, the religion of God is described as the Holy City or the New Jerusalem. Clearly, the New Jerusalem which descends from heaven is not a city of stone and lime, of brick and mortar, but is rather the religion of God which descends from heaven and is described as new. For it is obvious that the Jerusalem which is built of stone and mortar does not descend from heaven and is not renewed, but *that what is renewed is the religion of God.* [Italics added –ed.]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 13, Sections 1-3, pp. ...-...)

O ye beloved of God! O ye children of His Kingdom! Verily, verily, the new heaven and the new earth are come. The holy City, new Jerusalem, hath come down from on high in the form of a maid of heaven, veiled, beauteous, and unique, and prepared for reunion with her lovers on earth. The angelic company of the Celestial Concourse hath joined in a call that hath run throughout the universe, all loudly and mightily acclaiming: ‘This is the City of God and His abode, wherein shall dwell the pure and holy among His servants. He shall live with them, for they are His people and He is their Lord.’

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 12)

❖ “...such laws and teachings...as the laws of prayer and fasting...”

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....

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.... 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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, passim, pp 38-41)

This is the Day when the loved ones of God should keep their eyes directed towards His Manifestation, and fasten them upon whatsoever that Manifestation may be pleased to reveal. Certain traditions of bygone ages rest on no foundations whatever, while the notions entertained by past generations, and which they have recorded in their books, have, for the most part, been influenced by the desires of a corrupt inclination. Thou dost witness how most of the commentaries and interpretations of the words of God, now current amongst men, are devoid of truth....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 171)

From the early days of creation down to the present time, throughout all the divine dispensations, such a firm and explicit Covenant hath not been entered upon.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 210)

A dynamic process, divinely propelled, possessed of undreamt-of potentialities, world-embracing in scope, world-transforming in its ultimate consequences, had been set in motion.... It was finally consummated by the laws and ordinances which He formulated.... To direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-sent process, and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension, an instrument...was clearly indispensable. That instrument Bahá’u’lláh had expressly provided through the institution of the Covenant....

...[T]his unique and epoch-making Document...can find no parallel in the Scriptures of any previous Dispensation.... [T]his Covenant has been bequeathed to posterity in a Will and Testament

which, together with the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and several Tablets...constitute the chief buttresses designed by the Lord of the Covenant Himself to shield and support, after His ascension, the appointed Center of His Faith and the Delineator of its future institutions.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, passim, p. 237-239)

The last twenty-three years of the first Bahá'í century may thus be regarded as the initial stage of the Formative Period of the Faith, an Age of Transition to be identified with the rise and establishment of the Administrative Order, upon which the institutions of the future Bahá'í World Commonwealth must needs be ultimately erected in the Golden Age that must witness the consummation of the Bahá'í Dispensation. The Charter which called into being, outlined the features and set in motion the processes of, this Administrative Order is none other than the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His greatest legacy to posterity, the brightest emanation of His mind and the mightiest instrument forged to insure the continuity of the three ages which constitute the component parts of His Father's Dispensation.

The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh had been instituted solely through the direct operation of His Will and purpose. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, on the other hand, may be regarded as the offspring resulting from that mystic intercourse between Him Who had generated the forces of a God-given Faith and the One Who had been made its sole Interpreter and was recognized as its perfect Exemplar. The creative energies unleashed by the Originator of the Law of God in this age gave birth, through their impact upon the mind of Him Who had been chosen as its unerring Expounder, to that Instrument, the vast implications of which the present generation, even after the lapse of twenty-three years, is still incapable of fully apprehending. This Instrument can, if we would correctly appraise it, no more be divorced from the One Who provided the motivating impulse for its creation than from Him Who directly conceived it. The purpose of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation had, as already observed, been so thoroughly infused into the mind of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and His Spirit had so profoundly impregnated His being, and their aims and motives been so completely blended, that to dissociate the doctrine laid down by the former from the supreme act associated with the mission of the latter would be tantamount to a repudiation of one of the most fundamental verities of the Faith.

The Administrative Order which this historic Document has established, it should be noted, is, by virtue of its origin and character, unique in the annals of the world's religious systems. No Prophet before Bahá'u'lláh, it can be confidently asserted, not even Muhammad Whose Book clearly lays down the laws and ordinances of the Islamic Dispensation, has established, authoritatively and in writing, anything comparable to the Administrative Order which the authorized Interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings has instituted, an Order which, by virtue of the administrative principles which its Author has formulated, the institutions He has established, and the right of interpretation with which He has invested its Guardian, must and will, in a manner

unparalleled in any previous religion, safeguard from schism the Faith from which it has sprung. Nor is the principle governing its operation similar to that which underlies any system, whether theocratic or otherwise, which the minds of men have devised for the government of human institutions. Neither in theory nor in practice can the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh be said to conform to any type of democratic government, to any system of autocracy, to any purely aristocratic order, or to any of the various theocracies, whether Jewish, Christian or Islamic which mankind has witnessed in the past. It incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, is devoid of the defects which each of them inherently possesses, and blends the salutary truths which each undoubtedly contains without vitiating in any way the integrity of the Divine verities on which it is essentially founded. The hereditary authority which the Guardian of the Administrative Order is called upon to exercise, and the right of the interpretation of the Holy Writ solely conferred upon him; the powers and prerogatives of the Universal House of Justice, possessing the exclusive right to legislate on matters not explicitly revealed in the Most Holy Book; the ordinance exempting its members from any responsibility to those whom they represent, and from the obligation to conform to their views, convictions or sentiments; the specific provisions requiring the free and democratic election by the mass of the faithful of the Body that constitutes the sole legislative organ in the world-wide Bahá'í community—these are among the features which combine to set apart the Order identified with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh from any of the existing systems of human government.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 325-327)

❖ *“He shall not be asked of His doings...”*

Blessed is the man that hath acknowledged his belief in God and in His signs, and recognized that “He shall not be asked of His doings.” Such a recognition hath been made by God the ornament of every belief, and its very foundation. Upon it must depend the acceptance of every goodly deed. Fasten your eyes upon it, that haply the whisperings of the rebellious may not cause you to slip....

Were He to decree as lawful the thing which from time immemorial had been forbidden, and forbid that which had, at all times, been regarded as lawful, to none is given the right to question His authority. Whoso will hesitate, though it be for less than a moment, should be regarded as a transgressor.

Whoso hath not recognized this sublime and fundamental verity, and hath failed to attain this most exalted station, the winds of doubt will agitate him, and the sayings of the infidels will distract his soul. He that hath acknowledged this principle will be endowed with the most perfect constancy. All honor to this all-glorious station, the remembrance of which adorneth every exalted Tablet. Such is the teaching which God bestoweth on you, a teaching that will deliver you from all manner

of doubt and perplexity, and enable you to attain unto salvation in both this world and in the next. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bountiful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 86-87)

Know verily that the essence of justice and the source thereof are both embodied in the ordinances prescribed by Him Who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men, if ye be of them that recognize this truth. He doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation. Were His law to be such as to strike terror into the hearts of all that are in heaven and on earth, that law is naught but manifest justice. The fears and agitation which the revelation of this law provokes in men's hearts should indeed be likened to the cries of the suckling babe weaned from his mother's milk....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 174; and as cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 6)

...Just as there are laws governing our physical lives, requiring that we must supply our bodies with certain foods, maintain them within a certain range of temperatures, and so forth, if we wish to avoid physical disabilities, so also there are laws governing our spiritual lives. These laws are revealed to mankind in each age by the Manifestation of God, and obedience to them is of vital importance if each human being, and mankind in general, is to develop properly and harmoniously. Moreover, these various aspects are interdependent. If an individual violates the spiritual laws for his own development he will cause injury not only to himself but to the society in which he lives. Similarly, the condition of society has a direct effect on the individuals who must live within it.

As you point out, it is particularly difficult to follow the laws of Bahá'u'lláh in present-day society whose accepted practice is so at variance with the standards of the Faith. However, there are certain laws that are so fundamental to the healthy functioning of human society that they must be upheld whatever the circumstances. Realizing the degree of human frailty, Bahá'u'lláh has provided that other laws are to be applied only gradually, but these too, once they are applied, must be followed, or else society will not be reformed but will sink into an ever worsening condition. It is the challenging task of the Bahá'ís to obey the law of God in their own lives, and gradually to win the rest of mankind to its acceptance.

In considering the effect of obedience to the laws on individual lives, one must remember that the purpose of this life is to prepare the soul for the next. Here one must learn to control and direct one's animal impulses, not to be a slave to them. Life in this world is a succession of tests and achievements, of falling short and of making new spiritual advances. Sometimes the course may seem very hard, but one can witness, again and again, that the soul who steadfastly obeys the law of Bahá'u'lláh, however hard it may seem, grows spiritually, while the one who compromises with the

law for the sake of his own apparent happiness is seen to have been following a chimera: he does not attain the happiness he sought, he retards his spiritual advance and often brings new problems upon himself.

To give one very obvious example: the Bahá'í law requiring consent of parents to marriage. All too often nowadays such consent is withheld by non-Bahá'í parents for reasons of bigotry or racial prejudice; yet we have seen again and again the profound effect on those very parents of the firmness of the children in the Bahá'í law, to the extent that not only is the consent ultimately given in many cases, but the character of the parents can be affected and their relationship with their child greatly strengthened.

Thus, by upholding Bahá'í law in the face of all difficulties we not only strengthen our own characters but influence those around us.

(The Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973*, pp. 105-107)

❖ *“The daily obligatory prayers are three in number...”*

The daily obligatory prayers are three in number.... The believer is entirely free to choose any one of those three prayers, but is under the obligation of reciting either one of them, and in accordance with any specific directions with which they may be accompanied.

These daily obligatory prayers, together with a few other specific ones...have been invested by Bahá'u'lláh with a special potency and significance...that through them [the believers] may enter into a much closer communion with God, and identify themselves more fully with His laws and precepts.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 7; and in *Bahá'í Prayers*, in part cited on p. v, and partially cited on p. 208)

❖ *“You are forbidden to commit adultery, sodomy and lechery...”*

Ye are forbidden to commit adultery, sodomy and lechery. Avoid them, O concourse of the faithful. By the righteousness of God! Ye have been called into being to purge the world from the defilement of evil passions. This is what the Lord of all mankind hath enjoined upon you, could ye but perceive it. He who relateth himself to the All-Merciful and committeth satanic deeds, verily he is not of Me. Unto this beareth witness every atom, pebble, tree and fruit, and beyond them this ever-proclaiming, truthful and trustworthy Tongue.

(Bahá'u'lláh, from a previously untranslated Tablet, cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated July 5, 1993, p. 4)

...[[It is worth noting that the Bahá'í Writings do not uphold the materialistic view that nature is perfect. 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes this very clear, for example, in a talk found on pages 308-312 of "The Promulgation of Universal Peace" [sic], where He states:

"The mission of the Prophets of God has been to train the souls of humanity and free them from the thralldom of natural instincts and physical tendencies. They are like unto Gardeners, and the world of humanity is the field of Their cultivation, the wilderness and untrained jungle growth wherein They proceed to labor." (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 310

'Abdu'l-Bahá's teaching in this regard may be easily understood if one considers that "nature" sometimes provides examples that are unworthy of emulation by human beings. For example, the fact that some species eat their young does not mean that it is acceptable for human beings to do so. The Bahá'í concept of human nature is teleological; that is, there are certain qualities intended by God for "human nature", and qualities which do not accord with these are described as "unnatural". This does not mean that such aberrations may not be caused by the operations of "nature." Alcoholism is a good example. As [" — — — "] points out, evidence indicates that it may possibly be induced by a genetic flaw. In that sense it is due to "natural" causes, but this does not necessarily mean that it is. Regarding the question of whether or not same-sex marriages would ever be permitted by the Universal House of Justice, the enclosed extracts indicate clearly that it would not. In addition, it is interesting to note that 'Abdu'l-Bahá says in a Tablet: Know thou that the command of marriage is eternal. It will never be changed nor altered. This is divine creation and there is not the slightest possibility that change or alteration affect this divine creation (marriage).

('Abdu'l-Bahá, as cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a longer Letter dated July 5, 1993, pp. 1-2)

❖ *"The Faith...constitutes...the stage of maturity..."*

...After Bahá'u'lláh many Prophets will, no doubt, appear, but they will be all under His shadow. Although they may abrogate the laws of this Dispensation, they nevertheless draw their spiritual force from this mighty Revelation. The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh constitutes, indeed, the stage of maturity in the development of mankind. His appearance has released such spiritual force which will continue to animate, for many long years to come, the world in its development. Whatever progress may be achieved in later ages, after the unification of the whole human race is achieved, will be but an improvement in the machinery of the world. For the machinery itself has been already created by Bahá'u'lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi, in a Letter dated 11-14-35, cited by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated 12-15-77)

b. Two forms, explicitly mentioned...

As regards the meaning of the Bahá'í Covenant: The Guardian considers the existence of two forms of Covenant both of which are explicitly mentioned in the literature of the Cause. First is the covenant that every prophet makes with humanity or, more definitely, with His people that they will accept and follow the coming Manifestation who will be the reappearance of His reality. The second form of Covenant is such as the one Bahá'u'lláh made with His people that they should accept the Master. This is merely to establish and strengthen the succession of the series of Lights that appear after every Manifestation. Under the same category falls the Covenant the Master made with the Bahá'ís that they should accept His administration after Him....

(From a Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, cited in *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 15; and also in part in a Letter to Mr. Dales S. Cole, dated October 21, 1932; and as reprinted in the U.S. *Bahá'í News*, issue dated January 1934, No. 80, p. 5)

1) *To accept the coming Manifestation*

“...First is the covenant that every prophet makes with humanity or, more definitely, with His people that they will accept and follow the coming Manifestation who will be the reappearance of His reality....”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, *Op. Cit.* above...)

❖ “*Bahá'u'lláh made a covenant concerning a Promised One...*”

Bahá'u'lláh made a covenant concerning a Promised One Who will become manifest after one thousand or thousands of years.... [‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian, published in “Bahá'í World Faith”, (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976, p. 358)] and later, in:

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol. I, p. 114)

❖ “*My fears are for Him Who will be sent down unto you after Me...*”

In the Suriy-i-Sabr, revealed as far back as the year 1863, on the very first day of His arrival in the garden of Ridvan, He thus affirms: “God hath sent down His Messengers to succeed to Moses and Jesus, and He will continue to do so till ‘the end that hath no end’; so that His grace may, from the heaven of Divine bounty, be continually vouchsafed to mankind.”

“I am not apprehensive for My own self,” Bahá’u’lláh still more explicitly declares, “My fears are for Him Who will be sent down unto you after Me—Him Who will be invested with great sovereignty and mighty dominion.” And again He writes in the Suratu’l-Haykal: “By those words which I have revealed, Myself is not intended, but rather He Who will come after Me. To it is witness God, the All-Knowing.” “Deal not with Him,” He adds, “as ye have dealt with Me.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 116-117)

[Bahá’u’lláh Himself had significantly revealed in one of His Tablets—a Tablet that sheds an illuminating light on the entire episode: “By God, O people! Mine eye weepeth, and the eye of Ali (the Bab) weepeth amongst the Concourse on high, and Mine heart crieth out, and the heart of Muhammad crieth out within the Most Glorious Tabernacle, and My soul shouteth and the souls of the Prophets shout before them that are endued with understanding... My sorrow is not for Myself, but for Him Who shall come after Me, in the shadow of My Cause, with manifest and undoubted sovereignty, inasmuch as they will not welcome His appearance, will repudiate His signs, will dispute His sovereignty, will contend with Him, and will betray His Cause....”

(Bahá’u’lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, p. 250, in reference to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, according to Taherzadeh, in *The Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh*, Vol. 3, p. 142 [because similar patterns of opposition and sedition repeat themselves, at each and every stage and level of unfoldment in the influence of the new Revelation! —ed.])

In connection with the Manifestations destined to follow the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá makes this definite and weighty declaration: “Concerning the Manifestations that will come down in the future ‘in the shadows of the clouds,’ know verily that in so far as their relation to the source of their inspiration is concerned they are under the shadow of the Ancient Beauty. In their relation, however, to the age in which they appear, each and every one of them ‘doeth whatsoever He willeth.’”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 111 and p. 167)

❖ “Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God...”

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 345)

We have noted what thou didst write...regarding the verse: ‘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.’

The meaning of this is that any individual who, before the expiry of a full thousand years—years known and clearly established by common usage and requiring no interpretation—should lay claim to a Revelation direct from God, even though he should reveal certain signs, that man is assuredly false and an impostor.

This is not a reference to the Universal Manifestation, for it is clearly set forth in the Holy Writings that centuries, nay thousands of years, must pass on to completion, before a Manifestation like unto this Manifestation shall appear again.

It is possible, however, that after the completion of a full thousand years, certain Holy Beings will be empowered to deliver a Revelation: this, however, will not be through a Universal Manifestation....

The substance is, that prior to the completion of a thousand years, no individual may presume to breathe a word. All must consider themselves to be of the order of subjects, submissive and obedient to the commandments of God and the laws of the House of Justice. Should any deviate by so much as a needle’s point from the decrees of the Universal House of Justice, or falter in his compliance therewith, then is he of the outcast and rejected.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 67-68)

2) To accept the Master and His administration after Him

The second form of Covenant is such as the one Bahá’u’lláh made with His people that they should accept the Master [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. This is merely to establish and strengthen the succession of the series of Lights that appear after every Manifestation. Under the same category falls the Covenant the Master made with the Bahá’ís that they should accept His administration after Him....

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual, dated October 21, 1932 (cited above); in Shoghi Effendi, *Directives from the Guardian*, p. 15; also cited in *Lights of Guidance*, p. 181, #593, [but mistakenly dated as October 21, 1921], and *Extracts from the USBN [U.S. Baha’i News]*, pp. 4-5)

...this Covenant has been bequeathed to posterity in a Will and Testament which, together with the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and several Tablets, in which the rank and station of Abdu’l-Bahá are unequivocally disclosed, constitute the chief buttresses designed by the Lord of the Covenant

Himself to shield and support, after His ascension, the appointed Center of His Faith and the Delineator of its future institutions.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 239)

❖ “[*Bahá'u'lláh hath made the Center of the Covenant the Interpreter of His Word...*”]

Abdu'l-Bahá, writing in confirmation of the authority conferred upon Him by Bahá'u'lláh, makes the following statement: "In accordance with the explicit text of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh hath made the Center of the Covenant the Interpreter of His Word -- a Covenant so firm and mighty that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like."

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 136)

❖ “...turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.”

He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Center and Pivot of Bahá'u'lláh's peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most exalted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring Interpreter of His Word, the embodiment of every Bahá'í ideal, the incarnation of every Bahá'í virtue, the Most Mighty Branch sprung from the Ancient Root, the Limb of the Law of God, the Being “round Whom all names revolve,” the Mainspring of the Oneness of Humanity, the Ensign of the Most Great Peace, the Moon of the Central Orb of this most holy Dispensation—styles and titles that are implicit and find their truest, their highest and fairest expression in the magic name Abdu'l-Bahá. He is, above and beyond these appellations, the “Mystery of God”—an expression by which Bahá'u'lláh Himself has chosen to designate Him, and which, while it does not by any means justify us to assign to Him the station of Prophethood, indicates how in the person of Abdu'l-Bahá the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.

“When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended,” proclaims the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, “turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.” And again, “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.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, and Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 133-134)

That ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is not a Manifestation of God, that He gets His light, His inspiration and sustenance direct from the Fountain-head of the Bahá'í Revelation; that He reflects even as a clear

and perfect Mirror the rays of Bahá'u'lláh's glory, and does not inherently possess that indefinable yet all-pervading reality the exclusive possession of which is the hallmark of Prophethood; that His words are not equal in rank, though they possess an equal validity with the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh; that He is not to be acclaimed as the return of Jesus Christ, the Son Who will come "in the glory of the Father"—these truths find added justification, and are further reinforced, by the following statement of Abdu'l-Bahá, addressed to some believers in America, with which I may well conclude this section: "...My name is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. My qualification is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. My reality is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. My praise is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Thralldom to the Blessed Perfection is my glorious and refulgent diadem, and servitude to all the human race my perpetual religion... No name, no title, no mention, no commendation have I, nor will ever have, except 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This is my longing. This is my greatest yearning. This is my eternal life. This is my everlasting glory."

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, and Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 139)

❖ “[N]one can say that this or that is the intention...save ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the interpreter of the aims, intents and purposes of the Words of the Blessed Perfection and is the interpreter of His own written words, and none can say that this or that is the intention conveyed therein, save ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The spirit of divine unity exists in the Divine Words, and one who interprets them in such wise as to create a division and discord is indeed one who errs....

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 45, to be regarded as “*pilgrims’ note*”)

❖ “...yet the entire episode, viewed in its proper perspective...”

Though the rebellion of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali precipitated many sombre and distressing events, and though its dire consequences continued for several years to obscure the light of the Covenant, to endanger the life of its appointed Center, and to distract the thoughts and retard the progress of the activities of its supporters in both the East and the West, yet the entire episode, viewed in its proper perspective, proved to be neither more nor less than one of those periodic crises which, since the inception of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and throughout a whole century, have been instrumental in weeding out its harmful elements, in fortifying its foundations, in demonstrating its resilience, and in releasing a further measure of its latent powers.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 252)

Now that the provisions of a divinely appointed Covenant had been indubitably proclaimed; now that the purpose of the Covenant was clearly apprehended and its fundamentals had become immovably established in the hearts of the overwhelming majority of the adherents of the Faith; and now that the first assaults launched by its would-be subverters had been successfully repulsed, the Cause for which that Covenant had been designed could forge ahead along the course traced for it by the finger of its Author.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 252)

The Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá...may be regarded as the offspring resulting from that mystic intercourse between Him Who had generated the forces of a God-given Faith and the One Who had been made its sole Interpreter and was recognized as its perfect Exemplar. The creative energies unleashed by the Originator of the Law of God in this age gave birth, through their impact upon the mind of Him Who had been chosen as its unerring Expounder, to that Instrument, the vast implications of which the present generation...is still incapable of fully apprehending. This Instrument can, if we would correctly appraise it, no more be divorced from the One Who provided the motivating impulse for its creation than from Him Who directly conceived it...
...[T]hat...would be tantamount to a repudiation of one of the most fundamental verities of the Faith....

The Administrative Order which this historic Document has established...is, by virtue of its origin and character, unique in the annals of the world’s religious systems....

...The Document establishing that Order, the Charter of a future world civilization, which may be regarded in some of its features as supplementary to no less weighty a Book than the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; signed and sealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; entirely written with His own hand; its first section composed during one of the darkest periods of His incarceration in the prison-fortress of ‘Akká, proclaims, categorically and unequivocally, the fundamental beliefs of the followers of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh; reveals, in unmistakable language, the twofold character of the Mission of the Báb; discloses the full station of the Author of the Bahá’í Revelation; asserts that “all others are servants unto Him and do His bidding”; stresses the importance of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; establishes the institution of the Guardianship as a hereditary office and outlines its essential functions; provides the measures for the election of the International House of Justice, defines its scope and sets forth its relationship to that Institution; prescribes the obligations, and emphasizes the responsibilities, of the Hands of the Cause of God; and extolls the virtues of the indestructible Covenant established by Bahá’u’lláh. That Document, furthermore, lauds the courage and constancy of the supporters of Bahá’u’lláh’s Covenant...summons the Afnan (the Báb’s kindred), the Hands of the Cause and the entire company of the followers of Bahá’u’lláh to arise unitedly to propagate His Faith...warns them against the dangers of association with the Covenant-breakers, and bids them shield the Cause

from the assaults of the insincere and the hypocrite; and counsels them to demonstrate by their conduct the universality of the Faith they have espoused, and vindicate its high principles.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, passim, pp. 325-326, and p. 328)

The Administrative Order, which ever since ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s ascension has evolved and is taking shape under our very eyes...may be considered as the framework of the Will itself,... [and] as it expands and consolidates itself, will no doubt manifest the potentialities and reveal the full implications of this momentous Document.... It will, as its component parts, its organic institutions, begin to function with efficiency and vigor, assert its claim and demonstrate its capacity to be regarded not only as the nucleus but the very pattern of the New World Order destined to embrace in the fullness of time the whole of mankind.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 144)

❖ “[T]his Branch will grow after it is cut off from this world...”

“Whatsoever is latent in the innermost of this holy cycle...shall gradually appear and be made manifest, for now is but the beginning of its growth and the dayspring of the revelation of its signs.” “Fear not,” are His [‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s] reassuring words foreshadowing the rise of the Administrative Order established by His Will, “fear not if this Branch be severed from this material world and cast aside its leaves; nay, the leaves thereof shall flourish, for this Branch will grow after it is cut off from this world below, it shall reach the loftiest pinnacles of glory, and it shall bear such fruits as will perfume the world with their fragrance.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 146)

If you knew what great things would happen to the Cause after my departure, you would pray every day and night for my release and demise.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 44, “pilgrims’ note”)

❖ “...For he is, after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the guardian of the Cause of God...”

...For he is, after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the guardian of the Cause of God, the Afnan, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of the Lord must obey him and turn unto him. He that obeyeth him not, hath not obeyed God; he that turneth away from him, hath turned away from God and he that denieth him, hath denied the True One. ...To none is given the right to put forth his own opinion or express his particular convictions. All must seek guidance and turn unto the Center of the

Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament*, p. 25; and as cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 12)

The sacred and youthful branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abha Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of the Exalted One (may my life be offered up for them both). Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament*, p. 11; and as cited by Shoghi Effendi in *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 7)

❖ “*The distinguishing feature...*”

O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the preeminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God’s holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 97)

“The world’s equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind’s ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal leyes have never witnessed.” “The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, an enduring foundation. Storms of human strife are powerless to undermine its basis, nor will men’s fanciful theories succeed in damaging its structure.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 109)

D. Enduring, Unassailable Foundation, ...“the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh”

“The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, an enduring foundation...”

(Bahá’u’lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 109)

“So firm and mighty is this Covenant,” He Who is its appointed Center has affirmed, “that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, p. 238)

The Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh is unbroken, its all-encompassing power inviolate. The two unique features which distinguish it from all religious covenants of the past are unchanged and operative. The revealed Word, in its original purity, amplified by the divinely guided interpretations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, remains immutable, unadulterated by any man-made creeds or dogmas, unwarrantable inferences, or unauthorized interpretations. The channel of Divine guidance, providing flexibility in all the affairs of mankind, remains open through that institution which was founded by Bahá’u’lláh and endowed by Him with supreme authority and unfailing guidance, and of which the Master wrote: “Unto this body all things must be referred.” How clearly we can see the truth of Bahá’u’lláh’s assertion: “The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, an enduring foundation. Storms of human strife are powerless to undermine its basis, nor will men’s fanciful theories succeed in damaging its structure.”

(The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated October 1963, cited in *Wellspring of Guidance*, p. 13; and in *Messages 1963 to 1986*, p. 15)

❖ “...all the forces of the universe, in the last analysis serve the Covenant...”

Today, the Lord of Hosts is the defender of the Covenant, the forces of the Kingdom protect it, heavenly souls tender their services, and heavenly angels promulgate and spread its broadcast. If it is considered with insight, it will be seen that all the forces of the universe, in the last analysis serve the Covenant.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 228; and *Star of the West*, Vol. 11, No. 14, p. 242)

To this same Covenant He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] has in His writings referred as the “Conclusive Testimony,” the “Universal Balance,” the “Magnet of God’s grace,” the “Upraised Standard,” the “Irrefutable Testament,” “the all-mighty Covenant, the like of which the sacred Dispensations of the past have never witnessed” and “one of the distinctive features of this most mighty cycle.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, p. 239)

“It is indubitably clear...that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, p. 238)

Today no power can conserve the oneness of the Bahá’í world save the Covenant of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 51)

“The power of the Covenant is as the heat of the sun which quickeneth and promoteth the development of all created things on earth. The light of the Covenant, in like manner, is the educator of the minds, the spirits, the hearts and souls of men.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, pp. 238-239)

Know this for a certainty that today the penetrative power in the arteries and the nerves of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant... There is no other power like unto this.

(From a talk given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 1 December 1912, for which no original transcript has been identified and its authenticity can not be confirmed, *Star of the West*, Vol. 11, No. 8, p. 121, hence “*pilgrims’ note*”)

Although in the body of the universe there are innumerable nerves, yet the main artery, which pulsates, energizes and invigorates all beings, is the power of the Covenant. All else is secondary to this.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. 11, No. 18, p. 308)

The vehicle in this resplendent Age for the practical fulfilment of these duties is the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh; it is, indeed, the potent instrument by which individual belief in Him is translated into constructive deeds. The Covenant comprises divinely conceived arrangements necessary to preserve the organic unity of the Cause. It therefore engenders a motivating power which, as the beloved Master tells us, “like unto the artery, beats and pulsates in the body of the world”. “It is

indubitably clear”, He asserts, “that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant.” Through it the meaning of the Word, both in theory and practice, is made evident in the life and work of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the appointed Interpreter, the perfect Exemplar, the Centre of the Covenant. Through it the processes of the Administrative Order—”this unique, this wondrous System”—are made to operate.

(The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated December 29, 1988, entitled:
“*Individual Rights and Freedoms*, p. 2)

❖ [“...*From this exalted station...*”

...From this exalted station We send Our greetings unto such believers as have taken fast hold on the Sure Handle and quaffed the choice wine of constancy from the hand of favour of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 239)]

“Know thou,” He has written, “that the ‘Sure Handle’ mentioned from the foundation of the world in the Books, the Tablets and the Scriptures of old is naught else but the Covenant and the Testament.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, p. 238)

The Blessed Perfection, in all the tablets, books, epistles and supplications, has begged confirmation for and praised and commended those who are firm in this Covenant and Testament, and has asked the wrath of God and woe and desolation unto the violators.

(From a Tablet attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, revealed for the San Francisco Assembly in 1912, cited in *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 17, p. 223, but for which authenticity can not be verified, hence “*pilgrims’ note*”)

❖ “*Do not disrupt Bahá’í unity...*”

Do not disrupt Bahá’í unity, and know that this unity cannot be maintained save through faith in the Covenant of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 214)

...for this divine Covenant is **an institution of the Lord**.

(From a Tablet attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, revealed for the San Francisco Assembly in 1912, *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 17, p. 223, authenticity for which can not be verified, hence “*pilgrims’ note*”) [Bold added for emphasis –ed.]

❖ “...*To assist Me is to teach My Cause...*”

Say: To assist Me is to teach My Cause. This is a theme with which whole Tablets are laden. This is the changeless commandment of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Comprehend this, O ye men of insight.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 196)



E. The Believers: party to the Covenant

O party of the Covenant! Verily, the Beauty of El-ABHA hath promised the most great assistance to the beloved who are firm in the Covenant and to confirm them through the mightiest power. Ye will surely find in your luminous assembly such signs as will shine within hearts and souls. Adhere to the hem of the robe of the Lofty One and do your best to spread the Covenant of God and to be kindled with the fire of the love of God, so that your hearts may move with joy through the fragrances of humbleness which are being diffused from the heart of Abdul-Bahá. Make feet firm, strengthen hearts and rely upon the everlasting bounties which will successively pour on you from the Kingdom of El-ABHA. Know, verily, the lights of Bahá' will shine forth unto you during your gathering together in the brilliant Paradise.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, v 1, pp. 1-2)

❖ “...but a token of *The grace...*”

Far, far from Thy glory be what mortal man can affirm of Thee, or attribute unto Thee, or the praise with which he can glorify Thee! Whatever duty Thou hast prescribed unto Thy servants of extolling to the utmost Thy majesty and glory is but a token of Thy grace unto them, *that they may be enabled to ascend unto the station conferred upon their own inmost being, the station of the knowledge of their own selves.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 4-5) [Italics and underling added –ed.]

O MY FRIENDS! Have ye forgotten that true and radiant morn, when in those hallowed and blessed surroundings ye were all gathered in My presence beneath the shade of the tree of life, which is planted in the all-glorious paradise? *Awe-struck ye listened as I gave utterance to these three most holy words: O friends! Prefer not your will to Mine, never desire that which I have not desired for you, and approach Me not with lifeless hearts, defiled with worldly desires and cravings.* Would ye but sanctify your souls, ye would at this present hour recall that place and those surroundings, and the truth of My utterance should be made evident unto all of you.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian # 19) [Italics added –ed.]

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....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 65) [Italics added –ed.]

Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not,
My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 5)

He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation, and His Manifestation can adduce no greater proof of the truth of His Mission than the proof of His own Person.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 49)

I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify, at this moment, to my powerlessness and to Thy might, to my poverty and to Thy wealth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 313)

...proclaiming to the sincere ones the glad tidings of the nearness of God, calling the believers in the Divine Unity to the court of the Presence of the Generous One.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 208)

“...It is incumbent upon everyone, in this day, to perceive with the eye of God, and to hearken with His ear. Whoso beholdeth Me with an eye besides Mine own will never be able to know Me. *None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.*”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 77) [Italics added –ed.]

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

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 2)

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 157)

Then will the manifold favors 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 195-196; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 267-268)

This is the plane whereon the vestiges of all things (Kullu Shay') are destroyed in the traveler, and on the horizon of eternity the Divine Face riseth out of the darkness, and the meaning of "All on the earth shall pass away, but the face of thy Lord...." [Qur'án 55:26, 27] is made manifest.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 37)

This station is the dying from self and the living in God, the being poor in self and rich in the Desired One. Poverty as here referred to signifieth being poor in the things of the created world, rich in the things of God's world. For when the true lover and devoted friend reacheth to the presence of the Beloved, the sparkling beauty of the Loved One and the fire of the lover's heart will kindle a blaze and burn away all veils and wrappings. Yea, all he hath, from heart to skin, will be set aflame, so that nothing will remain save the Friend.

When the qualities of the Ancient of Days stood revealed,

Then the qualities of earthly things did Moses burn away.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 36, quoting the *Mathnavi* of Rumi)

The penetration of the word of man dependeth upon the heat of the fire of the love of God. The more the splendors of the love of God become manifest in the heart, the greater will be the penetration of the Word.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 3, p. 699)

If thou art seeking after spiritual tranquility, turn thy face at all times toward the Kingdom of ABHA. If thou art desiring divine joy, free thyself from the bands of attachment. If thou art wishing for the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, become thou engaged in teaching the Cause of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 3, p. 557)

...Take the cup of the Testament in thy hand; leap and dance with ecstasy in the triumphal procession of the Covenant! Lay your confidence in the everlasting bounty, turn to the presence of the generous God; ask assistance from the Kingdom of ABHA; seek confirmation from the Supreme World; turn thy vision to the horizon of eternal wealth; and pray for help from the Source of Mercy!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 3, p. 641)

❖ “[L]et him, before all else, teach his own self...”

Whoso ariseth among you to teach the Cause of his Lord, let him, before all else, teach his own self, that his speech may attract the hearts of them that hear him. Unless he teacheth his own self, the words of his mouth will not influence the heart of the seeker.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 277)

...[T]he qualifications of the teachers of the Faith, like unto stars, shine resplendent throughout the heavens of the divine Tablets.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 58)

The first Taraz and the first effulgence which hath dawned from the horizon of the Mother Book is that man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty. Having attained the stage of fulfilment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 34-35)

“A servant is drawn unto Me in prayer until I answer him; and when I have answered him, I become the ear wherewith he heareth...”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 22)

The death of self is needed here, not rhetoric:

Be nothing, then, and walk upon the waves. [The Mathnavi]

Likewise is it written, “And be ye not like those who forget God, and whom He hath therefore caused to forget their own selves. These are the wicked doers.” [Qur’án 59:19.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 51)

This station hath many signs, unnumbered proofs. Hence it is said: “Hereafter We will show them Our signs in the regions of the earth, and in themselves, until it become manifest unto them that it is the truth,” [Qur’án 41:53] and that there is no God save Him.

One must, then, read the book of his own self, rather than some treatise on rhetoric. Wherefore He hath said, “Read thy Book: There needeth none but thyself to make out an account against thee this day.” [Qur’án 17:15.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 50)

This station conferreth the true standard of knowledge, and freeth man from tests. In this realm, to search after knowledge is irrelevant, for He hath said concerning the guidance of travelers on this plane, “Fear God, and God will instruct thee.” [Qur’án 2:282] And again: “Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth.” [Hadith]

Wherefore, a man should make ready his heart that it be worthy of the descent of heavenly grace, and that the bounteous Cup-Bearer may give him to drink of the wine of bestowal from the merciful vessel. “For the like of this let the travailers travail!” [Qur’án 37:59.]

And now do I say, “Verily we are from God, and to Him shall we return.” [Qur’án 2:151.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 53)

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.**” [1 Qur’án 41:53.] [2 Qur’án 51:21.] [3 Qur’án 59:19.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 101-102; and similarly in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 178) [Bold added —ed.]

1. Definition of Believers

❖ “...*the principle factors that must be taken into consideration...*”

I would only venture to state very briefly and as adequately as present circumstances permit, the principal factors that must be taken into consideration before deciding whether a person may be regarded a true believer or not. Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner, the Author, and the True Exemplar of the Bahá'í Cause, as set forth in ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's Testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present-day Bahá'í administration throughout the world - these I conceive to be the fundamental and primary considerations that must be fairly, discreetly, and thoughtfully ascertained before reaching such a vital decision.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 5)

❖ “*The essence of belief in Divine unity...*”

The essence of belief in Divine unity consisteth in regarding Him Who is the Manifestation of God and Him Who is the invisible, the inaccessible, the unknowable Essence as one and the same. By this is meant that whatever pertaineth to the former, all His acts and doings, whatever He ordaineth or forbiddeth, should be considered, in all their aspects, and under all circumstances, and without any reservation, as identical with the Will of God Himself. This is the loftiest station to which a true believer in the unity of God can ever hope to attain. Blessed is the man that reacheth this station, and is of them that are steadfast in their belief.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 166)

Wherefore it is incumbent upon all Bahá'ís to ponder this very 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 those 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 and not by name.... [Translated by Shoghi Effendi and published in “The Bahá'í World” [sic], vol. 2, “1926-1928” (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1928), p. xvi]

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol II, p. 346; and earlier in *The Divine Art of Living*, p. 61)

❖ “*For verily I say, this is the Day spoken of by God in His Book...*”

For verily I say, this is the Day spoken of by God in His Book: [1] ‘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.’ ... 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 Báb, cited in Nabil’s narrative: *The Dawn-Breakers*, translated and edited by Shoghi Effendi, p. 93)

He is a true Bahá’í who strives by day and by night to progress and advance along the path of human endeavour, whose most cherished desire is so to live and act as to enrich and illuminate the world, whose source of inspiration is the essence of divine virtue, whose aim in life is so to conduct himself 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 true Bahá’í. For in this holy Dispensation, the crowning glory of bygone ages and cycles, true faith is no mere acknowledgement of the unity of God, but rather the living of a life that will manifest all the perfections and virtues implied in such belief. [Translated by Shoghi Effendi and published in “The Bahá’í World”, Vol. 2 [sic], “1926-1928” (New York: Bahá’í Publishing Committee, 1928), p. xvi]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Compilation of Compilations*, Vol II, pp. 346-347, and earlier in *The Divine Art of Living*, pp. 61-62)

O army of God! Through the protection and help vouchsafed by the Blessed Beauty—may my life be a sacrifice to His loved ones—ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: ‘This man is unquestionably a Bahá’í, for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Bahá’ís.’ Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God. For He hath, through irrefutable Texts, entered into a binding Covenant with us all, requiring us to act in accordance with His sacred instructions and counsels.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 70; and as cited in part by Shoghi Effendi, in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 25)

...Nothing short of the spirit of a true Bahá'í can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 63-64)

2. Sublime station, exalted rank, ultimate purpose

The second Tajalli is to remain steadfast in the Cause of God—exalted be His glory—and to be unswerving in His love. And this can in no wise be attained except through full recognition of Him; and full recognition cannot be obtained save by faith in the blessed words: ‘He doeth whatsoever He willeth.’ Whoso tenaciously cleaveth unto this sublime word and drinketh deep from the living waters of utterance which are inherent therein, will be imbued with such a constancy that all the books of the world will be powerless to deter him from the Mother Book. O how glorious is this sublime station, this exalted rank, this ultimate purpose!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 50)

O people of God! In this day everyone should fix his eyes upon the horizon of these blessed words: ‘Alone and unaided He doeth whatsoever He pleaseth.’ Whoso attaineth this station hath verily attained the light of the essential unity of God and is enlightened thereby, while all others are reckoned in the Book of God among the followers of idle fancy and vain imagination...

Righteous men of learning who dedicate themselves to the guidance of others and are freed and well guarded from the promptings of a base and covetous nature are, in the sight of Him Who is the Desire of the world, stars of the heaven of true knowledge. It is essential to treat them with deference. They are indeed fountains of soft-flowing water, stars that shine resplendent, fruits of the blessed Tree, exponents of celestial power, and oceans of heavenly wisdom. Happy is he that followeth them. Verily such a soul is numbered in the Book of God, the Lord of the mighty Throne, among those with whom it shall be well.

The glory which proceedeth from God, the Lord of the Throne on High and of the earth below, rest upon you, O people of Bahá, O ye the companions of the Crimson Ark, and upon such as have inclined their ears to your sweet voices and have observed that whereunto they are bidden in this mighty and wondrous Tablet.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, passim, pp. 96-97)

Ye are...the letters inscribed upon His sacred scroll....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 196)

Ye are the letters of the words, and the words of the Book. Ye are the saplings which the hand of Loving-kindness hath planted in the soil of mercy, and which the showers of bounty have made to flourish.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 25)

Every receptive soul who hath in this Day inhaled the fragrance of His garment and hath, with a pure heart, set his face towards the all-glorious Horizon is reckoned among the people of Bahá in the Crimson Book.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 220)

In confirmation of the exalted rank of the true believer, referred to by Bahá'u'lláh, He reveals the following: "The station which he who hath truly recognized this Revelation will attain is the same as the one ordained for such prophets of the house of Israel as are not regarded as Manifestations 'endowed with constancy.'"

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 111)

[Blessed is the man that hath acknowledged his belief in God and in His signs, and recognized that "He shall not be asked of His doings." Such a recognition hath been made by God the ornament of every belief, and its very foundation. Upon it must depend the acceptance of every goodly deed. Fasten your eyes upon it, that haply the whisperings of the rebellious may not cause you to slip.

Were He to decree as lawful the thing which from time immemorial had been forbidden, and forbid that which had, at all times, been regarded as lawful, to none is given the right to question His authority. Whoso will hesitate, though it be for less than a moment, should be regarded as a transgressor.

Whoso hath not recognized this sublime and fundamental verity, and hath failed to attain this most exalted station, the winds of doubt will agitate him, and the sayings of the infidels will distract his soul. He that hath acknowledged this principle will be endowed with the most perfect constancy. All honor to this all-glorious station, the remembrance of which adorneth every exalted Tablet. Such is the teaching which God bestoweth on you, a teaching that will deliver you from all manner of doubt and perplexity, and enable you to attain unto salvation in both this world and in the next. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bountiful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 86-87)]

We dare not, in this Day, lift the veil that concealeth the exalted station which every true believer can attain, for the joy which such a revelation must provoke might well cause a few to faint away and die....

...From the excellence of so great a Revelation the honor with which its faithful followers must needs be invested can be well imagined. By the righteousness of the one true God! The very breath of these souls is in itself richer than all the treasures of the earth. Happy is the man that hath attained thereunto, and woe betide the heedless.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, passim, pp. 9-10)

As to thy question, doth every soul without exception achieve life everlasting? Know thou that immortality belongeth to those souls in whom hath been breathed the spirit of life from God. All save these are lifeless—they are the dead, even as Christ hath explained in the Gospel text. He whose eyes the Lord hath opened will see the souls of men in the stations they will occupy after their release from the body. He will find the living ones thriving within the precincts of their Lord, and the dead sunk down in the lowest abyss of perdition.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 189-190)

❖ “*Even as He hath revealed...*”

Even as He hath revealed: “Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel the others.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 48, and also, p. 52)

Excerpt from: TABLET TO THOMAS BREAKWELL:

O Breakwell, O my dear one!

Thy Lord hath verily singled thee out for His love, and hath led thee into His precincts of holiness, and made thee to enter the garden of those who are His close companions, and hath blessed thee with beholding His beauty.

O Breakwell, O my dear one!

Thou hast won eternal life, and the bounty that faileth never, and a life to please thee well, and plenteous grace.

O Breakwell, O my dear one!

Thou art become a star in the supernal sky, and a lamp amid the angels of high Heaven; a living spirit in the most exalted Kingdom, throned in eternity.

O Breakwell, O my dear one!

I ask of God to draw thee ever closer, hold thee ever faster; to rejoice thy heart with nearness to His presence, to fill thee with light and still more light, to grant thee still more beauty, and to bestow upon thee power and real glory.

O Breakwell, O my dear one!

At all times do I call thee to mind. I shall never forget thee. I pray for thee by day, by night; I see thee plain before me, as if in open day.

O Breakwell, O my dear one!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 188-189)

“Today a most painful news was received; its effect was agonizing and its anguish harrowing. Truly I say, Mirza Abul-Fazl [sic] was a glorious personage. From every standpoint he was peerless. It is a rare thing to find a person perfect from every direction, but he was such a person.... Truly I say he was in a state of the utmost severance, and adorned with the highest virtues of firmness and steadfastness. He was absolutely detached from everything. From the day he became a believer up to the last moment of his life, he was occupied in the service of the Cause of God; either he conveyed the Message or wrote books proving the validity of this Cause. He had not the slightest attachment to this mortal world.*

“How erudite and learned he was...!

“How humble and meek he was!

“...He was evanescent and lived in the station of nothingness. He was self-sacrificing at the Holy Threshold. No one inhaled from him the odor of superiority.

“Now the consummate wisdom of God hath deemed it wise to take him away from amongst us. The only way left to us is patience. How often one man has been equal to one thousand....

“...During the hours of grief he was the source of my consolation.... While I was living in Ramleh, whenever I felt depressed or sad, I called on him, and soon afterward I was in a happier frame of mind. He was the most sincere, most straightforward. He had not the least hypocrisy or deceit in his nature.... From every standpoint I trusted him, and had in him the greatest amount of confidence. Whenever anyone wrote books and articles against this Cause, I referred them to him for irrefutable answer....

“Truly I say the departure of Mirza Abul-Fazl is an irretrievable loss for the people of Bahá. In all the countries of the world, wherever the believers are found, they are deeply affected by the death of this glorious personage.... ...the hearts of all the believers of the world were attached to

him. He was the brilliant lamp of the Cause, the shining light of guidance, the sparkling star of knowledge, the luminous orb of understanding and a sea tumultuous with the waves of wisdom....

“...Praise be to God! that the believers of Washington are informed of the majesty and the station of that noble personage....

“In short, he severed his heart entirely from the ephemeral world and turned his gaze completely toward the Realm on High. He closed his eyes wholly to the rest, comfort and honor of this material earth, and attached himself to the spiritual glad-tidings, merciful fragrances and divine outpourings...that the leader of the lordly ones was released from the narrowness of this world and soared toward the infinite apex. The drop was joined to the ocean the ray returned to the Sun. He was liberated from the wilderness of separation and ascended to the Court of the Transfiguration of the Lord of the Covenant. Now he is submerged in the Sea of Lights and enthroned in the Kingdom of Abha!

“...you who are the believers of God, ascend the Mountain with contrite hearts, and gather together and chant in his behalf communes and prayers, so that God may exalt more than ever his station in the spiritual world. I will likewise engage tonight in supplication at the Divine Threshold in his behalf. “Upon ye be Bahá-El-Abha! [signed] ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Abbas.”

(Statements attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in *The Bahá’í Proofs*, [Tributes and Eulogies section], passim, pp. 19-27, as excerpted from *The Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, to be regarded as “*pilgrims’ note*”) [Note: * “Fazl” is also spelled in more contemporary works as “Fadl” –ed.]

❖ *“For verily, God hath ordained...”*

...For verily, God hath ordained for the one who chants it, the reward of a hundred martyrs and a service in both worlds....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 211)

As to Paradise: It is a reality and there can be no doubt about it, and now in this world it is realized through love of Me and My good-pleasure. Whosoever attaineth unto it God will aid him in this world below, and after death He will enable him to gain admittance into Paradise whose vastness is as that of heaven and earth. Therein the Maids of glory and holiness will wait upon him in the daytime and in the night season, while the day-star of the unfading beauty of his Lord will at all times shed its radiance upon him and he will shine so brightly that no one shall bear to gaze at him.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 188)

O army of God! Whosoever ye behold a person whose entire attention is directed toward the Cause of God; whose only aim is this, to make the Word of God to take effect; who, day and night, with pure intent, is rendering service to the Cause; from whose behaviour not the slightest trace of egotism or private motives is discerned—who, rather, wandereth distracted in the wilderness of the love of God, and drinketh only from the cup of the knowledge of God, and is utterly engrossed in spreading the sweet savours of God, and is enamoured of the holy verses of the Kingdom of God—know ye for a certainty that this individual will be supported and reinforced by heaven; that like unto the morning star, he will forever gleam brightly out of the skies of eternal grace. But if he show the slightest taint of selfish desires and self love, his efforts will lead to nothing and he will be destroyed and left hopeless at the last.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 71-72)

[Continuation from reference cited above:] “...The disinterested actions and free-hearted deeds of a person proclaim with the sound of a trumpet his loyalty and sincerity in the Cause. He is in no need of self-justification.... Strange, passing strange, that there was not a breath of self-desire in this person. Wholly divested from all other thoughts and mentions, he had consecrated all his time to the service of the Holy Threshold.... Were one to read all his writings and works, he does not find ‘I-ness’ and ‘egoism’ stalking between the lines, nor does he observe any pedantic expressions or circumlocution—in order to bear upon the reader the whole weight of his learning and scholarship. From the moment that he was ushered under the shade of the Blessed Tree, he forewent every pleasure and cut his heart from every worldly station. He asked for no comfort, he sought no rest, he longed for no fame and he wished no notoriety or name.... Until his very last breath, he served at the Holy Threshold.”

(Statements attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá re: “Mirza Abul-Fazl”, from *The Bahá’í Proofs, Tributes and Eulogies...*, pp. 22-23, excerpted from *The Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, hence “*pilgrims’ note*”)

❖ "*Bahá’u’lláh the Lord of Hosts...*"

BAHÁ’U’LLÁH THE LORD OF HOSTS

TO THE BELIEVERS OF GOD AND THE MAID-SERVANTS OF THE MERCIFUL OF
THE BAHÁ’Í ASSEMBLIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA:

Upon them be Bahá’u’lláh El-Abha!

HE IS GOD!

O ye apostles of Bahá’u’lláh,—May my life be sacrificed for you!

THE BLESSED Person of the Promised One is interpreted in the Holy Book as the Lord of Hosts—the heavenly armies. By heavenly armies those souls are intended who are entirely freed from the human world, transformed into celestial spirits and have become divine angels. Such souls are the rays of the Sun of Reality who will illumine all the continents. Each one is holding in his hand a trumpet, blowing the breath of life over all the regions. They are delivered from human qualities and the defects of the world of nature, are characterized with the characteristics of God, and are attracted with the fragrances of the Merciful. Like unto the apostles of Christ, who were filled with Him, these souls also have become filled with His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh; that is, the love of Bahá'u'lláh has so mastered every organ, part and limb of their bodies, as to leave no effect from the promptings of the human world.

These souls are the armies of God and the conquerors of the East and the West. Should one of them turn his face toward some direction and summon the people to the Kingdom of God, all the ideal forces and lordly confirmations will rush to his support and reinforcement. He will behold all the doors open and all the strong fortifications and impregnable castles razed to the ground. Singly and alone he will attack the armies of the world, defeat the right and left wings of the hosts of all the countries, break through the lines of the legions of all the nations and carry his attack to the very center of the powers of the earth. This is the meaning of the Hosts of God.

Any soul from among the believers of Bahá'u'lláh who attains to this station will become known as the Apostle of Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore strive ye with heart and soul so that ye may reach this lofty and exalted position, be established on the throne of everlasting glory, and crown your heads with the shining diadem of the Kingdom, whose brilliant jewels may irradiate upon centuries and cycles. O ye kind friends! Uplift your magnanimity and soar high toward the apex of heaven so that your blessed hearts may become illumined more and more, day by day, through the rays of the Sun of Reality, that is, His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh; at every moment the spirits may obtain a new life, and the darkness of the world of nature may be entirely dispelled; thus you may become incarnate light and personified spirit, become entirely unaware of the sordid matters of this world and in touch with the affairs of the divine world. ...

To attain to this supreme station is, however, dependent on the realization of certain conditions:

The first condition is firmness in the Covenant of God. For the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh from the doubts of the people of error. It is the fortified fortress of the Cause of God and the firm pillar of the religion of God. Today no power can conserve the oneness of the Bahá'í world save the Covenant of God; otherwise differences like unto a most great tempest will encompass the Bahá'í world. It is evident that the axis of the oneness of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant and nothing else. Had the Covenant not come to pass, had it not been revealed from the Supreme Pen and had not the Book of the Covenant, like unto the ray of the Sun of Reality, illuminated the world, the forces of the Cause of God would have been utterly

scattered and certain souls who were the prisoners of their own passions and lusts would have taken into their hands an axe, cutting the root of this Blessed Tree. Every person would have pushed forward his own desire and every individual aired his own opinion! Notwithstanding this great Covenant, a few negligent souls galloped with their chargers into the battlefield, thinking perchance they might be able to weaken the foundation of the Cause of God: but praise be to God all of them were afflicted with regret and loss, and ere long they shall see themselves in poignant despair. Therefore, in the beginning the believers must make their steps firm in the Covenant so that the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh may encircle them from all sides, the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse may become their supporters and helpers, and the exhortations and advices of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, like unto the pictures engraved on stone, may remain permanent and ineffaceable in the tablets of all hearts.

The second condition: Fellowship and love amongst the believers. The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved. For one of the greatest divine wisdoms regarding the appearance of the holy Manifestations is this: The souls may come to know each other and become intimate with each other; the power of the love of God may make all of them the waves of one sea, the flowers of one rose garden, and the stars of one heaven. This is the wisdom for the appearance of the holy Manifestations! ...

O ye friends! Fellowship, fellowship! Love, love! Unity, unity!—so that the power of the Bahá'í Cause may appear and become manifest in the world of existence....

The third condition: Teachers must continually travel to all parts of the continent, nay, rather, to all parts of the world, but they must travel like 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who journeyed throughout the cities of America. He was sanctified and free from every attachment and in the utmost severance. Just as His Holiness Christ says: "Shake off the very dust from your feet." [Cf. Matthew 10:14.]

The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of others? Unless he is detached from aught else save God, how can he teach severance to others?

In short, O ye believers of God! *Endeavor ye, so that you may take hold of every means in the promulgation of the religion of God and the diffusion of the fragrances of God.*

('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp 49-54) [Italics added —ed.]

❖ “...For this is the realm of Absolute Command...”

...For this is the realm of Absolute Command and is free of all the attributes of earth.

The exalted dwellers in this mansion do wield divine authority in the court of rapture, with utter gladness, and they do bear a kingly scepter. On the high seats of justice, they issue their commands, and they send down gifts according to each man’s deserving....

...Albeit at every moment these souls appear in a new office, yet their condition is ever the same.... Astonishment here is highly prized, and utter poverty essential. Wherefore hath it been said, “Poverty is My pride.” [Muhammad] And again: “God hath a people beneath the dome of glory, whom He hideth in the clothing of radiant poverty.” These are they who see with His eyes, hear with His ears, as it is written in the well-known tradition.

Concerning this realm, there is many a tradition and many a verse, of broad or special relevancy, but two of these will suffice to serve as a light for men of mind and heart.

The first is His statement: “O My Servant! Obey Me and I shall make thee like unto Myself. I say ‘Be,’ and it is, and thou shalt say ‘Be,’ and it shall be.”

And the second: “O Son of Adam! Seek fellowship with none until thou hast found Me, and whenever thou shalt long for Me, thou shalt find Me close to thee.”

Whatever high proofs and wondrous allusions are recounted herein, concern but a single Letter, a single Point. “Such hath been the way of God ... and no change canst thou find in the way of God.” [Qur’án 33:62; 48:23.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Four Valleys of Bahá’u’lláh*, passim, pp. 60-63)

Do you think it is the teachers who make converts and change human hearts? No, surely not. They are only pure souls who take the first steps and then let the spirit of Bahá’u’lláh move and make use of them.... The criterion is the extent to which we are ready to have the will of God work through us.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, p. 25)

❖ “And now, concerning His words...”

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 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, Sadiq, [1] in his eulogy of the Cherubim, saith: “There stand a company of our fellow-Shi’ihs behind the Throne.” Divers and manifold are the interpretations of the words “behind the Throne.” In one sense, they indicate that no true Shi’ihs

exist.... 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. [1 The sixth Imam of the Shi'ihis.]

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.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 78-80)

The meaning of ‘angels’ is the confirmations of God and His celestial powers. Likewise angels are blessed beings who have severed all ties with this nether world, have been released from the chains of self and the desires of the flesh, and anchored their hearts to the heavenly realms of the Lord. These are of the Kingdom, heavenly; these are of God, spiritual; these are revealers of God’s abounding grace; these are dawning-points of His spiritual bestowals.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 81)

❖ “O friends! It behoveth you...”

...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 behavior. 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 favors which in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 93-94)

...Number me not with them who read Thy words and fail to find Thy hidden gift which, as decreed by Thee, is contained therein, and which quickeneth the souls of Thy creatures and the

hearts of Thy servants. Cause me, O my Lord, to be reckoned among them who have been so stirred up by the sweet savors that have been wafted in Thy days that they have laid down their lives for Thee and hastened to the scene of their death in their longing to gaze on Thy beauty and in their yearning to attain Thy presence. And were any one to say unto them on their way, “Whither go ye?” they would say, “Unto God, the All-Possessing, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting!”

The transgressions committed by such as have turned away from Thee and have borne themselves haughtily towards Thee have not availed to hinder them from loving Thee, and from setting their faces towards Thee, and from turning in the direction of Thy mercy. These are they who are blessed by the Concourse on high, who are glorified by the denizens of the everlasting Cities, and beyond them by those on whose foreheads Thy most exalted pen hath written: “These! The people of Bahá. Through them have been shed the splendors of the light of guidance.” Thus hath it been ordained, at Thy behest and by Thy will, in the Tablet of Thine irrevocable decree.

Proclaim, therefore, O my God, their greatness and the greatness of those who while living or after death have circled round them. Supply them with that which Thou hast ordained for the righteous among Thy creatures. Potent art Thou to do all things. There is no God but Thee, the All-Powerful, the Help in Peril, the Almighty, the Most Bountiful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 83-84)

...Although the books and writings of Abul Fazl [sic] are used in many countries as text books, never did he even give a sign that he was an authority on any subject, consequently the gifts of God ever increased upon him, since he bore all honors in humility, until he attained to the supreme nearness.

The ones in real authority are known by their humility and self-sacrifice and show no attitude of superiority over the friends.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 44, “pilgrims’ note”)

[Cf. Also: Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, from “Be not careless of the virtues...” p. 75, through to “...It will lead all nations spiritually.” p. 86 –ed]

3. Man, the supreme Talisman

Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 259)

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 favor, so enduring a bounty.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 65)

O SON OF MAN!

Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 3)

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 favor 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 77-78)

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.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 100-101; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 177-178)

We have already explained that the very names and attributes of Divinity require the existence of created things. Although a detailed explanation of this matter was already provided, a brief mention will again be made here. Know that a lord without vassals cannot be imagined; a sovereign without subjects cannot exist; a teacher without pupils cannot be designated; a creator without a creation is impossible; a provider without those provided for is inconceivable—since all the divine names and attributes call for the existence of created things. If we were to imagine a time when created things did not exist, it would be tantamount to denying the divinity of God.

Apart from this, absolute non-existence lacks the capacity to attain existence. If the universe were pure nothingness, existence could not have been realized. Thus, as that Essence of Oneness, or divine Being, is eternal and everlasting—that is, as it has neither beginning nor end—it follows that the world of existence, this endless universe, likewise has no beginning.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 47, Sections 2 & 3, pp. 264-265)



...We cannot say, then, that there was a time when man was not. At most we can say that there was a time when this earth did not exist, and that at the beginning man was not present upon it.

But from the beginning that has no beginning to the end that has no end, a perfect Manifestation has always existed. This Man of Whom we speak here is not just any man: That which we intend is the Perfect Man.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 50, Sections 4 & 5, pp. 289-290)

a. The Perfect One; the perfect one...Manifestation; man

But from the beginning which has no beginning to the end which has no end, a perfect Manifestation has always existed. This Man of Whom we speak is not just any man: That which we intend is the Perfect Man....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 50, Sections 5, p. 290)

“And of all men...”

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 102; and in part, in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 179)

For each separate entity possesseth its allotted portion of the solar light and telleth of the Sun, but that Universal Reality in all Its splendour, that stainless Mirror Whose qualities are appropriate to the qualities of the Sun revealed within It—expresseth in their entirety the attributes of the

Source of Glory. And that Universal Reality is Man, the divine Being, the Essence that abideth forever.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 42)

❖ “...all things, in their inmost reality, testify to the revelation of the names and attributes of God...”

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 102; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 178)

Now, what we mean by “man” is the complete human being, the foremost person in the world, who is the sum of all spiritual and material perfections, and who is like the sun among all created things.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 46, Section 5, p. 261)

Thus, the divinity of God, which is the totality of all perfections, reveals itself in the reality of man—that is, the divine Essence is the sum total of all perfections, and from this station it casts a ray of its splendour upon the human reality. In other words, the Sun of Truth is reflected in this mirror. Thus man is a perfect mirror facing the Sun of Truth and is the seat of its reflection. The splendour of all the divine perfections is manifest in the reality of man, and it is for this reason that he is the vicegerent and apostle of God. If man did not exist, the universe would be without result, for the purpose of existence is the revelation of the divine perfections.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, Chapter 50, Section 4, p. 289)

b. Man has always been a distinct species...

...But man has always been a distinct species; he has been man, not an animal. Consider: If the embryo of man in the womb of the mother passes from one form to another which in no way resembles the former, is this a proof that the essence of the species has undergone transformation? That it was at first an animal and that its organs developed and evolved until it became a man? No, by God! How feeble and unfounded is this thought! For the originality of the human species and the independence of the essence of man are clear and evident.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 47, Section 11, p. 271)

... [L]et us suppose that man once bore a resemblance to the animal and that he has since evolved and transformed. Accepting this statement does not prove the transformation of species, but could instead be likened to the changes and transformations that the human embryo undergoes before reaching its full development and maturity, as was earlier mentioned. To be more explicit, let us suppose that man once walked on all fours or had a tail: This change and transformation is similar to that of the fetus in the womb of the mother. Even though the fetus develops and evolves in every possible way before it reaches its full development, from the beginning it belongs to a distinct species....

...To summarize: Just as man progresses, evolves, and is transformed from one form and appearance to another in the womb of the mother, while remaining from the beginning a human embryo, so too has man remained a distinct essence—that is, the human species—from the beginning of his formation in the matrix of the world, and has passed gradually from form to form. It follows that this change of appearance, this evolution of organs, and this growth and development do not preclude the originality of the species. Now, even accepting the reality of evolution and progress, nevertheless, from the moment of his appearance man has possessed perfect composition, and has had the capacity and potential to acquire both material and spiritual perfections and to become the embodiment of the verse, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” [Cf. Gen. 1:26]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 49, Sections 7-8, pp. 285-286)

Let us return to our subject. From the beginning of existence in the womb of the terrestrial globe, man gradually grew and developed like the embryo in the womb of its mother, and passed from one shape and form to another until he appeared with this beauty and perfection, this power and constitution. It is certain that initially he did not possess such loveliness, grace, and refinement, and that he has only gradually attained such form, disposition, comeliness, and grace. There is no doubt that, like the embryo in the womb of the mother, the embryo of humankind did not appear all at once in this form and become the embodiment of the words “Hallowed be the Lord, the most excellent of all creators!” Rather, it gradually attained various conditions and assumed divers forms until it attained this appearance and beauty, this perfection, refinement, and grace. It is therefore clear and evident that the growth and development of man on this planet unto his present completeness, even as the growth and development of the embryo in the womb of the mother, has been by degrees and through passing from state to state, and from one shape and form to another, for this is according to the requirements of the universal order and the divine law.

That is, the human embryo assumes different conditions and traverses numerous stages until it reaches that form in which it manifests the reality of the words “Hallowed be the Lord, the most excellent of all creators!” and shows forth the signs of full development and maturity. In like manner, from the beginning of man’s existence on this planet until he assumed his present shape,

form, and condition, a long time must have elapsed, and he must have traversed many stages before reaching his present condition....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 47, Sections 9-10, pp. 269-270)

The animal is a prisoner of the senses and is circumscribed by them: It cannot comprehend anything that lies beyond the reach or control of the senses, even though it excels man in the outward powers and senses.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 48, Section 7, p. 277)

God has endowed man with intelligence so that he may safeguard and protect himself. Therefore, he must provide and surround himself with all that scientific skill can produce. He must be deliberate, thoughtful and thorough in his purposes....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 48)

...It is therefore clearly established that man is endowed with a power of discovery that distinguishes him from the animal, and this power is none but the human spirit.

...All things are subdued by the hand of man, who withstands nature itself.

All other beings are captives of nature and cannot free themselves from its exigencies: Man alone can withstand nature....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 48, Sections 7, 9 & 10, pp. 277-278)

...We are living in a day of reliance upon material conditions. Men imagine that the great size and strength of a ship, the perfection of machinery or the skill of a navigator will ensure safety....yet, withal, let him rely upon God and consider God as the one Keeper. ... The purpose is that the people of the world may turn to God, the One Protector; that human souls may rely upon His preservation and know that He is the real safety.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, passim, pp. 48)

...[F]rom the moment of his appearance man has possessed perfect composition, and has had the capacity and potential to acquire both material and spiritual perfections and to become the embodiment of the verse, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.”[131] At most, he has become more pleasing, more refined and graceful, and by virtue of civilization he has emerged from his wild state, just as the wild fruits become finer and sweeter under the cultivation of the

gardener, and acquire ever greater delicacy and vitality. The gardeners of the world of humanity are the Prophets of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 49, Sections 8 & 9, p. 286)

These human conditions may be likened to the matrix of the mother from which a child is to be born into the spacious outer world. At first the infant finds it very difficult to reconcile itself to its new existence. It cries as if not wishing to be separated from its narrow abode and imagining that life is restricted to that limited space. It is reluctant to leave its home, but nature forces it into this world. Having come into its new conditions, it finds that it has passed from darkness into a sphere of radiance; from gloomy and restricted surroundings it has been transferred to a spacious and delightful environment. ...Its new life is filled with brightness and beauty; it looks with wonder and delight.... ...it breathes the life-quickenning atmosphere; and then it praises God for its release from the confinement of its former condition and attainment to the freedom of a new realm. This analogy expresses the relation of the temporal world to the life hereafter—the transition of the soul of man from darkness and uncertainty to the light and reality of the eternal Kingdom. At first it is very difficult to welcome death, but after attaining its new condition the soul is grateful, for it has been released from the bondage of the limited to enjoy the liberties of the unlimited. It has been freed from a world of sorrow, grief and trials to live in a world of unending bliss and joy.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 47)

[Note: It might be interesting to note in light of the fact that man was always destined to be a “distinct species” having a “rational faculty” or connection to the “rational soul” and spirit, the following excerpts on this subject as addressed in the “*Forward*” to the latest edition (2014 translation) of *Some Answered Questions*, herein subdivided into mini-paragraphs on individual topics or points, (not as formatted in the original text) – to aid the reader –ed]:

For Bahá’is, the science of evolution is accepted, but the conclusion that humanity is merely an accidental branch of the animal kingdom—with all its attendant social implications—is not....*

...Part 4 addresses the origins, powers, and conditions of man, including the implications of human evolution on earth, the immortality of the soul, the nature of the mind, and the connection between the soul and the body. ...

Broad and wide-ranging as the topics treated in Some Answered Questions may be, the book was not intended to be an exhaustive exposition of a self-contained system of thought, as attested by the volume’s title. A number of fundamental teachings of the Faith are, therefore, not explicitly

mentioned. Moreover, in the course of the months and years that the talks were given, the same topic would sometimes be addressed from different perspectives in separate conversations, with the result that the concepts required to fully understand a given subject may be spread across different chapters, or the contents of a subsequent chapter may form the basis for the understanding of an earlier one.

Finally, it should also be noted that, although ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reviewed and corrected the text, He did not attempt in the process to alter the basic form of the replies or to reorganize and consolidate the material. To develop a fuller picture of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s exposition of a given subject, then, the attentive reader should consider any chapter within the context of the entire book, and the book within the larger context of the entire body of the Bahá’í Teachings.

A notable case in point is the treatment of the subject of the evolution of species, which is taken up explicitly in Part 4, and which must be understood in light of several Bahá’í teachings, especially the principle of the harmony of science and religion. Religious belief should not contradict science and reason.

A certain reading of some of the passages found in Chapters 46–51 may lead some believers to personal conclusions that contradict modern science. Yet the Universal House of Justice has explained that Bahá’ís strive to reconcile their understanding of the statements of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with established scientific perspectives, and therefore it is not necessary to conclude that these passages describe conceptions rejected by science, for example, a kind of “parallel” evolution that proposes a separate line of biological evolution for the human species parallel to the animal kingdom since the beginning of life on earth.

A careful review of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements in this volume and in other sources suggests that His concern is not with the mechanisms of evolution but with the philosophical, social, and spiritual implications of the new theory. His use of the term “species”, for example, evokes the concept of eternal or permanent archetypes, which is not how the term is defined in contemporary biology. He takes into account a reality beyond the material realm.

While ‘Abdu’l-Bahá acknowledges elsewhere the physical attributes that human beings share in common with the animal and that are derived from the animal kingdom, in these talks He emphasizes another capacity, a capacity for rational consciousness, that distinguishes man from the animal and that is not found in the animal kingdom or in nature itself. This unique capacity, an expression of the human spirit, is not a product of the evolutionary process, but exists potentially in creation. [Italics added to distinguish quoted text –ed.]

(From the “Forward” to: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., *passim, pp. iv-vii)]



O SON OF MAN!

Veiled in My immemorial being and in the ancient eternity of My essence, I knew My love for thee; therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #3)

c. Recreated in His image; the Station of God, of the Manifestation...

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....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 65)

[T]herefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 3)]

...This station is the dying from self and the living in God, the being poor in self and rich in the Desired One.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 35)

So if we were to imagine a time when man belonged to the animal kingdom, that is, when he was merely an animal, existence would have been imperfect. This means that there would have been no man, and this chief member, which in the body of the world is like the mind and the brain in a human being, would have been lacking, and the world would thus have been utterly imperfect. This is sufficient proof in itself that if there had been a time when man belonged to the animal realm, the completeness of existence would have been destroyed; for man is the chief member of the body of this world, and a body without its chief member is undoubtedly imperfect. We regard man as the chief member because, among all created things, he encompasses all the perfections of existence....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 46, Section 4, p. ...)

❖ “For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God...”

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 101; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 177)

...Now, what we mean by “man” is the complete human being, the foremost person in the world, who is the sum of all spiritual and material perfections, and who is like the sun among all created things. Imagine, then, a time when the sun did not exist as such, in other words, when the sun was merely another celestial body. Undoubtedly, at such a time the relationships between existing things would have been disrupted. How can such a thing be imagined? Were one to carefully examine the world of existence, this argument alone would suffice.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 46, Section 5, p. ...)

All beings, whether universal or particular, were created perfect and complete from the beginning. The most one can say is that their perfections only become apparent gradually....

...Likewise, from the beginning the embryo possesses all perfections, such as the spirit, the mind, sight, smell, and taste—in a word, all the powers—but they are invisible and become apparent only gradually.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 51, Section 4, p. ...)

The exaltation of the animal world is to possess perfect members, organs and powers, and to have all its needs supplied. This is its chief glory, its honor and exaltation....

...But true felicity for the animal consists in passing from the animal world into the human realm, like the microscopic beings that, through the air and the water, enter into the body of man,

are assimilated, and replace that which has been consumed in his body. This is the greatest honour and felicity for the animal world, and no greater honour can be conceived for it....

...Then it is clear that the honour and exaltation of man cannot reside solely in material delights and earthly benefits. This material felicity is wholly secondary, while the exaltation of man resides primarily in such virtues and attainments as are the adornments of the human reality. These consist in divine blessings, heavenly bounties, heartfelt emotions, the love and knowledge of God, the education of the people, the perceptions of the mind, and the discoveries of science. They consist in justice and equity, truthfulness and benevolence, inner courage and innate humanity, safeguarding the rights of others and preserving the sanctity of covenants and agreements. They consist in rectitude of conduct under all circumstances, love of truth under all conditions, self-abnegation for the good of all people, kindness and compassion for all nations, obedience to the teachings of God, service to the heavenly Kingdom, guidance for all mankind, and education for all races and nations. This is the felicity of the human world! This is the exaltation of man in the contingent realm! This is eternal life and heavenly honour!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 15, Sections 4, 5 & 7, passim, pp. ... -...)

❖ [“...veiled and concealed...”

The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. ... This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended. ...”We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings; each one of these meanings we can explain.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 254)]

One is the very foundation and belongs to the spiritual realm; that is, it pertains to spiritual virtues and divine qualities. This part suffers neither change nor alteration: It is the Holy of Holies, which constitutes the essence of the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muḥammad, the Báb, and Bahá’u’lláh... It will never be abrogated, for it consists in spiritual rather than material truth. It is faith, knowledge, certitude, justice, piety, high-mindedness, trustworthiness, love of God, and charity. It is mercy to the poor, assistance to the oppressed, generosity to the needy, and upliftment of the fallen. It is purity, detachment, humility, forbearance, patience, and constancy.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Section 7, p. ...)

These gifts, however, do not manifest themselves in the reality of man save through a celestial and divine power and through the heavenly teachings, for they require a supernatural power. Traces of these perfections may well appear in the world of nature, but they are as fleeting and ephemeral as rays of sunlight upon the wall.

As the compassionate Lord has crowned the head of man with such a refulgent diadem, we must strive that its luminous gems may cast their light upon the whole world.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 15, Sections 8-9, p. ...)

...The wisdom of the appearance of the spirit in the body is this: The human spirit is a divine trust which must traverse every degree, for traversing and passing through the degrees of existence is the means of its acquiring perfections.... In the same way, when the human spirit traverses the degrees of existence and attains each degree and station—even that of the body—it will assuredly acquire perfections.

Moreover, it is necessary that the signs of the perfections of the spirit appear in this world, that the realm of creation may bring forth endless fruits, and that this body of the contingent world may receive life and manifest the divine bounties.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 52, Sections 2 & 3, p. ...)

❖ *...In the night season...*”

...In the night season the beauty of the immortal Being hath repaired from the emerald height of fidelity unto the Sadratu’l-Muntaha, and wept with such a weeping that the Concourse on high and the dwellers of the realms above wailed at His lamenting. Whereupon there was asked, Why the wailing and weeping? He made reply: As bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwell on earth the fragrance of fidelity....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 91)

Just as the spirit of man is the cause of the life of his body, so is the whole world even as a body and man as its spirit. If man did not exist, if the perfections of the spirit were not manifested and the light of the mind were not shining in this world, it would be like a body without a spirit.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 52, Section 3, p. ...)

...In the body of a man, which is the true divine example or parallel, the spirit, when in ideal control of all the lesser parts of the organism, finds the utmost harmony throughout the whole body – each part is in perfect reciprocity with the other parts. The commands and impulses of the spirit are obeyed by the body and the body in turn in its actions and functions identifies and determines the expression the spiritual impulses shall take. This is divine unity – and this law, being universal and found in every created object in the universe, has full application to the universal Bahá'í organism made up of believers everywhere, which has been established by the Manifestation of God.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 1-2; and *Guidance for Today and Tomorrow*, pp. 110-111)

❖ “Whosoever thou dost examine...”

Whosoever thou dost examine, through a microscope, the water man drinketh, the air he doth breathe, thou wilt see that with every breath of air, man taketh in an abundance of animal life, and with every draught of water, he also swalloweth down a great variety of animals. How could it ever be possible to put a stop to this process? For all creatures are eaters and eaten, and the very fabric of life is reared upon this fact. Were it not so, the ties that interlace all created things within the universe would be unraveled.... And further, whensoever a thing is destroyed, and decayeth, and is cut off from life, it is promoted into a world that is greater than the world it knew before. It leaveth, for example, the life of the mineral and goeth forward into the life of the plant; then it departeth out of the vegetable life and ascendeth into that of the animal, following which it forsaketh the life of the animal and riseth into the realm of human life, and this is out of the grace of thy Lord, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 157-158)

The mystery of sacrifice is that man should sacrifice all his conditions for the divine station of God. The station of God is mercy, kindness, forgiveness, sacrifice, favor, grace and giving life to the spirits and lighting the fire of His love in the hearts and arteries.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, p. 65)

It is incumbent upon thee, since thou hast attained the knowledge of God and His love, to sacrifice thy spirit and all thy conditions for the life of the world, bearing every difficulty for the comfort of the souls, sinking to the depth of the sea of ordeals for the sake of the love of faithfulness and burning with the fire of torture and regret like unto a lamp while the light is shining from thee unto the surroundings.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, p. 65)

Until man is born again from the world of nature, that is to say, becomes detached from the world of nature, he is essentially an animal, and it is the teachings of God which convert this animal into a human soul.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 304)

❖ “...*He hath singled out for His special favor...*”

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 favor 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

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 77-78)

Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace; and this plane of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self, that the radiance of the living God may then shine forth.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 76)

Therefore today “victory” neither hath been nor will be opposition to anyone, 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 desireth “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 beside God: afterwards let him turn his regards towards the cities of [others’] hearts.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *A Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 63)

❖ “*All these names and attributes are applicable to him.*”

“All these names and attributes are applicable to him.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 101; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 177)

“No one save a severed soul or a sincere heart finds response from God.”

(Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, No. 6, pp. 43, considered as “pilgrims’ note”)

❖ “...*Man is My Mystery...*”

Even as He hath said: “Man is My mystery, and I am his mystery.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 101; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 177)

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.” [Qur’án 41:53.] Again He saith: “And also in your own selves: will ye not then behold the signs of God?” [Qur’án 51:21.] 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.” [Qur’án 51:21.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 101; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 177-178)

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.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 101-102; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 177-178)

In the Name of God, the Clement, the Merciful. Praise be to God Who hath made being to come forth from nothingness; graven upon the tablet of man the secrets of preexistence; taught him from the mysteries of divine utterance that which he knew not; made him a Luminous Book unto those who believed and surrendered themselves; caused him to witness the creation of all things (Kullu Shay’) in this black and ruinous age, and to speak forth from the apex of eternity with a wondrous voice in the Excellent Temple [1]: to the end that every man may testify, in himself, by himself, in the station of the Manifestation of his Lord, that verily there is no God save Him, and that every man may thereby win his way to the summit of realities, until none shall contemplate anything whatsoever but that he shall see God therein. [1 The Manifestation.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 1-2) [Italics and underlining added –ed.]

[Note: *Kull-i-Shay'* or *Kullu Shay* literally means “*All things*”. A Bádí calendar period comprising nineteen Váhids (or 361 years). We are living in the first Kullu Shay'. Its numerical value is 361, or 19 x 19, as 19 is the numerical measure of one Váhid (or 19 years). Bahá'u'lláh declared his Mission in the year 19. (For more: Cf.: Marzieh Gail, *Bahá'í Glossary*, p. 27) –ed.]

...Astonishment here is highly prized, and utter poverty essential. Wherefore hath it been said, “Poverty is My pride.” [Muhammad] And again: “God hath a people beneath the dome of glory, whom He hideth in the clothing of radiant poverty.” [Hadith] These are they who see with His eyes, hear with His ears, as it is written in the well-known tradition.

Concerning this realm, there is many a tradition and many a verse, of broad or special relevancy, but two of these will suffice to serve as a light for men of mind and heart.

The first is His statement: “O My Servant! Obey Me and I shall make thee like unto Myself. I say ‘Be,’ and it is, and thou shalt say ‘Be,’ and it shall be.” And the second: “O Son of Adam! Seek fellowship with none until thou hast found Me, and whenever thou shalt long for Me, thou shalt find Me close to thee.”

Whatever high proofs and wondrous allusions are recounted herein, concern but a single Letter, a single Point. “Such hath been the way of God ... and no change canst thou find in the way of God.” [Qur’án 33:62; 48:23.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Four Valleys*, pp. 62-63)

Secrets are many, but strangers are myriad. Volumes will not suffice to hold the mystery of the Beloved One, nor can it be exhausted in these pages, although it be no more than a word, no more than a sign. “Knowledge is a single point, but the ignorant have multiplied it.” [Hadith, i.e. action or utterance traditionally attributed to the Prophet Muhammad or to one of the holy Imams.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 24)

d. Thy heart is My home...

O SON OF BEING!

Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. Thy spirit
is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 59)

[Cf. up ahead: passages on the “human spirit”, page 176 and following, this compilation –ed.]

How often hath the human heart, which is the recipient of the light of God and the seat of the revelation of the All-Merciful, erred from Him Who is the Source of that light and the Well Spring of that revelation. It is the waywardness of the heart that removeth it far from God, and condemneth it to remoteness from Him. Those hearts, however, that are aware of His Presence, are close to Him, and are to be regarded as having drawn nigh unto His throne.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 186)

“Neither doth My earth nor My heaven contain Me, but the heart of My faithful servant containeth Me.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 21-22)

“Earth and heaven cannot contain Me; what can alone contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me, and is faithful to My Cause.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 186)

No one save a severed soul or a sincere heart finds response from God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, No. 6, p. 43, considered as “*pilgrims’ note*”)

‘For many are called, but few are chosen.’ [Matthew 22:14.] That is, to many is it offered, but rare is the soul who is singled out to receive the great bestowal of guidance.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 9)

❖ “...*chosen out of the whole world...*”

He hath chosen out of the whole world the *hearts* of His servants, and made them each a seat for the revelation of His glory. Wherefore, sanctify them from every defilement, that the things for which they were created may be engraven upon them. This indeed is a token of God’s bountiful favor.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 297) [Italics added –ed.]

In this weighty and incomparable Document [*] its Author [Bahá'u'lláh]...singles out as His special domain the hearts of men....

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 239 [*Refers to the *Will and Testament* of the “Lord of the Covenant” (Bahá’u’lláh, Himself) –ed.]

❖ “*He must so cleanse his heart...*”

...[H]e 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 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 vainglory....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 192; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 264)

The spirit that animateth the human heart is the knowledge of God, and its truest adorning is the recognition of the truth that “He doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordaineth that which He pleaseth.” Its raiment is the fear of God, and its perfection steadfastness in His Faith. Thus God instructeth whosoever seeketh Him. He, verily, loveth the one that turneth towards Him. There is none other God but Him, the Forgiving, the Most Bountiful. All praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 290-291)

Praise be to God Who hath made being to come forth from nothingness; graven upon the tablet of man the secrets of preexistence; taught him from the mysteries of divine utterance that which he knew not; made him a Luminous Book unto those who believed and surrendered themselves; caused him to witness the creation of all things (Kullu Shay’) in this black and ruinous age, and to speak forth from the apex of eternity with a wondrous voice in the Excellent Temple [The Manifestation]: *to the end that every man may testify, in himself, by himself, in the station of the Manifestation of his Lord*, that verily there is no God save Him, *and that every man may thereby win his way to the summit of realities, until none shall contemplate anything whatsoever but that he shall see God therein.* . [Cf. Definition: “Kullu Shay’”, cited previously, on page 172 of this compilation –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 1-2) [Italics and underlining added for emphasis – ed.]

...The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. ...None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 254) [Underling added –ed.]

e. A sign of His Revelation...

Consider the rational faculty with which God hath endowed the essence of man.... [T]his rational faculty...should be regarded as *a sign of the revelation* of Him Who is the sovereign Lord of all.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 164) [Italics added –ed.]

The human spirit, which distinguishes man from the animal, is the rational soul, and these two terms—the human spirit and the rational soul—designate one and the same thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is called the rational soul, encompasses all things and as far as human capacity permits, discovers their realities and becomes aware of the properties and effects, the characteristics and conditions of earthly things...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 55, Section 5, p. ...)

❖ “*Consider the rational faculty with which God hath endowed...man...*”

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....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 164)

There are five outward material powers in man which are the means of perception—that is, five powers whereby man perceives material things. They are sight, which perceives sensible forms;

hearing, which perceives audible sounds; smell, which perceives odours; taste, which perceives edible things; and touch, which is distributed throughout the body and which perceives tactile realities. These five powers perceive external objects.

Man has likewise a number of spiritual powers: the power of imagination, which forms a mental image of things; thought, which reflects upon the realities of things; comprehension, which understands these realities; and memory, which retains whatever man has imagined, thought, and understood. The intermediary between these five outward powers and the inward powers is a common faculty, a sense which mediates between them and which conveys to the inward powers whatever the outward powers have perceived. It is termed the common faculty as it is shared in common between the outward and inward powers.

For instance, sight, which is one of the outward powers, sees and perceives this flower and conveys this perception to the inward power of the common faculty; the common faculty transmits it to the power of imagination, which in turn conceives and forms this image and transmits it to the power of thought; the power of thought reflects upon it and, having apprehended its reality, conveys it to the power of comprehension; the comprehension, once it has understood it, delivers the image of the sensible object to the memory, and the memory preserves it in its repository....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 56, Sections 1-4, p. ...) [Underling added –ed.]

❖ “*It is indubitably clear...*”

It is indubitably clear and evident that each of these afore-mentioned 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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 164) [Underlining added –ed.]

...But the human spirit, unless it be assisted by the spirit of faith, cannot become acquainted with the divine mysteries and the heavenly realities. It is like a mirror which, although clear, bright, and polished, is still in need of light. Not until a sunbeam falls upon it can it discover the divine mysteries.

As for the mind, it is the power of the human spirit. The spirit is as the lamp, and the mind as the light that shines from it. The spirit is as the tree, and the mind as the fruit. The mind is the perfection of the spirit and a necessary attribute thereof, even as the rays of the sun are an essential requirement of the sun itself.

This explanation, however brief, is complete. Reflect upon it and, God willing, you will grasp the details.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 56, Sections 5-7, p. ...)

❖ “...*Through its manifestation all these names and attributed have been revealed...*”

...this rational faculty.... Through its manifestation all these names and attributes have been revealed, and by the suspension of its action they are all destroyed and perish.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 164) [Underling added –ed.]

...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 Báb, cited by Nabil-i-A’zam, in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 92)

...names and attributes of God, such as knowledge...power, sovereignty...dominion, mercy...wisdom, glory, bounty...grace....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 103; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh* p. 48)

For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God.... All these names and attributes are applicable to him [man].

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 101; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 177)

O YE the embodiments of justice and equity and the manifestations of uprightness and of heavenly bounties....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 57)

Say: Honesty, virtue, wisdom and a saintly character redound to the exaltation of man, while dishonesty, imposture, ignorance and hypocrisy lead to his abasement....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 57)

...man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 35)

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 259-260)

These gifts, however, do not manifest themselves in the reality of man save through a celestial and divine power and through the heavenly teachings, for they require a supernatural power....

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 15, Section 8, p. ...)

❖ [“...*Through its manifestation...*”

Consider the rational faculty... Through its manifestation all these names and attributes have been revealed, and by the suspension of its action they are all destroyed and perish.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 163-164)]

...Whereupon the maid of heaven looked out from her exalted chamber,

...And with her brow signed to the Celestial Concourse,

...Flooding with the light of her countenance the heaven and the earth,

...And as the radiance of her beauty shone upon the people of dust,

...All beings were shaken in their mortal graves.

...She then raised the call which no ear through all eternity hath ever heard,

...And thus proclaimed: “By the Lord! He whose heart hath not the fragrance of the love of the exalted and glorious Arabian Youth,

...”Can in no wise ascend unto the glory of the highest heaven.”

...Thereupon she summoned unto herself one maiden from her handmaidens,

...And commanded her: “Descend into space from the mansions of eternity,

...”And turn thou unto that which they have concealed in the inmost of their hearts.

...”Shouldst thou inhale the perfume of the robe from the Youth that hath been hidden within the tabernacle of light by reason of that which the hands of the wicked have wrought,

... "Raise a cry within thyself, that all the inmates of the chambers of Paradise, that are the embodiments of the eternal wealth, may understand and hearken;

... "That they may all come down from their everlasting chambers and tremble,

... "And kiss their hands and feet for having soared to the heights of faithfulness;

... "Perchance they may find from their robes the fragrance of the Beloved One."

... Thereupon the countenance of the favored damsel beamed above the celestial chambers even as the light that shineth from the face of the Youth above His mortal temple;

... She then descended with such an adorning as to illumine the heavens and all that is therein.

... She bestirred herself and perfumed all things in the lands of holiness and grandeur.

... When she reached that place she rose to her full height in the midmost heart of creation,

... And sought to inhale their fragrance at a time that knoweth neither beginning nor end.

... She found not in them that which she did desire, and this, verily, is but one of His wondrous tales.

... She then cried aloud, wailed and repaired to her own station within her most lofty mansion,

... And then gave utterance to one mystic word, whispered privily by her honeyed tongue,

... And raised the call amidst the Celestial Concourse and the immortal maids of heaven:

... "By the Lord! I found not from these idle claimants the breeze of Faithfulness!

... "By the Lord! The Youth hath remained lone and forlorn in the land of exile in the hands of the ungodly."

... She then uttered within herself such a cry that the Celestial Concourse did shriek and tremble,

... And she fell upon the dust and gave up the spirit. It seemeth she was called and hearkened unto Him that summoned her unto the Realm on High.

... Glorified be He that created her out of the essence of love in the midmost heart of His exalted paradise!

... Thereupon the maids of heaven hastened forth from their chambers, upon whose countenances the eye of no dweller in the highest paradise had ever gazed.

... They all gathered around her, and lo! they found her body fallen upon the dust;

... And as they beheld her state and comprehended a word of the tale told by the Youth, they bared their heads, rent their garments asunder, beat upon their faces, forgot their joy, shed tears and

smote with their hands upon their cheeks, and this is verily one of the mysterious grievous afflictions....

(Bahá'u'lláh, extract from "The Tablet of the Holy Mariner", Bahá'í Prayers, pp. 224-227)
[Note: Taherzadeh writes in The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, Vol. I, p. 230, "After each verse, except the last three, is the refrain: "Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious". –ed.]

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 [The Qur'an]: '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. ...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 Báb, cited by Nabil-i-A'zam, in The Dawn-Breakers, p. 93)

As bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwell on earth the fragrance of fidelity. ...Thereupon the Maid of Heaven hastened forth unveiled and resplendent from Her mystic mansion, and asked of their names, and all were told but one. ...”Thus far and no farther.” Verily, We bear witness unto that which they have done, and now are doing.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 91-92)

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.’

(The Báb, cited by Nabil-i-A'zam, in The Dawn-Breakers, p. 93)

Cast the idle tales behind your backs and behold My Revelation through Mine eyes. Unto this have ye been exhorted in heavenly Books and Scriptures, in the Scrolls and Tablets.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 241)

The principles of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart....

(Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 22)

❖ *“Intone, O My servant...”*

Intone, O My servant, the verses of God that have been received by thee, as intoned by them who have drawn nigh unto Him, that the sweetness of thy melody may kindle thine own soul, and attract the hearts of all men. Whoso reciteth, in the privacy of his chamber, the verses revealed by God, the scattering angels of the Almighty shall scatter abroad the fragrance of the words uttered by his mouth, and shall cause the heart of every righteous man to throb. Though he may, at first, remain unaware of its effect, yet the virtue of the grace vouchsafed unto him must needs sooner or later exercise its influence upon his soul. Thus have the mysteries of the Revelation of God been decreed by virtue of the Will of Him Who is the Source of power and wisdom.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 295; and *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. iv)

“A servant is drawn unto Me in prayer until I answer him; and when I have answered him, I become the ear wherewith he heareth...”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 22)

...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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 195; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 267)

Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power. To this beareth witness that which the Pen of Revelation hath revealed. Meditate upon this, O men of insight!...

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 22)



It would be wholly untrue to maintain that this [rational –ed.] 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 164-165)

[*sign: “this rational faculty, which should be regarded as a sign of the revelation of Him Who is the sovereign Lord of all.” (Op. Cit., above, from: *Gleanings...*, p. 164) – ed.]

From among all created things He hath singled out for His special favor 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....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 77)

For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 101; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 177)

“He hath known God who hath known himself.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 102; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 178)

O My servants! My holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing luster. It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been pre-ordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets. ...O My servants! The one true God is My witness! This most great, this fathomless and surging Ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you. Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein! Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye

but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favor, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty.

O My servants! Could ye apprehend with what wonders of My munificence and bounty I have willed to entrust your souls, ye would, of a truth, rid yourselves of attachment to all created things, and would gain a true knowledge of your own selves—a knowledge which is the same as the comprehension of Mine own Being. Ye would find yourselves independent of all else but Me, and would perceive, with your inner and outer eye, and as manifest as the revelation of My effulgent Name, the seas of My loving-kindness and bounty moving within you.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 326-327)

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.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 165-166) [Italics added —ed.]

The duty of long years of love obey
 And tell the tale of happy days gone by,
 That land and sky may laugh aloud today,
 And it may gladden mind and heart and eye.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 60)

This is the realm of full awareness, of utter self-effacement. Even love is no pathway to this region, and longing hath no dwelling here; wherefore is it said, "Love is a veil betwixt the lover and the beloved." Here love becometh an obstruction and a barrier, and all else save Him is but a curtain.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 60)

...this station is the apex of consciousness and the secret of divine guidance. This is the center of the mystery: "He doth what He willeth, ordaineth what He pleaseth."

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 57)

To attain to this supreme station is, however, dependent on the realization of certain conditions: The first condition is firmness in the Covenant of God. For the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh from the doubts of the people of error....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 51)

...Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner, the Author, and the True Exemplar of the Bahá'í Cause, as set forth in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved’s sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present-day Bahá'í administration throughout the world...

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 90; and *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 5)

4. Firmness in the Covenant: the station of full recognition

Blessed is the man that hath acknowledged his belief in God and in His signs, and recognized that "He shall not be asked of His doings." Such a recognition hath been made by God the ornament of every belief, and its very foundation. Upon it must depend the acceptance of every goodly deed. Fasten your eyes upon it, that haply the whisperings of the rebellious may not cause you to slip.

Were He to decree as lawful the thing which from time immemorial had been forbidden, and forbid that which had, at all times, been regarded as lawful, to none is given the right to question His authority. Whoso will hesitate, though it be for less than a moment, should be regarded as a transgressor.

Whoso hath not recognized this sublime and fundamental verity, and hath failed to attain this most exalted station, the winds of doubt will agitate him, and the sayings of the infidels will distract his soul. He that hath acknowledged this principle will be endowed with the most perfect constancy. All honor to this all-glorious station, the remembrance of which adorneth every exalted Tablet. Such is the teaching which God bestoweth on you, a teaching that will deliver you from all manner of doubt and perplexity, and enable you to attain unto salvation in both this world and in the next. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bountiful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 86-87)

The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man to know God. In this Day whosoever is guided by the fragrance of the raiment of His mercy to gain admittance into the pristine Abode, which is the station of recognizing the Source of divine commandments and the Dayspring of His Revelation, hath everlastingly attained unto all good. Having reached this lofty station a twofold obligation resteth upon every soul. One is to be steadfast in the Cause with such steadfastness that were all the peoples of the world to attempt to prevent him from turning to the Source of Revelation, they would be powerless to do so. The other is observance of the divine ordinances which have streamed forth from the wellspring of His heavenly-propelled Pen. For man's knowledge of God cannot develop fully and adequately save by observing whatsoever hath been ordained by Him and is set forth in His heavenly Book.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 267-268)

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Day Spring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof, hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. It behoveth every one who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Paragraph 1, p. 19)

The first and foremost duty prescribed unto men, next to the recognition of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, is the duty of steadfastness in His Cause. Cleave thou unto it, and be of them whose minds are firmly fixed and grounded in God. No act, however meritorious, did or can ever compare unto it. It is the king of all acts, and to this thy Lord, the All-Highest, the Most Powerful, will testify....

The virtues and attributes pertaining unto God are all evident and manifest, and have been mentioned and described in all the heavenly Books. Among them are trustworthiness, truthfulness, purity of heart while communing with God, forbearance, resignation to whatever the Almighty hath decreed, contentment with the things His Will hath provided, patience, nay, thankfulness in the midst of tribulation, and complete reliance, in all circumstances, upon Him. These rank, according to the estimate of God, among the highest and most laudable of all acts. All other acts are, and will ever remain, secondary and subordinate unto them....

The spirit that animateth the human heart is the knowledge of God, and its truest adorning is the recognition of the truth that "He doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordaineth that which He

pleaseth.” Its raiment is the fear of God, and its perfection steadfastness in His Faith. Thus God instructeth whosoever seeketh Him. He, verily, loveth the one that turneth towards Him. There is none other God but Him, the Forgiving, the Most Bountiful. All praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 290-291) [Italics and underlining added –ed.]

[Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, p. 22)]

❖ “...hold fast to that which will ‘elevate’ their ‘station’...”

In this weighty and incomparable Document its Author discloses the character of that “excellent and priceless heritage” bequeathed by Him to His “heirs”; proclaims afresh the fundamental purpose of His Revelation; enjoins the “peoples of the world” to hold fast to that which will “elevate” their “station”; announces to them that “God hath forgiven what is past”....

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 239)

❖ [“I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls...concealed in the depths...”

Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean. I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine.... [Underling added –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 327-328)]

[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 favor 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. [Underling added –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 77-78)]

...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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 65) [Underlining added –ed.]

I have, moreover, with the hand of divine power, unsealed the choice wine of My Revelation, and have wafted its holy, its hidden, and musk-laden fragrance upon all created things. Who else but yourselves is to be blamed if ye choose to remain unendowed with so great an outpouring of God's transcendent and all-encompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy?...

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 327)

True belief in God and recognition of Him cannot be complete save by acceptance of that which He hath revealed and by observance of whatsoever hath been decreed by Him and set down in the Book by the Pen of Glory.

... The second Tajalli is to remain steadfast in the Cause of God—exalted be His glory—and to be unswerving in His love. And this can in no wise be attained except through full recognition [*] of Him; and full recognition cannot be obtained save by faith in the blessed words: 'He doeth whatsoever He willeth.' Whoso tenaciously cleaveth unto this sublime word and drinketh deep from the living waters of utterance which are inherent therein, will be imbued with such a constancy that all the books of the world will be powerless to deter him from the Mother Book. O how glorious is this sublime station, this exalted rank, this ultimate purpose!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 50-51) [Underlining added –ed.] [*Cf. “recognize”: (literally: “to know again” or “honor” and “acknowledge”) – from Webster's definition on page 62 of this compilation –ed.]

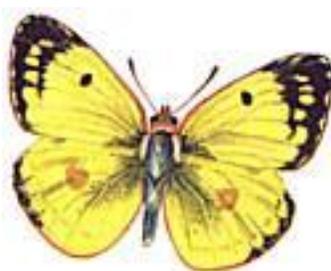
...By faith is meant, first, conscious knowledge, and second, the practice of good deeds.

(From an early translation of: Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha* v3, p. 549)

[Revised Translation:] Pleasing and acceptable as is a righteous person before God's Holy Threshold, yet good works should proceed from knowledge...The point is this, that faith compriseth both knowledge and the performance of good works. (as provided by The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated Oct. 22, 1996, entitled: “Authentication and Authority” [Underlining added –ed.]

In sum, the meaning of “He doeth whatsoever He willeth” is that if the Manifestation of God issues a command, enforces a law, or performs an action whose wisdom His followers cannot grasp, they should not think for a moment of questioning His words or actions. All souls are under the shadow of the universal Manifestation, must submit to the authority of the religion of God, and are not to deviate so much as a hairsbreadth. Rather, they must conform their every act and deed to the religion of God, and should they deviate from it they will be reprov'd and held accountable before God. It is certain that they have no share of the station “He doeth whatsoever He willeth”, for it is confined to the universal Manifestation of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, Chapter 45, Section 9, p. ...)



a. The Religion of God consists of two parts

“...The religion of God consists of two parts: One is the very foundation and belongs to the spiritual realm; that is, it pertains to spiritual virtues and divine qualities. This part suffers neither change nor alteration....”

“...The second part of the religion of God, which pertains to the material world... ..is modified and altered in each prophetic cycle in accordance with the necessities of the times.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Section 10, passim, pp.-...)

1) Never deny the spiritual to the material

“...never deny the spiritual things to the material, rather both are incumbent upon thee....”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, p. 448)



❖ “...*The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence...*”

“Verily I say: The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence and a safe stronghold for all the peoples of the world. ...Indeed, there existeth in man a faculty which deterreth him from, and guardeth him against, whatever is unworthy and unseemly, and which is known as his sense of shame. This, however, is confined to but a few; all have not possessed, and do not possess, it...”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 27; and *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 63)

He should cleanse his heart from all evil passions and corrupt desires, for the fear of God is the weapon that can render him victorious, the primary instrument whereby he can achieve his purpose. The fear of God is the shield that defendeth His Cause, the buckler that enableth His people to attain to victory. It is a standard that no man can abase, a force that no power can rival. By its aid, and by the leave of Him Who is the Lord of Hosts, they that have drawn nigh unto God have been able to subdue and conquer the citadels of the hearts of men.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 272)

The fear of God... is the chief cause of the protection of mankind, and the supreme instrument for its preservation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 27; and *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 63)

❖ “...*The mystery of sacrifice...*”

It is incumbent upon thee, since thou hast attained the knowledge of God and His love, to sacrifice thy spirit and all thy conditions for the life of the world, bearing every difficulty for the comfort of the souls, sinking to the depth of the sea of ordeals for the sake of the love of faithfulness and burning with the fire of torture and regret like unto a lamp while the light is shining from thee unto the surroundings.

[Cf.: "...As bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwell on earth the fragrance of fidelity...." (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 91)]

...The mystery of sacrifice is that man should sacrifice all his conditions for the divine station of God. The station of God is mercy, kindness, forgiveness, sacrifice, favor, grace and giving life to the spirits and lighting the fire of His love in the hearts and arteries....

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, v 1, p. 65)

[Cf.: "...The religion of God consists of two parts: One is the very foundation and belongs to the spiritual realm; that is, it pertains to spiritual virtues and divine qualities...It is faith, knowledge, certitude, justice, piety, high-mindedness, trustworthiness, love of God, and charity. It is mercy to the poor, assistance to the oppressed, generosity to the needy, and upliftment of the fallen. It is purity, detachment, humility, forbearance, patience, and constancy.."

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Section 7, p. ...)

and...

❖ "*Upon the reality of man...*"

"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...."

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 65) –ed.]

❖ "*Fear ye the Merciful.*"

The more grievous their woes, the greater waxed the love of the people of Bahá. Unto their sincerity hath borne witness what the All-Merciful hath sent down in the Qur'án. He saith: 'Wish ye, then, for death, if ye are sincere.' ...

... Thereupon hath the cry and the lamentation of the true Faith been raised once again, saying: "Verily, Sinai calleth aloud and saith: '...Fear ye the Merciful. Indeed have I attained unto Him Who conversed upon me, and the ecstasies of my joy have seized the pebbles of the earth and the dust thereof.' And the Bush exclaimeth: '...Judge ye fairly that which hath in truth been manifested. Verily the Fire which God revealed unto the One Who conversed with Him is now manifested. Unto this beareth witness every man of insight and understanding.'"

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 85-86)

The day is approaching when the wrathful anger of the Almighty will have taken hold of them. He, verily, is the Omnipotent, the All-Subduing, the Most Powerful. He shall cleanse the earth from the defilement of their corruption, and shall give it for an heritage unto such of His servants as are nigh unto Him.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 208; and as cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 81, and *The Promised Day Is Come*, pp. 3-4)

...If he expressed publicly his love for some particular person, in his heart he loved him more; if he eulogized him, in his heart he praised him more. He was fervent and zealous. If he was displeased with a person, he could not hold conversation with him....”

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá regarding the passing of Mirza Abul-Fazl [Fadl], and cited in *The Bahá’í Proofs*, “Tributes and Eulogies...”, p. 22, but extracted from The Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, hence considered as “pilgrims’ note”)

...The Kingdom of God is founded upon equity and justice, and also upon mercy, compassion, and kindness to every living soul. Strive ye then with all your heart to treat compassionately all humankind—except for those who have some selfish, private motive, or some disease of the soul. Kindness cannot be shown the tyrant, the deceiver, or the thief, because, far from awakening them to the error of their ways, it maketh them to continue in their perversity as before. No matter how much kindness ye may expend upon the liar, he will but lie the more, for he believeth you to be deceived, while ye understand him but too well, and only remain silent out of your extreme compassion.

... Most human beings are sinners, but the beasts are innocent. Surely those without sin should receive the most kindness and love—all except animals which are harmful, such as bloodthirsty wolves, ...poisonous snakes, and similar pernicious creatures, the reason being that kindness to these is an injustice to human beings and to other animals as well....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 158-159) [Bold, underlining and italics added –ed.]

Never be depressed. The more ye are stirred by violation, the more deepen ye in firmness and steadfastness, and be assured that the divine hosts shall conquer, for they are assured of the victory of the Abha Kingdom. ...for only a few weak souls have been led away by the flattery and the specious arguments of the violators who are outwardly with the greatest care exhibiting firmness but inwardly are engaged in *agitating souls*... [Italics added –ed.]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 211-212)

...But the friends of God must be awake and must know that the scattering of these doubts hath as its motive personal desires and the achievement of leadership.

Do not disrupt Bahá'í unity, and know that this unity cannot be maintained save through faith in the Covenant of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 214-215)

Praise be to God, all such doors are closed in the Cause...for a special authoritative Centre hath been appointed—a Centre that solveth all difficulties and wardeth off all differences....

Thus it is seen that no means for dissension hath been left, but carnal desires are the cause of difference as it is the case with the violators. These do not doubt the validity of the Covenant but selfish motives have dragged them to this condition. It is not that they do not know what they do—they are perfectly aware and still they exhibit opposition.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 215-216)

It is early morning, and the reviving winds of the Abha Paradise are blowing over all creation, but they can stir only the pure of heart, and only the pure sense can detect their fragrance. Only the perceiving eye beholdeth the rays of the sun; only the listening ear can hear the singing of the Concourse on high. Although the plentiful rains of spring, the bestowals of Heaven, pour down upon all things, they can only fructify good soil; they love not brackish ground, where no results of all the bounty can be shown.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 22)

Hold thou fast to the Covenant of thy Lord, and as the days go by, increase thy store of love for His beloved ones. Bend thou with tenderness over the servitors of the All-Merciful, that thou mayest hoist the sail of love upon the ark of peace that moveth across the seas of life. Let nothing grieve thee, and be thou angered at none. It behoveth thee to be content with the Will of God, and a true and loving and trusted friend to all the peoples of the earth, without any exceptions whatever. This is the quality of the sincere, the way of the saints, the emblem of those who believe in the unity of God, and the raiment of the people of Bahá.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 25)

Walk, therefore, with a sure step and engage with the utmost assurance and confidence in the promulgation of the divine fragrances, the glorification of the Word of God and firmness in the Covenant. Rest ye assured that if a soul ariseth in the utmost perseverance and raiseth the Call of the Kingdom and resolutely promulgateth the Covenant, be he an insignificant ant he shall be enabled

to drive away the formidable elephant from the arena, and if he be a feeble moth he shall cut to pieces the plumage of the rapacious vulture.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 209)

O ye loved ones of God! In this, the Bahá’í dispensation, God’s Cause is spirit unalloyed. His Cause belongeth not to the material world. It cometh neither for strife nor war, nor for acts of mischief or of shame; it is neither for quarrelling with other Faiths, nor for conflicts with the nations. Its only army is the love of God, its only joy the clear wine of His knowledge, its only battle the expounding of the Truth; its one crusade is against the insistent self, the evil promptings of the human heart. Its victory is to submit and yield, and to be selfless is its everlasting glory. In brief, it is spirit upon spirit:

Unless ye must,
Bruise not the serpent in the dust,
How much less wound a man.
And if ye can,
No ant should ye alarm,
Much less a brother harm.

Let all your striving be for this, to become the source of life and immortality, and peace and comfort and joy, to every human soul, whether one known to you or a stranger, one opposed to you or on your side. Look ye not upon the purity or impurity of his nature: look ye upon the all-embracing mercy of the Lord, the light of Whose grace hath embosomed the whole earth and all who dwell thereon, and in the plenitude of Whose bounty are immersed both the wise and the ignorant....

...It behoveth the loved ones of the Lord to be the signs and tokens of His universal mercy and the embodiments of His own excelling grace. Like the sun, let them cast their rays upon garden and rubbish heap alike,.... Such are the attributes of the righteous, such is the distinguishing mark of those who serve His Threshold....

...Wherefore must the loved ones of God, laboriously, with the waters of their striving, tend and nourish and foster this tree of hope. In whatsoever land they dwell, let them with a whole heart befriend and be companions to those who are either close to them, or far removed. Let them, with qualities like unto those of heaven, promote the institutions and the religion of God. Let them never lose heart, never be despondent, never feel afflicted. The more antagonism they meet, the more let

them show their own good faith; the more torments and calamities they have to face, the more generously let them pass round the bounteous cup. Such is the spirit which will become the life of the world, such is the spreading light at its heart: and he who may be and do other than this is not worthy to serve at the Holy Threshold of the Lord.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, passim, pp. 256-257)

Endeavour, therefore, that ye may scatter and disperse the army of doubt and of error with the power of the holy utterances. This is my exhortation and this is my counsel. Do not quarrel with anybody, and shun every form of dispute. Utter the Word of God. If he accepteth it the desired purpose is attained, and if he turneth away leave him to himself and trust to God.

Such is the attribute of those who are firm in the Covenant.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 210)

Arise thou...with the power of the Kingdom, with a divine confirmation, with a genuine zeal and ardour and with a flame of the love of God. Roar like unto a lion and exhibit such ecstasy and love among these few souls that praise and glorification may continuously reach thee from the divine Kingdom and mighty confirmations may descend upon thee. Rest thou assured. If thou dost act accordingly and hoist the standard of the Covenant, Paris shall burst into flame. Be constantly attached to and seek always the confirmations of Bahá’u’lláh for these turn the drop into a sea and convert the gnat into an eagle.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 103)

...All things are beneficial if joined with the love of God; and without His love all things are harmful, and act as a veil between man and the Lord of the Kingdom....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 181)

❖ “*Be not afraid...*”

Be not afraid of anyone, place thy whole trust in God....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 190)

“*And if he feareth not God, God will make him to fear all things; whereas all things fear him who feareth God.*” [from the Arabic]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 58) [Italics added for emphasis –ed.]

Thus, whoso seeketh to assist God must, before all else, conquer, with the sword of inner meaning and explanation, the city of his own heart and guard it from the remembrance of all save God, and only then set out to subdue the cities of the hearts of others.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 109)

Everyone, then, who desireth “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 beside God:

❖ [“*Arise, O people...*”

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.... (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 86; and *Gleanings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 93)]

...afterwards let him turn his regards [sic] towards the cities of [others’] hearts. This is what is intended by “victory”....

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *A Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 64)

2) *Obedience to the Administrative Order*

[A dynamic process, divinely propelled, possessed of undreamt-of potentialities, world-embracing in scope, world-transforming in its ultimate consequences, had been set in motion.... It was finally consummated by the laws and ordinances which He formulated....

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, passim, p. 237)]

❖ “*Through His Law, Bahá'u'lláh gradually unveils....*”

Through His Law, Bahá'u'lláh gradually unveils the significance of the new levels of knowledge and behaviour to which the peoples of the world are being called. He embeds His precepts in a setting of spiritual commentary, keeping ever before the mind of the reader the principle that these laws, no matter the subject with which they deal, serve the manifold purposes of bringing tranquillity to human society, raising the standard of human behaviour, increasing the range of human understanding, and spiritualizing the life of each and all. Throughout, it is the relationship of the individual soul to God and the fulfilment of its spiritual destiny that is the ultimate aim of the laws of religion.

“Think not”, is Bahá’u’lláh’s own assertion, “that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power.”

His Book of Laws is His “weightiest testimony unto all people, and the proof of the All-Merciful unto all who are in heaven and all who are on earth”.

(Bahá’u’lláh, cited by The Universal House of Justice, in the “Introduction” to the *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 2-3; [Cf. also, earlier, in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 327-328, and pp. 331-332 which follow... –ed.]

[O My servants! Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean. I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine — words of consummate power and wisdom. I have, moreover, with the hand of divine power, unsealed the choice wine of My Revelation, and have wafted its holy, its hidden, and musk-laden fragrance upon all created things. Who else but yourselves is to be blamed if ye choose to remain unendowed with so great an outpouring of God’s transcendent and all-encompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy?...

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 327-328)]

They whom God hath endued with insight will readily recognize that the precepts laid down by God constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples. He that turneth away from them, is accounted among the abject and foolish. We, verily, have commanded you to refuse the dictates of your evil passions and corrupt desires, and not to transgress the bounds which the Pen of the Most High hath fixed, for these are the breath of life unto all created things. The seas of Divine wisdom and divine utterance have risen under the breath of the breeze of the All-Merciful. Hasten to drink your fill, O men of understanding! They that have violated the Covenant of God by breaking His commandments, and have turned back on their heels, these have erred grievously in the sight of God, the All-Possessing, the Most High.

O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures. Thus hath it been sent down from the heaven of the Will of your Lord, the Lord of Revelation. Were any man to taste the sweetness of the words which the lips of the All-Merciful have willed to utter, he would, though the treasures of the earth be in his possession, renounce them one and all, that he might vindicate the truth of even one of His commandments, shining above the day spring of His bountiful care and loving-kindness.

Say: From My laws the sweet smelling savor of My garment can be smelled, and by their aid the standards of victory will be planted upon the highest peaks. The Tongue of My power hath, from the heaven of My omnipotent glory, addressed to My creation these words: “Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty.” Happy is the lover that hath inhaled the divine fragrance of his Best-Beloved from these words, laden with the perfume of a grace which no tongue can describe. By My life! He who hath drunk the choice wine of fairness from the hands of My bountiful favor, will circle around My commandments that shine above the Day Spring of My creation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 331-332)

To direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-sent process, and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension, an instrument divinely ordained, invested with indisputable authority, organically linked with the Author of the Revelation Himself, was clearly indispensable. That instrument Bahá'u'lláh had expressly provided through the institution of the Covenant, an institution which he had firmly established prior to His ascension.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 237-238)

❖ *“For this divine Covenant is an institution of the Lord...”*

“For this divine Covenant is an institution of the Lord. The Blessed Perfection, in all the tablets, books, epistles and supplications, has begged confirmation for and praised and commended those who are firm in this Covenant and Testament, and asked the wrath of God and woe and desolation unto the violators.” “For firmness in the Covenant will preserve the unity of the religion of God and the foundation of the religion of God will not be shaken.” (...Words of Abdu'l-Bahá [sic]: Portion of Tablet revealed for San Francisco Bahá'í Assembly, during 1912.) [Italics added –ed.]

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 17, p. 223, “pilgrims’ note”)

...The Covenant comprises divinely conceived arrangements necessary to preserve the organic unity of the Cause. It therefore engenders a motivating power which, as the beloved Master tells us, “like unto the artery, beats and pulsates in the body of the world”. “It is indubitably clear”, He asserts, “that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant.” Through it the meaning of the Word, both in theory and practice, is made evident in the life and work of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, the appointed Interpreter, the perfect Exemplar, the Centre of the Covenant. Through it the processes of the Administrative Order—“this unique, this wondrous System”—are made to operate.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, cited by the Universal House of Justice, in a Letter dated December 29, 1988, entitled: *Individual Rights and Freedoms*, p. 2)

❖ “*The Will of the divine Testator is this...*”

The Will of the divine Testator is this: It is incumbent upon the Aghsan, the Afnan 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 Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.’ The object of this sacred verse is none other 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....

... Say: O servants! Let not the means of order be made the cause of confusion and the instrument of union an occasion for discord.

(Bahá’u’lláh, from the “*Kitáb-i-’Ahd*” [Book of the Covenant], in *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh, passim*, p. 221)

There hath branched from the Sadratu’l-Muntaha 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 [that of the Most Great Branch and Center of the Covenant: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]; 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. [Italics added –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, from the “*Suriy-i-Ghusn*” [Tablet of the Branch], cited by Shoghi Effendi in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 134; in Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*. V 1, p. 135; and in H.M. Balyuzi, ‘*Abdu'l-Bahá: The Centre of the Covenant*, pp. 22-23)

PRAISE be to Him Who hath honoured the Land of Ba [1] through the presence of *Him round Whom all names revolve* [‘Abdu'l-Bahá]. All the atoms of the earth have announced unto all created things that from behind the gate of the Prison-city there hath appeared and above its horizon there hath shone forth the Orb of the beauty of the great, *the Most Mighty Branch of God — His ancient and immutable Mystery* — proceeding on its way to another land. Sorrow, thereby, hath enveloped this Prison-city, whilst another land rejoiceth. Exalted, immeasurably exalted is our Lord, the Fashioner of the heavens and the Creator of all things, He through Whose sovereignty the doors of the prison were opened, thereby causing what was promised aforetime in the Tablets to be fulfilled. He is verily potent over what He willeth, and in His grasp is the dominion of the entire creation. He is the All-Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. [1 Beirut. This Tablet is 'a letter dictated by Bahá'u'lláh and addressed by Mirza Aqa Jan, His amanuensis, to 'Abdu'l-Bahá while the latter was on a visit to Beirut.' (cited Shoghi Effendi in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 136.)]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 225) [Italics added —ed.]

By His supreme pen He [Bahá'u'lláh] hath explicitly declared that the object of the following verse of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is the Most Great Branch:

‘When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces toward Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.’ Its meaning briefly is this: that after My ascension it is incumbent upon the Aghsan, the Afnan and the kindred, and all the friends of God, to turn their faces to Him Who hath branched from the Ancient Root.

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 213)

[The passing of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá marked the termination of the first and Heroic Age of the Bahá'í Faith and signaled the opening of the Formative Age destined to witness the gradual emergence of its Administrative Order, whose establishment had been foretold by the Báb, whose laws were revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, whose outlines were delineated by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament, and whose foundations are now being laid by the national and local councils which are elected by the professed adherents of the Faith, and which are paving the way for the constitution of the World Council, to be designated as the Universal House of Justice, which in conjunction with me, as its appointed Head and authorized interpreter of the Bahá'í teachings, must coordinate and

direct the affairs of the Bahá'í community, and whose seat will be permanently established in the Holy Land, in close proximity to its world spiritual center, the resting-places of its Founders.

The Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh which is destined to evolve into the Bahá'í World Commonwealth, ...has already extended its ramifications to every continent of the globe.... ..It has published and disseminated, through its appointed agencies, Bahá'í literature... consolidated its structure through the incorporation of ...National Assemblies and ...local Assemblies, in lands as far apart as South America, India and the Antipodes — incorporations that legally empower its elected representatives to hold property as trustees of the Bahá'í community, ...and to solemnize Bahá'í marriage.... It disposes of international, national and local endowments, ...spread over every continent of the globe, [and] enjoys in several countries the privilege of official recognition by the civil authorities.... ..This Administrative Order, unlike the systems evolved after the death of the Founders of the various religions, is divine in origin, rests securely on the laws, the precepts, the ordinances and institutions which the Founder of the Faith has Himself specifically laid down and unequivocally established, and functions in strict accordance with the interpretations of the authorized Interpreters of its holy scriptures.

(Shoghi Effendi, from *Summary Statement – 1947**, *Special UN Committee on Palestine*, passim) [**Sometimes written as: “1948” –ed.*] [Cf. pp. 375-385 for this Statement –ed.]

❖ “*For he is...the Guardian of the Cause of God...*”

For he is, after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Guardian of the Cause of God, the Afnan, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of the Lord must obey him and turn unto him. ...To none is given the right to put forth his own opinion or express his particular conviction. All must seek guidance and turn unto the Center of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament*, p. 25-26)

It is incumbent upon the members of the House of Justice, upon all the Aghsan, the Afnan, the Hands of the Cause of God to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the Guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before him.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament*, p. 11)

The sacred and youthful branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abha Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of the Exalted One (may my life be offered up for them both). Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God; whoso rebelleth against him and against them hath rebelled

against God; whoso opposeth him hath opposed God; whoso contendeth with them hath contended with God; whoso disputeth with him hath disputed with God; whoso denieth him hath denied God; whoso disbelieveth in him hath disbelieved in God; whoso deviateth, separateth himself and turneth aside from him hath in truth deviated, separated himself and turned aside from God. May the wrath, the fierce indignation, the vengeance of God rest upon him!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament*, p. 11)

“Firmness in The Covenant means OBEDIENCE so that no one may say, ‘this is my opinion,’ nay rather he must obey that which proceeds from the Pen and Tongue of The Covenant.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. IV, No. 10, p. 174)

“If a soul utter a word without the sanction of the Covenant, he is not firm.... Remain firm even if the people of heaven try to shake you. Firmness in the Covenant is not mere words. The command is explicit.”

(The Research Department at the World Centre describes this reference as “excerpts from some instructions given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to several friends in America, July, 1912, which received His personal signature”, published in *Star of the West*, Vol. 11, No. 14, p. 239. However, as the original text could not be identified nor its authenticity verified, it is to be considered as “pilgrims’ note”.)

❖ “*It is incumbent upon every one not to take any step...*”

“It is incumbent upon every one not to take any step without consulting the Spiritual Assembly, and they must assuredly obey with heart and soul its bidding and be submissive unto it, that things may be properly ordered and well arranged. Otherwise every person will act independently and after his own judgment, will follow his own desire, and do harm to the Cause.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 21; and in *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, p. 42)

[In sum, the meaning of “He doeth whatsoever He willeth” is that if the Manifestation of God issues a command, enforces a law, or performs an action whose wisdom His followers cannot grasp, they should not think for a moment of questioning His words or actions. All souls are under the shadow of the universal Manifestation, must submit to the authority of the religion of God, and are not to deviate so much as a hairsbreadth. Rather, they must conform their every act and deed to the religion of God...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 174)]

The tests of every dispensation are in direct proportion to the greatness of the Cause, and as heretofore such a manifest Covenant, written by the Supreme Pen, hath not been entered upon, the tests are proportionately more severe. These trials cause the feeble souls to waver while those who are firm are not affected.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 210)

Should we build up the Administrative World Order to a point of absolute perfection but at the same time allow it to be hampered or disconnected from the channels within, through which channels the Holy Spirit of the Cause pours forth, we would have nothing more than a perfected body out of touch with and cut off from the finer promptings of the soul or spirit. If, on the other hand, the influxes and goings forth of the spirit are scattered, diffused, and subjected wholly to the more or less imperfect guidance and interpretation of individual believers, lacking both the wisdom secured through consultation and also the lights of real unity which shine through consultative action and obedience thereto – a disordered and disorganized activity would be witnessed, which would but dimly reflect the divine purpose for this age, which is no less than the establishment of the reign of divine love, justice, and wisdom in the world, under and in conformity to the Divine Law.

In the body of a man, which is the true divine example or parallel, the spirit, when in ideal control of all the lesser parts of the organism, finds the utmost harmony throughout the whole body – each part is in perfect reciprocity with the other parts. The commands and impulses of the spirit are obeyed by the body and the body in turn in its actions and functions identifies and determines the expression the spiritual impulses shall take. This is divine unity – and this law, being universal and found in every created object in the universe, has full application to the universal Bahá’í organism made up of believers everywhere, which has been established by the Manifestation of God.

(Shoghi Effendi, cited in *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, pp.1-2; and *Guidance for Today and Tomorrow*, pp. 110-111)

“To be a Bahá’í is to accept the Cause in its entirety.”

"... To accept the Cause without the administration is like to accept the teachings without acknowledging the divine station of Bahá'u'lláh. To be a Bahá'í is to accept the Cause in its entirety. To take exception to one basic principle is to deny the authority and sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh, and therefore is to deny the Cause. The administration is the social order of Bahá'u'lláh. Without it all the principles of the Cause will remain abortive. [T]o take exception to this, therefore, is to take exception to the fabric that Bahá'u'lláh has prescribed, it is to disobey his law."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, May 30, 1930, and cited in Hornby, *Lights of Guidance*, Selection #5, p. 2; and U.S. *Bahá'í News*, No. 43, August 1930, p. 3)

["I would only venture to state very briefly and as adequately as present circumstances permit the principal factors that must be taken into consideration before deciding whether a person may be regarded a true believer or not. Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner, the Author, and the True Exemplar of the Bahá'í Cause, as set forth in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present day Bahá'í Administration throughout the world—these I conceive to be the fundamental and primary considerations that must be fairly, discreetly and thoughtfully ascertained before reaching such a vital decision"]

(Shoghi Effendi: *Bahá'í Administration*, p.90)]

3) *The Balance: spirit and form*

["... close association with the spirit as well as the form..." (Cf.: Shoghi Effendi, above)

and...

❖ "...never deny..."

"...never deny the spiritual...to the material, rather both are incumbent upon thee....

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, v 2, p. 449) –ed.]

Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. Nothing short of the spirit of a true Bahá'í can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 63-64; and *Principals of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 44)

❖ “...in him are...revealed...”

[For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God.... All these names and attributes are applicable to him [man].

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 101; and also in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 177)]

There are only four accepted criteria of comprehension, that is, four criteria whereby the realities of things are understood.

The first criterion is that of the senses; that is, all that the eye, the ear, the taste, the smell, and the touch perceive is called “sensible”. At present all the European philosophers hold this to be the most perfect criterion. They claim that the greatest of all criteria is that of the senses, and they regard it as sacrosanct. And yet the criterion of the senses is defective, as it can err. For example, the greatest of the senses is the power of vision. The vision, however, sees a mirage as water and reckons images reflected in mirrors as real and existing; it sees large bodies as small, perceives a whirling point as a circle, imagines the earth to be stationary and the sun to be in motion, and is subject to many other errors of a similar nature. One cannot therefore rely implicitly upon it.

The second criterion is that of the intellect, which was the principal criterion of comprehension for those pillars of wisdom, the ancient philosophers. They deduced things through the power of the mind and relied on rational arguments: All their arguments are based upon reason. But despite this, they diverged greatly in their opinions. They would even change their own views: For twenty years they would deduce the existence of something through rational arguments, and then afterwards they would disprove the same, again through rational arguments. Even Plato at first proved through rational arguments the immobility of the earth and the movement of the sun, and then subsequently established, again through rational arguments, the centrality of the sun and the movement of the earth. Then the Ptolemaic theory became widespread, and Plato's theory was entirely forgotten until a modern astronomer revived it. Thus have the mathematicians disagreed among themselves, even though they all relied on rational arguments.

Likewise, at one time they would establish a thing by rational arguments and disprove it at another, again by rational arguments. So a philosopher would firmly uphold a view for a time and adduce a range of proofs and arguments to support it, and afterwards he would change his mind and contradict his former position by rational arguments.

It is therefore evident that the criterion of reason is imperfect, as proven by the disagreements existing between the ancient philosophers as well as by their want of consistency and their propensity to change their own views. For if the criterion of intellect were perfect, all should have been united in their thoughts and agreed in their opinions.

The third criterion is that of tradition, that is, the text of the Sacred Scriptures, when it is said, “God said thus in the Torah”, or “God said thus in the Gospel.” This criterion is not perfect either, because the traditions must be understood by the mind. As the mind itself is liable to error, how can it be said that it will attain to perfect truth and not err in comprehending and inferring the meaning of the traditions? For it is subject to error and cannot lead to certitude. This is the criterion of the leaders of religion. What they comprehend from the text of the Book, however, is that which their minds can understand and not necessarily the truth of the matter; for the mind is like a balance, and the meanings contained in the texts are like the objects to be weighed. If the balance is untrue, how can the weight be ascertained?

Know, therefore, that what the people possess and believe to be true is liable to error. For in proving or disproving a thing a proof drawn from the evidence of the senses is advanced, this criterion is clearly imperfect; if a rational proof is adduced, the same holds true; and likewise if a traditional proof is given. Thus it is clear that man does not possess any criterion of knowledge that can be relied upon.

But the grace of the Holy Spirit is the true criterion regarding which there is no doubt or uncertainty. That grace consists in the confirmations of the Holy Spirit which are vouchsafed to man and through which certitude is attained.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 83 “*in entirety*”, pp. ...-...)

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

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

...This is a proof perceptible to the senses, acceptable to reason, in accord with traditions and teachings of the Holy Books and verified by the promptings of human hearts themselves. It is a proof upon which we can absolutely rely and declare to be complete.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, passim, pp. 255-256; and *Foundations of World Unity*, passim, pp. 87-89)

...But the grace of the Holy Spirit is the true criterion regarding which there is no doubt or uncertainty. That grace consists in the confirmations of the Holy Spirit which are vouchsafed to man and through which certitude is attained.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 83, Section 8, p. ...)

❖ “*Knowledge is a single point...*”

“Knowledge is a single point, but the ignorant have multiplied it.” [Hadith, i.e. action or utterance traditionally attributed to the Prophet Muhammad or to one of the holy Imams.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 24-25)

Today the dynamic power of the world of existence is the power of the Covenant which like unto an artery pulsateth in the body of the contingent world and protecteth Bahá’í unity.

The Bahá’ís are commanded to establish the oneness of mankind; if they cannot unite around one point how will they be able to bring about the unity of mankind?

The purpose of the Blessed Beauty in entering into this Covenant and Testament was to gather all existent beings around one point so that the thoughtless souls, who in every cycle and generation have been the cause of dissension, may not undermine the Cause. He hath, therefore, commanded that whatever emanateth from the Centre of the Covenant is right and is under His protection and favour, while all else is error....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 208-209)

❖ “*Cleave thou, therefore...*”

Cleave thou, therefore, with the whole affection of thine heart, unto His love, and withdraw it from the love of anyone besides Him, that He may aid thee to immerse thyself in the ocean of His unity, and enable thee to become a true upholder of His oneness. God is My witness. My sole purpose in revealing to thee these words is to sanctify thee from the transitory things of the earth, and aid thee to enter the realm of everlasting glory, that thou mayest, by the leave of God, be of them that abide and rule therein.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, verse 71, pp. 214-215; and also in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 238)

Adorn the body of Thy kingdom with the raiment of My name, and arise, then, to teach My Cause. Better is this for thee than that which thou possessest. God will, thereby, exalt thy name among all the kings. Potent is He over all things. Walk thou amongst men in the name of God, and by the power of His might, that thou mayest show forth His signs amidst the peoples of the earth. Burn thou brightly with the flame of this undying Fire which the All-Merciful hath ignited in the midmost heart of creation, that through thee the heat of His love may be kindled within the hearts of His favoured ones. Follow in My way and enrapture the hearts of men through remembrance of Me, the Almighty, the Most Exalted.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, verse 145, p. 76)

O ye beloved of God, these are days for steadfastness, for firmness and perseverance in the Cause of God. Ye must not focus your attention upon the person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, for ere long he will bid you farewell. Rather must ye fix your gaze upon the Word of God. If the Word of God is being promoted, rejoice and be happy and thankful, though ‘Abdu’l-Bahá himself be threatened by the sword or burdened by the weight of chains and fetters. For the Holy Temple of the Cause of God is important, not the physical body of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The friends of God must arise with such steadfastness that if, at any moment, a hundred souls like ‘Abdu’l-Bahá become the target for the arrows of affliction, they will not shift or waver in their resolve, their determination, their enkindlement, their devotion and service in the Cause of God. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is himself a servant at the Threshold of the Blessed Beauty and a manifestation of pure and utter servitude at the Threshold of the Almighty. He hath no other station or title, no other rank or power. This is my ultimate Purpose, my eternal Paradise, my holiest Temple and my Sadratu’l-Muntaha.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 294-295)

“...Another commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another even as I love you. Great mercy and blessings are promised to the people of your land, but on one condition: that their hearts are filled with the fire of love, that they live in perfect kindness and harmony like one soul in different bodies. If they fail in this condition, the great blessings will be deferred. Never forget this; look at one another with the eye of perfection; **look at Me, follow Me, be as I am**; take no thought for yourselves or your lives, whether ye eat or whether ye sleep, whether ye are comfortable, whether ye are well or ill, whether ye are with friends or foes, whether ye receive praise or blame; for all these things ye must care not at all. Look at Me and be as I am; ye must die to yourselves and to the world, so shall ye be born again and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Behold a candle how it gives its light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give forth its flame of light.”

(Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by May Maxwell in *An Early Pilgrimage*, pp. 41-42; and in part in H.M. Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá – The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh*, p.73, considered as “*pilgrims’ note*”) [Bold italics added –ed.]

❖ “*Love Me, that I may love thee...*”

O SON OF BEING! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 5) [Underling added –ed.]

And be thou so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall not waver, even if the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee and all the heavens and the earth arise against thee.

Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones, and be not of those who doubt.

And if thou art overtaken by affliction in My path, or degradation for My sake, be not thou troubled thereby.

Rely upon God, thy God and the Lord of thy fathers. For the people are wandering in the paths of delusion, bereft of discernment to see God with their own eyes, or hear His Melody with their own ears. Thus have We found them, as thou also dost witness.

Thus have their superstitions become veils between them and their own hearts and kept them from the path of God, the Exalted, the Great.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Bahá’í Prayers*, pp. 210-211)

[...Abdu’l-Bahá is himself a servant at the Threshold of the Blessed Beauty and a manifestation of pure and utter servitude at the Threshold of the Almighty. He hath no other station or title, no other rank or power. This is my ultimate Purpose, my eternal Paradise, my holiest Temple and my Sadratu’l-Muntaha....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 295)]

These tests, even as thou didst write, do but cleanse the spotting of self from off the mirror of the heart, till the Sun of Truth can cast its rays thereon; for there is no veil more obstructive than the self, and however tenuous that veil may be, at the last it will completely shut a person out, and deprive him of his portion of eternal grace.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 182)

Why then are ye quenched, why silent, why leaden and dull? Ye must shine forth like the lightning, and raise up a clamouring like unto the great sea. Like a candle must ye shed your light, and even as the soft breezes of God must ye blow across the world. Even as sweet breaths from heavenly bowers, as musk-laden winds from the gardens of the Lord, must ye perfume the air for the people of knowledge, and even as the splendours shed by the true Sun, must ye illumine the hearts of humankind. For ye are the life-laden winds, ye are the jessamine-scents from the gardens of the saved. Bring then life to the dead, and awaken those who slumber. In the darkness of the world be ye radiant flames; in the sands of perdition, be ye well-springs of the water of life, be ye guidance from the Lord God. Now is the time to serve, now is the time to be on fire. Know ye the value of this chance, this favourable juncture that is limitless grace, ere it slip from your hands.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 266-267)

Regarding the statement in *The Hidden Words*, that man must renounce his own self, the meaning is that he must renounce his inordinate desires, his selfish purposes and the promptings of his human self, and seek out the holy breathings of the spirit, and follow the yearnings of his higher self, and immerse himself in the sea of sacrifice, with his heart fixed upon the beauty of the All-Glorious.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 206)

Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 54)

Some time ago a tablet was written stating that none are appointed to any authority to do anything but to serve the Cause as true servants of the friends and for this no tablet is necessary; such service when true and unselfish, requires no announcement, nor following, nor written document.

Let the servant be known by his deeds, by his life!

To be approved of God alone should be one’s aim.

...No one can deprive another of his rightful station, that can only be lost by one’s unwillingness or failure to do the will of God, or by seeking to use the Cause of God for one’s own gratification or ambition....

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 44, to be regarded as “pilgrims’ note”)

Today no soul has any station or enjoys any title except the soul who is firm in the Covenant and steadfast in the Testament, who entirely forgets himself and is released from the world.

(Attributed to `Abdu'l-Bahá, in *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 16, p. 218, but for which no verifiable text could be located, hence a “not authenticated” statement)

❖ “*These are the counsels of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá....*”

These are the counsels of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It is my hope that out of the bestowals of the Lord of Hosts ye will become the spiritual essence and the very radiance of humankind, binding the hearts of all with bonds of love; that through the power of the Word of God ye will bring to life the dead now buried in the graves of their sensual desires; that ye will, with the rays of the Sun of Truth, restore the sight of those whose inner eye is blind; that ye will bring spiritual healing to the spiritually sick. These things do I hope for, out of the bounties and the bestowals of the Beloved.

At all times do I speak of you and call you to mind. I pray unto the Lord, and with tears I implore Him to rain down all these blessings upon you, and gladden your hearts, and make blissful your souls, and grant you exceeding joy and heavenly delights....

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 36-37)

❖ “*Beseech the Lord your God...*”

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 Báb, cited by Nabil-i-A'zam, in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 93)

The time hath come when, as a thank-offering for this bestowal, ye should grow in faith and constancy as day followeth day, and should draw ever nearer to the Lord, your God, becoming magnetized to such a degree, and so aflame, that your holy melodies in praise of the Beloved will reach upward to the Company on high; and that each one of you, even as a nightingale in this rose garden of God, will glorify the Lord of Hosts, and become the teacher of all who dwell on earth.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 18)

O ye spiritual friends of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! A *trusted messenger* hath arrived and hath, *in the world of the spirit*, delivered a message from God’s loved ones. This auspicious courier bringeth fragrances of great ardour and wafteth the life-giving breezes of the love of God. He maketh the

heart to dance for joy and filleth up the soul with an ecstasy of love and rapture. *So intensely hath the glory of Divine Unity penetrated souls and hearts that all are now bound one to another with heavenly ties, and all are even as a single heart, a single soul. Wherefore reflections of the spirit and impressions of the Divine are now mirrored clear and sharp in the deep heart's core.* I beg of God to strengthen these spiritual bonds as day followeth day, and make this mystic oneness to shine ever more brightly, until at last all shall be as troops marshalled together beneath the banner of the Covenant within the sheltering shade of the Word of God; that they may strive with all their might until universal fellowship, close and warm, and unalloyed love, and spiritual relationships, will connect all the hearts in the world....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 19) [Italics added –ed.]

O God, my God! Aid Thou Thy trusted servants to have loving and tender hearts. Help them to spread, amongst all the nations of the earth, the light of guidance that cometh from the Company on high. Verily Thou art the Strong, the Powerful, the Mighty, the All-Subduing, the Ever-Giving. Verily Thou art the Generous, the Gentle, the Tender, the Most Bountiful.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 22)

O ye friends of God! True friends are even as skilled physicians, and the Teachings of God are as healing balm, a medicine for the conscience of man. They clear the head, so that a man can breathe them in and delight in their sweet fragrance. They waken those who sleep. They bring awareness to the unheeding, and a portion to the outcast, and to the hopeless, hope.

If in this day a soul shall act according to the precepts and the counsels of God, he will serve as a divine physician to mankind, and like the trump of Israfil, [1] he will call the dead of this contingent world to life; for the confirmations of the Abha Realm are never interrupted, and such a virtuous soul hath, to befriend him, the unfailing help of the Company on high. Thus shall a sorry gnat become an eagle in the fulness of his strength, and a feeble sparrow change to a royal falcon in the heights of ancient glory.

Wherefore, look not on the degree of your capacity, ask not if you are worthy of the task: rest ye your hopes on the help and loving-kindness, the favours and bestowals of Bahá’u’lláh—may my soul be offered up for His friends! Urge on the steed of high endeavour over the field of sacrifice, and carry away from this wide arena the prize of divine grace. [1 Believed to be the angel appointed to sound the trumpet on the Day of Resurrection to raise the dead at the bidding of the Lord.]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 22-23)

❖ “*The denizens of this plane...*”

The denizens of this plane speak no words—but they gallop their chargers.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 55)

Heed not your weaknesses and frailty; fix your gaze upon the invincible power of the Lord, your God, the Almighty. ...Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.’

(The Báb, cited by Nabil-i-A'zam, in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 94)

Thy generous Lord will assist thee to labour in His vineyard and will cause thee to be the means of spreading the spirit of unity among His handmaids. He will make thine inner eye to see with the light of knowledge, He will forgive thy sins and transform them into goodly deeds. Verily He is the Forgiving, the Compassionate, the Lord of immeasurable grace.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 164)

Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace; and this plane of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self, that the radiance of the living God may then shine forth. The martyr’s field is the place of detachment from self, that the anthems of eternity may be upraised. Do all ye can to become wholly weary of self, and bind yourselves to that Countenance of Splendours; and once ye have reached such heights of servitude, ye will find, gathered within your shadow, all created things. This is boundless grace; this is the highest sovereignty; this is the life that dieth not. All else save this is at the last but manifest perdition and great loss.

...Strive ye to receive your share of this eternal food, so that ye shall be loved and cherished in this world and the next.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 76)

Spread Thou through them Thy sweet savors far and wide; expound through them Thy Holy Writ; make known through them Thine Utterance; fulfill through them Thy Words; through them pour out Thy mercy.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 223)

❖ “*This plane requireth pure affection...*”

This plane requireth pure affection and the bright stream of fellowship. In telling of these companions...He saith: “They speak not till He hath spoken; and they do His bidding.” [Qur’án 21:27.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 55)

Today, every wise, vigilant and foresighted person is awakened, and to him are unveiled the mysteries of the future which show that nothing save the power of the Covenant is able to stir and move the heart of humanity....

Praise be to God that the highest wish entertained by heedful souls is the exaltation of the Word of God and the propagation of divine fragrances. This is, verily, the secure and firm foundation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, passim, p. 223)

[Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner, the Author, and the True Exemplar of the Bahá’í Cause, as set forth in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved’s sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present day Bahá’í administration throughout the world...

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 90; and *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*. p. 5)]

❖ “*Firmness in the Covenant means OBEDIENCE...*”

“Firmness in The Covenant means OBEDIENCE so that no one may say, ‘this is my opinion,’ nay rather he must obey that which proceeds from the Pen and Tongue of The Covenant.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. IV, No. 10, p. 174)

“If a soul utter a word without the sanction of the Covenant, he is not firm.... Remain firm even if the people of heaven try to shake you. Firmness in the Covenant is not mere words. The command is explicit.”

(From the Research Department at the World Centre: Described as “excerpts from some instructions given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to several friends in America, July, 1912, which received His personal signature”, published in *Star of the West*, Vol. 11, No. 14, p. 239. The original text could not be identified and its authenticity cannot be verified, hence “pilgrims’ note”)

❖ “*Today whoever is firm in the Covenant...*”

Today whoever is firm in the Covenant shall become ignited like unto a candle in the assemblage of the world and the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abha shall encircle him from all directions.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 16, p. 219)

Whoever is firm in the Covent and the Testament is today endowed with a seeing eye, and a responsive ear and daily advances in the divine realm until he becomes a heavenly angel.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. 10, No. 13, p. 251)

[These souls are the armies of God and the conquerors of the East and the West. Should one of them turn his face toward some direction and summon the people to the Kingdom of God, all the ideal forces and lordly confirmations will rush to his support and reinforcement. He will behold all the doors open and all the strong fortifications and impregnable castles razed to the ground. Singly and alone he will attack the armies of the world, defeat the right and left wings of the hosts of all the countries, break through the lines of the legions of all the nations and carry his attack to the very center of the powers of the earth. This is the meaning of the Hosts of God.

Any soul from among the believers of Bahá’u’lláh who attains to this station will become known as the Apostle of Bahá’u’lláh. Therefore strive ye with heart and soul so that ye may reach this lofty and exalted position, be established on the throne of everlasting glory, and crown your heads with the shining diadem of the Kingdom, whose brilliant jewels may irradiate upon centuries and cycles.

...To attain to this supreme station is, however, dependent on the realization of certain conditions:

The first condition is firmness in the Covenant of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, passim, pp. 50-51)]

The first condition:

Those souls that, in this day, enter the divine kingdom and attain everlasting life, although materially dwelling on earth, yet in reality soar in the realm of heaven. Their bodies may linger on earth but their spirits travel in the immensity of space. For as thoughts widen and become illumined, they acquire the power of flight and transport man to the kingdom of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 202)

❖ [“*When the victory arriveth...*”

When the victory arriveth, every man shall profess himself as believer and shall hasten to the shelter of God’s Faith. Happy are they who in the days of world-encompassing trials have stood fast in the Cause and refused to swerve from its truth.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 319)]

O ye kind friends! Uplift your magnanimity and soar high toward the apex of heaven so that your blessed hearts may become illumined more and more, day by day, through the rays of the Sun of Reality, that is, His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh; at every moment the spirits may obtain a new life, and the darkness of the world of nature may be entirely dispelled; thus you may become incarnate light and personified spirit, become entirely unaware of the sordid matters of this world and in touch with the affairs of the divine world.

Behold the portals which Bahá’u’lláh hath opened before you! Consider how exalted and lofty is the station you are destined to attain; how unique the favors with which you have been endowed. Should we become intoxicated with this cup, the sovereignty of this globe of earth will become lower in our estimation than children’s play. Should they place in the arena the crown of the government of the whole world, and invite each one of us to accept it, undoubtedly we shall not condescend, and shall refuse to accept it.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 50-51)

❖ “*Great indeed is the blessedness...*”

Great indeed is the blessedness of him who attaineth Thy presence, drinketh the wine of reunion proffered by the hand of Thy bounteousness, inhaleth the fragrance of Thy signs, unlooseth his tongue in celebrating Thy praise, soareth high in Thy heavens, is carried away by the sweetness of Thy Voice, gaineth admittance into the most exalted Paradise and attaineth the station of revelation and vision before the throne of Thy majesty.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 116)

As to Paradise: It is a reality and there can be no doubt about it, and now in this world it is realized through love of Me and My good-pleasure. Whosoever attaineth unto it God will aid him in this world below, and after death He will enable him to gain admittance into Paradise whose vastness is as that of heaven and earth. Therein the Maids of glory and holiness will wait upon him in the daytime and in the night season, while the day-star of the unfading beauty of his Lord will at

all times shed its radiance upon him and he will shine so brightly that no one shall bear to gaze at him.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 189)

[“—know ye for a certainty that this individual will be supported and reinforced by heaven; that like unto the morning star, he will forever gleam brightly out of the skies of eternal grace....”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 71)]

❖ [“*Astonishment here is highly prized...*”

Astonishment here is highly prized, and utter poverty essential. Wherefore hath it been said, “Poverty is My pride.” [Muhammad] And again: “God hath a people beneath the dome of glory, whom He hideth in the clothing of radiant poverty.” [Hadith] These are they who see with His eyes, hear with His ears, as it is written in the well-known tradition.

Concerning this realm, there is many a tradition and many a verse, of broad or special relevancy, but two of these will suffice to serve as a light for men of mind and heart.

The first is His statement: “O My Servant! Obey Me and I shall make thee like unto Myself. I say ‘Be,’ and it is, and thou shalt say ‘Be,’ and it shall be.”

And the second: “O Son of Adam! Seek fellowship with none until thou hast found Me, and whenever thou shalt long for Me, thou shalt find Me close to thee.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Four Valleys*, pp. 62-63)]

...the centre of the Sun of Truth is in the supernal world—the Kingdom of God. Those souls who are pure and unsullied, upon the dissolution of their elemental frames, hasten away to the world of God, and that world is within this world. The people of this world, however, are unaware of that world, and are even as the mineral and the vegetable that know nothing of the world of the animal and the world of man.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 194-195)

❖ “*...are...regarded as having drawn nigh...*”

Those hearts, however, that are aware of His Presence, are close to Him, and are to be regarded as having drawn nigh unto His throne.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 186)

This grace can come about through words and ways and deeds that are of the Unseen Kingdom but, lacking such, it can never be.

The confirmations of God are the surety for these blessings; the sacred bounty of God bestoweth these great gifts. The friends of God are supported by the Kingdom on high and they win their victories through the massed armies of the most great guidance. Thus for them every difficulty will be made smooth, every problem will most easily be solved.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 278-279)

❖ “*Should one...read this Tablet with absolute sincerity...*”

By God! Should one who is in affliction or grief read this Tablet with absolute sincerity, God will dispel his sadness, solve his difficulties and remove his afflictions.

Verily, He is the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds.

(Bahá’u’lláh, from “*The Tablet of Ahmad*”, *Bahá’í Prayers*, pp. 211-212)

‘The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering. The more the ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furrows the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment. His attitude in this world will be that of divine happiness....’

...‘To attain eternal happiness one must suffer. He who has reached the state of self-sacrifice has true joy. Temporal joy will vanish.’

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, passim, pp. 178-179)

‘Through suffering he will attain to an eternal happiness which nothing can take from him....’

‘...When a man is born into the world of phenomena he finds the universe; when he is born from this world to the world of the spirit, he finds the Kingdom.’

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, passim, pp. 177-178)

These tests, even as thou didst write, do but cleanse the spotting of self from off the mirror of the heart, till the Sun of Truth can cast its rays thereon; for there is no veil more obstructive than the self, and however tenuous that veil may be, at the last it will completely shut a person out, and deprive him of his portion of eternal grace.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 182)

❖ “*Sorrow not...*”

O My servants! Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. You are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 329)

[If it be your wish, O people, to know God and to discover the greatness of His might, look, then, upon Me with Mine own eyes, and not with the eyes of any one besides Me. Ye will, otherwise, be never capable of recognizing Me.... Thus have We manifested the truth of Our Revelation, that haply the people may be roused from their heedlessness, and be of them that understand. [Underling added –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 272-273)]

[Sorrow not save that thou art far from Us. Rejoice not save that thou art drawing near and returning unto Us.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 35)]

Walk thou high above the world of being through the power of the Most Great Name, that thou mayest become aware of the immemorial mysteries and be acquainted with that wherewith no one is acquainted....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 142)

... in that Dispensation the sphere of influence of that religion will encompass every land that man has trodden, and it will be established upon solid ground whereon the feet do not falter.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 13, Section 2, p. ...8)

A saint is one who leads a life of purity, one who has freed himself from all human weaknesses and imperfections.

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.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 60)

O army of God! Through the protection and help vouchsafed by the Blessed Beauty—may my life be a sacrifice to His loved ones—ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: ‘This man is unquestionably a Bahá’í, for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Bahá’ís.’ Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God. For He hath, through irrefutable Texts, entered into a binding Covenant with us all, requiring us to act in accordance with His sacred instructions and counsels.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 70)

Endeavor as much as possible to liberate thyself wholly from human susceptibilities—so that the powers of the Kingdom may gain control over thy heart and thy spirit – to such a degree that although thou art living on the face of the earth, yet thou mayest truly be in heaven; that although outwardly thou art composed of material elements, yet spiritually thou mayest become composed of heavenly elements.

This is the everlasting glory of man! This is the eternal sublimity in the world of existence! This is the never-ending Life! This is the Spirit incarnated in the heart of humanity! Upon thee be the Glory of the Most Glorious.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in a Tablet to Howard Colby Ives, cited in *Portals to Freedom*, p. 240.

[Note: an original of this tablet exists and its authenticity can be verified.]])

One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendor of those eternal principles proclaimed by Bahá’u’lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 66)

That the Cause associated with the name of Bahá'u'lláh feeds itself upon those hidden springs of celestial strength which no force of human personality, whatever its glamour, can replace; that its reliance is solely upon that mystic Source with which no worldly advantage, be it wealth, fame, or learning can compare; that it propagates itself by ways mysterious and utterly at variance with the standards accepted by the generality of mankind, will, if not already apparent, become increasingly manifest as it forges ahead towards fresh conquests in its struggle for the spiritual regeneration of mankind.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 51-52)

❖ [“*the station of revelation and vision...*”

Great indeed is the blessedness of him who attaineth Thy presence, drinketh the wine of reunion proffered by the hand of Thy bounteousness, inhaleth the fragrance of Thy signs, unlooseth his tongue in celebrating Thy praise, soareth high in Thy heavens, is carried away by the sweetness of Thy Voice, gaineth admittance into the most exalted Paradise and attaineth the station of revelation and vision before the throne of Thy majesty.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 116)]

[Whoso hath recognized the Day Spring of Divine guidance and entered His holy court hath drawn nigh unto God and attained His Presence, a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol. Such a man hath attained the knowledge of the station of Him Who is “at the distance of two bows,” Who standeth beyond the Sadratu'l-Muntaha. Whoso hath failed to recognize Him will have condemned himself to the misery of remoteness, a remoteness which is naught but utter nothingness and the essence of the nethermost fire. Such will be his fate, though to outward seeming he may occupy the earth's loftiest seats and be established upon its most exalted throne.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 70-71)]

We dare not, in this Day, lift the veil that concealeth the exalted station which every true believer can attain, for the joy which such a revelation must provoke might well cause a few to faint away and die.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 9-10)

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 10-11)

[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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 5)]

From the excellence of so great a Revelation the honor with which its faithful followers must needs be invested can be well imagined. By the righteousness of the one true God! The very breath of these souls is in itself richer than all the treasures of the earth. Happy is the man that hath attained thereunto, and woe betide the heedless.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 10)

‘For many are called, but few are chosen.’ [Matthew 22:14] That is, to many is it offered, but rare is the soul who is singled out to receive the great bestowal of guidance. ‘Such is the bounty of God: to whom He will He giveth it, and of immense bounty is God.’ [Qur’án 57:21]

...The beloved of the Lord must stand fixed as the mountains, firm as impregnable walls....

...Unless these divine bestowals be revealed from the inner self of humankind, the bounty of the Manifestation will prove barren, and the dazzling rays of the Sun of Truth will have no effect whatever.

Wherefore, O beloved of the Lord, strive ye with heart and soul to receive a share of His holy attributes and take your portion of the bounties of His sanctity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, passim, pp. 9-11)

❖ “...the fire of the tongue...”

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 193; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 265)

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 192-193; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 264)

[She then uttered within herself such a cry that the Celestial Concurrence did shriek and tremble, ...And she fell upon the dust and gave up the spirit. It seemeth she was called and hearkened unto Him that summoned her unto the Realm on High.

...Thereupon the maids of heaven hastened forth from their chambers, upon whose countenances the eye of no dweller in the highest paradise had ever gazed.

...They all gathered around her, and lo! they found her body fallen upon the dust;

...and this is verily one of the mysterious grievous afflictions....

(Bahá’u’lláh, from “*The Tablet of the Holy Mariner*”, *Bahá’í Prayers*, pp. 227-228)]

Thus have their superstitions become veils between them and their own hearts and kept them from the path of God, the Exalted, the Great.

(Bahá’u’lláh, from “*The Tablet of Ahmad*”, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 210)

People for the most part delight in superstitions. They regard a single drop of the sea of delusion as preferable to an ocean of certitude. By holding fast unto names they deprive themselves of the inner reality and by clinging to vain imaginings they are kept back from the Dayspring of heavenly signs....

We heard that which the person in question hath mentioned regarding certain teachers of the Faith. Indeed he hath spoken truly. Some heedless souls roam the lands in the name of God, actively engaged in ruining His Cause, and call it promoting and teaching the Word of God; and this

notwithstanding that the qualifications of the teachers of the Faith, like unto stars, shine resplendent throughout the heavens of the divine Tablets. Every fair-minded person testifieth and every man of insight is well aware that the One true God—exalted be His glory—hath unceasingly set forth and expounded that which will elevate the station and will exalt the rank of the children of men.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 58)

God says in His great Book, Qur'án, “He specializes with His Mercy whomsoever He willeth.” That is, God distinguisheth with His favor and bestowal a number of souls and marks them with His own seal of approval. A similar statement is revealed in the Gospel: “Many are called but few are chosen.” Now, praise be to God that thou art one of those “few.” Appreciate thou the value of this bounty, and occupy thy time as much as thou canst in the diffusion of the fragrances of God. Upon thee be greetings and praise.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in a Tablet to Howard Colby Ives cited in *Portals to Freedom*, p. 249.

[Note: an original of this tablet has not been found and its authenticity can not be verified, hence to be regarded as “*pilgrims’ note*”.]

❖ “...know that steadfastness and firmness...is indeed the spirit that quickeneth...”

O ye beloved of God, know that steadfastness and firmness in this new and wonderful Covenant is indeed the spirit that quickeneth the hearts which are overflowing with the love of the Glorious Lord; verily, it is the power which penetrates into the hearts of the people of the world! Your Lord hath assuredly promised His servants who are firm and steadfast to render them victorious at all times, to exalt their word, propagate their power, diffuse their lights, strengthen their hearts, elevate their banners, assist their hosts, brighten their stars, increase the abundance of the showers of mercy upon them, and enable the brave lions (or teachers) to conquer.

Hasten, hasten, O ye firm believers! Hasten, hasten,

O ye steadfast! Abandon the heedless, set aside every ignorant, take hold of the strong rope, be firm in this Great Cause, draw light from this Evident Light, be patient and be steadfast in this wise Religion! Ye shall see the hosts of inspiration descending successively from the Supreme World, the procession of attraction falling incessantly from the heights of heaven, the abundance of the Kingdom of ABHA outpouring continually and the teachings of God penetrating with the utmost power, while the heedless are indeed in evident loss.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, p. 443)

[O army of God! Whosoever ye behold a person whose entire attention is directed toward the Cause of God; whose only aim is this, to make the Word of God to take effect; who, day and night,

with pure intent, is rendering service to the Cause; from whose behaviour not the slightest trace of egotism or private motives is discerned—who, rather, wandereth distracted in the wilderness of the love of God, and drinketh only from the cup of the knowledge of God, and is utterly engrossed in spreading the sweet savours of God, and is enamoured of the holy verses of the Kingdom of God—know ye for a certainty that this individual will be supported and reinforced by heaven; that like unto the morning star, he will forever gleam brightly out of the skies of eternal grace. But if he show the slightest taint of selfish desires and self love, his efforts will lead to nothing and he will be destroyed and left hopeless at the last.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 71)]

[Love is the most great law that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle, the unique power that bindeth together the divers elements of this material world, the supreme magnetic force that directeth the movements of the spheres in the celestial realms. Love revealeth with unfailing and limitless power the mysteries latent in the universe. Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world, and the shedder of imperishable glory upon every high-aiming race and nation.

Whatsoever people is graciously favoured therewith by God, its name shall surely be magnified and extolled by the Concourse from on high, by the company of angels, and the denizens of the Abha Kingdom. And whatsoever people turneth its heart away from this Divine Love—the revelation of the Merciful—shall err grievously, shall fall into despair, and be utterly destroyed. That people shall be denied all refuge, shall become even as the vilest creatures of the earth, victims of degradation and shame....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 27-28)]

❖ “...Wherefore, do thou love Me...”

O SON OF MAN!

I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 4)

[O SON OF BEING!

Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 5)]

Thou hast, verily, sacrificed thy life and great will be the spiritual results thou shalt obtain. Rest thou confident that day by day thou shalt progress and wax greater in firmness and in constancy. The bounties of Bahá'u'lláh shall compass thee about and the joyful tidings from on high shall time and again be imparted unto thee.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 96)

No one save a severed soul or a sincere heart finds response from God.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 45, “pilgrims’ note”)

“Following the spirit” is a guidance by and through the heart, the prompter of the spirit.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 43, “pilgrims’ note”)

❖ “...a moment’s separation...would to them be unthinkable.”

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 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....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 198-199; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 269-270)

[*Cf.: “...The religion of God consists of two parts: One is the very foundation and belongs to the spiritual realm; that is, it pertains to spiritual virtues and divine qualities....” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 11, Section 7. p. ...) found on page 81 of this compilation –ed.]

Render thou thanks unto the Beloved of the world for having graciously aided thee to attain confirmation in this glorious Cause. Entreat Him moreover to make His loved ones steadfast therein, for the inflammatory writings of the mischief-makers are widespread and the clamour of the foreboders of evil is raised high.

Happy are they that have cast behind their backs all else save God and have held fast unto that which the Lord of strength and power hath enjoined upon them. His Glory be upon thee and upon such as have been enabled to recognize and embrace this mighty Cause.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 235)

The second condition:

b. Fellowship and love amongst the believers...

[Note: Cf. also, the more detailed section entitled “Fellowship and Love” beginning on page 412 Ff. ahead. –ed.]

The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 52)

“...Another commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another even as I love you. Great mercy and blessings are promised to the people of your land, but on one condition: that their hearts are filled with the fire of love, that they live in perfect kindness and harmony like one soul in different bodies. If they fail in this condition, the great blessings will be deferred. Never forget this; look at one another with the eye of perfection; look at Me, follow Me, be as I am; take no thought for yourselves or your lives, whether ye eat or whether ye sleep, whether ye are comfortable, whether ye are well or ill, whether ye are with friends or foes, whether ye receive praise or blame; for all these things ye must care not at all. Look at Me and be as I am; ye must die to yourselves and to the world, so shall ye be born again and enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Behold a candle how it gives its light. It weeps its life away drop by drop in order to give forth its flame of light.”

(Words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by May Maxwell, *Op. Cit.*, in *An Early Pilgrimage*, pp. 41-42, “*pilgrims’ note*”)

❖ “*For one of the greatest divine wisdoms...is this...*”

[...For one of the greatest divine wisdoms regarding the appearance of the holy Manifestations is this: The souls may come to know each other and become intimate with each other; the power of the love of God may make all of them the waves of one sea, the flowers of one rose garden, and the stars of one heaven. This is the wisdom for the appearance of the holy Manifestations! When the most great bestowal reveals itself in the hearts of the believers, the world of nature will be transformed, the darkness of the contingent being will vanish, and heavenly illumination will be obtained. Then the whole world will become the Paradise of Abha, every one of the believers of God will become a blessed tree, producing wonderful fruits.

O ye friends! Fellowship, fellowship! Love, love! Unity, unity!—so that the power of the Bahá’í Cause may appear and become manifest in the world of existence. My thoughts are turned towards you, and my heart leaps within me at your mention. Could ye know how my soul glows with your love, so great a happiness would flood your hearts as to cause you to become enamored with each other.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 52-53)]

O ye loving friends! Strive ye with heart and soul to make this world the mirror-image of the Kingdom, that this nether world may teem with the blessings of the world of God, that the voices of the Company on high may be raised in acclamation, and signs and tokens of the bounties and bestowals of Bahá’u’lláh may encompass all the earth.

Jinab-i-Amin hath expressed the greatest admiration for you honoured men and enlightened women, naming and commending you each by each, telling at length of the firmness and constancy ye all have shown, saying that, God be praised, in all Persia the men and women are standing together, straight, strong, unmoveable—a mighty edifice solidly raised up; and that ye are engaged with love and joy in spreading abroad the sweet savours of the Lord.

These were tidings of great joy, especially as they have reached me in these days of extreme peril. For the dearest wish of this wronged one is that the friends be spiritual of heart and illumined of mind, and once this grace is granted me, calamity, however afflictive, is but bounty pouring down upon me, like copious rain....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 221-222)

The holy Manifestations of God were sent down to make visible the oneness of humanity. For this did They endure unnumbered ills and tribulations, that a community from amongst mankind’s divergent peoples could gather within the shadow of the Word of God and live as one, and could, with delight and grace, demonstrate on earth the unity of humankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 278)

All over the world one hears beautiful sayings extolled and noble precepts admired. All men say they love what is good, and hate everything that is evil! Sincerity is to be admired, whilst lying is despicable. Faith is a virtue, and treachery is a disgrace to humanity. It is a blessed thing to gladden the hearts of men, and wrong to be the cause of pain. To be kind and merciful is right, while to hate is sinful. Justice is a noble quality and injustice an iniquity. That it is one’s duty to be pitiful and harm no one, and to avoid jealousy and malice at all costs. Wisdom is the glory of man, not ignorance; light, not darkness! It is a good thing to turn one’s face toward God, and foolishness to ignore Him. That it is our duty to guide man upward, and not to mislead him and be the cause of his downfall. There are many more examples like unto these.

But all these sayings are but words and we see very few of them carried into the world of action. On the contrary, we perceive that men are carried away by passion and selfishness, each man thinking only of what will benefit himself even if it means the ruin of his brother. They are all anxious to make their fortune and care little or nothing for the welfare of others. They are concerned about their own peace and comfort, while the condition of their fellows troubles them not at all.

Unhappily this is the road most men tread.

But Bahá’ís must not be thus; they must rise above this condition. Actions must be more to them than words. By their actions they must be merciful and not merely by their words. They must on all occasions confirm by their actions what they proclaim in words. Their deeds must prove their fidelity, and their actions must show forth Divine light.

Let your actions cry aloud to the world that you are indeed Bahá’ís, for it is actions that speak to the world and are the cause of the progress of humanity.

If we are true Bahá’ís speech is not needed. Our actions will help on the world, will spread civilization, will help the progress of science, and cause the arts to develop. Without action nothing in the material world can be accomplished, neither can words unaided advance a man in the spiritual Kingdom. It is not through lip-service only that the elect of God have attained to holiness, but by patient lives of active service they have brought light into the world.

Therefore strive that your actions day by day may be beautiful prayers. Turn towards God, and seek always to do that which is right and noble. Enrich the poor, raise the fallen, comfort the sorrowful, bring healing to the sick, reassure the fearful, rescue the oppressed, bring hope to the hopeless, shelter the destitute!

This is the work of a true Bahá’í, and this is what is expected of him. If we strive to do all this, then are we true Bahá’ís, but if we neglect it, we are not followers of the Light, and we have no right to the name.

God, who sees all hearts, knows how far our lives are the fulfilment of our words.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 80-82)

The Bahá’ís are commanded to establish the oneness of mankind; if they cannot unite around one point how will they be able to bring about the unity of mankind? [Underlining added –ed.]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 209)

To be brief, it hath been decided by the Desire of God that union and harmony may day by day increase among the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful One, in the West. Not until this is realized will the affairs advance by any means whatever!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, p. 124)

The third condition:

c. Teachers must continually travel...

The third condition: Teachers must continually travel to all parts of the continent, nay, rather, to all parts of the world, but they must travel like ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who journeyed throughout the cities of America. He was sanctified and free from every attachment and in the utmost severance. Just as His Holiness Christ says: Shake off the very dust from your feet. [Cf. Matthew 10:14.]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 53)

❖ “[A]rise...to teach My Cause...”

Adorn the body of Thy kingdom with the raiment of My name, and arise, then, to teach My Cause. Better is this for thee than that which thou possesseth. God will, thereby, exalt thy name among all the kings. Potent is He over all things.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 76)

We heard that which the person in question hath mentioned regarding certain teachers of the Faith. Indeed he hath spoken truly. Some heedless souls roam the lands in the name of God, actively engaged in ruining His Cause, and call it promoting and teaching the Word of God; and this

notwithstanding that the qualifications of the teachers of the Faith, like unto stars, shine resplendent throughout the heavens of the divine Tablets....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 58)

[The first Taraz and the first effulgence which hath dawned from the horizon of the Mother Book is that man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty. Having attained the stage of fulfilment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth, and such wealth as he acquireth through crafts or professions is commendable and praiseworthy in the estimation of men of wisdom, and especially in the eyes of servants who dedicate themselves to the education of the world and to the edification of its peoples. They are, in truth, cup-bearers of the life-giving water of knowledge and guides unto the ideal way. They direct the peoples of the world to the straight path and acquaint them with that which is conducive to human upliftment and exaltation. The straight path is the one which guideth man to the dayspring of perception and to the dawning-place of true understanding and leadeth him to that which will redound to glory, honour and greatness.

We cherish the hope that through the loving-kindness of the All-Wise, the All-Knowing, obscuring dust may be dispelled and the power of perception enhanced, that the people may discover the purpose for which they have been called into being. In this Day whatsoever serveth to reduce blindness and to increase vision is worthy of consideration. This vision acteth as the agent and guide for true knowledge. Indeed in the estimation of men of wisdom keenness of understanding is due to keenness of vision. The people of Bahá must under all circumstances observe that which is meet and seemly and exhort the people accordingly.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 34-35)]

O people of God! Righteous men of learning who dedicate themselves to the guidance of others and are freed and well guarded from the promptings of a base and covetous nature are, in the sight of Him Who is the Desire of the world, stars of the heaven of true knowledge. It is essential to treat them with deference. They are indeed fountains of soft-flowing water, stars that shine resplendent, fruits of the blessed Tree, exponents of celestial power, and oceans of heavenly wisdom. Happy is he that followeth them. Verily such a soul is numbered in the Book of God, the Lord of the mighty Throne, among those with whom it shall be well.

The glory which proceedeth from God, the Lord of the Throne on High and of the earth below, rest upon you, O people of Bahá, O ye the companions of the Crimson Ark, and upon such as have inclined their ears to your sweet voices and have observed that whereunto they are bidden in this mighty and wondrous Tablet.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 96-97)

[O army of God! Whosoever ye behold a person whose entire attention is directed toward the Cause of God; whose only aim is this, to make the Word of God to take effect; who, day and night, with pure intent, is rendering service to the Cause; from whose behaviour not the slightest trace of egotism or private motives is discerned — who, rather, wandereth distracted in the wilderness of the love of God, and drinketh only from the cup of the knowledge of God, and is utterly engrossed in spreading the sweet savours of God, and is enamoured of the holy verses of the Kingdom of God — know ye for a certainty that this individual will be supported and reinforced by heaven; that like unto the morning star, he will forever gleam brightly out of the skies of eternal grace....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 71)]

❖ “...seek what will...promote the Cause...”

Every eye, in this Day, should seek what will best promote the Cause of God....

Beseech ye the one true God to grant that ye may taste the savor 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 neighbor. Bend your energies to whatever may foster the education of men....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 8-9)

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 13-14)

“By the righteousness of God,” Bahá’u’lláh wishing to reveal the full potency of His invincible power asserts, “should a man, all alone, arise in the name of Bahá and put on the armor of His love, him will the Almighty cause to be victorious, though the forces of earth and heaven be arrayed against him.” “By God besides Whom is none other God! Should any one arise for the triumph of our Cause, him will God render victorious though tens of thousands of enemies be leagued against him. And if his love for Me wax stronger, God will establish his ascendancy over all the powers of earth and heaven. Thus have We breathed the spirit of power into all regions.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, as cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 106)

O GOD! O God! Thou seest my weakness, lowliness and humility before Thy creatures; nevertheless, I have trusted in Thee and have arisen in the promotion of Thy teachings among Thy strong servants, relying on Thy power and might.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 106; as well as *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 178)

❖ “*Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Bahá...*”

Say: Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Bahá, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds. Such a deed is acceptable only when he that teacheth the Cause is already a firm believer in God, the Supreme Protector, the Gracious, the Almighty. He hath, moreover, ordained that His Cause be taught through the power of men’s utterance....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 278)

Indeed thou didst grasp the significance of rendering assistance unto God and didst arise to achieve this through the power of wisdom and utterance. Say: *To assist Me is to teach My Cause*. This is a theme with which whole Tablets are laden. This is the changeless commandment of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Comprehend this, O ye men of insight. They that have passed beyond the bounds of wisdom fail to understand the meaning of assisting God as set forth in the Book.... He knoweth the reality of victory and hath taught it to you with an utterance that the vain imaginings of them that rove distraught in the wilderness of doubt can never corrupt.

O My Name! Suffer all created things to quaff once again from this chalice which hath caused the seas to rise. Kindle then in the hearts the blazing fire which this crimson Tree hath ignited, that they may arise to extol and magnify His Name amidst the adherents of all Faiths.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 196) [Italics added –ed.]

[O army of God! Through the protection and help vouchsafed by the Blessed Beauty—may my life be a sacrifice to His loved ones—ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: ‘This man is unquestionably a Bahá’í, for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Bahá’ís.’ Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 70-71)]

❖ “*...the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him...*”

By the righteousness of God! Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 280)

Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.

(The Báb, as cited by Nabil-i-A'zam, in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 94)

If thou art wishing for the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, become thou engaged in teaching the Cause of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 3, p. 557)

“Of all the gifts of God the greatest is the gift of Teaching. It draweth unto us the Grace of God and is our first obligation. Of such a gift how can we deprive ourselves? Nay, our lives, our goods, our comforts, our rest, we offer them all as a sacrifice for the Abha Beauty and teach the Cause of God.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 25)

❖ “...endued with the Divine Elixir that can, alone, transmute...”

The Book of God is wide open, and His Word is summoning mankind unto Him. No more than a mere handful, however, hath been found willing to cleave to His Cause, or to become the instruments for its promotion. These few have been endued with the Divine Elixir that can, alone, transmute into purest gold the dross of the world, and have been empowered to administer the infallible remedy for all the ills that afflict the children of men. No man can obtain everlasting life, unless he embraceth the truth of this inestimable, this wondrous, and sublime Revelation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 183)

The field is indeed so immense, the period so critical, the Cause so great, the workers so few, the time so short, the privilege so priceless, that no follower of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, worthy to bear His name, can afford a moment's hesitation.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 46)

❖ “Whoso ariseth to teach...must needs detach himself...”

Whoso ariseth to teach Our Cause must needs detach himself from all earthly things, and regard, at all times, the triumph of Our Faith as his supreme objective. This hath, verily, been decreed in the Guarded Tablet. And when he determineth to leave his home, for the sake of the Cause of his Lord, let him put his whole trust in God, as the best provision for his journey, and array himself with the robe of virtue. Thus hath it been decreed by God, the Almighty, the All-Praised.

If he be kindled with the fire of His love, if he forgoeth all created things, the words he uttereth shall set on fire them that hear him. Verily, thy Lord is the Omniscient, the All-Informed. Happy is the man that hath heard Our voice, and answered Our call. He, in truth, is of them that shall be brought nigh unto Us.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 334-335)

Unlock, O people, the gates of the hearts of men with the keys of the remembrance of Him Who is the Remembrance of God and the Source of wisdom amongst you. He hath chosen out of the whole world the hearts of His servants, and made them each a seat for the revelation of His glory. Wherefore, sanctify them from every defilement, that the things for which they were created may be engraven upon them. This indeed is a token of God's bountiful favor.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 296-297)

Be not grieved if thou performest it thyself alone. Let God be all-sufficient for thee. Commune intimately with His Spirit, and be thou of the thankful. Proclaim the Cause of thy Lord unto all who are in the heavens and on the earth. Should any man respond to thy call, lay bare before him the pearls of the wisdom of the Lord, thy God, which His Spirit hath sent down unto thee, and be thou of them that truly believe. And should any one reject thine offer, turn thou away from him, and put thy trust and confidence in the Lord, thy God, the Lord of all worlds.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 279)

Should any man, in this Day, arise and, with absolute detachment from all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, set his affections on Him Who is the Day Spring of God's holy Revelation, he will, verily, be empowered to subdue all created things, through the potency of one of the Names of the Lord, his God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Know thou of a certainty that the Day Star of Truth hath, in this Day, shed upon the world a radiance, the like of which bygone ages have never witnessed. Let the light of His glory, O people, shine upon you, and be not of the negligent.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 318)

God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of teaching His Cause. Whoever ariseth to discharge this duty, must needs, ere he proclaimeth His Message, adorn himself with the ornament of an upright and praiseworthy character, so that his words may attract the hearts of such as are receptive to his call. Without it, he can never hope to influence his hearers.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 334)

Whoso ariseth among you to teach the Cause of his Lord, let him, before all else, teach his own self, that his speech may attract the hearts of them that hear him. Unless he teacheth his own self, the words of his mouth will not influence the heart of the seeker. Take heed, O people, lest ye be of them that give good counsel to others but forget to follow it themselves. The words of such as these, and beyond the words the realities of all things, and beyond these realities the angels that are nigh unto God, bring against them the accusation of falsehood.

Should such a man ever succeed in influencing any one, this success should be attributed not to him, but rather to the influence of the words of God, as decreed by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise. In the sight of God he is regarded as a lamp that imparteth its light, and yet is all the while being consumed within itself.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 277)

The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of others? Unless he is detached from aught else save God, how can he teach severance to others?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 53)

[“The beloved Guardian has stressed over and over again, that to effectively teach the Faith, the individual must study deeply, the Divine Word, imbibe Its life-giving waters, and feast upon Its glorious teachings. He should then /meditate/ on the import of the Word, and finding its spiritual depths, /pray/ for guidance and assistance. But most important, after prayer is /action/. After one has prayed and meditated, he must arise, relying fully on the guidance and confirmation of Bahá'u'lláh, to teach His Faith. /Perseverance/ in action is essential, just as wisdom and audacity are necessary for effective teaching. The individual must sacrifice all things to this great goal, and then the victories will be won.” [From a letter dated 30 May 1956 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Hands of the Cause in the United States]

(Compilations, *The Individual and Teaching - Raising the Divine Call*, p. 36)]

❖ *Take the cup of the Testament in thy hand...*”

...Take the cup of the Testament in thy hand; leap and dance with ecstasy in the triumphal procession of the Covenant! Lay your confidence in the everlasting bounty, turn to the presence of the generous God; ask assistance from the Kingdom of ABHA; seek confirmation from the Supreme World; turn thy vision to the horizon of eternal wealth; and pray for help from the Source of Mercy!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 3, p. 641)

Caution and prudence, however, must be observed even as recorded in the Book. The veil must in no wise be suddenly rent asunder.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament*, p. 25)

❖ *“Every word is endowed with a spirit...”*

Every word is endowed with a spirit, therefore the speaker or expounder should carefully deliver his words at the appropriate time and place, for the impression which each word maketh is clearly evident and perceptible....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 172-173)

Follow thou the way of thy Lord, and say not that which the ears cannot bear to hear, for such speech is like luscious food given to small children. However palatable, rare and rich the food may be, it cannot be assimilated by the digestive organs of a suckling child. Therefore unto every one who hath a right, let his settled measure be given.

Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it. Such is the consummate wisdom to be observed in thy pursuits. Be not oblivious thereof, if thou wishest to be a man of action under all conditions. First diagnose the disease and identify the malady, then prescribe the remedy, for such is the perfect method of the skilful physician.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu’l-Baha*, pp. 268-269; [Cf also: Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 176]) [Emphasis added –ed.]



I declare by the Blessed Perfection – May my life be a sacrifice to His believers – that if the believers arise to act according to the good-pleasure of the Blessed Perfection, the lights will be revealed, the mysteries discovered, the veils rent asunder, the darkness dispelled, the verses of unity chanted, and the melodies of the spiritual music of the Glorious Lord sung!

SHOW YE AN EFFORT! WORK UNCEASINGLY! LABOR DILIGENTLY; — so that the Everlasting Bounty be realized, Eternal Life be destined, and the nostrils be perfumed with the Holy Fragrances!

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 5; but as no original text could be identified or authenticated, considered as “*pilgrims’ note*”)

❖ “...*these confirmations would be entirely cut off...*”

O ye servants of the Blessed Beauty!... It is clear that in this day, confirmations from the unseen world are encompassing all those who deliver the divine Message. Should the work of teaching lapse, these confirmations would be entirely cut off, since it is impossible for the loved ones of God to receive assistance unless they teach.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 264-265)

Perhaps the reason why you have not accomplished so much in the field of teaching is the extent you have looked upon your own weaknesses and inabilities to spread the Message. Bahá’u’lláh and the Master have both urged us repeatedly to disregard our own handicaps and lay our whole reliance upon God. He will come to our aid if we only arise and become an active channel for God’s Grace.

Do you think it is the teachers who make converts and change human hearts? No, surely not. They are only pure souls who take the first steps and then let the spirit of Bahá’u’lláh move and make use of them. If any one of them should even for a second think or consider his achievements as due to his own capacities, his work is ended and his fall starts. This is the fact why so many competent souls have, after wonderful services, suddenly found themselves utterly impotent and perhaps thrown aside by the spirit of the Cause as useless souls. The criterion is the extent to which we are ready to have the will of God work through us.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 25-26)

It is therefore imperative for the individual American believer, and particularly for the affluent, the independent, the comfort-loving and those obsessed by material pursuits, to step forward, and dedicate their resources, their time, their very lives to a Cause of such transcendence that no human eye can even dimly perceive its glory. Let them resolve, instantly and unhesitatingly, to place, each according to his circumstances, his share on the altar of Bahá'í sacrifice, lest, on a sudden, unforeseen calamities rob them of a considerable portion of the earthly things they have amassed.

Now if ever is the time to tread the path which the dawn-breakers of a previous age have so magnificently trodden. Now is the time to carry out, in the spirit and in the letter, the fervent wish so pathetically voiced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who longed, as attested in the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, to "travel though on foot and in the utmost poverty" and raise "in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans" "the call of Ya-Bahá'u'l-Abha!"

Then, and only then, can the members of this community hasten the advent of the day when, as prophesied by His pen, "heavenly illumination" will "stream" from their country "to all the peoples of the world." Then, and only then will they find themselves "securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion."

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 131-132)

❖ "About teaching. You may teach in [one of] two ways..."

...About teaching. You may teach in two ways. One way is limited teaching; another way is the unlimited teaching.

Teaching in a limited way consists of the following, namely: explaining the proofs and evidences in regard to the principles of Bahá'u'lláh, quoting the prophecies from the Old and New Testaments, stating that that Day has come. Moreover, the intellectual proofs and evidences are this and this, etc. The principles of Bahá'u'lláh have been set forth with such potency and penetration that no one can deny them. While he was in prison, He was in chains, and He wrote important Epistles to the Kings and Rulers of the world. All that which He wrote in these letters came to pass later on, the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh do exist quoting therein wonderful signs which appeared to Bahá'u'lláh during the various periods of His life.

While in prison He withstood two despotic kings, and He gained victory over both. In prison He raised His Banner, He spread His Teachings and spiritually defeated two despotic kings. They could not prevent the spread of His Teachings. In brief, while in prison, He raised the Ensign of His Principles. This is impaneled in the history of the world. Such dominion appeared from Him, and such potency manifested from His personality. There are many instances of such, and when a

person explains these things, He is guiding, He is teaching, He is crying out. This is teaching in the limited sense.

Teaching in an unlimited sense consists of the following and is very good, very great: the teacher himself (or herself) becomes the standing proof of Bahá'u'lláh—that he (or she) may become a miracle of Bahá'u'lláh with such power and such knowledge and desire, such actions and such words and character, and such heavenly powers, that you may live amongst the people, that you may be a proof, undeniable proof, of Bahá'u'lláh.

If someone ask: “What is the proof of Bahá'u'lláh?” one may say such a person—there is the proof; look at her. Bahá'u'lláh has educated this person. He has awakened this soul. He has quickened this life. He has made this person a speaker; He has given her knowledge, made her holy, made her sanctified—a shining light—He has made her a sun. This is unlimited teaching.

God willing, each one of you may become a sun.

(From a talk attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Romona Allen Brown in *Memories of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 66-67, considered as “pilgrims’ note”)

❖ “*To deepen in the Cause...*”

...To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master so thoroughly as to be able to give it to others in its pure form.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá'í Administration*, p. 11)

❖ “*...Which is the best way spread the teaching?*”

When asked by an American friend: “Which is the best way to spread the teaching?” he said: “By deeds. This way is open to all, and deeds are understood by all. Join yourselves to those who work for the poor, the weak and the unfortunate; this is greatly to be commended. To teach by words requires the skill of a wise physician. He does not offer help to those who do not want treatment. Do not press help on those who do not need your help. The work of teaching is not for all.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 98) [Cf.: pages 396-397 up ahead regarding the authenticity of this text, as no originals exist of these talks. The same principle applies to Promulgation of Universal Peace, and Paris Talks. For further explanation, please refer to both letters under the category of Authenticity and Authority, on page 391 and following, in the Appendices.— ed.]

[...all these sayings are but words and we see very few of them carried into the world of action....

But Bahá'ís must not be thus; they must rise above this condition. Actions must be more to them than words. By their actions they must be merciful and not merely by their words. They must on all occasions confirm by their actions what they proclaim in words. Their deeds must prove their fidelity, and their actions must show forth Divine light.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p.80) [See note above regarding Authenticity and Authority –ed.]

“The need of the Hour is Teaching on the Home Front. Its goals can only be won, by a new spirit of dedication and consecration on the part of the friends, each in his own country, in his own home.

“ . . . Never must they let a day pass without teaching some soul, trusting to Bahá’u’lláh that the seed will grow. The friends should seek pure souls, gain their confidence, and then teach that person carefully until he becomes a Bahá’í, and then nurture him until he becomes a firm and active supporter of the Faith.

“ . . . Everyone must remember that it is the ‘Holy Spirit that quickens’ and therefore the teacher must become like a reed through which the Holy Spirit may reach the seeking soul.

“The beloved Guardian has stressed over and over again, that to effectively teach the Faith, the individual must study deeply, the Divine Word, imbibe Its life-giving waters, and feast upon Its glorious teachings. He should then /meditate/ on the import of the Word, and finding its spiritual depths, /pray/ for guidance and assistance. But most important, after prayer is /action/. After one has prayed and meditated, he must arise, relying fully on the guidance and confirmation of Bahá’u’lláh, to teach His Faith. /Perseverance/ in action is essential, just as wisdom and audacity are necessary for effective teaching. The individual must sacrifice all things to this great goal, and then the victories will be won.” [From a letter dated 30 May 1956 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Hands of the Cause in the United States]

(Compilations, *The Individual and Teaching - Raising the Divine Call*, pp. 35-36)

❖ “...Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones...”

...O Lord, my God! Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones, strengthen me in my servitude to Thee, illumine my brow with the light of adoration in Thy court of holiness, and of prayer to Thy Kingdom of grandeur. Help me to be selfless at the heavenly entrance of Thy gate, and aid me to be detached from all things within Thy holy precincts. Lord! Give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness; with its robe clothe me, and in its ocean immerse me. Make me as dust in

the pathway of Thy loved ones, and grant that I may offer up my soul for the earth ennobled by the footsteps of Thy chosen ones in Thy path, O Lord of Glory in the Highest.

With this prayer doth Thy servant call Thee, at dawntide and in the night-season. Fulfil his heart's desire, O Lord! Illumine his heart, gladden his bosom, kindle his light, that he may serve Thy Cause and Thy servants.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 319-320; and *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 233)

❖ “*O friends! Be not careless of the virtues...*”

O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny. Suffer not your labors to be wasted through the vain imaginations which certain hearts have devised. Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men, the letters inscribed upon His sacred scroll. With the utmost unity, and in a spirit of perfect fellowship, exert yourselves, that ye may be enabled to achieve that which beseemeth this Day of God. Verily I say, strife and dissension, and whatsoever the mind of man abhorreth are entirely unworthy of his station. Center your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God. Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation, whose power hath caused the foundations of the mightiest structures to quake, every mountain to be crushed into dust, and every soul to be dumbfounded. Should the greatness of this Day be revealed in its fullness, every man would forsake a myriad lives in his longing to partake, though it be for one moment, of its great glory—how much more this world and its corruptible treasures!

Be ye guided by wisdom in all your doings, and cleave ye tenaciously unto it. Please God ye may all be strengthened to carry out that which is the Will of God, and may be graciously assisted to appreciate the rank conferred upon such of His loved ones as have arisen to serve Him and magnify His name. Upon them be the glory of God, the glory of all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, and the glory of the inmates of the most exalted Paradise, the heaven of heavens.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 196-197)

The teaching work should under all conditions be actively pursued by the believers because divine confirmations are dependent upon it. Should a Bahá’í refrain from being fully, vigorously and wholeheartedly involved in the teaching work he will undoubtedly be deprived of the blessings of the Abha Kingdom. Even so, this activity should be tempered with wisdom—not that wisdom which requireth one to be silent and forgetful of such an obligation, but rather that which requireth one to display divine tolerance, love, kindness, patience, a goodly character, and holy deeds. In

brief, encourage the friends individually to teach the Cause of God and draw their attention to this meaning of wisdom mentioned in the Writings, which is itself the essence of teaching the Faith—but all this to be done with the greatest tolerance, so that heavenly assistance and divine confirmation may aid the friends.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 268)

❖ [“...*the station of revelation and vision*...”

Great indeed is the blessedness of him who attaineth Thy presence, drinketh the wine of reunion proffered by the hand of Thy bounteousness, inhaleth the fragrance of Thy signs, unlooseth his tongue in celebrating Thy praise, soareth high in Thy heavens, is carried away by the sweetness of Thy Voice, gaineth admittance into the most exalted Paradise and attaineth the station of revelation and vision before the throne of Thy majesty.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 116)]

It is my firm conviction which I now express with all sincerity and candor, that the dignity and unity of the Cause urgently demands—particularly throughout the American continent—that the friends should in their words and conduct emphasize and give absolute prominence to the constructive dynamic principles of Bahá’u’lláh, rather than attach undue importance to His negative Teachings....

...As the Master so fully and consistently did throughout His lifetime, we must all make a supreme effort to pour out a genuine spirit of kindness and hopeful love to peoples of various creeds and classes, and must abstain from all provocative language that may impede the effect of what true and continued kindness can produce.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 18-19)

To Martha Root, that archetype of Bahá’í itinerant teachers and the foremost Hand raised by Bahá’u’lláh since ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s passing, must be awarded, if her manifold services and the supreme act of her life are to be correctly appraised, the title of Leading Ambassadors of His Faith and Pride of Bahá’í teachers, whether men or women, in both the East and the West...

...“Unrestrained as the wind,” putting her “whole trust” in God, as “the best provision” for her journey, she fulfilled almost to the letter the wish so poignantly expressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Tablets, whose summons she had instantly arisen to carry out: “O that I could travel, even though on foot and in the utmost poverty, to these regions, and, raising the call of ‘Ya Bahá’u’l-Abha’ in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans, promote the Divine teachings! This, alas, I cannot do. How intensely I deplore it! Please God, ye may achieve it.”

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, passim, pp. 386-389)

1) Unnumbered ills and tribulations...

The holy Manifestations of God were sent down to make visible the oneness of humanity. For this did They endure unnumbered ills and tribulations, that a community from amongst mankind's divergent peoples could gather within the shadow of the Word of God and live as one, and could, with delight and grace, demonstrate on earth the unity of humankind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 278)

❖ “*Make of thine effort a glass...*”

...Make of thine effort a glass, perchance it may shelter this flame from the contrary winds; albeit this light doth long to be kindled in the lamp of the Lord, and to shine in the globe of the spirit. For the head raised up in the love of God will certainly fall by the sword, and the life that is kindled with longing will surely be sacrificed, and the heart which remembereth the Loved One will surely brim with blood....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 41-42)

O My friend! Many a hound pursueth this gazelle of the desert of oneness; many a talon claweth at this thrush of the eternal garden. Pitiless ravens do lie in wait for this bird of the heavens of God, and the huntsman of envy stalketh this deer of the meadow of love.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 41)

O thou friend! Be not sorrowful because of my imprisonment and lament not for my difficulties; nay, rather ask God to increase my hardship in His path, for therein lies a wisdom which none are able to comprehend save the near angels.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, p. 333)

Thou seest me, O my God, bowed down in lowliness, humbling myself before Thy commandments, submitting to Thy sovereignty, trembling at the might of Thy dominion, fleeing from Thy wrath, entreating Thy grace, relying upon Thy forgiveness, shaking with awe at Thy fury. I implore Thee with a throbbing heart, with streaming tears and a yearning soul, and in complete detachment from all things, to make Thy lovers as rays of light across Thy realms, and to aid Thy

chosen servants to exalt Thy Word, that their faces may turn beautiful and bright with splendour, that their hearts may be filled with mysteries, and that every soul may lay down its burden of sin. Guard them then from the aggressor, from him who hath become a shameless and blasphemous doer of wrong....

...O ye my spiritual friends! For some time now the pressures have been severe, the restrictions as shackles of iron. This hapless wronged one was left single and alone, for all the ways were barred. Friends were forbidden access to me, the trusted were shut away, the foe compassed me about, the evil watchers were fierce and bold. At every instant, fresh affliction. At every breath, new anguish. Both kin and stranger on the attack; indeed, one-time lovers, faithless and unpitying, were worse than foes as they rose up to harass me. None was there to defend 'Abdu'l-Bahá, no helper, no protector, no ally, no champion. I was drowning in a shoreless sea, and ever beating upon my ears were the raven-croaking voices of the disloyal...

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 224-225)

O God, my God! Thou seest me plunged in an ocean of anguish, held fast to the fires of tyranny, and weeping in the darkness of the night. Sleepless I toss and turn upon my bed, mine eyes straining to behold the morning light of faithfulness and trust. I agonize even as a fish, its inward parts afire as it leapeth about in terror upon the sand, yet I ever look for Thy bestowals to appear from every side.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 222)

At every daybreak, triple darkness. At eventide, stone-hearted tyranny. And never a moment's peace, and never any balm for the spear's red wounds. From moment to moment, word would come of my exile to the Fezzan sands; from hour to hour, I was to be cast into the endless sea. Now they would say that these homeless wanderers were ruined at last; again that the cross would soon be put to use. This wasted frame of mine was to be made the target for bullet or arrow; or again, this failing body was to be cut to ribbons by the sword.

Our alien acquaintances could not contain themselves for joy, and our treacherous friends exulted. 'Praise be to God,' one would exclaim, 'Here is our dream come true.' And another, 'God be thanked, our spear-head found the heart.'

Affliction beat upon this captive like the heavy rains of spring, and the victories of the malevolent swept down in a relentless flood, and still 'Abdu'l-Bahá remained happy and serene, and relied on the grace of the All-Merciful. That pain, that anguish, was a paradise of all delights; those chains were the necklace of a king on a throne in heaven. Content with God's will, utterly resigned, my heart surrendered to whatever fate had in store, I was happy. For a boon companion, I had great joy.

Finally a time came when the friends turned inconsolable, and abandoned all hope. It was then the morning dawned, and flooded all with unending light. The towering clouds were scattered, the dismal shadows fled. In that instant the fetters fell away, the chains were lifted off the neck of this homeless one and hung round the neck of the foe. Those dire straits were changed to ease, and on the horizon of God's bounties the sun of hope rose up. All this was out of God's grace and His bestowals.

And yet, from one point of view, this wanderer was saddened and despondent. For what pain, in the time to come, could I seek comfort? At the news of what granted wish could I rejoice? There was no more tyranny, no more affliction, no tragical events, no tribulations. My only joy in this swiftly-passing world was to tread the stony path of God and to endure hard tests and all material griefs. For otherwise, this earthly life would prove barren and vain, and better would be death. The tree of being would produce no fruit; the sown field of this existence would yield no harvest. Thus it is my hope that once again some circumstance will make my cup of anguish to brim over, and that beautiful Love, that Slayer of souls, will dazzle the beholders again. Then will this heart be blissful, this soul be blessed. [Cf.: Bahá'u'lláh, "The Fire Tablet", *Bahá'í Prayers*, pp. 212-218]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 226-227) [Italics added –ed.]

The tests of every dispensation are in direct proportion to the greatness of the Cause, and as heretofore such a manifest Covenant, written by the Supreme Pen, hath not been entered upon, the tests are proportionately more severe. These trials cause the feeble souls to waver while those who are firm are not affected. These agitations of the violators are no more than the foam of the ocean, which is one of its inseparable features....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 210)

Never be depressed. The more ye are stirred by violation, the more deepen ye in firmness and steadfastness, and be assured that the divine hosts shall conquer, for they are assured of the victory of the Abha Kingdom. Throughout all regions the standard of firmness and steadfastness is upraised and the flag of violation is debased, for only a few weak souls have been led away by the flattery and the specious arguments of the violators who are outwardly with the greatest care exhibiting firmness but inwardly are engaged in agitating souls....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 211-212)

In short, the ocean of the Covenant is tumultuous and wide. It casteth ashore the foam of violation and thus rest ye assured. Be engaged in the furtherance of the Mashriqu’l-Adhkar and

prepare the means for the diffusion of the divine fragrances. Be not engaged in anything but this, for otherwise thou shalt dissipate thine attention and the work will not advance.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 215)

...When God calls a soul to a high station, it is because that soul has capacity for that station as a gift of God, and because that soul has supplicated to be taken into His service. No envies, jealousies, calumnies, slanders, plots, nor schemes, will ever move God to remove a soul from its intended place, for by the grace of God, such actions on the part of the people are the test of the servant, testing his strength, forbearance, endurance and sincerity under adversity. At the same time those who show forth envies, jealousies, etc. toward a servant, are depriving themselves of their own stations, and not another of his, for they prove by their own acts that they are not only unworthy of being called to any station awaiting them, but also prove that they cannot withstand the very first test that of rejoicing over the success of their neighbor, at which God rejoices. Only by such a sincere joy can the gift of God descend unto a pure heart.

Envy closes the door of Bounty, and jealousy prevents one from ever attaining to the Kingdom of Abha.

No! Before God! No one can deprive another of his rightful station, that can only be lost by one's unwillingness or failure to do the will of God, or by seeking to use the Cause of God for one's own gratification or ambition.

No one save a severed soul or a sincere heart finds response from God. By assisting in the success of another servant in the Cause does one in reality lay the foundation for one's own success and aspirations.

Ambitions are an abomination before the Lord.

How regrettable! Some even use the affairs of the Cause and its activities as a means of revenge on account of some personal spite, or fancied injury, interfering with the work of another, or seeking its failure. Such only destroy their own success, did they know the truth.

Abdu'l Bahá is the interpreter of the aims, intents, and purposes of the Words of the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'o'lláh) [sic] and is the interpreter of his own written words, and none can say that this or that is the intention conveyed therein, save Abdu'l Bahá. The spirit of unity exists in the Divine Words, and one who interprets them in such wise as to create a division and discord is indeed one who errs.

Were not the Revelation of Bahá'o'lláh [sic] one adaptable to the entire world and its diverse nations, it could not be a unique and universal Revelation, but its elasticity adapts itself to all conditions, and its spirit is one that moulds itself into every vehicle and need for the accomplishment of the divine plan of unity.

But when some follow merely the hard and fixed letter of the law, they deprive it (the Revelation) of its elastic quality the spirit and endeavor to convert it into a hard instrument of inflexible qualities....

Blessed are they who are the means of making unity among the friends, and pity on those who in the right or wrong are the cause of discord. For instance: When one is in the right in a case in dispute, and his minority prevents him from establishing this rightful matter, instead of agitating the subject, if he will humbly submit to sacrifice his position for the sake of unity and peace, God will accept that sacrifice and ere long the rightful matter will be established without any farther dispute, by the Divine assistance; whereas without such sacrifice and submissiveness great harm might ensue.

The friends must be prepared to efface themselves at all times. Seeking the approval of men is many times the cause of imperiling the approval of God.

The worst enemies of the Cause are in the Cause and mention the Name of God. We need not fear the enemies on the outside for such can be easily dealt with. But the enemies who call themselves friends and who persistently violate every fundamental law of love and unity, are difficult to be dealt with in this day, for the mercy of God is still great. But ere long this merciful door will be closed and such enemies will be attacked with a madness....

If you knew what great things would happen to the Cause after my departure, you would pray every day and night for my release and demise.

(Statements attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá “at table” by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, pp. 43-45, but as no authentic or original copy could be found, to be considered as “*pilgrims’ note*”) [Italics added –ed.]

❖ “[S]elf-love...is a strange trait...”

...self-love...is a strange trait and the means of the destruction of many important souls in the world. If man be imbued with all good qualities but be selfish, all the other virtues will fade or pass away and eventually he will grow worse.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, p. 135)

❖ “*Know ye that trials and tribulations have...been the lot...*”

Know ye that trials and tribulations have, from time immemorial, been the lot of the chosen Ones of God and His beloved, and such of His servants as are detached from all else but Him, they whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of the Almighty, they that speak not till He hath spoken, and act according to His commandment. Such is God’s method

carried into effect of old, and such will it remain in the future. Blessed are the steadfastly enduring, they that are patient under ills and hardships, who lament not over anything that befalleth them, and who tread the path of resignation....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 204; and also in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 129)

Say: Magnified be Thy Name, O Lord my God! I beseech Thee by Thy Name through which the splendour of the light of wisdom shone resplendent when the heavens of divine utterance were set in motion amidst mankind, to graciously aid me by Thy heavenly confirmations and enable me to extol Thy Name amongst Thy servants.

O Lord! Unto Thee have I turned my face, detached from all save Thee and holding fast to the hem of the robe of Thy manifold blessings. Unloose my tongue therefore to proclaim that which will captivate the minds of men and will rejoice their souls and spirits. Strengthen me then in Thy Cause in such wise that I may not be hindered by the ascendancy of the oppressors among Thy creatures nor withheld by the onslaught of the disbelievers amidst those who dwell in Thy realm. Make me as a lamp shining throughout Thy lands that those in whose hearts the light of Thy knowledge gloweth and the yearning for Thy love lingereth may be guided by its radiance.

Verily, potent art Thou to do whatsoever Thou willest, and in Thy grasp Thou holdest the kingdom of creation. There is none other God but Thee, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 151-152)

“Be as I am!”

[Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l Bahá; Cf.: May Maxwell, *An Early Pilgrimage*, cited elsewhere in this compilation, and Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá – The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 73, but generally regarded as “pilgrims’ note”; (Cf. Appendix II re: “Explanation of Pilgrims’ note” at end of this course, pp. 389-392) –ed.]

2) His never-interrupted aid...the breath of everlasting life

Be ye assured with the greatest assurance that, verily, God will help those who are firm in His Covenant in every matter....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, , p. 83)

All praise and thanksgiving be unto the Blessed Beauty, for calling into action the armies of His Abha Kingdom, and sending forth to us His never-interrupted aid, dependable as the rising stars. In every region of the earth hath He supported this single, lonely servant, at every moment hath He made known to me the signs and tokens of His love. He hath cast into a stupor all those who are clinging to their vain illusions, and made them infamous in the sight of high and low. He hath caused those who run after their fads and fancies to become objects of general reproach, and hath exposed the arrogant to public view; He hath made those of the friends who proved infirm of faith to serve as a warning to every beholder, and hath caused the leaders of those who waver to love but themselves and sink down in self-conceit. Meanwhile, by the power of His might, He hath made this broken-winged bird to rise up before all who dwell on earth. He hath shattered the serried ranks of the rebellious, and hath given the victory to the hosts of salvation, and breathed into the hearts of those who stand firm in the Covenant and Testament the breath of everlasting life.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 237-238)

O army of God! Praise be to God, Bahá’u’lláh hath lifted the chains from off the necks of humankind, and hath set man free from all that trammelled him, and told him: Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch; be ye compassionate and kind to all the human race. Deal ye with strangers the same as with friends, cherish ye others just as ye would your own. See foes as friends; see demons as angels; give to the tyrant the same great love ye show the loyal and true....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 72)

O army of God! Beware lest ye harm any soul, or make any heart to sorrow; lest ye wound any man with your words, be he known to you or a stranger, be he friend or foe. Pray ye for all; ask ye that all be blessed, all be forgiven. Beware, beware, lest any of you seek vengeance, even against one who is thirsting for your blood. Beware, beware, lest ye offend the feelings of another, even though he be an evil-doer, and he wish you ill. Look ye not upon the creatures, turn ye to their Creator. See ye not the never-yielding people, see but the Lord of Hosts.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 73)

❖ “*O Son of Being! ... O Son of Man!...*”

O SON OF BEING!

Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.

O SON OF MAN!

Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 29 and # 27, respectively)

That seeker should also regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quenqueth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 193; and also in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 265)

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 Báb, as cited by Nabil-i-A'zam, in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 93)

Utter the Word of God. If he accepteth it the desired purpose is attained, and if he turneth away leave him to himself and trust to God.

Such is the attribute of those who are firm in the Covenant.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 210)

❖ “*Thus doeth the Nightingale utter His call...*”

Thus doth the Nightingale utter His call unto you from this prison. He hath but to deliver this clear message. Whosoever desireth, let him turn aside from this counsel and whosoever desireth let him choose the path to his Lord.

O people, if ye deny these verses, by what proof have ye believed in God? Produce it, O assemblage of false ones.

Nay, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, they are not, and never shall be able to do this, even should they combine to assist one another.

O Ahmad! Forget not My bounties while I am absent. Remember My days during thy days, and My distress and banishment in this remote prison. And be thou so steadfast in My love that thy heart shall not waver, even if the swords of the enemies rain blows upon thee and all the heavens and the earth arise against thee.

Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones, and be not of those who doubt....

(Bahá'u'lláh, “*The Tablet of Ahmad*”, *Bahá'í Prayers*, pp. 209-210)

❖ “*Utter the Word...*”

Utter the Word of God....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 210)

❖ “*Speak not till He hath spoken...*”

...speak not till He hath spoken, and ...do His bidding.

(The Báb, as cited by Nabil-i-A’zam, in Shoghi Effendi’s translation of *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 93)

“The holy realities of the Concourse on high...yearn, in this day, in the Most Exalted Paradise, to return unto this world, so that they may be aided to render some service to the threshold of the Abha Beauty, and arise to demonstrate their servitude to His sacred Threshold.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 47)

O army of God! Today, in this world, every people is wandering astray in its own desert, moving here and there according to the dictates of its fancies and whims, pursuing its own particular caprice. Amongst all the teeming masses of the earth, only this community of the Most Great Name is free and clear of human schemes and hath no selfish purpose to promote. Alone amongst them all, this people hath arisen with aims purified of self, following the Teachings of God, most eagerly toiling and striving toward a single goal: to turn this nether dust into high heaven, to make of this world a mirror for the Kingdom, to change this world into a different world, and cause all humankind to adopt the ways of righteousness and a new manner of life.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 70)

❖ “*Unite the hearts of Thy servants...*”

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.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 203) [Italics added –ed.]

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 whatsoever 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 8-9) [Italics added –ed.]

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 11)

[The Bahá'ís are commanded to establish the oneness of mankind; if they cannot unite around one point how will they be able to bring about the unity of mankind?

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 209)]

To be brief, it hath been decided by the Desire of God that union and harmony may day by day increase among the friends of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful One, in the West. Not until this is realized will the affairs advance by any means whatever!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, p. 124) [Underling added –ed.]

Walk, therefore, with a sure step and engage with the utmost assurance and confidence in the promulgation of the divine fragrances, the glorification of the Word of God and firmness in the Covenant.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 209)

Souls are inclined toward estrangement. Steps should first be taken to do away with this estrangement, for only then will the Word take effect. If a believer showeth kindness to one of the neglectful, and, with great love, gradually leadeth him to an understanding of the validity of the Holy Cause, so that he may come to know the fundamentals of God’s Faith and the implications thereof—such a one will certainly be transformed, *excepting only those seldom-encountered individuals who are even as ashes, whose hearts are ‘hard as rocks, or harder still.’* [Qur’án 2:69]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 265) [Italics added –ed.]

When man’s soul is rarified and cleansed, spiritual links are established, and from these bonds sensations felt by the heart are produced. The human heart resembleth a mirror. When this is purified human hearts are attuned and reflect one another, and thus spiritual emotions are generated. This is like the world of dreams when man is detached from things which are tangible

and experienceth those of the spirit. What amazing laws operate, and what remarkable discoveries are made! And it may even be that detailed communications are registered...

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 108) [Italics added –ed.]

Should we build up the Administrative World Order to a point of absolute perfection but at the same time *allow it to be hampered or disconnected from the channels within, through which channels the Holy Spirit of the Cause pours forth*, we would have nothing more than a perfected body out of touch with and cut off from the finer promptings of the soul or spirit. If, on the other hand, the influxes and goings forth of the spirit are scattered, diffused, and subjected wholly to the more or less imperfect guidance and interpretation of individual believers, lacking both the wisdom secured through consultation and also the lights of real unity which shine through consultative action and obedience thereto - a disordered and disorganized activity would be witnessed, which would but dimly reflect the divine purpose for this age, which is no less than the establishment of the reign of divine love, justice, and wisdom in the world, under and in conformity to the Divine Law.

In the body of a man, which is the true divine example or parallel, the spirit, when in ideal control of all the lesser parts of the organism, finds the utmost harmony throughout the whole body - each part is in perfect reciprocity with the other parts. *The commands and impulses of the spirit are obeyed by the body and the body in turn in its actions and functions identifies and determines the expression the spiritual impulses shall take. This is divine unity - and this law, being universal and found in every created object in the universe, has full application to the universal Bahá’í organism made up of believers everywhere, which has been established by the Manifestation of God.*

(Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 1-2; and *Guidance for Today and Tomorrow*, pp. 110-111) [Italics and underlining added –ed.]

Nothing short of the *spirit* of a true Bahá’í can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 63-64; and *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, p. 44) [Italics added –ed.]

❖ “*Man can withstand anything except that which is divinely intended...*”

All created things are expressions of the affinity and cohesion of elementary substances, and nonexistence is the absence of their attraction and agreement. Various elements unite harmoniously in composition, but when these elements become discordant, repelling each other, decomposition and nonexistence result. Everything partakes of this nature and is subject to this principle, *for the creative foundation in all its degrees and kingdoms is an expression or outcome of love....*

...The powers of earth cannot withstand the privileges and bestowals which God has ordained for this great and glorious century. It is a need and exigency of the time. Man can withstand anything except that which is divinely intended and indicated for the age and its requirements.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, passim, pp. 123-125) [Italics and underlining added –ed.] [Also, see “Note” about this source, PUP, page 247, above –ed.)

...And the greatest means for the union and harmony of all is Spiritual Meetings. This matter is very important and is as a magnet (to attract) for divine confirmation.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, p. 124)

“...It behooveth the loved ones of God to be enamored of one another and to sacrifice themselves for their fellow-workers in the Cause. They should yearn towards one another even as the sore athirst yearneth for the Water of Life, and the lover burneth to meet his heart’s desire.”

Such is the sublime, the glorious position He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] wishes us, and all the peoples and kindreds on earth, to attain in this world; how much more to achieve unity and common understanding among ourselves, and then arise to herald with one voice the coming of the Kingdom and the salvation of mankind.

With unity of purpose firmly established in our minds, with every trace of personal animosity banished from our hearts, and with the spirit of whole-hearted and sustained fellowship kindled in our souls, can we hope to deliver effectively the Message of Bahá’u’lláh, and execute faithfully the various provisions of our Beloved’s Will and Testament.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, and Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 35-36)

❖ *“The first condition is absolute love and harmony...”*

The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the

trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden. Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be nonexistent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught...

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 87-88)

By the Ancient Beauty! This wronged one hath in no wise borne nor doth he bear a grudge against any one; towards none doth he entertain any ill-feeling and uttereth no word save for the good of the world. My supreme obligation, however, of necessity, prompteth me to guard and preserve the Cause of God. Thus, with the greatest regret, I counsel you saying: Guard ye the Cause of God, protect His law and have the utmost fear of discord. This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá (may my life be offered up for them): "His Holiness, the Exalted One (the Bab), is the Manifestation of the Unity and Oneness of God and the Forerunner of the Ancient Beauty. His Holiness the Abha Beauty (may my life be a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the Supreme Manifestation of God and the Dayspring of His Most Divine Essence. All others are servants unto Him and do His bidding."

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 19)

Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner, the Author, and the True Exemplar of the Bahá'í Cause, as set forth in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present day Bahá'í administration throughout the world....

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 90)]

❖ "...Shield the Cause of God..."

O ye beloved of the Lord! Strive with all your heart to shield the Cause of God from the onslaught of the insincere, for souls such as these cause the straight to become crooked and all benevolent efforts to produce contrary results.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Will and Testament*, p. 21)

O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor deprives himself of God's grace. It is incumbent upon everyone to show the utmost love, rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and sincere kindness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers. So intense must be the spirit of love and loving kindness, that the stranger may find himself a friend, the enemy a true brother, no difference whatsoever existing between them. For universality is of God and all limitations earthly. Thus man must strive that his reality may manifest virtues and perfections, the light whereof may shine upon

everyone. The light of the sun shineth upon all the world and the merciful showers of Divine Providence fall upon all peoples. The vivifying breeze reviveth every living creature and all beings endued with life obtain their share and portion at His heavenly board. In like manner, the affections and loving kindness of the servants of the One True God must be bountifully and universally extended to all mankind. Regarding this, restrictions and limitations are in no wise permitted.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament*, p. 13)

❖ “...*conflict, contention and vainglory hath ever been...like unto the play and pastimes of children...*”

In the eyes of those possessed of insight, all this conflict, contention and vainglory hath ever been, and will ever be, like unto the play and pastimes of children. Take heed, and be not of them that see and yet deny.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 168)

The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá shall be vouchsafed to them....

...The members thereof [of a Spiritual Assembly] must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should anyone oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions. If after discussion, a decision be carried unanimously well and good; but if, the Lord forbid, differences of opinion should arise, a majority of voices must prevail.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 86; *Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 21-22, and *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, p. 42)

Wherefore, O my loving friends! Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good-will and friendliness, that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Bahá, that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancor may vanish from the world and the darkness of estrangement amidst the peoples and kindreds of the world may give way to the Light of Unity. Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you show your fidelity unto them, should they be unjust toward you show

justice towards them, should they keep aloof from you attract them to yourselves, should they show their enmity be friendly towards them, should they poison your lives, sweeten their souls, should they inflict a wound upon you, be a salve to their sores. Such are the attributes of the sincere! Such are the attributes of the truthful.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament*, p. 14)

...Strive ye then with all your heart to treat compassionately all humankind—except for those who have some selfish, private motive, or some disease of the soul. Kindness cannot be shown the tyrant, the deceiver, or the thief, because, far from awakening them to the error of their ways, it maketh them to continue in their perversity as before. No matter how much kindness ye may expend upon the liar, he will but lie the more, for he believeth you to be deceived, while ye understand him but too well, and only remain silent out of your extreme compassion.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 158)

❖ “*The Lord hath ordained...*”

“The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Bahá, and should it exceed this number it does not matter.... It behooveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It is incumbent upon them to take counsel together and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly. Thus hath the Lord your God commanded you. Beware lest ye put away that which is clearly revealed in His Tablet. Fear God, O ye that perceive.” Fear God, O ye that perceive.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 30, p. 29; and earlier as cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 21)

Does not ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wish us, as He looks down upon us with loving expectation from His glorious Station, to obliterate as much as possible all traces of censure, of conflicting discussions, of cooling remarks, of petty unnecessary observations that impede the onward march of the Cause, that damp the zeal of the firm believer and detract from the sublimity of the Bahá’í Cause in the eyes of the inquirer? In order, however, to insure fair and quick and vigorous action whenever such an evil activity is revealed and has been carefully ascertained, the best and only means would appear to be, for the careful observer, once he is assured of such an evil action, and has grown hopeless of the attitude of kindness and forbearance, to report it quietly to the Spiritual Assembly....

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 19)

❖ *“It is incumbent upon everyone...”*

Furthermore, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reveals the following:—”It is incumbent upon every one not to take any step without consulting the Spiritual Assembly, and they must assuredly obey with heart and soul its bidding and be submissive unto it, that things may be properly ordered and well arranged. Otherwise every person will act independently and after his own judgment, will follow his own desire, and do harm to the Cause.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 21)

The law of order must always obtain in the world of humanity. Heaven has so decreed in the creation of man....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 152)

Be ye assured with the greatest assurance that, verily, God will help those who are firm in His Covenant in every matter....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, p. 83)

[And again...]

“The prime requisites for them that take counsel together *are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold.*

Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá shall be vouchsafed to them.

In this day, assemblies of consultation are of the greatest importance and a vital necessity.

Obedience unto them is essential and obligatory.

The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument.

Should any one oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed.

The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions...”.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 21; see also: *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 87, and *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, p. 42) [Italics, bulleting or itemization added –ed.]

Let us also remember that at the very root of the Cause lies the principle of the undoubted right of the individual to self-expression, his freedom to declare his conscience and set forth his views. If certain instructions of the Master are today particularly emphasized and scrupulously adhered to, let us be sure that they are but provisional measures designed to guard and protect the Cause in its present state of infancy and growth until the day when this tender and precious plant shall have sufficiently grown to be able to withstand the unwisdom of its friends and the attacks of its enemies.

Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. *Nothing short of the spirit of a true Bahá’í* can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá’í Administration*, p. 63) [Italics added –ed.]

❖ *“NO OBSTACLE should be placed before any soul which might prevent it from finding the truth.”*

NO OBSTACLE should be placed before any soul which might prevent it from finding the truth. Bahá'u'lláh revealed his [sic] directions, teachings, and laws, so that souls might know God, and not that any utterance might become an obstacle in their way.

Holding to the letter of the law is many times an indication of a desire for leadership. One who assumes to be the enforcer of the law shows an intellectual understanding of the Cause, but that spiritual guidance in them is not yet established.

The alphabet of things is for children, that they may in time use their reasoning powers. “Following the spirit” is a guidance by and through the heart, the prompter of the spirit. The Pharisees were extremely orthodox, holding strictly to the law. They were the cause of the condemnation and ultimate crucifixion of Jesus.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 43, “pilgrims’ note”)

❖ “*the Army of the Cause...can never be defeated, but it’s rate of advance can be slowed...*”

The Army of the Cause, advancing at the bidding of the Lord, to conquer the hearts of men, can never be defeated, but its rate of advance can be slowed down by acts of unwisdom and ignorance on the part of its supporters....

(The Universal House of Justice, *Messages 1963 to 1986*, p. 163)

❖ “*You have been called to this station...*”

You are the lowly, of whom God has thus spoken in His Book: “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 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.”

(The Báb, cited by Nabil-i-A’zam, in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 93) [Underlining added –ed.]

Enumerating the obligations incumbent upon the members of the consulting councils, the Beloved reveals the following: — “The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden. Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be nonexistent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught. The second condition: — They must, when coming together, turn their faces to the Kingdom on high and ask aid from the Realm of Glory.... In short, whatsoever thing is arranged in harmony and with love and purity of motive, its result is light, and should the least trace of estrangement prevail the result shall be darkness upon darkness.... If this be so regarded, that assembly shall be of God, but otherwise it shall lead to coolness and alienation that proceed from the Evil One.... Should they endeavour to fulfil these conditions the Grace of the Holy Spirit shall be vouchsafed unto them, and that assembly shall become the centre of the Divine blessings, the hosts of Divine confirmation shall come to their aid, and they shall day by day receive a new effusion of Spirit.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, passim, pp. 87-89; and as cited by Shoghi Effendi in *Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 22-23)

If the solution to the problems of consolidation and deepening, as you set forth in your letter, were to be found in appointing Counsellors or a corps of trainers and workers who, to enable them

to give their full-time services to the Cause, are supported entirely by the Fund, you can be sure that such a provision would already have been made in Bahá'í Administration. You should bear in mind that the infant Faith of God is gradually approaching its promised stage of fulfillment, and that the world at large is likewise moving steadily towards its inevitable stage of maturity. The answer to the crying needs of the Faith lies not in releasing an ever-increasing number of full-time workers in the field, but in working out ways and means to strengthen the foundations of Local Spiritual Assemblies, which are the broad and solid base upon which the structure of God's World Order needs to be constructed. As the messages of the House of Justice repeatedly stress, great efforts should be exerted to attain this goal. The more the Counsellors, the traveling teachers, the pioneers, and particularly the Auxiliary Board members direct their energies towards the fulfillment of this objective, the sooner will the day come when the problems you describe in your letter can be effectively resolved.

We are instructed to say that you should not feel discouraged, nor should you consider disagreement with your views on the part of other believers who are equally sincere and firm in the Covenant, necessarily an act of jealousy towards you or opposition to you personally. Many problems can be solved with love and wisdom, with optimism and trust in the good intentions, the devotion, and the love and dedication that fellow-believers have for the Faith....

(The Universal House of Justice, in a Letter to an individual believer, dated 11-04-80)

❖ *"This challenge, so severe and insistent..."*

This challenge, so severe and insistent, and yet so glorious, faces no doubt primarily the individual believer on whom, in the last resort, depends the fate of the entire community. He it is who constitutes the warp and woof on which the quality and pattern of the whole fabric must depend. He it is who acts as one of the countless links in the mighty chain that now girdles the globe. He it is who serves as one of the multitude of bricks which support the structure and insure the stability of the administrative edifice now being raised in every part of the world. Without his support, at once whole-hearted, continuous and generous, every measure adopted, and every plan formulated, by the body which acts as the national representative of the community to which he belongs, is foredoomed to failure. The World Center of the Faith itself is paralyzed if such a support on the part of the rank and file of the community is denied it. The Author of the Divine Plan Himself is impeded in His purpose if the proper instruments for the execution of His design are lacking. The sustaining strength of Bahá'u'lláh Himself, the Founder of the Faith, will be withheld from every and each individual who fails in the long run to arise and play his part.

The administrative agencies of a divinely conceived Administrative Order at long last erected and relatively perfected stand in dire need of the individual believer to come forward and utilize them with undeviating purpose, serene confidence and exemplary dedication. The heart of the

Guardian cannot but leap with joy, and his mind derive fresh inspiration, at every evidence testifying to the response of the individual to his allotted task. The unseen legions, standing rank upon rank, and eager to pour forth from the Kingdom on high the full measure of their celestial strength on the individual participants of this incomparably glorious Crusade, are powerless unless and until each potential crusader decides for himself, and perseveres in his determination, to rush into the arena of service ready to sacrifice his all for the Cause he is called upon to champion.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, pp. 130-131)



❖ *“Friends, the time is coming when I shall be no longer with you...”*

At the close of His strenuous Western tours, which had called forth the last ounce of His ebbing strength, He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] had written [cited by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By*, p. 309]:

“Friends, the time is coming when I shall be no longer with you. I have done all that could be done. I have served the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh to the utmost of my ability. I have labored night and day all the years of my life. Oh, how I long to see the believers shouldering the responsibilities of the Cause! Now is the time to proclaim the Kingdom of Bahá! Now is the hour of union and concord! Now is the day of the spiritual harmony of the friends of God! All the resources of my physical strength I have exhausted, and the spirit of my life is the welcome tidings of the unity of the people of Bahá. I am straining my ears toward the East and toward the West, toward the North and toward the South, that haply I may hear the songs of love and fellowship raised in the meetings of the believers. My days are numbered, and save this there remains none other joy for me. Oh, how I yearn to see the friends united, even as a shining strand of pearls, as the brilliant Pleiades, as the rays of the sun, the gazelles of one meadow!

“The mystic nightingale is singing for them; will they not listen? The bird of paradise is warbling; will they not hear? The Angel of the Kingdom of Abha is calling to them; will they not hearken? The Messenger of the Covenant is pleading; will they not heed?

Ah! I am waiting, waiting to hear the glad news that the believers are the embodiment of sincerity and loyalty, the incarnation of love and amity and the manifestation of unity and concord!

“Will they not rejoice my heart?

“Will they not satisfy my yearnings?

“Will they not heed my pleadings?

“Will they not fulfill my hopes?

“Will they not answer my call?

“I am waiting, I am patiently waiting!”

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in entirety in *Bahá'í Year Book*, v 1, [1926], p. 31 [a precursor to *The Bahá'í World*]; also cited in part by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By*, p. 309; and by J.E. Esslemont in *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era*, p. 61, as well as by H.M. Balyuzi, in *'Abdu'l-Bahá - The Centre of the Covenant*, p. 406)

Seek thou the shore of the Most Great Ocean, and enter, then, the Crimson Ark which God hath ordained in the Qayyum-i-Asma for the people of Bahá. Verily, it passeth over land and sea. He that entereth therein is saved, and he that turneth aside perisheth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 139)

5. The people of Bahá...

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

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

[Cf. also, up ahead in this compilation, the Section entitled: “Ascendancy of ...[His] independent sovereignty, ...in the plenitude of might and power, ...revealed in its full splendour” which refers to the appearance of this people (“the people of Bahá”) as “holy ones”, helpers, “hands, and “a new race”; as well as the Master’s Tablet longing for their eventual, promised appearance, pg. 37 –ed.]

Every receptive soul who hath in this Day inhaled the fragrance of His garment and hath, with a pure heart, set his face towards the all-glorious Horizon is reckoned among the people of Bahá in the Crimson Book. Grasp ye, in My Name, the chalice of My loving-kindness, drink then your fill in My glorious and wondrous remembrance. [Underling and italics added for emphasis –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 220)

[Seek thou the shore of the Most Great Ocean, and enter, then, the Crimson Ark which God hath ordained in the Qayyum-i-Asma for the people of Bahá. Verily, it passeth over land and sea. He that entereth therein is saved, and he that turneth aside perisheth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 139)]

“We will now mention unto thee Trustworthiness and the station thereof in the estimation of God, thy Lord, the Lord of the Mighty Throne. One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island. Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst. Turning Our face to the right, We beheld what the pen is powerless to describe; nor can it set forth that which the eye of the Lord of Mankind witnessed in that most sanctified, that most sublime, that blest, and most exalted Spot. Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: ‘O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings.’ Thus have We sent down for thee that which will draw men nigh unto the Lord of creation.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 136-137)

Consort with all men, O people of Bahá, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a

language of utmost kindness and goodwill. If it be accepted, if it fulfill its purpose, your object is attained. If anyone should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 14)

O people of Bahá! Subdue the citadels of men's hearts with the swords of wisdom and of utterance. They that dispute, as prompted by their desires, are indeed wrapped in a palpable veil. Say: The sword of wisdom is hotter than summer heat, and sharper than blades of steel, if ye do but understand. Draw it forth in My name and through the power of My might, and conquer, then, with it the cities of the hearts of them that have secluded themselves in the stronghold of their corrupt desires. Thus biddeth you the Pen of the All-Glorious, whilst seated beneath the swords of the wayward.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 55)

O servant of Bahá! Be self-sacrificing in the path of God, and wing thy flight unto the heavens of the love of the Abha Beauty, for any movement animated by love moveth from the periphery to the centre, from space to the Day-Star of the universe. Perchance thou deemest this to be difficult, but I tell thee that such cannot be the case, for when the motivating and guiding power is the divine force of magnetism it is possible, by its aid, to traverse time and space easily and swiftly. Glory be upon the people of Bahá.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 197-198)

❖ “*Inspire then my soul...*”

...Inspire then my soul, O my God, with Thy wondrous remembrance, that I may glorify Thy name. Number me not with them who read Thy words and fail to find Thy hidden gift which, as decreed by Thee, is contained therein, and which quickeneth the souls of Thy creatures and the hearts of Thy servants. Cause me, O my Lord, to be reckoned among them who have been so stirred up by the sweet savors that have been wafted in Thy days that they have laid down their lives for Thee and hastened to the scene of their death in their longing to gaze on Thy beauty and in their yearning to attain Thy presence. And were any one to say unto them on their way, “Whither go ye?” they would say, “Unto God, the All-Possessing, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting!”

The transgressions committed by such as have turned away from Thee and have borne themselves haughtily towards Thee have not availed to hinder them from loving Thee, and from setting their faces towards Thee, and from turning in the direction of Thy mercy. These are they

who are blessed by the Concourse on high, who are glorified by the denizens of the everlasting Cities, and beyond them by those on whose foreheads Thy most exalted pen hath written: “These! The people of Bahá. Through them have been shed the splendors of the light of guidance.” Thus hath it been ordained, at Thy behest and by Thy will, in the Tablet of Thine irrevocable decree.

Proclaim, therefore, O my God, their greatness and the greatness of those who while living or after death have circled round them. Supply them with that which Thou hast ordained for the righteous among Thy creatures. Potent art Thou to do all things. There is no God but Thee, the All-Powerful, the Help in Peril, the Almighty, the Most Bountiful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 83-84)

Say: Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Bahá, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds. Such a deed is acceptable only when he that teacheth the Cause is already a firm believer in God, the Supreme Protector, the Gracious, the Almighty. He hath, moreover, ordained that His Cause be taught through the power of men's utterance, and not through resort to violence. Thus hath His ordinance been sent down from the Kingdom of Him Who is the Most Exalted, the All-Wise. Beware lest ye contend with any one, nay, strive to make him aware of the truth with kindly manner and most convincing exhortation. If your hearer respond, he will have responded to his own behoof, and if not, turn ye away from him, and set your faces towards God's sacred Court, the seat of resplendent holiness.

Dispute not with any one concerning the things of this world and its affairs, for God hath abandoned them to such as have set their affection upon them. Out of the whole world He hath chosen for Himself the hearts of men — hearts which the hosts of revelation and of utterance can subdue. Thus hath it been ordained by the Fingers of Bahá, upon the Tablet of God's irrevocable decree, by the behest of Him Who is the Supreme Ordainer, the All-Knowing.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 278-279)

And now concerning thy question whether human souls continue to be conscious one of another after their separation from the body. Know thou that the souls of the people of Bahá, who have entered and been established within the Crimson Ark, shall associate and commune intimately one with another, and shall be so closely associated in their lives, their aspirations, their aims and strivings as to be even as one soul. They are indeed the ones who are well-informed, who are keen-sighted, and who are endued with understanding. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

The people of Bahá, who are the inmates of the Ark of God, are, one and all, well aware of one another's state and condition, and are united in the bonds of intimacy and fellowship. Such a

state, however, must depend upon their faith and their conduct. They that are of the same grade and station are fully aware of one another's capacity, character, accomplishments and merits. They that are of a lower grade, however, are incapable of comprehending adequately the station, or of estimating the merits, of those that rank above them. Each shall receive his share from thy Lord. Blessed is the man that hath turned his face towards God, and walked steadfastly in His love, until his soul hath winged its flight unto God, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Most Powerful, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Merciful.

The souls of the infidels, however, shall — and to this I bear witness — when breathing their last be made aware of the good things that have escaped them, and shall bemoan their plight, and shall humble themselves before God. They shall continue doing so after the separation of their souls from their bodies.

It is clear and evident that all men shall, after their physical death, estimate the worth of their deeds, and realize all that their hands have wrought. I swear by the Day Star that shineth above the horizon of Divine power! They that are the followers of the one true God shall, the moment they depart out of this life, experience such joy and gladness as would be impossible to describe, while they that live in error shall be seized with such fear and trembling, and shall be filled with such consternation, as nothing can exceed. Well is it with him that hath quaffed the choice and incorruptible wine of faith through the gracious favor and the manifold bounties of Him Who is the Lord of all Faiths....

This is the Day when the loved ones of God should keep their eyes directed towards His Manifestation, and fasten them upon whatsoever that Manifestation may be pleased to reveal. Certain traditions of bygone ages rest on no foundations whatever, while the notions entertained by past generations, and which they have recorded in their books, have, for the most part, been influenced by the desires of a corrupt inclination. Thou dost witness how most of the commentaries and interpretations of the words of God, now current amongst men, are devoid of truth. Their falsity hath, in some cases, been exposed when the intervening veils were rent asunder. They themselves have acknowledged their failure in apprehending the meaning of any of the words of God.

Our purpose is to show that should the loved ones of God sanctify their hearts and their ears from the vain sayings that were uttered aforetime, and turn with their inmost souls to Him Who is the Day Spring of His Revelation, and to whatsoever things He hath manifested, such behavior would be regarded as highly meritorious in the sight of God....

Magnify His Name, and be thou of the thankful. Convey My greetings to My loved ones, whom God hath singled out for His love, and caused them to achieve their objects. All glory be to God, the Lord of all worlds.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 169-172)

[*Reminder*: The subject of these “holy ones”, a new race, helpers and “hands” is also amply addressed in the Section “Ascendancy of ...[His] independent sovereignty...in the plenitude of might and power, ...revealed in its full splendour...” further on in this compilation –ed.]



Concerning this realm, there is many a tradition and many a verse, of broad or special relevancy, but two of these will suffice to serve as a light for men of mind and heart.

The first is His statement: “O My Servant! Obey Me and I shall make thee like unto Myself. I say ‘Be,’ and it is, and thou shalt say ‘Be,’ and it shall be.”

And the second: “O Son of Adam! Seek fellowship with none until thou hast found Me, and whenever thou shalt long for Me, thou shalt find Me close to thee.”

Whatever high proofs and wondrous allusions are recounted herein, concern but a single Letter, a single Point. “Such hath been the way of God ... and no change canst thou find in the way of God.” [Qur’án 33:62; 48:23.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 63)



F. Opposition, enmity, attacks, obstructiveness, oppression, repudiation, denial ...

“...for such is the way of heedless souls, from time out of mind.”

(Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 234)

❖ “...*the huntsman of even stalketh this deer of the meadow of love.*”

“For the head raised up in the love of God will certainly fall by the sword...” [and...]

“O My friend! Many a hound pursueth this gazelle of the desert of oneness; many a talon claweth at this thrush of the eternal garden. Pitiless ravens do lie in wait for this bird of the heavens of God, and the huntsman of envy stalketh this deer of the meadow of love.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, passim, p. 41)

❖ “...*reflect upon that which hath been the cause of such denial...*”

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.” [Qur’án 36:30] 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.” [Qur’án 40:5]

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

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, passim, pp. 4-6)

O Temple of God! No sooner had the hosts of Divine Revelation been sent down by the Lord of all names and attributes bearing the banners of His signs, than the exponents of doubt and fancy were put to flight. They disbelieved in the clear tokens of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting, and rose up against Him in enmity and opposition....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “Súriy-i-Haykal”, verse 49, p. 26)

Reflect, what could have been the motive for such deeds? What could have prompted such behavior 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 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 behavior 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....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 13-15; and also *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 17-19) [Underlining added –ed.]

Neither thy grunting, nor the barking of those around thee, nor the opposition of the hosts of the world can withhold the Almighty from achieving His purpose. The whole world hath been set ablaze by the Word of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, a Word softer than the morning breeze. It hath been manifested in the form of the human temple, and through it God hath quickened the souls of the sincere among His servants. In its inner essence, this Word is the living water by which God hath purified the hearts of such as have turned unto Him and forgotten every other mention, and

through which He draweth them nigh unto the seat of His mighty Name. We have sprinkled it upon the people of the graves, and lo, they have risen up, with their gaze fixed upon the shining and resplendent Beauty of their Lord.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 141)

[Cf: *The barking of dogs is loud on every side: Where is the lion of the forest of Thy might, O Chastiser of the worlds? ...*

(Bahá'u'lláh, "The Fire Tablet", *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 213)]

O thou exalted bough of the divine Lote-Tree! ...When thou art disdained and rejected by the wicked doers be not cast down; and at the power and stiffneckedness of the presumptuous be neither vexed nor sick at heart; for such is the way of heedless souls, from time out of mind. 'O the misery of men! No Messenger cometh unto them but they laugh Him to scorn!' [Qur'án 36:29]

Indeed, the attacks and the obstructiveness of the ignorant but cause the Word of God to be exalted, and spread His signs and tokens far and wide. Were it not for this opposition by the disdainful, this obduracy of the slanderers, this shouting from the pulpits, this crying and wailing of great and small alike, these accusations of unbelief levelled by the ignorant, this uproar from the foolish—how could news of the advent of the Primal Point and the bright dawning of the Day-Star of Bahá ever have reached to east and west? How else could the planet have been rocked from pole to pole? How else could Persia have become the focal point of scattering splendours, and Asia Minor the radiating heart of the beauty of the Lord? However else could the flame of the Manifestation have spread into the south? By what means could the cries of God have been heard in the far north? How else could His summons have been heard in the continents of America and of Africa the dark? ...

All praise and thanksgiving be unto the Blessed Beauty, for calling into action the armies of His Abha Kingdom, and sending forth to us His never-interrupted aid, dependable as the rising stars. In every region of the earth hath He supported this single, lonely servant, at every moment hath He made known to me the signs and tokens of His love. He hath cast into a stupor all those who are clinging to their vain illusions, and made them infamous in the sight of high and low. He hath caused those who run after their fads and fancies to become objects of general reproach, and hath exposed the arrogant to public view; He hath made those of the friends who proved infirm of faith to serve as a warning to every beholder, and hath caused the leaders of those who waver to love but themselves and sink down in self-conceit. Meanwhile, by the power of His might, He hath made this broken-winged bird to rise up before all who dwell on earth. He hath shattered the serried ranks of the rebellious, and hath given the victory to the hosts of salvation, and breathed into the hearts of those who stand firm in the Covenant and Testament the breath of everlasting life.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, passim, pp. 234-238)
[Italics added –ed.]

But after I leave, some people may arise in opposition, heaping persecutions upon you in their bitterness, and in the newspapers there may be articles published against the Cause. Rest ye in the assurance of firmness. Be well poised and serene, remembering that this is only as the harmless twittering of sparrows and that it will soon pass away. *If such things do not happen, the fame of the Cause will not become widespread, and the summons of God will not be heard. Consider the history of the past.*

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 428-429) [Italics added –ed.]

Every process of purification whereby an inscrutable Wisdom chose from time to time to purge the body of His chosen followers of the defilement of the undesirable and the unworthy, these victims of an unrelenting jealousy have hailed as a symptom of the invading forces of schism which were soon to sap its strength, vitiate its vitality, and complete its ruin.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 73)

[Shoghi Effendi, forced often to announce publicly the spiritual downfall of not only well-known Bahá’ís but the members of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own family, refers to the latter as “those whose acts proclaim their severance from the Holy Tree and their forfeiture of their sacred birthright.” His heart, he said, was oppressed by the “repeated defections” of the “unworthy kindred” of the beloved Master, defections which, he made clear, were a “process of purification whereby an inscrutable Wisdom chose from time to time to purge the body of His chosen followers of the defilement of the undesirable and the unworthy...” Shoghi Effendi pointed out that those who are inimical to the Faith always seize upon evidences of this purification process as a symptom of oncoming schism which they hopefully anticipate will bring about its downfall. But which never has.

(Rúhíyyih Rabbání, *The Priceless Pearl*, p. 123)]

❖ “*We should welcome, therefore...*”

...We should welcome, therefore, not only the open attacks which its avowed enemies persistently launch against it, but should also view as *a blessing in disguise* every storm of mischief with which they who apostatize their faith or claim to be its faithful exponents assail it from time to time. Instead of undermining the Faith, such assaults, both from within and from without, reinforce its foundations, and excite the intensity of its flame. Designed to becloud its radiance, they proclaim to all the world the exalted character of its precepts, the completeness of its unity, the uniqueness of its position, and the pervasiveness of its influence.

I do not feel for one moment that such clamor, mostly attributable to impotent rage against the resistless march of the Cause of God, can ever distress the valiant warriors of the Faith. For these heroic souls, whether they be contending in America's impregnable stronghold, or struggling in the heart of Europe, and across the seas as far as the continent of Australasia, have already abundantly demonstrated the tenacity of their Faith and the abiding value of their conviction.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 15-16) [Italics added –ed.]

["Shoghi Effendi used to remark that out of his sufferings something always seemed to be born. He would go through these ordeals by fire — for indeed he seemed to fairly burn with suffering — and then some rain from heaven, in the form of good news, would shower upon him and help to revive him. I am afraid the mystery of sacrifice still remains a mystery to me, but certainly the Holy Ones of this world buy their victories dearly.”

(Rúhíyyih Rabbani, *The Priceless Pearl*, p. 100)]

❖ “...*Thou wast not alone...*”

O thou herald of the Kingdom! Thou wast not alone in the trip thou didst undertake in various places. The spirit and soul of ‘Abdul-Bahá was with thee. Although thou hast been afflicted with many and severe persecutions, hast heard derision, scorn and contempt and observed the opposition of the heedless ones, yet this is conducive to thy glory, that thou hast been made a target for the arrow of opposition in the Path of God and hast drunk the cup of affliction. Consider this, how many a calamity was submitted to by those sanctified souls in bygone ages and to how many sufferings they were resigned! Thou also must endure dire oppression and ordeals in the Path of ABHA and maintain the feet of steadfastness and firmness. Then thou shalt behold the confirmation of God surrounding thee. Rejoice thou and be happy that thou hast attained to this station and walked in the footsteps of the holy souls.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, pp. 220-221)

❖ “*Raise up, then, from this Temple...*”

...Raise up, then, from this Temple, the temples of the Oneness of God, that they may tell out, in the kingdom of creation, the tidings of their Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, and be of them that are illumined by His light.

...Erelong shall God bring forth from His Temple such souls as will remain unswayed by the insinuations of the rebellious, and who will quaff at all times of the cup that is life indeed. These, truly, are of the blissful.

These are servants who abide beneath the shelter of the tender mercy of their Lord, and who remain undeterred by those who seek to obstruct their path....

These are they who circle round the Cause of God even as the shadow doth revolve around the sun....

These souls are the protectors of the Cause of God on earth, who shall preserve its beauty from the obscuring dust of idle fancies and vain imaginings. In the path of their Lord they shall not fear for their lives; rather will they sacrifice their all in their eagerness to behold the face of their Well-Beloved....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, "Súriy-i-Haykal", verses 12-16, passim, pp. 8-9)

Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! I yield Thee thanks for that Thou hast made me the target of divers tribulations and the mark of manifold trials, in order that Thy servants may be endued with new life and all Thy creatures may be quickened.

I swear by Thy glory, O Thou the Best Beloved of the worlds and the Desire of all such as have recognized Thee! The one reason I wish to live is that I may reveal Thy Cause, and I seek the continuance of life only that I may be touched by adversity in Thy path.

I implore Thee, O Thou by Whose summons the hearts of all them who were nigh unto Thee have soared into the atmosphere of Thy presence, to send down upon Thy loved ones what will enable them to dispense with all else except Thee. Endue them, then, with such constancy that they will arise to proclaim Thy Cause, and will call on Thy name, before all that are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth, in such wise that the Pharaonic cruelties inflicted by the oppressors among Thy servants will not succeed in keeping them back from Thee.

Thou art, verily, the God of power, the God of glory, the God of strength and wisdom.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 146-147)

1. The Letters of Negation ... must needs exist in Thy realm

For the letters of negation, no matter how far they may be removed from the holy fragrances of Thy knowledge, and however forgetful they may become of the wondrous splendors of the dawning light of Thy beauty, which are shed from the heaven of Thy majesty, must needs exist in Thy realm, so that the words which affirm Thee may thereby be exalted.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 325)

Man must walk in many paths and be subjected to various processes in his evolution upward. Physically he is not born in full stature but passes through consecutive stages of foetus, infant, childhood, youth, maturity and old age. Suppose he had the power to remain young throughout his life. He then would not understand the meaning of old age and could not believe it existed. If he could not realize the condition of old age he would not know that he was young. He would not know the difference between young and old without experiencing the old. Unless you have passed through the state of infancy how would you know this was an infant beside you? If there was no wrong how would you recognize the right? If it were not for sin how would you appreciate virtue? If evil deeds were unknown how could you commend good actions? If sickness did not exist how would you understand health? Evil is non-existent; it is the absence of good; sickness is the loss of health; poverty the lack of riches. When wealth disappears you are poor; you look within the treasure box but find nothing there. Without knowledge there is ignorance; therefore ignorance is simply the lack of knowledge. Death is the absence of life. Therefore on the one hand we have existence; on the other, nonexistence, negation or absence of existence.

Briefly; the journey of the soul is necessary. The pathway of life is the road which leads to divine knowledge and attainment. Without training and guidance the soul could never progress beyond the conditions of its lower nature which is ignorant and defective.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p. 78)

❖ “...consigned...and...assembled neath the shadow of negation”

THE Bayan shall constitute God’s unerring balance till the Day of Resurrection which is the Day of Him Whom God will make manifest. Whoso acteth in conformity with that which is revealed therein will abide in Paradise, under the shadow of His affirmation and reckoned among the most sublime Letters in the presence of God; while whoso deviateth, were it even so much as the tip of a grain of barley, will be consigned to the fire and will be assembled neath the shadow of negation. This truth hath likewise been laid bare in the Qur’án where in numerous instances God hath set down that whoever should pass judgement contrary to the bounds fixed by Him, would be deemed an infidel...

(The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 102)

“He around Whom the Point of the Bayan (Báb) hath revolved is come” is Bahá'u'lláh’s confirmatory testimony to the inconceivable greatness and preminent character of His own Revelation. “If all who are in heaven and on earth,” He moreover affirms, “be invested in this day

with the powers and attributes destined for the Letters of the Bayan, whose station is ten thousand times more glorious than that of the Letters of the Qur'anic Dispensation, and if they one and all should, swift as the twinkling of an eye, hesitate to recognize My Revelation, they shall be accounted, in the sight of God, of those that have gone astray, and regarded as 'Letters of Negation.'" "Powerful is He, the King of Divine might," He, alluding to Himself in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, asserts, "to extinguish with one letter of His wondrous words, the breath of life in the whole of the Bayan 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 sepulchers of their vain and selfish desires."

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, pp. 98-99)

[I recognize, moreover, that were any of the revelations of Thy names and Thine attributes to be withheld, though it be the weight of a grain of mustard seed, from whatsoever hath been created by Thy power and begotten by Thy might, the foundations of Thine everlasting handiwork would thereby be made incomplete, and the gems of Thy Divine wisdom would become imperfect. For the letters of negation, no matter how far they may be removed from the holy fragrances of Thy knowledge, and however forgetful they may become of the wondrous splendors of the dawning light of Thy beauty, which are shed from the heaven of Thy majesty, must needs exist in Thy realm, so that the words which affirm Thee may thereby be exalted.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 325)]

2. The Principle of Light and Shadow, light and darkness, truth and falsehood

Should a touchstone be found, however, it would instantly distinguish truth from falsehood, light from darkness, and sun from shadow.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 189)

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity; that all human beings are the sheep of God and He is the kind Shepherd. This Shepherd is kind to all the sheep, because He created them all, trained them, provided for them and protected them. There is no doubt that the Shepherd is kind to all the sheep and should there be among these sheep ignorant ones, they must be educated; if there be children, they must be trained until they reach maturity; if

there be sick ones, they must be cured. There must be no hatred and enmity, for as by a kind physician these ignorant, sick ones should be treated.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 298-299)

The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favour of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory. If a child be trained from his infancy, he will, through the loving care of the Holy Gardener, drink in the crystal waters of the spirit and of knowledge, like a young tree amid the rilling brooks. And certainly he will gather to himself the bright rays of the Sun of Truth, and through its light and heat will grow ever fresh and fair in the garden of life.

Therefore must the mentor be a doctor as well: that is, he must, in instructing the child, remedy its faults; must give him learning, and at the same time rear him to have a spiritual nature. Let the teacher be a doctor to the character of the child, thus will he heal the spiritual ailments of the children of men.

If, in this momentous task, a mighty effort be exerted, the world of humanity will shine out with other adornings, and shed the fairest light. Then will this darksome place grow luminous, and this abode of earth turn into Heaven. The very demons will change to angels then, and wolves to shepherds of the flock, and the wild-dog pack to gazelles that pasture on the plains of oneness, and ravening beasts to peaceful herds, and birds of prey, with talons sharp as knives, to songsters warbling their sweet native notes.

For the inner reality of man is a demarcation line between the shadow and the light, a place where the two seas meet; [1] it is the lowest point on the arc of descent, [2] and therefore is it capable of gaining all the grades above. With education it can achieve all excellence; devoid of education it will stay on, at the lowest point of imperfection. [1 Qur’án 25:55, 35:13, 55:19-25. (See also Marriage Prayer revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá beginning ‘He is God! O peerless Lord! In Thine almighty wisdom Thou hast enjoined marriage...’ –ed.)] [2 See *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 328-329 (*sic*, now pp.285-286 –ed.) for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s comments on the arc of descent and ascent.]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 129-130)

O ye beloved of the Lord! The Kingdom of God is founded upon equity and justice, and also upon mercy, compassion, and kindness to every living soul. Strive ye then with all your heart to treat compassionately all humankind — except for those who have some selfish, private motive, or some disease of the soul. Kindness cannot be shown the tyrant, the deceiver, or the thief, because, far from awakening them to the error of their ways, it maketh them to continue in their perversity as before. No matter how much kindness ye may expend upon the liar, he will but lie the more, for he

believeth you to be deceived, while ye understand him but too well, and only remain silent out of your extreme compassion.

Briefly, it is not only their fellow human beings that the beloved of God must treat with mercy and compassion, rather must they show forth the utmost loving-kindness to every living creature. For in all physical respects, and where the animal spirit is concerned, the selfsame feelings are shared by animal and man. Man hath not grasped this truth, however, and he believeth that physical sensations are confined to human beings, wherefore is he unjust to the animals, and cruel.

And yet in truth, what difference is there when it cometh to physical sensations? The feelings are one and the same, whether ye inflict pain on man or on beast. There is no difference here whatever. And indeed ye do worse to harm an animal, for man hath a language, he can lodge a complaint, he can cry out and moan; if injured he can have recourse to the authorities and these will protect him from his aggressor. But the hapless beast is mute, able neither to express its hurt nor take its case to the authorities. If a man inflict a thousand ills upon a beast, it can neither ward him off with speech nor hale him into court. Therefore is it essential that ye show forth the utmost consideration to the animal, and that ye be even kinder to him than to your fellow man.

Train your children* from their earliest days to be infinitely tender and loving to animals. If an animal be sick, let the children try to heal it, if it be hungry, let them feed it, if thirsty, let them quench its thirst, if weary, let them see that it rests.

Most human beings are sinners, but the beasts are innocent. Surely those without sin should receive the most kindness and love — all except animals which are harmful, such as bloodthirsty wolves, such as poisonous snakes, and similar pernicious creatures, the reason being that kindness to these is an injustice to human beings and to other animals as well. If, for example, ye be tender-hearted toward a wolf, this is but tyranny to a sheep, for a wolf will destroy a whole flock of sheep. A rabid dog, if given the chance, can kill a thousand animals and men. Therefore, compassion shown to wild and ravening beasts is cruelty to the peaceful ones — and so the harmful must be dealt with. But to blessed animals the utmost kindness must be shown, the more the better. Tenderness and loving-kindness are basic principles of God's heavenly Kingdom. Ye should most carefully bear this matter in mind.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 158-159)

[*Cf. also: references above regarding the training of children: “...*he must, in instructing the child, remedy its faults; must give him learning, and at the same time rear him to have a spiritual nature...*” and “...*There must be no hatred and enmity, for as by a kind physician these ignorant, sick ones should be treated...*” —ed.]

❖ “...*liberating them from the shadows of...self and desire...*”

...There He [Moses] heard the soul-stirring Voice of the Spirit speaking from out of the kindled Fire, bidding Him to shed upon Pharaonic 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 Salsabil of renunciation, from the bewilderment of remoteness, cause them to enter the peaceful city of the divine presence...

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 54-55)

In the midst of the Israelites, He blazed out like a lamp of Divine guidance, and by the light of salvation He led that lost people out of the shadows of ignorance into knowledge and perfection.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 75)

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.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 60-61)

❖ [“...*Should a touchstone be found...*”

Should a touchstone be found, however, it would instantly distinguish truth from falsehood, light from darkness, and sun from shadow....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 189)]

❖ “*He will, likewise, clearly distinguish all the signs of God...from the doings, the words and ways of men...*”

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 exalted 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 savors of God be wafted, he will assuredly recognize and inhale their fragrance, even though he be dwelling in the uttermost ends of the West. He will, likewise, clearly distinguish all the signs of God — His wondrous utterances, His great works, and mighty deeds — from the doings, the words and ways of men, even as the jeweler 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 196-198; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 267-268)

[For thirty long years, from the hour of Bahá'u'lláh's ascension until His own immaculate spirit passed into the light of the all-highest realm, 'Abdu'l-Bahá rested neither night nor day. Single and alone, a prisoner, a victim of tyranny, He rose up to reform the world—to refine and train and educate the human race. He watered the tree of the Faith, He sheltered it from the whirlwind and the lightning bolt, He protected God's holy Cause, He guarded the divine law, He defeated its adversaries, He frustrated the hopes of those who wished it ill.

All His life long, that quintessence of eternal glory, that subtle and mysterious Being, was subjected to trials and ordeals. He was the target of every calumny, of every false accusation, from enemies both without and within. To be a victim of oppression was His lot in this world's life, and all He knew of it was toil and pain. In the dark of the night, He would sigh out His grief, and as He chanted His prayers at the hour of dawn, that wondrous voice of His would rise up to the inmates of Heaven.

Under such conditions, He trained and with His own hand fostered a number of souls who would stand as a mighty fortress protecting the Cause, and as armour-plate for the Ark of the Covenant. With awesome power, these would scatter the forces of illusion, and with heavy blows, strike down the false rumours of the people of doubt. God be praised, that labour bore fruit, and the meaning of those toilsome efforts became plain. Those blessed souls rose up in all their loyalty, and with their steadfastness and long-suffering they served as shining examples for the children of salvation.

His bounties, His favours to the people of Bahá were made perfect, and extended to every class and kind. And as at the beginning, so at the end: His final bestowal of all, a crowning adornment, was His Will and Testament. Here, to Bahá'ís of every degree, in the clearest, most complete, most unmistakable of utterances, He described the obligation of each one, explicitly appointed, irrefutably and in writing, the Centre of the Faith, designating the Guardian of the Cause and the interpreter of the Holy Book, His Eminence Shoghi Effendi, appointing him, the Chosen Branch, as the one toward whom all must turn. Thus He closed for all time the doors of contention and strife, and in the best of ways and in a most perfect method He pointed out the path that leads aright.

Thus by its very roots He pulled out the tree of mischief and dissension. He razed the structure of violation to the ground. He left no margin for error, no room for doubts. And thus He crowned the first of all His loving-kindnesses with this last of them. Let us praise and thank God for this supreme gift, this great bounty.

(From a letter of Bahíyyih Khánum to a believer in Shiraz, June 26 to July 25, 1922, cited in *Bahíyyih Khánum The Greatest Holy Leaf*, pp. 152-154)]

❖ “...*This fresh crisis...*”

...This fresh crisis which, during almost a decade, agitated Him [Bahá'u'lláh] and His companions, was, however, marked throughout not only by the assaults of His adversaries from without, but by the machinations of enemies from within, as well as by the grievous misdeeds of those who, though bearing His name, perpetrated what made His heart and His pen alike to lament.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 185)

[No proper picture of Shoghi Effendi's life can be obtained without reference to the subject of Covenant-breaking. The principle of light and shadow, setting each other off, the one intensifying the other, is seen in nature and in history; the sun casts shadows; at the base of the lamp lies shadow; the brighter the light the darker the shadow; the evil in men calls to mind the good, and the greatness of the good underlines the evil. The entire life of the Guardian was plagued and blighted by the ambition, the folly, the jealousy and hatred of individuals who rose up against the Cause and against him as Head of the Cause and who thought they could either subvert the Faith entirely or discredit its Guardian and set themselves up as leaders of a rival faction and win the body of believers over to their own interpretation of the Teachings and the way in which they believed the Cause of God should be run. No one ever succeeded in doing these things, but a series of disaffected individuals never ceased to try. The ringleaders misled the fools, the excommunicated tried to pervert the faithful.

To the seizure of the keys of Bahá'u'lláh's Shrine by those who broke the Covenant during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, there followed in the course of the earliest years of Shoghi Effendi's ministry the defection in Egypt of Faeg, the founder of a "Scientific Society" which he now sought to bring forward as a rival to the Administration of which Shoghi Effendi was the head. Shoghi Effendi, particularly after reading the denunciation of the old Covenant-breakers in the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, was prepared for their attacks, but the sudden stirring up of so much mischief and opposition in so unexpected a quarter left him shocked and greatly disturbed. I shall never forget how he looked when he called my mother and me to his bedroom, in 1923; we stood at the foot of his bed, where he lay, obviously prostrated and heart-broken, with great black shadows under his eyes, and he told us he could not stand it, he was going away. It must have been terribly difficult for such young a man to find himself the centre of so many attacks and to realize it devolved upon him to exercise his right and perform his duty of excommunication in order to protect the Faith and keep the flock safe from the wolves prowling around it.

Covenant-breaking always made Shoghi Effendi ill, it was as if he were the Cause, in some mysterious way, and any attack on its body affected him who was its heart...

(Rúhíyyih Rabbani , *The Priceless Pearl*, pp. 118-119)]

❖ *"The worst enemies of the Cause are in the Cause..."*

"The worst enemies of the Cause are in the Cause and mention the Name of God. We need not fear the enemies on the outside for such can be easily dealt with. But the enemies who call themselves friends and who persistently violate every fundamental law of love and unity, are difficult to be dealt with in this day, for the mercy of God is still great. But ere long this merciful door will be closed and such enemies will be attacked with a madness."

(Statement attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in "The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause", *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 45, "pilgrims' note")

Bahá'u'lláh Himself, referring to those who had actively arisen to destroy or harm His Faith, had declared that "God hath not blinked, nor will He ever blink His eyes at the tyranny of the oppressor. More particularly in this Revelation hath He visited each and every tyrant with His vengeance." Vast and awful is, indeed, the spectacle which meets our eyes, as we survey the field over which the retributory winds of God have, since the inception of the ministry of Bahá'u'lláh, furiously swept, dethroning monarchs, extinguishing dynasties, uprooting ecclesiastical hierarchies, precipitating wars and revolutions, driving from office princes and ministers, dispossessing the usurper, casting down the tyrant, and chastising the wicked and the rebellious.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 224)

["Shoghi Effendi used to remark that out of his sufferings something always seemed to be born. He would go through these ordeals by fire — for indeed he seemed to fairly burn with suffering — and then some rain from heaven, in the form of good news, would shower upon him and help to revive him. I am afraid the mystery of sacrifice still remains a mystery to me, but certainly the Holy Ones of this world buy their victories dearly.”

(Rúhíyyih Rabbani, *The Priceless Pearl*, p. 100)]

3. The Ocean cannot retain the agitations of the violators...

The tests of every dispensation are in direct proportion to the greatness of the Cause, and as heretofore such a manifest Covenant, written by the Supreme Pen, hath not been entered upon, the tests are proportionately more severe. These trials cause the feeble souls to waver while those who are firm are not affected. These agitations of the violators are no more than the foam of the ocean, which is one of its inseparable features; but the ocean of the Covenant shall surge and shall cast ashore the bodies of the dead, for it cannot retain them. Thus it is seen that the ocean of the Covenant hath surged and surged until it hath thrown out the dead bodies—souls that are deprived of the Spirit of God and are lost in passion and self and are seeking leadership. This foam of the ocean shall not endure and shall soon disperse and vanish, while the ocean of the Covenant shall eternally surge and roar....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 210-211)

From the early days of creation down to the present time, throughout all the divine dispensations, such a firm and explicit Covenant hath not been entered upon. In view of this fact is it possible for this foam to remain on the surface of the ocean of the Covenant? No, by God! The violators are trampling upon their own dignity, are uprooting their own foundations and are proud at being upheld by flatterers who exert a great effort to shake the faith of feeble souls. But this action of theirs is of no consequence; it is a mirage and not water, foam and not the sea, mist and not a cloud, illusion and not reality. All this ye shall soon see.

Praise be to God, ye are firm and steadfast; be ye thankful that like unto blessed trees ye are firmly planted in the soil of the Covenant. It is sure that every firm one will grow, will yield new fruits and will increase daily in freshness and grace. Reflect upon all the writings of Bahá’u’lláh, whether epistles or prayers, and ye shall surely come across a thousand passages wherein Bahá’u’lláh prays: ‘O God! Bring to naught the violators of the Covenant and defeat the oppressors of the Testament.’ ‘He who denieth the Covenant and the Testament is rejected by God, and he who

remaineth firm and steadfast therein is favoured at the Threshold of Oneness.' Such sayings and prayers abound, refer to them and ye shall know.

Never be depressed. The more ye are stirred by violation, the more deepen ye in firmness and steadfastness, and be assured that the divine hosts shall conquer, for they are assured of the victory of the Abha Kingdom. Throughout all regions the standard of firmness and steadfastness is upraised and the flag of violation is debased, for only a few weak souls have been led away by the flattery and the specious arguments of the violators who are outwardly with the greatest care exhibiting firmness but inwardly are engaged in agitating souls. Only a few who are the leaders of those who stir and agitate are outwardly known as violators while the rest, through subtle means, deceive the souls, for outwardly they assert their firmness and steadfastness in the Covenant but when they come across responsive ears they secretly sow the seeds of suspicion. The case of all of them resembleth the violation of the Covenant by Judas Iscariot and his followers. Consider: hath any result or trace remained after them? Not even a name hath been left by his followers and although a number of Jews sided with him it was as if he had no followers at all. This Judas Iscariot who was the leader of the apostles betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver. Take heed, O ye people of perception!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 211-212)



G. A series of rhythmic pulsations...

The resistless march of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, viewed in this light, and propelled by the stimulating influences which the unwisdom of its enemies and the force latent within itself, both engender, resolves itself into a series of rhythmic pulsations, precipitated, on the one hand, through the explosive outbursts of its foes, and the vibrations of Divine Power, on the other, which speed it, with ever-increasing momentum, along that predestined course traced for it by the Hand of the Almighty.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America*, p. 51)

The Faith that had stirred a whole nation to its depth, for whose sake thousands of precious and heroic souls had been immolated and on whose altar He Who had been its Author had sacrificed His life, was now being subjected to the strain and stress of yet another crisis of extreme violence and far-reaching consequences. It was one of those periodic crises which, occurring throughout a whole century, succeeded in momentarily eclipsing the splendor of the Faith and in almost disrupting the structure of its organic institutions. Invariably sudden, often unexpected, seemingly fatal to both its spirit and its life, these inevitable manifestations of the mysterious evolution of a world Religion, intensely alive, challenging in its claims, revolutionizing in its tenets, struggling against overwhelming odds, have either been externally precipitated by the malice of its avowed antagonists or internally provoked by the unwisdom of its friends, the apostasy of its supporters, or the defection of some of the most highly placed amongst the kith and kin of its founders. No matter how disconcerting to the great mass of its loyal adherents, however much trumpeted by its adversaries as symptoms of its decline and impending dissolution, these admitted setbacks and reverses, from which it has time and again so tragically suffered, have, as we look back upon them, failed to arrest its march or impair its unity. Heavy indeed has been the toll which they exacted, unspeakable the agonies they engendered, widespread and paralyzing for a time the consternation they provoked. Yet, viewed in their proper perspective, each of them can be confidently pronounced a blessing in disguise, affording a providential means for the release of a fresh outpouring of celestial strength, a miraculous escape from imminent and still more dreadful calamities, an instrument for the fulfillment of age-old prophecies, an agency for the purification and revitalization of the life of the community, an impetus for the enlargement of its limits and the propagation of its influence, and a compelling evidence of the indestructibility of its cohesive strength. Sometimes at the height of the crisis itself, more often when the crisis was past, the significance of these trials has manifested itself to men's eyes, and the necessity of such experiences has been demonstrated, far and wide and beyond the shadow of a doubt, to both friend and foe. Seldom, if indeed at any time,

has the mystery underlying these portentous, God-sent upheavals remained undisclosed, or the profound purpose and meaning of their occurrence been left hidden from the minds of men.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 61-62)

In the vastness and diversity of its Holy Writ; in the number of its martyrs; in the valor of its champions; in the example set by its followers; in the condign punishment suffered by its adversaries; in the pervasiveness of its influence; in the incomparable heroism of its Herald; in the dazzling greatness of its Author; in the mysterious operation of its irresistible spirit; the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, now standing at the threshold of the sixth decade of its existence, had amply demonstrated its capacity to forge ahead, indivisible and incorruptible, along the course traced for it by its Founder, and to display, before the gaze of successive generations, the signs and tokens of that celestial potency with which He Himself had so richly endowed it.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 224)

❖ *“From two ranks amongst men...power hath been seized: kings and ecclesiastics.”*

“From two ranks amongst men,” is His terse and prophetic utterance, “power hath been seized: kings and ecclesiastics.” “If ye pay no heed,” He thus warned the kings of the earth, “unto the counsels which ... We have revealed in this Tablet, Divine chastisement will assail you from every direction... On that day ye shall ... recognize your own impotence.” And again: “Though aware of most of Our afflictions, ye, nevertheless, have failed to stay the hand of the aggressor.” And, furthermore, this arraignment: “...We ... will be patient, as We have been patient in that which hath befallen Us at your hands, O concourse of kings!”

Condemning specifically the world's ecclesiastical leaders, He has written: “The source and origin of tyranny have been the divines... God, verily, is clear of them, and We, too, are clear of them.” “When We observed carefully,” He openly affirms, “We discovered that Our enemies are, for the most part, the divines.” “O concourse of divines!” He thus addresses them, “Ye shall not henceforth behold yourselves possessed of any power, inasmuch as We have seized it from you...” “Had ye believed in God when He revealed Himself,” He explains, “the people would not have turned aside from Him, nor would the things ye witness today have befallen Us.”....

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *God Passes By*, p. 230)

...Despite the blows leveled at its nascent strength, whether by the wielders of temporal and spiritual authority from without, or by black-hearted foes from within, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh had, far from breaking or bending, gone from strength to strength, from victory to victory. *Indeed its history, if read aright, may be said to resolve itself into a series of pulsations, of alternating crises and triumphs, leading it ever nearer to its divinely appointed destiny.* The outburst of savage

fanaticism that greeted the birth of the Revelation proclaimed by the Báb, His subsequent arrest and captivity, had been followed by the formulation of the laws of His Dispensation, by the institution of His Covenant, by the inauguration of that Dispensation in Badasht, and by the public assertion of His station in Tabriz. Widespread and still more violent uprisings in the provinces, His own execution, the blood bath which followed it and Bahá'u'lláh's imprisonment in the Siyah-Chal had been succeeded by the breaking of the dawn of the Bahá'í Revelation in that dungeon. Bahá'u'lláh's banishment to Iraq, His withdrawal to Kurdistan and the confusion and distress that afflicted His fellow-disciples in Baghdad had, in turn, been followed by the resurgence of the Bábí community, culminating in the Declaration of His Mission in the Najibiyyih Garden. Sultan Abdu'l-'Aziz's decree summoning Him to Constantinople and the crisis precipitated by Mirza Yahya had been succeeded by the proclamation of that Mission to the crowned heads of the world and its ecclesiastical leaders. Bahá'u'lláh's banishment to the penal colony of 'Akká, with all its attendant troubles and miseries, had, in its turn, led to the promulgation of the laws and ordinances of His Revelation and to the institution of His Covenant, the last act of His life. The fiery tests engendered by the rebellion of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and his associates had been succeeded by the introduction of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh in the West and the transfer of the Báb's remains to the Holy Land. The renewal of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's incarceration and the perils and anxieties consequent upon it had resulted in the downfall of Abdu'l-Hamid, in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's release from His confinement, in the entombment of the Báb's remains on Mt. Carmel, and in the triumphal journeys undertaken by the Center of the Covenant Himself in Europe and America. The outbreak of a devastating world war and the deepening of the dangers to which Jamal Pasha and the Covenant-breakers had exposed Him had led to the revelation of the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, to the flight of that overbearing Commander, to the liberation of the Holy Land, to the enhancement of the prestige of the Faith at its world center, and to a marked expansion of its activities in East and West. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing and the agitation which His removal had provoked had been followed by the promulgation of His Will and Testament, by the inauguration of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í era and by the laying of the foundations of a world-embracing Administrative Order. And finally, the seizure of the keys of the Tomb of Bahá'u'lláh by the Covenant-breakers, the forcible occupation of His House in Baghdad by the Shí'ah community, the outbreak of persecution in Russia and the expulsion of the Bahá'í community from Islam in Egypt had been succeeded by the public assertion of the independent religious status of the Faith by its followers in East and West, by the recognition of that status at its world center, by the pronouncement of the Council of the League of Nations testifying to the justice of its claims, by a remarkable expansion of its international teaching activities and its literature, by the testimonials of royalty to its Divine origin, and by the completion of the exterior ornamentation of its first House of Worship in the western world.

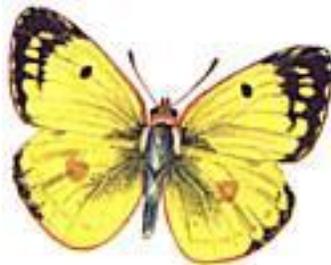
...Kings, emperors, princes, whether of the East or of the West, had, as we look back upon the tumultuous record of an entire century, either ignored the summons of its Founders, or derided their Message, or decreed their exile and banishment, or barbarously persecuted their followers, or

sedulously striven to discredit their teachings. They were visited by the wrath of the Almighty, many losing their thrones, some witnessing the extinction of their dynasties, a few being assassinated or covered with shame, others finding themselves powerless to avert the cataclysmic dissolution of their kingdoms, still others being degraded to positions of subservience in their own realms. The Caliphate, its arch-enemy, had unsheathed the sword against its Author and thrice pronounced His banishment. It was humbled to dust, and, in its ignominious collapse, suffered the same fate as the Jewish hierarchy, the chief persecutor of Jesus Christ, had suffered at the hands of its Roman masters, in the first century of the Christian Era, almost two thousand years before. Members of various sacerdotal orders, Shí'ah, Sunni, Zoroastrian and Christian, had fiercely assailed the Faith, branded as heretic its supporters, and labored unremittingly to disrupt its fabric and subvert its foundations. The most redoubtable and hostile amongst these orders were either overthrown or virtually dismembered, others rapidly declined in prestige and influence, all were made to sustain the impact of a secular power, aggressive and determined to curtail their privileges and assert its own authority. Apostates, rebels, betrayers, heretics, had exerted their utmost endeavors, privily or openly, to sap the loyalty of the followers of that Faith, to split their ranks or assault their institutions. These enemies were, one by one, some gradually, others with dramatic swiftness, confounded, dispersed, swept away and forgotten. Not a few among its leading figures, its earliest disciples, its foremost champions, the companions and fellow-exiles of its Founders, trusted amanuenses and secretaries of its Author and of the Center of His Covenant, even some of those who were numbered among the kindred of the Manifestation Himself, not excluding the nominee of the Báb and the son of Bahá'u'lláh, named by Him in the Book of His Covenant, had allowed themselves to pass out from under its shadow, to bring shame upon it, through acts of indelible infamy, and to provoke crises of such dimensions as have never been experienced by any previous religion. All were precipitated, without exception, from the enviable positions they occupied, many of them lived to behold the frustration of their designs, others were plunged into degradation and misery, utterly impotent to impair the unity, or stay the march, of the Faith they had so shamelessly forsaken. Ministers, ambassadors and other state dignitaries had plotted assiduously to pervert its purpose, had instigated the successive banishments of its Founders, and maliciously striven to undermine its foundations. They had, through such plottings, unwittingly brought about their own downfall, forfeited the confidence of their sovereigns, drunk the cup of disgrace to its dregs, and irrevocably sealed their own doom. Humanity itself, perverse and utterly heedless, had refused to lend a hearing ear to the insistent appeals and warnings sounded by the twin Founders of the Faith, and later voiced by the Center of the Covenant in His public discourses in the West. It had plunged into two desolating wars of unprecedented magnitude, which have deranged its equilibrium, mown down its youth, and shaken it to its roots. The weak, the obscure, the down-trodden had, on the other hand, through their allegiance to so mighty a Cause and their response to its summons, been enabled to accomplish such feats of valor and heroism as to equal, and in some cases to dwarf, the exploits of those men and women of undying fame whose names and deeds adorn the spiritual annals of mankind....

...The tribulations attending the progressive unfoldment of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh have indeed been such as to exceed in gravity those from which the religions of the past have suffered. Unlike those religions, however, *these tribulations have failed utterly to impair its unity, or to create, even temporarily, a breach in the ranks of its adherents. It has not only survived these ordeals, but has emerged, purified and inviolate, endowed with greater capacity to face and surmount any crisis which its resistless march may engender in the future.*

Mighty indeed have been the tasks accomplished and the victories achieved by this sorely-tried yet undefeatable Faith within the space of a century! *Its unfinished tasks, its future victories, as it stands on the threshold of the second Bahá'í century, are greater still.* In the brief space of the first hundred years of its existence it has succeeded in diffusing its light over five continents, in erecting its outposts in the furthestmost corners of the earth, in establishing, on an impregnable basis its Covenant with all mankind, in rearing the fabric of its world-encompassing Administrative Order, in casting off many of the shackles hindering its total emancipation and world-wide recognition, in registering its initial victories over royal, political and ecclesiastical adversaries, and *in launching the first of its systematic crusades for the spiritual conquest of the whole planet....*

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, passim, pp. 407-411) [Italics added –ed.]



We, verily, have ordained this Temple to be the source of all existence in the new creation, that all may know of a certainty My power to accomplish that which I have purposed through My word “Be”, and it is! Beneath the shadow of every letter of this Temple We shall raise up a people whose number none can reckon save God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Erelong shall God bring forth from His Temple such souls as will remain unswayed by the insinuations of the rebellious, and who will quaff at all times of the cup that is life indeed. These, truly, are of the blissful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “Súriy-i-Haykal”, verse 13, p. 8)



H. Ascendancy of ...His independent sovereignty, ...in the plenitude of might and power, ...revealed in its full splendour...

Say: The celestial Youth hath ascended the Throne of glory, made manifest *His independent sovereignty*, and now voiceth, in the most sweet and wondrous accents, this call betwixt earth and heaven: "O peoples of the earth! Wherefore have ye disbelieved in your Lord, the All-Merciful, and turned aside from Him Who is the Beauty of the All-Glorious? By the righteousness of God! This is His Hidden Secret, Who hath risen from the dayspring of creation; and this is His cherished Beauty, Who hath shone forth above the horizon of this exalted Station, invested with the sovereignty of God, the Help in Peril, the All-Glorious, the All-Subduing, the Almighty." [Italics added –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, "Súriy-i-Haykal", verse 62, p. 33)

This, verily, is an evidence of Mine ascendancy, though none amongst the people is truly thankful for it, save those whose eyes God hath illumined with the light of His knowledge, whose hearts He hath made the repository of His Revelation, and upon whose shoulders He hath placed the weight of His Cause. [Italics added –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, "Súriy-i-Haykal", verse 35, p. 20)

O Pen of the Most High! Harken unto the Call of Thy Lord, raised from the Divine Lote-Tree in the holy and luminous Spot, that the sweet accents of Thy Lord, the All-Merciful, may fill Thy soul with joy and fervour, and that the breezes that waft from My name, the Ever-Forgiving, may dispel Thy cares and sorrows. Raise up, then, from this Temple, the temples of the Oneness of God, that they may tell out, in the kingdom of creation, the tidings of their Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious, and be of them that are illumined by His light.

We, verily, have ordained this Temple to be the source of all existence in the new creation, that all may know of a certainty My power to accomplish that which I have purposed through My word "Be", and it is! Beneath the shadow of every letter of this Temple We shall raise up a people whose number none can reckon save God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Erelong shall God bring forth from His Temple such souls as will remain unswayed by the insinuations of the rebellious, and who will quaff at all times of the cup that is life indeed. These, truly, are of the blissful.

These are servants who abide beneath the shelter of the tender mercy of their Lord, and who remain undeterred by those who seek to obstruct their path. Upon their faces may be seen the

brightness of the light of the All-Merciful, and from their hearts may be heard the remembrance of Mine all-glorious and inaccessible Name. Were they to unloose their tongues to extol their Lord, the denizens of earth and heaven would join in their anthems of praise-yet how few are they who hear! And were they to glorify their Lord, all created things would join in their hymns of glory. Thus hath God exalted them above the rest of His creation, and yet the people remain unaware!

These are they who circle round the Cause of God even as the shadow doth revolve around the sun. Open, then, your eyes, O people of the Bayan, that haply ye may behold them! It is by virtue of their movement that all things are set in motion, and by reason of their stillness all things are brought to rest, would that ye might be assured thereof! Through them the believers in the Divine Unity have turned towards Him Who is the Object of the adoration of the entire creation, and by them the hearts of the righteous have found rest and composure, could ye but know it! Through them the earth hath been established, the clouds have rained down their bounty, and the bread of knowledge hath descended from the heaven of grace, could ye but perceive it!

These souls are the protectors of the Cause of God on earth, who shall preserve its beauty from the obscuring dust of idle fancies and vain imaginings. In the path of their Lord they shall not fear for their lives; rather will they sacrifice their all in their eagerness to behold the face of their Well-Beloved when once He hath appeared in this Name, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Glorious, the Most Holy.

O Living Temple! Arise by the power of Thy Self in such wise that all created things will be moved to arise with Thee. Aid, then, Thy Lord through such ascendancy and might as We have bestowed upon Thee. Take heed lest Thou falter on that Day when all created things are filled with dismay; rather be Thou the revealer of My name, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Assist Thy Lord to the utmost of Thine ability, and pay no heed to the peoples of the world, for that which their mouths utter is like unto the droning of a gnat in an endless valley. Quaff the water of life in My name, the All-Merciful, and proffer unto the near ones amongst the inmates of this lofty station that which shall cause them to become detached from all names and enter beneath this blessed and all-encompassing shadow.

O Living Temple! Through Thee have We gathered together all created things, whether in the heavens or on the earth, and called them to account for that which We had covenanted with them before the foundation of the world. And lo, but for a few radiant faces and eloquent tongues, We found most of the people dumbfounded, their eyes staring up in fear. From the former We brought forth the creation of all that hath been and all that shall be. These are they whose countenances God hath graciously turned away from the face of the unbelievers, and whom He hath sheltered beneath the shadow of the Tree of His own Being; they upon whose hearts He hath bestowed the gift of peace and tranquillity, and whom He hath strengthened and assisted through the hosts of the seen and the unseen.

O Eyes of this Temple! Look not upon the heavens and that which they contain, nor upon the earth and them that dwell thereon, for We have created you to behold Our own Beauty: See it now before you! Withhold not your gaze therefrom, and deprive not yourselves of the Beauty of your Lord, the All-Glorious, the Best-Beloved. Erelong shall We bring into being through you keen and penetrating eyes that will contemplate the manifold signs of their Creator and turn away from all that is perceived by the people of the world. Through you shall We bestow the power of vision upon whomsoever We desire, and lay hold upon those who have deprived themselves of this gracious bounty. These, verily, have drunk from the cup of delusion, though they perceive it not.

O Ears of this Temple! Purge yourselves from all idle clamour and hearken unto the voice of your Lord. He, verily, revealeth unto you, from the Throne of glory, that there is none other God save Me, the All-Glorious, the Almighty, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Erelong shall We bring into being through you pure and undefiled ears which will heed the Word of God and that which hath appeared from the Dayspring of the Utterance of your Lord, the All-Merciful. They shall assuredly perceive the sweet accents of Divine Revelation that proceed from these most blessed and hallowed precincts.

O Tongue of this Temple! We, verily, have created thee through Our name, the All-Merciful, have taught thee whatsoever had remained concealed in the Bayan, and have bestowed upon thee the power of utterance, that thou mayest make mention of Mine exalted Self amidst My creatures. Proclaim, then, this wondrous and mighty Remembrance, and fear not the manifestations of the Evil One. Thou wert called into being for this very purpose by virtue of My transcendent and all-compelling command. Through thee have We unloosed the Tongue of Utterance to expound all that hath been, and We shall again, by My sovereign power, unloose it to speak of that which is yet to come. Erelong shall We bring into being through thee eloquent tongues that will praise and extol Me amongst the Concourse on high and amidst the peoples of the world. Thus have the verses of God been revealed, and thus hath it been decreed by the Lord of all names and attributes. Thy Lord, verily, is the True One, the Knower of things unseen. Nothing whatsoever shall prevent these tongues from magnifying their Creator. Through them, all created things shall arise to glorify the Lord of names and to bear witness that there is none other God save Me, the All-Powerful, the Most-Glorious, the Best-Beloved. Nor shall those who make mention of Me speak aught unless they be inspired by this Tongue from its lofty station. Few, however, are they who understand! No tongue is there that speaketh not the praises of its Lord and maketh not mention of His Name. Amongst the people, however, are those who understand and utter praises, and those who utter praises, yet understand not.

O Maid of inner meanings! Step out of the chamber of utterance by the leave of God, the Lord of the heavens and the earth. Reveal, then, thyself adorned with the raiment of the celestial Realm, and proffer with thy ruby fingers the wine of the heavenly Dominion, that haply the denizens of this world may perceive the light that shone forth from the Kingdom of God when the Daystar of

eternity appeared above the horizon of glory. Perchance they may arise before the dwellers of earth and heaven to extol and magnify this Youth Who hath established Himself in the midmost heart of Paradise upon the throne of His name, the All-Sufficing Helper-He upon Whose countenance shineth the brightness of the All-Merciful, from Whose gaze appear the glances of the All-Glorious, and in Whose ways are revealed the tokens and evidences of God, the omnipotent Protector, the Almighty, the All-Loving.

Grieve not if none be found to accept the crimson wine proffered by Thy snow-white hand and to seize it in the name of Thy Lord, the Most Exalted, the Most High-He Who hath appeared again in His name, the Most Glorious. Leave this people unto themselves, and repair unto the Tabernacle of majesty and glory, wherein Thou shalt encounter a people whose faces shine as brightly as the sun in its noontide splendour, and who praise and extol their Lord in this Name that hath arisen, in the *plenitude of might and power*, to assume the throne of *independent sovereignty*. From their lips Thou shalt hear naught but the strains of My glorification and praise; unto this Thy Lord beareth Me witness. The existence of these people, however, hath remained concealed from the eyes of all who, from everlasting, have been created through the Word of God. Thus have We made plain Our meaning and set forth Our verses, that perchance men may reflect upon the signs and tokens of their Lord.

These are they who, in truth, were not enjoined to prostrate themselves before Adam. They have never turned away from the countenance of Thy Lord, and partake at every moment of the gifts and delights of holiness. Thus hath the Pen of the All-Merciful set forth the secrets of all things, be they of the past or of the future. Would that the world might understand! Erelong shall God make manifest this people upon the earth, and through them shall exalt His name, diffuse His signs, uphold His words, and proclaim His verses, in spite of those that have repudiated His truth, gainsaid His sovereignty, and cavilled at His signs.

O Beauty of the All-Glorious! Shouldst Thou chance upon this people and enter their presence, recount unto them that which this Youth hath related unto Thee concerning Himself and the things that have befallen Him, that they may come to know what hath been inscribed upon the Preserved Tablet. Acquaint them with the tidings of this Youth, and with the trials and tribulations He hath suffered, that they may become mindful of Mine afflictions, and be of them that understand. Recount, then, unto them how We singled out for Our favour one of Our brothers [Mirza Yahya], how We imparted unto him a dewdrop from the fathomless ocean of knowledge, clothed him with the garment of one of Our Names, and exalted him to such a station that all were moved to extol him, and how We so protected him from the harm of the malevolent as to disarm even the mightiest amongst them.

We arose before the peoples of earth and heaven at a time when all had determined to slay us. While dwelling in their midst, We continually made mention of the Lord, celebrated His praise, and stood firm in His Cause, until at last the Word of God was vindicated amongst His creatures, His

signs were spread abroad, His power exalted, *and His sovereignty revealed in its full splendour*. To this bear witness all His honoured servants. Yet when My brother beheld the rising fame of the Cause, he became filled with arrogance and pride. Thereupon he emerged from behind the veil of concealment, rose up against Me, disputed My verses, denied My testimony, and repudiated My signs. Nor would his hunger be appeased unless he were to devour My flesh and drink My blood. To this testify such of God's servants as have accompanied Him in His exile, and they that enjoy near access unto Him.

To this end he conferred with one of My servants and sought to win him over to his own designs; whereupon the Lord despatched unto Mine assistance the hosts of the seen and the unseen, protected Me by the power of truth, and sent down upon Me that which thwarted his purpose. Thus were foiled the plots of those who disbelieve in the verses of the All-Merciful. They, truly, are a rejected people. When news spread of that which the promptings of self had impelled My brother to attempt, and Our companions in exile learned of his nefarious design, the voice of their indignation and grief was lifted up and threatened to spread throughout the city. We forbade, however, such recriminations, and enjoined upon them patience, that they might be of those that endure steadfastly.

By God, besides Whom is none other God! We withstood all these trials with forbearance, and enjoined upon God's servants to show forth patience and fortitude. Removing Ourselves from their midst, We took up residence in another house, that perchance the flame of envy might be quenched in Our brother's breast, and that he might be guided aright. We neither opposed him, nor saw him again thereafter, but remained in Our home, placing Our hopes in the bounty of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. When, however, he realized that his deed had been exposed, he seized the pen of calumny and wrote unto the servants of God, attributing what he had himself committed unto Mine own peerless and wronged Beauty. His purpose was none other than to inspire mischief amongst God's servants, and to instil hatred into the hearts of those who had believed in God, the All-Glorious, the All-Loving.

By the One in Whose hand is My soul! We were dismayed by his deceitfulness-nay, bewildered were all things visible and invisible. Nor did he find respite from what he harboured in his bosom until he had committed that which no pen dare describe, and by which he disgraced the dignity of My station and profaned the sanctity of God, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised. Were God to turn all the oceans of the earth into ink and all created things into pens, they would not suffice Me to exhaust the record of his wrongdoings. Thus do We recount that which befell Us, that haply ye may be of them that understand.

O Pen of Eternity! Grieve not at the things that have befallen Thee, for ere long shall God raise up a people who will see with their own eyes and will recall Thy tribulations. Withhold Thy pen from the mention of Thine enemies, and bestir it in the praise of the Eternal King. Renounce all created things, and quaff the sealed wine of My remembrance. Beware lest Thou become occupied with the mention of those from whom naught save the noisome savours of enmity can be perceived,

those who are so enslaved by their lust for leadership that they would not hesitate to destroy themselves in their desire to emblazon their fame and perpetuate their names. God hath recorded such souls in the Preserved Tablet as mere worshippers of names. Recount then that which Thou hast purposed for this Temple, that its signs and tokens may be made manifest upon earth, and that the brightness of this Light may illumine the horizons of the world and cleanse the earth from the defilement of those who have disbelieved in God. Thus have We set down the verses of God and made plain the matter unto those who understand.

O Living Temple! Stretch forth Thy hand over all who are in heaven and on earth, and seize within the grasp of Thy Will the reins of command. We have, verily, placed in Thy right hand the empire of all things. Do as Thou willest, and fear not the ignorant. Reach out to the Tablet that hath dawned above the horizon of the pen of Thy Lord, and take hold of it with such strength that, through Thee, the hands of all who inhabit the earth may be enabled to lay fast hold upon it. This, in truth, is that which becometh Thee, if Thou be of those who understand. Through the upraising of Thy hand to the heaven of My grace, the hands of all created things shall be lifted up to their Lord, the Mighty, the Powerful, the Gracious. *Erelong shall We raise up, through the aid of Thy hand, other hands endued with power, with strength and might, and shall establish through them Our dominion over all that dwell in the realms of revelation and creation. Thus will the servants of God recognize the truth that there is none other God beside Me, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. With these hands, moreover, We shall both bestow and withhold, though none can understand this save those who see with the eye of the spirit.*

Say: O people! Can ye ever hope to escape the sovereign power of your Lord? By the righteousness of God! No refuge will ye find in this day, and no one to protect you, save those upon whom God hath bestowed the favour of His mercy. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. Say: O people! Forsake all that ye possess, and enter beneath the shadow of your Lord, the All-Merciful. Better is this for you than all your works of the past and of the future. Fear ye God, and deprive not yourselves of the sweet savours of the days of the Lord of all names and attributes. Take heed lest ye alter or pervert the text of the Word of God. Walk ye in the fear of God, and be numbered with the righteous.

Say: O people! This is the Hand of God, which hath ever been above your own hands, could ye but understand. Within its grasp We have ordained all the good of the heavens and the earth, such that no good shall be made manifest but that it proceedeth therefrom. Thus have We made it the source and treasury of all good both aforetime and hereafter. Say: The rivers of divine wisdom and utterance which flowed through the Tablets of God are joined to this Most Great Ocean, could ye but perceive it, and whatever hath been set forth in His Books hath attained its final consummation in this most exalted Word -- a Word shining above the horizon of the Will of the All-Glorious in this Revelation which hath filled with delight all things seen and unseen.

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

Should any one of them be called upon to confront all the hosts of creation, he would assuredly prevail through the ascendancy of My Will. This, verily, is a proof of My power, though My creatures comprehend it not. This, verily, is a sign of *My sovereignty*, though My subjects understand it not. This, verily, is a token of My command, though My servants perceive it not. This, verily, is an evidence of *Mine ascendancy*, though none amongst the people is truly thankful for it, save those whose eyes God hath illumined with the light of His knowledge, whose hearts He hath made the repository of His Revelation, and upon whose shoulders He hath placed the weight of His Cause. These shall inhale the fragrances of the All-Merciful from the garment of His Name, and shall rejoice at all times in the signs and verses of their Lord. As for those who disbelieve in God, and join partners with Him, they shall indeed incur His wrath, shall be cast into the Fire, and shall be made to dwell, fearful and dismayed, in its depths. Thus do We expound Our verses, and make plain the truth with clear proofs, that perchance the people may reflect upon the signs of their Lord.

O Living Temple! We have, in very truth, appointed Thee to be the sign of My majesty amidst all that hath been and all that shall be, and have ordained Thee to be the emblem of My Cause betwixt the heavens and the earth, through My word "Be", and it is!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, "Súriy-i-Haykal", verses 12-36, pp. 8-21) [Italics added –ed.] [Also Cf: "THE BLESSED Person of the Promised One is interpreted in the Holy Book as the Lord of Hosts—the heavenly armies....", as found on page 152 and following, of this compilation! –ed.]



Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration. This is the most great, the most joyful tidings imparted by the Pen of this Wronged One to mankind. Wherefore fear ye, O My well-beloved ones? Who is it that can dismay you? A touch of moisture sufficeth to dissolve the hardened clay out of which this perverse generation is moulded. The mere act of your gathering together is enough to scatter the forces of these vain and worthless people.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 84-85; and also *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 92-93)

“How many the lands that remained untilled and uncultivated; and how many the lands that were tilled and cultivated, and yet remained without water; and how many the lands which, when the harvest time arrived, no harvester came forth to reap! However, through the wonders of God's favour and the revelations of His loving-kindness. We cherish the hope that souls may appear who are the embodiments of heavenly virtue and who will occupy themselves with teaching the Cause of God and training all that dwell on earth.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, in a Tablet as cited by the Universal House of Justice at the conclusion of a Letter addressed to the Continental Board of Counsellors regarding the upcoming 5 Year Plan, dtd. Dec. 29, 2015, p. 16)

[I am the one, O my Lord, who hath held fast the cord of Thy loving-kindness, and clung to the hem of Thy mercy and favors. Do Thou ordain for me and for my loved ones the good of this world and of the world to come. Supply them, then, with the Hidden Gift Thou didst ordain for the choicest among Thy creatures.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Bahá'i Prayers*, p. 244)]

PART IV

The Promise and the Threat, as recorded in the Books of God...

The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the eighth leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is the following: 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 68) [Italics added –ed.]

...Above all else, the greatest gift and the most wondrous blessing hath ever been and will continue to be Wisdom. It is man's unfailing Protector. It aideth him and strengtheneth him. Wisdom is God's Emissary and the Revealer of His Name the Omniscient. Through it the loftiness of man's station is made manifest and evident. It is all-knowing and the foremost Teacher in the school of existence. It is the Guide and is invested with high distinction. Thanks to its educating influence earthly beings have become imbued with a gem-like spirit which outshineth the heavens. In the city of justice it is the unrivalled Speaker Who, in the year nine, illumined the world with the joyful tidings of this Revelation. And it was this peerless Source of wisdom that at the beginning of the foundation of the world ascended the stair of inner meaning and when enthroned upon the pulpit of utterance, through the operation of the divine Will, proclaimed two words. *The first heralded the promise of reward, while the second voiced the ominous warning of punishment* [or "threat" – as appearing in an earlier translation, BWF, p. 181, and as in the reference above, TAB, p. 68 –ed.]. The promise gave rise to hope and the warning begat fear. Thus the basis of world order hath been firmly established upon these twin principles. Exalted is the Lord of Wisdom, the Possessor of Great Bounty.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 66) [Italics added –ed.]

The first Taraz [Ornament] and the first effulgence which hath dawned from the horizon of the Mother Book is that man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 34-35)

When the Day-Star of Wisdom rose above the horizon of God's Holy Dispensation it voiced this all-glorious utterance: They that are possessed of wealth and invested with authority and power must show the profoundest regard for religion. In truth, religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world, for the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast to that which is good, and shun all evil....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 125)

The Pen of the Most High exhorteth, at this moment, the manifestations of authority and the sources of power, namely the kings, the sovereigns, the presidents, the rulers, the divines and the wise, and enjoineth them to uphold the cause of religion, and to cleave unto it. Religion is verily the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world and of tranquillity amongst its peoples....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 63-64)

The first word which the Abha Pen hath revealed and inscribed on the first leaf of Paradise is this: "Verily I say: The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence and a safe stronghold for all the peoples of the world. It is the chief cause of the protection of mankind, and the supreme instrument for its preservation. Indeed, there existeth in man a faculty which deterreth him from, and guardeth him against, whatever is unworthy and unseemly, and which is known as his sense of shame. This, however, is confined to but a few; all have not possessed, and do not possess, it.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 27; and *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 63)

The weakening of the pillars of religion hath strengthened the foolish, and emboldened them, and made them more arrogant. Verily I say: The greater the decline of religion, the more grievous the waywardness of the ungodly. This cannot but lead in the end to chaos and confusion. Hear Me, O men of insight, and be warned, ye who are endued with discernment!"

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 28; and *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 64)

Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness and justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine. Unto this will bear witness every man of true understanding.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 125)

[The law of order must always obtain in the world of humanity. Heaven has so decreed in the creation of man.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 152)]

❖ “Justice is, in this day, bewailing its plight...”

Justice is, in this day, bewailing its plight, and Equity groaneth beneath the yoke of oppression. The thick clouds of tyranny have darkened the face of the earth, and enveloped its peoples. Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration. This is the most great, the most joyful tidings imparted by the Pen of this Wronged One to mankind. Wherefore fear ye, O My well-beloved ones? Who is it that can dismay you? A touch of moisture sufficeth to dissolve the hardened clay out of which this perverse generation is moulded. The mere act of your gathering together is enough to scatter the forces of these vain and worthless people.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 84-85; and also *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* pp. 92-93)

He is endued with understanding who is aware of Thy Revelation and hath acknowledged Thy manifold tokens, Thy signs, and Thy testimonies.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 269)

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?

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 31)

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....

...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....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, passim, pp. 40-41)

“Soon,” Bahá'u'lláh's own words proclaim it, “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.” “By Myself,” He solemnly asserts, “the day is approaching when We will have rolled up the world and all that is therein, and spread out a new Order in its stead. He, verily, is powerful over all things.” “The world's equilibrium,” He explains, “hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this Most Great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System, the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.” “The signs of impending convulsions and chaos,” He warns the peoples of the world, “can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing Order appeareth to be lamentably defective.”

Dearly-beloved friends! This New World Order, whose promise is enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whose fundamental principles have been enunciated in the writings of the Center of His Covenant, involves no less than the complete unification of the entire human race. This unification should conform to such principles as would directly harmonize with the spirit that animates, and the laws that govern the operation of, the institutions that already constitute the structural basis of the Administrative Order of His Faith.

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 162-163)

[“Everything (in the world) is subject to corruption; but THE COVENANT of thy Lord shall continue to pervade all regions.” *New Translation*: “All on the earth shall pass away, but the Covenant of Thy Lord shall continue to overshadow all regions.” [from the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre circa 2002; no additional reference source given]

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. IV, No. 10, p. 170)]

❖ “*The time for the destruction of the world and its people...hath arrived...*”

“The time for the destruction of the world and its people,” Bahá’u’lláh’s prophetic pen has proclaimed, “hath arrived.” “The hour is approaching,” He specifically affirms, “when the most great convulsion will have appeared.” “The promised day is come, the day when tormenting trials will have surged above your heads, and beneath your feet, saying: ‘Taste ye what your hands have wrought!’” “Soon shall the blasts of His chastisement beat upon you, and the dust of hell enshroud you.” And again: “And when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake.” “The day is approaching when its [civilization’s] flame will devour the cities, when the Tongue of Grandeur will proclaim: ‘The Kingdom is God’s, the Almighty, the All-Praised!’”

(Bahá’u’lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 3)

No sooner had that Revelation been unveiled to men’s eyes than the signs of universal discord appeared among the peoples of the world, and commotion seized the dwellers of earth and heaven, and the foundations of all things were shaken. The forces of dissension were released, the meaning of the Word was unfolded, and every several atom in all created things acquired its own distinct and separate character. Hell was made to blaze, and the delights of Paradise were uncovered to men’s eyes. Blessed is the man that turneth towards Thee, and woe betide him who standeth aloof from Thee, who denieth Thee and repudiateth Thy signs in this Revelation wherein the faces of the exponents of denial have turned black and the faces of the exponents of truthfulness have turned white, O Thou Who art the Possessor of all names and attributes, Who holdest in Thy grasp the empire of whatever hath been created in heaven and on earth!

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 296)

How great is Thy power! How exalted Thy sovereignty! How lofty Thy might! How excellent Thy majesty! How supreme is Thy grandeur....

I testify that no sooner had the First Word proceeded, through the potency of Thy will and purpose, out of His mouth, and the First Call gone forth from His lips than the whole creation was revolutionized, and all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth were stirred to the depths. Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken, were divided, separated, scattered, combined and reunited, disclosing, in both the contingent world and the heavenly kingdom, entities of a new creation, and revealing, in the unseen realms, the signs and tokens of Thy unity and oneness. Through that Call Thou didst announce unto all Thy servants the advent of Thy most great Revelation and the appearance of Thy most perfect Cause.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 295-296)

The entire creation hath been called into being to exalt Thy triumph and to establish Thine ascendancy, and all the bounds that have been set by Thee are but the signs of Thy sovereignty, and proclaim the power of Thy might....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 326)

These are the days in which God hath proved the hearts of the entire company of His Messengers and Prophets, and beyond them those that stand guard over His sacred and inviolable Sanctuary, the inmates of the celestial Pavilion and dwellers of the Tabernacle of Glory. How severe, therefore, the test to which they who join partners with God must needs be subjected!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 11)

Dear friends! The powerful operations of this titanic upheaval are comprehensible to none except such as have recognized the claims of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. Their followers know full well whence it comes, and what it will ultimately lead to. Though ignorant of how far it will reach, they clearly recognize its genesis, are aware of its direction, acknowledge its necessity, observe confidently its mysterious processes, ardently pray for the mitigation of its severity, intelligently labor to assuage its fury, and anticipate, with undimmed vision, the consummation of the fears and the hopes it must necessarily engender.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 4)

❖ [“...Such a man hath attained the knowledge of the station of Him Who is ‘at the distance of two bows’...”

...Such a man hath attained the knowledge of the station of Him Who is “at the distance of two bows,” Who standeth beyond the Sadratu'l-Muntaha. Whoso hath failed to recognize Him will have condemned himself to the misery of remoteness, a remoteness which is naught but utter nothingness and the essence of the nethermost fire. Such will be his fate, though to outward seeming he may occupy the earth's loftiest seats and be established upon its most exalted throne.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 70-71)]

...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," [Qur'án 29:69] he shall enjoy the blessing conferred by the words: "In Our ways shall We assuredly guide him." [ibid.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 194-195; and *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 265-267) [Italics added –ed.]

How wondrous is the unity of the Living, the Ever-Abiding God—a unity which is exalted above all limitations, that transcendeth the comprehension of all created things! He hath, from everlasting, dwelt in His inaccessible habitation of holiness and glory, and will unto everlasting continue to be enthroned upon the heights of His independent sovereignty and grandeur. How lofty hath been His incorruptible Essence, how completely independent of the knowledge of all created things, and how immensely exalted will it remain above the praise of all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth!

From the exalted source, and out of the essence of His favor and bounty He hath entrusted every created thing with a sign of His knowledge, so that none of His creatures may be deprived of its share in expressing, each according to its capacity and rank, this knowledge. This sign is the mirror of His beauty in the world of creation. The greater the effort exerted for the refinement of this sublime and noble mirror, the more faithfully will it be made to reflect the glory of the names and attributes of God, and reveal the wonders of His signs and knowledge. Every created thing will be enabled (so great is this reflecting power) to reveal the potentialities of its pre-ordained station, will recognize its capacity and limitations, and will testify to the truth that "He, verily, is God; there is none other God besides Him."...

There can be no doubt whatever that, in consequence of the efforts which every man may consciously exert and as a result of the exertion of his own spiritual faculties, this mirror can be so cleansed from the dross of earthly defilements and purged from satanic fancies as to be able to draw nigh unto the meads of eternal holiness and attain the courts of everlasting fellowship. In pursuance, however, of the principle that for every thing a time hath been fixed, and for every fruit a season

hath been ordained, the latent energies of such a bounty can best be released, and the vernal glory of such a gift can only be manifested, in the Days of God....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 261-263)

No place is there for any one to flee to when once Thy laws have been sent down, and no refuge can be found by any soul after the revelation of Thy commandments. Thou hast inspired the Pen with the mysteries of Thine eternity, and bidden it teach man that which he knoweth not, and caused him to partake of the living waters of truth from the cup of Thy Revelation and Thine inspiration. ...No sooner, however, had the Pen traced upon the tablet one single letter of Thy hidden wisdom, than the voice of the lamentation of Thine ardent lovers was lifted up from all directions. Thereupon, there befell the just what hath caused the inmates of the tabernacle of Thy glory to weep and the dwellers of the cities of Thy revelation to groan.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 197)

The All-Merciful is come invested with power and sovereignty.... ...Blessed is the man who recognizeth Him and attaineth His presence, and woe betide such as deny Him and turn aside from Him....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 107-108)

Say: O peoples of the earth! By the righteousness of God! Whatever ye have been promised in the Books of your Lord, the Ruler of the Day of Return, hath appeared and been made manifest. Beware lest the changes and chances of the world hold you back from Him Who is the Sovereign Truth. Ere long will everything visible perish and only that which hath been revealed by God, the Lord of lords, shall endure.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 231-232)

Say: O people! The Lamp of God is burning; take heed, lest the fierce winds of your disobedience extinguish its light.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 167)

We perceive none, however, amongst the people of the earth who, sincerely yearning for the Truth, seeketh the guidance of the divine Manifestations concerning the abstruse matters of his Faith. All are dwellers in the land of oblivion, and all are followers of the people of wickedness and rebellion. God will verily do unto them that which they themselves are doing, and will forget them

even as they have ignored His Presence in His day. Such is His decree unto those that have denied Him, and such will it be unto them that have rejected His signs.

We conclude Our argument with His words—exalted is He—”And whoso shall withdraw from the remembrance of the Merciful, We will chain a Satan unto him, and he shall be his fast companion.” [Qur’án 43:36] “And whoso turneth away from My remembrance, truly his shall be a life of misery.” [Qur’án 20:124]

Thus hath it been revealed aforetime, were ye to comprehend.

Revealed by the “Ba” and the “Ha’.” [1]

Peace be upon him that inclineth his ear unto the melody of the Mystic Bird calling from the Sadratu’l-Muntaha!

Glorified be our Lord, the Most High! [1 - B and H meaning Bahá.]

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 256-257)

Behold, how the divers peoples and kindreds of the earth have been waiting for the coming of the Promised One. No sooner had He, Who is the Sun of Truth, been made manifest, than, lo, all turned away from Him, except them whom God was pleased to guide. We dare not, in this Day, lift the veil that concealeth the exalted station which every true believer can attain....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 9-10)

Tear asunder, in My Name, the veils that have grievously blinded your vision, and, through the power born of your belief in the unity of God, scatter the idols of vain imitation. Enter, then, the holy paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful. Sanctify your souls from whatsoever is not of God, and taste ye the sweetness of rest within the pale of His vast and mighty Revelation, and beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority. Suffer not yourselves to be wrapt in the dense veils of your selfish desires, inasmuch as I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure? If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, whilst standing in the presence of God, be asked: “Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self,” and if such a man should reply and say: “Inasmuch as all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I, too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the Beauty of the Eternal,” such a plea will, assuredly, be rejected. For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 142)

Burn away, wholly for the sake of the Well-Beloved, the veil of self with the flame of the undying Fire... The Word of God hath set the heart of the world afire; how regrettable if ye fail to be enkindled with its flame! ...I swear by Him Who hath caused Me to reveal whatever hath pleased Him! Ye are better known to the inmates of the Kingdom on high than ye are known to your own selves. Think ye these words to be vain and empty? Would that ye had the power to perceive the things your Lord, the All-Merciful, doth see—things that attest the excellence of your rank, that bear witness to the greatness of your worth, that proclaim the sublimity of your station! God grant that your desires and unmortified passions may not hinder you from that which hath been ordained for you.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 316-317)

Wilt Thou keep back from Thee the stranger whom Thou didst call unto his most exalted Home beneath the shadow of the wings of Thy mercy, or cast away the wretched creature that hath hastened to attain the shores of the ocean of Thy wealth? Wilt Thou shut up the door of Thy grace to the face of Thy creatures after having opened it through the power of Thy might and of Thy sovereignty, or close the eyes of Thy people when Thou hast already commanded them to turn unto the Day-Spring of Thy Beauty and the Dawning-Place of the splendors of Thy countenance?

Nay, and to this Thy glory beareth me witness! Such is not my thought of Thee, nor the thought of those of Thy servants that have near access to Thyself, nor that of the sincere amongst Thy people.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 270-271)

...excepting only those seldom-encountered individuals who are even as ashes, whose hearts are 'hard as rocks, or harder still.' [Qur'án 2:69]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 265)

...self-love...is a strange trait and the means of the destruction of many important souls in the world. If man be imbued with all good qualities but be selfish, all the other virtues will fade or pass away and eventually he will grow worse.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, p. 135)

❖ “*All human attainment moveth upon a lame ass...*”

How truly hath he [Muhammed] said: “All human attainment moveth upon a lame ass, whilst Truth, riding upon the wind, darteth across space.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, in referring to a story as told by Muhammed of the “Guidance of the Ignorant”, cited in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 187)

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 165-166)

The mystery of sacrifice is that man should sacrifice all his conditions for the divine station of God. The station of God is mercy, kindness, forgiveness, sacrifice, favor, grace and giving life to the spirits and lighting the fire of His love in the hearts and arteries.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, p. 65)

❖ [“*Knowledge is a single point...*”

“Knowledge is a single point, but the ignorant have multiplied it.” [Hadith, i.e. action or utterance traditionally attributed to the Prophet Muhammad or to one of the holy Imams.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 24-25)]

❖ “*In like manner...*”

In like manner, when thou strippest the wrappings of illusion from off thine heart, the lights of oneness will be made manifest.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 24)

O My friend, listen with heart and soul to the songs of the spirit, and treasure them as thine own eyes. For the heavenly wisdoms, like the clouds of spring, will not rain down on the earth of men's hearts forever; and though the grace of the All-Bounteous One is never stilled and never ceasing, yet to each time and era a portion is allotted and a bounty set apart, this in a given measure.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 37-38)

O Brother! Not every sea hath pearls; not every branch will flower, nor will the nightingale sing thereon. Then, ere the nightingale of the mystic paradise repair to the garden of God, and the rays of the heavenly morning return to the Sun of Truth—make thou an effort, that haply in this dust heap of the mortal world thou mayest catch a fragrance from the everlasting garden, and live forever

in the shadow of the peoples of this city. And when thou hast attained this highest station and come to this mightiest plane, then shalt thou gaze on the Beloved, and forget all else.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 38)

[O My friend! Many a hound pursueth this gazelle of the desert of oneness; many a talon claweth at this thrush of the eternal garden. Pitiless ravens do lie in wait for this bird of the heavens of God, and the huntsman of envy stalketh this deer of the meadow of love.

...Make of thine effort a glass, perchance it may shelter this flame from the contrary winds; albeit this light doth long to be kindled in the lamp of the Lord, and to shine in the globe of the spirit. For the head raised up in the love of God will certainly fall by the sword, and the life that is kindled with longing will surely be sacrificed, and the heart which remembereth the Loved One will surely brim with blood.] How well is it said:

Live free of love, for its very peace is anguish;

Its beginning is pain, its end is death. [Arabian poem.]

Peace be upon him who followeth the Right Path!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 41-42)

This is the realm of full awareness, of utter self-effacement. Even love is no pathway to this region, and longing hath no dwelling here; wherefore is it said, "Love is a veil betwixt the lover and the beloved." Here love becometh an obstruction and a barrier, and all else save Him is but a curtain. The wise Sana'i hath written:

Never the covetous heart shall come to the stealer of hearts,

Never the shrouded soul unite with beauty's rose.

For this is the realm of Absolute Command and is free of all the attributes of earth.

The exalted dwellers in this mansion do wield divine authority in the court of rapture, with utter gladness, and they do bear a kingly sceptre. On the high seats of justice, they issue their commands, and they send down gifts according to each man's deserving. Those who drink of this cup abide in the high bowers of splendor above the Throne of the Ancient of Days, and they sit in the Empyrean of Might within the Lofty Pavilion: "Naught shall they know of sun or piercing cold." [Qur'án 76:13.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Four Valleys*, pp. 96-97)

[The worst enemies of the Cause are in the Cause and mention the Name of God. We need not fear the enemies on the outside for such can be easily dealt with. But the enemies who call themselves friends and who persistently violate every fundamental law of love and unity, are difficult to be dealt with in this day, for the mercy of God is still great. But ere long this merciful door will be closed and such enemies will be attacked with a madness.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 45, hence “pilgrims’ note”)]

This is a hidden information of which we have informed the chosen ones lest they may be deprived of their praiseworthy station by associating with the embodiments of hatred. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all the friends of God to shun any person in whom they perceive the emanation of hatred for the glorious Beauty of Abha, though he may quote all the heavenly utterances and cling to all the Books.” He continues—Glorious be His Name!—“Protect yourselves with utmost vigilance, lest you be entrapped in the snare of deception and fraud.” This is the advice of the Pen of Destiny.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 20; and *Bahá’í World Faith*, p. 430)

[...If he was displeased with a person, he could not hold conversation with him.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and cited in *The Bahá’í Proofs*, “Tributes and Eulogies...”, p. 22, but extracted from *The Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab*, hence “pilgrims’ note”)]

[...the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Bahá’u’lláh from the doubts of the people of error. It is the fortified fortress of the Cause of God and the firm pillar of the religion of God. Today no power can conserve the oneness of the Bahá’í world save the Covenant of God; otherwise differences like unto a most great tempest will encompass the Bahá’í world. It is evident that the axis of the oneness of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant and nothing else.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 51)]

Today whoever is firm in the Covenant shall become ignited like unto a candle in the assemblage of the world and the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abha shall encircle him from all directions.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 16, p. 219)

It is known and clear that today the unseen divine assistance encompasseth those who deliver the Message. And if the work of delivering the Message be neglected, the assistance shall be entirely cut off, for it is impossible that the friends of God could receive assistance unless they be engaged in delivering the Message.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, pp. 390-391; and *The Individual and Teaching – Raising the Divine Call*, p. vii)

❖ “*If it be your wish...to know God...*”

If it be your wish, O people, to know God and to discover the greatness of His might, look, then, upon Me with Mine own eyes, and not with the eyes of any one besides Me. Ye will, otherwise, be never capable of recognizing Me.... Thus have We manifested the truth of Our Revelation, that haply the people may be roused from their heedlessness, and be of them that understand.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 272-273)

[Whoever is firm in the Covenant and Testament is today endowed with a seeing eye, and a responsive ear and daily advances in the divine realm until he becomes a heavenly angel.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. 10, No. 13, p. 251)]

❖ [“*And if he feareth not God...*”

“And if he feareth not God, God will make him to fear all things; whereas all things fear him who feareth God.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Four Valleys*, p. 58)]

[Be not afraid of anyone, place thy whole trust in God....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 190)]

“If a soul shall utter a word without the sanction of the Covenant, he is not firm.... Remain firm even if the people of heaven try to shake you. Firmness in the Covenant is not mere words. The command is explicit.”

(From the Research Department at the World Centre: Described as “excerpts from some instructions given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to several friends in America, July, 1912, which received his personal signature”, published in *Star of the West*, Vol. 11, No. 14, p. 239, the original text for which could not be identified, and its authenticity cannot be verified, hence “*pilgrims’ note*”)

❖ “*Throughout all regions the standard of firmness and steadfastness is upraised...*”

Throughout all regions the standard of firmness and steadfastness is upraised and the flag of violation is debased, for only a few weak souls have been led away by the flattery and the specious arguments of the violators who are outwardly with the greatest care exhibiting firmness but inwardly are engaged *in agitating souls*.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 211-212) [Italics added –ed.]

These agitations of the violators are no more than the foam of the ocean, which is one of its inseparable features; but the ocean of the Covenant shall surge and shall cast ashore the bodies of the dead, for it cannot retain them. Thus it is seen that the ocean of the Covenant hath surged and surged until it hath thrown out the dead bodies—souls that are deprived of the Spirit of God and are lost in passion and self and are seeking leadership. This foam of the ocean shall not endure and shall soon disperse and vanish, while the ocean of the Covenant shall eternally surge and roar....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 210-211)

The more one is severed from the world, from desires, from human affairs, and conditions, the more impervious does one become to the tests of God. Tests are a means by which a soul is measured as to its fitness, and proven out by its own acts. God knows its fitness beforehand, and also its unpreparedness, but man, with an ego, would not believe himself unfit unless proof were given him. Consequently his susceptibility to evil is proven to him when he falls into the tests, and the tests are continued until the soul realizes its own unfitness, then remorse and regret tend to root out the weakness.

The same test comes again in greater degree, until it is shown that a former weakness has become a strength, and the power to overcome evil has been established.... The friends must be prepared to efface themselves at all times. Seeking the approval of men is many times the cause of imperiling the approval of God.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 45, “pilgrims’ note”)

Today no soul has any station or enjoys any title except the soul who is firm in the Covenant and steadfast in the Testament, who entirely forgets himself and is released from the world.

(From a Tablet attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, revealed for the Bahá’ís in Spokane, Seattle and Portland, *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 16, p. 218; but as the original has not been identified its authenticity can not be verified, hence “pilgrims’ note”)

❖ “...hath not obeyed God...”

Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God; whoso rebelleth against him and against them hath rebelled against God....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Will and Testament*, p. 11)

Should any deviate by so much as a needle’s point from the decrees of the Universal House of Justice, or falter in his compliance therewith, then is he of the outcast and rejected.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 67-68)

❖ “...if thou seekest my pleasure...”

Walk in My statutes for love of Me and deny thyself that which thou desirest if thou seekest My pleasure.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 38)

There is no peace for thee save by renouncing thyself and turning unto Me; for it behooveth thee to glory in My name, not in thine own; to put thy trust in Me and not in thyself, since I desire to be loved alone and above all that is.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 8)

If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 7)

For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 48)

[Love is the most powerful force in the universe.... ..He who hath not this hath no portion with El-Bahá!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 3, p. 526 [from earlier translation]; cf. also [in part]: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 27-28)]

[Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 5)]

[...In theology, the promises of God to man, usually carrying with them conditions to be fulfilled by man. God’s promise of a blessing to be fulfilled on the performance of a condition. (Cf. “Definition: Covenant” – Part III, this compilation, page 76 –ed.)]

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 68)

For this divine Covenant is an institution of the Lord. The Blessed Perfection in all the tablets, books, epistles and supplications, has begged confirmation for and praised and commended those who are firm in this Covenant and Testament, and has asked the wrath of God, and woe and desolation unto the violators.

For firmness in the Covenant will preserve the unity of the religion of God and the foundation of the religion of God will not be shaken.

(From a Tablet attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, revealed for the San Francisco Assembly in 1912, *Star of the West*, Vol. VIII, No. 17, p. 223, authenticity for which can not be verified, hence “*pilgrims’ note*”)

❖ [“*That which harmeth Me...*”

My imprisonment doeth Me no harm, neither the tribulations I suffer, nor the things that have befallen Me at the hands of My oppressors. That which harmeth Me is the conduct of those who, though they bear My name, yet commit that which maketh My heart and My pen to lament....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 23; and *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 70)]

[My captivity can bring on Me no shame. Nay, by My life, it conferreth on Me glory. That which can make Me ashamed is the conduct of such of My followers as profess to love Me, yet in fact follow the Evil One. They, indeed, are of the lost.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 117-118)]

❖ “*The Evil One is he that hindereth...*”

The Evil One is he that hindereth the rise and obstructeth the spiritual progress of the children of men.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 94)

Say: O people! This is the Hand of God, which hath ever been above your own hands, could ye but understand. Within its grasp We have ordained all the good of the heavens and the earth, such that no good shall be made manifest but that it proceedeth therefrom. Thus have We made it the source and treasury of all good both aforetime and hereafter.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “*Súriy-i-Haykal*”, verse 33, p. 19)

THE source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment with His holy will and pleasure. The essence of wisdom is the fear of God, the dread of His scourge and punishment, 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 essence of love is for man to turn his heart to the Beloved One, and sever himself from all else but Him, and desire naught save that which is the desire of his Lord.... The essence of detachment is for man to turn his face towards the courts of the Lord, to enter His Presence, behold His Countenance, and stand as witness before Him.... The source of all evil is for man to turn away from his Lord and set his heart on things ungodly.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 155-156)

The tests of every dispensation are in direct proportion to the greatness of the Cause, and as heretofore such a manifest Covenant, written by the Supreme Pen, hath not been entered upon, the tests are proportionately more severe. These trials cause the feeble souls to waver while those who are firm are not affected.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 210)

❖ [“...regarding certain teachers of the Faith...”

...regarding certain teachers of the Faith. Indeed he hath spoken truly. Some heedless souls roam the lands in the name of God, actively engaged in ruining His Cause, and call it promoting and teaching the Word of God....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 58)]

[Hasten, hasten, O ye firm believers!

Hasten, hasten, O ye steadfast!

Abandon the heedless, set aside every ignorant, take hold of the strong rope, be firm in this Great Cause, draw light from this Evident Light, be patient and be steadfast in this wise Religion! Ye shall see the hosts of inspiration descending successively from the Supreme World, the procession of attraction falling incessantly from the heights of heaven, the abundance of the Kingdom of ABHA outpouring continually and the teachings of God penetrating with the utmost power, while the heedless are indeed in evident loss.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, p. 442)]

[But if he show the slightest taint of selfish desires and self love, his efforts will lead to nothing and he will be destroyed and left hopeless at the last.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 72)]

[Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 71)]

[If thou art wishing for the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, become thou engaged in teaching the Cause of God.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 3, p. 557)]

❖ “*The teaching work should...be actively pursued...*”

The teaching work should under all conditions be actively pursued by the believers because divine confirmations are dependent upon it. Should a Bahá’í refrain from being fully, vigorously

and wholeheartedly involved in the teaching work he will undoubtedly be deprived of the blessings of the Abha Kingdom... [Cf.also: "Say: To assist Me is to teach My Cause." *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 196 –ed.]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 268)

He will come to our aid if we only arise and become an active channel for God’s Grace....

Do you think it is the teachers who make converts and change human hearts? No, surely not. They are only pure souls who take the first steps and then let the spirit of Bahá’u’lláh move and make use of them. If any one of them should even for a second think or consider his achievements as due to his own capacities, his work is ended and his fall starts. This is the fact why so many competent souls have, after wonderful services, suddenly found themselves utterly impotent and perhaps thrown aside by the spirit of the Cause as useless souls. The criterion is the extent to which we are ready to have the will of God work through us.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahá’í Administration*, pp. 25-26)

❖ “*No one can deprive another of his rightful station...*”

No one can deprive another of his rightful station, that can only be lost by one’s unwillingness or failure to do the will of God, or by seeking to use the Cause of God for one’s own gratification or ambition. ...*No one save a severed soul or a sincere heart finds response from God....* Ambitions are an abomination before the Lord.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, p. 44, hence “*pilgrims’ note*”) [Italics added –ed.]

❖ “*The All-Merciful is come invested with power and sovereignty...*”

The All-Merciful is come invested with power and sovereignty.... Blessed is the man who recognizeth Him and attaineth His presence, and woe betide such as deny Him and turn aside from Him. I beseech God to aid His servants to return unto Him. Verily He is the Pardoner, the Forgiving, the Merciful.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 107-108)

Since Thou hast purposed, O my God, to cause all created things to enter into the tabernacle of Thy transcendent grace and favor, and to waft over the entire creation the fragrances of the raiment of Thy glorious unity, and to look upon all things with the eyes of Thy bounty and Thy oneness, I beseech Thee, therefore, by Thy love, which Thou hast made to be the mainspring of the

revelations of Thine eternal holiness, and the flame that gloweth within the hearts of such of Thy creatures as yearn towards Thee, to create, this very moment, for those of Thy people who are wholly devoted to Thee, and for such of Thy loved ones as love Thee, out of the essence of Thy bounty and Thy generosity, and from the inmost spirit of Thy grace and Thy glory, Thy Paradise of transcendent holiness, and to exalt it above everything except Thee, and to sanctify it from aught else save Thyself....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 326-327)

The Faith that had stirred a whole nation to its depth, for whose sake thousands of precious and heroic souls had been immolated and on whose altar He Who had been its Author had sacrificed His life, was now being subjected to the strain and stress of yet another crisis of extreme violence and far-reaching consequences. It was one of those periodic crises which, occurring throughout a whole century, succeeded in momentarily eclipsing the splendor of the Faith and in almost disrupting the structure of its organic institutions. Invariably sudden, often unexpected, seemingly fatal to both its spirit and its life, these inevitable manifestations of the mysterious evolution of a world Religion, intensely alive, challenging in its claims, revolutionizing in its tenets, struggling against overwhelming odds, have either been externally precipitated by the malice of its avowed antagonists or internally provoked by the unwisdom of its friends, the apostasy of its supporters, or the defection of some of the most highly placed amongst the kith and kin of its founders. No matter how disconcerting to the great mass of its loyal adherents, however much trumpeted by its adversaries as symptoms of its decline and impending dissolution, these admitted setbacks and reverses, from which it has time and again so tragically suffered, have, as we look back upon them, failed to arrest its march or impair its unity. Heavy indeed has been the toll which they exacted, unspeakable the agonies they engendered, widespread and paralyzing for a time the consternation they provoked. Yet, viewed in their proper perspective, each of them can be confidently pronounced a blessing in disguise, affording a providential means for the release of a fresh outpouring of celestial strength, a miraculous escape from imminent and still more dreadful calamities, an instrument for the fulfillment of age-old prophecies, an agency for the purification and revitalization of the life of the community, an impetus for the enlargement of its limits and the propagation of its influence, and a compelling evidence of the indestructibility of its cohesive strength. Sometimes at the height of the crisis itself, more often when the crisis was past, the significance of these trials has manifested itself to men's eyes, and the necessity of such experiences has been demonstrated, far and wide and beyond the shadow of a doubt, to both friend and foe. Seldom, if indeed at any time, has the mystery underlying these portentous, God-sent upheavals remained undisclosed, or the profound purpose and meaning of their occurrence been left hidden from the minds of men.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 61-62)

The Army of the Cause, advancing at the bidding of the Lord, to conquer the hearts of men, can never be defeated, but its rate of advance can be slowed down by acts of unwisdom and ignorance on the part of its supporters....

(The Universal House of Justice, *Messages 1963 to 1986*, p. 163)

❖ “...*a warning and a promise...*”

The proclamation of the Oneness of Mankind...implies at once *a warning and a promise—a warning that in it lies the sole means for the salvation of a greatly suffering world, a promise that its realization is at hand.*

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 46) [Italics added –ed.]

The inexorable march of recent events has carried humanity so near to the goal foreshadowed by Bahá'u'lláh that no responsible follower of His Faith, viewing on all sides the distressing evidences of the world's travail, can remain unmoved at the thought of its approaching deliverance.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 26)

Who knows but that triumphs, unsurpassed in splendour, are not in store for the mass of Bahá'u'lláh's toiling followers? Surely, we stand too near the colossal edifice His hand has reared to be able, at the present stage of the evolution of His Revelation, to claim to be able even to conceive the full measure of its promised glory. Its past history, stained by the blood of countless martyrs, may well inspire us with the thought that, whatever may yet befall this Cause, however formidable the forces that may still assail it, however numerous the reverses it will inevitably suffer, its onward march can never be stayed, and that it will continue to advance until the very last promise, enshrined within the words of Bahá'u'lláh, shall have been completely redeemed.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 667-668)

❖ “...*Know this, that hardships and misfortune shall increase day by day...*”

“...Know this, that hardships and misfortune shall increase day by day, and the people will be distressed. The doors of joy and happiness shall be closed upon all sides; terrible wars shall happen. Disappointment and the frustration of hopes shall surround the people from every direction, until they are obliged to turn to God. Then the Lights of great happiness will enlighten the horizons, so that the cry of ‘Ya-Bahá-El-Abha!’ rise upon all sides. This will happen!”

(Signed) ‘ABDUL-BAHÁ ABBAS. [sic]

(Portion of a Tablet revealed by Abdul-Bahá [sic] in the spring of 1904 for [Mrs. Isabella/] I.D. Brittingham, New York City, America; and published in *Star of the West*, Vol. 12, No. 8, p. 148)

Section Title: “*The Fire of Ordeal*” ...

Great and far-reaching as have been those changes in the past, they cannot appear, when viewed in their proper perspective, except as subsidiary adjustments prelude that transformation of unparalleled majesty and scope which humanity is in this age bound to undergo. That the forces of a world catastrophe can alone precipitate such a new phase of human thought is, alas, becoming increasingly apparent. That nothing short of the fire of a severe ordeal, unparalleled in its intensity, can fuse and weld the discordant entities that constitute the elements of present-day civilization, into the integral components of the world commonwealth of the future, is a truth which future events will increasingly demonstrate.

The prophetic voice of Bahá'u'lláh warning, in the concluding passages of the Hidden Words, "the peoples of the world" that "an unforeseen calamity is following them and that grievous retribution awaiteth them" throws indeed a lurid light upon the immediate fortunes of sorrowing humanity. Nothing but a fiery ordeal, out of which humanity will emerge, chastened and prepared, can succeed in implanting that sense of responsibility which the leaders of a new-born age must arise to shoulder.

I would again direct your attention to those ominous words of Bahá'u'lláh which I have already quoted: "And when the appointed hour is come, there shall suddenly appear that which shall cause the limbs of mankind to quake."

Has not 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself asserted in unequivocal language that "another war, fiercer than the last, will assuredly break out"?

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, “The Goal of a New World Order”, p. 45)

❖ “*Be not sorrowful because of my imprisonment...*”

O thou friend! Be not sorrowful because of my imprisonment and lament not for my difficulties; nay, rather ask God to increase my hardship in His path, for therein lies a wisdom which none are able to comprehend save the near angels.

O thou friend! Verily, those among the friends who were martyred in the path of God—verily this is a favor from God which He bestoweth upon whomsoever He chooses; verily God is the most bountiful!—they attained what the holy ones in the Supreme Kingdom yearned for, and quaffed the wine of grace from the bountiful hand of thy Lord the Merciful—may my spirit be a sacrifice to them!

Therefore, be not sorrowful, for in it is a great bounty for them and by it (martyrdom) the fire of the love of God is increased in glowing, the Word of God in spreading, the standard of God in elevation, the fragrances of God in diffusion, and by this blood the tree of peace is watered, the orchard of unity and harmony pruned, and by it the fragrances of holiness emanate from the Tree of Life and are being diffused in the world. Verily this is from the mercy of God, which is bestowed upon whomsoever He wishes.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, pp. 333-334)

❖ [“*Sorrow not save that...*”

Sorrow not save that thou art far from Us. Rejoice not save that thou art drawing near and returning unto Us.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #35)]

O ye beloved of God! When the winds blow severely, rains fall fiercely, the lightening flashes, the thunder roars, the bolt descends and storms of trial become severe, grieve not; for after this storm, verily, the divine spring will arrive, the hills and fields will become verdant, the expanses of grain will joyfully wave, the earth will become covered with blossoms, the trees will be clothed with green garments and adorned with blossoms and fruits. Thus blessings become manifest in all countries. These favors are results of those storms and hurricanes.

The discerning man rejoiceth at the day of trials, his breast becometh dilated at the time of severe storms, his eyes become brightened when seeing the showers of rain and gusts of wind, whereby trees are uprooted; because he foreseeth the result and the end (of these trials); the leaves, blossoms and fruits (which follow this wintry storm); while the ignorant (short-sighted) person becometh troubled when he seeth a storm, is saddened when it raineth severely, is terrified by the thunder and trembleth at the surging of the waves which storm the shore.

As ye have heard of the former times, when (for example) Christ—glory be to Him!—appeared, a storm of trials arose, afflictions appeared, the winds of tests blew, the thunder of temptation descended and hosts of people (Pharisees) surrounded the houses of the friends; then the weak ones were shaken and were misled after once being guided; but the disciples withstood the hardships and endured the storms of ordeals, remaining firm in the Religion of God. Then observe that which occurred after the storm and what appeared subsequent to that severity, whereby the members (followers) trembled.

God changed the sorrow to joy, the destructive darkness of calamity into the shining light from the Supreme Concourse. The people at the beginning persecuted and reviled the believers in God and said of them: “These are the people of aberration.” Then, when their light appeared, their stars shone and their lamps illuminated, the people returned into love and affinity; they prayed to

them, offered words of glory night and day (in their name) and remembered them in eulogy, reverence, honor and majesty.

Therefore, O ye beloved of God, be not grieved when people stand against you, persecute you, afflict and trouble you and say all manner of evil against you. The darkness will pass away and the light of the manifest signs will appear, the veil will be withdrawn and the Light of Reality will shine forth from the unseen [Kingdom] of El-ABHA. This we inform you before it occurs, so that when the hosts of people arise against you for my love, be not disturbed or troubled; nay, rather, be firm as a mountain, for this persecution and reviling of the people upon you is a pre-ordained matter. Blessed is the soul who is firm in the path!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, pp. 13-14)

The resistless march of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh, viewed in this light, and propelled by the stimulating influences which the unwisdom of its enemies and the force latent within itself, both engender, resolves itself into a series of rhythmic pulsations, precipitated, on the one hand, through the explosive outbursts of its foes, and the vibrations of Divine Power, on the other, which speed it, with ever-increasing momentum, along that predestined course traced for it by the Hand of the Almighty.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America*, p. 51)

That God-born Force, irresistible in its sweeping power, incalculable in its potency, unpredictable in its course, mysterious in its workings, and awe-inspiring in its manifestations—a Force which, as the Báb has written, “vibrates within the innermost being of all created things,” and which, according to Bahá’u’lláh, has through its “vibrating influence,” “upset the equilibrium of the world and revolutionized its ordered life”—such a Force, acting even as a two-edged sword, is, under our very eyes, sundering, on the one hand, the age-old ties which for centuries have held together the fabric of civilized society, and is unloosing, on the other, the bonds that still fetter the infant and as yet unemancipated Faith of Bahá’u’lláh.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, pp. 46-47)

The undreamt-of opportunities offered through the operation of this Force—the American believers must now rise, and fully and courageously exploit them. “*The holy realities of the Concourse on high*,” writes ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “*yearn, in this day, in the Most Exalted Paradise, to return unto this world, so that they may be aided to render some service to the threshold of the Abha Beauty, and arise to demonstrate their servitude to His sacred Threshold.*”

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 47) [Italics added —ed.]

These challenging criticisms, whether or not dictated by malice, cannot but serve to galvanize the souls of its ardent supporters, and to consolidate the ranks of its faithful promoters. They will purge the Faith from those pernicious elements whose continued association with the believers tends to discredit the fair name of the Cause, and to tarnish the purity of its spirit. We should welcome, therefore, not only the open attacks which its avowed enemies persistently launch against it, but should also view as a blessing in disguise every storm of mischief with which they who apostatize their faith or claim to be its faithful exponents assail it from time to time. Instead of undermining the Faith, such assaults, both from within and from without, reinforce its foundations, and excite the intensity of its flame. Designed to becloud its radiance, they proclaim to all the world the exalted character of its precepts, the completeness of its unity, the uniqueness of its position, and the pervasiveness of its influence.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 15-16)

❖ “*These trials cause the feeble souls to waver...*”

These trials cause the feeble souls to waver while those who are firm are not affected. These agitations...are no more than the foam of the ocean...but the ocean of the Covenant shall surge and shall cast ashore the bodies of the dead, for it cannot retain them.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 210)

I do not feel for one moment that such clamor, mostly attributable to impotent rage against the resistless march of the Cause of God, can ever distress the valiant warriors of the Faith. For these heroic souls...have already abundantly demonstrated the tenacity of their Faith and the abiding value of their conviction.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 16)

I consider it my duty to warn every beginner in the Faith that the promised glories of the Sovereignty which the Bahá'í teachings foreshadow, can be revealed only *in the fullness of time*, that the implications of the Aqdas and the Will of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as the twin repositories of the constituent elements of that Sovereignty, are *too far-reaching for this generation to grasp and fully appreciate....*

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 16) [Italics added –ed.]

A dynamic process, divinely propelled, possessed of undreamt-of potentialities, world-embracing in scope, world-transforming in its ultimate consequences, had been set in motion on that memorable night when the Báb communicated the purpose of His mission to Mulla Husayn in an

obscure corner of Shiraz. It acquired a tremendous momentum with the first intimations of Bahá'u'lláh's dawning Revelation amidst the darkness of the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran. It was further accelerated by the Declaration of His mission on the eve of His banishment from Baghdad. It moved to a climax with the proclamation of that same mission during the tempestuous years of His exile in Adrianople. Its full significance was disclosed when the Author of that Mission issued His historic summonses, appeals and warnings to the kings of the earth and the world's ecclesiastical leaders. It was finally consummated by the laws and ordinances which He formulated, by the principles which He enunciated and by the institutions which He ordained during the concluding years of His ministry in the prison-city of 'Akká.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 237)

The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh had been instituted solely through the direct operation of His Will and purpose. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, on the other hand, may be regarded as the offspring resulting from that mystic intercourse between Him Who had generated the forces of a God-given Faith and the One Who had been made its sole Interpreter and was recognized as its perfect Exemplar. The creative energies unleashed by the Originator of the Law of God in this age gave birth, through their impact upon the mind of Him Who had been chosen as its unerring Expounder, to that Instrument, the vast implications of which the present generation, even after the lapse of twenty-three years, is still incapable of fully apprehending. This Instrument can, if we would correctly appraise it, no more be divorced from the One Who provided the motivating impulse for its creation than from Him Who directly conceived it. The purpose of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation had, as already observed, been so thoroughly infused into the mind of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and His Spirit had so profoundly impregnated His being, and their aims and motives been so completely blended, that to dissociate the doctrine laid down by the former from the supreme act associated with the mission of the latter would be tantamount to a repudiation of one of the most fundamental verities of the Faith.

The Administrative Order which this historic Document has established, it should be noted, is, by virtue of its origin and character, unique in the annals of the world's religious systems. No Prophet before Bahá'u'lláh, it can be confidently asserted, not even Muhammad Whose Book clearly lays down the laws and ordinances of the Islamic Dispensation, has established, authoritatively and in writing, anything comparable to the Administrative Order which the authorized Interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings has instituted, an Order which, by virtue of the administrative principles which its Author has formulated, the institutions He has established, and the right of interpretation with which He has invested its Guardian, must and will, in a manner unparalleled in any previous religion, safeguard from schism the Faith from which it has sprung. Nor is the principle governing its operation similar to that which underlies any system, whether theocratic or otherwise, which the minds of men have devised for the government of human

institutions. Neither in theory nor in practice can the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh be said to conform to any type of democratic government, to any system of autocracy, to any purely aristocratic order, or to any of the various theocracies, whether Jewish, Christian or Islamic which mankind has witnessed in the past. It incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, is devoid of the defects which each of them inherently possesses, and blends the salutary truths which each undoubtedly contains without vitiating in any way the integrity of the Divine verities on which it is essentially founded. The hereditary authority which the Guardian of the Administrative Order is called upon to exercise, and the right of the interpretation of the Holy Writ solely conferred upon him; the powers and prerogatives of the Universal House of Justice, possessing the exclusive right to legislate on matters not explicitly revealed in the Most Holy Book; the ordinance exempting its members from any responsibility to those whom they represent, and from the obligation to conform to their views, convictions or sentiments; the specific provisions requiring the free and democratic election by the mass of the faithful of the Body that constitutes the sole legislative organ in the world-wide Bahá'í community—these are among the features which combine to set apart the Order identified with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh from any of the existing systems of human government.

Nor have the enemies who, at the hour of the inception of this Administrative Order, and in the course of its twenty-three year existence, both in the East and in the West, from within and from without, misrepresented its character, or derided and vilified it, or striven to arrest its march, or contrived to create a breach in the ranks of its supporters, succeeded in achieving their malevolent purpose. The strenuous exertions of an ambitious Armenian, who, in the course of the first years of its establishment in Egypt, endeavored to supplant it by the “Scientific Society” which in his short-sightedness he had conceived and was sponsoring, failed utterly in its purpose. The agitation provoked by a deluded woman who strove diligently both in the United States and in England to demonstrate the unauthenticity of the Charter responsible for its creation, and even to induce the civil authorities of Palestine to take legal action in the matter—a request which to her great chagrin was curtly refused—as well as the defection of one of the earliest pioneers and founders of the Faith in Germany, whom that same woman had so tragically misled, produced no effect whatsoever. The volumes which a shameless apostate composed and disseminated, during that same period in Persia, in his brazen efforts not only to disrupt that Order but to undermine the very Faith which had conceived it, proved similarly abortive. The schemes devised by the remnants of the Covenant-breakers, who immediately the aims and purposes of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's Will became known arose, headed by Mirza Badi'u'lláh, to wrest the custodianship of the holiest shrine in the Bahá'í world from its appointed Guardian, likewise came to naught and brought further discredit upon them. The subsequent attacks launched by certain exponents of Christian orthodoxy, in both Christian and non-Christian lands, with the object of subverting the foundations, and distorting the features, of this same Order were powerless to sap the loyalty of its upholders or to deflect them from their high

purpose. Not even the infamous and insidious machinations of a former secretary of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who, untaught by the retribution that befell Bahá’u’lláh’s amanuensis, as well as by the fate that overtook several other secretaries and interpreters of His Master, in both the East and the West, has arisen, and is still exerting himself, to pervert the purpose and nullify the essential provisions of the immortal Document from which that Order derives its authority, have been able to stay even momentarily the march of its institutions along the course set for it by its Author, or to create anything that might, however remotely, resemble a breach in the ranks of its assured, its wide-awake and stalwart supporters.

The Document establishing that Order, the Charter of a future world civilization, which may be regarded in some of its features as supplementary to no less weighty a Book than the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; signed and sealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; entirely written with His own hand; its first section composed during one of the darkest periods of His incarceration in the prison-fortress of ‘Akká, proclaims, categorically and unequivocally, the fundamental beliefs of the followers of the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh; reveals, in unmistakable language, the twofold character of the Mission of the Bab; discloses the full station of the Author of the Bahá’í Revelation; asserts that “all others are servants unto Him and do His bidding”; stresses the importance of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; establishes the institution of the Guardianship as a hereditary office and outlines its essential functions; provides the measures for the election of the International House of Justice, defines its scope and sets forth its relationship to that Institution; prescribes the obligations, and emphasizes the responsibilities, of the Hands of the Cause of God; and extolls the virtues of the indestructible Covenant established by Bahá’u’lláh.

That Document, furthermore, lauds the courage and constancy of the supporters of Bahá’u’lláh’s Covenant; expatiates on the sufferings endured by its appointed Center; recalls the infamous conduct of Mirza Yahya and his failure to heed the warnings of the Bab; exposes, in a series of indictments, the perfidy and rebellion of Mirza Muhammad-’Ali, and the complicity of his son Shu’a’u’lláh and of his brother Mirza Badi’u’lláh; reaffirms their excommunication, and predicts the frustration of all their hopes; summons the Afnan (the Báb’s kindred), the Hands of the Cause and the entire company of the followers of Bahá’u’lláh to arise unitedly to propagate His Faith, to disperse far and wide, to labor tirelessly and to follow the heroic example of the Apostles of Jesus Christ; warns them against the dangers of association with the Covenant-breakers, and bids them shield the Cause from the assaults of the insincere and the hypocrite; and counsels them to demonstrate by their conduct the universality of the Faith they have espoused, and vindicate its high principles. In that same Document its Author reveals the significance and purpose of the Huququ’lláh (Right of God), already instituted in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; enjoins submission and fidelity towards all monarchs who are just; expresses His longing for martyrdom, and voices His prayers for the repentance as well as the forgiveness of His enemies....

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 325-328)

...I cannot refrain from appealing to them who stand identified with the Faith to disregard the prevailing notions and the fleeting fashions of the day, and to realize as never before that the exploded theories and the tottering institutions of present-day civilization must needs appear in sharp contrast with those God-given institutions which are destined to arise upon their ruin. I pray that they may realize with all their heart and soul the ineffable glory of their calling, the overwhelming responsibility of their mission, and the astounding immensity of their task.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 16-17)

For let every earnest upholder of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh realize that the storms which this struggling Faith of God must needs encounter, as the process of the disintegration of society advances, shall be fiercer than any which it has already experienced. Let him be aware that so soon as the full measure of the stupendous claim of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh comes to be recognized by those time-honored and powerful strongholds of orthodoxy, whose deliberate aim is to maintain their stranglehold over the thoughts and consciences of men, this infant Faith will have to contend with enemies more powerful and more insidious than the cruellest torture-mongers and the most fanatical clerics who have afflicted it in the past. What foes may not in the course of the convulsions that shall seize a dying civilization be brought into existence, who will reinforce the indignities which have already been heaped upon it!

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 17)

❖ [“...for therein lies a wisdom...”

...for therein lies a wisdom which none are able to comprehend save the near angels.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, p. 333)]

[We ought to show something greater than forgiveness in meeting the cruelties and strictures in our lives. To be hurt and to forgive is saintly, but far beyond this is the power to comprehend and not be hurt. This power we may have...acceptance without complaint...and it should be associated with our name. We ought never to be known to complain or lament. It is not that we would “make the best of things”, but that we may find in everything, even in calamity, the gems of enduring wisdom. We ought never to be impatient. We ought to be as incapable of impatience as one would be of revolt. This not being so much longsuffering, as quiet awareness of the forces that operate in the hours of dark or years of waiting and inactivity. Always we ought to move with the larger rhythm, the wider sweep, towards our ultimate goal, in that complete acquiescence, that perfect chord which underlies the spirit of the Faith itself.]

(Earlier statement originally circulated as attributable in full to Bahiyyih Khánum, but found only in part, in a narrative format, in *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. 5, 1932-1934, “*The Passing of Bahíyyih Khánum*,” by Marjory Morten, p. 185.) – ed.]

❖ [*“Sorrow not if, in these days...”*]

[O My servants! Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. You are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them you will, no doubt, attain.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 329)]

[*When the victory arriveth, every man shall profess himself as believer and shall hasten to the shelter of God's Faith. Happy are they who in the days of world-encompassing trials have stood fast in the Cause and refused to swerve from its truth.*

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 319)]

[As to Paradise: It is a reality and there can be no doubt about it, and now in this world it is realized through love of Me and My good-pleasure. Whosoever attaineth unto it God will aid him in this world below, and after death He will enable him to gain admittance into Paradise whose vastness is as that of heaven and earth. Therein the Maids of glory and holiness will wait upon him in the daytime and in the night season, while the day-star of the unfading beauty of his Lord will at all times shed its radiance upon him and he will shine so brightly that no one shall bear to gaze at him. Such is the dispensation of Providence, yet the people are shut out by a grievous veil. Likewise apprehend thou the nature of hell-fire and be of them that truly believe. For every act performed there shall be a recompense according to the estimate of God, and unto this the very ordinances and prohibitions prescribed by the Almighty amply bear witness. For surely if deeds were not rewarded and yielded no fruit, then the Cause of God—exalted is He—would prove futile. Immeasurably high is He exalted above such blasphemies! However, unto them that are rid of all attachments a deed is, verily, its own reward. Were We to enlarge upon this theme numerous Tablets would need to be written.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 189)]

❖ [*“By deeds. This way is open to all...”*]

By deeds. This way is open to all, and deeds are understood by all....

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 98)]

❖ “*Their deeds must prove their fidelity...*”

...Their deeds must prove their fidelity, and their actions must show forth Divine light.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 80)

❖ “*Think ye these words...vain and empty?*”

Ye are better known to the inmates of the Kingdom on high than ye are known to your own selves. Think ye these words to be vain and empty?

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 317)

Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! I yield Thee thanks for that Thou hast made me the target of divers tribulations and the mark of manifold trials, in order that Thy servants may be endued with new life and all Thy creatures may be quickened.

I swear by Thy glory, O Thou the Best Beloved of the worlds and the Desire of all such as have recognized Thee! The one reason I wish to live is that I may reveal Thy Cause, and I seek the continuance of life only that I may be touched by adversity in Thy path.

I implore Thee, O Thou by Whose summons the hearts of all them who were nigh unto Thee have soared into the atmosphere of Thy presence, to send down upon Thy loved ones what will enable them to dispense with all else except Thee. Endue them, then, with such constancy that they will arise to proclaim Thy Cause, and will call on Thy name, before all that are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth, in such wise that the Pharaonic cruelties inflicted by the oppressors among Thy servants will not succeed in keeping them back from Thee.

Thou art, verily, the God of power, the God of glory, the God of strength and wisdom.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 146-147)

I beseech Thee, O God of bounty and King of all created things, to guard Thy servants from the imaginations which their hearts may devise. Raise them up, then, to such heights that their footsteps may slip not in the face of the evidences of Thy handiwork, which the manifold exigencies of Thy wisdom have ordained, and whose secrets Thou hast hid from the face of Thy people and Thy creatures. Withhold them not, O my Lord, from the ocean of Thy knowledge, neither do Thou

deprive them of what Thou didst destine for such of Thy chosen ones as have near access to Thee, and those of Thy trusted ones as are wholly devoted to Thy Self. Supply them, then, from Thy sea of certainty with what will calm the agitation of their hearts. Turn, O Lord my God, the darkness of their fancies into the brightness of certitude, and cause them to arise, and to walk steadfastly in Thy straight Path, that haply Thy Book may not hinder them from recognizing Him Who is its Revealer, and Thy names from acknowledging the One Who is their Creator, and their Provider, and their Origin, and their King, and their Begetter, and their Destroyer, and their Glorifier, and their Abaser, and their Governor, and the Sovereign Protector of their Bearers.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 283-284)

[“Those nearest to God are those who obey His commandments....”

(From a statement attributed to Munireh Khánum, cited in Ida A. Finch, Fanny Alma Knobloch, and Alma S. Knobloch, *Flowers Culled from the Rose Garden of Akka*, p. 7, “pilgrims’ note”)]

If one entering the Kingdom of God possesses learning and science it is well, but the essential thing, or the thing of greatest importance, is to enter the Kingdom of God and be characterized by the Divine Attributes.... Science and learning are good, but they are branches, not the root.

(From a statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cited in *Flowers Culled from the Rose Garden of Akka*, Op. Cit. above, p. 11, “pilgrims’ note”)

You are striving to please God. Today all distinctions between man and man fall away; there only remains the degree of striving to serve. He who serves most is nearest to God.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Star of the West*, Vol. II, No. 12, p. 4, “pilgrims’ note”)

Souls...who will consign their own selves to oblivion, strip from themselves the defects of humankind, and unchain themselves from human bondage, will beyond any doubt be illumined with the heavenly splendours of oneness, and will all attain unto real union in the world that dieth not.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 118)

❖ “*You have been called to this station...*”

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.’

(The Báb, cited by Nabil-i-A’zam, in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 93)]

❖ “*Ye are the letters of the words, and the words of the Book...*”

Ye are the letters of the words, and the words of the Book. Ye are the saplings which the hand of Loving-kindness hath planted in the soil of mercy, and which the showers of bounty have made to flourish. He hath protected you from the mighty winds of misbelief, and the tempestuous gales of impiety, and nurtured you with the hands of His loving providence. Now is the time for you to put forth your leaves, and yield your fruit.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 25-26)

[Any soul from among the believers of Bahá’u’lláh who attains to this station will become known as the Apostle of Bahá’u’lláh.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 50)]

PART V

In the Beginning was the Word

It is clear and evident, therefore, that the first bestowal of God is the Word, and its discoverer and recipient is the power of understanding. This Word is the foremost instructor in the school of existence and the revealer of Him Who is the Almighty. All that is seen is visible only through the light of wisdom. All that is manifest is but a token of knowledge. All names are but its name, and the beginning and end of all matters must needs depend upon it.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section I, p. 4)

For the Word of God is collective wisdom, absolute knowledge and eternal truth.

Consider the statement recorded in the first chapter of the book of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” This statement is brief but replete with the greatest meanings.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 154)

❖ “[the] Word...it is the channel of God’s primal grace...”

The entire creation hath been called into being through the Will of God, magnified be His glory, and peerless Adam hath been fashioned through the agency of His all-compelling Word, a Word which is the source, the wellspring, the repository, and the dawning-place of the intellect. From it all creation hath proceeded, and it is the channel of God’s primal grace. None can grasp the reality of the origin of creation save God, exalted be His glory, Whose knowledge embraceth all things both before and after they come into being. Creation hath neither beginning nor end, and none hath ever unraveled its mystery. Its knowledge hath ever been, and shall remain, hidden and persevered with those Who are the Repositories of divine knowledge.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section II, verse 2.48, p. 47)

[In the world of God there is no past, present, or future: All of these are one. So when Christ said, “In the beginning was the Word,” [Cf. John 1:1] — He meant that it was, is, and shall be; for in the world of God there is no time. Time holds sway over the creatures but not over God. So in the prayer where Christ says, “Hallowed be Thy name” [Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:2], the meaning is that Thy

name was, is, and shall be hallowed. Again, morning, noon, and evening exist in relation to the earth, but in the sun there is neither morning, nor noon, nor evening.

(`Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 39, Section 7, p. ...)

❖ [“*As regards thine assertions...*”

As regards thine assertions about the beginning of creation, this is a matter on which conceptions vary by reason of the divergences in men’s thoughts and opinions. Wert thou to assert that it hath ever existed and shall continue to exist, it would be true; or wert thou to affirm the same concept as is mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, no doubt would there be about it, for it hath been revealed by God, the Lord of the worlds. Indeed He was a hidden treasure. This is a station that can never be described nor even alluded to....

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 140)]

As to the “realm of subtle entities” which is often referred to, it pertaineth to the Revelation of the Prophets, and aught else is mere superstition and idle fancy. At the time of the Revelation all men are equal in rank. By reason, however, of their acceptance or rejection, rise or fall, motion or stillness, recognition or denial, they come to differ thereafter. For instance, the one true God, magnified be His glory, speaking through the intermediary of His Manifestation, doth ask: “Am I not your Lord?” Every soul that answereth “Yea, verily!” is accounted among the most distinguished of all men in the sight of God. Our meaning is that ere the Word of God is delivered, all men are deemed equal in rank and their station is one and the same. It is only thereafter that differences appear, as thou hast no doubt observed.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section I, pp. 48-49)

And in the station of ‘I did wish to make Myself known’, God was, and His creation had ever existed beneath His shelter from the beginning that hath no beginning, apart from its being preceded by a Firstness which cannot be regarded as firstness and originated by a Cause inscrutable even unto all men of learning.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 140)

[The essence of belief in Divine unity consisteth in regarding Him Who is the Manifestation of God and Him Who is the invisible, the inaccessible, the unknowable Essence as one and the same.... This is the loftiest station to which a true believer in the unity of God can ever hope to attain.

(Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 167)]

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 165-166)

For some there are who dwell upon the plane of oneness and speak of that world, and some inhabit the realms of limitation, and some the grades of self, while others are completely veiled.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 21)

Such is the state of the wayfarers in this Valley; but the people of the Valleys above this see the end and the beginning as one; nay, they see neither beginning nor end, and witness neither "first" nor "last." [1] Nay rather, the denizens of the undying city, who dwell in the green garden land, see not even "neither first nor last"; they fly from all that is first, and repulse all that is last. For these have passed over the worlds of names, and fled beyond the worlds of attributes as swift as lightning.

Thus is it said: "Absolute Unity excludeth all attributes." [2] And they have made their dwelling-place in the shadow of the Essence. [1 Qur'án 57:3.] [2 Saying attributed to Ali.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 15)

In this city, even the veils of light are split asunder and vanish away. "His beauty hath no veiling save light, His face no covering save revelation."

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 39)

And the splendor of that light is in the hearts, yet it is hidden under the veilings of sense and the conditions of this earth....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 24)

In this Valley, the wayfarer leaveth behind him the stages of the "oneness of Being and Manifestation" and reacheth a oneness that is sanctified above these two stations. Ecstasy alone can encompass this theme, not utterance nor argument; and whosoever hath dwelt at this stage of the journey, or caught a breath from this garden land, knoweth whereof We speak.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 39)

[“We will now mention unto thee Trustworthiness and the station thereof in the estimation of God, thy Lord, the Lord of the Mighty Throne. One day of days We repaired unto Our Green Island. “...Upon Our arrival, We beheld its streams flowing, and its trees luxuriant, and the sunlight playing in their midst. Turning Our face to the right, We beheld what the pen is powerless to describe; nor can it set forth that which the eye of the Lord of Mankind witnessed in that most sanctified, that most sublime, that blest, and most exalted Spot. Turning, then, to the left We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: ‘O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem. I am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings.’”

(Bahá'u'lláh, and “One of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise”, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 136-137; and *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 37-38)]

[Lauded be Thy name, O Thou Who art the Goal of my desire! I swear by Thy glory! How great is my wish to attain unto a detachment so complete that were there to appear before me those countenances which are hid within the chambers of chastity, and the beauty of which Thou didst veil from the eyes of the entire creation, and whose faces Thou didst sanctify from the sight of all beings, and were they to unveil themselves in all the glory of the splendors of Thine incomparable beauty, I would refuse to look upon them, and would behold them solely for the purpose of discerning the mysteries of Thy handiwork, which have perplexed the minds of such as have drawn nigh unto Thee, and awed the souls of all them that have recognized Thee. I would, by Thy power and Thy might, soar to such heights that nothing whatsoever would have the power to keep me back from the manifold evidences of Thy transcendent dominion, nor would any earthly scheme shut me out from the manifestations of Thy Divine holiness.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 338)]

[Say: Step out of Thy holy chamber, O Maid of Heaven, inmate of the Exalted Paradise! Drape thyself in whatever manner pleaseth Thee in the silken Vesture of Immortality, and put on, in the name of the All-Glorious, the brodered Robe of Light....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 282-283)]

In this city, even the veils of light are split asunder and vanish away. "His beauty hath no veiling save light, His face no covering save revelation."

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 39)

[Intone, then, before the face of the peoples of earth and heaven, and in a most melodious voice, the anthem of praise, for a remembrance of Him Who is the King of the names and attributes of God. Thus have We decreed Thy destiny. Well able are We to achieve Our purpose.

Beware that Thou divest not Thyself, Thou Who art the Essence of Purity, of Thy robe of effulgent glory. Nay, enrich Thyself increasingly, in the kingdom of creation, with the incorruptible vestures of Thy God, that the beauteous image of the Almighty may be reflected through Thee in all created things and the grace of Thy Lord be infused in the plenitude of its power into the entire creation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 283)]

[It hath been decreed by Us that the Word of God and all the potentialities thereof shall be manifested unto men in strict conformity with such conditions as have been foreordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. *We have, moreover, ordained that its veil of concealment be none other except its own Self.* Such indeed is Our Power to achieve Our Purpose. Should the Word be allowed to release suddenly all the energies latent within it, no man could sustain the weight of so mighty a Revelation. Nay, all that is in heaven and on earth would flee in consternation before it.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 76-77)] [Italics added—ed.]

In the universe of creation all phenomenal beings are as letters. Letters in themselves are meaningless and express nothing of thought or ideal—as, for instance, a, b, etc. Likewise, all phenomenal beings are without independent meaning. But a word is composed of letters and has independent sense and meaning. Therefore, as Christ conveyed the perfect meaning of divine reality and embodied independent significance, He was the Word. He was as the station of reality compared to the station of metaphor. There is no intrinsic meaning in the leaves of a book, but the thought they convey leads you to reflect upon reality. The reality of Jesus was the perfect meaning, the Christhood in Him which in the Holy Books is symbolized as the Word.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 154-155)

❖ [“*Consider that which hath been sent down unto Muhammad...*”

Consider that which hath been sent down unto Muhammad, the Apostle of God. The measure of the Revelation of which He was the bearer had been clearly foreordained by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Powerful. They that heard Him, however, could apprehend His purpose only to

the extent of their station and spiritual capacity. He, in like manner, uncovered the Face of Wisdom in proportion to their ability to sustain the burden of His Message. No sooner had mankind attained the stage of maturity, than the Word revealed to men's eyes the latent energies with which it had been endowed—energies which manifested themselves in the plenitude of their glory when the Ancient Beauty appeared, in the year sixty, in the person of Ali-Muhammad, the Báb.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 76)]

[Contemplate with thine inward eye the chain of successive Revelations that hath linked the Manifestation of Adam with that of the Báb. I testify before God that each one of these Manifestations hath been sent down through the operation of the Divine Will and Purpose, that each hath been the bearer of a specific Message, that each hath been entrusted with a divinely-revealed Book and been commissioned to unravel the mysteries of a mighty Tablet. The measure of the Revelation with which every one of them hath been identified had been definitely fore-ordained. This, verily, is a token of Our favor unto them, if ye be of those that comprehend this truth....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 74-75)]

["The germ," the Bab asserts in the Persian Bayan, "that holds within itself the potentialities of the Revelation that is to come is endowed with a potency superior to the combined forces of all those who follow me." "Of all the tributes," He again affirms, "I have paid to Him Who is to come after Me, the greatest is this, My written confession, that no words of Mine can adequately describe Him, nor can any reference to Him in My Book, the Bayan, do justice to His Cause."

(The Báb, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p.100)]

[It hath been decreed by Us that the Word of God and all the potentialities thereof shall be manifested unto men in strict conformity with such conditions as have been foreordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. We have, moreover, ordained that its veil of concealment be none other except its own Self. Such indeed is Our Power to achieve Our Purpose. Should the Word be allowed to release suddenly all the energies latent within it, no man could sustain the weight of so mighty a Revelation. Nay, all that is in heaven and on earth would flee in consternation before it.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 76)]

[Cf.: *Knowing God, therefore, means the comprehension and knowledge of His attributes and not of His Reality. This knowledge of the attributes is also proportioned to the capacity and power of man; it is not absolute*

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, 2014 ed., Chapter 59, Section 7, p.)]

❖ “*Know...that the veil...hath not been completely lifted...*”

“Know verily that the veil hiding Our countenance hath not been completely lifted. We have revealed Our Self to a degree corresponding to the capacity of the people of Our age. Should the Ancient Beauty be unveiled in the fullness of His glory mortal eyes would be blinded by the dazzling intensity of His revelation.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 116)

[Know assuredly that just as thou firmly believest that the Word of God, exalted be His glory, endureth for ever [sic], thou must, likewise, believe with undoubting faith that its meaning can never be exhausted. They who are its appointed interpreters, they whose hearts are the repositories of its secrets, are, however, the only ones who can comprehend its manifold wisdom....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 175)]



Motion and Stillness...

In the Bible it is revealed: “*Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*”

(*King James Bible, (Old and New Testaments)*, Psalms, 46:10) [Italics added –ed.]

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 163) [Italics added –ed.]

Additionally: He Who is both the Beginning and the End, He Who is both Stillness and Motion, is now manifest before your eyes. Behold how, in this Day, the Beginning is reflected in the End, how out of Stillness Motion hath been engendered. This motion hath been generated by the potent energies which the words of the Almighty have released throughout the entire creation. Whoso hath been quickened by its vitalizing power, will find himself impelled to attain the court of the Beloved; and whoso hath deprived himself therefrom, will sink into irretrievable despondency.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 168)

[*O thou who hast fixed thy gaze upon the Dawning-Place of the Cause of God! Know thou for a certainty that the Will of God is not limited by the standards of the people, and God doth not tread in their ways. Rather is it incumbent upon everyone to firmly adhere to God's straight Path. Were He to pronounce the right to be the left or the south to be the north, He speaketh the truth and there is no doubt of it. Verily He is to be praised in His acts and to be obeyed in His behests. He hath no associate in His judgement nor any helper in His sovereignty. He doeth whatsoever He willeth and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth. Know thou moreover that all else besides Him have been*

created through the potency of a word from His presence, while of themselves they have no motion nor stillness, except at His bidding and by His leave.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 109-110)]

[These are they who circle round the Cause of God even as the shadow doth revolve around the sun. Open, then, your eyes, O people of the Bayan, that haply ye may behold them! It is by virtue of their movement that all things are set in motion, and by reason of their stillness all things are brought to rest, would that ye might be assured thereof! Through them the believers in the Divine Unity have turned towards Him Who is the Object of the adoration of the entire creation, and by them the hearts of the righteous have found rest and composure, could ye but know it! Through them the earth hath been established, the clouds have rained down their bounty, and the bread of knowledge hath descended from the heaven of grace, could ye but perceive it!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, verse 15, p. 8)]



POSTSCRIPT

A fire from the Kingdom hath been kindled in the heart of the world, in the Blessed Tree, whose flame shall ere long set aglow the pillars of the earth and its rays illumine the horizons of the nations. All the signs hath appeared, all the (prophetic) references hath become clear, all that was revealed in the Books and Scriptures hath become fully manifest, and there is no ground for any one to hesitate in regard thereto.

Some people of former times and some sects avoided certain others as strangers, but now the Glorious Beloved One hath ridden upon His swift coursing steed, circling about in the arena of Truth and all that was hidden became manifest.

Let there be no more silence nor reticence, taciturnity nor negligence. The Candle is lighted -- yet the moths continue motionless and melancholy behind the veils.

Now is the time to roar like unto a sea and seek to ascend heavenward! If we desire to reach the apex of the Supreme Kingdom, we must unfurl our wings; if we wish to dive into the depths of the ocean, we must teach our limbs swimming. The time is short and the Divine Courser moves swiftly on; let us keep up and compete with each other and let us light a brilliant candle!

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, vol. 2, pp. 405-406)

[O phoenix of that immortal flame kindled in the sacred Tree! Bahá’u’lláh (may my life, my soul, my spirit, be offered up as a sacrifice unto His lowly servants) hath, during His last days on earth, given the most emphatic promise that, through the outpourings of the grace of God and the aid and assistance vouchsafed from His Kingdom on high, souls will arise and holy beings appear who, as stars, would adorn the firmament of divine Guidance; illumine the dayspring of loving kindness and bounty; manifest the signs of the unity of God; shine with the light of sanctity and purity; receive their full measure of divine inspiration; raise high the sacred torch of faith; stand firm as the rock and immovable as the mountain; and grow to become luminaries in the heavens of His Revelation, mighty channels of His grace, means for the bestowals of God’s bountiful care, heralds calling forth the name of the one true God, and establishers of the world’s supreme foundation.

These shall labor ceaselessly by day and by night, shall heed neither trial nor woe, shall suffer no respite in their efforts, shall seek no repose, shall disregard all ease and comfort and, detached and unsullied, shall consecrate every fleeting moment of their life to the diffusion of the divine fragrance and the exaltation of God’s holy Word. Their face will radiate heavenly gladness, and their hearts be filled with joy. Their souls will be inspired, and their foundation stand secure. They shall scatter in the world, and travel throughout all regions. They shall raise their voice in every assembly, and adorn and revive every gathering. They shall speak in every tongue, and interpret every hidden meaning. They shall reveal the mysteries of the Kingdom, and manifest unto every

one the signs of God. They shall burn brightly even as a candle in the heart of every assembly, and beam forth as a star upon every horizon. The gentle breeze wafted from the garden of their hearts shall perfume and revive the souls of men, and the revelations of their minds, even as showers, reinvigorate the peoples and nations of the world.

I am waiting, eagerly waiting for these holy ones to appear; and yet, how long will they delay their coming? My prayer and ardent supplication, at eventide and at dawn, is that these shining stars may soon shed their radiance upon the world, that their sacred countenance may be unveiled to mortal eyes, and the billows of grace, rising from His oceans above, may flow upon all mankind. Pray ye also and supplicate unto Him that through the bountiful aid of the Ancient Beauty these souls may be unveiled to the eyes of the world. The glory of God rest upon thee, and upon him whose face is illumined with that everlasting light that shineth from His Kingdom of Glory.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 251-252; and as already cited on page 37, of this compilation)]

❖ “*The day is approaching when God will have...raised up a race of men...*”

The day is approaching when God will have, by an act of His Will, raised up *a race of men* the nature of which is inscrutable to all save God, the All-Powerful, the Self-Subsisting. He shall purify them from the defilement of idle fancies and corrupt desires, shall lift them up to the heights of holiness, and shall cause them to manifest the signs of His sovereignty and might upon earth. Thus hath it been ordained by God, the All-Glorious, the All-Loving. [Italics added –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, verse 8, p. 8)

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

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, verse 34, p. 28) [Italics added –ed.]

[And again:] “The day is approaching when God will have, by an act of His Will, raised up a race of men the nature of which is inscrutable to all save God, the All-Powerful, the Self-Subsisting.” “He will, ere long, out of the Bosom of Power [sic] draw forth the Hands of

Ascendancy and Might [sic] —Hands [sic*] who will arise to win victory for this Youth and who will purge mankind from the defilement of the outcast and the ungodly. These Hands [sic*] will gird up their loins to champion the Faith of God, and will, in My name the self-subsistent, the mighty, subdue the peoples and kindreds of the earth. They will enter the cities and will inspire with fear the hearts of all their inhabitants. Such are the evidences of the might of God; how fearful, how vehement is His might!”

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 109-110)

[*Note: These words were originally capitalized in the rendition of the Guardian, as cited in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, but later converted to the lower case in *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* as published by Universal House of Justice. – ed.]

The everlasting Candle shineth in its naked glory. Behold how it hath consumed every mortal veil. O ye moth-like lovers of His light! Brave every danger, and consecrate your souls to its consuming flame. O ye that thirst after Him! Strip yourselves of every earthly affection, and hasten to embrace your Beloved. With a zest that none can equal make haste to attain unto Him. The Flower, thus far hidden from the sight of men, is unveiled to your eyes. In the open radiance of His glory He standeth before you. His voice summoneth all the holy and sanctified beings to come and be united with Him. Happy is he that turneth thereunto; well is it with him that hath attained, and gazed on the light of so wondrous a countenance.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 321-322)

“Three Kinds of Martyrdom” (Monevar Khánum)

MARTYRDOM has many explanations of which the first is to stand bravely and meet death unflinchingly in the path of God....

The second is to little by little detach one's heart entirely from this world, laying aside, deliberately, all vanities, worldly seductions, and devoting oneself to the vineyard of God, in whatever capacity he is fitted to serve....

The third consists of doing the hardest and most difficult things with such willingness and self-sacrifice that all behold it as your pleasure.

(From a letter attributed to Monevar Khánum, the daughter of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, written to a friend in Paris (c. 1903), cited in *Star of the West*, Vol. 14, No. 12, p. 377 — for which access to the original letter is not available, so it can neither be verified nor authenticated, hence it must be considered as “*pilgrims’ note*”)

ADDENDA

Addendum I: “To teach by words”

When asked by an American friend: “Which is the best way to spread the teaching?” He said: “By deeds. This way is open to all, and deeds are understood by all. Join yourselves to those who work for the poor, the weak and the unfortunate; this is greatly to be commended. To teach by words requires the skill of a wise physician. He does not offer help to those who do not want treatment. Do not press help on those who do not need your help. The work of teaching is not for all.”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 98)

O ye friends of God! True friends are even as skilled physicians, and the Teachings of God are as healing balm, a medicine for the conscience of man. They clear the head, so that a man can breathe them in and delight in their sweet fragrance. They waken those who sleep. They bring awareness to the unheeding, and a portion to the outcast, and to the hopeless, hope.

If in this day a soul shall act according to the precepts and the counsels of God, he will serve as a divine physician to mankind, and like the trump of Israfil, [1] he will call the dead of this contingent world to life; for the confirmations of the Abha Realm are never interrupted, and such a virtuous soul hath, to befriend him, the unfailing help of the Company on high. Thus shall a sorry gnat become an eagle in the fulness of his strength, and a feeble sparrow change to a royal falcon in the heights of ancient glory. [1. Believed to be the angel appointed to sound the trumpet on the Day of Resurrection to raise the dead at the bidding of the Lord.]

Wherefore, look not on the degree of your capacity, ask not if you are worthy of the task: rest ye your hopes on the help and loving-kindness, the favours and bestowals of Bahá’u’lláh—may my soul be offered up for His friends! Urge on the steed of high endeavour over the field of sacrifice, and carry away from this wide arena the prize of divine grace.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 22)

O ye blessed souls! Although ye are undergoing crucial tests in view of the repeated and assiduous attempts of some people to shake the faith of the friends in Los Angeles, yet ye are under the guarding eye of the bounty of Bahá'u'lláh and are assisted by legions of angels.

Walk, therefore, with a sure step and engage with the utmost assurance and confidence in the promulgation of the divine fragrances, the glorification of the Word of God and firmness in the Covenant. Rest ye assured that if a soul ariseth in the utmost perseverance and raiseth the Call of the Kingdom and resolutely promulgateth the Covenant, be he an insignificant ant he shall be enabled to drive away the formidable elephant from the arena, and if he be a feeble moth he shall cut to pieces the plumage of the rapacious vulture.

Endeavour, therefore, that ye may scatter and disperse the army of doubt and of error with the power of the holy utterances. This is my exhortation and this is my counsel. Do not quarrel with anybody, and shun every form of dispute. Utter the Word of God. If he accepteth it the desired purpose is attained, and if he turneth away leave him to himself and trust to God.

Such is the attribute of those who are firm in the Covenant.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 209-210)

❖ *“Walk thou high above the world of being through the power of the Most Great Name”*

Whoso firmly believeth today in the rebirth of man and is fully conscious that God, the Most Exalted, wieldeth supreme ascendancy and absolute authority over this new creation, verily such a man is reckoned with them that are endued with insight in this most great Revelation. Unto this beareth witness every discerning believer.

Walk thou high above the world of being through the power of the Most Great Name, that thou mayest become aware of the immemorial mysteries and be acquainted with that wherewith no one is acquainted. Verily, thy Lord is the Helper, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Be thou as a throbbing artery, pulsating in the body of the entire creation, that through the heat generated by this motion there may appear that which will quicken the hearts of those who hesitate.

At the time when We were hidden behind countless veils of light thou didst commune with Me and didst witness the luminaries of the heaven of My wisdom and the billows of the ocean of Mine utterance. Verily thy Lord is the Truthful, the Faithful. Great indeed is the blessedness of him who hath attained the liberal effusions of this ocean in the days of his Lord, the Most Bountiful, the All-Wise....

...Teach thou the Cause of God with an utterance which will cause the bushes to be enkindled, and the call 'Verily, there is no God but Me, the Almighty, the Unconstrained' to be raised therefrom. Say: Human utterance is an essence which aspireth to exert its influence and needeth moderation. As to its influence, this is conditional upon refinement which in turn is

dependent upon hearts which are detached and pure. As to its moderation, this hath to be combined with tact and wisdom as prescribed in the Holy Scriptures and Tablets. Meditate upon that which hath streamed forth from the heaven of the Will of thy Lord, He Who is the Source of all grace, that thou mayest grasp the intended meaning which is enshrined in the sacred depths of the Holy Writings.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, passim, pp. 142-143) [Italics added –ed.]

“Have ye forgotten that true and radiant morn...?”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian # 19) [Cf.: page 42 of this compilation, for the entire passage –ed.]

How can a true lover continue to exist when once the effulgent glories of the Beloved are revealed? How can the shadow endure when once the sun hath shone forth? How can a devoted heart have any being before the existence of the Object of its devotion? Nay, by the One in Whose hand is my soul! In this station, the seeker's complete surrender and utter effacement before his Creator will be such that, were he to search the East and the West, and traverse land, sea, mountain and plain, he would find no trace of his own self or of any other soul.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries*, pp. 70-71)

...O thou who hast surrendered thy will to God! By self-surrender and perpetual union with God is meant that men should merge their will wholly in the Will of God, and regard their desires as utter nothingness beside His Purpose. Whatsoever the Creator commandeth His creatures to observe, the same must they diligently, and with the utmost joy and eagerness, arise and fulfil. They should in no wise allow their fancy to obscure their judgment, neither should they regard their own imaginings as the voice of the Eternal. In the Prayer of Fasting We have revealed: “Should Thy Will decree that out of Thy mouth these words proceed and be addressed unto them, ‘Observe, for My Beauty’s sake, the fast, O people, and set no limit to its duration,’ I swear by the majesty of Thy glory, that every one of them will faithfully observe it, will abstain from whatsoever will violate Thy law, and will continue to do so until they yield up their souls unto Thee.” In this consisteth the complete surrender of one’s will to the Will of God. Meditate on this, that thou mayest drink in the waters of everlasting life which flow through the words of the Lord of all mankind, and mayest testify that the one true God hath ever been immeasurably exalted above His creatures. He, verily, is the Incomparable, the Ever-Abiding, the Omniscient, the All-Wise. The station of absolute self-surrender transcendeth, and will ever remain exalted above, every other station.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 337-338)

Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. Nothing short of the spirit of a true Bahá'í can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 63-64)

Addendum II: "Inner Meanings"

O Maid of inner meanings! Step out of the chamber of utterance by the leave of God, the Lord of the heavens and the earth. Reveal, then, thyself adorned with the raiment of the celestial Realm, and proffer with thy ruby fingers the wine of the heavenly Dominion, that haply the denizens of this world may perceive the light that shone forth from the Kingdom of God when the Daystar of eternity appeared above the horizon of glory. Perchance they may arise before the dwellers of earth and heaven to extol and magnify this Youth Who hath established Himself in the midmost heart of Paradise upon the throne of His name, the All-Sufficing Helper—He upon Whose countenance shineth the brightness of the All-Merciful, from Whose gaze appear the glances of the All-Glorious, and in Whose ways are revealed the tokens and evidences of God, the omnipotent Protector, the Almighty, the All-Loving.

Grieve not if none be found to accept the crimson wine proffered by Thy snow-white hand and to seize it in the name of Thy Lord, the Most Exalted, the Most High—He Who hath appeared again in His name, the Most Glorious. Leave this people unto themselves, and repair unto the Tabernacle of majesty and glory, wherein Thou shalt encounter a people whose faces shine as brightly as the sun in its noontide splendour, and who praise and extol their Lord in this Name that hath arisen, in the plenitude of might and power, to assume the throne of independent sovereignty. From their lips Thou shalt hear naught but the strains of My glorification and praise; unto this Thy Lord beareth Me witness. The existence of these people, however, hath remained concealed from the eyes of all who, from everlasting, have been created through the Word of God. Thus have We made plain Our meaning and set forth Our verses, that perchance men may reflect upon the signs and tokens of their Lord.

These are they who, in truth, were not enjoined to prostrate themselves before Adam [Cf.: Koran (Qur'an) 2 :30-34, and 38 :71-75]. They have never turned away from the countenance of

Thy Lord, and partake at every moment of the gifts and delights of holiness. Thus hath the Pen of the All-Merciful set forth the secrets of all things, be they of the past or of the future. Would that the world might understand! Erelong shall God make manifest this people upon the earth, and through them shall exalt His name, diffuse His signs, uphold His words, and proclaim His verses, in spite of those that have repudiated His truth, gainsaid His sovereignty, and cavilled at His signs.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “Súriy-i-Haykal”, verses 22-24, pp. 13-14)

Say: O people! Cast away, before the splendours of this Revelation, the things that ye possess, and cleave to that which God hath bidden you observe. Such is His command unto you, and He, verily, is best able to command. By My Beauty! My purpose in revealing these words is to cause all men to draw nigh unto God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised. Beware lest ye deal with Me as ye dealt with My Herald. Do not object, when the verses of God are sent down unto you from the Court of My favour, saying, “these do not proceed from an innate and untaught nature”, for that nature itself hath been created by My word and circleth round Me, if ye be of them that apprehend this truth. Inhale from the utterances of your Lord, the All-Merciful, the sweet smell of the garment of inner meanings, which hath been diffused throughout the entire creation and hath shed its fragrance over all created things. Happy are those who perceive it and hasten unto God with radiant hearts.

O Living Temple! We, verily, have made Thee a mirror unto the kingdom of names, that Thou mayest be, amidst all mankind, a sign of My sovereignty, a herald unto My presence, a summoner unto My beauty, and a guide unto My straight and perspicuous Path. We have exalted Thy Name among Our servants as a bounty from Our presence. I, verily, am the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days. We have, moreover, adorned Thee with the ornament of Our own Self, and have imparted unto Thee Our Word, that Thou mayest ordain in this contingent world whatsoever Thou willest and accomplish whatsoever Thou pleasest. We have destined for Thee all the good of the heavens and of the earth, and decreed that none may attain unto a portion thereof unless he entereth beneath Thy shadow, as bidden by Thy Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. We have conferred upon Thee the Staff of authority and the Writ of judgement, that Thou mayest test the wisdom of every command. We have caused the oceans of inner meaning and explanation to surge from Thy heart in remembrance of Thy Lord, the God of mercy, that Thou mayest render thanks and praise unto Him and be of those who are truly thankful. We have singled Thee out from amongst all Our creatures, and have appointed Thee as the Manifestation of Our own Self unto all who are in the heavens and on the earth.

Bring then into being, by Our leave, resplendent mirrors and exalted letters that shall testify to Thy sovereignty and dominion, bear witness to Thy might and glory, and be the manifestations of Thy Names amidst mankind. We have caused Thee again to be the Origin and the Creator of all mirrors, even as We brought them forth from Thee aforetime. And We shall cause Thee to return

unto Mine own Self, even as We called Thee forth in the beginning. Thy Lord, verily, is the Unconstrained, the All-Powerful, the All-Compelling. Warn, then, these mirrors, once they have been made manifest, lest they swell with pride before their Creator and Fashioner when He appeareth amongst them, or let the trappings of leadership delude and debar them from bowing in submission before God, the Almighty, the All-Beauteous.

Say: O concourse of mirrors! Ye are but a creation of My will and have come to exist by virtue of My command. Beware lest ye deny the verses of My Lord, and be of them who have wrought injustice and are numbered with the lost. Beware lest ye cling unto that which ye possess, or take pride in your fame and renown. That which behoveth you is to wholly detach yourselves from all that is in the heavens and on the earth. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the All-Powerful, the Almighty.

O Temple of My Cause! Say: Should I wish to transform, in a single moment, all things into mirrors of My Names, this undoubtedly is in My power, how much more in the power of My Lord, Who hath called Me into being through His all-compelling and inscrutable command. And should I choose to revolutionize the entire creation in the twinkling of an eye, this assuredly is possible unto Me, how much more unto that sovereign Purpose enshrined in the Will of God, My Lord and the Lord of all the worlds.

Say: O ye manifestations of My Names! Should ye offer up all that ye possess, nay your very lives, in the path of God, and invoke Him to the number of the grains of sand, the drops of rain, and the waves of the sea, and yet oppose the Manifestation of His Cause at the time of His appearance, your works shall in no wise be mentioned before God. Should ye, however, neglect all righteous works and yet choose to believe in Him in these days, God perchance will put away your sins. He, verily, is the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful. Thus doth the Lord inform you of His purpose, that haply ye may not wax proud before the One through Whom whatsoever hath been revealed from all eternity hath been confirmed. Happy is he who approacheth this Most Sublime Vision, and woe to them that turn aside!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “Súriy-i-Haykal”, verses 80-85, pp. 42-46)

He is God, exalted be His glory!

It is clear and evident that the one true God—glorified be His mention!—is sanctified above the world and all that is therein. By “rendering assistance unto God”, then, it is not meant that any soul should fight or contend with another. That Sovereign Lord Who doeth whatsoever He pleaseth hath entrusted the kingdom of creation, its lands and its seas, into the hands of the kings, for they are, each according to his degree, the manifestations of His divine power. Should they enter beneath the shadow of the True One, they will be accounted of God, and if not, thy Lord, verily, knoweth and observeth all things.

That which God-glorified be His Name!-hath desired for Himself is the hearts of His servants, which are the treasuries of His love and remembrance and the repositories of His knowledge and wisdom. It hath ever been the wish of the Eternal King to cleanse the hearts of His servants from the things of the world and all that pertaineth thereunto, that they may be made worthy recipients of the effulgent splendours of Him Who is the King of all names and attributes. Wherefore must no stranger be allowed in the city of the heart, that the incomparable Friend may enter His abode. By this is meant the effulgence of His names and attributes, and not His exalted Essence, inasmuch as that peerless King hath ever been, and shall eternally remain, sanctified above ascent and descent.

It followeth, therefore, that rendering assistance unto God, in this day, doth not and shall never consist in contending or disputing with any soul; nay rather, what is preferable in the sight of God is that the cities of men's hearts, which are ruled by the hosts of self and passion, should be subdued by the sword of utterance, of wisdom and of understanding. *Thus, whoso seeketh to assist God must, before all else, conquer, with the sword of inner meaning and explanation, the city of his own heart and guard it from the remembrance of all save God, and only then set out to subdue the cities of the hearts of others.*

Such is the true meaning of rendering assistance unto God. Sedition hath never been pleasing unto God, nor were the acts committed in the past by certain foolish ones acceptable in His sight. Know ye that to be killed in the path of His good pleasure is better for you than to kill. The beloved of the Lord must, in this day, behave in such wise amidst His servants that they may by their very deeds and actions guide all men unto the paradise of the All-Glorious.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, "Súriy-i-Haykal", verses 210-213, pp. 108-110) [Italics added –ed.]

Indeed thou didst grasp the significance of rendering assistance unto God and didst arise to achieve this through the power of wisdom and utterance. Say: To assist Me is to teach My Cause. This is a theme with which whole Tablets are laden. This is the changeless commandment of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future....

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 196) [Underling added –ed.]

The essential requirement for whoso advanceth a claim is to support his assertions with clear proofs and testimonies. Beyond this, the rejection of the people, whether learned or ignorant, hath never been, nor shall it ever be, of any consequence. The Prophets of God, those Pearls of the ocean of Divine Unity and the Repositories of Divine Revelation, have ever been the object of men's repudiation and denial. Even as 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." And again: "No Messenger cometh unto them but they laugh Him to scorn."

Consider the dispensation of Him Who is the Seal of the Prophets and the King of the Chosen Ones—may the souls of all mankind be offered up for His sake! After the Daystar of Truth dawned above the horizon of Hijaz, how great were the cruelties which the exponents of error inflicted upon that incomparable Manifestation of the All-Glorious! Such was their heedlessness that they regarded every injury inflicted upon that sacred Being as ranking among the greatest of all acts, and constituting a means of attainment unto God, the Most High. For in the early years of His mission the divines of that age, both Christian and Jewish, turned away from that Daystar of the heaven of glory, whereupon all people, high and low alike, bestirred themselves to extinguish the light of that Luminary of the horizon of inner meanings. The names of all these divines have been mentioned in the books of old; among them are Wahb Ibn-i-Rahib, Ka'b Ibn-i-Ashraf, 'Abdu'lláh-i-Ubayy, and others of their like.

Finally, matters came to such a pass that these men took counsel together and conspired to shed His pure blood, even as God-glorified be His mention!—saith: “And remember when the disbelievers schemed against Thee, that they might lay hold upon Thee, or slay Thee, or cast Thee out; and so they schemed, and God schemed, and God, verily, is the best of schemers.” Again He saith: “But if their opposition be grievous to Thee—if Thou canst, seek out an opening into the earth or a ladder into heaven and bring to them a sign; yet if God wished, He could gather them unto true guidance; be Thou not, then, of the ignorant.” By God! The hearts of His favoured ones are consumed at the purport of these two blessed verses. Such established and undisputed facts have been forgotten, and no one hath paused to reflect, in days past or in this day, upon the things that have prompted men to turn away from the Revealers of the light of God at the time of their manifestation.

Likewise, before the appearance of the Seal of the Prophets, consider Jesus, the Son of Mary. When that Manifestation of the All-Merciful revealed Himself, all the divines charged that Quintessence of faith with impiety and rebellion. Eventually, with the sanction of Annas, the most learned of the divines of His day, and Caiaphas, the high priest, His blessed person was made to suffer that which the pen is ashamed to mention and powerless to describe. The wide world in all its vastness could no longer contain Him, until at last God raised Him up unto heaven.

Were a detailed account of all the Prophets to be given here, We fear that it might lead to weariness. The doctors of the Torah in particular assert that no independent Prophet will come after Moses with a new Law. They maintain that a Scion of the House of David shall be made manifest Who will promulgate the Law of the Torah, and help establish and enforce its commandments throughout the East and the West.

The followers of the Gospel, likewise, hold as impossible that the Bearer of a new Revelation should again shine forth from the dayspring of the Will of God after Jesus, Son of Mary—peace be upon Him! In support of this contention, they adduce the following verse from the Gospel: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the words of the Son of Man shall never pass away.” They maintain

that neither the teachings nor the commandments of Jesus—peace be upon Him!—may ever be altered.

At one point in the Gospel, He saith: “I go away, and come again.” Again in the Gospel of John, He hath foretold the advent of a Comforter who shall come after Him. In the Gospel of Luke, moreover, a number of signs and portents have been mentioned. Certain divines of that Faith, however, have interpreted these utterances after their own fancy, and have thus failed to grasp their true significance.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, “Súriy-i-Haykal”, verses 242-248, pp. 122-125)



Be not grieved if thou performest it thyself alone. Let God be all-sufficient for thee. Commune intimately with His Spirit, and be thou of the thankful. Proclaim the Cause of thy Lord unto all who are in the heavens and on the earth. Should any man respond to thy call, lay bare before him the pearls of the wisdom of the Lord, thy God, which His Spirit hath sent down unto thee, and be thou of them that truly believe. And should any one reject thine offer, turn thou away from him, and put thy trust and confidence in the Lord, thy God, the Lord of all worlds. By the righteousness of God! Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure light. Thus hath it been foreordained in the realm of God's Revelation, by the behest of Him Who is the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful. There lay concealed within the Holy Veil, and prepared for the service of God, a company of His chosen ones who shall be manifested unto men, who shall aid His Cause, who shall be afraid of no one, though the entire human race rise up and war against them. These are the ones who, before the gaze of the dwellers on earth and the denizens of heaven, shall arise and, shouting aloud, acclaim the name of the Almighty, and summon the children of men to the path of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised. Walk thou in their way, and let no one dismay thee. Be of them whom the tumult of the world, however much it may agitate them in the path of their Creator, can never sadden, whose purpose the blame of the blamer will never defeat.

Go forth with the Tablet of God and His signs, and rejoin them that have believed in Me, and announce unto them tidings of Our most holy Paradise. Warn, then, those that have joined partners with Him. Say: I am come to you, O people, from the Throne of glory, and bear you an announcement from God, the Most Powerful, the Most Exalted, the Most Great. In mine hand I carry the testimony of God, your Lord and the Lord of your sires of old. Weigh it with the just Balance that ye possess, the Balance of the testimony of the Prophets and Messengers of God. If ye find it to be established in truth, if ye believe it to be of God, beware, then, lest ye cavil at it, and render your works vain, and be numbered with the infidels. It is indeed the sign of God that hath been sent down through the power of truth, through which the validity of His Cause hath been demonstrated unto His creatures, and the ensigns of purity lifted up betwixt earth and heaven.

Say: This is the sealed and mystic Scroll, the repository of God's irrevocable Decree, bearing the words which the Finger of Holiness hath traced, that lay wrapt within the veil of impenetrable mystery, and hath now been sent down as a token of the grace of Him Who is the Almighty, the Ancient of Days. In it have We decreed the destinies of all the dwellers of the earth and the denizens of heaven, and written down the knowledge of all things from first to last. Nothing whatsoever can escape or frustrate Him, whether created in the past or to be created in the future, could ye but perceive it. Say: The Revelation sent down by God hath most surely been repeated, and the outstretched Hand of Our power hath overshadowed all that are in the heavens and all that are on the earth. We have, through the power of truth, the very truth, manifested an infinitesimal glimmer of Our impenetrable Mystery, and lo, they that have recognized the radiance of the Sinaic splendor expired, as they caught a lightening glimpse of this Crimson Light enveloping the Sinai of Our Revelation. Thus hath He Who is the Beauty of the All-Merciful come down in the clouds of His testimony, and the decree accomplished by virtue of the Will of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Wise. Say: Step out of Thy holy chamber, O Maid of Heaven, inmate of the Exalted Paradise! Drape thyself in whatever manner pleaseth Thee in the silken Vesture of Immortality, and put on, in the name of the All-Glorious, the brodered Robe of Light. Hear, then, the sweet, the wondrous accent of the Voice that cometh from the Throne of Thy Lord, the Inaccessible, the Most High. Unveil Thy face, and manifest the beauty of the black-eyed Damsel, and suffer not the servants of God to be deprived of the light of Thy shining countenance. Grieve not if Thou hearest the sighs of the dwellers of the earth, or the voice of the lamentation of the denizens of heaven. Leave them to perish on the dust of extinction. Let them be reduced to nothingness, inasmuch as the flame of hatred hath been kindled within their breasts. Intone, then, before the face of the peoples of earth and heaven, and in a most melodious voice, the anthem of praise, for a remembrance of Him Who is the King of the names and attributes of God. Thus have We decreed Thy destiny. Well able are We to achieve Our purpose. Beware that Thou divest not Thyself, Thou Who art the Essence of Purity, of Thy robe of effulgent glory. Nay, enrich Thyself increasingly, in the kingdom of creation, with the incorruptible vestures of Thy God, that the beauteous image of the Almighty may be reflected through Thee in all created things and the grace of Thy Lord be infused in the plenitude of its power into the entire creation.

If Thou smellst from any one the smell of the love of Thy Lord, offer up Thyself for him, for We have created Thee to this end, and have covenanted with Thee, from time immemorial, and in the presence of the congregation of Our well-favored ones, for this very purpose. Be not impatient if the blind in heart hurl down the shafts of their idle fancies upon Thee. Leave them to themselves, for they follow the promptings of the evil ones.

Cry out before the gaze of the dwellers of heaven and of earth: I am the Maid of Heaven, the Offspring begotten by the Spirit of Bahá. My habitation is the Mansion of His Name, the All-Glorious. Before the Concourse on high I was adorned with the ornament of His names. I was wrapt within the veil of an inviolable security, and lay hidden from the eyes of men. Methinks that I heard a Voice of divine and incomparable sweetness, proceeding from the right hand of the God of Mercy, and lo, the whole Paradise stirred and trembled before Me, in its longing to hear its accents, and gaze on the beauty of Him that uttered them. Thus have We revealed in this luminous Tablet, and in the sweetest of languages, the verses which the Tongue of Eternity was moved to utter in the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá.

Say: He ordaineth as He pleaseth, by virtue of His sovereignty, and doeth whatsoever He willeth at His own behest. He shall not be asked of the things it pleaseth Him to ordain. He, in truth, is the Unrestrained, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 279-284)

Addendum III: Service and Tests

I have come to this country in the advanced years of my life, undergoing difficulties of health and climate because of excessive love for the friends of God. It is my wish that they may be assisted to become servants of the heavenly Kingdom, captives in the service of the will of God. This captivity is freedom; this sacrifice is glorification; this labor is reward; this need is bestowal. *For service in love for mankind is unity with God. He who serves has already entered the Kingdom and is seated at the right hand of his Lord.* [Italics added –ed.]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 186)

❖ “...that the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established...”

The mystic and wondrous Bride, hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God and His divine favor, been made manifest even as the resplendent light shed by the

beauty of the Beloved. I bear witness, O friends! that the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established. Let it now be seen what your endeavors in the path of detachment will reveal. In this wise hath the divine favor been fully vouchsafed unto you and unto them that are in heaven and on earth. All praise to God, the Lord of all Worlds.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian # 82)

[Suggestion: As you read the following passages regarding “tests”, see if you will be able to identify the different types of tests that can be sustained. There appear to be tests for personal growth (advancement and transformation); tests to try and prove the hearts of the servants – separating the weak (insincere) from the strong (steadfast, devoted and firm in the Covenant); tests suffered as affliction/s in His path, (which ultimately stupefy and release even greater power, thereby validating or propelling the Cause forward); and tests which are sent by the Wrath of God specifically directed toward His enemies – (designed to confound and eventually defeat and decimate those who would arise concertedly to oppose, deny, obstruct or destroy the onward march of the Cause, its Central Figures, chief proponents, major principles and lasting tenets). –ed.]

...Know, moreover, that it is through such words that God proveth His servants and sifteth them, separating the believer from the infidel, the detached from the worldly, the pious from the profligate, the doer of good from the worker of iniquity, and so forth. Thus hath the Dove of holiness proclaimed: “Do men think when they say 'We believe' they shall be let alone and not be put to proof?” [Qurán 29:2] [Italics added for emphasis – ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries*, p. 17)

By the righteousness of God! These are the days in which God hath proved the hearts of the entire company of His Messengers and Prophets, and beyond them those that stand guard over His sacred and inviolable Sanctuary, the inmates of the celestial Pavilion and dwellers of the Tabernacle of Glory. How severe, therefore, the test to which they who join partners with God must needs be subjected!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 11-12) [As regards “those who join partners with God”, see references below...]

If thou deniest Me, by what proof canst thou vindicate the truth of that which thou dost possess? Produce it, then, O thou who hast joined partners with God, and turned aside from His sovereignty that hath encompassed the worlds!

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 82)

...As for those who disbelieve in God, and join partners with Him, they shall indeed incur His wrath, shall be cast into the Fire, and shall be made to dwell, fearful and dismayed, in its depths.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 21)

[Note: In the time of Bahá'u'lláh, those who 'joined partners with God' were specifically referenced as those among the followers of the Báb who had stubbornly and persistently held onto their precepts of, and attachment to, the preceding Revelation (although this appellation could also be applied to other contemporary co-religionists [such as the Muslim hierarchy and their minions] who opposed Bahá'u'lláh as well). Elsewhere, He has referred to them as those who only worship and adore the 'Kingdom of Names' – and not the true station, spirit, significance and reality of Him Whom God would make Manifest – as the 'Hidden Secret' and promised 'King of Kings'. (For instance: Cf. page 297 of this compilation: "...God hath recorded such souls in the Preserved Tablet as mere worshippers of names".)]

It can be surmised that in this day we can extend this concept to apply to those who would intentionally, maliciously, concertedly and persistently, devise and plot to oppose and deny, attack, discredit, besmerch, undermine and overthrow, the trajectory and winning prominence and influence of the Revelation of God for this Day, based in their own selfish theories and twisted notions, devious desires and personal ambitions, and a total and complete misunderstanding, misinterpretation and repudiation of the goals and aims of this new Dispensation (the Day of God Himself, or King of Days), especially from an attachment to or in the name of, any or all previous Revelations or otherwise prevalent but archaic schools of thought or ways of thinking, perceiving, and reasoning.

Furthermore, in a discussion of His Tablets to the various Kings and Rulers of the earth, Bahá'u'lláh Himself has specifically pointed out that those who would most virulently arise to oppose were the rulers (or the ruling class), the clerical hierarchy (and hence their throng of coreligionists, as influenced by their leaders), and the politicians, themselves. Interesting to surmise how this will eventually play out in these latter days. –ed.]

"O guardian angels! Return them to their abode in the world below,

Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious!

"Inasmuch as they have purposed to rise to that sphere which the wings of the celestial dove have never attained;

Glorified be my Lord, the All-Glorious!

"Whereupon the ship of fancy standeth still *which the minds of them that comprehend cannot grasp.*" [Italics added –ed.]

(Bahá'u'lláh, "Tablet of the Holy Mariner", *Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 223, and elsewhere)

O SON OF BEING! Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 55)

O SON OF MAN! My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy. Hasten thereunto that thou mayest become an eternal light and an immortal spirit. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic # 51)

❖ *"But regarding the tests..."*

But regarding the tests: Undoubtedly they must be violent so that those souls who are weak may fall back, while the souls who are firm and sincere may shine forth from the horizon of the Most Great Guidance like unto the sparkling stars.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, p. 470)

❖ [*"Know verily that the purpose...hath been to test and prove the peoples of the world..."*]

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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Iqán*, p. 49)]

Thou hast written concerning the tests that have come upon thee. To the sincere ones, tests are as a gift from God, the Exalted, for a heroic person hasteneth, with the utmost joy and gladness, to

the tests of a violent battlefield, but the coward is afraid and trembles and utters moaning and lamentation. Likewise, an expert student prepareth and memorizeth his lessons and exercises with the utmost effort, and in the day of examination he appeareth with infinite joy before the master. Likewise, the pure gold shineth radiantly in the fire of test. Consequently, it is made clear that for holy souls, trials are as the gift of God, the Exalted; but for weak souls they are an unexpected calamity. This test is just as thou hast written: it removeth the rust of egotism from the mirror of the heart until the Sun of Truth may shine therein. For, no veil is greater than egotism and no matter how thin that covering may be, yet it will finally veil man entirely and prevent him from receiving a portion from the eternal bounty.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 3, pp. 722-723)

[“The more one is severed from the world, from desires, from human affairs, and conditions, the more impervious does one become to the tests of God. Tests are a means by which a soul is measured as to its fitness, and proven out by its own acts. God knows its fitness beforehand, and also its unpreparedness, but man, with an ego, would not believe himself unfit unless proof were given him. Consequently his susceptibility to evil is proven to him when he falls into the tests, and the tests are continued until the soul realizes its own unfitness, then remorse and regret tend to root out the weakness.

“The same test comes again in greater degree, until it is shown that a former weakness has become a strength, and the power to overcome evil has been established.”

(Attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá [as utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in answer to questions asked by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger during a few brief meetings at Haifa, Syria, January 26 to February 5, 1915, and recorded by Dr. Getsinger at the time]; and published as “The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause”, *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, No. 6, pp. 43-45, considered as “*pilgrims’ note*”)]

❖ “*This station conferreth the true standard of knowledge...*”

...This station conferreth the true standard of knowledge, and freeth man from tests. In this realm, to search after knowledge is irrelevant, for He hath said concerning the guidance of travelers on this plane, “Fear God, and God will instruct thee.” And again: “Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth.”

(Bahá’u’lláh, *The Four Valleys*, pp. 53-54)

...The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sadiq, son of

Muhammad, spoken: “God verily will test them and sift them.” This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 255)

...Regard the afflictions endured in the path of God as comfort itself. Every affliction suffered for His sake is a potent remedy, every bitterness is naught but sweetness and every abasement an exaltation. Were men to apprehend and acknowledge this truth, they would readily lay down their lives for such affliction. For it is the key to inestimable treasures, and no matter how outwardly abhorrent, it hath ever been and will continue to be inwardly prized. We accept and affirm what thou hast said, for the peoples of the world are indeed bereft of the light of the Orb of justice and regard it as their enemy.

If thou desirest to be freed from affliction, recite thou this prayer which hath been revealed by the Pen of the All-Merciful: “O God, my God! I testify to Thy unity and to Thy oneness. I beseech Thee, O Thou Possessor of names and Fashioner of the heavens, by the pervasive influence of Thine exalted Word and the potency of Thy supreme Pen, to aid me with the ensigns of Thy power and might, and to protect me from the mischief of Thine enemies who have violated Thy Covenant and Thy Testament. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.” This invocation is an impregnable stronghold and an indomitable army. It conferreth protection and ensureth deliverance.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, Section I, pp. 59-60)

O thou friend! Be not sorrowful because of my imprisonment and lament not for my difficulties; nay, rather ask God to increase my hardship in His path, for therein lies a wisdom which none are able to comprehend save the near angels.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, p. 333)

...And yet, from one point of view, this wanderer was saddened and despondent. For what pain, in the time to come, could I seek comfort? At the news of what granted wish could I rejoice? There was no more tyranny, no more affliction, no tragical events, no tribulations. My only joy in this swiftly-passing world was to tread the stony path of God and to endure hard tests and all material griefs. For otherwise, this earthly life would prove barren and vain, and better would be death. The tree of being would produce no fruit; the sown field of this existence would yield no harvest. Thus it is my hope that once again some circumstance will make my cup of anguish to brim over, and that beauteous Love, that Slayer of souls, will dazzle the beholders again. Then will this heart be blissful, this soul be blessed.

“O Divine Providence! Lift to Thy lovers' lips a cup brimful of anguish. To the yearners on Thy pathway, make sweetness but a sting, and poison honey-sweet. Set Thou our heads for ornaments on the points of spears. Make Thou our hearts the targets for pitiless arrows and darts.

Raise Thou this withered soul to life on the martyr's field, make Thou his faded heart to drink the draught of tyranny, and thus grow fresh and fair once more. Make him to be drunk with the wine of Thine Eternal Covenant, make him a reveller holding high his cup. Help him to fling away his life; grant that for Thy sake, he be offered up.

“Thou art the Mighty, the Powerful. Thou art the Knower, the Seer, the Hearer.”

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 226-227)

❖ *“O Thou Whose tests are a healing medicine...”*

O Thou Whose tests are a healing medicine to such as are nigh unto Thee, Whose sword is the ardent desire of all them that love Thee, Whose dart is the dearest wish of those hearts that yearn after Thee, Whose decree is the sole hope of them that have recognized Thy truth! I implore Thee, by Thy divine sweetness and by the splendors of the glory of Thy face, to send down upon us from Thy retreats on high that which will enable us to draw nigh unto Thee. Set, then, our feet firm, O my God, in Thy Cause, and enlighten our hearts with the effulgence of Thy knowledge, and illumine our breasts with the brightness of Thy names.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 220-221)

I swear by Thy glory, O Thou the Best Beloved of the worlds and the Desire of all such as have recognized Thee! The one reason I wish to live is that I may reveal Thy Cause, and I seek the continuance of life only that I may be touched by adversity in Thy path.

I implore Thee, O Thou by Whose summons the hearts of all them who were nigh unto Thee have soared into the atmosphere of Thy presence, to send down upon Thy loved ones what will enable them to dispense with all else except Thee. Endue them, then, with such constancy that they will arise to proclaim Thy Cause, and will call on Thy name, before all that are in Thy heaven and on Thy earth, in such wise that the Pharaohic cruelties inflicted by the oppressors among Thy servants will not succeed in keeping them back from Thee.

Thou art, verily, the God of power, the God of glory, the God of strength and wisdom.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, pp. 146-147)

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: ‘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 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.'* [Italics added –ed.]

(Words of the Báb as cited by Nabil-i-A'zam, in *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 93)

❖ *“Service to the friends is service to the Kingdom...”*

Service to the friends is service to the Kingdom of God, and consideration shown to the poor is one of the greatest teachings of God.

(Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 27)

Wherefore, O my loving friends! Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good-will and friendliness; that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Baha [sic], that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancor may vanish from the world and the darkness of estrangement amidst the peoples and kindreds of the world may give way to the Light of Unity. Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you show your fidelity unto them, should they be unjust toward you show justice towards them, should they keep aloof from you attract them to yourself, should they show their enmity be friendly towards them, should they poison your lives sweeten their souls, should they inflict a wound upon you be a salve to their sores. Such are the attributes of the sincere! Such are the attributes of the truthful.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Will and Testament*, p. 14)

TABLET OF VISITATION FOR ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

[This prayer, revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is read at His Shrine. It is also used in private prayer.]

Whoso reciteth this prayer with lowliness and fervor will bring gladness and joy to the heart of this Servant [‘Abdu’l Bahá]; it will be even as meeting Him face to face.

He is the All-Glorious!

O God, my God! Lowly and tearful, I raise my suppliant hands to Thee and cover my face in the dust of that Threshold of Thine, exalted above the knowledge of the learned, and the praise of all that glorify Thee. Graciously look upon Thy servant, humble and lowly at Thy door, with the glances of the eye of Thy mercy, and immerse him in the Ocean of Thine eternal grace.

Lord! He is a poor and lowly servant of Thine, enthralled and imploring Thee, captive in Thy hand, praying fervently to Thee, trusting in Thee, in tears before Thy face, calling to Thee and beseeching Thee, saying:

O Lord, my God! Give me Thy grace to serve Thy loved ones, strengthen me in my servitude to Thee, illumine my brow with the light of adoration in Thy court of holiness, and of prayer to Thy Kingdom of grandeur. Help me to be selfless at the heavenly entrance of Thy gate, and aid me to be detached from all things within Thy holy precincts. Lord! Give me to drink from the chalice of selflessness; with its robe clothe me, and in its ocean immerse me. Make me as dust in the pathway of Thy loved ones, and grant that I may offer up my soul for the earth ennobled by the footsteps of Thy chosen ones in Thy path, O Lord of Glory in the Highest.

With this prayer doth Thy servant call Thee, at dawntide and in the night-season. Fulfil his heart’s desire, O Lord! Illumine his heart, gladden his bosom, kindle his light, that he may serve Thy Cause and Thy servants.

Thou art the Bestower, the Pitiful, the Most Bountiful, the Gracious, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 319-320; and in various Bahá’í prayer books, as “Tablet of Visitation to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”, such as *Bahá’í Prayers*, p. 232)

“Today all distinctions between man and man fall away; there remains the degree of striving to serve. He who serves most is nearest to God...”

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in a statement made September 8, 1911, in London, England, found in *Star of the West*, Vol II, #12, issue dated October 16, 1911, but which could not be authenticated or verified, hence “*pilgrims’ note*”)

[“Those nearest to God are those who obey His commandments...”]

(Munireh Khanúm as cited in *Flowers culled from the Rose Garden of Acca*, Op. Cit., November 8, 1908, p. 7, but which could not be authenticated or verified, hence “*pilgrims’ note*”)]



“My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.”

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, from the Arabic, #1)



The Pure Heart...

When asked for a definition of a *pure heart*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said,
 "The *pure heart* is one that is *entirely cut away from self*.
 To be *selfless* is to be *pure*." [Italics added –ed.]

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *‘Abdu'l-Bahá in London*, p. 106)

If thou seekest to be intoxicated with the cup of the Most Mighty Gift, cut thyself from the world and be quit of self and desire. Exert thyself night and day until spiritual powers may penetrate thy heart and soul. Abandon the body and the material, until the merciful powers may become manifest; because not until the soil is become pure will it develop through the heavenly bounty; not until the heart is purified, will the radiance of the Sun of Truth shine therein. I beg of God that thou wilt day by day increase the purity of thy heart, the cheerfulness of thy soul, the light of thy insight and the search for Truth.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, v3, p. 511; and *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 362)

It is easy to read the Holy Scriptures, but it is only with a clean heart and a pure mind that one may understand their true meaning. Let us ask God's help to enable us to understand the Holy Books. Let us pray for eyes to see and ears to hear, and for hearts that long for peace.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, pp. 56-57)

May your hearts become clear and pure like unto polished mirrors in which may be reflected the full glory of the Sun of Truth.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 95)

O ye beloved of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and ye handmaids of the Merciful! It is early morning, and the reviving winds of the Abha Paradise are blowing over all creation, but they can stir only the pure of heart, and only the pure sense can detect their fragrance. Only the perceiving eye beholdeth the rays of the sun; only the listening ear can hear the singing of the Concourse on high. Although the plentiful rains of spring, the bestowals of Heaven, pour down upon all things, they can only fructify good soil; they love not brackish ground, where no results of all the bounty can be shown.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 22)

Today the soft and holy breathings of the Abha Realm are passing over every land, but only the pure in heart draw nigh and derive a benefit therefrom. It is the hope of this wronged soul that from the grace of the Self-Subsistent One and by the manifest power of the Word of God, the heads of the unmindful may be cleared, that they may perceive these sweet savours which blow from secret rosebeds of the spirit.

('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 22)

Look ye not upon the fewness of thy numbers, rather, seek ye out hearts that are pure. One consecrated soul is preferable to a thousand other souls. If a small number of people gather lovingly together, with absolute purity and sanctity, with their hearts free of the world, experiencing the emotions of the Kingdom and the powerful magnetic forces of the Divine, and being at one in their happy fellowship, that gathering will exert its influence over all the earth. The nature of that band of people, the words they speak, the deeds they do, will unleash the bestowals of Heaven, and provide a foretaste of eternal bliss. The hosts of the Company on high will defend them, and the angels of the Abha Paradise, in continuous succession, will come down to their aid.

The meaning of 'angels' is the confirmations of God and His celestial powers. Likewise angels are blessed beings who have severed all ties with this nether world, have been released from the chains of self and the desires of the flesh, and anchored their hearts to the heavenly realms of the Lord. These are of the Kingdom, heavenly; these are of God, spiritual; these are revealers of God's abounding grace; these are dawning-points of His spiritual bestowals.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 80-81)

And out of pure hearts, and through heavenly bounties, all the perfections, qualities and attributes of the divine must now be made manifest.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 232)

Make of thine effort a glass, perchance it may shelter this flame from the contrary winds; albeit this light doth long to be kindled in the lamp of the Lord, and to shine in the globe of the spirit. *For the head raised up in the love of God will certainly fall by the sword, and the life that is kindled with longing will surely be sacrificed, and the heart which remembereth the Loved One will surely brim with blood.* How well is it said:

Live free of love, for its very peace is anguish;

Its beginning is pain, its end is death.

Peace be upon him who followeth the Right Path!

* * * * *

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, pp. 41-42) [Italics added –ed.]

Afterword...

Pleasing and acceptable as is a righteous person before God's Holy Threshold, yet good works should proceed from knowledge... ..The point is this, that faith compriseth both knowledge and the performance of good works.

(Retranslation of a passage from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section, *Bahá’i World Faith*, passim, pp. 282-283 [as originally published in *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, vol. 3, p. 549], as provided by the Research Department in a letter to the Universal House of Justice, dated Oct. 22, 1996, entitled: “Authentication and Authority”)

...A humanity which has come of age can respond to a directness of teaching that goes beyond the language of parable and allegory; faith is a matter not of blind belief, but of conscious knowledge. Nor is the guidance of an ecclesiastical elite any longer required: the gift of reason confers on each individual in this new age of enlightenment and education the capacity to respond to Divine guidance. The test is that of sincerity....

(Bahá’í International Community, 1992 May 29, *Statement on Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 5)

❖ “*If one entering the Kingdom...*”

“If one entering the Kingdom of God possesses learning and science it is well, but the essential thing, or the thing of greatest importance is to enter into the Kingdom of God, and to be characterized by the Divine Attributes.... Science and learning are good, but they are the branch, not the root.”

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, November 8, 1908, found in *Flowers Culled from the Rose Garden of Acca*, p. 11, “pilgrims’ note”)

And now I give you a commandment which shall be for a covenant between you and Me—that ye have faith; that your faith be steadfast as a rock that no storms can move, that nothing can disturb, and that it endure through all things even to the end; even should ye hear that your Lord has been crucified, be not shaken in your faith; for I am with you always, whether living or dead, I am with you to the end. As ye have faith so shall your powers and blessings be. This is the balance—this is the balance—this is the balance.

(Statement attributed to ‘Abdu’l Bahá, cited in *An Early Pilgrimage* by Max Maxwell, p. 40; and also cited in Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 73, generally considered as “*pilgrims’ note*”)



Ye are the letters of the words, and the words of the Book.

Ye are the saplings which the hand of Loving-kindness hath planted in the soil of mercy, and which the showers of bounty have made to flourish.

He hath protected you from the mighty winds of misbelief, and the tempestuous gales of impiety, and nurtured you with the hands of His loving providence.

Now is the time for you to put forth your leaves, and yield your fruit.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 25-26)

“I am waiting, I am patiently waiting...”

[Cf.: pages 263 of this compilation, for the entire passage]

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í Year Book* (1926), Vol. I, p. 31; also cited in part by Shoghi Effendi in *God Passes By*, p. 309; and by J.E. Esslemont in *Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era*, p. 61, as well as H.M. Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá - The Centre of the Covenant*, p. 406)

...Hear Me, ye mortal birds! In the Rose Garden of changeless splendor a Flower hath begun to bloom, compared to which every other flower is but a thorn, and before the brightness of Whose glory the very essence of beauty must pale and wither. Arise, therefore, and, with the whole enthusiasm of your hearts, with all the eagerness of your souls, the full fervor of your will, and the concentrated efforts of your entire being, strive to attain the paradise of His presence, and endeavor to inhale the fragrance of the incorruptible Flower, to breathe the sweet savors of holiness, and to obtain a portion of this perfume of celestial glory. Whoso followeth this counsel will break his chains asunder, will taste the abandonment of enraptured love, will attain unto his heart's desire, and will surrender his soul into the hands of his Beloved. Bursting through his cage, he will, even as the bird of the spirit, wing his flight to his holy and everlasting nest.

Night hath succeeded day, and day hath succeeded night, and the hours and moments of your lives have come and gone, and yet none of you hath, for one instant, consented to detach himself from that which perisheth. Bestir yourselves, that the brief moments that are still yours may not be dissipated and lost. Even as the swiftness of lightning your days shall pass, and your bodies shall be laid to rest beneath a canopy of dust. What can ye then achieve? How can ye atone for your past failure?

The everlasting Candle shineth in its naked glory. Behold how it hath consumed every mortal veil. O ye moth-like lovers of His light! Brave every danger, and consecrate your souls to its consuming flame. O ye that thirst after Him! Strip yourselves of every earthly affection, and hasten to embrace your Beloved. With a zest that none can equal make haste to attain unto Him. The Flower, thus far hidden from the sight of men, is unveiled to your eyes. In the open radiance of His glory He standeth before you. His voice summoneth all the holy and sanctified beings to come and be united with Him. Happy is he that turneth thereunto; well is it with him that hath attained, and gazed on the light of so wondrous a countenance.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 320-322)

APPENDIX I:

Summary Statement by Shoghi Effendi to the UN Special Committee on Palestine, 1947/48

[Shoghi Effendi, great-grandson of Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the Bahá'í Faith, was the spiritual head of the Bahá'í World Community from 1921 until his passing in 1957. The following versions of his commentary on the origin and aims of the Bahá'í Faith are excerpted both from a statement prepared by him in 1947 for the United Nations Special Palestine Committee, and later condensed and added to the Preface of an earlier publication, a long letter to the friends, entitled: *The Promised Day Has Come*, first circulated in 1941.:]

From the preface to *The Promised Day Is Come* (originally published in 1941 but added in subsequent versions):

The fundamental principle enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh ... is that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is a continuous and progressive process, that all the great religions of the world are divine in origin, that their basic principles are in complete harmony, that their aims and purposes are one and the same, that their teachings are but facets of one truth, that their functions are complementary, that they differ only in the nonessential aspects of their doctrines, and that their missions represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society....

...His mission is to proclaim that the ages of the infancy and of the childhood of the human race are past, that the convulsions associated with the present stage of its adolescence are slowly and painfully preparing it to attain the stage of manhood, and are heralding the approach of that Age of Ages when swords will be beaten into plowshares, when the Kingdom promised by Jesus Christ will have been established, and the peace of the planet definitely and permanently ensured. Nor does Bahá'u'lláh claim finality for His own Revelation, but rather stipulates that a fuller measure of the truth He has been commissioned by the Almighty to vouchsafe to humanity, at so critical a juncture in its fortunes, must needs be disclosed at future stages in the constant and limitless evolution of mankind.

The Bahá'í Faith upholds the unity of God, recognizes the unity of His Prophets, and inculcates the principle of the oneness and wholeness of the entire human race. It proclaims the necessity and the inevitability of the unification of mankind, asserts that it is gradually approaching, and claims that nothing short of the transmuting spirit of God, working through His chosen Mouthpiece in this day, can ultimately succeed in bringing it about. It, moreover, enjoins upon its followers the primary duty of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all manner of prejudice and superstition, declares the purpose of religion to be the promotion of amity and concord, proclaims its essential harmony with science, and recognizes it as the foremost agency for the pacification and the orderly progress of human society....

Mirza Husayn-'Ali, surnamed Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God), a native of Mazindaran, Whose advent the Báb [Herald and Forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh] had foretold, ... was imprisoned in Tihran, was banished, in 1852, from His native land to Baghdad, and thence to Constantinople and Adrianople, and finally to the prison city of 'Akká, where He remained incarcerated for no less than twenty-four years, and in whose neighborhood He passed away in 1892. In the course of His banishment, and particularly in Adrianople and 'Akká, He formulated the laws and ordinances of His Dispensation, expounded, in over a hundred volumes, the principles of His Faith, proclaimed His Message to the kings and rulers of both the East and the West, both Christian and Muslim, addressed the Pope, the Caliph of Islam, the Chief Magistrates of the Republics of the American continent, the entire Christian sacerdotal order, the leaders of Shi'ih and Sunni Islam, and the high priests of the Zoroastrian religion. In these writings He proclaimed His Revelation, summoned those whom He addressed to heed His call and espouse His Faith, warned them of the consequences of their refusal, and denounced, in some cases, their arrogance and tyranny....

The Faith which this order serves, safeguards and promotes is ... essentially supernatural, supranational, entirely non-political, non-partisan, and diametrically opposed to any policy or school of thought that seeks to exalt any particular race, class or nation. It is free from any form of ecclesiasticism, has neither priesthood nor rituals, and is supported exclusively by voluntary contributions made by its avowed adherents. Though loyal to their respective governments, though imbued with the love of their own country, and anxious to promote at all times, its best interests, the followers of the Bahá'í Faith, nevertheless, viewing mankind as one entity, and profoundly attached to its vital interests, will not hesitate to subordinate every particular interest, be it personal, regional or national, to the over-riding interests of the generality of mankind, knowing full well that in a world of interdependent peoples and nations the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the

advantage of the whole, and that no lasting result can be achieved by any of the component parts if the general interests of the entity itself are neglected....

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, pp. v-viii)

Longer version, as first presented to the United Nations Committee on Palestine:

Shoghi Effendi's Statement to the Special UN Committee on Palestine, 1947

The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh A World Religion

Shoghi Effendi

The Faith established by Bahá'u'lláh was born in Persia about the middle of the nineteenth century and has, as a result of the successive banishments of its Founder, culminating in His exile to the Turkish penal colony of 'Akká, and His subsequent death and burial in its vicinity, fixed its permanent spiritual center in the Holy Land, and is now in the process of laying the foundations of its world administrative center in the city of Haifa.

Alike in the claims unequivocally asserted by its author and the general character of the growth of the Bahá'í community in every continent of the globe, it can be regarded in no other light than a world religion, destined to evolve in the course of time into a world-embracing commonwealth, whose advent must signalize the Golden Age of mankind, the age in which the unity of the human race will have been unassailably established, its maturity attained, and its glorious destiny unfolded through the birth and efflorescence of a world-encompassing civilization.

RESTATEMENT OF ETERNAL VERITIES

Though sprung from Shi'ih Islam, and regarded, in the early stages of its development, by the followers of both the Muslim and Christian Faiths, as an obscure sect, an Asiatic cult or an offshoot of the Muhammadan religion, this Faith is now increasingly demonstrating its right to be recognized, not as one more religious system superimposed on the conflicting creeds which for so many generations have divided mankind and darkened its fortunes, but rather as a restatement of the eternal verities underlying all the religions of the past, as a unifying force instilling into the adherents of these religions a new spiritual vigor, infusing them with a new hope and love for mankind, firing them with a new vision of fundamental unity of their religious doctrines, and unfolding to their eyes the glorious destiny that awaits the human race.

Though sprung from Shi'ih Islam, and regarded, in the early stages of its development, by the followers of both the Muslim and Christian Faiths, as an obscure sect, an Asiatic cult or an offshoot of the Muhammadan religion, this Faith is now increasingly demonstrating its right to be recognized, not as one more religious system superimposed on the conflicting creeds which for so many generations have divided mankind and darkened its fortunes, but rather as a restatement of the eternal verities underlying all the religions of the past, as a unifying force instilling into the adherents of these religions a new spiritual vigor, infusing them with a new hope and love for mankind, firing them with a new vision of fundamental unity of their religious doctrines, and unfolding to their eyes the glorious destiny that awaits the human race.

The fundamental principle enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, the followers of His Faith firmly believe, is that Religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is a continuous and progressive process, that all the great religions of the world are divine in origin, that their basic principles are in complete harmony, that their aims and purposes are one and the same, that their teachings are but facets of one truth, that their functions are complementary, that they differ only in the non-essential aspects of their doctrines and that their missions represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society.

TO RECONCILE CONFLICTING CREEDS

The aim of Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet of this new and great age which humanity has entered upon -- He whose advent fulfils the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments as well as those of the Qur'án regarding the coming of the Promised One in the end of time, on the Day of Judgment -- is not to destroy but to fulfill the Revelations of the past, to reconcile rather than accentuate the divergences of the conflicting creeds which disrupt present-day society.

His purpose, far from belittling the station of the Prophets gone before Him or of whittling down their teachings, is to restate the basic truths which these teachings enshrine in a manner that would conform to the needs, and be in consonance with the capacity, and be applicable to the problems, the ills and perplexities, of the age in which we live. His mission is to proclaim that the ages of the infancy and of the childhood of the human race are past, that the convulsions associated with the present stage of its adolescence are slowly and painfully preparing it to attain the stage of manhood, and are heralding the approach of that Age of Ages when swords will be beaten into plowshares, when the Kingdom promised by Jesus Christ will have been established, and the peace of the planet definitely and permanently ensured. Nor does Bahá'u'lláh claim finality for His own Revelation, but rather stipulates that a fuller measure of the truth He has been commissioned by the

Almighty to vouchsafe to humanity, at so critical a juncture in its fortunes, must needs be disclosed at future stages in the constant and limitless evolution of mankind.

ONENESS OF THE HUMAN RACE

The Bahá'í Faith upholds the unity of God, recognizes the unity of His Prophets, and inculcates the principle of the oneness and wholeness of the entire human race. It proclaims the necessity and the inevitability of the unification of mankind, asserts that it is gradually approaching, and claims that nothing short of the transmuted spirit of God, working through His chosen Mouthpiece in this day, can ultimately succeed in bringing it about. It, moreover, enjoins upon its followers the primary duty of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all manner of prejudice and superstition, declares the purpose of religion to be the promotion of amity and concord, proclaims its essential harmony with science, and recognizes it as the foremost agency for the pacification and the orderly progress of human society. It unequivocally maintains the principle of equal rights, opportunities and privileges for men and women, insists on compulsory education, eliminates extremes of poverty and wealth, abolishes the institution of priesthood, prohibits slavery, asceticism, mendicancy and monasticism, prescribes monogamy, discourages divorce, emphasizes the necessity of strict obedience to one's government, exalts any work performed in the spirit of service to the level of worship, urges either the creation or selection of an auxiliary international language, and delineates the outlines of those institutions that must establish and perpetuate the general peace of mankind.

THE HERALD

The Bahá'í Faith revolves around three central Figures, the first of whom was a youth, a native of Shiraz, named Mirza Ali-Muhammad, known as the Báb (Gate), who in May, 1844, at the age of twenty-five, advanced the claim of being the Herald Who, according to the sacred Scriptures of previous Dispensations, must needs announce and prepare the way for the advent of One greater than Himself, Whose mission would be according to those same Scriptures, to inaugurate an era of righteousness and peace, an era that would be hailed as the consummation of all previous Dispensations, and initiate a new cycle in the religious history of mankind. Swift and severe persecution, launched by the organized forces of Church and State in His native land, precipitated successively His arrest, His exile to the mountains of Adhirbayjan, His imprisonment in the fortresses of Mah-Ku and Chihriq and His execution, in July, 1850, by a firing squad in the public square of Tabriz. No less than twenty thousand of his followers were put to death with such barbarous cruelty as to evoke the warm sympathy and the unqualified admiration of a number of Western writers, diplomats, travellers and scholars, some of whom were witnesses of these abominable outrages, and were moved to record them in their books and diaries.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Mirza Husayn-Ali, surnamed Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God), a native of Mazindaran, Whose advent the Báb had foretold, was assailed by those same forces of ignorance and fanaticism, was imprisoned in Tihran, was banished, in 1852, from His native land to Baghdad, and thence to Constantinople and Adrianople, and finally to the prison city of 'Akká, where He remained incarcerated for no less than twenty-four years, and in whose neighborhood He passed away in 1892. In the course of His banishment, and particularly in Adrianople and 'Akká, He formulated the laws and ordinances of His Dispensation, expounded, in over a hundred volumes, the principles of His Faith, proclaimed His Message to the kings and rulers of both the East and the West, both Christian and Muslim, addressed the Pope, the Caliph of Islam, the Chief Magistrates of the Republics of the American continent, the entire Christian sacerdotal order, the leaders of Shi'ih and Sunni Islam, and the high priests of the Zoroastrian religion. In these writings He proclaimed His Revelation, summoned those whom He addressed to heed His call and espouse His Faith, warned them of the consequences of their refusal, and denounced, in some cases, their arrogance and tyranny.

'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

His eldest son, Abbas Effendi, known as 'Abdu'l-Bahá (the Servant of Baha), appointed by Him as the successor and the authorized interpreter of His teachings, who since early childhood had been closely associated with His Father, and shared His exile and tribulations, remained a prisoner until 1908, when as a result of the Young Turk Revolution, He was released from His confinement. Establishing His residence in Haifa, He embarked soon after on His three-year journey to Egypt, Europe and North America, in the course of which He expounded before vast audiences, the teachings of His Father and predicted the approach of that catastrophe that was soon to befall mankind. He returned to His home on the eve of the first World War, in the course of which He was exposed to constant danger, until liberation of Palestine by the forces under the command of General Allenby, who extended the utmost consideration to Him and the small band of His fellow-exiles in 'Akká and Haifa. In 1921 He passed away, and was buried in a vault in the mausoleum erected on Mount Carmel, at the express instruction of Bahá'u'lláh for the remains of the Báb which had previously been transferred from Tabriz to the Holy Land after having been preserved and concealed for no less than sixty years.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

The passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá marked the termination of the first and Heroic Age of the Bahá'í Faith and signaled the opening of the Formative Age destined to witness the gradual emergence of its Administrative Order, whose establishment had been foretold by the Báb, whose laws were

revealed by Bahá'u'lláh, whose outlines were delineated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will and Testament, and whose foundations are now being laid by the national and local councils which are elected by the professed adherents of the Faith, and which are paving the way for the constitution of the World Council, to be designated as the Universal House of Justice, which in conjunction with me, as its appointed Head and authorized interpreter of the Bahá'í teachings, must coordinate and direct the affairs of the Bahá'í community, and whose seat will be permanently established in the Holy Land, in close proximity to its world spiritual center, the resting-places of its Founders.

The Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh which is destined to evolve into the Bahá'í World Commonwealth, and has already survived the assaults launched against its institutions by such formidable foes as the kings of the Qajar dynasty, the Caliphs of Islam, the ecclesiastical leaders of Egypt, and the Nazi regime in Germany, has already extended its ramifications to every continent of the globe, stretching from Iceland to the extremity of Chile, has established in no less than eighty-eight countries of the world, has gathered within its pale representatives of no less than thirty-one races, numbers among its supporters Christians of various denominations, Muslims of both Sunni and Shi'ah sects, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and Buddhists. It has published and disseminated, through its appointed agencies, Bahá'í literature in forty-eight languages; Has already consolidated its structure through the incorporation of five National Assemblies and seventy-seven local Assemblies, in lands as far apart as South America, India and the Antipodes -- incorporations that legally empower its elected representatives to hold property as trustees of the Bahá'í community. It disposes of international, national and local endowments, estimated at several million pounds, and spread over every continent of the globe, enjoys in several countries the privilege of official recognition by the civil authorities, enabling it to secure exemption from taxation for its endowments and to solemnize Bahá'í marriage, and numbers among its stately edifices, two temples, the one erected in Russian Turkistan and the other on the shore of Lake Michigan at Wilmette, on the outskirts of Chicago.

This Administrative Order, unlike the systems evolved after the death of the Founders of the various religions, is divine in origin, rests securely on the laws, the precepts, the ordinances and institutions which the Founder of the Faith has Himself specifically laid down and unequivocally established, and functions in strict accordance with the interpretations of the authorized Interpreters of its holy scriptures. Though fiercely assailed, ever since its inception, it has by virtue of its character, unique in the annals of the world's religious history, succeeded in maintaining unity of the diversified and far-flung body of its supporters, and enabled them to launch, unitedly and systematically, enterprises in both Hemispheres, designed to extend its limits and consolidate its administrative institutions.

The Faith which this order serves, safeguards and promotes, is, it should be noted in this connection, essentially supernatural, supranational, entirely non-political, non-partisan, and diametrically opposed to any policy or school of thought that seeks to exalt any particular race, class or nation. It is free from any form of ecclesiasticism, has neither priesthood nor rituals, and is supported exclusively by voluntary contributions made by its avowed adherents. Though loyal to their respective governments, though imbued with the love of their own country, and anxious to promote, at all times, its best interests, the followers of the Bahá'í Faith, nevertheless, viewing mankind as one entity, and profoundly attached to its vital interests, will not hesitate to subordinate every particular interest, be it personal, regional or national, to the over-riding interests of the generality of mankind, knowing full well that in a world of interdependent peoples and nations the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole, and that no lasting result can be achieved by any of the component parts if the general interests of the entity itself are neglected.

Nor should the fact be overlooked that the Faith has already asserted and demonstrated its independent religious character, has been emancipated from fetters of orthodoxy in certain Islamic countries, has obtained in one of them an unsolicited testimony to its independent religious status, and succeeded in winning the allegiance of royalty to its cause.

TRIBUTERS BY LEADERS

"It is like a wide embrace," is Queen Marie of Rumania's own tribute, "gathering together all those who have searched for words of hope. It accepts all great Prophets gone before, it destroys no other creeds and leaves all doors open....The Bahá'í teaching brings peace to the soul and hope to the heart. To those in search of assurance, the words of the Father are as a fountain in the desert after long wandering....It is a wondrous message that Bahá'u'lláh and His son 'Abdu'l-Bahá have given us. They have not set it up aggressively, knowing that the germ of eternal truth which lies at its core cannot but take root and spread....It is Christ's Message taken up anew, in the same words almost, but adapted to the thousand years and more difference that lies between the year one and today....If ever the name of Bahá'u'lláh or 'Abdu'l-Bahá comes to your attention, do not put their writings from you. Search out their books, and let their glorious, peace-bringing, love-creating words and lessons sink into your hearts as they have into mine."

"The teaching of the Bábís," wrote Leo Tolstoy, "...have great future before them....I therefore sympathize the Bábísm with all my heart, inasmuch as it teaches people brotherhood and equality and sacrifice of material life for service to God....The teachings of the Bábís which come to

us out of Islam have through Bahá'u'lláh's teachings been gradually developed, and now present us with the highest and purest form of religious teaching."

"Take these principles to the diplomats," is the late President Masaryk's advice, "to the universities and colleges and other schools, and also write about them. It is the people who will bring the universal peace." "The Bahá'í teaching," is President Eduard Benes' testimony, "is one of the great instruments for the final victory of the spirit and of humanity....The Bahá'í Cause is one of the great moral and social forces in all the world today. I am more convinced than ever, with the increasing moral and political crises in the world, we must have greater international coordination. Such a movement as the Bahá'í Cause which paves the way for universal organization of peace is necessary."

"If there has been any Prophet in recent times," asserts Rev. T. K. Cheyne in his 'The Reconciliation of Races and Religions', "it is to Bahá'u'lláh that we must go. Character is the final judge. Bahá'u'lláh was a man of the highest class -- that of Prophets." "It is possible indeed," declares Viscount Samuel of Carmel, "to pick out points of fundamental agreement among all creeds. That is the essential purpose of the Bahá'í religion, the foundation and growth of which is one of the most striking movements that have proceeded from the East in recent generations."

"Palestine," is Professor Norman Bentwich's written testimony, "may indeed be now regarded as the land not of three but of four faiths, because the Bahá'í creed, which has its center of faith and pilgrimage in 'Akká and Haifa, is attaining to the character of a world religion. So far as its influence goes in the land, it is a factor making for international and inter-religious understanding."

And, finally, is the judgment passed by no less outstanding a figure than the late Master of Balliol, Professor Benjamin Jowett: "The Bábí movement may not impossibly turn out to have the promise of the future." Professor Lewis Campbell, an eminent pupil of Dr. Jowett, has confirmed this statement by quoting him as saying: "This Bahá'í Movement is the greatest light that has come into the world since the time of Jesus Christ. You must watch it and never let it out of your sight. It is too great and too near to this generation to comprehend. The future alone can reveal its import."

(Shoghi Effendi, Summary Statement – 1947 [sometimes written as 1948 –ed.], Special UN Committee on Palestine)]

APPENDIX II:

XXXVII. PILGRIMS' NOTES

1431. Any Narrative not Authenticated by a Text should not be Trusted

"Thou has written concerning the pilgrims and pilgrims' note. Any narrative that is not authenticated by a Text should not be trusted. Narratives, even if true, cause confusion. For the people of Baha, the Text, and only the Text, is authentic."

('Abdu'l-Bahá: from a previously untranslated tablet)

1432. Privilege of Friends to Share Results of These Visits

"Regarding the notes taken by pilgrims at Haifa. The Guardian has stated that he is unwilling to sign the notes of any pilgrim, in order that the literature consulted by the believers shall not be unduly extended... This means that the notes of pilgrims do not carry the authority resident in the Guardian's letters written over his own signature. On the other hand each pilgrim brings back information and suggestions of a most precious character, and it is the privilege of all the friends to share in the spiritual results of these visits."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United State: Bahá'í News, No. 281, p. 4. July 1954)

1433. Pilgrims' Notes are Hearsay and Cannot Claim the Authority of the Sacred Text

"The instructions of the Master and the Guardian make it very clear that Pilgrims' notes are hearsay and cannot claim the authority and binding power of the Sacred Text....Moreover, the fact that the pilgrim writing of his experience is a reliable or well-known believer, or that the reported statement seems to be repeated in the notes of several pilgrims, does not in itself confer authority upon the pilgrim's note in question."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House to an individual believer, January 23, 1980)

1434. The Notes of Pilgrims are For Their Own Use

"Shoghi Effendi has often said that the notes of the pilgrims should be for their own personal use and bear absolutely no authority. What he desires to convey to the friends at large he will always say in his general letters."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 26, 1933.)

1435. The Difference Between talks and Tablets

"Shoghi Effendi has laid down the principle that the Bahá'ís should not attribute much importance to talks, reported to have been given by the Master, if these have not in one form or other obtained his sanction.

"Bahá'u'lláh has made it clear enough that only those things that have been revealed in the form of Tablets have a binding power over the friends. Hearsays may be a matter of interest but can in no way claim authority. This basic teaching of Bahá'u'lláh was to preserve the Faith from being corrupted like Islam which attribute binding authority to all reported sayings of Muhammad.

"This being a basic principle of the Faith we should not confuse Tablets that were actually revealed and mere talks attributed to the founders of the Cause. The first have absolute binding authority while the latter can in no way claim our obedience. The highest thing this can achieve is to influence the activities of the one who has heard the saying in person.

"Those talks of the Master that were reviewed by Him corrected or in some other form considered authentic by Himself, such as the 'Some Answered Questions', these could be considered as Tablets and therefore be given the necessary binding power. All other talks such as are included in Ahmad's diary or the diary of pilgrims, do not fall under this category and could be considered only as interesting material to be taken for what they are worth.

"For this reason Shoghi Effendi has not been encouraging the publication of reported sayings that were not authenticated by the Master Himself. And when he said that they may be published if quotations marks are taken away, Shoghi Effendi tried to prevent the friends from considering as actual words of the Master things that were not authenticated by Him."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the United States Publishing Committee, December 29, 1931)

1436. Stories Told About 'Abdu'l-Bahá

"He would also urge you to attach no importance to the stories told about 'Abdu'l-Bahá or to those attributed to Him by the friends. These should be regarded in the same light as the notes and impressions of visiting pilgrims. They need not be suppressed, but they should not also be given prominence or official recognition."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, October 2, 1935)

1437. Only Signed or Sealed Tablets are Considered Authentic

"According to the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh no authority can be attached to a mere hearsay, no matter through whom it may come. The Tablets that bear the seal or signature of Bahá'u'lláh and the Master are the only parts of the literature that have any authority and that constitute the basis of our belief. All other forms of literature may bear points of interest but they cannot be considered as authentic. This is the view that Shoghi Effendi took towards the talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that Ahmad Sohrab had incorporated in his book, and it is the attitude that he would take towards any other reported saying, naturally unless the Master has appended His signature to that talk and thereby given it the authority of a tablet such as is the case with Some Answered Questions that was actually corrected by Him."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 18, 1931)

1438. Pilgrim's Notes Reporting the Master's Words on Embracing and Kissing

"The pilgrim's note reports the Master as saying: 'Women and men must not embrace each other when not married, or not about to be married. They must not kiss each other... If they wish to greet each other, or comfort each other, they may take each other by the hand.' In a letter to an individual written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi it is said: 'The Master's words to... which you quoted, can certainly be taken as the true spirit of the teachings on the subject of sex. We must strive to achieve this exalted standard.' (October 19, 1974)

(From a letter of the Universal of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, February 10, 1974)

1439. Haifa Notes Collected by Mrs. Maxwell

"With reference to the Haifa Notes collected by dear Mrs. Maxwell; these have exactly the same status as all other pilgrims' notes, and as such there should be no objection to their circulation among the believers. While these notes taken down by the pilgrims do not constitute as official pronouncements made by the Guardian, and therefore should not be imposed on the friends, those who wish to share them with the members of the Community should, under no circumstances, be prevented from doing so. Though not strictly official, and in some instances inaccurate and misleading, these notes, as experience has shown, can be of tremendous help, guidance and inspiration to many individual believers, and their value as such should therefore be readily admitted." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 28, 1939)

(Helen Bassett Hornby, *Lights of Guidance*, pp. 438-440)

APPENDIX III

“AUTHENTICATION AND AUTHORITY”

The Universal House of Justice

The Bahá'í World Centre

[In a Letter to an Individual Believer]

22 October 1996

Message:

Your email message of 2 October 1996 has been received by the Universal House of Justice, and we have been asked to convey the following information in reply to your questions regarding the authenticity of certain texts and documents.

In response to your first question regarding the authenticity of the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as recorded in collections such as "Paris Talks", "Abdu'l-Bahá in London", and "The Promulgation of Universal Peace", we enclose a memorandum from the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre which specifically addresses this issue.

Also enclosed is a memorandum prepared by the Research Department at the request of the House of Justice on the subject of the authenticity of letters written by Shoghi Effendi's secretaries on his behalf, which we believe answers the first part of your second question.

As to whether there is a distinction between correspondence from the World Centre that has been signed "The Universal House of Justice" and that signed on behalf of the Secretariat: In brief, the manner in which each of these letters is prepared depends upon the contents of the letter. Drafts of letters which contain newly formulated policies are consulted upon and approved during a meeting of the House of Justice; correspondence dealing with previously enunciated policies, or with matters of a routine nature, are prepared, as delegated by the House of Justice, by its Secretariat and initialled by at least the majority of the members of the House of Justice before being dispatched. All letters written over the signature of the Department of the Secretariat are authorized by the Universal House of Justice.

As to whether the materials prepared by the Research Department constitute the authoritative word of the Universal House of Justice on a particular subject, as raised in your third question, the House of Justice indicates that such materials, though prepared at its direction, represent the views of that Department. While such views are very useful as an aid to resolving perplexities or gaining an enhanced understanding of the Bahá'í Teachings, they should never be taken to be in the same category as the elucidations and clarifications provided by the Universal House of Justice in the exercise of its assigned functions. However, the House of Justice chooses to convey the materials prepared by the Research Department to the friends because it wishes them to be thoughtfully attended to and seriously considered.

It is hoped that the above comments and enclosed memoranda are helpful to you.

Department of the Secretariat

Enclosures 2 (appended)

MEMORANDUM

From: Research Department

To: The Universal House of Justice

13 October 1994

Authority of Letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

In an electronically mailed communication dated 22 September 1994, Mr. ... raises a number of questions related to the above subject. His questions seem mostly to arise from a statement made by Philip Hainsworth in the introduction to the collection of letters published in "Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'í Community of the British Isles" (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981). In 1979, Mr. Hainsworth wrote:

Prior to April 1941 when Amatu'l-Baha Rúhíyyih Rabbani began to write to the British Bahá'ís on behalf of the Guardian, he had had few helpers and his secretaries had caused him much suffering. Their names are not mentioned in this book and only their letters which carried the Guardian's handwriting as a footnote or contained words which indicated they were writing as instructed by him have been used.

(p. xvii)

Rather than address Mr. ...'s questions point by point, we provide the following information and comment which would seem to illuminate all of the questions he has posed.

The Research Department has no information about why, specifically, the editors of "Unfolding Destiny" decided that letters written by the Guardian's secretaries on his behalf could not be included in the book unless they were accompanied by notations in the Guardian's handwriting. Mr. ... may wish to inquire further from Mr. Hainsworth or from the Publishing Trust in this regard.

The following statement, referred to by Mr. ... and published in "Principles of Bahá'í Administration" without a date, was added by Shoghi Effendi to a letter written on his behalf to an individual on 7 December 1930. He wrote:

I wish to add and say that whatever letters are sent in my behalf from Haifa are all read and approved by me before mailing.[1] There is no exception whatever to this rule.

[1] We note that Mr. ... seems to feel that "in my behalf" is an incorrect English construct, but neither the Third Webster's International Dictionary nor the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary supports such a view.

This clear statement of Shoghi Effendi was written in response to the following question:

Can you make a statement which would establish the authenticity of your letters written by Ruhi or Soheil with your P.C. [sic] attached. There are still some people who continue to feel that these letters are not authorized by you and only express the personal opinions of the above writers.

The other extract quoted by Mr. ... also indicates that "the secretaries of the Guardian convey his thoughts and instructions and these messages are authoritative", albeit "certainly not the same" as words from his own pen:

Although the secretaries of the Guardian convey his thoughts and instructions and these messages are authoritative, their words are in no sense the same as his, their style certainly not the same, and their authority less, for they use their own terms and not his exact words in conveying his messages.

(25 February 1951 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles)

A third pertinent extract is the following:

The infallibility of the Guardian is confined to matters which are related strictly to the Cause and interpretation of the teachings; he is not an infallible authority on other subjects, such as economics, science, etc. When he feels that a certain thing is essential for the protection of the Cause, even if it is something that affects a person personally, he must be obeyed, but when he gives advice, such as that he gave you in a previous letter about your future, it is not binding; you are free to follow it or not as you please.

(17 October 1944 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual)

From the above extracts it seems fairly clear that letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi "related strictly to the Cause and interpretation of the teachings" constitute authoritative Bahá'í text, while any personal advice which they may contain is not binding. The Guardian's statement that he

reviewed every letter written on his behalf without exception makes it clear that the authority of the letters was independent of whatever personal "sufferings" might have been caused by certain secretaries, and that there was no "delegation" whatsoever of his interpretative authority, but merely a use of secretarial assistance for his huge burden of correspondence.

MEMORANDUM

From: Research Department

To: The Universal House of Justice

28 March 1996

Authenticity of "Bahá'í World Faith" and "Foundations of World Unity"

Mr. ... in an email message dated 19 February 1996, asks for information about the authenticity of the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá published in the above-mentioned books. Specifically, he wants to know about the section entitled "Knowledge and Deeds", found on pages 382-383 of "Bahá'í World Faith". He also asks about the status of the talks found in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace", and in "Paris Talks" and " 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London". We provide the following response.

The specific Tablet Mr. ... asks about, as noted in the Appendix of "Bahá'í World Faith", was originally published in "Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 3 (Chicago: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1930 printing), p. 549. The Tablet has been recently retranslated for inclusion in a forthcoming publication. We provide below the revised translation:

Pleasing and acceptable as is a righteous person before God's Holy Threshold, yet good works should proceed from knowledge. However matchless and exquisite may be a blind man's handiwork, yet he himself is deprived of seeing it. How sorely do certain animals labour on man's

behalf, what loads they bear for him, how greatly they contribute to his ease and comfort; and yet, because they are unwitting, they earn no recompense for all their pains. The clouds rain down their bounty, nurturing the plants and flowers, and imparting verdure and enchantment to the plain and prairie, the forest and the garden; but yet, unconscious as they are of the results and fruit of their outpourings, they win no praise or honour, nor earn the gratitude and approbation of any man. The lamp imparteth light, but as it hath no consciousness of doing so, no one is indebted to it. This apart, a man of righteous deeds and goodly conduct will assuredly turn towards the Light, in whichever quarter he behold it. The point is this, that faith compriseth both knowledge and the performance of good works.

Regarding the status of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks published in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace" and "Paris Talks", original Persian transcripts of some, but not all, of the talks are available. We provide the following extract from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice which indicates that "in the future each talk will have to be identified and those which are unauthenticated will have to be clearly distinguished from those which form a part of Bahá'í Scripture":

The original of "Some Answered Questions" in Persian is preserved in the Holy Land; its text was read in full and corrected by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself. Unfortunately, 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not read and authenticate all transcripts of His other talks, some of which have been translated into various languages and published. For many of His addresses included in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace" and "Paris Talks", for example, no original authenticated text has yet been found. However, the Guardian allowed such compilations to continue to be used by the friends. In the future each talk will have to be identified and those which are unauthenticated will have to be clearly distinguished from those which form a part of Bahá'í Scripture. This does not mean that the unauthenticated talks will have to cease to be used -- merely that the degree of authenticity of every document will have to be known and understood.

(23 March 1987)

For "'Abdu'l-Bahá in London", no original transcripts exist, and the following letter was written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi in this regard:

Regarding "'Abdu'l-Bahá in London": Nothing can be considered scripture for which we do not have an original text. A verbatim record in Persian of His talks would of course be more reliable than one in English, because He was not always accurately interpreted. However such a book is of value, and certainly has its place in our Literature.

(24 October 1947 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, published in "Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'í Community of the British Isles" (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981), p. 208.

The Research Department can not, at present, provide a detailed listing of which extracts from "Foundations of World Unity" and "Bahá'í World Faith" are authentic and which are not as, to date, such a listing has not been compiled. Mr. ... can feel free to inquire about the status of specific extracts in which he is interested. We note that the majority of the passages in "Foundations of World Unity" are extracted from talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá published in "The Promulgation of Universal Peace".

(Cover Letter to an individual believer by the Universal House of Justice, dated 22 October, 1996, regarding content from the Research Department in two Memoranda to The Universal House of Justice, the first dated 13 October, 1994, and the latter 28 March, 1996, with the composite entitled: "Authentication and Authority")

APPENDIX IV

Memorandum from the Research Department

10 November 2003

[Document begins on the next page...]

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

10 November 2003

Transmitted by email: kochmann@attbi.com

Mr. Richard Kochmann
U.S.A.

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Your email letters of 24 June and 21 August 2003 have been received at the Bahá'í World Centre and referred to the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice for study. Enclosed is a memorandum prepared by that Department in response to your request, the contents of which we hope will be of assistance to you in your endeavours.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat

Enclosure

MEMORANDUM

To: The Universal House of Justice

Date: 10 November 2003

From: Research Department

Authenticity of Quotations used in a Study on the Covenant

The Research Department has studied the request of Mr. Richard Kochmann in an emailed message of 24 June 2003 to the Bahá'í World Centre. He states that at the suggestion of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, he is submitting "all questionable, obscure, earlier translated, or perhaps unauthenticated references" that, if we understand correctly, are associated with a study of the Covenant undertaken by his late wife. He notes that he will remove anything that cannot be substantiated "from the body of the work at hand" before presenting it for review.

It might be useful to begin by referring Mr. Kochmann to the extracts in "Lights of Guidance" on pilgrims' notes.¹ These extracts highlight the principles that underlie the criteria by which a statement is judged to be "authentic". As he is no doubt aware, many of the translations found in "Star of the West" can be traced to authentic Tablets; however, it is important to know that these translations were very early, may well contain serious inaccuracies and can be misleading.

The Research Department has numbered the items in the order Mr. Kochmann presents them, and it provides the following comments:

1. "O our God, we beg of Thee by the King of Names and Maker of heaven and earth, by the rustling of the leaves of the Tree of Life and by Thine utterances...."

This prayer for unity appeared in various early publications but was later withdrawn apparently because of issues concerning the verification of its authenticity. As of the present time, the Research Department has been unable to locate an original text, and its authenticity remains in question.

2. "Our meaning is that, in the sight of God, trustworthiness is the bedrock...."

Our meaning is that, in the sight of God, trustworthiness is the bedrock of His Faith and the foundation of all virtues and perfections. A man deprived of this quality is destitute of everything. What shall faith and piety avail if trustworthiness be lacking?

(From an authorized translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed in Persian and Arabic)

¹ "Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File", Helen Bassett Hornby, comp., 6th rev. ed. (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1999, 2001 printing), see section XXXVIII, extracts 1431-1439.

3. "Bahá'u'lláh made a covenant concerning a Promised One Who will become manifest after one thousand or thousands of years."

This quote is an extract from an authentic Tablet revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Persian.

4 and 41. "If he expressed publicly his love for some particular person, in his heart he loved him more; if he eulogized him, in his heart he praised him more.... He was fervent and zealous. If he was displeased with a person, he could not hold conversation with him."

This is an oral statement attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that was extracted from the diary of Mírzá Ahmad Sohrab for a tribute to Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl. Extracts from this diary are considered to be pilgrims' notes.²

5. "Endeavor as much as possible to liberate thyself wholly from human susceptibilities—so that the powers of the Kingdom may gain control over thy heart and thy spirit...."

This quotation is from an authentic Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed for Howard Colby Ives. The translation is dated 16 July 1914 and is published in Howard Colby Ives', "Portals to Freedom" (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1937), page 240. No new translation is available.

6. "God says in His great Book, Qur'án, 'He specializes with His Mercy whomsoever He willeth.' That is, God distinguisheth with His favor and bestowal a number of souls and marks them with His own seal of approval."

Although this Tablet was apparently also revealed for Howard Colby Ives and appears on page 249 in "Portals to Freedom" (see item 5), no original text has been identified and its authenticity cannot be confirmed.

7. "About teaching. You may teach in two ways. One way is limited teaching; another way is the unlimited teaching...."³

This quote is from a talk attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that is quoted in Ramona Allen Brown's "Memories of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: Recollections of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Faith in California" (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980), pages 66–67. It is considered pilgrims' notes.

8. "But regarding the qualifications of the teachers, they are revealed in the Divine Tablets."

This quote is from an authentic Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; no more current translation is available. It is published in "Star of the West", volume V, number 14 (November 23, 1914), page 215.

² Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, "The Bahá'í Proofs and A Short Sketch of the History and Lives of the Leaders of This Religion", facsimile of the 1929 edition (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust 1983), page 22.

³ The quote provided by Mr. Kochmann is missing the word "such" in paragraph 4: "...with such power and such knowledge...". Mr. Kochmann notes that the quote was cited by Alan Ward, whereas it was cited by Ramona Allen Brown.

9, 16, 17, 22, 23, 26, 32, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 42, 45. "No obstacle should be placed before any soul which might prevent it from finding the truth. Bahá'u'lláh revealed his directions...."

These quotes are taken from an article in "Star of the West", volume VI, number 6 (June 24, 1915), pages 43-45. According to the subtitle, these are "Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in answer to questions asked by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger during a few brief meetings at Haifa, Syria, January 26 to February 5, 1915, and recorded by Dr. Getsinger at the time." They are all considered to be pilgrims' notes.

10. "The spiritual, or divine life, of the soul is not a condition into which man can evolve by virtue of his human perfection."

This extract appears in an article by Charles Mason Remy in "Star of the West", volume IV, number 10 (September 8, 1913), page 171. Based on our reading, these are Mr. Remy's own words rather than material quoted from the Bahá'í Writings.

11. "O God! Assist me with the hosts of the Supreme Concourse and make me firm and steadfast in the Covenant and Testament. I am weak in the Covenant and Testament, confer upon me strength."

This quote is published in "Star of the West", volume VIII, number 17 (January 19, 1918), page 228. It is attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the original source is given as "...notes of an American pilgrim to 'Abdu'l-Bahá while in Dublin, N. H., July 1912". It is considered pilgrims' notes.

12. "And this Covenant is the Ancient Covenant, the Illuminator of the horizons.... It is the Testament and the Covenant and it is mentioned in ... all the early Books and in the later tablets.... It is the strong fortress ... it is the sum of all the sacred writings...."⁴

This is an extract from an authentic Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá published in "Star of the West", volume VIII, number 16 (December 31, 1917), pages 213-214. No new translation is available.

13. "There is no occasion for perturbation for the Blessed Beauty has closed all doors of error and doubt and has entered with all the friends into a Covenant and Testament...."⁵

Quotation from a Tablet attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and published in "Star of the West", volume 10, number 12 (October 16, 1919), page 234. We have not identified the original and cannot verify its authenticity.

14. "Today, the Lord of Hosts is the defender of the Covenant, the forces of the Kingdom protect it, heavenly souls tender their services...."

This quote is from an authentic Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá published in "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" section 192.1.

⁴ Underlining is added to denote where the original text does not agree with the quote provided by Mr. Kochmann.

⁵ The quote provided by Mr. Kochmann incorrectly reads, "There is no cause for perturbation..." rather than "There is no occasion for perturbation...".

15 and 39. "Everything (in the world) is subject to corruption; but THE COVENANT of thy Lord shall continue to pervade all regions."

This quote is from an authentic Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá published in "Star of the West", volume IV, number 10 (September 8, 1913), page 170. The current translation for this statement is:

All on the earth shall pass away, but the Covenant of Thy Lord shall continue to overshadow all regions.

18. "Know this for a certainty that today the penetrative power in the arteries and the nerves⁶ of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant.... There is no other power like unto this."

From a talk given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on 1 December 1912, this quote is published in "Star of the West", volume 11, number 8 (August 1, 1920). No original transcript of this talk has been identified and its authenticity cannot be confirmed.

19. "Although in the body of the universe there are innumerable nerves, yet the main artery, which pulsates, energizes, and invigorates all beings, is the power of the Covenant. All else is secondary to this."

This quote is from an authentic Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed for Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Killius and published in "Star of the West", volume 11, number 18 (February 7, 1921), page 308. No current translation is available.

20. The Blessed Perfection, in all the tablets, books, epistles and supplications, has begged confirmation for and praised and commended⁷ those who are firm in this Covenant and Testament, and has asked the wrath of God and woe and desolation unto the violators.

This quote is from a Tablet attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and revealed for the San Francisco Assembly in 1912. The extract was published in "Star of the West", volume VIII, number 17 (January 19, 1918), page 223. Its authenticity cannot be verified.

21, 24 and 44. For this divine Covenant is an institution of the Lord...."

These quotes are part of the same Tablet as quote 20 above. The extract was published in "Star of the West", volume VIII, number 17 (January 19, 1918); all quotations appear on page 223. Its authenticity cannot be verified.

25. "Another commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another even as I love you. Great mercy and blessings are promised to the people of your land...."

As noted by Mr. Kochmann, this quote is cited by May Maxwell in "An Early Pilgrimage" (London: George Ronald, 1953 revised edition), pages 41-42. A similar though

⁶ The original quote in "Star of the West" first mentions "arteries" and then "nerves", whereas Mr. Kochmann's copy of the quote reverses these words.

⁷ The quote provided by Mr. Kochmann incorrectly uses the word "commanded" rather than "commended". His reference also states it is from "Star of the West", volume VIII, number 16, but it is actually from volume VIII, number 17.

not exact quote is also found in "Bahá'í Scriptures", which he also lists as a source reference for this quote. This statement is considered to be a pilgrim's note.

27 and 43. "Today no soul has any station or enjoys any title except the soul who is firm in the Covenant and steadfast in the Testament, who entirely forgets himself and is released from the world."

These identical quotes are an extract from a Tablet attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá revealed for Bahá'ís in Spokane, Seattle and Portland, and published in "Star of the West", volume VIII, number 16 (December 31, 1917), page 218. The original Tablet has not been identified and its authenticity cannot be verified.

28. "If a soul utter a word without the sanction of the Covenant, he is not firm.... Remain firm even if the people of heaven try to shake you...."

Described as "Excerpts from some instructions given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to several friends in America, July 1912, which received his personal signature", this quote was published in "Star of the West", volume 11, number 14 (November 23, 1920), page 239. The original text has not been identified, and its authenticity cannot be verified.

29. "Firmness in The Covenant means OBEDIENCE so that no one may say, 'this is my opinion,' nay rather he must obey that which proceeds from the Pen and Tongue of The Covenant."

This extract appears in an article by Charles Mason Remy in "Star of the West", volume IV, number 10 (September 8, 1913) page 174. It has been taken from an authentic Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. No new translation is available.

30. "Today whoever is firm in the Covenant shall become ignited like unto a candle in the assemblage of the world...."

This quote was extracted from an authentic Tablet revealed for "a Los Angeles believer" and published in "Star of the West", volume VIII, number 16 (December 31, 1917), page 219.

31. "Whoever is firm in the Covenant and the⁸ Testament is today endowed with a seeing eye, and a responsive ear and daily advances in the divine realm until he becomes a heavenly angel."

Extracted from an authentic Tablet revealed for Ella Quant, this quote was published in "Star of the West", volume 10, number 13 (November 4, 1919), page 251.

⁸ The quote provided by Mr. Kochmann is missing "the" in front of the word "Testament".

36. "I declare by the Blessed Perfection—May my life be a sacrifice to His believers—that if the believers arise to act...."⁹

This quote was extracted from a Tablet attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and published in "Star of the West", volume V, number 1 (March 21, 1914), page 5. The original Tablet has not been identified, and its authenticity cannot be verified.

40. "This is a hidden information of which we have informed the chosen ones lest they may be deprived of their praiseworthy station by associating with the embodiments of hatred. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all the friends of God to shun any person in whom they perceive the emanation of hatred for the glorious Beauty of Abha, though he may quote all the heavenly utterances and cling to all the Books.' He continues, glorious be His Name: 'Protect yourselves with utmost vigilance, lest you be entrapped in the snare of deception and fraud.' This is the advice of the Pen of Destiny."¹⁰

This quote is taken from an authentic Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and appears in "Star of the West", volume 13, number 1 (March 21, 1922), page 20. No new translation is available.

46. "Know this, that hardships and misfortune shall increase day by day, and the people will be distressed. The doors of joy and happiness shall be closed on all sides; terrible wars shall happen. Disappointment and the frustration of hopes shall surround the people in every direction, until they are obliged to turn to God. Then the Lights of great happiness will enlighten the horizons, so that the cry of 'Ya-Baha-El-Abha!' may arise¹¹ upon all sides. This will happen!"

This quote was taken from an authentic Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to I. D. Brittingham, published in "Star of the West", volume 12, number 8 (August 1, 1921), page 148.

47. "Those nearest to God are those who obey His commandments."

This quote appears as an oral statement attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wife, Munírih Khánum, as quoted in the pilgrims' notes of Mrs. Ida A. Finch, Miss Fanny A. Knobloch, and Miss Alma S. Knobloch, titled "Flowers culled from the Rose Garden of Acca" (United States, 1910), page 7. It is considered pilgrims' notes.

48. "If one entering the Kingdom of God possesses learning and science it is well, but the essential thing, or the thing of greatest importance, is to enter into the Kingdom of God,¹² and to be characterized...."

This quote is also an oral statement attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as quoted in "Flowers culled from the Rose Garden of Acca" noted above.

⁹ The word "sung", appearing as the last word in the first paragraph of the quote provided by Mr. Kochmann, should be lowercased rather than capitalized as he presented it.

¹⁰ The quote as it appears in "Star of the West" has several differences in capitalization and punctuation when compared to the quote provided by Mr. Kochmann. The correct version appears above.

¹¹ An error appears at this point in the quote provided by Mr. Kochman. It reads "...so that the cry of 'Ya-Bahá-El-Abha rise upon all sides'".

¹² This comma and the word "to" which follows after "and" are missing from the quote provided by Mr. Kochmann.

49. **"You are striving to please¹³ God. Today all distinctions between man and man fall away; there only remains the degree of striving to serve. He who serves most is nearest to God."**

This is an oral statement attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as quoted in an article titled "'Abdu'l-Bahá in London" in "Star of the West", volume II, number 12 (October 16, 1911), page 4. It is considered pilgrims' notes.

50. **"Martyrdom has many explanations of which the first is to stand bravely and meet death unflinchingly in the path of God...."**

This quotation is apparently from a letter written by the daughter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to a friend in Paris and published in "Star of the West", volume 14, number 12 (March, 1924), page 377. The Research Department does not have access to the original letter and cannot offer any comment.

¹³ The quote provided by Mr. Kochmann incorrectly uses the word "serve" rather than "please".

Finis:

O My servants! Through the might of God and His power, and out of the treasury of His knowledge and wisdom, I have brought forth and revealed unto you the pearls that lay concealed in the depths of His everlasting ocean. I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine -- words of consummate power and wisdom. I have, moreover, with the hand of divine power, unsealed the choice wine of My Revelation, and have wafted its holy, its hidden, and musk-laden fragrance upon all created things. Who else but yourselves is to be blamed if ye choose to remain unendowed with so great an outpouring of God's transcendent and all-encompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy?...

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 327-328)

Think not that We have revealed unto you a mere code of laws. Nay, rather, We have unsealed the choice Wine with the fingers of might and power. To this beareth witness that which the Pen of Revelation hath revealed. Meditate upon this, O men of insight!...

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, paragraph 5, p. 21; and also as cited earlier, in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 332-333)



The Collins Gate (the view with the path to the Qiblah)

"O King! I was but a man like others..."

"O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow. The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely. This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list. The evanescent is as nothing before Him Who is the Ever-Abiding. His all-compelling summons hath reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people. I was indeed as one dead when His behest was uttered. The hand of the will of thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful, transformed Me."

Now is the moment in which to cleanse thyself with the waters of detachment that have flowed out from the Supreme Pen, and to ponder, wholly for the sake of God, those things which, time and again, have been sent down or manifested, and then to strive, as much as lieth in thee, to quench, through the power of wisdom and the force of thy utterance, the fire of enmity and hatred which smouldereth in the hearts of the peoples of the world. The Divine Messengers have been sent down, and their Books were revealed, for the purpose of promoting the knowledge of God, and of furthering unity and fellowship amongst men. But now behold, how they have made the Law of God a cause and pretext for perversity and hatred. How pitiful, how regrettable, that most men are cleaving fast to, and have busied themselves with, the things they possess, and are unaware of, and shut out as by a veil from, the things God possesseth!

Say: "O God, my God! Attire mine head with the crown of justice, and my temple with the ornament of equity. Thou, verily, art the Possessor of all gifts and bounties."

Justice and equity are twin Guardians that watch over men. From them are revealed such blessed and perspicuous words as are the cause of the well-being of the world and the protection of the nations.

These words have streamed from the pen of this Wronged One in one of His Tablets: "The purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, hath been to bring forth the Mystic Gems out of the mine of man -- they Who are the Dawning-Places of His Cause and the Repositories of the pearls of His knowledge; for, God Himself, glorified be He, is the Unseen, the One concealed and hidden from the eyes of men. Consider what the Merciful hath revealed in the Qur'án: No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision, and He is the Subtile, the All-Informed!"

That the divers communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence of the Faith of God and His Religion. These principles and laws, these firmly-established and mighty systems, have proceeded from one Source, and are rays of one Light. That they differ one from another is to be attributed to the varying requirements of the ages in which they were promulgated.

Gird up the loins of your endeavor, O people of Baha, that haply the tumult of religious dissension and strife that agitateth the peoples of the earth may be stilled, that every trace of it may be completely obliterated. For the love of God, and them that serve Him, arise to aid this sublime and momentous Revelation. Religious fanaticism and hatred are a world-devouring fire, whose violence none can quench. The Hand of Divine power can, alone, deliver mankind from this desolating affliction. Consider the war that hath involved the two Nations, how both sides have renounced their possessions and their lives. How many the villages that were completely wiped out!

The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Daystar of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth. The One true God, He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to the truth of these words.

Exert yourselves that ye may attain this transcendent and most sublime station, the station that can insure the protection and security of all mankind. This goal excelleth every other goal, and this aspiration is the monarch of all aspirations. So long, however, as the thick clouds of oppression, which obscure the daystar of justice, remain undispeled, it would be difficult for the glory of this station to be unveiled to men's eyes. These thick clouds are the exponents of idle fancies and vain imaginings, who are none other but the divines of Persia. At one time We spoke in the language of the lawgiver; at another in that of the truth-seeker and the mystic, and yet Our supreme purpose and highest wish hath always been to disclose the glory and sublimity of this station. God, verily, is a sufficient witness!

Consort with all men, O people of Baha, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindness and goodwill. If it be accepted, if it fulfill its purpose, your object is attained. If anyone should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 11-15) [Italics added –ed.]

Parting Words of the Báb to the “Letters of the Living”...

“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:[1] '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 whatever 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:[2] '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:[3] "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 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,[4] the first Springs that have welled out from the Source of this 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 Muhammad, His Prophet? Arise in His name, put your trust wholly in Him, and be assured of ultimate victory.' [5]

[1 The Qur'án.]

[2 The Qur'án.]

[3 The Qur'án.]

[4 One of the Báb's titles.]

[5 The Báb refers to the Letters of the Living in the Persian Bayan (Vahid I, Báb 2) in the following terms: "All of these formed the name of the Living One, for these are the names that are the nearest to God; the others are guided by their clear and significant actions, for God began the creation of the Bayan through them, and it is to them that the creation of the Bayan will again return. They are the lights which in the past have eternally prostrated themselves and will prostrate themselves eternally in the future, before the celestial throne." ("Le Bayan Persan," vol. 1, pp. 24-25.)]

(Words of the Báb as addressed to His followers, cited by Nabil-i-A'zam, in *The Dawn-Breakers*, as translated by Shoghi Effendi, pp. 92-94)

FELLOWSHIP AND LOVE

O ye spiritual friends of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! A trusted messenger hath arrived and hath, in the world of the spirit, delivered a message from God's loved ones. This auspicious courier bringeth fragrances of great ardour and wafteth the life-giving breezes of the love of God. He maketh the heart to dance for joy and filleth up the soul with an ecstasy of love and rapture. So intensely hath the glory of Divine Unity penetrated souls and hearts that all are now bound one to another with heavenly ties, and all are even as a single heart, a single soul. Wherefore reflections of the spirit and impressions of the Divine are now mirrored clear and sharp in the deep heart's core. I beg of God to strengthen these spiritual bonds as day followeth day, and make this mystic oneness to shine ever more brightly, until at last all shall be as troops marshalled together beneath the banner of the Covenant within the sheltering shade of the Word of God; that they may strive with all their might until universal fellowship, close and warm, and unalloyed love, and spiritual relationships, will connect all the hearts in the world. Then will all humankind, because of this fresh and dazzling bounty, be gathered in a single homeland. Then will conflict and dissension vanish from the face of the earth, then will mankind be cradled in love for the beauty of the All-Glorious. Discord will change to accord, dissension to unison. The roots of malevolence will be torn out, the basis of aggression destroyed. The bright rays of union will obliterate the darkness of limitations, and the splendours of heaven will make the human heart to be even as a mine veined richly with the love of God.

O ye loved ones of the Lord! This is the hour when ye must associate with all the earth's peoples in extreme kindness and love, and be to them the signs and tokens of God's great mercy. Ye must become the very soul of the world, the living spirit in the body of the children of men. In this wondrous Age, at this time when the Ancient Beauty, the Most Great Name, bearing unnumbered gifts, hath risen above the horizon of the world, the Word of God hath infused such awesome power into the inmost essence of humankind that He hath stripped men's human qualities of all effect, and hath, with His all-conquering might, unified the peoples in a vast sea of oneness.

Now is the time for the lovers of God to raise high the banners of unity, to intone, in the assemblages of the world, the verses of friendship and love and to demonstrate to all that the grace of God is one. Thus will the tabernacles of holiness be upraised on the summits of the earth, gathering all peoples into the protective shadow of the Word of Oneness. This great bounty will dawn over the world at the time when the lovers of God shall arise to carry out His Teachings, and to scatter far and wide the fresh, sweet scents of universal love.

In every dispensation, there hath been the commandment of fellowship and love, but it was a commandment limited to the community of those in mutual agreement, not to the dissident foe. In this wondrous age, however, praised be God, the commandments of God are not delimited, not restricted to any one group of people, rather have all the friends been commanded to show forth fellowship and love, consideration and generosity and loving-kindness to every community on

earth. Now must the lovers of God arise to carry out these instructions of His: let them be kindly fathers to the children of the human race, and compassionate brothers to the youth, and self-denying offspring to those bent with years. The meaning of this is that ye must show forth tenderness and love to every human being, even to your enemies, and welcome them all with unalloyed friendship, good cheer, and loving-kindness. When ye meet with cruelty and persecution at another's hands, keep faith with him; when malevolence is directed your way, respond with a friendly heart. To the spears and arrows rained upon you, expose your breasts for a target mirror-bright; and in return for curses, taunts and wounding words, show forth abounding love. Thus will all peoples witness the power of the Most Great Name, and every nation acknowledge the might of the Ancient Beauty, and see how He hath toppled down the walls of discord, and how surely He hath guided all the peoples of the earth to oneness; how He hath lit man's world, and made this earth of dust to send forth streams of light.

These human creatures are even as children, they are brash and unconcerned. These children must be reared with infinite, loving care, and tenderly fostered in the embraces of mercy, so that they may taste the spiritual honey-sweetness of God's love; that they may become like unto candles shedding their beams across this darksome world, and may clearly perceive what blazing crowns of glory the Most Great Name, the Ancient Beauty, hath set on the brows of His beloved, what bounties He hath bestowed on the hearts of those He holdeth dear, what a love He hath cast into the breasts of humankind, and what treasures of friendship He hath made to appear amongst all men.

O God, my God! Aid Thou Thy trusted servants to have loving and tender hearts. Help them to spread, amongst all the nations of the earth, the light of guidance that cometh from the Company on high. Verily Thou art the Strong, the Powerful, the Mighty, the All-Subduing, the Ever-Giving. Verily Thou art the Generous, the Gentle, the Tender, the Most Bountiful.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 19-22)

❖ *“When man's soul is rarified and cleansed, spiritual links are established.... And it may even be that detailed communications are registered...”*

O thou ignited candle! Thy letter was received. Its contents imparted spiritual gladness, for they were pervaded by spiritual sentiments and indicated the attraction of thy heart, attachment to the Kingdom of God and love for His divine teachings.

Verily, thou showest a high endeavour, hast a pure and sanctified purpose, wishest naught save the good-pleasure of God, seekest nothing but the attainment of limitless bounties, and art engaged in the promulgation of divine teachings and the explanation of abstruse metaphysical problems.....

...The letter thou hast enclosed was perused. When man's soul is rarified and cleansed, spiritual links are established, and from these bonds sensations felt by the heart are produced. The

human heart resembleth a mirror. When this is purified human hearts are attuned and reflect one another, and thus spiritual emotions are generated. This is like the world of dreams when man is detached from things which are tangible and experienceth those of the spirit. What amazing laws operate, and what remarkable discoveries are made! And it may even be that detailed communications are registered...

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, passim, pp. 106-108)

The second condition: Fellowship and love amongst the believers. The divine friends must be attracted to and enamored of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved. For one of the greatest divine wisdoms regarding the appearance of the holy Manifestations is this: The souls may come to know each other and become intimate with each other; the power of the love of God may make all of them the waves of one sea, the flowers of one rose garden, and the stars of one heaven. This is the wisdom for the appearance of the holy Manifestations! When the most great bestowal reveals itself in the hearts of the believers, the world of nature will be transformed, the darkness of the contingent being will vanish, and heavenly illumination will be obtained. Then the whole world will become the Paradise of Abha, every one of the believers of God will become a blessed tree, producing wonderful fruits.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, pp. 52-53)

❖ *This plane requireth pure affection and the bright stream of fellowship.”*

If the loving seekers wish to live within the precincts of the Attracting One (Majdhub), [1] no soul may dwell on this Kingly Throne save the beauty of love. This realm is not to be pictured in words. [1 That attribute of God which draws all creatures to Him.]

Love shunneth this world and that world too,
In him are lunacies seventy-and-two. The minstrel of love harpeth this lay:
Servitude enslaveth, kingship doth betray. [1] [1 The Mathnavi.]

This plane requireth pure affection and the bright stream of fellowship. In telling of these companions of the Cave He saith: "They speak not till He hath spoken; and they do His bidding." [1] [1 Qur'án 21:27.]

On this plane, neither the reign of reason is sufficient nor the authority of self. Hence, one of the Prophets of God hath asked: "O my Lord, how shall we reach unto Thee?" And the answer came, "Leave thyself behind, and then approach Me."

These are a people who deem the lowest place to be one with the throne of glory, and to them beauty's bower differeth not from the field of a battle fought in the cause of the Beloved.

The denizens of this plane speak no words -- but they gallop their chargers. They see but the inner reality of the Beloved. To them all words of sense are meaningless, and senseless words are full of meaning. They cannot tell one limb from another, one part from another. To them the mirage is the real river; to them going away is returning. Wherefore hath it been said:

The story of Thy beauty reached the hermit's dell;
 Crazed, he sought the Tavern where the wine they buy and sell.
 The love of Thee hath leveled down the fort of patience,
 The pain of Thee hath firmly barred the gate of hope as well. [1] [1 Sa'di.]
 In this realm, instruction is assuredly of no avail.
 The lover's teacher is the Loved One's beauty,
 His face their lesson and their only book.
 Learning of wonderment, of longing love their duty,
 Not on learned chapters and dull themes they look.
 The chain that binds them is His musky hair.

The Cyclic Scheme, [1] to them, is but to Him a stair. [2] [1 The Cyclic Theory of Abu-'Ali Sina (Avicenna -- 980-1037) as expressed by him in the quatrain: Every semblance, every shape that perisheth today In the treasure-house of Time is safely stored away. When the world revolveth to its former place, Out of the Invisible He draweth forth its face. See also Some Answered Questions, p. 326.] [2 The Mathnavi.]

Here followeth a supplication to God, the Exalted, the Glorified:

O Lord! O Thou Whose bounty granteth wishes!

I stand before Thee, all save Thee forgetting.

Grant that the mote of knowledge in my spirit

Escape desire and the lowly clay;

Grant that Thine ancient gift, this drop of wisdom,

Merge with Thy mighty sea. [1] [1 Ibid.]

Thus do I say: There is no power or might save in God, the Protector, the Self-Subsistent. [1]

[1 From Qur'án 18:37.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Four Valleys*, pp. 54-57)

“...It behooveth the loved ones of God to be enamored of one another and to sacrifice themselves for their fellow-workers in the Cause. They should yearn towards one another even as the sore athirst yearneth for the Water of Life, and the lover burneth to meet his heart's desire.”

Such is the sublime, the glorious position He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] wishes us, and all the peoples and kindreds on earth, to attain in this world; how much more to achieve unity and common understanding among ourselves, and then arise to herald with one voice the coming of the Kingdom and the salvation of mankind.

With unity of purpose firmly established in our minds, with every trace of personal animosity banished from our hearts, and with the spirit of whole-hearted and sustained fellowship kindled in our souls, can we hope to deliver effectively the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, and execute faithfully the various provisions of our Beloved's Will and Testament.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as cited by Shoghi Effendi, and Shoghi Effendi, in *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 35-36) [Italics added –ed.]

[Also note:

❖ *“In the same way, when any souls grow to be true believers, they will attain a spiritual relationship with one another, and show forth a tenderness which is not of this world.”*

...When, therefore, the people of Baha undertake to marry, the union must be a true relationship, a spiritual coming together as well as a physical one, so that throughout every phase of life, and in all the worlds of God, their union will endure; for this real oneness is a gleaming out of the love of God.

In the same way, when any souls grow to be true believers, they will attain a spiritual relationship with one another, and show forth a tenderness which is not of this world. They will, all of them, become elated from a draught of divine love, and that union of theirs, that connection, will also abide forever. Souls, that is, who will consign their own selves to oblivion, strip from

themselves the defects of humankind, and unchain themselves from human bondage, will beyond any doubt be illumined with the heavenly splendours of oneness, and will all attain unto real union in the world that dieth not.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 117-118)]

And finally:

Whenever an illumined assembly of the friends of God is gathered, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, although bodily absent, is yet present in spirit and in soul. I am always a traveller to America and am assuredly associating with spiritual and illumined friends. *Distance is annihilated and prevents not the close and intimate association of two souls that are closely attached in heart even though they may be in two different countries.* I am therefore thy close companion, attuned and in harmony with thy soul. [Italics added –ed.]

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 102)

Mini-Post Script...

O Breakwell, O my dear one!

At all times do I call thee to mind.

I shall never forget thee.

I pray for thee by day, by night;

I see thee plain before me,

as if in open day.

O Breakwell, O my dear one!

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 189)

And regarding the special spiritual bond between the Guardian and the Greatest Holy Leaf:

The letter dated 5 August 1932, from that spiritual friend has been received by the Guardian of the Cause of God, may our lives be sacrificed for him, and he has been informed of your receiving his telegram regarding the ascension of that matchless fruit of the Tree of Glory, the Most Exalted Leaf.

There is no question but that the burden of grief on his sorrowing heart, because of this terrible ordeal, this great calamity, is heavier than minds can conceive, or words can tell. That gem

of immortality, that precious and exalted being, was the one consolation, the one companion of the Guardian in his sorrow-filled life; and she, with her sweet encouragement, her gentle words, her never-ceasing, soothing care of him, her smiles that came like fair winds from heavenly gardens, could always gladden and refresh his spirit.

No one has understood the tender, spiritual and celestial bond between the Guardian and her who was the Remnant of Baha, nor can any mind conceive that plane of being, nor reckon its sublimity.

During her whole life span, that heavenly being was subjected to ordeals and tribulations. She confronted the attacks of the hostile, and she suffered afflictions any one of which could well have shattered a mountain of iron. And yet the sweet and comely face of that spirit-like dove of holiness, was wreathed till her very last hour in life-giving smiles, nor did that patience and endurance, that greatness, that majesty and dignity, ever desert her delicate and fragile person.

She who was the trust left by Bahá'u'lláh had no other aim nor goal but these: to proclaim the Cause of God and exalt His Word; to praise and glorify the Blessed Beauty's name; to bear 'Abdu'l-Bahá in mind and serve Him ever; to pity the sorely-troubled and give them endless, loving care; to cherish and comfort them, and bring them joy. There is, then, good reason, that with the passing of this peerless gem, this precious, matchless pearl, we should rend our garments in mourning, and that our eyes should stream with bitter tears.

The Guardian conveys his message of condolence, and says that in this severest of afflictions, it would befit the people of Baha to hold fast to resignation and acquiescence, and to rise up and loyally serve the Faith, taking for their example that priceless treasure of the Abha Paradise.

(Compilations, Shoghi Effendi through his secretary, as cited in *Bahiyih Khanum*, pp. 76-78)

And...

The Guardian of the Cause of God has received your letter of 21 July 1932, telling of your and the other friends' profound distress on receiving word of this calamity, this dire ordeal, that is, the ascension of the Most Exalted Leaf, that brightest fruit of the Eternal Tree.

It is certain that this anguish, this harrowing event, has reached into the very depths of his being, and oppressed and darkened his radiant heart more than words can ever tell. For the subtle and spiritual attachment that the Guardian felt for her, and the heavenly tenderness and affection between that lovely fruit of the divine Lote-Tree and himself, was a bond so strong as to defy description, nor can the mind encompass that exalted state. That secret is a secret well-concealed, a treasured mystery unplumbed, and to a plane such as this, the minds of the believers can never find their way. On this account the Guardian's anguish at being parted from that bright and comely denizen of Heaven is beyond our conceiving.

She who was a sparkling light of God, she who was so full of grace -- that widespread ray of Heaven's splendour, that sign of God's mercy -- was made to appear with all perfections, all goodly attributes, all blessed ways; and never had the world's eye gazed upon such a welling spring of tender love, of pity and compassion, and never will it behold again such a gem of loving-kindness, such a fount of God's munificence.

How many a night did she whom the world wronged spend as a prisoner, worn with care, tormented, banished from her home. How many a day did she live through as an exile and a captive! There was no venom of affliction, at the hands of this Faith's foes, that was not given her to drink, no arrow of cruelty but struck her holy breast. Yet in spite of the endless tribulations and disasters, she who was a spirit of holiness and a songster of Heaven, would even in the midst of dire ordeals, her face aglow, bloom like a rose.

The Guardian sends messages of consolation to you and all the friends in this bereavement, and he says that in this calamitous time all must bow down their heads and be acquiescent, arise in faithful service to His Cause, and model themselves upon that most exalted, sacred and resplendent presence.

(Compilations, Shoghi Effendi through his secretary, as cited in *Bahiyih Khanum*, pp. 81-82)

And finally:

“Dearly-beloved Greatest Holy Leaf! Through the mist of tears that fill my eyes I can clearly see, as I pen these lines, thy noble figure before me, and can recognize the serenity of thy kindly face. I can still gaze, though the shadow of the grave separate us, into thy blue, love-deep eyes, and can feel, in its calm intensity, the immense love thou didst bear for the Cause of thine Almighty Father, the attachment that bound thee to the most lowly and insignificant among its followers, the warm affection thou didst cherish for me in thine heart. The memory of the ineffable beauty of thy smile shall ever continue to cheer and hearten me in the thorny path I am destined to pursue. The remembrance of the touch of thine hand shall spur me on to follow steadfastly in thy way. The sweet magic of thy voice shall remind me, when the hour of adversity is at its darkest, to hold fast to the rope thou didst seize so firmly all the days of thy life.

“Bear thou this my message to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, thine exalted and divinely-appointed Brother: If the Cause for which Bahá'u'lláh toiled and labored, for which Thou didst suffer years of agonizing sorrow, for the sake of which streams of sacred blood have flowed, should, in the days to come, encounter storms more severe than those it has already weathered, do Thou continue to overshadow, with Thine all-encompassing care and wisdom, Thy frail, Thy unworthy appointed child.

“Intercede, O noble and well-favoured scion of a heavenly Father, for me no less than for the toiling masses of Thy ardent lovers, who have sworn undying allegiance to Thy memory, whose souls have been nourished by the energies of Thy love, whose conduct has been moulded by the inspiring example of Thy life, and whose imaginations are fired by the imperishable evidences of Thy lively faith, Thy unshakable constancy, Thy invincible heroism, Thy great renunciation.

“Whatever betide us, however distressing the vicissitudes which the nascent Faith of God may yet experience, we pledge ourselves, before the mercy-seat of thy glorious Father, to hand on, unimpaired and undivided, to generations yet unborn, the glory of that tradition of which thou hast been its most brilliant exemplar.

“In the innermost recesses of our hearts, O thou exalted Leaf of the Abha Paradise, we have reared for thee a shining mansion that the hand of time can never undermine, a shrine which shall frame eternally the matchless beauty of thy countenance, an altar whereon the fire of thy consuming love shall burn forever.”

SHOGHI.

Haifa, Palestine.

July 17, 1932.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, pp. 195-196, and as cited by Ruhíyyih Khanum in *The Priceless Pearl*, p. 145)

❖ “...*spiritual ties are far deeper...*”

"Deep as are family ties, we must always remember that the spiritual ties are far deeper; they are everlasting and survive death, whereas physical ties, unless supported by spiritual bonds, are confined to this life. You should do all in your power, through prayer and example, to open the eyes of your family to the Bahá'í Faith, but do not grieve too much over their actions. Turn to your Bahá'í brothers and sisters who are living with you in the light of the Kingdom.”

(Shoghi Effendi, *Principles of Bahai Administration*, p. 16)

❖ “...*that holy and spiritual souls influence, help and guide...*”

"As to the question that the holy and spiritual souls influence, help and guide the creatures after they have cast off this elemental mould-this is an established truth of the Bahá'ís..."

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha*, Vol. 3, p. 543; and as later cited in *Compilations, Lights of Guidance*, p. 207, entry #690)

"The soul acts in the physical world with the help of the body. When it is detached from the body, it acts without an intermediary... "... The body is the horse, the soul is the rider, and sometimes the rider moves without a mount. But people who do not reflect say that when the soul has left the body it can no longer act. Spirit has no body reflect on this subject."

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Divine Philosophy*, 1928 ed., p. 127, and as later cited in *Compilations, Lights of Guidance*, pp. 207, entry #691)

"... The answer to the first question: the souls of the children of the Kingdom after their separation from the body, ascend unto the realm of everlasting life. But if ye ask as to the place, know ye that the world of existence is a single world, although its stations are various and distinct. For example, the mineral life occupieth its own plane, but a mineral entity is without any awareness at all of the vegetable kingdom..." "as to the second question: the tests and trials of God take place in this world, not in the world of the Kingdom. "The answer to the third question is this, that in the other world the human reality doth not assume a physical form, rather doth it take on a heavenly form, made up of elements of that heavenly realm. "And the answer to the fourth question: the center of the Sun of Truth is in the supernal world-The kingdom of God. These souls who are pure and unsullied, upon the dissolution of their elemental frames, hasten away to the world of God, and that world is within this world. The people of this world, however, are unaware of that world, and are even as the mineral and the vegetable that know nothing of the world of the animal and the world of man."

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 194-195; also cited in *Compilations, Lights of Guidance*, p. 207, entry #692)

❖ “Wherefore, O ye Bahá’ís, strive...to create...”

Wherefore, O ye Bahá’ís, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals. This is your task.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 246)

Unless and until the believers really come to realize they are one spiritual family, knit together by a bond more lasting than mere physical ties can ever be, they will not be able to create that warm community atmosphere which alone can attract the hearts of humanity, frozen for lack of real love and feeling. (From a letter dated 5 May 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, as appearing in Compilations, *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol II, p. 312, entry #1956, from *The Individual and Teaching - Raising the Divine Call*, pp. 25-26)

❖ “*A real, spiritual connection...*”

As to the difference between inspiration and imagination: inspiration is in conformity with the Divine Texts, but imaginations do not conform therewith. A real, spiritual connection between the True One and the servant is a luminous bounty which causeth an ecstatic (or divine) flame, passion and attraction. When this connection is secured (or realized) such an ecstasy and happiness become manifest in the heart that man doth fly away (with joy) and uttereth melody and song. Just as the soul bringeth the body in motion, so that spiritual bounty and real connection likewise moveth (or cheereth) the human soul. [Underling added –ed.]

As to truthful dreams: I beg of God that thy inner eye (insight) may be so opened that thou mayest thyself differentiate between truthful and untruthful dreams....

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, Vol. 1, pp. 195-196)

❖ “*the gift of intercession...*”

But the holy souls are promised the gift of intercession. And know thou for a certainty, that in the divine worlds, the spiritual beloved ones (believers) will recognize each other, and will seek union (with each other), but a spiritual union. Likewise, a love that one may have entertained for any one will not be forgotten in the world of the Kingdom. Likewise, thou wilt not forget (there) the life that thou hast had in the material world.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, Vol. 1, p. 205)

Regarding True Bahá’í Marriage and the Everlasting Connection of Souls...

In speaking of Bahá’í marriage, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states:

“Together they are the two wings of a bird” sharing equally in the power of mind and spirit while differing in aspect and the fields in which their specialized gifts qualify them to operate. Muhammad stated that everything was created in pairs: man and woman each have vacuums in their nature which seek completion. Cognizant of this void and realizing the necessity for its fulfillment, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá wrote: "Regarding the question of matrimony: know that the command of marriage is eternal. It will never be changed or altered. This is a Divine creation and there is not the slightest possibility that change or alteration shall affect this Divine Creation."

"Among the majority of the people of the world marriage consists of physical relationship, and the union and relationship is but temporary, for at the end physical separation is destined and ordained. But the marriage of the people of Baha must consist of both physical and spiritual relationship."

"When relationship, union and concord exist between the two from a physical and spiritual standpoint, that is real union and is therefore everlasting."

"Consequently when the people of Baha desire to enter the sacred union of matrimony, eternal connection, ideal relationship, spiritual and physical association of thoughts and conceptions of life must exist between them, so that in all the grades of existence and in all the worlds of God this union may continue forever and ever. For this union is a splendor of the Light of the Love of God."

'Abdu'l-Bahá in writing to a Bahá'í stated that "everyone had an affinity, but that affinities did not always meet in this world, and if they did, they might not be happy together, as this was not a place for perfect happiness.

"He added that there was no power that could keep them apart and that in one of the worlds of God they would recognize their oneness, and go through eternity inseparable...."

He refers further to this: "Souls who sacrifice self, become detached from the imperfections of the realm of man and free from the bondage of this ephemeral world, assuredly the splendors of the rays of Divine Union shall shine in their hearts, and they shall find ideal relationship and happiness in the Eternal Paradise. Out of the fusion of two souls a third subtle entity is born. Though invisible and intangible on earth it is the composite soul of true lovers. The progress of one mysteriously influences the other, they become the tutors of each other's soul. Distance or death, being physical forces, cannot cause its disintegration." [Underlining added –ed.]

(Statements attributed to Abdu'l-Bahá, cited by Rosemary Sala, in an article entitled:

"Marriage in the Bahá'í Faith", *Bahá'í World*, Volume VII (1936-1938), p.763)

And again:

Among the people of Baha, however, marriage must be a union of the body and of the spirit as well, for here both husband and wife are aglow with the same wine, both are enamoured of the same matchless Face, both live and move through the same spirit, both are illumined by the same glory. This connection between them is a spiritual one, hence it is a bond that will abide forever. Likewise do they enjoy strong and lasting ties in the physical world as well, for if the marriage is based both on the spirit and the body, that union is a true one, hence it will endure. If, however, the bond is physical and nothing more, it is sure to be only temporary, and must inexorably end in separation.

When, therefore, the people of Baha undertake to marry, the union must be a true relationship, a spiritual coming together as well as a physical one, so that throughout every phase of life, and in all the worlds of God, their union will endure; for this real oneness is a gleaming out of the love of God.

In the same way, when any souls grow to be true believers, they will attain a spiritual relationship with one another, and show forth a tenderness which is not of this world. They will, all of them, become elated from a draught of divine love, and that union of theirs, that connection, will also abide forever. Souls, that is, who will consign their own selves to oblivion, strip from themselves the defects of humankind, and unchain themselves from human bondage, will beyond any doubt be illumined with the heavenly splendours of oneness, and will all attain unto real union in the world that dieth not. [Underlining added – ed.]

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, pp. 117-118)

PERSECUTION AND REVILEMENT

❖ *Persecution and Revilement – Foreordained...*

O ye beloved of God! When the winds blow severely, rains fall fiercely, the lightening flashes, the thunder roars, the bolt descends and storms of trial become severe, grieve not; for after this storm, verily, the divine spring will arrive, the hills and fields will become verdant, the expanses of grain will joyfully wave, the earth will become covered with blossoms, the trees will be clothed with green garments and adorned with blossoms and fruits. Thus blessings become manifest in all countries. These favors are results of those storms and hurricanes.

The discerning man rejoiceth at the day of trials, his breast becometh dilated at the time of severe storms, his eyes become brightened when seeing the showers of rain and gusts of wind, whereby trees are uprooted; because he foreseeth the result and the end (of these trials); the leaves, blossoms and fruits (which follow this wintry storm); while the ignorant (short-sighted) person becometh troubled when he seeth a storm, is saddened when it raineth severely, is terrified by the thunder and trembleth at the surging of the waves which storm the shore.

As ye have heard of the former times, when (for example) Christ—glory be to Him!—appeared, a storm of trials arose, afflictions appeared, the winds of tests blew, the thunder of temptation descended and hosts of people (Pharisees) surrounded the houses of the friends; then the weak ones were shaken and were misled after once being guided; but the disciples withstood the hardships and endured the storms of ordeals, remaining firm in the Religion of God. Then observe that which occurred after the storm and what appeared subsequent to that severity, whereby the members (followers) trembled.

God changed the sorrow to joy, the destructive darkness of calamity into the shining light from the Supreme Concourse. The people at the beginning persecuted and reviled the believers in God and said of them: “These are the people of aberration.” Then, when their light appeared, their stars shone and their lamps illuminated, the people returned into love and affinity; they prayed to them, offered words of glory night and day (in their name) and remembered them in eulogy, reverence, honor and majesty.

Therefore, O ye beloved of God, be not grieved when people stand against you, persecute you, afflict and trouble you and say all manner of evil against you. The darkness will pass away and the light of the manifest signs will appear, the veil will be withdrawn and the Light of Reality will shine forth from the unseen [Kingdom] of El-ABHA. This we inform you before it occurs, so that when the hosts of people arise against you for my love, be not disturbed or troubled; nay, rather, be firm as a mountain, for this persecution and reviling of the people upon you is a pre-ordained matter. Blessed is the soul who is firm in the path!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 1, pp. 13-14)

...I cannot refrain from appealing to them who stand identified with the Faith to disregard the prevailing notions and the fleeting fashions of the day, and to realize as never before that the exploded theories and the tottering institutions of present-day civilization must needs appear in sharp contrast with those God-given institutions which are destined to arise upon their ruin. I pray that they may realize with all their heart and soul the ineffable glory of their calling, the overwhelming responsibility of their mission, and the astounding immensity of their task.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 16-17)

For let every earnest upholder of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh realize that the storms which this struggling Faith of God must needs encounter, as the process of the disintegration of society advances, shall be fiercer than any which it has already experienced. Let him be aware that so soon as the full measure of the stupendous claim of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh comes to be recognized by those time-honored and powerful strongholds of orthodoxy, whose deliberate aim is to maintain their stranglehold over the thoughts and consciences of men, this infant Faith will have to contend with enemies more powerful and more insidious than the cruellest torture-mongers and the most fanatical clerics who have afflicted it in the past. What foes may not in the course of the convulsions that shall seize a dying civilization be brought into existence, who will reinforce the indignities which have already been heaped upon it!

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 17)

❖ "...for therein lies a wisdom..."

...for therein lies a wisdom which none are able to comprehend save the near angels.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, v 2, p. 333)

❖ "...When God calls a soul to a high station..."

...When God calls a soul to a high station, it is because that soul has capacity for that station as a gift of God, and because that soul has supplicated to be taken into His service. No envies, jealousies, calumnies, slanders, plots, nor schemes, will ever move God to remove a soul from its intended place, for by the grace of God, such actions on the part of the people are the test of the servant, testing his strength, forbearance, endurance and sincerity under adversity.

At the same time those who show forth envies, jealousies, etc. toward a servant, are depriving themselves of their own stations, and not another of his, for they prove by their own acts that they are not only unworthy of being called to any station awaiting them, but also prove that they cannot

withstand the very first test that of rejoicing over the success of their neighbor, at which God rejoices. Only by such a sincere joy can the gift of God descend unto a pure heart.

Envy closes the door of Bounty, and jealousy prevents one from ever attaining to the Kingdom of Abha.

No! Before God! No one can deprive another of his rightful station, that can only be lost by one's unwillingness or failure to do the will of God, or by seeking to use the Cause of God for one's own gratification or ambition.

No one save a severed soul or a sincere heart finds response from God. By assisting in the success of another servant in the Cause does one in reality lay the foundation for one's own success and aspirations.

Ambitions are an abomination before the Lord.

How regrettable! Some even use the affairs of the Cause and its activities as a means of revenge on account of some personal spite, or fancied injury, interfering with the work of another, or seeking its failure. Such only destroy their own success, did they know the truth.

Abdu'l Bahá is the interpreter of the aims, intents, and purposes of the Words of the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'o'lláh) [sic] and is the interpreter of his own written words, and none can say that this or that is the intention conveyed therein, save Abdu'l Bahá. The spirit of unity exists in the Divine Words, and one who interprets them in such wise as to create a division and discord is indeed one who errs.

Were not the Revelation of Bahá'o'lláh [sic] one adaptable to the entire world and its diverse nations, it could not be a unique and universal Revelation, but its elasticity adapts itself to all conditions, and its spirit is one that moulds itself into every vehicle and need for the accomplishment of the divine plan of unity.

But when some follow merely the hard and fixed letter of the law, they deprive it (the Revelation) of its elastic quality the spirit and endeavor to convert it into a hard instrument of inflexible qualities....

Blessed are they who are the means of making unity among the friends, and pity on those who in the right or wrong are the cause of discord. For instance: When one is in the right in a case in dispute, and his minority prevents him from establishing this rightful matter, instead of agitating the subject, if he will humbly submit to sacrifice his position for the sake of unity and peace, God will

accept that sacrifice and ere long the rightful matter will be established without any farther dispute, by the Divine assistance; whereas without such sacrifice and submissiveness great harm might ensue.

The friends must be prepared to efface themselves at all times. Seeking the approval of men is many times the cause of imperiling the approval of God.

The worst enemies of the Cause are in the Cause and mention the Name of God. We need not fear the enemies on the outside for such can be easily dealt with. But the enemies who call themselves friends and who persistently violate every fundamental law of love and unity, are difficult to be dealt with in this day, for the mercy of God is still great. But ere long this merciful door will be closed and such enemies will be attacked with a madness....

If you knew what great things would happen to the Cause after my departure, you would pray every day and night for my release and demise.

(Statements attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá “at table” by Dr. Edward C. Getsinger in “*The Worst Enemies of the Cause Are in the Cause*”, found in: *Star of the West*, Vol. VI, no. 6, pp. 43-45, but as no authentic or original copy could be found, to be considered as “*pilgrims’ notes*”) [Italics added –ed.]

“..He wishes you, however, to urge the friends not to feel in the least disheartened or discouraged, but to pursue with renewed determination, unity and vigour their sacred task of spreading and establishing the Faith, confident in the glorious future awaiting them. The greater the number of persecutions, and the more intense they become in character, the deeper their faith should be in the unique mission entrusted to them by Bahá'u'lláh, and the greater their zeal to help in hastening its complete fulfillment.

"This Cause, as very Divine Cause, cannot be effectively established unless it encounters and valiantly triumphs over the forces of opposition with which it is assailed. The history of the Faith is in itself a sufficient proof of that. Trials and persecutions have always been, and will continue to be, the lot of the chosen ones of God. But these they should consider as blessing in disguise, as through them their faith will be quickened, purified and strengthened. Bahá'u'lláh compared such afflictive trials to the oil which feeds the lamp of the Cause of God.

"The friends should, therefore, not assume an attitude of mere resignation in the face of persecutions. They should rather welcome them, and utilize as means for their own spiritual uplift and also for the promotion of the Cause. As the Faith grows stronger and attracts the serious attention and consideration of the world outside, the friends must expect a similar, if not a greater,

increase in the forces of opposition which from every direction, both secular and religious, will be massed to undermine the very basis of its existence. The final outcome of such a struggle, which will be surely gigantic, is clear to us believers. A Faith born of God and guided by His Divine and all-pervasive spirit cannot but finally triumph and firmly establish itself, no matter how persistent and insidious the forces with which it has to contend. The friends should be confident, and act with the utmost wisdom and moderation, and should particularly abstain from any provocative act. The future is surely theirs."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 24, 1936, from Hornby, *Lights of Guidance*, #1380, pp. 418-419)

"We...should also view as a blessing in disguise every storm of mischief with which they who apostatize their faith or claim to be its faithful exponents assail it from time to time. Instead of undermining the Faith, such assaults, both from within and from without, reinforce its foundations, and excite the intensity of its flame. . . . Unlike the Dispensation of Christ, unlike the Dispensation of Muhammad, unlike all the Dispensations of the past, the apostles of Bahá'u'lláh in every land, wherever they labor and toil, have before them in clear, in unequivocal and emphatic language, all the laws, the regulations, the principles, the institutions, the guidance, they require for the prosecution and consummation of their task." March 31, 1930.

(Shoghi Effendi, in Extracts from the USBN; and as cited in part by Ruhíyyih Khanum, in *The Priceless Pearl*, pp. 120-121)

And as Regards Covenant Breaking within the Holy Family (in a Chapter Entitled "THE PRINCIPLE OF LIGHT AND SHADOW", Ruhíyyih Khanum has written:

But the tale of defections such as these does not convey the true picture of what Covenant-breaking signified in the ministry of Shoghi Effendi. To understand that one must understand the old story of Cain and Abel, the story of family jealousies which, like a sombre tread in the fabric of history, runs through all its epochs and can be traced in all its events. Ever since the opposition of the younger brother of Bahá'u'lláh, Mirza Yahya, the poison of Covenant-breaking, which is opposition to the Centre of the Covenant, entered the Faith and remained. It is difficult for those who have neither experienced what this disease is, nor devoted any consideration to the subject, to grasp the reality of the power for destruction it possesses. All the members of the family of Bahá'u'lláh grew up in the shadow of Covenant-breaking. The storms, separations, reconciliations, final sundering of ties, which are involved when a close, distinguished and often dear relative is dying spiritually of a spiritual disease, are inconceivable to one who has not experienced them. The weakness of the human heart, which so often attaches itself to an unworthy object, the weakness of the human mind, prone to conceit and self-assurance in personal opinions, involve people in a

welter of emotions that blind their judgment and lead them far astray. In the East, where the sense of family to this day is still strongly clannish, its members cling to each other much more intensely than in the West. No matter what Yahya had done there was a lingering feeling in the family that, after all, some reason must be on his side, not all justification in a "family matter was necessarily on Bahá'u'lláh's side. One can readily see that if even the faintest trace of such an attitude existed amongst members of Bahá'u'lláh's own family the children would not grow up to see Covenant-breaking in its true proportions. The flaw would be there, the most dangerous of all human doubts, that after all the Perfect One might not under all circumstances be perfect, but sometimes just a little prone to error in judging others. When this doubt enters the germs are present in one's own system, perhaps to lie dormant forever, perhaps to flare up into disease. It has always seemed to me that the division which took place in Bahá'u'lláh's family after His ascension, and the successive disaffections two generations later of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's entire family from Shoghi Effendi, had begun in an attitude of mind that developed in the Baghdad days before Bahá'u'lláh had even declared His Mission. The root was back there, the poisonous fruit garnered eighty years later.

Faith and obedience are the most important factors in one's relation to God, to His Manifestation, to the Head of the Faith. One must believe even if one does not see, and even if one does not believe one must obey. The Covenant-breaking inside the family of Bahá'u'lláh was like a vine, it entwined the tree and strangled it; wherever its tendrils reached out it plucked up what it wound itself about and destroyed that too. This is why so many of the minor relatives, the secretaries, the members of the community surrounding the Centre of the Cause, became involved in the periodic disaffections of various members of the family and every time one of these diseased members was lopped off, some blinded sympathizers went too.

It looks simple on paper. But when year after year a house is torn by heart-breaking emotions, shaken by scenes that leave one's brain numb, one's nerves decimated and one's feelings in a turmoil, it is not simple, it is just plain hell. Before a patient lies on the operating table and the offending part is removed there is a long process of delay, of therapeutic effort to remedy the disease, of hope for recovery. So it is with Covenant-breaking; the taint is detected; warning, remonstrance, advice follow; it seems better; it breaks out again, worse than before; convulsive situations arise - repentance, forgiveness follow - and then all over again, the same thing, worse than before, recommences. With infinite variations this is what took place in the lifetimes of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi.

It is all history now and there is no use recapitulating it case by case. But I believe one thing should be made clear. Whereas we ordinary human beings react in one way, these extraordinary human beings react in an entirely different way. They are, in such matters - however great the difference in their own stations - entirely different from us. I used to wonder, in the early years of my life with the Guardian, why he got so terribly upset by these happenings, why he reacted so violently to them, why he would be prostrated from evidences of Covenant-breaking. Gradually I

came to understand that such beings, so different from us, have some sort of mysterious built-in scales in their very souls; automatically they register the spiritual state of others, just as one side of a scale goes down instantly if you put something in it because of the imbalance this creates. We individual Bahá'ís are like the fish in the sea of the Cause, but these beings are like the sea itself, any alien element in the sea of the Cause, so to speak, with which, because of their nature, they are wholly identified, produces an automatic reaction on their part; the sea casts out its dead.

Shoghi Effendi, forced often to announce publicly the spiritual downfall of not only well-known Bahá'ís but the members of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own family, refers to the latter as "those whose acts proclaim their severance from the Holy Tree and their forfeiture of their sacred birthright." His heart, he said, was oppressed by the "repeated defections" of the "unworthy kindred" of the beloved Master, defections which, he made clear, were a "process of purification whereby an inscrutable Wisdom chose from time to time to purge the body of His chosen followers of the defilement of the undesirable and the unworthy..." Shoghi Effendi pointed out that those who are inimical to the Faith always seize upon evidences of this purification process as a symptom of oncoming schism which they hopefully anticipate will bring about its downfall. But which never has.

Even though this phenomenon of Covenant-breaking seems to be an inherent aspect of religion this does not mean it produces no damaging effect on the Cause. On the contrary, as Shoghi Effendi cabled the Bahá'ís after the death of a relative: "time alone will reveal extent havoc wreaked this virus violation injected fostered over two decades 'Abdu'l-Bahá's family". It does not mean that much of it could not be avoided through greater individual effort and loyalty. Above all it does not mean that a devastating effect is not produced on the Centre of the Covenant himself. Shoghi Effendi's whole life was darkened by the vicious personal attacks made upon him. I personally am convinced that the main reason the heart of the Guardian was sufficiently undermined physically for it to stop in 1957 was because of the unbearable strain thirty-six years of interminable struggle with a series of Covenant-breakers had placed upon it. It is only necessary to add that it was the death of his own brother-in-law that provided the occasion for sending the above-quoted cable, for us to catch a glimpse of what Shoghi Effendi repeatedly passed through during his ministry.

(Ruhiyyih Khanum, *The Priceless Pearl*, pp. 121-123)

Violation – Characteristics thereof...

[“...Wherefore, O my loving friends! Consort with all the peoples, kindred and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, good-will and friendliness, that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Baha [sic], that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancour may vanish from the world and the darkness of estrangement amidst the peoples and kindreds of the world may give way to the Light of Unity. Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you show your fidelity unto them, should they be unjust toward you show justice towards them, should they keep aloof from you attract them to yourselves, should they show their enmity be friendly towards them, should they poison your lives, sweeten their souls, should they inflict a wound upon you, be a salve to their sores. Such are the attributes of the sincere! Such are the attributes of the truthful.” (from: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Will and Testament of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, Part One, p. 14).

The exhortation to consort with the peoples and religions of the world with the utmost love and fellowship should not be confused with the commandment to shun entirely the Covenant-breakers. Covenant-breaking is a deadly spiritual disease and never before in the history of religion have its pernicious effects been brought to light. In this Dispensation, however, the position of the Covenant-breakers and their spiritual condition have been exposed and fully examined. As we have described in chapter [sic] 3, Covenant-breaking provokes the wrath of God. Therefore, when a believer breaks the Covenant, his spiritual lifeline is cut off. Although he may have great knowledge of the teachings and the history of the Faith and may have had a brilliant record of service to the Cause, he becomes a lifeless being. Spiritually he turns blind and deaf; his heart becomes cold and bereft of faith. In reality he is not the same person any more. This is the reason why the violators of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh acted in the way they did.

As previously noted, in nature water can only flow from a high level to a lower one. It cannot flow to a point on the same level or to a higher one. Similarly, in order for a believer to receive the bounties of God from on high, he must be positioned at the opposite end of the scale: lowly, humble and self-effacing. The Covenant-breakers were not. They aspired to be equal to the Centre of the Covenant and thus the spiritual energies released by God could not reach them and they became deprived of the outpouring of the spirit of faith. Their lives, once guided by the Light of Truth, were now based on falsehood. Deception, intrigue, dishonesty and violence became their way of life. Throughout the ages these vices have proved to be the weapons which the ungodly use against the righteous. But in the end they are obliterated by the power of truth.... [Underlining added –ed.]

(Adib Taherzadeh, *The Child of the Covenant*, pp. 236-237)]

THE MASTER'S LAST TABLET TO AMERICA

“The Tree of Life is just beginning to grow...

This Tree of Life is the *Book of the Covenant*”

The Last Tablet Revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá for the Bahá'ís of America

To all the friends of God in America – The Glory of God rest upon them!

He Is God!

O ye friends of God!

'Abdu'l-Bahá is day and night thinking of you and mentioning you, for the friends of God are dear to Him. Every morning at dawn I supplicate the Kingdom of God and ask that you may be filled with the breath of the Holy Spirit, so that you may become brilliant candles, shine with the light of guidance and dispel the darkness of error. Rest assured that the confirmations of the Abha Kingdom will continuously reach you.

Through the power of the divine springtime, the downpour of the celestial clouds and the heat of the Sun of Reality, the tree of life is just beginning to grow. Before long, it will produce buds, bring forth leaves and fruits, and cast its shade over the East and the West. This Tree of Life is the Book of the Covenant.

In America, in these days, severe winds have surrounded the Lamp of the Covenant, hoping that this brilliant Light may be extinguished, and this Tree of Life may be uprooted. Certain weak, capricious, malicious and ignorant souls have been shaken by the earthquake of hatred, of animosity, have striven to efface the Divine Covenant and Testament, and render the clear water muddy so that in it they might fish. They have arisen against the Center of the Covenant like the people of Bayan who attacked the Blessed Beauty and every moment uttered a calumny. Every day they seek a pretext and secretly arouse doubts, so that the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh may be completely annihilated in America.

O friends of God! Be awake, be awake; be vigilant, be vigilant! His Holiness, the Báb, made a Covenant for Bahá'u'lláh with all the people of the Bayan, so that on the day of appearance of "Him Whom God shall manifest" -- and of the radiation of the Light of Bahá'u'lláh, they might believe

and be assured, arise in service and promulgate the Word of God. Later the people of the Bayan, like Mirza Yahya and many others, arose against the Blessed Beauty, invented every sort of calumny, aroused doubt in the minds of the people, and from the Books of His Holiness the Báb -- that were full of references to "Him Whom God shall manifest" -- tried to prove Bahá'u'lláh false. Every day they wrote and spread a pamphlet opposing Bahá'u'lláh, caused trouble and perplexity among the people; they inflicted the greatest injury and cruelty, yet counted themselves firm in the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb. However, when the light of the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb, lighted the universe, then all the faithful and sincere souls were freed from the darkness of the violation of the people of the Bayan and shone like brilliant candles.

Bahá'u'lláh, in all the Tablets and Epistles, forbade the true and firm friends from associating and meeting the violators of the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb, saying that no one should go near them because their breath is like the poison of the snake that kills instantly.

In the Hidden Words, He says: "Esteem the friendship of the just, but withhold both mind and hand from the company of the wicked."

Addressing one of the friends, He says: "It is clear to your honor that before long Satan, in the garb of man, will reach that land and will try to mislead the friends of the Divine Beauty through temptations which arouse the desires of self, and will cause them to follow the footsteps of Satan away from the right and glorious path, and prevent them from attaining the Blessed Shore of the King of Oneness. This is a hidden information of which we have informed the chosen ones lest they may be deprived of their praiseworthy station by associating with the embodiments of hatred. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all the friends of God to shun any person in whom they perceive the emanation of hatred for the Glorious Beauty of Abha, though he may quote all the Heavenly Utterances and cling to all the Books." He continues -- Glorious be His Name! -- "Protect yourselves with utmost vigilance, lest you be entrapped in the snare of deception and fraud." This is the advice of the Pen of Destiny.

In another address, He says: "Therefore, to avoid these people will be the nearest path by which to attain the divine good pleasure; because their breath is infectious, like unto poison."

In another Tablet, He says: "O Kazim, close thine eye to the people of the world; drink the water of knowledge from the heavenly cup bearers, and listen not to the nonsensical utterances of the manifestations of Satan, because the manifestations of Satan are occupying today the observation posts of the glorious path of God, and preventing the people by every means of deception and ruse. Before long you will witness the turning away of the people of Bayan from the Manifestation of the Merciful."

In another Tablet, He says: "Endeavor to your utmost to protect yourselves, because Satan appears in different robes and appeals to everyone according to each person's own way, until he becomes like unto him -- then he will leave him alone."

In another Tablet, He says: "Shun any man in whom you perceive enmity for this Servant, though he may appear in the garb of piety of the former and later people, or may arise to the worship of the two worlds."

In another Tablet, He says: "O Mahdi! Be informed by these utterances and shun the manifestations of the people of hell, the rising place of Nimrods, the rising place of Pharees, the fountain of Tagut, and the soothsayers."

Again He says: "Say, O my friend and my pure ones! Listen to the Voice of this Beloved Prisoner in this Great Prison. If you detect in any man the least perceptible breath of violation, shun him and keep away from him." Then He says: "Verily, they are manifestations of Satan."

In another Tablet, He says: "And turn your faces to the Great Countenance for before long the foul odors of the wicked persons will pass over these regions. God willing, you may remain protected during these days."

In the 18th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, 6th to 9th verses, His Holiness Christ says: "But whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh. Wherefore if thy hand or thy feet offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee."

And in the 21st chapter and 38th verse of the Gospel of Matthew, He says: "But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the heir, come let us kill him and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him."

Also in the 22nd chapter and the 14th verse of the Gospel of Matthew, He says "But many are called and few are chosen."

In the Holy Writings of His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, in a thousand places at least, the violators of the Covenant are execrated and condemned. Some of the heavenly passages will be mentioned.

In short, all the friends in America know that the founders of this sedition -- namely, the violators of the Covenant -- are people whose aims are known to all the friends. Yet, O glorious God, they are deceived by them!

Praise be to God, you know with perfect clearness that His Holiness Christ, was extremely kind and loving, yet there were people like Judas Iscariot who -- by their own deeds -- separated themselves from Christ. Therefore, what fault of Christ's could that be? Now the Nakazene say that 'Abdu'l-Bahá is despotic, drives some people out and excommunicates like the Pope. This is not so at all! Any person who has left (the Cause), did so because of his own actions, intrigues and evil plots. If this objection be raised against 'Abdu'l-Bahá, they must also object to the Blessed Beauty

who, with distinct and conclusive command, forbids the friends from companionship and familiarity with the violators of the people of Bayan.

Supplication! O Lord of the Covenant! O luminous Star of the world! The persecuted 'Abdu'l-Bahá has fallen into the hands of persons who appear as sheep and in reality are ferocious wolves; they exercise every sort of oppression, endeavor to destroy the foundation of the Covenant, -- and claim to be Bahá'ís. They strike at the root of the Tree of the Covenant -- and count themselves persecuted -- just as did the people of Bayan who broke the Covenant of His Holiness, the Báb, and from six directions shot arrows of reproach and calumny at Thy Blessed Body. Notwithstanding this great oppression, they call themselves oppressed. Now this Servant of Thy Threshold has also fallen into the hands of oppressors. Every hour they contrive new intrigues and fraud, and bring forth new calumny.

Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha! Protect the Stronghold of Thy Cause from these thieves, and safeguard the lamps of the Kingdom from these malevolent winds!

Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha! 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not rest a moment until He had raised Thy Cause and the Standard of the Kingdom of Abha waved over the world. Now some people have arisen with intrigues and evil aspirations to trample this flag in America, but My hope is in Thy confirmations. Leave Me not single, alone and oppressed! As Thou didst promise, verbally and in writing, that Thou wouldst protect this deer of the pasture of Thy love from the attacks of the hounds of hatred and animosity, and that Thou wouldst safeguard this persecuted sheep from the claws and teeth of the ferocious wolves, -- now do I await the appearance of Thy bounties and the realization of Thy definite promise. Thou art the true Protector, and Thou art the Lord of the Covenant! Therefore, protect this Lamp which Thou hast lighted, from the severe winds.

Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha! I have forsaken the world and its people, am heartbroken because of the unfaithful, and am weary. In the cage of this world I flutter like a frightened bird and long for the flight to Thy Kingdom.

Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha! Make me to drink the cup of sacrifice, and free Me! Relieve Me from these difficulties, hardships, afflictions and troubles! Thou art the assister, the helper, the protector and the supporter!

Now some of the writings, prayers and verses of the Blessed Beauty will be mentioned in which association with the violators is forbidden. In the Iranian Commune, He says:

"Protect this Servant from the doubts of the persons who have turned away from Thee and are deprived of the sea of Thy knowledge. O God! O God! Protect this Servant through Thy bounty and generosity from the evil of Thine enemies who have broken Thy Covenant and Testament."

In another place He says: "O My God and the Aim of My Life! Protect this weak one with Thy Mighty hand from the voice of the Naegh."

Also He says: "Ye have taken one whom I hate to be thy beloved, and My enemy to be thy friend."

Also He says: "The company of the wicked ones increaseth sorrow, and the association with the pious ones removeth rust from the heart. The one who desires to associate with God, let him associate with His friends; the one who wishes to hear the Words of God, let him hear the words of His chosen ones."

Also He says: "Do not associate with the wicked, because the company of the wicked changeth the light of life into the fire of remorse. If thou asketh for the bounties of the Holy Spirit, associate with the pure ones, because they have quaffed the eternal chalice from the hands of the Cupbearer of eternity."

Also He says: "The greatest of degradation is to leave the Shadow of God and enter under the shadow of Satan."

Also He says: "O ye servants! There is nothing in this heart save the effulgences of the splendor of the morn of Meeting, and it does not speak but the absolute truth from your Lord. Therefore, do not follow self; break not God's Covenant and violate not His Testament. Proceed with perfect steadfastness, and with heart, soul and tongue, turn unto Him, and be not of the thoughtless."

And still He says: "You have forgotten God's Covenant and violated His Testament."

And again He says: "If anyone comes to you with the book of the wicked, put him behind you."

"Among the people are those who have broken the Covenant, and among them are those who have followed what was ordained by the All-Knower, the All-Wise. My affliction is not from My imprisonment and persecution, or from what comes to Me from My rebellious servants, -- but from the actions of those who attribute themselves to this persecuted One and commit among the people that which is degrading to the honor of God. Verily, they are of the seditious."

Likewise speaking for the violators, He says: "Thou hast made the pulpits for Thy mention, the proclamation of Thy Word and the manifestation of Thy Cause, and we have ascended them to proclaim the breaking of Thy Covenant and Testament."

Likewise, He says: "Take what has been ordained for you and follow not those who have broken God's Covenant and Testament, for lo! they are the people of error."

Again He says: "Those who have broken the Covenant of God, notwithstanding His Commands, and have turned away, they are the people of error before the most Opulent, the Exalted."

And He says: "Those who have been faithful to God's Covenant are of the highest ones in the sight of the exalted Lord. Those who have become negligent are of the people of fire in the sight of Thy Lord, the Beloved, the Independent."

Likewise He says: "Blessed is the servant or maid-servant who believes, and woe to the polytheists who have violated the Covenant of God and His Testament, and deviated from My Right Path."

Likewise He says: "I implore of Thee not to deprive me of what Thou possessest or what Thou hast ordained for Thy chosen ones who have not broken Thy Covenant and Testament. Say! Die with your hatred! Verily, He is come by Whom the pillars of the world have been shaken and because of Whom the feet have stumbled -- save those who have not broken the Covenant, but have followed what God revealed in His Book."

Likewise He says: "The Supreme Concourse will pray for the one who is adorned with the garment of faithfulness between heaven and earth; but he who breaks the Covenant is cursed by heaven and earth."

Likewise He says: "Take hold of what has been revealed unto you, with a power superior to that of the hands of the unbelievers who have violated the Covenant of God and His Testament, and have turned from the Face."

Also He says: "O Yahya! Verily the Book has come! Take it with a power from Us and do not follow those who have broken the Covenant of God and His Testament, and have denied what has been revealed from the Powerful, the All-Knower."

Likewise He says: "I awoke this morning, O My God, under the shadow of Thy great bounty and have taken, with Thy power, the pen to mention Thee with such mention as shall be a light unto the pure, and fire unto the wicked who have violated Thy Covenant, denied Thy Verses and put aside the Kawther of life which appeared by Thy command and was revealed by the finger of Thy will."

Here, in a Tablet to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, He says also: "O God! This is a Branch which has sprung forth from the Tree of Oneness, the Sadrat of Thy Unity. O God! Thou seest Him looking to Thee and clinging to the rope of Thy Bounties. Protect Him in the shelter of Thy Mercy! Thou knowest, O My God, that I do not desire Him save for what Thou dost desire Him, and I do not choose Him save for what Thou dost choose Him. Assist Him with the Hosts of Thy earth and Thy heaven. Assist, O God, those who assist Him, and choose those who choose Him. Confirm those who draw nigh unto Him, and debase those who deny Him and do not want Him. O God, Thou seest that at this moment of Revelation My Pen shakes and My Being trembles. I ask Thee, By My impatience in Thy Love and My willingness to proclaim Thy Cause, to ordain for Him and His friends, what Thou hast ordained for Thy Messengers and the faithful ones of Thy Revelation. Verily, Thou art the powerful and the omnipotent! By God, O people, My eye weeps, and the eye of Ali weeps in the

Supreme Concourse; My heart throbs, and the heart of Muhammad throbs in the Courts of Abha; My heart and the hearts of the Prophets lament with the people of knowledge, if you are those who are possessed of sight. My sorrow is not for Myself, but for the One Who comes after Me in the Shadow of the Cause with a clear, undeniable reign; because these will not acknowledge His Manifestation and will deny His evidences and verses, will dispute His power, will antagonize Him and will be traitors to His Cause -- as they did to His Person in those days -- and ye were witnesses."

Again in a Tablet to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, He says: "O Greatest Branch! Verily, Thy illness caused Me sorrow, but God will cure Thee, and He is the most generous and best helper. Glory be upon Thee and upon those who serve Thee and encircle Thee! Woe and torment be upon him who opposes and torments Thee! Blessed is he who befriends Thee, and hell be for him who opposes Thee

Likewise He says: "Is it possible that after the dawning of the sun of Thy Testament from the horizon of Thy greatest Tablet that any feet shall slip away from the right Path? We said, O My Supreme Pen, it behoves Thee to do as Thou hast been bidden by God, the exalted and the great. Do not ask about that which melts Thy heart and those of the denizens of Paradise who encompass Thy wonderful Cause. Thou shouldst not know what We have hidden from Thee. Thy Lord is the veiler and the knower. Turn Thy most luminous Face to the greatest aspect and say: O My Merciful God! Decorate the Heaven of Bayan with the stars of steadfastness, trust and truth. Verily, Thou art the Powerful over what Thou willest. There is no God save Thee, the wise and the generous."

In short, from these Holy Utterances and those of His Holiness Christ, it becomes clear, evident and proved, that man should associate with people who are firm in the Covenant and Testament, and befriend the pure ones; because bad associates bring about infection of bad qualities. It is like leprosy; it is impossible for a man to associate and befriend a leper and not be infected. This command is for the sake of protection and to safeguard.

Consider this text of the New Testament: the brothers of His Holiness Christ, came to Him and they said: "These are your brothers." He answered that His brothers were those who believed in God, and refused to associate with His own brothers.

Likewise Qurratu'l-'Ayn, who is celebrated in all the world, when she believed in God and was attracted to the Divine Breaths, she forsook her two eldest sons, although they were her two oldest children, because they did not become believers, and thereafter did not meet them. She said: "All the friends of God are my children, but these two are not. I will have nothing to do with them."

Consider! The Divine Gardener cuts off the dry or weak branch from the good tree and grafts to it, a branch from another tree. He both separates and unites. This is that which His Holiness Christ says: that from all the world they come and enter the Kingdom, and the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out. Noah's grandson, Canaan, was detested in the sight of Noah and others

were accepted. The brothers of the Blessed Beauty detached themselves from Him, and the Blessed Beauty never met them. He said: "This is an eternal separation between you and Me." All this was not because the Blessed Beauty was despotic; but because these persons, through their own actions and words deprived themselves from the bounties and bestowals of the Blessed Beauty. His Holiness Christ did not exercise despotism in the case of Judas Iscariot and His own brothers, -- but they separated themselves.

In short, the point is this: 'Abdu'l-Bahá is extremely kind, but when the disease is leprosy, what am I to do? Just as in bodily diseases we must prevent intermingling and infection and put into effect sanitary laws -- because the infectious physical diseases uproot the foundation of humanity; likewise one must protect and safeguard the blessed souls from the breaths and fatal spiritual diseases; otherwise violation, like the plague, will become a contagion and all will perish. In the early days, after the Ascension of the Blessed Beauty, the center of violation was alone; little by little the infection spread; and this was due to companionship and association.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith* – “*Abdu'l-Bahá Section*”, pp. 429-438; and earlier in *Star of the West*, vol. XIII, no. 1, March 21, 1922, pp. 19-25)

[According to the account in *Star of the West* (above), the original of this document was found unsigned among the Master's papers after His passing, but subsequently approved as authentic by Shoghi Effendi who placed the Master's three Seals on the page of the original in Persian, added a personal note attesting to this, and to the approved translation which follows, and had it sent for safekeeping to Roy Wilhelm in America; with the English translation (by Emogene Hoagg, Ali Mohammed Bakir and Rouhi in the Holy Land, after the Ascension) to Corine True, for sharing with the friends in America –ed.]

A DESCRIPTION OF THE KITAB-I-AQDAS BY SHOGHI EFFENDI

TAKEN FROM GOD PASSES BY, HIS HISTORY OF THE FIRST BAHÁ'Í CENTURY

Unique and stupendous as was this Proclamation, it proved to be but a prelude to a still mightier revelation of the creative power of its Author, and to what may well rank as the most signal act of His ministry -- the promulgation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. Alluded to in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, the principal repository of that Law which the Prophet Isaiah had anticipated, and which the writer of the Apocalypse had described as the "new heaven" and the "new earth", as "the Tabernacle of God", as the "Holy City", as the "Bride", the "New Jerusalem coming down from God", this "Most Holy Book", whose provisions must remain inviolate for no less than a thousand years, and whose system will embrace the entire planet, may well be regarded as the brightest emanation of the mind of Bahá'u'lláh, as the Mother Book of His Dispensation, and the Charter of His New World Order.

Revealed soon after Bahá'u'lláh had been transferred to the house of Udi Khammar (circa 1873), at a time when He was still encompassed by the tribulations that had afflicted Him, through the acts committed by His enemies and the professed adherents of His Faith, this Book, this treasury enshrining the priceless gems of His Revelation, stands out, by virtue of the principles it inculcates, the administrative institutions it ordains and the function with which it invests the appointed Successor of its Author, unique and incomparable among the world's sacred Scriptures.

For, unlike the Old Testament and the Holy Books which preceded it, in which the actual precepts uttered by the Prophet Himself are non-existent; unlike the Gospels, in which the few sayings attributed to Jesus Christ afford no clear guidance regarding the future administration of the affairs of His Faith; unlike even the Qur'án which, though explicit in the laws and ordinances formulated by the Apostle of God, is silent on the all-important subject of the succession, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, revealed from first to last by the Author of the Dispensation Himself, not only preserves for posterity the basic laws and ordinances on which the fabric of His future World Order must rest, but ordains, in addition to the function of interpretation which it confers upon His Successor, the necessary institutions through which the integrity and unity of His Faith can alone be safeguarded.

In this Charter of the future world civilization its Author -- at once the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Unifier and Redeemer of mankind -- announces to the kings of the earth the promulgation of the "Most Great Law"; pronounces them to be His vassals; proclaims Himself the "King of Kings"; disclaims any intention of laying hands on their kingdoms; reserves for Himself the right to "seize and possess the hearts of men"; warns the world's ecclesiastical leaders not to weigh the "Book of God" with such standards as are current amongst them; and

affirms that the Book itself is the "Unerring Balance" established amongst men. In it He formally ordains the institution of the "House of Justice", defines its functions, fixes its revenues, and designates its members as the "Men of Justice", the "Deputies of God", the "Trustees of the All-Merciful"; alludes to the future Centre of His Covenant, and invests Him with the right of interpreting His holy Writ; anticipates by implication the institution of Guardianship; bears witness to the revolutionizing effect of His World Order; enunciates the doctrine of the "Most Great Infallibility" of the Manifestation of God; asserts this infallibility to be the inherent and exclusive right of the Prophet; and rules out the possibility of the appearance of another Manifestation ere the lapse of at least one thousand years.

In this Book He, moreover, prescribes the obligatory prayers; designates the time and period of fasting; prohibits congregational prayer except for the dead; fixes the Qiblah; institutes the Huququ'lláh (Right of God); formulates the law of inheritance; ordains the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar; establishes the Nineteen Day Feast, the Bahá'í festivals and the Intercalary Days; abolishes the institution of priesthood; prohibits slavery, asceticism, mendicancy, monasticism, penance, the use of pulpits and the kissing of hands; prescribes monogamy; condemns cruelty to animals, idleness and sloth, backbiting and calumny; censures divorce; interdicts gambling, the use of opium, wine and other intoxicating drinks; specifies the punishments for murder, arson, adultery and theft; stresses the importance of marriage and lays down its essential conditions; imposes the obligation of engaging in some trade or profession, exalting such occupation to the rank of worship; emphasizes the necessity of providing the means for the education of children; and lays upon every person the duty of writing a testament and of strict obedience to one's government.

Apart from these provisions Bahá'u'lláh exhorts His followers to consort, with amity and concord and without discrimination, with the adherents of all religions; warns them to guard against fanaticism, sedition, pride, dispute and contention; inculcates upon them immaculate cleanliness, strict truthfulness, spotless chastity, trustworthiness, hospitality, fidelity, courtesy, forbearance, justice and fairness; counsels them to be "even as the fingers of one hand and the limbs of one body"; calls upon them to arise and serve His Cause; and assures them of His undoubted aid. He, furthermore, dwells upon the instability of human affairs; declares that true liberty consists in man's submission to His commandments; cautions them not to be indulgent in carrying out His statutes; prescribes the twin inseparable duties of recognizing the "Dayspring of God's Revelation" and of observing all the ordinances revealed by Him, neither of which, He affirms, is acceptable without the other.

The significant summons issued to the Presidents of the Republics of the American continent to seize their opportunity in the Day of God and to champion the cause of justice; the injunction to the members of parliaments throughout the world, urging the adoption of a universal script and language; His warnings to William I, the conqueror of Napoleon III; the reproof He administers to Francis Joseph, the Emperor of Austria; His reference to "the lamentations of Berlin" in His apostrophe to "the banks of the Rhine"; His condemnation of "the

throne of tyranny" established in Constantinople, and His prediction of the extinction of its "outward splendour" and of the tribulations destined to overtake its inhabitants; the words of cheer and comfort He addresses to His native city, assuring her that God had chosen her to be "the source of the joy of all mankind"; His prophecy that "the voice of the heroes of Khurasan" will be raised in glorification of their Lord; His assertion that men "endued with mighty valour" will be raised up in Kirman who will make mention of Him; and finally, His magnanimous assurance to a perfidious brother who had afflicted Him with such anguish, that an "ever-forgiving, all-bounteous" God would forgive him his iniquities were he only to repent -- all these further enrich the contents of a Book designated by its Author as "the source of true felicity", as the "Unerring Balance", as the "Straight Path" and as the "quickener of mankind".

The laws and ordinances that constitute the major theme of this Book, Bahá'u'lláh, moreover, has specifically characterized as "the breath of life unto all created things", as "the mightiest stronghold", as the "fruits" of His "Tree", as "the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples", as "the lamps of His wisdom and loving-providence", as "the sweet-smelling savour of His garment", and the "keys" of His "mercy" to His creatures.

"This Book", He Himself testifies, "is a heaven which We have adorned with the stars of Our commandments and prohibitions." "Blessed the man", He, moreover, has stated, "who will read it, and ponder the verses sent down in it by God, the Lord of Power, the Almighty. Say, O men! Take hold of it with the hand of resignation... By My life! It hath been sent down in a manner that amazeth the minds of men. Verily, it is My weightiest testimony unto all people, and the proof of the All-Merciful unto all who are in heaven and all who are on earth." And again: "Blessed the palate that savoureth its sweetness, and the perceiving eye that recognizeth that which is treasured therein, and the understanding heart that comprehendeth its allusions and mysteries. By God! Such is the majesty of what hath been revealed therein, and so tremendous the revelation of its veiled allusions that the loins of utterance shake when attempting their description."

And finally: "In such a manner hath the Kitáb-i-Aqdas been revealed that it attracteth and embraceth all the divinely appointed Dispensations. Blessed those who peruse it! Blessed those who apprehend it! Blessed those who meditate upon it! Blessed those who ponder its meaning! So vast is its range that it hath encompassed all men ere their recognition of it. Erelong will its sovereign power, its pervasive influence and the greatness of its might be manifested on earth."

(Bahá'u'lláh, as cited by Shoghi Effendi, and Shoghi Effendi - from *God Passes By*, pp. 213-216 - as found in *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, pp. 12-16)

Epilogue

Know ye that by "the world" is meant your unawareness of Him Who is your Maker, and your absorption in aught else but Him. The "life to come," on the other hand, signifieth the things that give you a safe approach to God, the All-Glorious, the Incomparable. Whatsoever deterreth you, in this Day, from loving God is nothing but the world. Flee it, that ye may be numbered with the blest. Should a man wish to adorn himself with the ornaments of the earth, to wear its apparels, or partake of the benefits it can bestow, no harm can befall him, if he alloweth nothing whatever to intervene between him and God, for God hath ordained every good thing, whether created in the heavens or in the earth, for such of His servants as truly believe in Him. Eat ye, O people, of the good things which God hath allowed you, and deprive not yourselves from His wondrous bounties. Render thanks and praise unto Him, and be of them that are truly thankful.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, p. 276)

Blessed is he who alloweth nothing whatsoever to intervene between him and his Lord. No harm, assuredly, can befall him if he partaketh with justice of the benefits of this world, inasmuch as We have created all things for such of Our servants as truly believe in God.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, verse 146, p. 76)

Yet those who journey in the garden land of knowledge, because they see the end in the beginning, see peace in war and friendliness in anger.

Such is the state of the wayfarers in this Valley; but the people of the Valleys above this see the end and the beginning as one; nay, they see neither beginning nor end, and witness neither "first" nor "last." [1] Nay rather, the denizens of the undying city, who dwell in the green garden land, see not even "neither first nor last"; they fly from all that is first, and repulse all that is last. For these have passed over the worlds of names, and fled beyond the worlds of attributes as swift as lightning. Thus is it said: "Absolute Unity excludeth all attributes." [2] And they have made their dwelling-place in the shadow of the Essence.

[1 Qur'án 57:3.]

[2 Saying attributed to Ali.] 16

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 15)

Words of Wisdom (ASL I KULLU'L KHAYR)

In the Name of God, the Exalted, the Most High

THE source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment with His holy will and pleasure.

The essence of wisdom is the fear of God, the dread of His scourge and punishment, 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.

The essence of love is for man to turn his heart to the Beloved One, and sever himself from all else but Him, 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 aught else beside 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 towards 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 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 essence of true safety is to observe silence, to look at the end of things and to renounce the world.

The beginning of magnanimity is when man expendeth his wealth on himself, on his family and on the poor among his brethren in his Faith.

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 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 out 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 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.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 155-158)

Know thou that the Kingdom is the real world, and this nether place is only its shadow stretching out. A shadow hath no life of its own; its existence is only a fantasy, and nothing more; it is but images reflected in water, and seeming as pictures to the eye.

Rely upon God. Trust in Him. Praise Him, and call Him continually to mind. He verily turneth trouble into ease, and sorrow into solace, and toil into utter peace. He verily hath dominion over all things.

If thou wouldst hearken to my words, release thyself from the fetters of whatsoever cometh to pass. Nay rather, under all conditions thank thou thy loving Lord, and yield up thine affairs unto His Will that worketh as He pleaseth. This verily is better for thee than all else, in either world.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 177)

❖ “*The source of error...*”

The source of error is to disbelieve in the One true God, rely upon aught else but Him, and flee from His Decree.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 158)

Thou seest me, O my God, bowed down in lowliness, humbling myself before Thy commandments, submitting to Thy sovereignty, trembling at the might of Thy dominion, fleeing from Thy wrath, entreating Thy grace, relying upon Thy forgiveness, shaking with awe at Thy fury. I implore Thee with a throbbing heart, with streaming tears and a yearning soul, and in complete detachment from all things, to make Thy lovers as rays of light across Thy realms, and to aid Thy chosen servants to exalt Thy Word, that their faces may turn beautiful and bright with splendour, that their hearts may be filled with mysteries, and that every soul may lay down its burden of sin. Guard them then from the aggressor, from him who hath become a shameless and blasphemous doer of wrong.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 224)

...And if thou art overtaken by affliction in My path, or degradation for My sake, be not thou troubled thereby.

Rely upon God, thy God and the Lord of thy fathers. For the people are wandering in the paths of delusion, bereft of discernment to see God with their own eyes, or hear His Melody with their own ears. Thus have We found them, as thou also dost witness.

Thus have their superstitions become veils between them and their own hearts and kept them from the path of God, the Exalted, the Great.

Be thou assured in thyself that verily, he who turns away from this Beauty hath also turned away from the Messengers of the past and showeth pride towards God from all eternity to all eternity.

Learn well this Tablet, O Ahmad. Chant it during thy days and withhold not thyself therefrom. For verily, God hath ordained for the one who chants it, the reward of a hundred martyrs and a service in both worlds. These favors have We bestowed upon thee as a bounty on Our part and a mercy from Our presence, that thou mayest be of those who are grateful.

By God! Should one who is in affliction or grief read this Tablet with absolute sincerity, God will dispel his sadness, solve his difficulties and remove his afflictions.

(Compilations, *Bahá'í Prayers*, “Tablet of Ahmad”, pp. 210-211)

Summary Introduction to:

“He hath known God who hath known himself”:
A Deepening Course on the Bahá’í Revelation

A COMPILATION
FROM THE
BAHÁ’Í SACRED WRITINGS

...As preliminarily prepared for a public presentation at the ‘Irfan Colluquium, circa 2015-2016.

Hi. I am Richard Kochmann. I am here to present a summary of a major work (a more than 400 page compilation) of the Bahá'í Writings -- entitled "He hath known God who hath known himself", which I have been involved with since the late 1960's as part of three generations in a family of Bahá'í scholars.

So, first, some background on the participants and contributors: The first of these scholars was Howard Colby Ives, the grandfather of my first Bahá'í teacher and late wife, Barbara Ives -- who had met with 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1912, initially at the Master's beckoning call, singling him out in a large gathering, for a private meeting.

About this experience Howard had written "*He looked at me!* It seemed as though never before had anyone seen *me.*" [from *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. 1940-1944, "In Memoriam" Section, p. 610], and "such an understanding love enveloped me that even at that distance and with a heart still cold a thrill ran through me as if a breeze from a divine morning had touched my brow." [*Ibid.*, as above.]

Years later, Howard wrote his recollections of his initial introduction to the Faith from the prodding but gentle persistence of a dear friend whom he finally decided he couldn't reasonably refuse, to the initial encounter and other reminiscences of the Master's visit to America in 1912, in a memoir reviewing all those events, which he finalized during the evening years of his life, when he was going deaf and blind, but could still sit up in bed and compose by the "touch system" on an old typewriter, before eventually being completely overtaken by cancer, as he approached his 75th year. As to his losing many of his physical faculties, he considered it a blessing -- to enable him to prepare for the next life!

This work, the memoir, was entitled "*Portals to Freedom*", and completed and first published by B. Dalton & Company in 1937.

History: In his mid-40's, Howard had been an ordained Unitarian Minister, with many questions about "Return" and "Revival", as he began his 46th year, when he first came across the Faith and was "ushered in" to meet with 'Abdu'l-Bahá personally.

That first meeting was in a large reception room of the Ansonia Hotel in New York City, where his friend had brought him. Once there, after joining the crowd that had gathered in a spacious waiting room for the Master to appear, he found himself being strangely beckoned from across the large meeting room by the Master Himself, who was summoning him to approach, and when he did, he was embraced and suddenly ushered into a private meeting in separate chamber, with just the Master (who had even dismissed His interpreter). He said later, "and life has never been (quite) the same since". More about this incredible experience can be found in unfolding detail in his memorable book "*Portals*" referenced above.

After having studied the Faith and becoming a believer, Howard eventually chose to give up his congregation and means of livelihood within the Church, and became an itinerant Bahá'í teacher

along with his wife Mabel, (best known among the friends as ‘Riswanaea’ which was her name as bestowed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá) -- opening new communities primarily across the northeastern United States (but in the beginning venturing as far southwest as Pittsburgh)...

“Their first stop” Pittsburgh was “where, besides working during the day” (as traveling salespersons with often a new product to barker) “...they held thirty-six meetings in six weeks”(Ibid. *The Bahá’í World...*, cited above, p. 611) which they (and other Bahá’í itinerant teachers) did during this period -- by advertising and hosting Bahá’í talks in local hotels, and after several weeks moving on to expose and open the next new community as well as revisiting earlier ones that they had already visited and opened to the Faith.

During these years the couple virtually lived out of suitcases, giving up what would otherwise be considered any kind of a normal or ordinary life -- for the next 15 years, never settling into a permanent home until they became too old to travel teach regularly -- but that is one of the ways the Faith was promoted by itinerant teachers who sacrificed everything else, in the early formative days of the spread of the Faith in North America.

Howard was also a constant student of the Writings, in the special class of Bahá’í scholar, writing not only Bahá’í-themed and inspired poetry, but also in creating (gathering and organizing) a huge compendium he continued to develop and work on, of what had been either already translated or was just then being provided to the Bahá’ís in the West by the Guardian, entitled “*The Ocean of His Utterances*” -- which was subsequently typed and circulated (passed around) via individually typed or carbon copies -- to all the friends in America, (and which can now be found [the compilation] under its original title, on line, at bahai-library.com).

His memorable book, “*Portals...*” had after its first publication in 1937, eventually become translated in those intermediate years -- into nearly 30 languages (including Farsi) -- world-wide and was especially beloved by the Persian friends, because of its being the memoirs of a relatable and spiritually-minded Westerner in his encounters and recollections of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Before his death Howard (who was referred to in the family as “Uncle-Granddaddy”) had also written his young, beloved and favorite granddaughter Barbara (who was then in her mid-teens and fixated on pursuing a career as a film star in Hollywood), a very direct, determined, and impassioned letter encouraging her to devote her life to “the study of the Writings” in service to the Faith, and not allow her then desire to pursue a life as an actress, with goals of a Hollywood career to interfere with this prerequisite or calling. This letter too, circulated and passed through the hands of many of the early friends, and was known as the “My Dearest Grandbobby” letter as that is how he addressed Barbara.

Moving onward, I subsequently met Barbara at the Greenacre Bahá’í School in the summer of 1969. By this point (with the passing of nearly 30 years from where our story had left off!) she had grown up, married, and was raising a family. By this point in time, also, she had become a scholar

or researcher of the Bahá'í Revelation (as modeled and encouraged by her grandfather), wishing to discover or uncover Bahá'u'lláh's own definitions and explanations of His Writings, and the admonitions, premises, prophecies and principles, laws and commandments contained therein – to be seen and understood by mind and heart, and not through the eyes or interpretation of one's "neighbor". During this process she continued to sense the closeness, guidance and doting encouragement and example of her loving grandfather!

Bahá'u'lláh had said that it was incumbent to see with one's own eyes, and not through the eyes of one's neighbor, as this was an important element and aspect of independent investigation, and the need for the individual to personally examine and test the wisdom of each commandment.

[“The principles of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be carefully studied, one by one, until they are realized and understood by mind and heart -- so will you become strong followers of the light, truly spiritual, heavenly soldiers of God, acquiring and spreading the true civilization in Persia, in Europe, and in the whole world. This will be the paradise which is to come on earth, when all mankind will be gathered together under the tent of unity in the Kingdom of Glory.” (‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 22); and “...It is incumbent upon everyone, in this day, to perceive with the eye of God, and to hearken with His ear. Whoso beholdeth Me with an eye besides Mine own will never be able to know Me. None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.” (Bahá'u'lláh, cited by Shoghi Effendi, in *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 77)]

When I came across Barbara at the Greenacre Bahá'í School in the summer of 1969, I was an impressionable and longing Bahá'í youth – having just completed a year of home front pioneering on an Indian Pueblo in the U.S. Southwest, and was seeking many answers to eternal questions. I thought that by beginning a doctorate level of study at the U. Mass School of Education on the Amherst campus, that I could find the direction I was seeking, as many outstanding and prominent Bahá'ís were on campus during that period. I felt elated to have considered such an opportunity.

Through unusual if not other-worldly circumstances, however, Barbara was able to sympathize with me and present an alternative mode of study. She, who was working even then on the preliminary research to expand her grandfather's studies into a course about Man's Knowledge of God, the Station of the Manifestations, the Covenant in many of its aspects, and the duties and responsibilities of the believers as party to that Covenant – made clear to me that there were not yet full time Bahá'í institutions (for the study of the Word) in this country (the West) that could provide and accommodate that level of coursework and immersion in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh – but that she could offer time spent in her home to provide the level of study and immersion in the Sacred Writings that I was seeking.

So thus began a two year program commitment to uncover the evident and hidden dynamics of this Revelation! By the end of summer I had moved in and installed myself in her family home in upstate western New York, with its vast Bahá'í library and exceedingly competent teacher and

guide, finding work at a local expediting department in a large quasi-military aircraft device developer/manufacturer in the area, to pay my expenses.

My quest and questions, and interactions with Barbara helped to pave the way and reinforce her development of the evolving and expanded course “He hath known God who hath known himself” (*Kitáb-i-Iqán/Book of Certitude*, p. 102; and *Gleanings*, p. 178).

Over the years this course of study had evolved into weekend study institutes, which we hosted in our home with Barbara as the facilitator, first in the Midwest, and later in the Southwest, as we were able to eventually marry and jointly pioneer on the Big Navajo Reservation. Eventually, we acquired some land in an area bordering another branch of the Navajo Reservation in western New Mexico, for the development of a Bahá’í school for the study of the Writings, to which Barbara was dedicated and for which we had begun excavation of the first building, at the time of her premature passing in early fall of 1977.

I later expanded the course, as new publications and translations became available from the World Centre, and also expanded it to include other discoveries in the Writings that rounded out and completed the story. This is especially interesting because Barbara’s style of research was to gather together all available references on a particular subject (which are all scattered throughout the Writings and have no structure or organization to tie them together or relate them to one another -- in terms of the volumes we have available in the West at the present day), and cull them down to the most appropriate citations, while placing them, systematically, in a lengthy compendium that all can have access to and review, in just one place or document.

(By the time I had assumed and taken over the responsibilities for completing the course, I marveled at what Barbara had already accomplished in her quest, sense of organization, and modeling for other determined Bahá’í researchers. I also felt an abiding sense of her example and encouragement.)

In this compendium we have a diligently compiled and systematically organized approach to the Revelation of God for this Day, from references that were at one time scattered throughout the works of Shoghi Effendi’s translations, but now under substantively unified, correlated and orderly subject headings from all available resources! Part of this process was greatly enhanced in accomplishment by the introduction of the late 1990’s search engine, Ocean (inspired from the name Howard chose for his work) by Chad Jones – as a gift to the Bahá’í world!)

I will now discuss and highlight certain aspects and general categories of this work, which Barbara referred to as “the course”. (She felt this material to be suitable for the trainers of what she referred to as “the Teachers of the teachers” – and it was later submitted/“passed on” to the Counsellors at the International Teaching Center for that purpose.)

To obtain an understanding of the dynamic operations of the Covenant, which includes man’s responsibility to God (and God’s responsibility or promises to man) one must first have an

understanding of the Word (“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God”), Divine Unity (both between the Manifestation and God as “One” – as well as between all the Prophets and Manifestations (to make any distinction between any one of Them is to deny all of Them); and to recognize that each was endowed with a measured portion to reveal to mankind, at the time of His appearance, according to the Will of God, and the principle of progressively unfolding revelation), and that the Word itself is the covering to the inner mysteries, heavenly delights and majestic might and powers of a universal Revelation. Attendant with this was the recognition that individual spiritual progress is made by the fire that is in the heart, obedience, purity, love, sincerity, sacrifice, and humility in all of one’s strivings and endeavors, in the path of study and service toward the one true God.

In the section entitled “Man’s Knowledge of God” we learn that man can not know God, nor have any direct access to that realm, as He is the surrounding One, and we are the surrounded, and to seek it is impiety, the way is barred; but that God can be known through His Manifestations.

In this regard, Bahá’u’lláh has revealed:

“And since there can be no tie of direct intercourse to bind the one true God with His creation, and no resemblance whatever can exist between the transient and the Eternal, the contingent and the Absolute, He hath ordained that in every age and dispensation a pure and stainless Soul be made manifest in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. Unto this subtle, this mysterious and ethereal Being He hath assigned a twofold nature; the physical, pertaining to the world of matter, and the spiritual, which is born of the substance of God Himself. He hath, moreover, conferred upon Him a double station. The first station, which is related to His innermost reality, representeth Him as One Whose voice is the voice of God Himself. To this testifieth the tradition: ‘Manifold and mysterious is My relationship with God. I am He, Himself, and He is I, Myself, except that I am that I am, and He is that He is.’ And in like manner, the words: ‘Arise, O Muhammad, for lo, the Lover and the Beloved are joined together and made one in Thee.’ He similarly saith: ‘There is no distinction whatsoever between Thee and Them, except that They are Thy Servants.’ The second station is the human station, exemplified by the following verses: ‘I am but a man like you.’ “Say, praise be to my Lord! Am I more than a man, an apostle?” He continues: “These Essences of Detachment, these resplendent Realities are the channels of God’s all-pervasive grace. Led by the light of unfailing guidance, and invested with supreme sovereignty, They are commissioned to use the inspiration of Their words, the effusions of Their infallible grace and the sanctifying breeze of Their Revelation for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitations. Then, and only then, will the Trust of God, latent in the reality of man, emerge, as resplendent as the rising Orb of Divine Revelation, from behind the veil of concealment, and implant the ensign of its revealed glory upon the summits of men’s hearts.” (Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, pp. 66-67)

Other topics in the “course” include a lengthy examination of “Covenant” with such subtitles as: “The Law of God is divided into two parts; a twofold language” with even further subsections examining the first part (“the Holy of Holies”) with such topics or categories as “spiritual not material”; “from everlasting to everlasting”; “divine revelation is continuous, (orderly) and progressive (and not spasmodic or final)”; “this Universal Cycle”; “the Covenant between the Manifestation/s and God”; a section entitled: “Absolute, Eternal, Almighty and Universal Law” (including sub-sections describing the “Laws” of “Order, Love, Divine Unity, and Spiritual Progress”); and concluding with numerous references concerning: “Spiritual virtues, divine qualities, eternal commandments, and inner meanings”.

Regarding “inner meanings” Barbara was particularly keen on wanting to know more of the operation (origin, nature, purpose and functioning) of the “Maids of Heaven” (or Huris of Paradise), positioned beyond the station of the Manifestation on the wings of the Spirit) Who are the Essence or Inner Meaning/s of each of the Names and Attributes of God, as “It” descends through the power of the Covenant -- into the hearts of true believers and pure and sincere servants everywhere!

The next section or subtitle is about the “Holy City”, the “second part” (or material aspect) of the Covenant of God – which refers to the “material world”, “with two forms explicitly mentioned”: “to accept the coming Manifestations” and “to accept the Master and His administration after Him”.

From here we go to a lengthy subdivided section on the qualities and character of the true believers, their exalted rank, sublime station and ultimate purpose; “firmness in the Covenant” and “the station of full recognition”; “teachers must continually travel”; “love, harmony and fellowship amongst the believers”; “His never interrupted aid”; and Obedience to the Administrative Order, as well as “Never deny the spiritual to the material...”, and the Balance being “spirit and form”. This section is concluded with a brief acknowledgement of “the People of Bahá” – the new race of men as promised by God throughout eternity, who would emerge in this age from behind the veils of concealment, entering every city and being afraid of no one! Their appearance is also covered further on in the course, in a section entitled: “Ascendancy of...[His] independent sovereignty,...in the plenitude of might and power,...revealed in its full splendor” in which their qualities, purpose, servitude and confirmed rank and powers are fully identified and explained.

Barbara concluded her work on the course with sections delineating and defining “The Promise and the Threat as recorded in the Books of God” and “In the Beginning was the Word”. I added, because of new texts made available following her death in 1977 -- such as *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, and subsequently over the years, the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, (Book of Laws), *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh...*, “*Gems...*”, “*Tabernacle..*” and finally the wondrous “*Summons of the Lord of Hosts*” – sections on “Opposition and Denial” as promoting the onward unfoldment and recognition of the Faith, that the “Letters of Negation must needs exist” in this realm, that “The Ocean will continue to surge” and “purge”, and more about the appearance of the new race of men in the new section as described above, which includes the longer version of the “Súriy-i-Haykal”,

(Súrih of the Temple) in which Bahá'u'lláh addresses and defines the appearance of a new race of men whose advent the world hath awaited, “who remain undeterred by those who would seek to obstruct their path”. He continues “These are they who circle round the Cause of God...”; “Through them the believers in Divine Unity have turned towards Him Who is the Object of Adoration...”; those by virtue of whose movement “all things are set into motion” and by reason of their stillness “all things are brought to rest”; and “These souls are the protectors of the Cause of God on earth, who shall preserve its beauty from the obscuring dust of idle fancies and vain imaginings. In the path of their Lord they shall not fear for their lives; rather will they sacrifice their all in their eagerness to behold the face of their Well-Beloved when once He hath appeared in this Name, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Glorious, the Most Holy.” (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, verses 12-16, pp. 8-9)

Further on in that same Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh indicates: *“O Living Temple! Stretch forth Thy hand over all who are in heaven and on earth, and seize within the grasp of Thy Will the reins of command. We have, verily, placed in Thy right hand the empire of all things. Do as Thou willest, and fear not the ignorant. Reach out to the Tablet that hath dawned above the horizon of the pen of Thy Lord, and take hold of it with such strength that, through Thee, the hands of all who inhabit the earth may be enabled to lay fast hold upon it. This, in truth, is that which becometh Thee, if Thou be of those who understand. Through the upraising of Thy hand to the heaven of My grace, the hands of all created things shall be lifted up to their Lord, the Mighty, the Powerful, the Gracious. Erelong shall We raise up, through the aid of Thy hand, other hands endued with power, with strength and might, and shall establish through them Our dominion over all that dwell in the realms of revelation and creation. Thus will the servants of God recognize the truth that there is none other God beside Me, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. With these hands, moreover, We shall both bestow and withhold, though none can understand this save those who see with the eye of the spirit.”*

(Bahá'u'lláh, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, verse 31, p.18)

About this Tablet, Taherzadeh informs us:

“One of the most momentous of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh is the Suriy-i-Haykal or Suratu'l-Haykal (Surih of the Temple). Bahá'u'lláh ordered the Surih and the Tablets to the Kings to be copied in the form of a pentacle symbolizing the human temple. The Tablets were copied in the following order: the Suriy-i-Haykal itself, then the Tablet to Pope Pius IX, the Tablet to Napoleon III, the Tablet to Czar Alexander II, the Tablet to Queen Victoria and the Tablet to Násiri'd-Dín Sháh. Associating this with the prophecy of Zechariah in the Old Testament, Bahá'u'lláh concludes the Suriy-i-Haykal with these words:

‘Thus have We built the Temple with the hands of power and might, could ye but know it. This is the Temple promised unto you in the Book. Draw ye nigh unto it. This is that which profiteth you, could ye but comprehend it. Be fair, O peoples of the earth! Which is preferable, this, or a temple which is built of clay? Set your faces towards it. Thus have ye been commanded by God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Follow ye His bidding, and praise ye God, your Lord, for that which He hath bestowed upon you. He verily, is the Truth. No God is there but He. He revealeth what He pleaseth, through His Words 'Be and it is.'

“Throughout the Tablet, the Pen of the Most High addresses the Haykal (Temple) and reveals the glory and majesty with which it is invested. In answer to a question, Bahá'u'lláh has stated that the Haykal which is addressed in this Surih is the Person of Bahá'u'lláh, and so is the voice which addresses the Haykal. It is fascinating to know that the One Who speaks with the voice of God in this Tablet is identical with the One spoken to.”

(Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, vol. 3, pp. 132-134)

The “course” (“He hath known God who hath known himself”) is now available on line in 3 languages (English, French and Spanish), thanks to the generous assistance of Jonah Winters, at: http://bahai-library.com/kochmann_deepening_course_compilation

I hope you will be able to avail yourself of this opportunity to plunge more deeply in the Ocean of His Utterances!

Most respectfully,

Richard Kochmann, Ciudad Cariari, Asuncion, Belen, Heredia, Costa Rica

Notes...

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"Kind words..."

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Thanking you in advance,

Most respectfully,

Richard Kochmann

December 15, 2016

Ciudad Cariari, Heredia Province, Costa Rica