

Service to the Cause of God versus Professional Clergy

Peter Terry (2024)

While a number of the early Iranian converts to the Baha'i Faith whose names have been preserved and who were accounted among those who rendered significant service to the Cause were members of the 'ulama of Imami Shi'i Islam, unless they observed taqiyya and did not divulge their new religious identity, they presumably lost their income as members of the Muslim clergy. This was likely to have been the case when others converted to the Faith, be they Iranian Jewish rabbis and Zoroastrian mobeds, or American and European Christian pastors and priests. If there was some flexibility in permitting continuation of clerical employment in other religions during the leadership of Baha'u'llah (1817-1892)¹, whose ministry spanned the years 1863-1892; and 'Abdu'l-Baha (1844-1921)², whose ministry spanned the years 1892-1921; this tolerance was gradually discontinued by Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), whose ministry as Guardian spanned the years 1921-1957, as he insisted that Baha'is not be members of churches, of lodges, of secret societies, and that they openly identify themselves with their new faith rather than keep it under wraps for fear of ill repute, unemployment or violent persecution.

Professional priesthood is prohibited in the Baha'i Faith.

Do we find any explicit statement to this effect by Baha'u'llah? Perhaps in one of His Arabic or Persian Tablets which have not yet been translated into English. Nonetheless, the evidence that He enacted this prohibition is far too pervasive to be questioned, even in the absence of a specific written affirmation. This assertion will be amply demonstrated in this essay

Let us begin with 'Abdu'l-Baha, whom Baha'u'llah appointed to interpret His Writings and speak on His behalf. While no Tablet has yet been translated that includes a statement forbidden priesthood, we do find important attestations to the principle nevertheless.

In 1911, we find this unequivocal affirmation by Charles Mason Remey (1874-1974)³, a very well-informed American Baha'i, later appointed Hand of the Cause and President of the International Baha'i Council by Shoghi Effendi:

¹<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bah%C3%A1%CA%BCu%27II%C3%A1h>

²<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%CA%BBAbdu%27I-Bah%C3%A1>

³https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mason_Remey

In this Cause there is no priesthood apart from the laity. Each one who receives the spirit should share it with those whom he meets in daily life. All are teachers. Teaching is given without money and without price. (Charles Mason Remey, "The Bahá'í Faith, A teaching of peace", Address made before the Third National Peace Congress, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, Saturday, 6 May 1911; in Star of the West, II:5, 5 June 1911, p. 11)

It is inconceivable that Remey would have espoused such a principle unless he had read it with his own eyes or heard it with his own ears. He learned of the Baha'i Faith while residing in Paris and attending the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, studying architecture, probably around 1900.

Chronologically the next trace of this doctrine that we find is the record of a conversation between 'Abdu'l-Baha and Rev. James Thompson Bixby (1843-1921)⁴, in April 1912, during which 'Abdu'l-Baha was asked about ranks in the Faith, and replied:

Rev. Bixby: Is Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl an apostle, prophet or one delegated with special authority?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: We do not have apostles, prophets and special leaders, because all are servants. **We have no ecclesiastical order or authority.** Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl was trained and taught by Bahá'u'lláh; His disciple in this sense. He was near to Bahá'u'lláh; but he has no special station except the station of service.

Rev. Bixby: Were the "Letters of the Living" appointed by the Báb abrogated by Bahá'u'lláh?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: The "Letters of the Living" were at first eighteen in number. The Báb said, "Go forth and teach others the Message you have received." Among them were some of great ability, who became prominent. Some disappeared. They were not appointed as a secret order. Bahá'u'lláh did not abrogate their function. As an organization of believers in the Báb it passed away by itself, naturally. The Báb said, "These are the acceptors of my teachings." They had no official station. **He did not depend upon them as His clergy.** They were servants of the Cause of God. Whoever is near to God is a servant of God.

Rev. Bixby: Did not Subh-i-Azal occupy an authoritative position?

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'u'lláh educated him just as He educated Mírzá Abu'l-Fadl and myself. Subh-i-Azal separated voluntarily. He did not follow his Teacher as we have done. Therefore we do not mention his name. We have no quarrel with those who differ, but are commanded to love them. ('Abdu'l-Baha answering questions of Rev. J.T. Bixby, with Rev. Howard Colby Ives (1867-1941)⁵ present, at Hotel Ansonia, New York City, 13 April 1912, notes by Howard MacNutt (1859-1926)⁶, in Star of the West, III:8, 1 August 1912, p. 7)

⁴https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Thompson_Bixby

⁵<https://bahaichronicles.org/howard-colby-ives/>

⁶<https://www.bahaiblog.net/articles/history-tributes/howard-macnutt-disciple-of-abdul-baha/>

Subsequent to this we find another confirmation of this Baha'i doctrine in a newspaper article written by J.R. Reid, published in June 1920:

The temple will be a great place of worship for all mankind. Its doors will never be closed; **no priesthood will ever officiate within its walls**; about it will be gardens and fountains; and beyond these, a series of buildings devoted to the application of true religion to life, a hospital, an orphan asylum, a hospice or house of hospitality, a guild house, a university, etc. Only worship can be voiced in the temple itself; but the results of such worship are to be evidenced in these surrounding buildings, where all activities of the community will meet in the comradeship inspired by mutual counsel from which criticism and politics shall have been banished. (J.R. Reid wrote "The model for the Bahá'í Temple, Chicago-Louis J. Bourgeois, Architect", an article in The Architectural Record, June 1920, pp. 501-505; reprinted in Star of the West, XI:9, 20 August 1920, p. 143)

We now transition to the Guardianship of Shoghi Effendi, which began in 1921.

While we have not yet found any specific statements by the Guardian on this matter from the 1920s, there are three published affirmations of the principle by Baha'is, both of whom were loyal to the Guardian, and hence it appears that this continued to be a principle that the believers considered to be fundamental to the Faith:

Charles Mason Remey, having first affirmed this Baha'i teaching in 1911, reaffirmed it in April 1922:

In this Cause there is no priesthood nor clergy. Each soul approaches God in prayer without sacred rite nor ceremony. Temples open to all people of all religions are to be provided for reading, meditation and prayer. These are to be surrounded by hospices, hospitals, asylums, schools, universities, etc., the whole group of buildings to be known as a "Mashriqu'l-Adhkár", which translated from the Arabic literally means "The dawning point of the mentions (of God)". In these institutions is symbolized both the spiritual worship and the humanitarian service as taught by Bahá'u'lláh. (Charles Mason Remey, "The Bahá'í Revelation-the religious need of the time (continued)", in Star of the West, XIII:2, 9 April 1922, p. 37

Horace Holley (1887-1960)⁷, a Baha'i deeply imbued with the spirit of the Cause during the ministry of the Guardian, and a whole-hearted pioneer in the field of Baha'i administration, also appointed a Hand of the Cause by Shoghi Effendi, wrote the following in October 1922:

⁷[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Holley_\(Bah%C3%A1%BC%C3%AD\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horace_Holley_(Bah%C3%A1%BC%C3%AD))

It is an inherent part of all 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teaching on the subject of tribunals and political progress that the spiritual conditions for real justice have not yet been fulfilled. He regards the function of legislation as a function of illumined minds, severed from all considerations save that of justice and truth. The act of making laws he declares to be an aspect of meditation. That is, just as the poet receives his visions, or the scientist his principles, through intense meditation, so will the future legislative body arrive at its structure of civic, national or international law. Order is of the essence of the manifested universe, and that order flows through and inspires the minds that turn to it in unity and for the purpose of creating justice. Thus those who are capable of entering this unity and impersonal abstraction are to be selected by the people from their wisest men. The legislator, in fact, is placed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a high spiritual station, and the evident tendency on the part of our noblest clergy to turn from fruitless theological discussions in order to assist in the solving of great political and economic problems is a reflection of this teaching; **for 'Abdu'l-Bahá has also declared that the universal religion of the future will have no professional clergy.** (Horace Holley, "The spirit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (continued)", Part II; in *Star of the West*, XIII: 7 October 1922, p. 170)

Another Baha'i who attested to this teaching was the French scientist Dr. Auguste Forel (1848-1931)⁸, according to Kate Kempner, in an article published in February 1924:

Professor Auguste Forel, the famous French psychiatrist, outlines in a pamphlet, *Homme et Fourmi*, (Lausanne 1923) a so-called programme human practicable--a practicable programme for mankind which in some form or other must be adopted, if humanity is to survive the destructive forces of civilization--war, alcoholism, etc. Among other points Professor Forel states the necessity of a universal international auxiliary language, as well as that of a universal religion, which he calls the scientific, synthetic, super-national religion of the Bahá'ís for the commonwealth of the world--without dogma, **without clergy**. He says that in 1920 he learned of the existence of the Bahá'í Faith, founded almost seventy years before, in the Orient, which gives itself to the service of mankind, to which Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Brahman, Jew or Monist can belong, which leaves aside all discussion of the metaphysical nature of God, the Devil, paradise, hell, etc.

When Professor Forel found the Bahá'í Movement; he who previously had been opposed to the existing religions, because he saw nothing but creeds and sects, obscuring the reality of religion, became a follower of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

He founded a Bahá'í group in Zurich, Switzerland, and professes that according to his opinion [that the] Bahá'í Faith is the religion of the future. (Kate Kempner, "The scientific religion", in *Star of the West* XIV:11, February 1924, p. 338)

⁸https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auguste_Forel

In the 1930s, we have found letters written by the Guardian which listed this doctrine as among those distinctive to the Faith:

Nor can the Bahá'í Administrative Order be dismissed as a hard and rigid system of unmitigated autocracy or as an idle imitation of any form of absolutistic ecclesiastical government, whether it be the Papacy, the Imamate or any other similar institution, for the obvious reason that upon the international elected representatives of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh has been conferred the exclusive right of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the Bahá'í writings. Neither the Guardian of the Faith nor any institution apart from the International House of Justice can ever usurp this vital and essential power or encroach upon that sacred right. **The abolition of professional priesthood with its accompanying sacraments of baptism, of communion and of confession of sins**, the laws requiring the election by universal suffrage of all local, national, and international Houses of Justice, **the total absence of episcopal authority with its attendant privileges, corruptions and bureaucratic tendencies**, are further evidences of the non-autocratic character of the Bahá'í Administrative Order and of its inclination to democratic methods in the administration of its affairs. (Shoghi Effendi, Letter dated February 8, 1934 in The World Order of Baha'u'llah, pp. 153-154)

Concerning the abolition of the institution of paid national teachers, the Guardian wishes to re-affirm his former statements on this matter, and to stress once more that great care be taken to avoid the difficulties and the misunderstandings which in former days had caused so much trouble among the friends. **The main point to be emphasized in this connection is that of making the teaching of the Cause not the work of a limited group but the chief duty and responsibility of every Bahá'í. This is why no salaried teachers should any longer exist. But occasionally to defray the expenses of a teaching trip of a certain Bahá'í, particularly when it is done spontaneously, can do no harm to the Cause. Such an action, provided it is done with care and only when circumstances make it necessary, constitutes no violation of the principles already referred to.** The danger in all activities of this nature is to give the impression that the teaching of the Cause is an institution, depending on the support of paid teachers. Those who willingly and with utmost detachment arise to promote the Cause should, undoubtedly, be helped in every way. But they have no claim whatever on the financial help which some friends may freely choose to extend to them.' (Shoghi Effendi in a letter to Mr. Leroy Ioas (1896-1965)⁹, Chairman of the National Teaching Committee, USA, on March 5, 1934; in Lights of Guidance, #1937, p. 571)

Also discovered were letters written during this period on behalf of the Guardian:

⁹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leroy_ioas

The Guardian is fully conscious of the difficulties that impede the progress of the Faith in your community. Chief among these, you mention the lack of courage and of initiative on the part of the believers, and a feeling of inferiority complex which prevents them from addressing the public. It is precisely these weaknesses that he wishes the friends to overcome, for these do not only paralyze their efforts but actually serve to quench the flame of faith in their hearts. Not until all the friends come to realize that every one of them is able, in his own measure, to deliver the Message, can they ever hope to reach the goal that has been set before them by a loving and wise Master. **It is no use waiting for some able and eloquent teacher to take all the responsibility for the spread of the Cause. For such a thing is not only contrary to the spirit of the Teachings but to the explicit text of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, both of whom place the obligation of teaching not on any particular class, as in former ecclesiastical organizations, but on every faithful and loyal follower of the Cause.** The teaching of the Word is thus made universal and compulsory. How long then shall we wait to carry out this command, the full wisdom of which only future generations will be able to appreciate? We have no special teachers in the Cause. Everyone is a potential teacher. He has only to use what God has given him and thus prove that he is faithful to his trust. (Letter written on behalf of the Guardian, dated September 1, 1933; in Shoghi Effendi, Arohanui - Letters to New Zealand, p. 34)

Compared to matrimonial conception and forms current among existing religions, the Bahá'í conception of marriage is practically void of all ceremonies. **There is no officiating priesthood.** The two contracting parties simply appear before the Spiritual Assembly and express their desire to be united with the bonds of marriage. There is a short formula which they have to pronounce before the members, and a marriage certificate which they both have to sign. In the Cause we do not have what is commonly called the 'Aqid'. The appearance of the two parties before the Assembly has even only an Administrative importance. It carries with it no spiritual or sacramental obligation of significance. I mean only the mere act of appearing before the Assembly, not marriage itself which is of course essentially a spiritual and moral act of union." (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, July 6, 1935; in Lights of Guidance, #1263, p. 377)

For it must be clearly understood that **working for the Cause does not and cannot constitute a sort of professional activity**, of the type current in ecclesiastical organizations, whether Christian, Muslim or otherwise. **We have no priesthood no specialized class of people who can make the Cause their only life-work In the Bahá'í Cause**, where practical considerations are harmoniously combined with those of a more theoretical character, where idealism and realism are each duly recognized and are fused into a harmonious whole, men and women are commanded to work for the Cause not as substitute to their daily professional occupation but in addition to them. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 30, 1936; cited in Lights of Guidance, #2111, pp. 624-625)

In 1944, God Passes By, the Guardian's history of the first Baha'i century (1844-1944) was published and in that historical review he indicated that the source of the prohibition of a professional priesthood in the Baha'i Faith was the Kitab-i-Aqdas:

In this Book [Kitab-i-Aqdas] He, moreover, prescribes the obligatory prayers; designates the time and period of fasting; prohibits congregational prayer except for the dead; fixes the Qiblih; institutes the Huququ'lláh (Right of God); formulates the law of inheritance; ordains the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar; establishes the Nineteen Day Feasts, 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... (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, 1944, p. 214)

One of the goals of the Ten Year Crusade (1953-1963), all of which were determined by the Guardian, was "the codification of the laws and ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas".¹⁰ The Guardian worked on compiling that codification, but had not completed it when he died in November 1957.¹¹ A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas was published under the aegis of the Universal House of Justice, in April 1973.¹² In that codification we read a list of prohibitions set forth in the Kitab-i-Aqdas by Baha'u'llah¹³:

(y) Prohibitions:

- i. Interpretation of the Holy Writ
- ii. Slave trading
- iii. Asceticism
- iv. Monasticism
- v. Mendicancy[40]
- vi. **Priesthood**
- vii. Use of pulpits
- viii. The kissing of hands
- ix. Confession of sins[41]

While the reader will encounter specific verses that prohibit i.-v., and vii-ix., he will not find any reference to vi. Priesthood. This does not suggest that the text of the Kitab-i-Aqdas was not preserved in its entirety, nor that it was modified, nor that it was inaccurately translated, but

¹⁰<https://reference.bahai.org/en/t/se/MBW/mbw-71.html>

¹¹<https://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/KA/ka-1.html>

¹²http://bahai-library.com/bahaullah_synopsis_codification

¹³Baha'u'llah, Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 46, in http://bahai-library.com/bahaullah_synopsis_codification

rather that this was an instance in which 'Abdu'l-Baha interpreted the text based upon the passages that do exist in the original Arabic, and that He discerned in those passages the intent of Baha'u'llah. That no specific written document associated with either Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha has chronicled this interpretation does not in the least detract from its canonicity. The Guardian stated on more than one occasion, the principle that he does not affirm any doctrine that is not found in the Writings of Baha'u'llah or the interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

The Bahá'í Writings also do not refer specifically to any of these forms of religion current in India. So, the Guardian feels it impossible to give you any definite and detailed information on that subject. (Letter written on behalf of the Guardian, dated April 17, 1936; in Shoghi Effendi, Dawn of a New Day, p. 198)

In connection with the article published in the October number of the "Herald of the South" entitled "Above the Mists"; the Guardian wishes the believers to disregard such subjects as psychic practices and phenomena, for these besides **not being authenticated by the Writings of the Founders of the Faith**, pertain mostly to the domain of conjectures. (Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated March 30, 1938; in Effendi, Arohanui - Letters to New Zealand, p. 87)

Unfortunately it would seem that the knowledge "which could largely eliminate fear"¹⁴ has **not been disclosed or identified by Bahá'u'lláh**; so we do not know what it is. (Extract from a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, dated 5 January 1948, published in Bahá'í News, #210 (August 1948), p. 3; cited in The Compilation of Compilations, vol. I, #570, p. 249)

With regard to your wish for reorganizing your business along Bahá'í lines, Shoghi Effendi deeply appreciates the spirit that has permitted you to make such a suggestion. But he feels nevertheless that the time has not yet come for any believer to bring about such a fundamental change in the economic structure of our society, however restricted may be the field for such an experiment. **The economic teachings of the Cause, though well known in their main outline, have not as yet been sufficiently elaborated and systematized to allow anyone to make an exact and thorough application of them even on a restricted scale.**

As you say, **the Writings are not so rich on this subject and many issues at present baffling the minds of the world are not even mentioned.** The primary consideration is the spirit that has to permeate our economic life, and this will gradually crystallize itself into definite institutions and principles that will help to bring about the ideal condition foretold by Bahá'u'lláh."

¹⁴In the treasuries of the knowledge of God there lieth concealed a knowledge which, when applied, will largely, though not wholly, eliminate fear. This knowledge, however, should be taught from childhood, as it will greatly aid in its elimination. (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 32)

No, Bahá'u'lláh did not bring a complete system of economics to the world. Profit sharing is recommended as a solution to one form of economic problems. **There is nothing in the teachings against some kind of capitalism; its present form, though, would require adjustments to be made.**

There are practically no technical teachings on economics in the Cause, such as banking, the price system, and others. The Cause is not an economic system, nor its Founders be considered as having been technical economists. The contribution of the Faith to this subject is essentially indirect, as it consists of the application of spiritual principles to our present-day economic system. **Bahá'u'lláh has given us a few basic principles which should guide future Bahá'í economists in establishing such institutions which will adjust the economic relationships of the world...**

Social inequality is the inevitable outcome of the natural inequality of man. Human beings are different in ability and should, therefore, be different in their social and economic standing. Extremes of wealth and poverty should, however, be abolished...

The Master has definitely stated that wages should be unequal, simply because that men are unequal in their ability and hence should receive wages that would correspond to their varying capacities and resources. (Letter written on behalf of the Guardian, in Shoghi Effendi, Directives from the Guardian, #54, pp. 19-20)

As the Guardian did not regard anything not actually found in the authenticated writings and utterances of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha as representative of their teachings, and did not encourage "conjecture" but rather "study...in the light of modern problems...finding its application to actual prevailing conditions"¹⁵, his statement, in God Passes By, that Baha'u'llah prohibited professional priesthood in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, and his reiteration of that statement in his incomplete Codification of that Book, are firm indications that the Guardian found an interpretation of verses in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, either by Baha'u'llah or by 'Abdu'l-Baha, that established that principle.

To return to references to this principle in God Passes By and other writings by and on behalf of the Guardian:

A handful of students, belonging to the Shaykhi school, sprung from the Ithna-'Ashariyyih sect of Shi'ah Islam, had, in consequence of the operation of this process, been expanded and transformed into a world community, closely knit, clear of vision, alive, consecrated by the sacrifice of no less than twenty thousand martyrs; supranational; non-sectarian; non-political; claiming the status, and assuming the functions, of a world religion; spread over five continents and the islands of the seas; with ramifications extending over sixty sovereign states and

¹⁵Letter written on behalf of the Guardian, in Shoghi Effendi, Directives from the Guardian, #56, p. 21.

seventeen dependencies; equipped with a literature translated and broadcast in forty languages; exercising control over endowments representing several million dollars; recognized by a number of governments in both the East and the West; integral in aim and outlook; **possessing no professional clergy**; professing a single belief; following a single law; animated by a single purpose; organically united through an Administrative Order, divinely ordained and unique in its features; including within its orbit representatives of all the leading religions of the world, of various classes and races; faithful to its civil obligations; conscious of its civic responsibilities, as well as of the perils confronting the society of which it forms a part; sharing the sufferings of that society and confident of its own high destiny. (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, 1944, pp. 402-403)

On August 12, 1944, the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma:

Regarding the question of paid teachers as we have no clergy or priests there is no paid career open to Bahá'í teachers. This, however, does not mean that teachers going out to spread the Faith, and unable to support themselves, should not receive money from the National Spiritual Assembly or a Local Assembly. At present it would be quite impossible to spread the Cause if those who arise to serve it as teachers or pioneers were not given financial assistance. All must realize, however, that the moneys they receive are only to enable them to fulfil their objectives, and that they cannot consider themselves permanently entitled to be supported by the Cause. In America the pioneers have made every effort to establish themselves in some position in the place they have gone to settle in, and thus be freed from the necessity of drawing further upon Bahá'í funds. (Letter on behalf of the Guardian, dated August 12, 1944; in Lights of Guidance, #1937, p. 571)

He also wrote on the Guardian's behalf to the British National Spiritual Assembly, on May 29, 1946:

Pioneers who volunteer for work, if they are not able to support themselves, should be supported by the National Fund until they either find work or their task is completed.

Likewise, travelling teachers should be assisted financially to carry out the 'projects' assigned to them. **The friends should not for a moment confuse this type of support with the creation of a paid clergy.** Any Bahá'í can, at the discretion of the N.S.A., receive this necessary assistance, and it is clearly understood it is temporary and only to carry out a specific plan.

Bahá'u'lláh Himself has not only enjoined on every one the duty of teaching His Faith, but stated if you cannot go yourself, to send someone in your stead. (Letter on behalf of the Guardian, dated May 29, 1946; in Principles of Baha'i Administration, p. 84; Lights of Guidance, #1937, p. 571)

A particularly important statement, in view of its wide publication and universal audience, was the Guardian's statement on the Faith to the Special Committee of Palestine of the United Nations, dating to 1947:

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. 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. (Shoghi Effendi, Summary Statement - 1947, Special UN Committee on Palestine; partially cited in the Preface to *The Promised Day is Come*, apparently not in the first edition, which was dated March 28, 1941)

This prohibition of clergy rules out any assumption that references to the *'ulama fi'l-Baha* in the Writings intend the existence of a professional class of learned ones in the Baha'i community. While always praising those who are learned, experts, masters of their fields, and calling upon them when needed, Baha'u'llah and His chosen interpreters were not experts themselves, nor did they endorse experts as occupying a separate caste (the Brahmins) as in the Hindu religion, a separate class (the magi) as in the Zoroastrian religion, a separate dharma (monks and nuns) as in the Buddhist religion, a separate estate (the priests and monastics) as in the Christian religion, or regard their spiritual knowledge and judgment as superior in the ways that count to laymen. Indeed, Baha'u'llah affirms this principle in **Kitab-i-Iqan**:

The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit. This is evidenced by those who, today, though without a single letter of the accepted standards of learning, are occupying the loftiest seats of knowledge; and the garden of their hearts is adorned, through the showers of divine grace, with the roses of wisdom and the tulips of understanding. Well

is it with the sincere in heart for their share of the light of a mighty Day! (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 211)

In our time, most people no longer believe that religious leaders are uniquely informed of the meaning of the Scriptures. Their immediate followers may retain this belief, but the rest of the world does not. However, many people have exchanged one class of intermediaries with another. Instead of believing in priests and ministers, monks and gurus, they believe in academic authorities, in professors and in the academic consensus that goes far beyond trusting in one authority and replaces it with a command to trust all who associate with the academy's mouthpieces. In crisis after crisis, contemporary governments and media turn to "experts", usually scientists of one kind or another, all of them university trained and most university employed. While, generally speaking, an economist knows more economics, an educator about education, a doctor about medicine, than a person who is not endowed through his certified training with specialized knowledge in one of those fields. However, in the understanding of the divine teachings, "experts" are not valued for their knowledge above all other people.

On the contrary, Baha'u'llah has pointed out, in numerous texts, that the unschooled are often far more perceptive and cognizant of the truth than those with all the human learning imaginable. Baha'u'llah elaborated upon this theme in the Kitab-i-Aqdas:

O concourse of divines! When My verses were sent down, and My clear tokens were revealed, We found you behind the veils. This, verily, is a strange thing. Ye glory in My Name, yet ye recognized Me not at the time your Lord, the All-Merciful, appeared amongst you with proof and testimony. We have rent the veils asunder. Beware lest ye shut out the people by yet another veil. Pluck asunder the chains of vain imaginings, in the name of the Lord of all men, and be not of the deceitful. Should ye turn unto God and embrace His Cause, spread not disorder within it, and measure not the Book of God with your selfish desires. This, verily, is the counsel of God aforetime and hereafter, and to this God's witnesses and chosen ones, yea, each and every one of Us, do solemnly attest. (#165)

Call ye to mind the shaykh whose name was Muhammad-Hasan, who ranked among the most learned divines of his day. When the True One was made manifest, this shaykh, along with others of his calling, rejected Him, while a sifter of wheat and barley accepted Him and turned unto the Lord. Though he was occupied both night and day in setting down what he conceived to be the laws and ordinances of God, yet when He Who is the Unconstrained appeared, not one letter thereof availed him, or he would not have turned away from a Countenance that hath illumined the faces of the well-favoured of the Lord. Had ye believed in God when He revealed Himself, the people would not have turned aside from Him, nor would the things ye witness today have befallen Us. Fear God, and be not of the heedless. (#166)

Beware lest any name debar you from Him Who is the Possessor of all names, or any word shut you out from this Remembrance of God, this Source of Wisdom amongst you. Turn unto God and seek His protection, O concourse of divines, and make not of yourselves a veil between Me and My creatures. Thus doth your Lord admonish you, and command you to be just, lest your works should come to naught and ye yourselves be oblivious of your plight. Shall he who denieth this Cause be able to vindicate the truth of any cause throughout creation? Nay, by Him Who is the Fashioner of the universe! Yet the people are wrapped in a palpable veil. Say: Through this Cause the day-star of testimony hath dawned, and the luminary of proof hath shed its radiance upon all that dwell on earth. Fear God, O men of insight, and be not of those who disbelieve in Me. Take heed lest the word "Prophet" withhold you from this Most Great Announcement, or any reference to "Vicegerency" debar you from the sovereignty of Him Who is the Vicegerent of God, which overshadoweth all the worlds. Every name hath been created by His Word, and every cause is dependent on His irresistible, His mighty and wondrous Cause. Say: This is the Day of God, the Day on which naught shall be mentioned save His own Self, the omnipotent Protector of all worlds. This is the Cause that hath made all your superstitions and idols to tremble. (#167)

A comparison of this teaching with the original teachings of the Mosaic and Christian religions may be of value to the reader. While the Mosaic religion had two ranks of clergy, the priests (kohanim) and their assistants (leviim), and they were given leave to live in any of the realms of the sons of Israel but were not assigned territories of their own; their courts of law were not intended to be made up of these two ranks but rather of "elders"; few of their prophets were of these two ranks; and the Messiah was not predicted to be a kohen or levi. And yet the Gospel reports only one interaction between Jesus and a kohen, the kohen ha-gadol (chief priest), Gamaliel. His critics and condemnors were many, and they were called Sadducees (Tzadikim), Pharisees (Farisim) and Scribes (Soferim), none of them among the two ranks of priests established in Torah.

Jesus responded to the quest for rank among His own followers in this manner:

20:20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshiping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. 20:21 And he said unto her, *What wilt thou?* She saith unto him, *Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.*

20:22 But Jesus answered and said, *Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?* They say unto him, *We are able.*

20:23 And he saith unto them, *Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.*

20:24 And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

20:25 But Jesus called them unto him, and said, *Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: **but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.** 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.* (Gospel of Matthew)

We recall 'Abdu'l-Baha's affirmation, that there are no ranks in the Baha'i Cause, that all are the servants of God and the servants of humanity. This was His response to Rev. Bixby, who asked if there were any clergy in the Baha'i religion.

Now, to look at this question historically, we know that some of the teachers of the Faith in Iran and in America received financial support from the community, including Louis Gregory (1874-1951)¹⁶ and Albert Vail (1880-1966)¹⁷ in the USA, and that this was eventually discontinued during the ministry of the Guardian. Baha'u'llah had obligated Baha'is who were either unable or unwilling to dedicate part of their time to teaching their religion to support others able to discharge this sacred obligation, and Shoghi Effendi called for the financial support of these teachers of the Faith, particularly those who "pioneered" and were unable to defray all of their own expenses (Citadel of Faith, pp. 15, 61; Dawn of a New Day, p. 137; Messages to the Baha'i World, p. 5; The Unfolding Destiny of the British Baha'i Community, pp. 186, 223). However, service to the Cause was not contingent upon professional training, nor did it entitle whosoever was thereby engaged to lifelong community support. The purpose of the Baha'i teacher and pioneer was not to be perpetually dependent upon the financial support of individual Baha'is or Baha'i institutions, but rather, to raise up an indigenous community of new believers wherever he went, and to move to a new location and render the same service as soon as the community he was shepherding was independent and had no further need of his leadership and initiative. There was no training of such missionaries, there was no formal program required of them prior to pioneering, and they were rarely among the most knowledgeable of the believers, who were often tenured professors not at liberty to provide this kind of service. While Mirza Abu'l-Fadl Gulpaygani (1844-1914)¹⁸ and Fadil Mazandarani (1880-1957)¹⁹ traveled, including to America, to teach their Faith, they were principally engaged in study and in authoring and compiling books and treatises rather than pioneering. Alessandro Bausani (1921-1988)²⁰, Udo Schaefer

¹⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Gregory

¹⁷https://bahaipedia.org/Albert_Ross_Vail

¹⁸https://bahaipedia.org/M%C3%ADr%C3%A1_Abu%E2%80%99Fa%E1%B8%8D

¹⁹https://bahaipedia.org/F%C3%A1dil_Mazandar%C3%A1n%C3%AD

²⁰https://bahaipedia.org/Alessandro_Bausani

(1926-2019)²¹ and other outstanding scholars served the Faith but did not pioneer. It was understood that the qualifications for serving as pioneers were not intellectual but rather a matter of inner calling and liberty to follow that calling.

There are many teachers of the Faith who have not been cited in this treatise, and who certainly deserve to be noted. Either this author or others will continue to chronicle their wonderful contributions. Many changes have occurred in the Baha'i community in recent decades, including in the manner in which the Baha'i Faith is taught, to seekers and adherents alike, and that chapter of history will have to be written some day.

However, to return to Baha'u'llah, He called upon every Baha'i to teach His Cause, and for those unable to do so to provide the means so that others can render this service in their stead. This, surely, is proof sufficient that He wished that this vital function continue and that it be carried out by all but a few of His followers. In a sense, the Baha'i Faith is religion laicized, and in another sense, Baha'is are a religion of priests. We conclude with some of His penetrating words about teaching His Cause:

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. (Baha'u'llah, Tablet to Nasiri'd-Din Shah, in Suriy-i-Haykal, in Summons of the Lord of Hosts, #212-213)

Be not dismayed, O peoples of the world, when the daystar of My beauty is set, and the heaven of My tabernacle is concealed from your eyes. **Arise to further My Cause, and to exalt My Word amongst men. We are with you at all times, and shall strengthen you through the power of truth. We are truly almighty. Whoso hath recognized Me will arise and serve Me with such determination that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose.** (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, #38; Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, LXXI)

Arise ye, under all conditions, to render service to the Cause, for God will assuredly assist you through the power of His sovereignty which overshadoweth the worlds. (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, #74)

²¹https://bahaipedia.org/Udo_Schaefer

Assist ye, O My people, My chosen servants who have arisen to make mention of Me among My creatures and to exalt My Word throughout My realm. These, truly, are the stars of the heaven of My loving providence and the lamps of My guidance unto all mankind. But he whose words conflict with that which hath been sent down in My Holy Tablets is not of Me. Beware lest ye follow any impious pretender. These Tablets are embellished with the seal of Him Who causeth the dawn to appear, Who lifteth up His voice between the heavens and the earth. Lay hold on this Sure Handle and on the Cord of My mighty and unassailable Cause.

The Lord hath granted leave to whosoever desireth it that he be instructed in the divers tongues of the world that he may deliver the Message of the Cause of God throughout the East and throughout the West, that he make mention of Him amidst the kindreds and peoples of the world in such wise that hearts may revive and the moldering bone be quickened. (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, #117-118)

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. Say: Fear ye God and sow not the seeds of dissension amongst men. Observe ye that which hath been enjoined upon you by your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Knowing. 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.**

Numerous letters from thee have been presented before Our Throne. We have perused them as a token of grace on Our part, and for each name thou didst mention therein We have revealed that which will stir the minds of men and will cause the spirits to soar. Moreover We have repeatedly enabled thee to hearken unto the warblings of the birds of heaven and to incline thine ear to the songs of the nightingales pouring forth their melodies upon the branches. Thus was the Pen of God set in motion in thy remembrance that thou mightest admonish men through the power of this utterance which is divinely ordained to be the revealer of the signs of His glory.

Blessed is the spot wherein the anthem of His praise is raised, and blessed the ear that hearkeneth unto that which hath been sent down from the heaven of the loving-kindness of thy Lord, the All-Merciful.

Exhort thou the servants of God unto that whereunto We have exhorted thee that they may abstain from whatsoever is forbidden them in the Mother Book. Those who perpetrate deeds that would create turmoil among the people have indeed strayed far from helping God and His Cause and are numbered with the mischief-makers in the Tablet which God hath designated to be the dawning-place of all Tablets.

Say: If it be Our pleasure We shall render the Cause victorious through the power of a single word from Our presence. He is in truth the Omnipotent, the All-Compelling. Should it be God's intention, there would appear out of the forests of celestial might the lion of indomitable strength whose roaring is like unto the peals of thunder reverberating in the mountains. **However, since Our loving providence surpasseth all things, We have ordained that complete victory should be achieved through**

speech and utterance, that Our servants throughout the earth may thereby become the recipients of divine good. This is but a token of God's bounty vouchsafed unto them. Verily thy Lord is the All-Sufficing, the Most Exalted.

Say: Fear ye God and commit not such deeds as would cause My loved ones on earth to lament. Thus biddeth you this Pen which hath set the Pen of Glory in motion within the arena of wisdom and true understanding.

Convey My greetings unto those whose faces mirror forth the radiance of Bahá, then mention to them this utterance which cheereth the eyes of the righteous. The glory of God rest upon thee and upon such as have firmly clung to the Cord of God, the Revealer of verses...

Restrain thou the inhabitants of those regions from provocative acts, from strife, dissension or aught else that would create trouble. **That which is praiseworthy in these days is the promotion of the Cause. For instance if those people who pursue certain aims were to dedicate themselves to the teaching of the Cause, all the dwellers of those regions would, ere long, be invested with the mantle of faith.**

Should anyone perceive the sweetness of the following passage in the Tablet revealed in honor of Nabíl of Qáin,² he would readily comprehend the significance of assistance: 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.**

O My Name! Utterance must needs possess penetrating power. For if bereft of this quality it would fail to exert influence. **And this penetrating influence dependeth on the spirit being pure and the heart stainless. Likewise it needeth moderation, without which the hearer would be unable to bear it, rather he would manifest opposition from the very outset. And moderation will be obtained by blending utterance with the tokens of divine wisdom which are recorded in the sacred Books and Tablets. Thus when the essence of one's utterance is endowed with these two requisites it will prove highly effective and will be the prime factor in transforming the souls of men. This is the station of supreme victory and celestial dominion. Whoso attaineth thereto is invested with the power to teach the Cause of God and to prevail over the hearts and minds of men.**" (Baha'u'llah, Tablet to Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji; in Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, pp. 198-199)

It behooveth the people of Bahá to render the Lord victorious through the power of their utterance and to admonish the people by their goodly deeds and character, inasmuch as deeds exert greater influence than words.

O Ḥaydar-ʿAlí!¹ Upon thee be the praise of God and His glory. Say: Honesty, virtue, wisdom and a saintly character redound to the exaltation of man, while dishonesty, imposture, ignorance and hypocrisy lead to his abasement. By My life! Man's distinction lieth not in ornaments or wealth, but rather in virtuous behavior and true understanding. Most of the people in Persia are steeped in deception and idle fancy. How great the difference between the condition of these people and the station of such valiant souls as have passed beyond the sea of names and pitched their tents upon the shores of the ocean of detachment. Indeed none but a few of the existing generation hath yet earned the merit of hearkening unto the warblings of the doves of the all-highest Paradise. "Few of My servants are truly thankful."² 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. God

grant you may be graciously aided under all conditions to shatter the idols of superstition and to tear away the veils of the imaginations of men. **Authority lieth in the grasp of God, the Fountainhead of revelation and inspiration and the Lord of the Day of Resurrection.**

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.

The people of Bahá burn brightly amidst the gatherings even as a candle and hold fast unto that which God hath purposed. This station standeth supreme above all stations. Well is it with him who hath cast away the things that the people of the world possess, yearning for that which pertaineth unto God, the Sovereign Lord of eternity.

Say: O God, my God! Thou beholdest me circling round Thy Will with mine eyes turned towards the horizon of Thy bounty, eagerly awaiting the revelation of the effulgent splendors of the sun of Thy favors. I beg of Thee, O Beloved of every understanding heart and the Desire of such as have near access unto Thee, to grant that Thy loved ones may become wholly detached from their own inclinations, holding fast unto that which pleaseth Thee. Attire them, O Lord, with the robe of righteousness and illumine them with the splendors of the light of detachment. **Summon then to their assistance the hosts of wisdom and utterance that they may exalt Thy Word amongst Thy creatures and proclaim Thy Cause amidst Thy servants.** Verily, potent art Thou to do what Thou wilt, and within Thy grasp lie the reins of all affairs. No God is there but Thee, the Mighty, the Ever-Forgiving. (Bahá'u'llah, Baha'u'llah, Tablet to Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji; in Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas)

The sanctified souls should ponder and meditate in their hearts regarding the methods of teaching. From the texts of the wondrous, heavenly Scriptures they should memorize phrases and passages bearing on various instances, so that in the course of their speech they may recite divine verses whenever the occasion demandeth it, inasmuch as these holy verses are the most potent elixir, the greatest and mightiest talisman. So potent is their influence that the hearer will have no cause for vacillation. I swear by My life! This Revelation is endowed with such a power that it will act as the lodestone for all nations and kindreds of the earth. Should one pause to meditate attentively he would recognize that no place is there, nor can there be, for anyone to flee to. (Bahá'u'llah, Baha'u'llah, Tablet to Siyyid Mihdiy-i-Dahaji; in Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas)

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have passed beyond the sea of names and pitched their tents upon the shores of the ocean of detachment. Indeed none but a few of the existing generation hath yet earned the merit of hearkening unto the warblings of the doves of the all-highest Paradise. "Few of My servants are truly thankful."² 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. God grant you may be graciously aided under all conditions to shatter the idols of superstition and to tear away the veils of the imaginations of men. Authority lieth in the grasp of God, the Fountainhead of revelation and inspiration and the Lord of the Day of Resurrection.

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He that riseth to serve My Cause should manifest My wisdom, and bend every effort to banish ignorance from the earth. (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Hikmat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas)

At one time this sublime Word was heard from the Tongue of Him Who is the Possessor of all being and the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below—exalted is the glory of His utterance—: **Piety and detachment are even as two most great luminaries of the heaven of teaching. Blessed the one who hath attained unto this supreme station, this habitation of transcendent holiness and sublimity.** (Baha'u'llah, Excerpts from other Tablets, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, #17)

And further We have said: "**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." (Baha'u'llah, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp. 53-54)

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.** (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, III)

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.

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. Nothing is, or can ever be, hidden from God. If ye follow in His way, His incalculable and imperishable blessings will be showered upon you. This is the luminous Tablet, whose verses have streamed from the moving Pen of Him Who is the Lord of all worlds. Ponder it in your hearts, and be ye of them that observe its precepts. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, V)

Let not your hearts be perturbed, O people, when the glory of My Presence is withdrawn, and the ocean of My utterance is stilled. In My presence amongst you there is a wisdom, and in My absence there is yet another, inscrutable to all but God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. **Verily, We behold you from Our realm of glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favored angels.** (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, LXXII)

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 glory – how much more this world and its corruptible treasures!

Be ye guided in 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 that is on the earth, and the glory of the inmates of the most exalted Paradise, the heaven of heavens. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, XCVI)

If they arise to teach My Cause, they must let the breath of Him Who is the Unconstrained, stir them and must spread it abroad on the earth with high resolve, with minds that are wholly centered in Him,

and with hearts that are completely detached from and independent of all things, and with souls that are sanctified from the world and its vanities. It behoveth them to choose as the best provision for their journey reliance upon God, and to clothe themselves with the love of their Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious. If they do so, their words shall influence their hearers. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, C)

They who follow Me must strive, under all circumstances, to promote the welfare of whosoever will arise for the triumph of My Cause, and must at all times prove their devotion and fidelity unto him. Happy is the man that hearkeneth and observeth My counsel. Woe unto him that faileth to fulfil My wish. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CII)

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. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CXXVIII)

Say: Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Baha, 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 Baha, upon the Tablet of God's irrevocable decree, by the behest of Him Who is the Supreme Ordainer, the All-Knowing. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CXXVIII)

Wherefore, be thankful to God, for having strengthened thee to aid His Cause, for having made the flowers of knowledge and understanding to spring forth in the garden of thine heart. Thus hath His grace encompassed thee, and encompassed the whole of creation. Beware, lest thou allow anything whatsoever to grieve thee. Rid thyself of all attachment to the vain allusions of men, and cast behind thy back the idle and subtle disputations of them that are veiled from God. **Proclaim, then, that which the**

Most Great Spirit will inspire thee to utter in the service of the Cause of thy Lord, that thou mayest stir up the souls of all men and incline their hearts unto this most blessed and all-glorious Court...

Know thou that We have annulled the rule of the sword, as an aid to Our Cause, and substituted for it the power born of the utterance of men. Thus have We irrevocably decreed, by virtue of Our grace. Say: O people! Sow not the seeds of discord among men, and refrain from contending with your neighbor, for your Lord hath committed the world and the cities thereof to the care of the kings of the earth, and made them the emblems of His own power, by virtue of the sovereignty He hath chosen to bestow upon them. He hath refused to reserve for Himself any share whatever of this world's dominion. To this He Who is Himself the Eternal Truth will testify. The things He hath reserved for Himself are the cities of men's hearts, that He may cleanse them from all earthly defilements, and enable them to draw nigh unto the hallowed Spot which the hands of the infidel can never profane. **Open, O people, the city of the human heart with the key of your utterance. Thus have We, according to a pre-ordained measure, prescribed unto you your duty.** (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CXXXIX)

The Pen of the Most High hath decreed and imposed upon every one the obligation to teach this Cause.... God will, no doubt, inspire whosoever detacheth himself from all else but Him, and will cause the pure waters of wisdom and utterance to gush out and flow copiously from his heart. Verily, thy Lord, the All-Merciful, is powerful to do as He willeth, and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth. Wert thou to consider this world, and realize how fleeting are the things that pertain unto it, thou wouldst choose to tread no path except the path of service to the Cause of thy Lord. **None would have the power to deter thee from celebrating His praise, though all men should arise to oppose thee.** (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CXLIV)

He that wisheth to promote the Cause of the one true God, let him promote it through his pen and tongue, rather than have recourse to sword or violence...O ye beloved of God! Repose not yourselves on your couches, nay bestir yourselves as soon as ye recognize your Lord, the Creator, and hear of the things which have befallen Him, and hasten to His assistance. **Unloose your tongues, and proclaim unceasingly His Cause.** This shall be better for you than all the treasures of the past and of the future, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CLIV)

They that have forsaken their country for the purpose of teaching Our Cause -- these shall the Faithful Spirit strengthen through its power. A company of Our chosen angels shall go forth with them, as bidden by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Wise. How great the blessedness that awaiteth him that hath attained the honor of serving the Almighty! By My life! No act, however great, can compare with it, except such deeds as have been ordained by God, the All-Powerful, the Most Mighty. Such a service is, indeed, the prince of all goodly deeds, and the ornament of every goodly act. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the Sovereign Revealer, the Ancient of Days.

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 335 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. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CLVII)

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.

Say: He from whom, in this day, the sweet savours of the remembrance of his Lord, the All-Merciful, have not been diffused, is indeed unworthy of the station of man. He, verily, is of them that have followed their own desires, and shall ere long find himself in grievous loss. Doth it behove you to relate yourselves to Him Who is the God of mercy, and yet commit the things which the Evil One hath committed? Nay, by the Beauty of Him Who is the All-Glorified! could ye but know it. Purge your hearts from love of the world, and your tongues from calumny, and your limbs from whatsoever may withhold you from drawing nigh unto God, the Mighty, the All-Praised. Say: By the world is meant that which turneth you aside from Him Who is the Dawning-Place of Revelation, and inclineth you unto that which is unprofitable unto you. Verily, the thing that deterreth you, in this day, from God is worldliness in its essence. Eschew it, and approach the Most Sublime Vision, this shining and resplendent Seat. 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.

Should your words, O people, be at variance with your deeds, what then shall distinguish you from those who profess their faith in the Lord, their God, and yet, when He came down to them overshadowed with clouds, rejected Him and waxed proud before God, the Incomparable, the Omniscient? Shed not the blood of anyone, O people, neither judge ye anyone unjustly. Thus have ye been commanded by Him Who knoweth, Who is informed of all. They that commit disorders in the land after it hath been well ordered, these indeed have outstepped the bounds that have been set in the Book. Wretched shall be the abode of the transgressors!

God hath prescribed unto everyone 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. Thus doth God instruct you. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.

They who exhort others unto justice, while themselves committing iniquity, stand accused of falsehood by the inmates of the Kingdom and by those who circle round the throne of their Lord, the Almighty, the Beneficent, for that which their tongues have uttered. Commit not, O people, that which dishonoureth your name and the fair name of the Cause of God amongst men. Beware lest ye approach that which your minds abhor. Fear God and follow not in the footsteps of them that are gone astray. Deal not treacherously with the substance of your neighbour. Be ye trustworthy on earth, and withhold not from

the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. He, verily, will bestow upon you the double of what ye possess. He, in truth, is the All-Bounteous, the Most Generous.

Say: We have ordained that our Cause be taught through the power of utterance. Beware lest ye dispute idly with anyone. Whoso ariseth wholly for the sake of his Lord to teach His Cause, the Holy Spirit shall strengthen him and inspire him with that which will illumine the heart of the world, how much more the hearts of those who seek Him.

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.

If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin. He, verily, is the Concealer, the Lord of grace abounding. O ye rich ones on earth! If ye encounter one who is poor, treat him not disdainfully. Reflect upon that whereof ye were created. Every one of you was created of a sorry germ. It behoveth you to observe truthfulness, whereby your temples shall be adorned, your names uplifted, your stations exalted amidst men, and a mighty recompense assured for you before God." (Baha'u'llah, Tablet to Napoleon III, Suriy-i-Haykal, in Summons of the Lord of Hosts; also selections in Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CLVIII)

Center your attention unceasingly upon that which will cause the Word of God to be exalted. In this Most Great Revelation goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character are regarded as the hosts of God, likewise is His blessed and holy Word. These hosts are the lodestone of the hearts of men and the effective means for unlocking doors. Of all the weapons in the world this is the keenest.

Beseech thou God to graciously assist all men to observe that which His all-glorious Pen hath recorded in the sacred Books and Tablets. (Baha'u'llah, Excerpts from other Tablets, in Tablets revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas)

Do thou beseech God to enable thee to remain steadfast in this path, and **aid thee to guide the peoples of the world to Him Who is the manifest and sovereign Ruler**, Who hath revealed Himself in a distinct attire, Who giveth utterance to a Divine and specific Message. This is the essence of faith and certitude. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CLX)

Gird up the loins of thine endeavor, that haply thou mayest guide thy neighbor to the law of God, the Most Merciful. Such an act, verily, excelleth all other acts in the sight of God, the All-Possessing, the Most High. Such must be thy steadfastness in the Cause of God, that no earthly thing whatsoever will have the power to deter thee from thy duty. Though the powers of earth be leagued against thee, though all men dispute with thee, thou must remain unshaken.

Be unrestrained as the wind, while carrying the Message of Him Who hath caused the Dawn of Divine Guidance to break. Consider, how the wind, faithful to that which God hath ordained, bloweth upon all the regions of the earth, be they inhabited or desolate. Neither the sight of desolation, nor the evidences of prosperity, can either pain or please it. It bloweth in every direction, as bidden by its Creator. So should be every one that claimeth to be a lover of the one true God. It behoveth him to fix his gaze upon the fundamentals of His Faith, and to labor diligently for its propagation. Wholly for the sake of God he

should proclaim His Message, and with that same spirit accept whatever response his words may evoke in his hearer. He who shall accept and believe, shall receive his reward; and he who shall turn away, shall receive none other than his own punishment. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CLXI)

Strengthen Thou, O my Lord, the hearts of them that love Thee, that they may not be affrighted by the hosts of the infidels that are turned back from Thee, but may follow Thee in whatsoever hath been revealed by Thee. **Aid them, moreover, to remember and to praise Thee, and to teach Thy Cause with eloquence and wisdom.** Thou art He Who hath called Himself the Most Merciful. Ordain, then, O my God, for me and for whosoever hath sought Thee what beseemeth the excellence of Thy glory and the greatness of Thy majesty. No God is there but Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. (Prayers and Meditations, XXXI)