The Compilation of Compilations vol I

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The Compilation of Compilations, Volume I

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Compilation of Compilations, Volume I

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EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS CONCERNING ARTS AND CRAFTS

I. From the Writings of Baha'u'llah

1. Blessed are those who have fixed their gaze on the realm of glory and have followed the commandments of the Lord of Names. Blessed is he who in the days of God will engage in handicrafts. This is a bounty from God, for in this Most Great Dispensation it is acceptable in the sight of God for man to occupy himself in a trade which relieveth him of depending upon charity. The craft of every craftsman is regarded as worship.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

2. One of the names of God is the Fashioner. He loveth craftsmanship. Therefore any of His servants who manifesteth this attribute is acceptable in the sight of this Wronged One. Craftsmanship is a book among the books of divine sciences, and a treasure among the treasures of His heavenly wisdom. This is a knowledge with meaning, for some of the sciences are brought forth by words and come to an end with words.
(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

3. God grant that thou wilt exert thine utmost to acquire perfections, as well as proficiency in a craft.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

4. The one true God, exalted be He, loveth to witness handiworks of high craftsmanship produced by His loved ones. Blessed art thou, for what thy skill hath produced hath reached the presence of thy Lord, the Exiled, the Wronged. Please God every one of His friends may be enabled to acquire one of the crafts, and be confirmed in adhering to what hath been ordained in the Book of God, the All- Glorious, the All-Wise.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian and Arabic)

5. Teach ye your children so that they may peruse the divine verses every morn and eve. God hath prescribed unto every father to educate his The <p2> children, both boys and girls, in the sciences and in morals, and in crafts and professions....

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

6. It is incumbent upon the children to exert themselves to the utmost in acquiring the art of reading and writing.... Writing skills that will provide for urgent needs will be enough for some; and then it is better and more fitting that they should spend their time in studying those branches of knowledge which are of use.

As for what the Supreme Pen hath previously set down, the reason is that in every art and skill, God loveth the highest perfection.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

7. The fifth Taraz concerneth the protection and preservation of the stations of God's servants. One should not ignore the truth of any matter, rather should

one give expression to that which is right and true. The people of Baha should not deny any soul the reward due to him, should treat craftsmen with deference, and, unlike the people aforetime, should not defile their tongues with abuse.

In this Day the sun of craftsmanship shineth above the horizon of the occident and the river of arts is flowing out of the sea of that region. One must speak with fairness and appreciate such bounty....

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed After the Kitab-i-Aqdas" [rev, ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1978) pp. 38-39)

8. The third Tajalli is concerning arts, crafts and sciences. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words. Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world. Unto this beareth witness the Mother Book on the day of His return....

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed After the Kitab-i-Aqdas", pp. 51-52)

9. At the outset of every endeavour, it is incumbent to look to the end of it. Of all the arts and sciences, set the children to studying those which will result in advantage to man, will ensure his progress and elevate his <p3> rank. Thus the noisome odours of lawlessness will be dispelled, and thus through the high endeavours of the nation's leaders, all will live cradled, secure and in peace.

The Great Being saith: The learned of the day must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom....

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed After the Kitab-i-Aqdas", pp. 16 & 69)

10. The purpose of learning should be the promotion of the welfare of the people, and this can be achieved through crafts. It hath been revealed and is now repeated that the true worth of artists and craftsmen should be appreciated, for they advance the affairs of mankind. Just as the foundations of religion are made firm through the Law of God, the means of livelihood depend upon those who are engaged in arts and crafts. True learning is that which is conducive to the well-being of the world, not to pride and self-conceit, or to tyranny, violence and pillage.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

II. From the Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha

11. Every person must have an occupation, a trade or a craft, so that he may carry other people's burdens, and not himself be a burden to others.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

12. Thou hast written regarding thy meeting with... He hath written that he

desireth to teach thee one of the crafts and show thee affection and consideration. We beseech God that this purpose may be attained, and thou wilt learn such a skill, for according to the divine ordinances, every person must acquire a craft.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

13. He must study every day from morning till noon, so that he may learn how to read and write. From noon till about sunset he should acquire a craft. The children must both learn to read and acquire an art or skill.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian) <p4>

14. It is necessary for all to learn a craft, through which the people may earn their living. This commandment is universal.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

15. It is the commandment of the Blessed Beauty, may my life be a sacrifice at His Threshold, that whosoever engageth in a craft, should endeavour to acquire in it utmost proficiency. Should he do so, that craft becometh a form of worship.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

16. Another friend asked, "In the Tablets it is stated that we must be severed and detached. In another place it is stated that we must learn a trade or profession. Do not these two statements contradict each other?" 'Abdu'l-Baha replied, "In the Cause of Baha'u'llah, it is incumbent upon every soul to acquire a trade and an occupation. For example, I know how to weave or make a mat, and you know some other trade. This, in itself is an act of worship, provided that it is conducted on the basis of utmost honesty and faithfulness.

And this is the cause of prosperity. Yet, in spite of being so occupied, if the heart is not chained and tied to this world, and is not troubled by current events, neither hindered by wealth from rendering service to mankind, nor grieved because of poverty, - then this is human perfection. Otherwise in a state of poverty, to manifest generosity and in a state of weakness to claim justice - this can easily be (said, but it is not a proof of man's attainments and alertness."

(From an article written by Dr. Z. Baghdadi entitled "'Abdu'l-Baha in America", published in "Star of the West", Vol. 19, No. 7, p. 219)

17. And further, according to the Divine commandments, every child must learn reading and writing, and acquire such branches of knowledge as are useful and necessary, as well as learning an art or skill. The utmost care must be devoted to these matters; any neglect of them, any failure to act on them, is not permissible.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

18. Among the greatest of all great services is the education of children, <p5>

and promotion of the various sciences, crafts and arts. Praised be God, ye are now exerting strenuous efforts toward this end. The more ye persevere in this most important task, the more will ye witness the confirmations of God, to such a degree that ye yourselves will be astonished.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

19. O ye recipients of the favours of God! In this new and wondrous Age, the unshakable foundation is the teaching of sciences and arts. According to explicit Holy Texts, every child must be taught crafts and arts, to the degree that is needful. Wherefore, in every city and village, schools must be established and every child in that city or village is to engage in study to the necessary degree.

It followeth that whatever soul shall offer his aid to bring this about will assuredly be accepted at the Heavenly Threshold, and extolled by the Company on High.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.] (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), Sec. 109, pp. 134-35.)

20. Thy letter was received. Praise be to God it imparted the good news of thy health and safety and indicated that thou art ready to enter an agricultural school. This is highly suitable. Strive as much as possible to become proficient in the science of agriculture, for in accordance with the divine teachings the acquisition of sciences and the perfection of arts are considered acts of worship. If a man engageth with all his power in the acquisition of a science or in the perfection of an art, it is as if he has been worshipping God in churches and temples. Thus as thou enterest a school of agriculture and strivest in the acquisition of that science thou art day and night engaged in acts of worship - acts that are accepted at the threshold of the Almighty. What bounty greater than this that science should be considered as an act of worship and art as service to the Kingdom of God.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", 126, pp. 144-45)

21. O thou servant of the One true God! In this universal dispensation man's wondrous craftsmanship is reckoned as worship of the Resplendent Beauty. <p6>

Consider what a bounty and blessing it is that craftsmanship is regarded as worship. In former times, it was believed that such skills were tantamount to ignorance, if not a misfortune, hindering man from drawing nigh unto God. Now consider how His infinite bestowals and abundant favours have changed hell-fire into blissful paradise, and a heap of dark dust into a luminous garden.

It behoveth the craftsmen of the world at each moment to offer a thousand tokens of gratitude at the Sacred Threshold, and to exert their highest endeavour and diligently pursue their professions so that their efforts may produce that which will manifest the greatest beauty and perfection before the eyes of all men.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" 127, p. 145

22. Make every effort to acquire the advanced knowledge of the day, and strain every nerve to carry forward the divine civilization. Establish schools that are well organized, and promote the fundamentals of instruction in the various branches of knowledge through teachers who are pure and sanctified, distinguished for their high standards of conduct and general excellence, and strong in faith; scholars and educators with a thorough knowledge of sciences and arts.

Included must be promotion of the arts, the discovery of new wonders, the expansion of trade, and the development of industry. The methods of civilization and the beautification of the country must also be encouraged...

(From a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

23. While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly grace, foster them in the cradle of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies that will benefit mankind.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", 102, p. 129) <p7>

III. From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to individual believers unless otherwise cited

24. In connection with your dear husband, Shoghi Effendi would consider it in full and happy accord with the expressed desire of the Master that every man should have some permanent work. Much as he desires to see you both devote your entire energies to a well thought out, progressive and attractive presentation of the Cause - a thing he feels we lack lamentably- he would be very pleased to see your husband follow what the Master often repeated even to His own immediate family, namely the necessity of a profession. Of course you know that He always said His had been mat-making.

(20 September 1929)

25. He sincerely hopes that as the Cause grows and talented persons come under its banner, they will begin to produce in art the divine spirit that animates their soul. Every religion has brought with it some form of art - let us see what wonders this Cause is going to bring along. Such a glorious spirit should also give vent to a glorious art. The Temple with all its beauty is only the first ray of an early dawn; even more wondrous things are to be achieved in the future.

(11 December 1931)

26. Shoghi Effendi was very much interested to learn of the success of the "Pageant of the Nations" you produced. He sincerely hopes that all those who attended it were inspired by the same spirit that animated you while arranging it.

It is through such presentations that we can arouse the interest of the greatest number of people in the spirit of the Cause. The day will come when the Cause will spread like wildfire when its spirit and teachings will be presented on the stage or in art and literature as a whole. Art can better awaken such noble sentiments than cold rationalizing, especially among the mass of the people.

We have to wait only a few years to see how the spirit breathed by Baha'u'llah will find expression in the work of the artists. What you and some other Baha'is are attempting are only faint rays that precede the effulgent light of a glorious morn. We cannot yet value the part the Cause is destined to play in the life of society. We have to give it time. The <p8> material this spirit has to mould is too crude and unworthy, but it will at last give way and the Cause of Baha'u'llah will reveal itself in its full splendour.

(10 October 1932, cited in "Baha'i News", 73 (May 1933) p. 7)

27. Although now is only the very beginning of Baha'i art, yet the friends who feel they are gifted in such matters should endeavour to develop and cultivate their gifts and through their works to reflect, however inadequately, the Divine Spirit which Baha'u'llah has breathed into the world.

(4 November 1937)

28. As regards producing a book of Baha'i songs, your understanding that there is no cultural expression which could be called Baha'i at this time (distinctive music, literature, art, architecture, etc., being the flower of the civilization and not coming at the beginning of a new Revelation), is correct. However, that does not mean that we haven't Baha'i songs, in other words, songs written by Baha'is on Baha'i subjects. There is no objection to getting out a compilation of these, but he does not think money should be spent in printing it, in view of the state of the National Fund, and the much more important work in the teaching field which needs to be undertaken this year. If you can get out such a book in a mimeographed form, he feels this would be sufficient to meet the needs at this time.

(21 September 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

Revised August 1990 <p9>

EXTRACTS ON BAHA'I BURIAL

Extracts from the Writings of Baha'u'llah:

29. It is forbidden you to carry the body more than an hour's distance from the town; bury it with tranquillity and cheer in a nearby place.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

Question: Regarding the carrying of the dead where it is bidden that they should be buried within one hour's distance, does this law apply to transportation both by land and sea, or is it otherwise?

Answer: The law applieth to transportation by land as well as by sea, whether it be an hour's distance by boat or train. The purpose is the time-limit of one hour, no matter what means of conveyance is employed. However, the sooner the burial taketh place, the more fitting and preferable.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

30. Briefly the law for the burial of the dead states that it is forbidden to carry the body for more than one hour's journey from the place of death; that the body should be wrapped in a shroud of silk or cotton, and on its finger should be placed a ring bearing the inscription "I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate"; and that the coffin should be of crystal, stone or hard fine wood. A specific Prayer for the Dead is ordained, to be said before interment.[1] It has been explained by 'Abdu'l Baha and the Guardian that this law prohibits cremation of the dead. The formal prayer and the ring are meant to be used for those who have attained the age of maturity. (p. 46)
[1 See Extract 4]

("A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah", (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1973), pp. 62-63)

31. The Prayer for the Dead is published in Prayers and Meditations of Baha'u'llah, No. CLXVII. It is the only Baha'i obligatory prayer which is to be recited in congregation; it is to be recited by one believer while all present stand. There is no requirement to face the Qiblih when reciting this prayer. (p. 7) <p10>

("Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas" p. 58)

Extracts from Letters Written on behalf of the Guardian:

32. Regarding the Baha'i funeral service: it is extremely simple, as it consists only of a congregational prayer to be read before burial. This prayer will be made available to the friends when the "Aqdas" is translated and published. In the mean time your National Spiritual Assembly should take great care lest any uniform procedure or ritual in this matter be adopted or imposed upon the friends. The danger in this, as in some other cases regarding Baha'i worship, is that a definite system of rigid rituals and practices be developed among the believers. The utmost simplicity and flexibility should be observed, and a selection from the Baha'i Sacred Writings would serve the purpose at the present time, provided this selection is not rigidly and uniformly adopted on all such occasions.

(10 January 1936 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

33. Both the Baha'i marriage service and the Baha'i funeral service are extremely simple in character, and you must have certainly read in the "Baha'i News" the explanation given by the Guardian on these two points. As already stated all forms of rigidity and uniformity in such matters should be avoided

by the believers. What is of vital importance is to strictly observe the laws and directions specifically revealed by Baha'u'llah. These will be gradually brought to the attention of the friends and explained to them by the Guardian. In the mean time great care should be taken to prevent the introduction of unnecessary details and additions of a man-made nature to the body of the Teachings.

(19 May 1936 to an individual believer)

34. There is no objection whatsoever to non-Baha'is being present when the long prayer for the dead is read, as long as they respect our manner of reading it by rising and standing as the Baha'is do on this occasion. Nor, indeed, is there any objection to non-Baha'is being present during the reading of any Baha'i prayer for the departed. In reporting Baha'i marriages it is much better to mention that the ceremony was performed by the Assembly, as this is the proper thing to <p11> do, and an individual only acts for the Assembly on this occasion. As a funeral is not a legal ceremony more latitude can be allowed, especially as the family of the deceased may want some particular Baha'i friend to officiate.

. . .

Mr. and Mrs.... are naturally quite free to be buried in their own plot in the Cemetery, if that is what they desire.

An official Baha'i funeral service should only be given for a believer, but there is no objection to the reading of Baha'i prayers, or indeed to a Baha'i conducting the funeral service of a non-Baha'i, if this has been requested.

(20 July 1946 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

35. The body may be conveyed by any means to a distance that can be covered in one hour's journey.

(5 August 1949 to an individual believer)

36. The Guardian thinks the ideal thing would be for the believers to have a Baha'i Cemetery....

(5 September 1950 to an individual believer)

37. Regarding the questions which you ask, concerning Baha'i burials, etc. At the present time, the Guardian is not stressing these matters, as their establishment might divert attention from the supreme tasks we have before us. However, the answers are as follows: Under the Baha'i teachings it seems clear that the body is not to be embalmed. The burial should take place within an hour's travel time from the place of death. The preparation for the body for burial is a careful washing, and placing in a shroud of white cloth, silk preferably. There is nothing in the teachings with regard to turning the body over to Scientific Institutions for scientific research, and therefore the individual may do as he wishes, until such a time as the Universal House of

Justice may legislate on this matter, if they ever do. The practice in the Orient is to bury the person within 24 hours of the time of death, sometimes even sooner, although there is no provision in the teachings as to the time limit.

(2 April 1955 to an individual believer) <p12>

38. There is nothing in the Teachings against leaving our bodies to medical science. The only thing we should stipulate is that we do not wish to be cremated, as it is against our Baha'i Laws.

As many people make arrangements to leave their bodies to medical science for investigation, he suggests that you inquire, either through some lawyer friend or through some hospital, how you could do this, and then make the necessary provision in your Will, stipulating that you wish your body to be of service to mankind in death, and that, being a Baha'i, you request that your remains not be cremated and not be taken more than an hour's journey from the place you die. The spirit has no more connection with the body after it departs, but, as the body was once the temple of the spirit, we Baha'is are taught that it must be treated with respect.

(22 March 1957 to an individual believer)

Extracts from Letters written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice:

39. For the burial of the dead the only requirements now binding in the West are to bury the body (not to cremate it), not to carry it more than a distance of one hour's journey from the place of death, and to say the Prayer for the Dead if the deceased is a believer over the age of 15.

(9 June 1974 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iceland)

40. You have asked whether it is permissible for the friends to chant a prayer collectively. There is a difference between chanting a prayer collectively and congregational prayer. The latter is a formal prayer usually led by an individual using a prescribed ritual. Congregational prayer in this form is forbidden in the Faith except in the case of the Prayer for the Dead. While reciting prayers in unison and spontaneously joining in the recitation of the Words of God is not forbidden, the friends should bear in mind the advice of the beloved Guardian on this subject when he stated that: although the friends are thus left free to follow their own inclination, ... they should take the utmost care that any manner they practice should not acquire too rigid a character, and thus develop into an institution. This is a point which the friends should <p13> always bear in mind, lest they deviate from the clear path indicated in the Teachings."[1]
[1 "Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas", No.2 of Notes, p. 57.]

(6 February 1975 to an individual believer)

41. The Universal House of Justice advises that the place of death may be taken to be the city or town in which the believer passes away, and therefore the hour's journey may be calculated from the city limits to the place of burial.

However, it should be borne in mind that the spirit of Baha'u'llah's law is to be buried near where one dies.

At the present time there are no definite regulations for preparing Baha'i cemeteries. However, in a Tablet of the Master's, He emphasizes the need for the cemetery to have a beautiful outward appearance and states that the graves should not be joined together but that each one should have a flower bed around its four sides. He also indicates that it would be pleasing if a pool were located in the center of the cemetery and beautiful trees were planted around it as well as around the cemetery itself.

(20 February 1978 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Brazil)

42. The Prayer for the Dead should be recited at the funeral if the deceased is 15 years old or more. If there is no one at the funeral able to read, it is sufficient to say only that part of the Prayer which requires the repetition nineteen times of each of six short verses.

The body must be placed in the grave in such a position that the feet point towards 'Akka (the Qiblih).

(From a statement prepared by a National Spiritual Assembly in Africa and approved by the Universal House of Justice on 14 June 1982)

Revised August 1990 <p15>

EXTRACTS FROM THE BAHA'I WRITINGS ON BUDDHA, KRISHNA, ZOROASTER AND RELATED SUBJECTS

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

43. Blessed souls whether Moses, Jesus, Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius, or Muhammad were the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity. How can we deny such irrefutable proof? How can we be blind to such light?...

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

44. Thou hast written regarding Buddha and Confucius. Buddha was an illustrious personage. Confucius became the cause of civilization, advancement and prosperity for the people of China. Now it is not the time when we discuss concerning the stations and positions of those who are passed away. We must concentrate our attention upon the present. What hath transpired in a former time is past. Now is the time when we restrict our discussion to the Most Great Luminary of Peace and Salvation in this Age, to talk of the Blessed Perfection [Baha'u'llah] and to voice His exhortations, behests and teachings. Buddha and Confucius were kings in bygone ages who have disappeared. Their sovereignty in this world is ended and their cycle is completed. Now the Throne of the Kingdom of ABHA is established and the Blessed Perfection is sitting upon the Throne of Grandeur. We must raise this Call, promulgate the Word of God and live in accord with the teachings and advices of the Beauty of ABHA

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 2 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1915), pp. 469-70)

45. There are prophecies concerning this Manifestation in the Buddhistic books, but they are in symbols and metaphors, and some spiritual conditions are mentioned therein, but the leaders of religion do not understand. They think these prophecies are material things; yet those signs are foreshadowing spiritual occurrences.

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 3 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1916), p. 565)<p16>

46. Buddha also established a new religion, and Confucius renewed morals and ancient virtues, but their institutions have been entirely destroyed. The beliefs and rites of the Buddhists and Confucianists have not continued in accordance with their fundamental teachings. The founder of Buddhism was a wonderful soul. He established the Oneness of God, but later the original principles of His doctrines gradually disappeared, and ignorant customs and ceremonials arose and increased until they finally ended in the worship of statues and images.

. . .

So it is with religions; through the passing of time they change from their original foundation, the truth of the Religion of God entirely departs, and the spirit of it does not stay; heresies appear, and it becomes a body without a soul. That is why it is renewed

.

The meaning is that the Buddhists and Confucianists now worship images and statues. They are entirely heedless of the Oneness of God and believe in imaginary gods like the ancient Greeks. But in the beginning it was not so; there were different principles and other ordinances.

("Some Answered Questions", (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), pp. 165-166)

47. ... Thou hadst written that in the sacred books of the followers of Zoroaster it is written that in the latter days, in three separate Dispensations, the sun must needs be brought to a standstill. In the first Dispensation, it is predicted, the sun will remain motionless for ten days; in the second for twice that time; in the third for no less than one whole month. The interpretation of this prophecy is this: the first Dispensation to which it refers is the Muhammadan Dispensation during which the Sun of Truth stood still or ten days. Each day is reckoned as one century. The Muhammadan Dispensation must have, therefore, lasted no less than one thousand years, which is precisely the period that has elapsed from the setting of the Star of the Imamate to the advent of the Dispensation proclaimed by the Bab. The second Dispensation referred to in this prophecy is the one inaugurated by the Bab Himself which began in the year 1260 A.H. and was brought to a close in the year 1280 A.H. As to the third Dispensation -- the Revelation proclaimed by Baha'u'llah -- inasmuch as the Sun of Truth when attaining that station shineth in the plenitude of its meridian splendor its duration hath been fixed for a

period of one whole month, which is the maximum time taken by the sun to pass through a sign of the Zodiac. From this thou canst imagine the magnitude of the Baha'i <p17> cycle -- a cycle that must extend over a period of at least five hundred thousand years.

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 101-2)

From the Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

48. ...The real teaching of Buddha is the same as the teaching of Jesus Christ. The teachings of all the Prophets are the same in character. Now men have changed the teaching. If you look at the present practice of the Buddhist religion, you will see that there is little of the Reality left. Many worship idols although their teaching forbids it.

Buddha had disciples and he wished to send them out into the world to teach, so he asked them questions to see if they were prepared as he would have them be. "When you go to the East and to the West," said the Buddha, "and the people shut their doors to you and refuse to speak to you, what will you do?" -- The disciples answered and said; "We shall be very thankful that they do us no harm." -- "Then if they do you harm and mock, what will you do?" -- 'We shall be very thankful that they do not give us worse treatment." -- "If they throw you into prison?" -- 'We shall still be grateful that they do not kill us." -- "What if they were to kill you?" the Master asked for the last time. "Still," answered the disciples, "we will be thankful, for they cause us to be martyrs. What more glorious fate is there than this, to die for the glory of God?" And the Buddha said: 'Well done!" The teaching of Buddha was like a young and beautiful child, and now it has become as an old and decrepit man. Like the aged man it cannot see, it cannot hear, it cannot remember anything....

('Abdu'l-Baha in London: Addresses, and Notes of Conversations", Commemorative ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), pp. 63-64)

49. The Message of Krishna is the message of love. All God's prophets have brought the message of love....

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912", 11th ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 35)

50. A star has the same radiance if it shines from the East or from the West. Be free from prejudice, so will you love the Sun of Truth from <p18> whatsoever point in the horizon it may arise! You will realize that if the Divine light of truth shone in Jesus Christ it also shone in Moses and in Buddha. The earnest seeker will arrive at this truth....

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912", p. 137)

From the Writings of Shoghi Effendi:

51. To Israel He was neither more nor less than the incarnation of the "Everlasting Father," the "Lord of Hosts" come down "with ten thousands of

saints"; to Christendom Christ returned "in the glory of the Father," to Shi'ah Islam the return of the Imam Husayn; to Sunni Islam the descent of the "Spirit of God" (Jesus Christ); to the Zoroastrians the promised Shah-Bahram; to the Hindus the reincarnation of Krishna; to the Buddhists the fifth Buddha.

. . .

To His Dispensation the sacred books of the followers of Zoroaster had referred as that in which the sun must needs be brought to a standstill for no less than one whole month. To Him Zoroaster must have alluded when, according to tradition, He foretold that a period of three thousand years of conflict and contention must needs precede the advent of the World-Savior Shah-Bahram, Who would triumph over Ahriman and usher in an era of blessedness and peace.

He alone is meant by the prophecy attributed to Gautama Buddha Himself, that "a Buddha named Maitreye, the Buddha of universal fellowship" should, in the fullness of time, arise and reveal "His boundless glory." To Him the Bhagavad-Gita of the Hindus had referred as the "Most Great Spirit," the "Tenth Avatar," the "Immaculate Manifestation of Krishna."

("God Passes By", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), pp. 94-95)

From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to individual believers unless otherwise noted:

52. Concerning the passage in "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah" in which the Guardian quotes 'Abdu'l-Baha's interpretation of the prophecy referring to the times when the sun would stand still in the heavens he wishes me to explain that the days referred to in this prophecy have to be reckoned differently. In the Sacred Scriptures of various religions there <p19> are to be found frequent references to days, but these have been considered as indicating different periods of time, as for instance in the Qur'an a day is reckoned as one thousand years. The first ten days in the above-mentioned prophecy represent each a century, making thus a total of one thousand lunar years. As to the twenty days referring to the Babi Dispensation, each of them represents only one lunar year, the total of twenty years marking the duration of the Revelation of the Bab. The thirty days in the last Dispensation should not be reckoned numerically, but should be considered as symbolizing the incomparable greatness of the Baha'i Revelation, which, though not the final, is none the less thus far the fullest revelation of God to man. >From a physical point of view, the thirty days represent the maximum time taken by the sun to pass through a sign of the zodiac. They thus represent a culminating point in the evolution of this star. So also from a spiritual standpoint these thirty days should be viewed as indicating the highest, though not the final stage in the spiritual evolution of mankind.

(7 August 1934 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

53. As regards your study of the Hindu religion: The origins of this and many

other religions that abound in India are not quite known to us, and even the Orientalists and the students of religion are not in complete accord about the results of their investigations in that field. The Baha'i 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. He would urge you, however, to carry on your studies in that field, although its immensity is wellnigh bewildering, with the view of bringing the Message to the Hindus. The task of converting this section of the Indian population is a most vital obligation, although the Guardian is fully aware of the many difficulties that it presents. Nevertheless the friends should do their best to make as many converts among the Hindus as they possibly can.

(17 April 1936)

54. The number nine, which in itself is the number of perfection, is considered by the Baha'is as sacred because it is symbolic of the perfection of the Baha'i Revelation, which constitutes the ninth in the line of existing <p20> religions, the latest and fullest Revelation which mankind has ever known. The eighth is the Religion of the Bab, and the remaining seven are: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism,Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the religion of the Sabaeans. These religions are not the only true religions that have appeared in the world, but are the only ones which are still existing. There have always been divine prophets and messengers, to many of whom the Qur'an refers. But the only ones existing are those mentioned above.

(28 July 1936)

55. The nine religions to which you have referred include both the Babi and the Baha'i Dispensations, Baha'u'llah being the ninth Prophet in the series. The other Prophets included are Zoroaster, Krishna, Moses, the Christ, Muhammad, Buddha, the Prophet of the Sabaeans Whose name is unrecorded, the Bab and Baha'u'llah.... Buddha appeared in the Adamic cycle....

(13 July 1938)

56. Regarding Lao-Tse: the Baha'is do not consider him a prophet, or even a secondary prophet or messenger, unlike Buddha or Zoroaster, both of Whom were divinely appointed and fully independent Manifestations of God.

As to the religion of the Sabaeans, very little is known about the origins of this religion, though we Baha'is are certain of one thing, that the founder of it has been a divinely-sent Messenger. The country where Sabaeanism became widespread and flourished was Chaldea, and Abraham is considered as having been a follower of that Faith.

(10 November 1939)

57. With reference to your question concerning the Sabaean and Hindu religions: there is nothing in the Teachings that could help us in ascertaining which one of these two Faiths is older. Neither history seems to be able to provide a

definite answer to this question. The records concerning the origin of these religions are not sufficiently detailed and reliable to offer any conclusive evidence on this point.

(9 November 1940) <p21>

58. Your question concerning Brahma and Krishna: such matters, as no reference occurs to them in the Teachings, are left for students of history and religion to resolve and clarify.

(14 April 1941)

59. Zoroaster lived about a thousand years before Christ. There is no exact date in the teachings regarding the beginning of His Dispensation. The personages in Zenda- Avesta cannot be absolutely relied upon, as the Avesta is not to be regarded as the authentic compilation of the writings of the Prophet.

(30 July 1941 to a National Committee and an individual believer)

60. Confucius was not a Prophet. It is quite correct to say he is the founder of a moral system and a great reformer. The Buddha was a Manifestation of God, like Christ, but His followers do not possess His authentic writings.

(26 December 1941 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New) Zealand)

61. In the Baha'i teachings it states that all the Prophets have foretold a Promised One Who is Baha'u'llah. We cannot be sure of the authenticity, word for word, of any of the past Holy Scriptures except the Qur'an, as they were either not written down during the Prophet's lifetime or have been changed in the course of time and the originals lost; what we can be sure of is that when Baha'u'llah or the Master stated that Zoroaster foretold a Promised One's coming, it is correct. The Zoroastrians have no way of contradicting this assertion of ours, as they themselves know their scriptures are not in the original form, and therefore not absolutely authentic.

(22 June 1943)

62. There is no mention in the Baha'i writings of any connection between the Near Eastern and Far Eastern Prophets. There are a very few references made to Buddha, which you have evidently seen. In "God Passes By" you will find that Baha'u'llah is the return of the Fifth Buddha, etc., and this is all the information the Guardian has, on this subject of Baha'u'llah's fulfilling Buddhistic prophecies, at present. <p22>

(24 June 1947)

63. Regarding your questions: the only reason there is not more mention of the Asiatic Prophets is because Their names seem to be lost in the mists of ancient history. Buddha is mentioned, and Zoroaster, in our Scriptures -- both non-Jewish Prophets or non Semitic Prophets. We are taught there always have been Manifestations of God, but we do not have any record of Their names.

(4 October 1950)

64. We cannot be sure of the authenticity of the scriptures of Buddha and Krishna, so we certainly cannot draw any conclusions about virgin birth mentioned in them. There is no reference to this subject in our teachings, so the Guardian cannot pronounce an opinion.

There are no dates in our teachings regarding the actual dates of the Prophets of the Adamic Cycle, so we cannot give any. Tentatively we can accept what historians may consider accurate. Naturally the dates referring to Muhammad, the Bab and Baha'u'llah we are sure of.

As our teachings do not state Zoroaster is the connecting link between the Euphrates and the Prophets in India we cannot assert this. Abraham and Krishna are two separate individuals, with no connection that we know of.

(25 November 1950)

65. Regarding the question of days referring in some cases to years, and in some cases to centuries in the Tablet to a Zoroastrian follower of the Faith: The only answer we can give people who lack the faith to accept the words of the Master as being divinely inspired interpretations of the truth, is that the language of prophecy has always in the past been veiled in meaning, and that allusions are found in all the Holy Books which cannot be accepted literally, and have not been satisfactorily interpreted until the appearance of this Revelation when, we believe, the books of the past and their mysteries have been at last unsealed. Could anybody find a more logical interpretation of this allusion in the Zoroastrian literature than that given by 'Abdu'l-Baha, or one which fits a coherent interpretation of religious history as well as the Master's words do?

(16 April 1951) <p23>

66. As there were no followers of the Bab or Baha'u'llah derived from the religions of the Far East in Their days, this may be the reason that They did not address any Tablets directly to these people. Also we must remember that every religion springs from some root, and just as Christianity sprang from Judaism, our own religion sprang from Islam, and that is why so many of the teachings deduce their proofs from Islam.

(5 March 1957)

Revised September 1990 <p25>

CENTERS OF BAHA'I LEARNING

Extracts from the Writings of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice

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BAHA'I SUMMER SCHOOLS

Importance and Purpose:

67. He was very happy to hear of the success of the school, especially that it has been the means of bringing to light hitherto unsuspected capacities among the friends.... The Summer School has been carrying on the divine work of bringing forth jewels from the mine of humanity and it is the hope of Shoghi Effendi and the friend here that those who have been trained in the Summer School will carry on the work in the various localities from which they come...

(From a letter dated 21 October 1925 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Green Acre Summer School, published in "Baha'i News" (10 February 1926), p. 3)

68. Such gatherings will give a chance to friends from different localities to come together and exchange views on the different problems of the Cause and also attract new souls to the spirit and teachings of the Faith. Not only will their knowledge of the writings deepen but also the unity of the Cause will be strengthened and the work of teaching enhanced....

Shoghi Effendi was very glad to hear that so many new souls were confirmed there. As we see the suffering around us, caused by the prevailing financial crises, we should redouble our energy in bringing the message of comfort and peace to those desperate souls, and add to our labours that the golden age promised by Baha'u'llah may dawn sooner....

(From a letter dated 18 November 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, published in "Baha'i News" 63 (June 1932), p. 4)

69. Shoghi Effendi feels that the real purpose of these Summer Schools is to deepen the knowledge of the friends. Lectures are very essential for they give a wonderful picture of the subject-matter. But it is not sufficient to have a picture; the friends should deepen their knowledge and this can be achieved if together with the lectures there are study classes and seminar work carried on by the same lecturer.

The world is undoubtedly facing a great crisis and the social, economic and political conditions are becoming daily more complex. Should the friends desire to take the lead in reforming the world, they should start by educating themselves and understand what the troubles <p27> and problems really are which baffle the mind of man. It is in these Summer Schools that this training should be provided for the friends.

(From a letter dated 27 January 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an

individual believer, published in "Baha'i News" 63 (June 1932), p. 3)

70. The Guardian fully agrees with your idea that the permanent welfare of the Faith demands the steady development of local Baha'i community life. This is the bedrock of Baha'i national growth and development. Great emphasis, he feels, should be placed upon Baha'i Summer Schools. A greater number of believers and visitors should be encouraged to attend them, their scope should, if not too expensive, be systematically widened, the atmosphere pervading them must be given a distinctive Baha'i character, and the level of their discussions and the standard of their studies must be raised.

(From a letter dated 10 September 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

71. How wonderful it would be if all the friends could arrange to spend at least a few days in one of these summer schools and take an active part in their development. These centers could attract many souls if properly arranged and made interesting; those non-Baha'is who visit them will then have some time to get into the spirit of the place and make a study of the Cause... We constantly receive letters from people who become Baha'is by visiting one of these centers and obtaining the Message there.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, received about 1 May 1932, quoted in "Baha'i News" 67 (October 1932), p. 4)

72. Regarding your Summer School: he is indeed grateful to your assembly for the great success that has attended your efforts for the formation of this institution, the teaching value of which for England cannot be overestimated.... The Guardian would, therefore, urge all the believers to persevere in their efforts for raising the standard, both intellectual and spiritual, of their Summer School and to heighten its prestige in the eyes of the friends, and of the general non-Baha'i public outside. The institution of the Summer School constitutes a vital and inseparable part of any teaching campaign, and as such ought to be given the full importance it deserves in the teaching plans and activities of the <p28> believers. It should be organized in such a way as to attract the attention of the non-believers to the Cause and thus become an effective medium for teaching. Also it should afford the believers themselves an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the Teachings, through lectures and discussions and by means of close and intense community life.

(From a letter dated 17 October 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles)

73. He has noted with deepest satisfaction indeed that your meetings have been well attended this year, and that the programme had been made as varied and interesting as possible, and combined, as every Baha'i Summer School should, the threefold features of devotion, study and recreation. Only through such a harmonious combination of these three elements can the institution of the Summer School yield the maximum of beneficent results, and fulfil its true

function of deepening the knowledge, stimulating the zeal, and fostering the spirit of fellowship among the believers in every Baha'i community.

The Guardian cherishes the hope that at the termination of your school this summer every one of the attendants will have derived such mental and spiritual benefits, and acquired such a fresh enthusiasm to serve as will enable him, upon his return to his local community, to labour with a determination and vigour that will excite the envy and admiration of his fellow-believers, and stimulate them to greater heights of consecration to the service of our beloved Cause.

(From a letter dated 15 August 1938 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Central States Summer School)

74. He is truly delighted to know that the attendance at the school has been satisfactory, and that the young believers, in particular, have been most enthusiastic about it. What he feels now is most essential is for the National Spiritual Assembly to make arrangements to have this school held regularly every year, so that it may develop into an effective, and increasingly vital, instrument for the propagation of the Faith, and also for the education and training of Baha'i teachers.

It is the Guardian's fervent hope that as this Institution expands, and fulfils the high hopes you all set upon it, it will be felt advisable by the National Spiritual Assembly to consider the possibilities of establishing, <p29> in due time, one or two more of such schools, thus permitting those friends, who in view of their limited means are not in a position to travel over large distances, to avail themselves of the benefits derived from these nascent Baha'i institutions of learning.

(From a letter dated 1 December 1938 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma)

75. What other community has shown the foresight, the organizing ability, the enthusiastic eagerness, that have been responsible for the establishment and multiplication, throughout its territory, of those initial schools which, as time goes by, will, on the one hand, evolve into powerful centers of Baha'i learning, and, on the other, provide a fertile recruiting ground for the enrichment and consolidation of its teaching force?...

(Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 9)

76. He ... hopes that from now on you will become a regular attendant at all future sessions at Louhelen, or at either one of the two remaining Summer Schools now operating in the States. Faithful attendance at any of these institutions of Baha'i learning would be indeed the best preparation for all prospective Baha'i teachers, and should as such be welcomed most heartily by all the believers.

(From a letter dated 22 August 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an

individual believer)

77. He is indeed immeasurably delighted to know that thanks to your earnest and wise efforts, and to the loving assistance and co-operation of the friends, Louhelen Ranch is steadily progressing and is increasingly fulfilling those ideal conditions which it should be the aim of every Baha'i summer school to create, maintain and enforce, namely: close association and fellowship, both social and spiritual, among the attendants, intellectual training in the history, principles and teachings of the Cause, and the application to one's life of the principles of moral conduct as explained and clarified by the Guardian himself in his "Advent of Divine Justice".

(From a letter dated 24 August 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers) <p30>

78. Equally important as a factor in the evolution of the Administrative Order has been the remarkable progress achieved, particularly in the United States of America, by the institution of the summer schools designed to foster the spirit of fellowship in a distinctly Baha'i atmosphere, to afford the necessary training for Baha'i teachers, and to provide facilities for the study of the history and teachings of the Faith, and for a better understanding of its relation to other religions and to human society in general.

(Shoghi Effendi, "God Passes By", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 340)

79. It is not enough to bring people into the Faith, one must educate them and deepen their love for it and their knowledge of its teachings, after they declare themselves. As the Baha'is are few in number, especially the active teachers, and there is a great deal of work to be done, the education of these new believers is often sadly neglected, and then results are seen such as the resignations you have had recently. In this respect, the summer schools can be of the greatest help to the friends, new and old Baha'is alike, for in them they can study, and enjoy the feeling of Baha'i companionship which is, alas, usually lacking in their home communities, owing to the smallness of their numbers.

(From a letter dated 18 July 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada)

Administration:

80. The Baha'i summer schools were originated in America to meet the requirements of the friends. They have been adopted by other Baha'i Communities the world over, but there is no reason why they should be called "summer schools". There is nothing rigid about the term, it is purely descriptive. The Guardian feels that although you can have the immediate affairs of your summer schools managed by a convenient Local Assembly, they should remain under the direct supervision of the National Spiritual Assembly as they are national in character and not purely local.

(From a letter dated 26 December 1941 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand) <p31>

81. Regarding the summer schools in general: although there is no objection to their being under the direct management of a special Committee elected for that purpose, they must be generally supervised by the National Spiritual Assembly in respect to policy, etc. In other words they must be considered as a national and not a purely local institution....

(From a letter dated 18 April 1942 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand)

82. Baha'i summer schools in the United States originated in the same informal manner as Yerrinbool; they were (and some still are) the property of individual believers who resided on them, but they are administered by Committees appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly and which usually include, out of courtesy and consideration, the owners. The American friends also desired to have many more summer schools, but the Guardian has so far not permitted them to add to the number, as it dissipates the energy and funds of the believers and would at present weaken those already existing.

(From a letter dated 13 May 1945 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand)

83. WELCOME EXPANSION SCOPE ANNUAL CONFERENCE THROUGH INAUGURATION SUMMER SCHOOL DESIGNED PROLONG SESSIONS CONFERENCE STIMULATE SPIRIT BAHA'I FELLOWSHIP, DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING FUNDAMENTAL SPIRITUAL ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPLES FAITH, FIX PATTERN FUTURE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOLS TEN EUROPEAN GOAL COUNTRIES....

(Shoghi Effendi, cable dated 20 July 1950 to Third Baha'i European Teaching Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark, published in "Baha'i News" 236 (October 1950), p. 1)

84. As regards the question you asked about a Summer School, there is no reason why a property should either be rented or bought for this purpose. You can arrange to hold a Summer School in any suitable place where the friends can find accommodation, and a hall can be rented for its sessions. This is what they have done in England for many years to great advantage. It is a simple and economical way of holding the School. The <p32> primary purpose of the School is to deepen the knowledge of the friends in the Teachings, to enable them to consort, as Baha'is, with each other, and to confirm any contacts who may have attended. The School may be held during the winter season or any other time of the year.

(From a letter dated 30 June 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska and an individual believer)

Courses and Curriculum:

85. ... he sincerely trusts that these summer courses will serve to deepen the knowledge and the understanding of the friends and enable them to diffuse the

teachings of the Faith to the struggling and almost hopeless world.

The wide range of the topics that are to be discussed and studied by the friends cover most of the important aspects of the Cause and such a plan will undoubtedly give them a broad and a sound knowledge of the essentials of the Faith. Special stress, however, should be put on the history of the Movement as well as on the guiding principles of Baha'i Administration; for on these two points most of the believers are not adequately informed. It is, therefore, a great opportunity for them to strengthen the basis of their beliefs and to try to deepen their understanding of the basis of the present-day Baha'i administrative system.

(From a letter dated 5 August 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

86. Definite courses should be given along the different phases of the Baha'i Faith and in a manner that will stimulate the students to proceed in their studies privately once they return home, for the period of a few days is not sufficient to learn everything. They have to be taught the habit of studying the Cause constantly, for the more we read the Words the more will the truth they contain be revealed to us.

(From a letter dated 24 November 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

87. The basic purpose of all Baha'i summer schools, whether in East or West, is to give the believers the opportunity to fully acquaint themselves, not only by mere study but through whole-hearted and active <p33> collaboration in various Baha'i activities, with the essentials of the Administration and in this way enable them to become efficient and able promoters of the Cause. The teaching of the Administration is, therefore, an indispensable feature of every Baha'i summer school and its special significance can be better understood if we realize the great need of every believer today for a more adequate understanding of the social principles and laws of the Faith. It is now, when the Cause is passing through some of the most difficult stages of its development, that the friends should equip themselves with the necessary knowledge of the Administration. The Guardian wishes you, therefore, to stress again, in all the coming summer schools, this vital point and in this way add to the effectiveness and success of your efforts along this line.

Postscript in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi;

I certainly advise you to concentrate next year on "The Dawn-Breakers" as well as on the needs, the principles and the purpose of Baha'i Administration. The Cause in your land is still in its formative period. It needs men and women of vision, of capacity and understanding....

(From a letter dated 25 September 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers, published in "Baha'i News" 78 (November 1933), p. 4)

88. He feels that in your next summer meetings continued emphasis should be

laid upon the teaching of the administration, especially in its relation to the outside world, so as to impress the non-Baha'i attendants at the School with the nature, character and world significance of the World Order of Baha'u'llah. The teaching of the Administration should, indeed, be considered as forming a permanent and vital feature of every Baha'i summer school. For upon its thorough and intelligent understanding by the entire community of the believers must inevitably depend the effectiveness and continued expansion of Baha'i activities throughout the world.

(From a letter dated 6 November 1934 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer) <p34>

89. With regard to the School's programme for the next summer: the Guardian would certainly advise, and even urge the friends to make a thorough study of the Qur'an, as the knowledge of this Sacred Scripture is absolutely indispensable for every believer who wishes to adequately understand, and intelligently read the Writings of Baha'u'llah. Although there are very few persons among our Western Baha'is who are capable of handling such a course in a scholarly way yet, the mere lack of such competent teachers should encourage and stimulate the believers to get better acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures of Islam. In this way, there will gradually appear some distinguished Baha'is who will be so well versed in the teaching of Islam as to be able to guide the believers in their study of that religion.

(From a letter dated 2 December 1935 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Central States Summer School Committee and an individual believer)

90. As regards the study courses for the next year's session: the Guardian wishes you to cover the same subjects, namely the Administrative Order and Islam, but feels that these should be studied through more detailed and concentrated examination of all their aspects. An effort should be made to raise the standard of studies, so as to provide the Baha'i student with a thorough knowledge of the Cause that would enable him to expound it befittingly to the educated public.

(From a letter dated 8 November 1937 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

91. The course on character building, ... the Guardian feels, is particularly important and should be given due emphasis and studied carefully and thoroughly, especially by the young believers in attendance at the school. These standards of Baha'i conduct, which he himself has set forth in his last general epistle, "The Advent of Divine Justice", and which it should be the paramount duty of every loyal and conscientious believer to endeavour to uphold and promote, deserve serious study and meditation, and should constitute the main central theme of this year's programme at all the three Baha'i Summer Schools in the States.

Since the purpose of the Summer School is not only to impart knowledge of the Teachings, but to infuse in the hearts of all those present such spirit as will

enable them to translate the ideals of the Cause into <p35> daily deeds of constructive spiritual living, it is more than fitting therefore that this year's meetings should be principally devoted to the study of Baha'i morals, not only in their theoretical aspect, but first and foremost in their relation to the present-day needs and requirements of Baha'i community life.

The principles and methods laid down by the Guardian in his "Advent of Divine Justice" on the vital subject of Baha'i ethics should indeed prove of valuable inspiration and guidance to all the students and friends attending the Summer School classes, and thus prepare them to better appreciate the privileges, and more adequately discharge the responsibilities, of their citizenship in the World Order of Baha'u'llah.

(From a letter dated 20 May 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

92. ... there is as yet no such thing as a Baha'i curriculum, and there are no Baha'i publications exclusively devoted to this subject, since the teachings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha do not present a definite and detailed educational system, but simply offer certain basic principles and set forth a number of teaching ideals that should guide future Baha'i educationalists in their efforts to formulate an adequate teaching curriculum which would be in full harmony with the spirit of the Baha'i Teachings, and would thus meet the requirements and needs of the modern age.

These basic principles are available in the sacred writings of the Cause, and should be carefully studied, and gradually incorporated in various college and university programmes. But the task of formulating a system of education which would be officially recognized by the Cause, and enforced as such throughout the Baha'i world is one which [the] present-day generation of believers cannot obviously undertake, and which has to be gradually accomplished by Baha'i scholars and educationalists of the future.

(From a letter dated 7 June 1939 written of behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

93. He feels ... that some of the courses are not sufficiently Baha'i in nature, but carry the student off into an unnecessary study of special techniques -- history, psychology or whatever it may be, which however <p36> valuable these topics may be in training the human mind and fitting the individual for contact with others, are a waste of time, in view of the very limited period that most of the Baha'is spend at a Baha'i summer school.

The friends should concentrate on deepening their grasp of the Teachings, particularly on studying what has already been done, and what must be done to fulfil the goals of this World Crusade.

(From a letter dated 11 May 1954 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

94. He thinks the less time spend on such topics as "Current Events in the

Light of the Baha'i Faith", and "The Baha'i Faith and Modern Science", the better. There is no harm in having an evening lecture by a qualified speaker once on each of these subjects, but he certainly does not feel that much time should be spent on them, for the very simple reason that there is so little that can be said on the subject. The Baha'is are not scientists, and cannot very well go into details of the relation of the Baha'i Faith to modern science; and "Current Events in the Light of the Baha'i Faith" is also a topic which can be dealt with briefly.

He feels that the most important thing for the Baha'i Schools all over the world at present to do is to strongly impress upon the Baha'i attendants the urgency of arising, not only to fulfil pioneer goals and to consolidate the work on the home front, which is getting weaker every year instead of stronger, but also to bring home to the friends the necessity of dispersing.

The Baha'is must realize that they belong to a world-wide Order, and not an American civilization. They must try and introduce the Baha'i atmosphere of life and thought into their Summer Schools, rather than making the Summer School an episode and a pleasant vacation period, during which they learn a little more about the Faith.

(From a letter dated 23 May 1954 written on behalf of the Shoghi Effendi to the Green Acre Program Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

95. Through the intensive study of Baha'i Scriptures and of the early history of the Faith; through the organization of courses on the teachings and history of Islam; through conferences for the promotion of <p37> inter-racial amity; through laboratory courses designed to familiarize the participants with the processes of the Baha'i Administrative Order; through special sessions devoted to Youth and child training; through classes in public speaking; through lectures on Comparative Religion; through group discussion on the manifold aspects of the Faith; through the establishment of libraries; through teaching classes; through courses on Baha'i ethics and on Latin America; through the introduction of winter school sessions; through forums and devotional gatherings; through plays and pageants; through picnics and other recreational activities, these schools, open to Baha'is and non-Baha'is alike, have set so noble an example as to inspire other Baha'i communities in Persia, in the British Isles, in Germany, in Australia, in New Zealand, in India, in 'Iraq and in Egypt to undertake the initial measures designed to enable them to build along the same lines institutions that bid fair to evolve into the Baha'i universities of the future.

(Shoghi Effendi, "God Passes By" p. 341)

Teaching the Public and Attracting Ethnic Minorities:

96. The Summer Schools provide a splendid setting and environment to which the best element among the coloured race should be specially attracted. Through such association prejudice can be gradually eradicated, and 'Abdu'l-Baha's

ardent wish fully realized.

The Guardian finds it impossible to overestimate the importance and urgency of this sacred duty that confronts both the Local and the National Assemblies.

(From a letter dated 28 July 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

97. The Guardian welcomes your suggestion to extend to various groups and clubs in Davison and the adjoining centres, whom you find to be well disposed and sympathetic towards the Faith, an invitation to attend certain special meetings at the Louhelen Summer School. He will pray that this plan you have conceived may result in further intensifying the campaign of teaching throughout those regions.

(From a letter dated 27 January 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers) <p38>

98. He hopes your Committee will continue to endeavour in raising the standard, both intellectual and spiritual, of the school, and make it an attractive centre not only to the believers but especially to non-Baha'is. It is, indeed, the teaching value of the school which you should particularly emphasize. The courses, lectures and general activities conducted by the friends should be arranged in such a way as to attract the attention of the outside public to the Cause. The Summer School is a high occasion for teaching the Message.

Through daily association with the believers, non-Baha'is will come to see the Cause functioning as an active and living community entirely dedicated to the service of what is best and highest in the world. The lectures will familiarize them with the principles underlying the New World Order, while their participation in the social life of the believers will enable them to see the way in which these very same principles are put into operation.

This is the aspect of the Summer School which the Guardian wishes your Committee to stress. He is confident that thereby the teaching work will receive a powerful impetus.

As regards the courses, he would advise you to continue laying emphasis on the history and teaching of Islam, and in particular on the Islamic origins of the Faith.

(From a letter dated 14 October 1936 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

99. He was delighted to hear of the great success your "Winter Institute for Baha'i Education" met with. Such progressive activities, especially when carried on in co- operation with local people who are not Baha'is, do a great deal of good, and not only expand the knowledge of the believers themselves but bring the Faith before the public in an excellent light....

(From a letter dated 9 February 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Phoenix, Arizona)

Youth Activities:

100. Indeed it is very important for the Faith, to extend the teachings of Baha'u'llah amongst the youth, as it is through their activities, that the Cause of our Beloved Master will in future spread all over the American continent. They have upon their shoulders all the responsibilities for the <p39> progress of the Movement; it is our duty to rear their spiritual feelings, enlighten their hearts with the light of guidance which has been shed before us by the Master.

The Guardian was pleased to learn of the interest and sympathetic understanding which are growing amongst these students. He hopes that, through your help, you will every year widen the scope of their activities and give them fresh opportunities to their sincere endeavours to spread the teachings.

Postscript in the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi:

I wish to urge the necessity of concentrating, at your next summer session, on the systematic study of the early history and principles of the Faith, on public speaking, and on a thorough discussion, both formally and informally, of various aspects of the Cause. These I regard as essential preliminaries to a future intensive campaign of teaching in which the rising generation must engage, if the spread of the Cause is to be assured in that land. May you succeed in your efforts to attain that goal!

(From a letter dated 2 November 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers)

101. He would advise you, however, to devote some more of your time to active teaching in public. To that end he would urge you to attend, if possible, all the sessions and meetings at the Geyserville Summer School, that you may not only deepen your knowledge of the Teachings, but also acquire the necessary training for expounding them to the public. The ambition of every young Baha'i should be, indeed, to become a well-informed and competent teacher. For this very purpose the institution of [the] Baha'i Summer School has been established, and its importance so strongly and repeatedly emphasized by the Guardian.

(From a letter dated 21 June 1935 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

102. The obligation to teach is essentially the responsibility of young believers. Their whole training should therefore be directed in such a way as to make them competent teachers. It is for this very purpose Baha'i summer schools, which constitute the very basis upon which the Baha'i <p40> universities of the future will be established, should be widely attended by young believers.

The Guardian would appeal to each and every member of your group to do his utmost to be present at least in one of the three summer schools now existing in the States. And for those young believers who will be travelling abroad

during the summer months it is always possible to attend the German Baha'i Summer School at Esslingen.

(From a letter dated 15 May written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Baha'i Youth Groups in the United States)

103. Remembering the strong emphasis repeatedly laid by the Guardian on the importance of the institution of the summer school, both as a centre for the preparation and training of prospective teachers and pioneers, and for the commingling and fellowship of various elements in the Baha'i Community, the Baha'i Youth, on whom Louhelen Ranch has exercised a particular and indeed irresistible appeal, and whose sessions they have so frequently and in such large numbers attended, have a peculiar responsibility to shoulder in connection with its development into that ideal Baha'i University of the future, which should be the aim of every existing Baha'i Summer School to establish in the fullness of time.

(From a letter dated 29 July 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Louhelen School)

104. As regards the questions you asked him: There is nothing in the teachings against dancing, and any arrangements for it at Summer Schools, etc., are left to the discretion of the Committee or Assembly in charge to make.

(From a letter dated 24 February 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Pioneers and Pioneering:

105. ... it should be the main concern of the teaching bodies in charge of the Central and South American teaching campaign to provide all such prospective pioneers with the fullest opportunity not only to acquire a perfect mastery of Spanish, but in addition to familiarize themselves, as thoroughly as possible, with the history, customs, and the social and religious background and traditions of the people in these Latin <p41> American countries. The Summer School, one of whose chief aims is to train and prepare the believers to become well- qualified and competent teachers, offers indeed good prospects of developing into a training ground for all prospective Central and South American Baha'i pioneers, and it would be therefore most opportune if the Committees in charge of our three Summer Schools decide to start classes for the teaching of Spanish, and of any such subjects as would be helpful for teaching in Spanish-speaking countries.

(From a letter dated 29 July 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

106. He was pleased to hear that you were able to attend the Summer School at Geyserville this year, as these institutions are of the greatest help to the friends and inspire them to carry on their often lonely pioneer work with renewed zeal.

(From a letter dated 22 November 1941 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an

individual believer)

107. Nor should any occasion be neglected by the pioneers of attending, if their personal circumstances permit, either the British or German Baha'i summer schools, and of forging such links with these institutions as will not only assist them in the discharge of their duties, but enable them to initiate, when the time is ripe, an institution of a similar character, under the auspices of the European Teaching Committee - an institution which will be the forerunner of the summer schools that will have to be founded separately by the future Assemblies in their respective countries....

(From a letter dated 5 June 1947 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the West)

Prospects for the Future:

108. Shoghi Effendi hopes that your summer school will increasingly develop and will become an important centre for the spread of the Message. You should try to raise its intellectual as well as its spiritual standard and to pave the way for its future development into one of the foremost Baha'i universities in the West. Much stress should be laid on the thorough study of the history and of the teachings of the Cause, and <p42> particularly of the nature, basis and outstanding features of the Administration....

(From a letter dated 1 October 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of Esslingen, Germany)

109. He was also very pleased to hear that the Summer School is becoming an institution of national importance, and that the friends are increasingly attending it and realizing its great value in the life of the entire Community of believers. In a country such as India it might grow to be the first permanent institution of Baha'i learning if the believers support it sufficiently and carry out their teaching campaign with whole-hearted devotion and zeal; for, with the influx of many new Baha'is into the Cause in that country, it should not be difficult to evolve it into a Baha'i university as time goes by.

(From a letter dated 10 January 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma)

TEACHING INSTITUTES

Teaching Institutes:

110. This is essentially an activity aimed at deepening the knowledge of the friends to prepare them for active participation in the teaching work. In some countries it may continue to be an activity conducted either in local Baha'i Centres or possibly housed in hired quarters, like most Summer Schools. However, in other countries, and particularly in mass teaching areas, it may have to be a modest structure acquired or erected in the rural areas where the majority of the believers reside rather than in capital cities, to obviate transportation expenses for those attending.

(From a circular letter dated 14 May 1964 written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies)

111. The material to be taught is prepared ahead of time, presented in simple language, and translated into the vernacular.

. . .

The subjects taught usually consist of Baha'i History, Laws and Teachings and the Administrative Order. Special emphasis is laid upon <p43> living the Baha'i life, the importance of teaching, prayer, fasting, Nineteen Day Feasts, Baha'i elections, and contribution to the Fund.

(Prepared for inclusion with a letter dated 24 December 1964 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guatemala)

112. We are happy to note plans for the Institute, but we feel that it would not be appropriate to issue a certificate for those who have completed the course. Instead, if you can afford it and if you feel it would be suitable you might give those who complete the course a pamphlet or piece of Baha'i literature with an appropriate inscription.

(From a letter dated 14 July 1965 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Indian Ocean)

113. We have also noted that you intend to give graduation diplomas to the friends who attend the institutes. Your desire to acknowledge devoted attendance at the institutes is most commendable, but we feel it would be preferable in future to give a suitable gift, such as a book, rather than a diploma. From experience in other areas of the world we have learned that such diplomas sometimes are misused by their recipients. For this reason we have discouraged their use.

(From a letter dated 27 October 1965 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guatemala)

114. Teaching Institutes activities may be carried on in the Haziratu'l-Quds as long as necessary, but you should keep in mind the goal of eventually acquiring a Teaching Institute elsewhere.

(From a letter dated 22 January 1968 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands)

115. We greatly appreciate your desire to serve the Cause and at the same time honour the beloved Hand of the Cause and wonder whether more feasible plans would appeal to you. For instance, you might consider establishing a fund to maintain Baha'i tutors in villages, who would teach not only reading and writing but the elements of the Faith as well. We have always stressed to those National Spiritual Assemblies which establish Teaching Institutes that at the present time such an Institute is a function and not necessarily a building and there are many places where such <p44> educational work can be pursued if a number of teachers can be supported. On the other hand, we have no idea of the

size of the principal you have in mind for your endowment and wonder whether a very simple school where not only children but adult literary classes could be held, would meet your intention.

(From a letter dated 18 April 1971 to an individual believer)

Revised September 1990 <p45>

A CHASTE AND HOLY LIFE

A Compilation Prepared by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice

Such a chaste and holy life, with its implications of modesty, purity, temperance, decency, and clean-mindedness, involves no less than the exercise of moderation in all that pertains to dress, language, amusements, and all artistic and literary avocations. It demands daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations. It calls for the abandonment of a frivolous conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often misdirected pleasures. It requires total abstinence from all alcoholic drinks, from opium, and from similar habit-forming drugs. It condemns the prostitution of art and of literature, the practices of nudism and of companionate marriage, infidelity in marital relationships, and all manner of promiscuity, of easy familiarity, and of sexual vices....

("The Advent of Divine Justice" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 30)

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-- A Chaste and Holy Life .....50 - 60

-- The Power of Example .....60 - 64

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THE BAHA'I STANDARD

The Nature of Baha'i Law:

116. 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....

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....

Say: From My laws the sweet smelling savour 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 favour, will circle around My commandments that shine above the Dayspring of My creation.

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!...

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), sec. 155, pp. 331-333)

117. 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 <p47> 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.

(From a letter dated 6 February 1973 written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, published in "Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968-1973" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976), pp. 105-6)

118. We have considered your several letters and have noted your questions, and your view that many Baha'i youth in ... are confused, and are pleading for guidance in simple clear language on how to meet daily situations, particularly those involving sex.

It is neither possible nor desirable for the Universal House of Justice to set forth a set of rules covering every situation. Rather is it the task of the individual believer to determine, according to his own prayerful understanding of the Writings, precisely what his course of conduct should be in relation to situations which he encounters in his daily life. If he is to fulfil his true mission in life as a follower of the Blessed Perfection, he will pattern his life according to the Teachings. The believer cannot attain this objective merely by living according to a set of rigid regulations. When his life is oriented toward service to Baha'u'llah, and when every conscious act is performed within this frame of reference, he will not fail to achieve the true purpose of his life.

Therefore, every believer must continually study the sacred Writings and the instructions of the beloved Guardian, striving always to attain a new and

better understanding of their import to him and to his society. He should pray fervently for Divine Guidance, wisdom and strength to do what is pleasing to God, and to serve Him at all times and to the best of his ability.

(From a letter dated 17 October 1968 written by the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

119. As to chastity, this is one of the most challenging concepts to get across in this very permissive age, but Baha'is must make the utmost effort to uphold Baha'i standards, no matter how difficult they may seem at first. Such efforts will be made easier if the youth will understand that the laws and standards of the Faith are meant to free them from untold spiritual <p48> and moral difficulties in the same way that a proper appreciation of the laws of nature enables one to live in harmony with the forces of the planet.

(From a letter dated 14 January 1985 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

True Liberty

120. Consider the pettiness of men's minds. They ask for that which injureth them, and cast away the thing that profiteth them....

Know ye that the embodiment of liberty and its symbol is the animal. That which beseemeth man is submission unto such restraints as will protect him from his own ignorance, and guard him against the harm of the mischief-maker. Liberty causeth man to overstep the bounds of propriety, and to infringe on the dignity of his station. It debaseth him to the level of extreme depravity and wickedness.

Regard men as a flock of sheep that need a shepherd for their protection. This, verily, is the truth, the/certain truth. We approve of liberty in certain circumstances, and refuse to sanction it in others. We, verily, are the All-Knowing.

Say: True liberty consisteth in man's submission unto My commandments, little as ye know it. Were men to observe that which We have sent down unto them from the Heaven of Revelation, they would, of a certainty, attain unto perfect liberty. Happy is the man that hath apprehended the Purpose of God in whatever He hath revealed from the Heaven of His Will, that pervadeth all created things. Say: The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth. Whoso hath tasted of its sweetness will refuse to barter it for all the dominion of earth and heaven.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. 159, pp. 335-36)

121. ...with regard to the peoples who clamour for freedom: the moderate freedom which guarantees the welfare of the world of mankind and maintains and preserves the universal relationships, is found in its fullest power and extension in the teachings of Baha'u'llah.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i

World Centre, 1982, sec. 227, p. 305) <p49>

The Baha' Standard of Chastity:

122. The chosen ones of God ... should not look at the depraved condition of the society in which they live, nor at the evidences of moral degradation and frivolous conduct which the people around them display. They should not content themselves merely with relative distinction and excellence. Rather they should fix their gaze upon nobler heights by setting the counsels and exhortations of the Pen of Glory as their supreme goal. Then it will be readily realized how numerous are the stages that still remain to be traversed and how far off the desired goal lies -- a goal which is none other than exemplifying heavenly morals and virtues.

(From a letter dated 30 October 1924 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tihran, translated from the Persian)

123. It must be remembered, however, that the maintenance of such a high standard of moral conduct is not to be associated or confused with any form of asceticism, or of excessive and bigoted puritanism. The standard inculcated by Baha'u'llah, seeks, under no circumstances, to deny anyone the legitimate right and privilege to derive the fullest advantage and benefit from the manifold joys, beauties, and pleasures with which the world has been so plentifully enriched by an All-Loving Creator. "Should a man," Baha'u'llah Himself reassures us, "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."

(Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 33)

124. The Baha'i standard is very high, more particularly when compared with the thoroughly rotten morals of the present world. But this standard of ours will produce healthier, happier, nobler people, and induce stabler marriages....

(From a letter dated 19 October 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer) <p50>

A CHASTE AND HOLY LIFE

Definition:

125. Such a chaste and holy life, with its implications of modesty, purity, temperance, decency, and clean-mindedness, involves no less than the exercise of moderation in all that pertains to dress, language, amusements, and all artistic and literary avocations. It demands daily vigilance in the control of one's carnal desires and corrupt inclinations. It calls for the abandonment of a frivolous conduct, with its excessive attachment to trivial and often

misdirected pleasures. It requires total abstinence from all alcoholic drinks, from opium, and from similar habit-forming drugs. It condemns the prostitution of art and of literature, the practices of nudism and of companionate marriage, infidelity in marital relationships, and all manner of promiscuity, of easy familiarity, and of sexual vices. It can tolerate no compromise with the theories, the standards, the habits, and the excesses of a decadent age. Nay rather it seeks to demonstrate, through the dynamic force of its example, the pernicious character of such theories, the falsity of such standards, the hollowness of such claims, the perversity of such habits, and the sacrilegious character of such excesses.

(Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 30)

126. He is My true follower who, if he come to a valley of pure gold, will pass straight through it aloof as a cloud, and will neither turn back, nor pause. Such a man is, assuredly, of Me. From his garment the Concourse on high can inhale the fragrance of sanctity.... And if he met the fairest and most comely of women, he would not feel his heart seduced by the least shadow of desire for her beauty. Such an one, indeed, is the creation of spotless chastity. Thus instructeth you the Pen of the Ancient of Days, as bidden by your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, sec. 60, p. 118)

127. Purity and chastity have been, and still are, the most great ornaments for the handmaidens of God. God is My Witness! The brightness of the light of chastity sheddeth its illumination upon the worlds of the spirit, and its fragrance is wafted even unto the Most Exalted Paradise....

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 32) <p51>

128. Concerning the positive aspects of chastity the Universal House of Justice states that the Baha'i Faith recognizes the value of the sex impulse and holds that the institution of marriage has been established as the channel of its rightful expression. Baha'is do not believe that the sex impulse should be suppressed but that it should be regulated and controlled.

Chastity in no way implies withdrawal from human relationships. It liberates people from the tyranny of the ubiquity of sex. A person who is in control of his sexual impulses is enabled to have profound and enduring friendships with many people, both men and women, without ever sullying that unique and priceless bond that should unite man and wife.

(From a letter dated 8 May 1979 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

Moderation:

Whatsoever passeth beyond the limits of moderation will cease to exert a beneficial influence. Consider for instance such things as liberty, civilization and the like. However much men of understanding may favourably regard them, they will, if carried to excess, exercise a pernicious influence

upon men.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), p. 169)

129. The choice of clothing and the cut of the beard and its dressing are left to the discretion of men. But beware, O people, lest ye make yourselves the playthings of the ignorant.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab- i-Aqdas", p. 23)

130. 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.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", p. 172) <p52>

131. We have permitted you to listen to music and singing. Beware lest such listening cause you to transgress the bounds of decency and dignity. Rejoice in the joy of My Most Great Name through which the hearts are enchanted and the minds of the well-favoured are attracted.

("Baha'u'llah, from a Tablet -- translated from the Arabic)

132. ...In the teachings there is nothing against dancing, but the friends should remember that the standard of Baha'u'llah is modesty and chastity. The atmosphere of modern dance halls, where so much smoking and drinking and promiscuity goes on, is very bad, but decent dances are not harmful in themselves. There is certainly no harm in classical dancing or learning dancing in school. There is also no harm in taking part in dramas. Likewise in cinema acting. The harmful thing, nowadays, is not the art itself but the unfortunate corruption which often surrounds these arts. As Baha'is we need avoid none of the arts, but acts and the atmosphere that sometimes go with these professions we should avoid.

(From a letter dated 30 June 1952 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly of India, Pakistan and Burma)

Daily Vigilance of Actions:

133. Arise, O people, and, by the power of God's might, resolve to gain the victory over your own selves, that haply the whole earth may be freed and sanctified from its servitude to the gods of its idle fancies - gods that have inflicted such loss upon, and are responsible for the misery of, their wretched worshippers. These idols form the obstacle that impedeth man in his efforts to advance in the path of perfection.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. 43, p. 93)

O SON OF BEING!

134. Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning;

for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.

("The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah, Arabic no.31, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985), p. 11)

135. For desire is a flame that has reduced to ashes uncounted lifetime harvests of the learned, a devouring fire that even the vast sea of their <p53> accumulated knowledge could never quench. How often has it happened that an individual who was graced with every attribute of humanity and wore the jewel of true understanding, nevertheless followed after his passions until his excellent qualities passed beyond moderation and he was forced into excess. His pure intentions changed to evil ones, his attributes were no longer put to uses worthy of them, and the power of his desires turned him aside from righteousness and its rewards into ways that were dangerous and dark. A good character is in the sight of God and His chosen ones and the possessors of insight, the most excellent and praiseworthy of all things, but always on condition that its centre of emanation should be reason and knowledge and its base should be true moderation....

("The Secret of Divine Civilization", 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983), pp. 59-60)

Abandonment of Frivolous Conduct:

O MY FRIEND!

136. Thou art the day-star of the heavens of My holiness, let not the defilement of the world eclipse thy splendour. Rend asunder the veil of heedlessness, that from behind the clouds thou mayest emerge resplendent and array all things with the apparel of life.

("The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah", Persian no. 73, p. 47)

137. Disencumber yourselves of all attachment to this world and the vanities thereof. Beware that ye approach them not, inasmuch as they prompt you to walk after your own lusts and covetous desires, and hinder you from entering the straight and glorious Path.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. 128, p. 276)

138. On page 25[1] of "The Advent of Divine Justice" the beloved Guardian is describing the requirements not only of chastity, but of "a chaste and holy life" -- both the adjectives are important. One of the signs of a decadent society, a sign which is very evident in the world today, is an almost frenetic devotion to pleasure and diversion, an insatiable thirst for <p54> amusement, a fanatical devotion to games and sport, a reluctance to treat any matter seriously, and a scornful, derisory attitude towards virtue and solid worth. Abandonment of "a frivolous conduct" does not imply that a Baha'i must be sour-faced or perpetually solemn. Humour, happiness,joy are characteristics of a true Baha'i life. Frivolity palls and eventually leads to boredom and emptiness, but true happiness and joy and humour that are parts of a balanced

life that includes serious thought, compassion and humble servitude to God, are characteristics that enrich life and add to its radiance.
[1 On page 25 in the 1956 U.S. edition; on page 30 in the 1984 U.S. edition.]

Shoghi Effendi's choice of words was always significant, and each one is important in understanding his guidance. In this particular passage, he does not forbid "trivial" pleasures, but he does warn against "excessive attachment" to them and indicates that they can often be "misdirected". One is reminded of 'Abdu'l-Baha's caution that we should not let a pastime become a waste of time.

(From a letter dated 8 May 1979 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

Alcohol:

139. Become ye intoxicated with the wine of the love of God, and not with that which deadeneth your minds, O ye that adore Him! Verily, it hath been forbidden unto every believer, whether man or woman....

(Baha'u'llah, cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 33)

140. The drinking of wine is, according to the text of the Most Holy Book, forbidden; for it is the cause of chronic diseases, weakeneth the nerves, and consumeth the mind.

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 33)

Drugs:

141. As to opium, it is foul and accursed. God protect us from the punishment He inflicteth on the user. According to the explicit Text of the Most Holy Book, it is forbidden, and its use is utterly condemned. Reason showeth that smoking opium is a kind of insanity, and experience attesteth that the user is completely cut off from the human kingdom. May God protect all against the perpetration of an act so hideous as this, an act which layeth in ruins the very foundation of what it is to be human, <p55> and which causeth the user to be dispossessed for ever and ever. For opium fasteneth on the soul, so that the user's conscience dieth, his mind is blotted away, his perceptions are eroded. It turneth the living into the dead. It quencheth the natural heat. No greater harm can be conceived than that which opium inflicteth. Fortunate are they who never even speak the name of it; then think how wretched is the user.

("Selection from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 148-49)

142. Regarding hashish, you had pointed out that some Persians have become habituated to its use. Gracious God! This is the worst of all intoxicants, and its prohibition is explicitly revealed. Its use causeth the disintegration of thought and the complete torpor of the soul. How could anyone seek this fruit of the infernal tree, and by partaking of it, be led to exemplify the qualities of a monster? How could one use this forbidden drug, and thus deprive himself of the blessings of the All-Merciful?...

Alcohol consumeth the mind and causeth man to commit acts of absurdity, but ... this wicked hashish extinguisheth the mind, freezeth the spirit, petrifieth the soul, wasteth the body and leaveth man frustrated and lost.

('Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

143. Concerning the so-called "spiritual" virtues of the hallucinogens, ... spiritual stimulation should come from turning one's heart to Baha'u'llah, and not through physical means such as drugs and agents.

From the description given in your letter it appears that hallucinogenic agents are a form of intoxicant. As the friends, including the youth, are required strictly to abstain from all forms of intoxicants, and are further expected conscientiously to obey the civil law of their country, it is obvious that they should refrain from using these drugs.

A very great responsibility for the future peace and well- being of the world is borne by the youth of today. Let the Baha'i youth by the power of the Cause they espouse be the shining example for their companions.

(From a letter dated 15 April 1965 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

144. ... Baha'is should not use hallucinogenic agents, including LSD, peyote and similar substances, except when prescribed for medical <p56> treatment. Neither should they become involved in experiments with such substances.

(From a letter dated 11 January 1967 written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

Baha'i Attitude Toward Sex:

145. Briefly stated the Baha'i conception of sex is based on the belief that chastity should be strictly practiced by both sexes, not only because it is in itself highly commendable ethically, but also due to its being the only way to a happy and successful marital life. Sex relationships of any form, outside marriage, are not permissible therefore, and whoso violates this rule will not only be responsible to God, but will incur the necessary punishment from society.

The Baha'i Faith recognizes the value of the sex impulse, but condemns its illegitimate and improper expression such as free love, companionate marriage and others, all of which it considers positively harmful to man and to the society in which he lives. The proper use of the sex instinct is the natural right of every individual, and it is precisely for this very purpose that the institution of marriage has been established. The Baha'is do not believe in the suppression of the sex impulse but in its regulation and control.

(From a letter dated 5 September 1938 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

146. Concerning your question whether there are any legitimate forms of expression of the sex instinct outside of marriage; according to the Baha'i

Teachings no sexual act can be considered lawful unless performed between lawfully married persons. Outside of marital life there can be no lawful or healthy use of the sex impulse. The Baha'i youth should, on the one hand, be taught the lesson of self- control which, when exercised, undoubtedly has a salutary effect on the development of character and of personality in general, and on the other should be advised, nay even encouraged, to contract marriage while still young and in full possession of their physical vigour. Economic factors, no doubt, are often a serious hindrance to early marriage, but in most cases are only an excuse, and as such should not be overstressed.

(From a letter dated 13 December 1940 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer) <p57>

147. Chastity implies both before and after marriage an unsullied, chaste sex life. Before marriage absolutely chaste, after marriage absolutely faithful to one's chosen companion. Faithful in all sexual acts, faithful in word and in deed.

The world today is submerged, amongst other things, in an over-exaggeration of the importance of physical love, and a dearth of spiritual values. In as far as possible the believers should try to realize this and rise above the level of their fellow-men who are, typical of all decadent periods in history, placing so much over-emphasis on the purely physical side of mating. Outside of their normal, legitimate married life they should seek to establish bonds of comradeship and love which are eternal and founded on the spiritual life of man, not on his physical life. This is one of the many fields in which it is incumbent on the Baha'is to set the example and lead the way to a true human standard of life, when the soul of man is exalted and his body but the tool for his enlightened spirit. Needless to say this does not preclude the living of a perfectly normal sex life in its legitimate channel of marriage.

(From a letter dated 28 September 1941 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

Immoral Practices are Condemned:

148. 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.

(Baha'u'llah, from a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

149. When we realize that Baha'u'llah says adultery retards the progress of the soul in the afterlife -- so grievous is it -- and that drinking destroys the mind, and not to so much as approach it, we see how clear are our teachings on these subjects.

(From a letter dated 30 September 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer) <p58>

150. Amongst the many other evils afflicting society in this spiritual low-water mark in history is the question of immorality, and overemphasis of sex. Homosexuality, according to the Writings of Baha'u'llah, is spiritually condemned. This does not mean that people so afflicted must not be helped and advised and sympathized with. It does mean that we do not believe that it is a permissible way of life; which, alas, is all too often the accepted attitude nowadays.

We must struggle against the evils in society by spiritual means, and by medical and social ones as well. We must be tolerant but uncompromising, understanding but immovable in our point of view.

(From a letter dated 21 May 1954 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

151. A number of sexual problems, such as homosexuality and transsexuality can well have medical aspects, and in such cases recourse should certainly be had to the best medical assistance. But it is clear from the teaching of Baha'u'llah that homosexuality is not a condition to which a person should be reconciled, but is a distortion of his or her nature which should be controlled and overcome. This may require a hard struggle, but so also can be the struggle of a heterosexual person to control his or her desires. The exercise of self-control in this, as in so very many other aspects of life, has a beneficial effect on the progress of the soul. It should, moreover, be borne in mind that although to be married is highly desirable, and Baha'u'llah has strongly recommended it, it is not the central purpose of life. If a person has to wait a considerable period before finding a spouse, or if ultimately, he or she must remain single, it does not mean that he or she is thereby unable to fulfil his or her life's purpose.

(From a letter dated 6 February 1973 written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, published in "Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968-1973", pp. 110-11)

152. Your letter asking for direct or indirect references in the Writings of the Faith to rape or sexual assault was referred to the Research Department, and we have been asked to convey to you the following comments. <p59>

"Lechery" is clearly forbidden by Baha'u'llah (see "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", p. 49) and Shoghi Effendi has stated that a "chaste and holy life", according to the teachings of the Faith, implies a condemnation of "all manner" of "sexual vices".

(See "Advent of Divine Justice", p. 25.)[1]
[1 On page 25 in the 1956 U.S. Edition; on page 30 in the 1984 U.S. edition.]

As to the contents of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, one of the provisions of that Most Holy Book is "not to indulge one's passions" (see "Synopsis and Codification of

the Laws and Ordinances of the Kitab-i-Aqdas", p. 50). Furthermore, reference should be made to one of the "prohibitions" mentioned on page 47 of the "Synopsis", namely "adultery". This word so appears in this book because entries in a synopsis should by necessity be brief, and by the original word used by Baha'u'llah in the Aqdas, i.e., "zina", adultery is generally and mainly intended. However, this by no means covers all the meanings of the concept of "zina" in legal language used in Arabic and Persian. One of the forms of "zina" -- i.e., when the illicit sexual intercourse is performed through force or violence -- is rape or sexual assault.

As to the punishments for such acts as rape, these will be determined in the future by the Universal House of Justice.

(From a letter dated 8 June 1982 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

Application of the Principle of a Chaste and Holy Life:

153. ... [absolute chastity] is mainly and directly concerned with the Baha'i youth, who can contribute so decisively to the virility, the purity, and the driving force of the life of the Baha'i community, and upon whom must depend the future orientation of its destiny, and the complete unfoldment of the potentialities with which God has endowed it....

As to a chaste and holy life it should be regarded as no less essential a factor that must contribute its proper share to the strengthening and vitalization of the Baha'i community, upon which must in turn depend the success of any Baha'i plan or enterprise.... All of them, be they men or women, must, at this threatening hour when the lights of religion are fading out, and its restraints are one by one being abolished, pause to <p60> examine themselves, scrutinize their conduct, and with characteristic resolution arise to purge the life of their community of every trace of moral laxity that might stain the name, or impair the integrity, of so holy and precious a Faith.

A chaste and holy life must be made the controlling principle in the behaviour and conduct of all Baha'is, both in their social relations with the members of their own community, and in their contact with the world at large. It must adorn and reinforce the ceaseless labours and meritorious exertions of those whose enviable position is to propagate the Message, and to administer the affairs, of the Faith of Baha'u'llah. It must be upheld, in all its integrity and implications, in every phase of the life of those who fill the ranks of that Faith, whether in their homes, their travels, their clubs, their societies, their entertainments, their schools, and their universities. It must be accorded special consideration in the conduct of the social activities of every Baha'i summer school and any other occasions on which Baha'i community life is organized and fostered. It must be closely and continually identified with the mission of the Baha'i youth, both as an element in the life of the Baha'i community, and as a factor in the future progress and orientation of the youth of their own country.

("The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 22; pp. 29-30)

THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

A Praiseworthy Character:

154. Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, sec. 131, p. 287)

155. A Baha'i is known by the attributes manifested by him, not by his name: he is recognized by his character, not by his person.

('Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet- translated from the Persian) <p61>

156. ...by upholding Baha'i law in the face of all difficulties we not only strengthen our own characters but influence those around us.

(From a letter dated 6 February 1973 written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, published in "Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968-1973", p. 107)

The Importance of Deeds:

O SON OF MY HANDMAID!

157. Guidance hath ever been given bywords, and now it is given by deeds. Every one must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds. In this wise We counsel you in this holy and resplendent tablet.

("The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah", Persian no. 76, pp. 48-49)

158. One righteous act is endowed with a potency that can so elevate the dust as to cause it to pass beyond the heaven of heavens. It can tear every bond asunder, and hath the power to restore the force that hath spent itself and vanished....

Be pure, O people of God, be pure; be righteous, be righteous....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. 131, p. 287)

159. The Guardian has urged, over and over again, the paramount necessity for Baha'i Youth to exemplify the Teachings, most particularly the moral aspect of them. If they are not distinguished for their high conduct they cannot expect other young people to take the Cause very seriously.

He heartily agrees with you that unless we practise the Teachings we cannot possibly expect the Faith to grow, because the fundamental purpose of all religions -- including our own -- is to bring man nearer to God, and to change his character, which is of the utmost importance. Too much emphasis is often

laid on the social and economic aspects of the Teachings; but the moral aspect cannot be over- emphasized.

(From a letter dated 6 September 1946 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer) <p62>

The Effect of Example:

160. The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct....

(Baha'u'llah, cited in "The Advent of Divine Justice", pp. 24-25)

161. Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others. Through them the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth. Happy is the man that heedeth My counsel, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All- Wise.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. 139, p. 305)

162. These are the days for rendering the divine Cause victorious and effective aid! The victory of God's Faith is dependent upon teaching; and teaching is conditional upon righteous actions and goodly deeds and conduct. The foundation-stone of a life lived in the way of God is the pursuit of moral excellence and the acquisition of a character endowed with qualities that are well-pleasing in His sight. The Baha'is should adorn themselves with this holy raiment; with this mighty sword they should conquer the citadels of men's hearts. People have grown weary and impatient of rhetoric and discourse, of preaching and sermonizing. In this day, the one thing that can deliver the world from its travail and attract the hearts of its peoples is deeds, not words; example, not precept; saintly virtues, not statements and charters issued by governments and nations on socio-political affairs. In all matters, great or small, word must be the complement of deed, and deed the companion of word: each must supplement, support and reinforce the other. It is in this respect that the Baha'is must seek distinction...

(From a letter dated 8 December 1923 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is in Bombay - translated from the Persian)

163. It is primarily through the potency of noble deeds and character, rather than by the power of exposition and proofs, that the friends of God should demonstrate to the world that what has been promised by God is bound to happen, that it is already taking place and that the divine glad- tidings are clear, evident and complete. For unless some illustrious <p63> souls step forth into the arena of service and shine out resplendent in the assemblage of men, the task of vindicating the truth of this Cause before the eyes of enlightened people would be formidable indeed. However, if the friends become embodiments of virtue and good character, words and arguments will be superfluous. Their very deeds will well serve as eloquent testimony, and their noble conduct will

ensure the preservation, integrity and glory of the Cause of God.

(From a letter dated 19 December 1923 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the East - translated from the Persian)

164. There is no doubt that the standard of spotless chastity inculcated by Baha'u'llah in His teachings can be attained by the friends only when they stand forth firmly and courageously as uncompromising adherents of the Baha'i way of life, fully conscious that they represent teachings which are the very antithesis of the corrosive forces which are so tragically destroying the fabric of man's moral values. The present trend in modern society and its conflict with our challenging principles of moral conduct, far from influencing the believers to compromise their resolve to adhere undeviatingly to the standards of purity and chastity set forth for them by their Faith, must stimulate them to discharge their sacred obligations with determination and thus combat the evil forces undermining the foundations of individual morality.

(From a letter dated 22 May 1966 written by the Universal House of Justice to two believers)

165. It is the challenging task of the Baha'is 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 Baha'u'llah, 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 <p64> he sought, he retards his spiritual advance and often brings new problems upon himself.

(From a letter dated 6 February 1973 written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, published in "Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1968-1973, p. 106)

Revised July 1990 <p65>

CONSERVATION OF THE EARTH'S RESOURCES

Prepared by the Research Department
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CONSERVATION OF THE EARTH'S RESOURCES

1. FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES

The approach of the world-wide Baha'i community to the conservation and protection of the earth's resources is based on a number of fundamental principles derived from the Baha'i Writings. These include:

1.1 NATURE AS A REFLECTION OF THE DIVINE

Nature is held in high regard. Baha'u'llah states that the contemplation of nature creates an awareness of the "signs"[1] and "tokens"[2] of God and constitutes proof of His existence. Thus:

...whatever I behold I readily discover that it maketh Thee known unto me, and it remindeth me of Thy signs, and of Thy tokens, and of Thy testimonies. By Thy glory! Every time I lift up mine eyes unto Thy heaven, I call to mind Thy highness and Thy loftiness, and Thine incomparable glory and greatness; and every time I turn my gaze to Thine earth, I am made to recognize the evidences of Thy power and the tokens of Thy bounty. And when I behold the sea, I find that it speaketh to me of Thy majesty, and of the potency of Thy might, and of

Thy sovereignty and Thy grandeur. And at whatever time I contemplate the mountains, I am led to discover the ensigns of Thy victory and the standards of Thine omnipotence.[3]

Nature reflects the "names and attributes of God".[4] It is the expression of "God's Will ... in ... the contingent world".[5] Baha'u'llah writes:

> Say: Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise.[6]

1.2 THE EARTH ONE COUNTRY

Baha'u'llah expounds a world view which acknowledges that the "earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens"[7] and He calls for the <p68> promotion of "the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth".[8]

'Abdu'l-Baha draws attention to the increasing interdependence of the world and the fact that "self- sufficiency"[9] is no longer possible. He envisages that the trend towards a united world will increase and will manifest itself in the form of "unity of thought in world undertakings"[10] and in other important realms of existence. One critical area for unified action is that of preserving the resources of the planet.

1.3 MAN'S STATION AND Responsibility

'Abdu'l-Baha indicates that man, "by reason of the ideal and heavenly force latent and manifest in him",[11] occupies a station that is "higher and nobler"[12] than nature, that "man is ruler over nature's sphere and province".[13]

> It is evident, therefore, that man is ruler over nature's sphere and province. Nature is inert; man is progressive. Nature has no consciousness; man is endowed with it. Nature is without volition and acts perforce, whereas man possesses a mighty will. Nature is incapable of discovering mysteries or realities, whereas man is especially fitted to do so. Nature is not in touch with the realm of God; man is attuned to its evidences. Nature is uninformed of God; man is conscious of Him. Man acquires divine virtues; nature is denied them. Man can voluntarily discontinue vices; nature has no power to modify the influence of its instincts. Altogether it is evident that man is more noble and superior, that in him there is an ideal power surpassing nature. He has consciousness, volition, memory, intelligent power, divine attributes and virtues of which nature is

completely deprived and bereft; therefore, man is higher and nobler by reason of the ideal and heavenly force latent and manifest in him.[14]

Man, possessed of an inner faculty which plants and animals do not have, a power which enables him to discover the secrets of nature and gain mastery over the environment, has a special responsibility to use his God-given powers for positive ends. The Universal House of Justice indicates that "the proper exercise of this responsibility is the key to whether his inventive genius produces beneficial results, or creates havoc in the material world".[15] <p69>

1.4 APPROACH TOWARD THE PHYSICAL WORLD -INTERACTION OF SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL

'Abdu'l-Baha stresses that the development of the physical world and the happiness of mankind are dependent on both the "call of civilization, of the progress of the material world"[16] and the "soul-stirring call of God, Whose spiritual teachings are safeguards of the everlasting glory, the eternal happiness and illumination of the world of humanity".[17] He states:

However, until material achievements, physical accomplishments and human virtues are reinforced by spiritual perfections, luminous qualities and characteristics of mercy, no fruit or result shall issue therefrom, nor will the happiness of the world of humanity, which is the ultimate aim, be attained. For although, on the one hand, material achievements and the development of the physical world produce prosperity, which exquisitely manifests its intended aims, on the other hand dangers, severe calamities and violent afflictions are imminent.

Consequently, when thou lookest at the orderly pattern of kingdoms, cities and villages, with the attractiveness of their adornments, the freshness of their natural resources, the refinement of their appliances, the ease of their means of travel, the extent of knowledge available about the world of nature, the great inventions, the colossal enterprises, the noble discoveries and scientific researches, thou wouldst conclude that civilization conduceth to the happiness and the progress of the human world. Yet shouldst thou turn thine eye to the discovery of destructive and infernal machines, to the development of forces of demolition and the invention of fiery implements, which uproot the tree of life, it would become evident and manifest unto thee that civilization is conjoined with barbarism. Progress and barbarism go hand in hand, unless material civilization be confirmed by Divine Guidance, by the revelations of the All-Merciful and by godly virtues, and

be reinforced by spiritual conduct, by the ideals of the Kingdom and by the outpourings of the Realm of Might....

Therefore, this civilization and material progress should be combined with the Most Great Guidance so that this nether world may become the scene of the appearance of the bestowals of the <p70> Kingdom, and physical achievements may be conjoined with the effulgences of the Merciful. This in order that the beauty and perfection of the world of man may be unveiled and be manifested before all in the utmost grace and splendour. Thus everlasting glory and happiness shall be revealed.[18]

Baha'u'llah describes the fate of those whose lives demonstrate a heedlessness of spiritual values and a failure to act in conformity with such values. He comments:

...ye walk on My earth complacent and self-satisfied, heedless that My earth is weary of you and everything within it shunneth you....[19]

Shoghi Effendi asserts that man's negligence contributes to the decline of the "present-day Order"[20] and impacts on the environment in a practical way:

The violent derangement of the world's equilibrium; the trembling that will seize the limbs of mankind; the radical transformation of human society; the rolling up of the present-day Order; the fundamental changes affecting the structure of government; ... the development of infernal engines of war; the burning of cities; the contamination of the atmosphere of the earth -- these stand out as the signs and portents that must either herald or accompany the retributive calamity which, as decreed by Him Who is the Judge and Redeemer of mankind, must, sooner or later, afflict a society which, for the most part, and for over a century, has turned a deaf ear to the Voice of God's Messenger in this day -- a calamity which must purge the human race of the dross of its age-long corruptions, and weld its component parts into a firmly knit world-embracing Fellowship -- a Fellowship destined, in the fullness of time, to be incorporated in the framework, and to be galvanized by the spiritualizing influences, of a mysteriously expanding, divinely appointed Order, and to flower, in the course of future Dispensations, into a Civilization, the like of which mankind has, at no stage in its evolution, witnessed.[21]

2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND NATURE

The relationship between man and nature is very complex. An appreciation of the dimensions of this subject requires consideration of some of the characteristics of nature described in the Baha'i Writings and <p71> an awareness of certain values and attitudes that guide individual behaviour and the establishment of priorities.

2.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF NATURE

2.1.1 A Unified System

'Abdu'l-Baha indicates that the "temple of the world"[22] has been "fashioned after the image and likeness of the human body".[23] He explains that:

> By this is meant that even as the human body in this world, which is outwardly composed of different limbs and organs, is in reality a closely integrated, coherent entity, similarly the structure of the physical world is like unto a single being whose limbs and members are inseparably linked together.
>
> Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly.
>
> Consider for instance how one group of created things constituteth the vegetable kingdom, and another the animal kingdom. Each of these two maketh use of certain elements in the air on which its own life dependeth, while each increaseth the quantity of such elements as are essential for the life of the other. In other words, the growth and development of the vegetable world is impossible without the existence of the animal kingdom, and the maintenance of animal life is inconceivable without the co-operation of the vegetable kingdom. Of like kind are the relationships that exist among all created things. Hence it was stated that co-operation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness.[24]<p72>

In another passage 'Abdu'l-Baha describes the interconnectedness of "every part of the universe"[25] and the importance of maintaining balance in the system:

Reflect upon the inner realities of the universe, the secret wisdoms involved, the enigmas, the inter-relationships, the rules that govern all. For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever....[26]

2.1.2 Subject to Law and Organization

'Abdu'l-Baha states that "The phenomenal world is entirely subject to the rule and control of natural law."[27] He contrasts nature's "absolute organization"[28] and its lack of "intelligence"[29] and "will"[30] with man's ability to "[command] the forces of Nature"[31] through discovery of "the constitution of things":[32]

This Nature is subjected to an absolute organization, to determined laws, to a complete order and a finished design, from which it will never depart to such a degree, indeed, that if you look carefully and with keen sight, from the smallest invisible atom up to such large bodies of the world of existence as the globe of the sun or the other great stars and luminous spheres, whether you regard their arrangement, their composition, their form or their movement, you will find that all are in the highest degree of organization and are under one law from which they will never depart.

But when you look at Nature itself, you see that it has no intelligence, no will. For instance, the nature of fire is to burn; it burns without will or intelligence. The nature of water is fluidity; it flows without will or intelligence. The nature of the sun is radiance; it shines without will or intelligence. The nature of vapour is to ascend; it ascends without will or intelligence. Thus it is clear that the natural movements of all things are compelled; there are no voluntary movements except those of animals and, above all, those of man. Man is able to resist and to oppose Nature because he discovers the constitution of things, and through this he commands the forces of Nature; all the inventions he has made are due to his discovery of the constitution of things. For example, he invented the telegraph, which <p73> is the means of communication between the East and the West. It is evident, then, that man rules over Nature.

Now, when you behold in existence such organizations, arrangements and laws, can you say that all these are the effect of Nature, though Nature has neither intelligence nor perception? If not, it becomes evident that this

Nature, which has neither perception nor intelligence, is in the grasp of Almighty God, Who is the Ruler of the world of Nature; whatever He wishes, He causes Nature to manifest.[33]

2.1.3 Change and Motion

Change is a law governing the whole of physical creation. It is seen in the passage of the seasons.

'Abdu'l-Baha writes:

The earth is in motion and growth; the mountains, hills and prairies are green and pleasant; the bounty is overflowing; the mercy universal; the rain is descending from the cloud of mercy; the brilliant Sun is shining; the full moon is ornamenting the horizon of ether; The great ocean-tide is flooding every little stream; the gifts are successive; the favours consecutive; and the refreshing breeze is blowing, wafting the fragrant perfume of the blossoms. Boundless treasure is in the hand of the King of Kings! Lift the hem of thy garment in order to receive it.[34]

Soon the whole world, as in springtime, will change its garb. The turning and falling of the autumn leaves is past; the bleakness of the winter time is over. The new year hath appeared and the spiritual springtime is at hand. The black earth is becoming a verdant garden; the deserts and mountains are teeming with red flowers; from the borders of the wilderness the tall grasses are standing like advance guards before the cypress and jessamine trees; while the birds are singing among the rose branches like the angels in the highest heavens, announcing the glad-tidings of the approach of that spiritual spring, and the sweet music of their voices is causing the real essence of all things to move and quiver.[35]

'Abdu'l-Baha states that "absolute repose does not exist in nature",[36] that "movement is essential to existence".[37] In relation to existence He describes the processes of "composition and decomposition":[38] <p74>

...consider the phenomenon of composition and decomposition, of existence and non-existence. Every created thing in the contingent world is made up of many and varied atoms, and its existence is dependent on the composition of these. In other words, through the divine creative power a conjunction of simple elements taketh place so that from this composition a distinct organism

is produced. The existence of all things is based upon this principle. But when the order is deranged, decomposition is produced and disintegration setteth in, then that thing ceaseth to exist. That is, the annihilation of all things is caused by decomposition and disintegration. Therefore attraction and composition between the various elements is the means of life, and discord, decomposition and division produce death. Thus the cohesive and attractive forces in all things lead to the appearance of fruitful results and effects, while estrangement and alienation of things lead to disturbance and annihilation. Through affinity and attraction all living things like plants, animals and men come into existence, while division and discord bring about decomposition and destruction.[39]

He also explains that, in the physical world, the course of evolution is in the direction of increasing levels of complexity:

In the physical creation, evolution is from one degree of perfection to another. The mineral passes with its mineral perfections to the vegetable; the vegetable, with its perfections, passes to the animal world, and so on to that of humanity....[40]

2.1.4 Diversity

'Abdu'l-Baha describes diversity as "the essence of perfection and the cause of the appearance of the bestowals"[41] of God, and He states:

Consider the flowers of a garden: though differing in kind, colour, form and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. Thus when that unifying force, the penetrating influence of the Word of God, taketh effect, the difference of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions and dispositions embellisheth the world of humanity. This diversity, this difference is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the<p75> limbs and organs of the human body, for each one contributeth to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole....

How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and colour! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof...[42]

The extent of the diversity of the "world of created beings"[43] is underlined in the following passage:

> ... the forms and organisms of phenomenal being and existence in each of the kingdoms of the universe are myriad and numberless. The vegetable plane or kingdom, for instance, has its infinite variety of types and material structures of plant life -- each distinct and different within itself, no two exactly alike in composition and detail -- for there are no repetitions in nature, and the augmentative virtue cannot be confined to any given image or shape. Each leaf has its own particular identity -- so to speak, its own individuality as a leaf....[44]

2.1.5 Serves the Human World

'Abdu'l-Baha describes the "causes and circumstances"[45] of the "perfection"[46] of the mineral, vegetable and animal worlds, and He distinguishes this from their "real prosperity"[47] which conduces to the honour of the various kingdoms. The honour and exaltation of every existing being depends upon causes and circumstances.

> The excellency, the adornment and the perfection of the earth is to be verdant and fertile through the bounty of the clouds of springtime. Plants grow; flowers and fragrant herbs spring up; fruit-bearing trees become full of blossoms and bring forth fresh and new fruit. Gardens become beautiful, and meadows adorned; mountains and plains are clad in a green robe, and gardens, fields, villages and cities are decorated. This is the prosperity of the mineral world.
>
> The height of exaltation and the perfection of the vegetable world is that a tree should grow on the bank of a stream of fresh water, that a gentle breeze should blow on it, that the warmth of the sun should shine on it, that a gardener should attend to its cultivation, <p76> and that day by day it should develop and yield fruit. But its real prosperity is to progress into the animal and human world, and replace that which has been exhausted in the bodies of animals and men.
>
> 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 honour and exaltation. So the supreme happiness of an animal is to have possession of a green and fertile meadow, perfectly pure flowing water, and a lovely, verdant forest. If these things are provided for it, no greater prosperity can be imagined. For example, if a bird builds its nest in a green and fruitful

forest, in a beautiful high place, upon a strong tree, and at the top of a lofty branch, and if it finds all it needs of seeds and water, this is its perfect prosperity.

But real prosperity for the animal consists in passing from the animal world to the human world, like the microscopic beings that, through the water and air, enter into man and are assimilated, and replace that which has been consumed in his body. This is the great honour and prosperity for the animal world; no greater honour can be conceived for it.[48]

2.1.6 Imperfection of Nature

Two views of nature are contrasted -- one which holds that the "world of nature is complete",[49] and one that declares that it is "incomplete"[50] because "it has need of intelligence and education".[51] 'Abdu'l-Baha states that the "mineral, vegetable, animal and human worlds are all in need of an educator":[52]

The materialists hold to the opinion that the world of nature is complete. The divine philosophers declare that the world of nature is incomplete. There is a wide difference between the two. The materialists call attention to the perfection of nature, the sun, moon and stars, the trees in their adornment, the whole earth and the sea -- even unimportant phenomena revealing the most perfect symmetry. The divine philosophers deny this seeming perfection and completeness in nature's kingdom, even though admitting the beauty of its scenes and aspects and acknowledging the irresistible cosmic forces which control the colossal suns and planets. They hold that while nature seems perfect, it is, nevertheless, imperfect because <p77> it has need of intelligence and education. In proof of this they say that man, though he be a very god in the realm of material creation, is himself in need of an educator. Man undeveloped by education is savage, animalistic, brutal. Laws and regulations, schools, colleges and universities have for their purpose the training of man and his uplift from the dark borderland of the animal kingdom....[53]

When we consider existence, we see that the mineral, vegetable, animal and human worlds are all in need of an educator.

If the earth is not cultivated, it becomes a jungle where useless weeds grow; but if a cultivator comes and tills the ground, it produces crops which nourish living creatures. It is evident, therefore, that the soil needs the cultivation of the farmer. Consider the trees: if they remain without a cultivator, they will be fruitless, and without fruit they are useless; but if they receive the care of a gardener, these same barren trees become fruitful, and through cultivation, fertilization and engrafting the trees which had bitter fruits

yield sweet fruits....

The same is true with respect to animals: notice that when the animal is trained it becomes domestic, and also that man, if he is left without education, becomes bestial, and, moreover, if left under the rule of nature, becomes lower than an animal, whereas if he is educated he becomes an angel....[54]

2.2 ATTITUDES AND VALUES

The Baha'i Writings articulate certain spiritual values and attitudes that guide the relationship of man toward nature. These include:

2.2.1 Appreciation

An awareness of the fact that the earth is the "source"[55] of man's "prosperity"[56] is tempered by the realization that "the honour and exaltation of man must be something more than material riches".[57] Thus: Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory....[58] <p78>

What is it of which ye can rightly boast? Is it on your food and your drink that ye pride yourselves, on the riches ye lay up in your treasuries, on the diversity and the cost of the ornaments with which ye deck yourselves? If true glory were to consist in the possession of such perishable things, then the earth on which ye walk must needs vaunt itself over you, because it supplieth you, and bestoweth upon you, these very things, by the decree of the Almighty. In its bowels are contained, according to what God hath ordained, all that ye possess. From it, as a sign of His mercy, ye derive your riches. Behold then your state, the thing in which ye glory! Would that ye could perceive it![59]

Then it is clear that the honour and exaltation of man must be something more than material riches. Material comforts are only a branch, but the root of the exaltation of man is the good attributes and virtues which are the adornments of his reality. These are the divine appearances, the heavenly bounties, the sublime emotions, the love and knowledge of God; universal wisdom, intellectual perception, scientific discoveries, justice, equity, truthfulness, benevolence, natural courage and innate fortitude; the respect for rights and the keeping of agreements and covenants; rectitude in all

circumstances; serving the truth under all conditions; the sacrifice of one's life for the good of all people; kindness and esteem for all nations; obedience to the teachings of God; service in the Divine Kingdom; the guidance of the people, and the education of the nations and races. This is the prosperity of the human world! This is the exaltation of man in the world! This is eternal life and heavenly honour![60]

2.2.2 Moderation

The Baha'i Writings encourage detachment from "this world and the vanities thereof",[61] since "attachment"[62] distracts the individual from awareness of God. This does not, however, constitute a form of asceticism or imply a rejection of life's pleasures. Baha'u'llah explains:

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 <p79> 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.[63]

The standard is one of moderation:

In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil....[64]

2.2.3 Kindness to Animals

Baha'u'llah calls for man to "show kindness to animals"[65] and He warns against "hunting to excess".[66] In relation to the former, 'Abdu'l-Baha writes:

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. <p80>

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... 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.[67]

The Baha'i Writings also assert that the consumption of meat is not a prerequisite to health:

Regarding the eating of animal flesh and abstinence therefrom, ... he [man] is not in need of meat, nor is he obliged to eat it. Even without eating meat he would live with the utmost vigour and energy.... Truly, the killing of animals and the eating of their meat is somewhat contrary to pity and compassion, and if one can content oneself with cereals, fruit, oil and nuts, such as pistachios, almonds and so on, it would undoubtedly be better and more pleasing.[68]

2.2.4 Development of Nature

In the Baha'i view, physical creation is dynamic and evolving from "one degree of perfection to another".[69] It is, however, "incomplete",[70] since it lacks "intelligence and education".[71] It stands in need of development by man in order to create not only a higher degree of order and beauty, which are standards upheld in the Baha'i teachings, but also to increase its fertility and productivity. In relation to the creation of order and beauty in the realm of nature 'Abdu'l-Baha writes:

Nature is the material world. When we look upon it, we see that it is dark and imperfect. For instance, if we allow a piece of land to remain in its natural condition, we will find it covered with thorns and thistles; useless weeds and wild vegetation will flourish upon it, and it will become like a jungle. The trees will be fruitless, lacking beauty and symmetry...[72]

And if, as thou passest by fields and plantations, thou observest that the plants, flowers and sweet-smelling herbs are growing luxuriantly together, forming a pattern of unity, this is an evidence of the fact that that plantation and garden is flourishing under the care of a skilful gardener. But when thou seest it in a state of disorder and irregularity thou inferrest that it hath lacked the training of an efficient farmer and thus hath produced weeds and tares.[73]<p81>

'Abdu'l-Baha also mentions the contribution of cultivation as a means of increasing the fertility of the earth and its productivity. He states:

If we should relegate this plot of ground to its natural state, allow it to return to its original condition, it would become a field of thorns and useless weeds, but by cultivation it will become fertile soil, yielding a harvest. Deprived of cultivation, the mountain slopes would be jungles and forests without fruitful trees. The gardens bring forth fruits and flowers in proportion to the care and tillage bestowed upon them by the gardener....[74]

A grain of wheat, when cultivated by the farmer, will yield a whole harvest, and a seed, through the gardener's care, will grow into a great tree....[75]

While the world of nature stands in need of development, man's approach to such development must be tempered by moderation, a commitment to protecting the "heritage [of] future generations",[76] and an awareness of the sanctity of nature that pervades the Writings of the Baha'i Faith. For example, Baha'u'llah states: Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified.[77]

2.2.5 Importance of Agriculture

Baha'u'llah states that "Special regard must be paid to agriculture."[78] He

characterizes it as an activity which is "conducive to the advancement of mankind and to the reconstruction of the world".[79] 'Abdu'l-Baha asserts that

The fundamental basis of the community is agriculture,- -tillage of the soil....[80]

He describes agriculture as "a noble science"[81] whose practice is an "act of worship",[82] and He encourages both women and men to engage in "agricultural sciences".[83] He indicates that should an individual "become proficient in this field, he will become a means of providing for the comfort of untold numbers of people".[84]

In relation to the economic and social development of the nations, the Universal House of Justice underlines the importance of "agriculture and the preservation of the ecological balance of the world".[85] <p82>

2.2.6 Use of Science

Science is described as "the governor of nature and its mysteries, the one agency by which man explores the institutions of material creation":[86]

...man through the exercise of his scientific, intellectual power ... can modify, change and control nature according to his own wishes and uses. Science, so to speak, is the breaker of the laws of nature.

Consider, for example, that man according to natural law should dwell upon the surface of the earth. By overcoming this law and restriction, however, he sails in ships over the ocean, mounts to the zenith in airplanes and sinks to the depths of the sea in submarines. This is against the fiat of nature and a violation of her sovereignty and dominion. Nature's laws and methods, the hidden secrets and mysteries of the universe, human inventions and discoveries, all our scientific acquisitions should naturally remain concealed and unknown, but man through his intellectual acumen searches them out of the plane of the invisible, draws them into the plane of the visible, exposes and explains them. For instance, one of the mysteries of nature is electricity. According to nature this force, this energy, should remain latent and hidden, but man scientifically breaks through the very laws of nature, arrests it and even imprisons it for his use.

In brief, man through the possession of this ideal endowment of scientific investigation is the most noble product of creation, the governor of nature....[87]

'Abdu'l-Baha links scientific endeavour with the implementation of a noble goal. He states:

This endowment is the most praiseworthy power of man, for through its employment and exercise the betterment of the human race is accomplished, the development of the virtues of

mankind is made possible and the spirit and mysteries of God become manifest....[88]

And He enumerates the general principle that ...any agency whatever, though it be the instrument of mankind's greatest good, is capable of misuse. Its proper use or abuse depends on the varying degrees of enlightenment, capacity, faith, honesty, devotion and highmindedness of the leaders of public opinion.[89] <p83>

3. PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

A number of issues pertinent to the protection of the environment are addressed in the Writings of the Baha'i Faith. Several of these are set out below.

3.1 PRESERVATION OF RESOURCES

Shoghi Effendi links the preservation and reclamation of the earth's resources with both the "protection of the] physical world and [the] heritage [of] future generations".[90] He affirms that the work of such groups as the Men of the Trees and the World Forestry Charter is "essentially humanitarian",[91] and he applauds their "noble objective"[92] of reclaiming the "desert areas [of] Africa".[93]

It is interesting to note that among the "powers and duties"[94] of the Universal House of Justice are "the advancement and betterment of the world"[95] and "the development of countries".[96]

3.2 CONTROL OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Baha'i Writings envisage that the protection, exploration, and exploitation of the earth's "unimaginably vast resources"[97] must, inevitably, in the long term, come under the jurisdiction of a "world federal system".[98] Such a system, based on recognition of the "unity of the human race",[99] will not only exercise "unchallengeable authority"[100] over the earth's resources, but it will also ensure economic and social justice. Shoghi Effendi writes:

> The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Baha'u'llah, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded.... In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will co-operate, and will harmoniously develop.... The economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be co-ordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated. <p84>

National rivalries, hatreds, and intrigues will cease,

and racial animosity and prejudice will be replaced by racial amity, understanding and co-operation. The causes of religious strife will be permanently removed, economic barriers and restrictions will be completely abolished, and the inordinate distinction between classes will be obliterated. Destitution on the one hand, and gross accumulation of ownership on the other, will disappear. The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life, and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral, and spiritual life of the entire human race.

A world federal system, ruling the whole earth and exercising unchallengeable authority over its unimaginably vast resources, blending and embodying the ideals of both the East and the West, liberated from the curse of war and its miseries, and bent on the exploitation of all the available sources of energy on the surface of the planet, a system in which Force is made the servant of Justice, whose life is sustained by its universal recognition of one God and by its allegiance to one common Revelation -- such is the goal towards which humanity, impelled by the unifying forces of life, is moving.[101]

3.3 APPROACHES TO PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

The conservation and protection of the environment must be addressed on the individual and societal levels. Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf, states:

We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.<p85>

No movement in the world directs its attention upon both these aspects of human life and has full measures

for their improvement, save the teachings of Baha'u'llah. And this is its distinctive feature. If we desire therefore the good of the world we should strive to spread those teachings and also practise them in our own life. Through them will the human heart be changed, and also our social environment provides the atmosphere in which we can grow spiritually and reflect in full the light of God shining through the revelation of Baha'u'llah.[102]

And, with regard to the solution of the world's problems, he indicates that:

We need a change of heart, a reframing of all our conceptions and a new orientation of our activities. The inward life of man as well as his outward environment have to be reshaped if human salvation is to be secured.[103]

On a governmental level, the Universal House of Justice calls for "global cooperation of the family of nations in devising and adopting measures designed to preserve the ecological balance this earth was given by its Creator".[104] The House of Justice asserts:

Until such time as the nations of the world understand and follow the admonitions of Baha'u'llah to whole-heartedly work together in looking after the best interests of all humankind, and unite in the search for ways and means to meet the many environmental problems besetting our planet, the House of Justice feels that little progress will be made towards their solution....[105]

The Universal House of Justice sets out the role of the individual Baha'i and of Baha'i communities in relation to saving "the wildlife and natural condition of the world" [106] as follows:

...the best way in which you can help to save the wildlife and natural condition of the world is to exert every effort to bring the Message of Baha'u'llah to the attention of your fellow-men and to win their allegiance to His Cause.

As the hearts of men are changed, and they begin to work in unity in the light of Baha'u'llah's teachings, they can begin to implement many practical improvements to the condition of the world. This is already beginning in the efforts at social and economic development in those areas where large Baha'i communities have been founded. <p86>

Of course, you can also assist those with whom you come into contact who have an interest in improving the environment, but the fundamental solution is the one that Baha'u'llah has brought.[107]

In addition to addressing the issue on a fundamental spiritual level, collaboration with individuals and groups interested in improving the environment is encouraged. The Baha'i communities are called upon to make the conservation of the environment an integral part of their ongoing activities by

...assisting in endeavours to conserve the environment in ways which blend with

the rhythm of life of our community...[108]

4. PROSPECT FOR THE FUTURE

'Abdu'l-Baha sketches the following picture of the future state of life on earth:

The Lord of all mankind hath fashioned this human realm
to be a Garden of Eden, an earthly paradise. If, as it
must, it findeth the way to harmony and peace, to love
and mutual trust, it will become a true abode of bliss,
a place of manifold blessings and unending delights.
Therein shall be revealed the excellence of humankind,
therein shall the rays of the Sun of Truth shine forth
on every hand.[109] <p87>

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59. "Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. CXVIII, pp. 252-53.

60. "Some Answered Questions, pp. 79-80.

61. "Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. CXXVIII, p. 276.

62. ibid.

63. ibid.

64. Baha'u'llah, "Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", p. 69.

65. "Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. CXXV, p. 265.

66. Universal House of Justice, "A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah", 1st ed. (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1973), note 34, p. 63.

67. "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 138, pp. 158-60.

68. 'Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet translated from the Persian.

69. "Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912 ,p.66.

70. "The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912",p.329.

71. ibid. <p90>

72. ibid., p. 308.

73. "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 225, p. 290.

74. "The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", pp. 353.

75. "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 104, p. 132.

76. Shoghi Effendi, from a cable dated 23 May 1951 to the New Earth Luncheon, London, U.K

77. Baha'u'llah, in "Baha'i Prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Baha'u'llah, the Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Baha", 1985 ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985), frontispiece.

78. "Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i- Aqdas", p. 90.

79. ibid., p. 89.

80. 'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in "Star of the West", vol. 4, no. 6 (24 June 1913), p. 103.

81. 'Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet translated from the Persian. 82. "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 126, p. 145.

83. ibid., and "The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 283.

84. 'Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet translated from the Persian.

85. Universal House of Justice, Department of the Secretariat, from a letter dated 31 March 1985 to an Association for Baha'i Studies.

86. "The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 29.

87. ibid., p. 30.

88. ibid., p. 31.

89. 'Abdu'l-Baha, "The Secret of Divine Civilization", 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983), p. 16.

90. Shoghi Effendi, from a cable dated 23 May 1951 to the New Earth Luncheon, London, U.K

91. Shoghi Effendi, from a cable dated 21 May 1956 to the World Forestry Charter Luncheon, London, U.K.

92. ibid.

93. Shoghi Effendi, from a cable dated 22 May 1957 to the World Forestry Charter Luncheon, London, U.K <p91>

94. Universal House of Justice, "The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice" (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1972), p. 5.

95. ibid.

96. ibid.

97. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 11 March 1936, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 204.

98. ibid.

99. ibid., p. 203.

100. ibid., p. 204.

101. ibid., pp. 203-4.

102. Secretary to Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 17 February 1933 to an individual believer.

103. Secretary to Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 27 May 1932 to an individual believer.

104. Universal House of Justice, Department of the Secretariat, from a letter dated 18 October 1981 to an individual believer.

105. ibid.

106. Universal House of Justice, Department of the Secretariat, from a letter dated 14 June 1984 to an individual believer.

107. ibid.

108. Universal House of Justice, from the 1989 Ridvan Message to the Baha'is of the World.

109. "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 220, p. 275. 91 <p93>

CONSULTATION: A COMPILATION

From the Writings of Baha'u'llah

166. The Great Being saith: The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion. Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), p. 168)

167. Say: no man can attain his true station except through his justice. No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be

attained except through consultation.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

168. Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

169. Such matters should be determined through consultation, and whatever emergeth from the consultation of those chosen, that indeed is the command of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

170. In all things it is necessary to consult. This matter should be forcibly stressed by thee, so that consultation may be observed by all. The intent of what hath been revealed from the Pen of the Most High is that consultation may be fully carried out among the friends, inasmuch as it is and will always be a cause of awareness and of awakening and a source of good and well-being.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

171. 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 <p94> 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.

(Cited in a letter dated 5 March 1922 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" [rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1977), p. 21)

172. If in the first group of people who have gathered, unanimity is not achieved, new people shall be added, after which a group equal in number to the Greatest Name[1] or fewer or greater shall be chosen from their midst by lots; whereupon the consultation shall be renewed; whatever is the result shall be obeyed. If the second time opinions again differ, repeat the process a third time. This time obey the majority vote. Verily He directeth whom He willeth to the straight Path.[2]
[1 Nine]
[2 173."This statement appears in 'Questions and Answers',described by Shoghi Effendi as an appendix to the 'Kitab-i-Aqdas'. It was revealed before Spiritual Assemblies had been established and was in answer to a question about the Baha'i teaching on consultation. The emergence of Spiritual Assemblies, to which the friends may always turn, in no way prohibits them from following, if they wish, the procedure outlined in the above passage when they desire to

consult on their personal problems. The quotation clearly indicates Baha'u'llah's preference for unanimity."
(From a letter dated 28 February 1978 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies)]

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic and Persian)

From the Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

174. ...lt 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.

(Cited in a letter dated 5 March 1922 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932, p. 21) <p95>

175. 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 Baha shall be vouchsafed to them.... 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. 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.

(Cited in a letter dated 5 March 1922 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 21-22)

176. ...

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 non-existent, 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.

They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views.

They must in every matter search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden.

The honored members must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should differences of opinion arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority.

It is again not permitted that any one of the honored members object to or censure, whether in or out of the meeting, any decision arrived at previously though that decision be not right, for such criticism would prevent any decision from being enforced.

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 <p96> 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 endeavor to fulfil these conditions the Grace of the Holy Spirit shall be vouchsafed unto them, and that assembly shall become the center 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.

(Cited in a letter dated 5 March 1922 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", pp. 22-23)

177. 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.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 39, p. 81)

178. If they agree upon a subject, even though it be wrong, it is better than to disagree and be in the right, for this difference will produce the

demolition of the divine foundation. Though one of the parties may be in the right and they disagree that will be the cause of a thousand wrongs, but if they agree and both parties are in the wrong, as it is in unity the truth will be revealed and the wrong made right.

("Baha'i World Faith: Selected Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 411)

179. The question of consultation is of the utmost importance, and is one of the most potent instruments conducive to the tranquillity and felicity of the people. For example, when a believer is uncertain about his affairs, or when he seeketh to pursue a project or trade, the friends should gather <p97> together and devise a solution for him. He, in his turn, should act accordingly. Likewise in larger issues, when a problem ariseth, or a difficulty occurreth, the wise should gather, consult, and devise a solution. They should then rely upon the one true God, and surrender to His Providence, in whatever way it may be revealed, for divine confirmations will undoubtedly assist. Consultation, therefore, is one of the explicit ordinances of the Lord of mankind.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

180. Man must consult on all matters, whether major or minor, so that he may become cognizant of what is good. Consultation giveth him insight into things and enableth him to delve into questions which are unknown. The light of truth shineth from the faces of those who engage in consultation. Such consultation causeth the living waters to flow in the meadows of man's reality, the rays of ancient glory to shine upon him, and the tree of his being to be adorned with wondrous fruit. The members who are consulting, however, should behave in the utmost love, harmony and sincerity towards each other. The principle of consultation is one of the most fundamental elements of the divine edifice. Even in their ordinary affairs the individual members of society should consult.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

181. Every one of the friends should highly praise the other and each should regard himself as evanescent and as naught in the presence of others. All matters should be consulted upon in the meeting and whatever is the majority vote should be carried out. I swear by the one true God, it is better that all should agree on a wrong decision, than for one right vote to be singled out, inasmuch as single votes can be sources of dissension, which lead to ruin. Whereas, if in one case they take a wrong decision, in a hundred other cases they will adopt right decisions, and concord and unity are preserved. This will offset any deficiency, and will eventually lead to the righting of the wrong.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

182. The purpose of consultation is to show that the views of several individuals are assuredly preferable to one man, even as the power of a number of men is of course greater than the power of one man. Thus <p98> consultation is acceptable in the presence of the Almighty, and hath been enjoined upon the

believers, so that they may confer upon ordinary and personal matters, as well as on affairs which are general in nature and universal.

For instance, when a man hath a project to accomplish, should he consult with some of his brethren, that which is agreeable will of course be investigated and unveiled to his eyes, and the truth will be disclosed. Likewise on a higher level, should the people of a village consult one another about their affairs, the right solution will certainly be revealed. In like manner, the members of each profession, such as in industry, should consult , and those in commerce should similarly consult on business affairs. In short, consultation is desirable and acceptable in all things and on all issues.

(Cited in letter dated 15 February 1922 written by Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia)

183. Regarding thy question about consultation of a father with his son, or a son with his father, in matters of trade and commerce, consultation is one of the fundamental elements of the foundation of the Law of God. Such consultation is assuredly acceptable, whether between father and son, or with others. There is nothing better than this. Man must consult in all things for this will lead him to the depths of each problem and enable him to find the right solution.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

184. The honoured members of the Spiritual Assembly should exert their efforts so that no differences may occur, and if such differences do occur, they should not reach the point of causing conflict, hatred and antagonism, which lead to threats. When you notice that a stage has been reached when enmity and threats are about to occur, you should immediately postpone discussion of the subject, until wranglings, disputations, and loud talk vanish, and a propitious time is at hand.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

185. Settle all things, both great and small, by consultation. Without prior consultation, take no important step in your own personal affairs. Concern yourselves with one another. Help along one another's projects <p99> and plans. Grieve over one another. Let none in the whole country go in need. Befriend one another until ye become as a single body, one and all...[1]
[1 Cf "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev.ed.] (Haifa Baha'i World Centre, 1982), Sec. 102, pp. 128-29.]

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

185/1. Every meeting which is organized for the purpose of unity and concord will be conducive to changing strangers into friends, enemies into associates, and 'Abdu'l-Baha will be present in His heart and soul with that meeting.

(Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas" vol.2 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1915), p. 553)

186. In this Cause consultation is of vital importance, but spiritual

conference and not the mere voicing of personal views is intended. In France I was present at a session of the senate, but the experience was not impressive. Parliamentary procedure should have for its object the attainment of the light of truth upon questions presented and not furnish a battleground for opposition and self- opinion. Antagonism and contradiction are unfortunate and always destructive to truth. In the parliamentary meeting mentioned, altercation and useless quibbling were frequent; the result, mostly confusion and turmoil; even in one instance a physical encounter took place between two members. It was not consultation but comedy.

The purpose is to emphasize the statement that consultation must have for its object the investigation of truth. He who expresses an opinion should not voice it as correct and right but set it forth as a contribution to the consensus of opinion; for the light of reality becomes apparent when two opinions coincide. A spark is produced when flint and steel come together. Man should weigh his opinions with the utmost serenity, calmness and composure. Before expressing his own views he should carefully consider the views already advanced by others. If he finds that a previously expressed opinion is more true and worthy, he should accept it immediately and not willfully hold to an opinion of his own. By this excellent method he endeavors to arrive at unity and truth. Opposition and division are deplorable. It is better then to have the opinion of a wise, <p100> sagacious man; otherwise, contradiction and altercation, in which varied and divergent views are presented, will make it necessary for a judicial body to render decision upon the question. Even a majority opinion or consensus may be incorrect. A thousand people may hold to one view and be mistaken, whereas one sagacious person may be right. Therefore, true consultation is spiritual conference in the attitude and atmosphere of love. Members must love each other in the spirit of fellowship in order that good results may be forthcoming. Love and fellowship are the foundation.

The most memorable instance of spiritual consultation was the meeting of the disciples of Jesus Christ upon the mount after His ascension.

They said, "Jesus Christ has been crucified, and we have no longer association and intercourse with Him in His physical body; therefore, we must be loyal and faithful to Him, we must be grateful and appreciate Him, for He has raised us from the dead, He made us wise, He has given us eternal life.

What shall we do to be faithful to Him?"

And so they held council.

One of them said, "We must detach ourselves from the chains and fetters of the world; otherwise, we cannot be faithful."

The others replied, "That is so."

Another said, "Either we must be married and faithful to our wives and children or serve our Lord free from these ties.

We cannot be occupied with the care and provision for families and at the same

time herald the Kingdom in the wilderness.

Therefore, let those who are unmarried remain so, and those who have married provide means of sustenance and comfort for their families and then go forth to spread the message of glad-tidings."

There were no dissenting voices; all agreed, saying, "That is right."

A third disciple said, "To perform worthy deeds in the Kingdom we must be further self-sacrificing.

From now on we should forego ease and bodily comfort, accept every difficulty, forget self and teach the Cause of God."

This found acceptance and approval by all the others.

Finally a fourth disciple said, "There is still another aspect to our faith and unity.

For Jesus' sake we shall be beaten, imprisoned and exiled.

They may kill us.

Let us receive this lesson now.

Let us realize and resolve that though we are beaten, banished, cursed, spat upon and led forth to be killed, we shall accept all this joyfully, loving those who hate and wound us."

All the disciples replied, "Surely we will -- it is agreed; this is right."

Then they descended from the summit of the mountain, and each went forth in a different direction upon his divine mission. <p101>

This was true consultation. This was spiritual consultation and not the mere voicing of personal views in parliamentary opposition and debate.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, 2nd ed (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 72-73)

187. The first duty of the members is to effect their own unity and harmony, in order to obtain good results. If there be no unity, or the Committee becomes the cause of inharmony, undoubtedly, it is better that it does not exist....

Therefore, when the unity of the members of the Committee is established, their second duty is to read the verses and communes, to be in a state of commemoration and mindfulness, that they may see each other as if in the presence of God.

(Published in "Star of the West", vol 8, no. 9 (20 August 1917), p. 114)

From the Writings of Shoghi Effendi:

188. 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 Baha'i 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, candour and courage on the other.

(23 February 1924 to the Baha'is of America, published in "Baha'i Administration, pp. 63-64)

189.

The duties of those whom the friends have freely and conscientiously elected as their representatives are no less vital and binding than the obligations of those who have chosen them.

Their function is not to dictate, but to consult, and consult not only among themselves, but as much as possible with the friends whom they represent.

They must regard themselves in no other light but that of chosen instruments for a more efficient and dignified presentation of the Cause of God.

They should never be led to suppose that they are the central ornaments of the body of the Cause, intrinsically superior to others in capacity or merit, and sole <p102> promoters of its teachings and principles.

They should approach their task with extreme humility, and endeavour by their open-mindedness, their high sense of justice and duty, their candour, their modesty, their entire devotion to the welfare and interests of the friends, the Cause, and humanity, to win not only the confidence and the genuine support and respect of those whom they should serve, but also their esteem and real affection.

They must at all times avoid the spirit of exclusiveness, the atmosphere of secrecy, free themselves from a domineering attitude, and banish all forms of prejudice and passion from their deliberations.

They should, within the limits of wise discretion, take the friends into their confidence, acquaint them with their plans, share with them their problems and anxieties, and seek their advice and counsel.

And when they are called upon to arrive at a certain decision, they should, after dispassionate, anxious, and cordial consultation, turn to God in prayer, and with earnestness and conviction and courage record their vote and abide by the voice of the majority, which we are told by our Master to be the voice of truth, never to be challenged, and always to be whole-heartedly enforced.

To this voice the friends must heartily respond, and regard it as the only means that can ensure the protection and advancement of the Cause.

(23 February 1924 to the Baha'is of America, published in Baha'i Administration, p. 64)

190. Not infrequently, nay oftentimes, the most lowly, untutored, and

inexperienced among the friends will, by the sheer inspiring force of selfless and ardent devotion, contribute a distinct and memorable share to a highly involved discussion in any given assembly.

(29 January 1925 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration", p. 79)

191. Indeed it has ever been the cherished desire of our Master 'Abdu'l-Baha that the friends in their councils, local as well as national, should by their candour, their honesty of purpose, their singleness of mind, and the thoroughness of their discussions achieve unanimity in all things.

(29 January 1925 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration", p. 80) <p103>

192. Consultation, frank and unfettered, is the bedrock of this unique Order.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 18 November 1933 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

From Letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi[1]:
[1 To individual believers unless otherwise indicated.]

193. Concerning the attendance of certain individuals at the meeting of the Assemblies and at the invitation of that body: This Shoghi Effendi considers to be as expert advice, which is absolutely necessary for good administration. The members of the Assembly are not supposed to know everything on every subject, so they can invite a person, versed in that question, to attend their meetings and explain his views. But naturally he will have no right to vote.

(23 October 1926 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, published in "Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to the Baha'i Community of the British Isles" (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1981), p. 59)

194. We are often told by the Master that under such circumstances we should consult our friends, especially the Assemblies, and seek their advice. It would be nice if you should follow that advice and take some of the friends into your confidence. Maybe God's will is best attained through consultation.

(12 November 1930)

195. With proper consultation some method is sure to be found. There is no need to wait until an Assembly is constituted to start consulting. The view of two earnest souls is always better than one.

(16 June 1932)

196. The principle of consultation, which constitutes one of the basic laws of the Administration, should be applied to all Baha'i activities which affect the collective interests of the Faith, for it is through cooperation and continual exchange of thoughts and views that the Cause can best <p104> safeguard and

foster its interests. Individual initiative, personal ability and resourcefulness, though indispensable, are, unless supported and enriched by the collective experiences and wisdom of the group, utterly incapable of achieving such a tremendous task.

(30 August 1933)

197. The believers should have confidence in the directions and orders of their Assembly, even though they may not be convinced of their justice or right. Once the Assembly, through a majority vote of its members, comes to a decision the friends should readily obey it. Specially those dissenting members within the Assembly whose opinion is contrary to that of the majority of their fellow-members should set a good example before the community by sacrificing their personal views for the sake of obeying the principle of majority vote that underlies the functioning of all Baha'i Assemblies.

But before the majority of the Assembly comes to a decision, it is not only the right but the sacred obligation of every member to express freely and openly his views, without being afraid of displeasing or alienating any of his fellow-members. In view of this important administrative principle of frank and open consultation, the Guardian would advise you to give up the method of asking other members to voice your opinion and suggestions. This indirect way of expressing your views to the Assembly not only creates an atmosphere of secrecy which is most alien to the spirit of the Cause, but would also lead to many misunderstandings and complications. The Assembly members must have the courage of their convictions, but must also express whole-hearted and unqualified obedience to the well-considered judgement and directions of the majority of their fellow-members.

(28 October 1935)

198. Through the clash of personal opinions, as 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated, the spark of truth is often ignited, and Divine guidance revealed. The friends should therefore not feel discouraged at the differences of opinion that may prevail among the members of an Assembly, for these, as experience has shown, and as the Master's words attest, fulfil a valuable function in all Assembly deliberations. But once the opinion of the majority has been ascertained, all the members should automatically and <p105> unreservedly obey it, and faithfully carry it out. Patience and restraint, however, should at all times characterize the discussions and deliberations of the elected representatives of the local community, and no fruitless and hair-splitting discussions indulged in, under any circumstances.

(18 April 1939)

199. In your last question, concerning cases when those needed for consultation are not available and a person is uncertain on the course to be followed in an important matter, you ask whether it is permissible for him to resort to the practice of "istikharihn[1] using the Kitab-i-Aqdas. The Guardian has stated that in such cases what is necessary and essential is for the person to turn

his heart wholly to God and to beseech aid from the Source of Grace and inspiration and nothing else. If it is possible to postpone the decision it would be preferable and more proper to do so, until the means for consultation are made available.
[1 This is a process of divination, such as is done through bibliomancy, when a Holy Book is opened at random and guidance is sought for one's problem by reading passages of the Book on the opened page.]

(23 April 1941- translated from the Persian)

200. The remedy to Assembly inharmony cannot be in the resignation or abstinence of any of its members. It must learn, in spite of disturbing elements, to continue to function as a whole, otherwise the whole system would become discredited through the introduction of exceptions to the rule.

The believers, loving the Cause above all else and putting its interests first, must be ready to bear the hardships entailed, of whatever nature they may be. Only through such persistence and self-sacrifice can we ever hope to preserve on the one hand our divine institutions intact, and on the other force ourselves to become nobler, better instruments to serve this glorious Faith.

(20 November 1941)

201. The questions you ask in your letter about individual guidance have two aspects, one might say. It is good that people should turn to God and beseech His aid in solving their problems and guiding their acts, indeed <p106> every day of their lives, if they feel the desire to do so. But they cannot possibly impose what they feel to be their guidance on anyone else, let alone on Assemblies or Committees, as Baha'u'llah has expressly laid down the law of consultation and never indicated that anything else superseded it.

(25 January 1943)

202. The Guardian advises that you should refer to other doctors, and follow the majority vote.[1]
[1 This advice was given by the Guardian in a case when the inquirer sought the Guardian's counsel, since one doctor's view was that an operation was needed, while another doctor did not consider such an operation necessary.]

(14 February 1945 - translated from the Arabic)

203. You have pointed out that on consultative bodies it may sometimes happen that in a given case the view of one of the members is better and has greater merit than that of the others, but these members are not prepared to accept such a view. The Guardian stated that it is necessary and imperative to consult frankly and with pure motives before arriving at a decision. Once the decision is taken, it is incumbent upon all to follow the majority view, and to enforce and put it into effect, even if the decision is a wrong one.

(1 February 1946 - translated from the Persian)

204. We all have a right to our opinions, we are bound to think differently;

but a Baha'i must accept the majority decision of his Assembly, realizing that acceptance and harmony -- even if a mistake has been made -- are the really important things, and when we serve the Cause properly, in the Baha'i way, God will right any wrongs done in the end.

...Baha'is are not required to vote on an Assembly against their consciences. It is better if they submit to the majority view and make it unanimous. But they are not forced to. What they must do, however, is to abide by the majority decision, as this is what becomes effective. They must not go around undermining the Assembly by saying they disagreed with the majority. In other words, they must put the Cause first and not their own opinions. He (a Spiritual Assembly member) can ask the Assembly to reconsider a matter, but he has no right to force them or <p107> create inharmony because they won't change. Unanimous votes are preferable, but certainly cannot be forced upon Assembly members by artificial methods such as are used by other societies.

(19 October 1947)

205. The Baha'is must learn to forget personalities and to overcome the desire -- so natural in people -- to take sides and fight about it. They must also learn to really make use of the great principle of consultation.

(30 June 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance: The Messages from the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to the Baha'is of Germany and Austria" [vol 1], (Hofheim-Langenhain: Baha'i- Verlag 1982), p. 152)

206. There are no dissenting votes in the Cause. When the majority of an Assembly decides a matter the minority, we are told by the Master, should accept this. To insist on having one's dissenting vote recorded is not good, and achieves no constructive end.

(19 March 1950)

207. The Guardian regrets that, in the light of the Master's statement that the deliberations of Assemblies must be secret and confidential, it is not possible to have a non- Assembly member in the National Spiritual Assembly meeting. You must always remember that, in matters of principle, there can be no deviation; in America it may be possible for you to find a wholly trustworthy believer; but if your Assembly is permitted to have non-Assembly secretaries present, then the same privilege must be accorded oriental and Latin American Assemblies; and can these other countries be assured of finding people of the calibre you have found? Highly personal subjects, damaging to the honour and happiness of others, are often taken up by National Assemblies, and the danger that confidence will be betrayed is already great enough with the 9 chosen representatives of the whole Community, let alone introducing non-Assembly members. You will just have to make your minutes a little more compact and sacrifice, if necessary, a certain amount of efficiency in order to follow this very important principle.

(5 July 1950 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States) <p108>

From Letters written by the Universal House of Justice:

208. Although Local Spiritual Assemblies are primarily responsible for counseling believers regarding personal problems, there may be times, when in the judgement of the National or Local Assembly, it would be preferable to assign counselling or advisory duties to individuals or committees. This is within the discretion of the Assembly.

(27 March 1966 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bolivia)

209. It is important to realise that the spirit of Baha'i consultation is very different from that current in the decision-making processes of non-Baha'i bodies.

The ideal of Baha'i consultation is to arrive at a unanimous decision. When this is not possible a vote must be taken. In the words of the beloved Guardian: "...when they are called upon to arrive at a certain decision, they should, after dispassionate, anxious and cordial consultation, turn to God in prayer, and with earnestness and conviction and courage record their vote and abide by the voice of the majority, which we are told by the Master to be the voice of truth, never to be challenged, and always to be whole-heartedly enforced".

As soon as a decision is reached it becomes the decision of the whole Assembly, not merely of those members who happened to be among the majority.

When it is proposed to put a matter to the vote, a member of the Assembly may feel that there are additional facts or views which must be sought before he can make up his mind and intelligently vote on the proposition. He should express this feeling to the Assembly, and it is for the Assembly to decide whether or not further consultation is needed before voting.

Whenever it is decided to vote on a proposition all that is required is to ascertain how many of the members are in favour of it; if this is a majority of those present, the motion is carried; if it is a minority, the motion is defeated. Thus the whole question of "abstaining" does not arise in Baha'i voting. A member who does not vote in favour of a proposition is, in effect, voting against it, even if at that moment he himself feels that he has been unable to make up his mind on the matter.

(6 March 1970 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada) <p109>

210. Your letter of 14 February 1973 enquiring about the uses of Baha'i consultation has been received.

This is, of course, a matter in which rigidity should be avoided.

When a believer has a problem concerning which he must make a decision, he has several courses open to him. If it is a matter that affects the interests of the Faith he should consult with the appropriate Assembly or committee, but individuals have many problems which are purely personal and there is no obligation upon them to take such problems to the institutions of the Faith;

indeed, when the needs of the teaching work are of such urgency it is better if the friends will not burden their Assemblies with personal problems that they can solve by themselves.

A Baha'i who has a problem may wish to make his own decision upon it after prayer and after weighing all the aspects of it in his own mind; he may prefer to seek the counsel of individual friends or of professional counselors such as his doctor or lawyer so that he can consider such advice when making his decision; or in a case where several people are involved, such as a family situation, he may want to gather together those who are affected so that they may arrive at a collective decision. There is also no objection whatever to a Baha'i's asking a group of people to consult together on a problem facing him.

It should be borne in mind that all consultation is aimed at arriving at a solution to a problem and is quite different from the sort of group baring of the soul that is popular in some circles these days and which borders on the kind of confession that is forbidden in the faith. On the subject of confession the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf to an individual believer: 'We are forbidden to confess to any person, as do the Catholics to their priests, our sins and shortcomings, or to do so in public, as some religious sects do. However, if we spontaneously desire to acknowledge we have been wrong in something, or that we have some fault of character, and ask another person's forgiveness or pardon, we are quite free to do so. The Guardian wants to point out, however, that we are not obliged to do so. It rests entirely with the individual."

(19 March 1973 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada) <p110>

From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice:

211. The statement which you quote[1] in the second paragraph of your letter is taken from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l- Baha which was addressed by Him to the friends in Tihran at a time when, without the knowledge and permission of the Spiritual Assembly and contrary to government regulations, one of the friends undertook to print the Kitab-i-Aqdas. The instructions of 'Abdu'l-Baha which you quote were issued on that occasion and in that context.
[1 See extract number 8.]

The Universal House of Justice has pointed out that when Shoghi Effendi enumerates the functions of a Local Spiritual Assembly in "Baha'i Administration" page 37, he indicates that the local matters to be referred to the Local Spiritual Assembly are those "pertaining to the Cause". This does not mean, of course, that personal problems may not be referred to Baha'i Assemblies. The Local Spiritual Assembly, however, is not the only institution or agency to which the friends may turn for consultation on personal matters. Such consultation could be held with members of one's family, with friends, or with experts. For example in one of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Baha envisages the possibility of experts in one profession conferring together.

(8 April 1975 to an individual believer

Revised November 1990 <p111>

THE COVENANT

December 1987

Materials assembled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice

A Covenant in the religious sense is a binding agreement between God and man, whereby God requires of man certain behaviour in return for which He guarantees certain blessings, or whereby He gives man certain bounties in return for which He takes from those who accept them an undertaking to behave in a certain way. There is, for example, the Greater Covenant which every Manifestation of God makes with His followers, promising that in the fulness of time a new Manifestation will be sent, and taking from them the undertaking to accept Him when this occurs. There is also the Lesser Covenant that a Manifestation of God makes with His followers that they will accept His appointed successor after Him. If they do so, the Faith can remain united and pure. If not, the Faith becomes divided and its force spent. It is a Covenant of this kind that Baha'u'llah made with His followers regarding 'Abdu'l-Baha and that 'Abdu'l-Baha perpetuated through the Administrative Order...

(23 March 1975, from a letter written by the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) <p113>

I. A Covenant: "...a binding agreement between God and man..."

212. 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... 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....

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.... 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.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, 2nd rev. ed (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983), Sec. 155, pp. 330-31)

213. Follow not, therefore, your earthly desires, and violate not the Covenant of God, nor break your pledge to Him. With firm determination, with the whole affection of your heart, and with the full force of your words, turn ye unto Him, and walk not in the ways of the foolish.... Break not the bond that uniteth you with your Creator, and be not of those that have erred and strayed from His ways....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, Sec. 153, p. 328)

214. Great is thy blessedness inasmuch as thou hast been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament... Dedicate thyself to the service of the Cause of thy Lord, cherish His remembrance in thy heart and celebrate His praise in such wise that every wayward and heedless soul may thereby be roused from slumber.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988, p. 262) <p114>

215. ...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 Baha'i, for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Baha'is." 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.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed] (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), p. 71)

II. "...the Greater Covenant which every Manifestation of God makes with His followers..."

The Pattern:

216. The Lord of the universe hath never raised up a prophet nor hath He sent down a Book unless He hath established His covenant with all men, calling for their acceptance of the next Revelation and of the next Book; inasmuch as the outpourings of His bounty are ceaseless and without limit.

("Selections from the Writings of the Bab", [rev. ed.] (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), p.87)

217. Abraham, on Him be peace, made a covenant concerning Moses and gave the glad-tidings of His coming. Moses made a covenant concerning the promised Christ, and announced the good news of His advent to the world. Christ made a covenant concerning the Paraclete and gave the tidings of His coming. The Prophet Muhammad made a covenant concerning the Bab, and the Bab was the One promised by Muhammad, for Muhammad gave the tidings of His coming. The Bab made a Covenant concerning the Blessed Beauty, Baha'u'llah, and gave the glad-tidings of His coming for the Blessed Beauty was the One promised by the Bab. Baha'u'llah made a covenant concerning a Promised One Who will <p115> become manifest after one thousand or thousands of years. That Manifestation is Baha'u'llah's Promised One, and will appear after a thousand or thousands of

years. He, moreover, with His Supreme Pen, entered into a great Covenant and Testament with all the Baha'is whereby they were all commanded to follow the Centre of the Covenant after His ascension, and depart, not even to a hair's breadth, from obeying Him.

('Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian, published in "Baha'i World Faith" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976), p. 358)

The advent of Baha'u'llah:

218. This is the Day, O my Lord, which Thou didst announce unto all mankind as the Day whereon Thou wouldst reveal Thy Self, and shed Thy radiance, and shine brightly over all Thy creatures. Thou hast, moreover, entered into a covenant with them, in Thy Books, and Thy Scriptures, and Thy Scrolls, and Thy Tablets, concerning Him Who is the Day-Spring of Thy Revelation, and hast appointed the Bayan to be the Herald of this Most Great and all-glorious Manifestation, and this most resplendent and most sublime Appearance.

("Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 275)

The Covenant of Baha'u'llah concerning the next Manifestation:

219. Verily God will raise up Him Whom God shall make manifest, and after Him Whomsoever He willeth, even as He hath raised up prophets before the Point of the Bayan. He in truth hath power over all things.

("Selections from the Writings of the Bab", p. 144)

220. Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying imposter.... Should a man appear, ere the lapse of a full thousand years -- each year consisting of twelve months according to the Qur'an, and of nineteen months of nineteen days each, according to the Bayan -- and if such a man reveal to your eyes all the signs of God, unhesitatingly reject him!

(Baha'u'llah, cited in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah - Selected Letters", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 132)<p116>

221. Centuries, nay, countless 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... 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-Baha, cited in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah - Selected Letters", p. 167)

III. The Letter Covenant: "...that Baha'u'llah made with His followers regarding 'Abdu'l-Baha..."

Appointment:

222. 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-Baha). Thus have We graciously revealed unto you our potent Will, and I am verily the Gracious, the All-Powerful.

(Baha'u'llah, cited in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah - Selected Letters, p. 134)

223. In accordance with the explicit text of the Kitab-i- Aqdas Baha'u'llah 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-Baha, cited in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah - Selected Letters" p. 136)

224. Today, the most important affair is firmness in the Covenant, because firmness in the Covenant wards off differences. <p117>

. . .Baha'u'llah covenanted, not that I ('Abdu'l-Baha) am the Promised One, but that 'Abdu'l-Baha is the Expounder of the Book and the Centre of His Covenant, and that the Promised One of Baha'u'llah will appear after one thousand or thousands of years. This is the Covenant which Baha'u'llah made. If a person shall deviate, he is not acceptable at the Threshold of Baha'u'llah. In case of differences, 'Abdu'l-Baha must be consulted. They must revolve around his good pleasure. After 'Abdu'l-Baha, whenever the Universal House of Justice is organized it will ward off differences.

('Abdu'l-Baha, cited in "Star of the West", vol. 4, no. 14 (November 1913), p. 237-38)

225. Inasmuch as great differences and divergences of denominational belief had arisen throughout the past, every man with a new idea attributing it to God, Baha'u'llah desired that there should not be any ground or reason for disagreement among the Baha'is. Therefore, with His own pen He wrote the Book of His Covenant, addressing His relations and all people of the world, saying, "Verily, I have appointed One Who is the Center of My Covenant. All must obey Him; all must turn to Him; He is the Expounder of My Book, and He is informed of My purpose. All must turn to Him. Whatsoever He says is correct, for, verily, He knoweth the texts of My Book. Other than He, no one doth know My Book." The purpose of this statement is that there should never be discord and divergence among the Baha'is but that they should always be unified and agreed.... Therefore, whosoever obeys the Center of the Covenant appointed by Baha'u'llah has obeyed Baha'u'llah, and whosoever disobeys Him has disobeyed Baha'u'llah....

Beware! Beware! lest anyone should speak from the authority of his own thoughts or create a new thing out of himself. Beware! Beware! According to the explicit Covenant of Baha'u'llah you should care nothing at all for such a person. Baha'u'llah shuns such souls.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 322-23)

226. He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Center and Pivot of Baha'u'llah's peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, <p118> 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 Baha'i ideal, the incarnation of every Baha'i 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-Baha. He is, above and beyond these appellations, the "Mystery of God" -- an expression by which Baha'u'llah 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-Baha the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter of 8 February 1934, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah - Selected Letters", p. 134)

227. Baha'u'llah, the Revealer of God's Word in this Day, the Source of Authority, the Fountainhead of Justice, the Creator of a new World Order, the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization, the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Unifier and Redeemer of all mankind, has proclaimed the advent of God's Kingdom on earth, has formulated its laws and ordinances, enunciated its principles, and ordained its institutions. To direct and canalize the forces released by His Revelation He instituted His Covenant, whose power has preserved the integrity of His Faith, maintained its unity and stimulated its world-wide expansion throughout the successive ministries of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi. It continues to fulfil its life-giving purpose through the agency of the Universal House of Justice whose fundamental object, as one of the twin successors of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, is to ensure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of the Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings.

(Universal House of Justice, "The Constitution of the Universal House of Justice" (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1972), pp. 3-4) <p119>

Uniqueness of Baha'u'llah's Covenant:

228. As to the most great characteristic of the revelation of Baha'u'llah, a specific teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past: It is the ordination and appointment of the Center of the Covenant. By this appointment and provision He has safeguarded and protected the religion of God against differences and schisms, making it impossible for anyone to create a new sect or faction of belief.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", pp. 455-56)

229. 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 Baha'u'llah had expressly provided through the institution of the Covenant, an institution which he had firmly established prior to His ascension. This same Covenant He had anticipated in His Kitab-i-Aqdas, had alluded to it as He bade His last farewell to the members of His family, who had been summoned to His bed-side, in the days immediately preceding His ascension, and had incorporated it in a special document which He designated as "the Book of My Covenant," and which He entrusted, during His last illness, to His eldest son 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Written entirely in His own hand ... this unique and epoch- making Document, designated by Baha'u'llah as His "Most Great Tablet," and alluded to by Him as the "Crimson Book" in His "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf," can find no parallel in the Scriptures of any previous Dispensation, not excluding that of the Bab Himself. For nowhere in the books pertaining to any of the world's religious systems, not even among the writings of the Author of the Babi Revelation, do we find any single document establishing a Covenant endowed with an authority comparable to the Covenant which Baha'u'llah had Himself instituted.

(Shoghi Effendi, "God Passes By" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1974), pp. 237-38)

230. ...There is, though, a great difference between this and previous Dispensations, for Baha'u'llah has written that this is "the Day which shall <p120> not be followed by night" ("God Passes By", p. 245). He has given us His Covenant which provides for a continuing centre of divine guidance in the world. The Baha'i Faith has not lacked for ambitious men who would seize the reins of authority and distort the Faith for their own ends, but in every case they have broken themselves and dashed their hopes on the rock of the Covenant.

(14 January 1979, from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

IV. The Lesser Covenant: "...that 'Abdu'l-Baha perpetuated through the Administrative Order..."

Twin Successors:

231. O my loving friends! After the passing away of this wronged one, it is incumbent upon the Aghsan (Branches),the Afnan (Twigs) of the Sacred Lote-Tree, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God and the loved ones of the Abha Beauty to turn unto Shoghi Effendi -- the youthful branch branched from the two hallowed and sacred Lote-Trees and the fruit grown from the union of the two offshoots of the Tree of Holiness, -- as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the guardian of the Cause of God, he unto whom all the Aghsan, the Afnan, the Hands of the Cause of God and His loved ones must turn. He is the expounder of the words of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendents.

("The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1968), p. 11)

232. And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers. Its members must be manifestations of the fear of God and day-springs of knowledge and understanding, must be steadfast in God's faith and the well-wishers of all mankind.

("The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 14)

233. Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of <p121> Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself.

("The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l- Baha", p. 19)

234. They [Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha] have also, in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as their chosen Successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter of 21 March 1930, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah - Selected Letters", pp. 19-20)

235. ...under the Covenant of God, Shoghi Effendi was, during his ministry as Guardian of the Cause, the point of authority in the Faith to which all were to turn... The same thing applies to the position occupied by the Universal House of Justice in its relationship to the friends.

(9 November 1981, from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

Authority:

236. 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 His Holiness, 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.

("The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 11) <p122>

237. ...it is made indubitably clear and evident that the Guardian of the Faith has been made the Interpreter of the Word and that the Universal House of Justice has been invested with the function of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the teachings. The interpretation of the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative and binding as the enactments of the International House of Justice, whose exclusive right and prerogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgment on such laws and ordinances as Baha'u'llah has not expressly revealed. Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter of 8 February 1934, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah - Selected Letters" pp. 149-50)

238. In the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, in the enactment of the legislation necessary to supplement the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the members of the Universal House of Justice, it should be borne in mind, are not, as Baha'u'llah's utterances clearly imply, responsible to those whom they represent, nor are they allowed to be governed by the feelings, the general opinion, and even the convictions of the mass of the faithful, or of those who directly elect them. They are to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience. They may, indeed they must, acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately in their minds the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but must reserve for themselves the right of an unfettered decision. "God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth," is Baha'u'llah's incontrovertible assurance. They, and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation....

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter of 8 February 1934, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah - Selected Letters", p. 153) <p123>

The passing of Shoghi Effendi:

239. At the time of our beloved Shoghi Effendi's death it was evident, from the circumstances and from the explicit requirements of the Holy Texts[1], that it had been impossible for him to appoint a successor in accordance with the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha....
[1 Shoghi Effendi had no children and all the surviving Aghsan had broken the Covenant.]

(The Universal House of Justice, from a letter dated 9 March 1965, published in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968" p. 44)

240. After prayerful and careful study of the Holy Texts bearing upon the question of the appointment of the successor to Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause of God, and after prolonged consultation which included consideration of the views of the Hands of the Cause of God residing in the Holy Land, the Universal House of Justice finds that there is no way to appoint or to legislate to make it possible to appoint a second Guardian to succeed Shoghi Effendi.

(The Universal House of Justice, from a letter dated 6 October 1963, published in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968, p. 11)

The Universal House of Justice:

241. The Covenant of Baha'u'llah 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-Baha 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 Baha'u'llah 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 Baha'u'llah's assertion: "The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon 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, from a letter dated October 1963, published in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968, p. 13) <p124>

242. The Universal House of Justice, which the Guardian said would be regarded by posterity as "the last refuge of a tottering civilization," is now, in the absence of the Guardian, the sole infallibly guided institution in the world to which all must turn, and on it rests the responsibility for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God in accordance with the revealed Word.

(The Universal House of Justice, from a letter dated 27 May 1966, published in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968", p. 90)

243. The infallibility of the Universal House of Justice, operating within its

ordained sphere, has not been made dependent upon the presence in its membership of the Guardian of the Cause....

...

However, quite apart from his function as a member and sacred head for life of the Universal House of Justice, the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, had the right and duty "to define the sphere of the legislative action" of the Universal House of Justice.

In other words, he had the authority to state whether a matter was or was not already covered by the Sacred Texts and therefore whether it was within the authority of the Universal House of Justice to legislate upon it....

The question therefore arises:

In the absence of the Guardian, is the Universal House of Justice in danger of straying outside its proper sphere and thus falling into error?

Here we must remember three things:

First, Shoghi Effendi, during the thirty-six years of his Guardianship, has already made innumerable such definitions, supplementing those made by 'Abdu'l-Baha and by Baha'u'llah Himself.

As already announced to the friends, a careful study of the Writings and interpretations on any subject on which the House of Justice proposes to legislate always precedes its act of legislation.

Second, the Universal House of Justice, itself assured of Divine guidance, is well aware of the absence of the Guardian and will approach all matters of legislation only when certain of its sphere of jurisdiction, a sphere which the Guardian has confidently described as "clearly defined."

Third, we must not forget the Guardian's written statement about these two institutions: "Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other."

(The Universal House of Justice, from a letter dated 27 May 1966, published in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968", pp. 82-84) <p125>

244. The Universal House of Justice, beyond its function as the enactor of legislation, has been invested with the more general functions of protecting and administering the Cause, solving obscure questions and deciding upon matters that have caused difference....

(From a letter dated 7 December 1969, published in "Messages from the Universal House of Justice: 1968-1973" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976), pp. 38-39)

245. Upon the Universal House of Justice, in the words of the Guardian, "has been conferred the exclusive right of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the Baha'i Writings." Its pronouncements, which are susceptible of amendment or abrogation by the House of Justice itself, serve to supplement and

apply the Law of God. Although not invested with the function of interpretation, the House of Justice is in a position to do everything necessary to establish the World Order of Baha'u'llah on this earth. Unity of doctrine is maintained by the existence of the authentic texts of Scripture and the voluminous interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi, together with the absolute prohibition against anyone propounding "authoritative" or "inspired" interpretations or usurping the function of Guardian. Unity of administration is assured by the authority of the Universal House of Justice.

(The Universal House of Justice, from a letter dated 9 March 1965, published in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968", pp. 52-53)

246.

In the Baha'i Faith there are two authoritative centers appointed to which the believers must turn, for in reality the Interpreter of the Word is an extension of that center which is the Word itself.

The Book is the record of the utterance of Baha'u'llah, while the divinely inspired Interpreter is the living Mouth of that Book -- it is he and he alone who can authoritatively state what the Book means.

Thus one center is the Book with its Interpreter, and the other is the Universal House of Justice guided by God to decide on whatever is not explicitly revealed in the Book.

This pattern of centers and their relationships is apparent at every stage in the unfoldment of the Cause.

In the Kitab-i-Aqdas Baha'u'llah tells the believers to refer after His passing to the Book, and to "Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root."

In the Kitab-i-'Ahdi (the Book of Baha'u'llah's Covenant), He makes it <p126> clear that this reference is to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

In the Aqdas Baha'u'llah also ordains the institution of the Universal House of Justice, and confers upon it the powers necessary for it to discharge its ordained functions.

The Master in His Will and Testament explicitly institutes the Guardianship, which Shoghi Effendi states was clearly anticipated in the verses of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, reaffirms and elucidates the authority of the Universal House of Justice, and refers the believers once again to the Book: "Unto the Most Holy Book everyone must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice," and at the very end of the Will He says: "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."

(From a letter dated 7 December 1969, published in "Messages from the Universal House of Justice: 1968-1973", pp. 42-43)

V. Response to the Lesser Covenant that "...the Faith can remain united and pure."

247. ...the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Baha'u'llah 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 Baha'i world save the Covenant of God; otherwise differences like unto a most great tempest will encompass the Baha'i world. It is evident that the axis of the oneness of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant and nothing else.... Therefore, in the beginning the believers must make their steps firm in the Covenant so that the confirmations of Baha'u'llah 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-Baha, like unto the pictures engraved on stone, may remain permanent and ineffaceable in the tablets of all hearts.

("Tablets of the Divine Plan Revealed by 'Abdu'l-Baha to the North American Baha'is" rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1977), p. 49)

248. 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 <p127> 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.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 209)

249. The progress of the Cause of God gathers increasing momentum and we may with confidence look forward to the day when this Community, in God's good time, shall have traversed the stages predicated for it by its Guardian, and shall have raised on this tormented planet the fair mansions of God's Own Kingdom wherein humanity may find surcease from its self-induced confusion and chaos and ruin, and the hatreds and violence of this time shall be transmuted into an abiding sense of world brotherhood and peace. All this shall be accomplished within the Covenant of the everlasting Father, the Covenant of Baha'u'llah.

(The Universal House of Justice, Ridvan Message 1973 to the Baha'is of the World)

250. The Baha'is must cling firmly to the knowledge that the Cause is safely in God's hands, that the Covenant of Baha'u'llah is incorruptible and that they can have complete confidence in the ability of the Universal House of Justice to function "under the care and protection of the Abha Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One"....

(28 May 1975, from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

VI. The power of the Covenant:

251. Today the pulsating power in the arteries of the body of the world is the spirit of the Covenant -- the spirit which is the cause of life. Whosoever is vivified with this spirit, the freshness and beauty of life become manifest in him, he is baptized with the Holy Spirit, he is born again, is freed from oppression and tyranny, from heedlessness and harshness which deaden the spirit, and attains to everlasting life. <p128> Praise thou God that thou art firm in the Covenant and the Testament and art turning thy face to the Luminary of the world, His Highness Baha'u'llah.

('Abdu'l-Baha, cited in "Star of the West, vol. 14, No. 7 (October 1923), p. 225)

252. It is indubitably clear, that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant.... 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-Baha, cited in "God Passes By", pp. 238-39)

253. 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.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p 228)

254. No power can eliminate misunderstandings except that of the Covenant. The power of the Covenant is all-embracing, and resolveth all difficulties, for the Pen of Glory hath explicitly declared that whatever misunderstanding may arise should be referred to the Centre of the Covenant....

('Abdu'l-Baha, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

255. Were it not for the protecting power of the Covenant to guard the impregnable fort of the Cause of God, there would arise among the Baha'is, in one day, a thousand different sects as was the case in former ages. But in this Blessed Dispensation, for the sake of the permanency of the Cause of God and the avoidance of dissension amongst the people of God, the Blessed Beauty (may my soul be a sacrifice unto Him), has through the Supreme Pen written the Covenant and the Testament...

('Abdu'l-Baha, cited in "Baha'i World Faith", pp. 357-58) <p129>

256. Launched through these very acts[1] into the troublesome seas of ceaseless tribulation, piloted by the mighty arm of 'Abdu'l-Baha and manned by the bold initiative and abundant vitality of a band of sorely-tried disciples, the Ark of Baha'u'llah's Covenant has, ever since those days, been steadily pursuing its course contemptuous of the storms of bitter misfortune that have raged, and

which must continue to assail it, as it forges ahead towards the promised haven of undisturbed security and peace.
[1 Events associated with the introduction of the Faith in the West]

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 21 April 1933, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah - Selected Letters", p. 84)

257. The Covenant is the "axis of the oneness of the world of humanity" because it preserves the unity and integrity of the Faith itself and protects it from being disrupted by individuals who are convinced that only their understanding of the Teachings is the right one -- a fate that has overcome all past Revelations. The Covenant is, moreover, embedded in the Writings of Baha'u'llah Himself. Thus, as you clearly see, to accept Baha'u'llah is to accept His Covenant; to reject His Covenant is to reject Him.

(3 January 1982, from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

Revised November 1990 <p131>

CRISIS AND VICTORY

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I. "The hosts of the world...are from every side launching their assault..."

('Abdu'l-Baha, cited in "The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 16)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHA'U'LLAH:

258. In the beginning of every Revelation adversities have prevailed, which later on have been turned into great prosperity.

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 82)

259. Consider the former generations. Witness how every time the Day Star of Divine bounty hath shed the light of His Revelation upon the world, the people of His Day have arisen against Him, and repudiated His truth. They who were regarded as the leaders of men have invariably striven to hinder their followers from turning unto Him Who is the Ocean of God's limitless bounty.

...

Thou hast known how grievously the Prophets of God, His Messengers and Chosen Ones, have been afflicted. Meditate a while on the motive and reason which have been responsible for such a persecution. At no time, in no Dispensation, have the Prophets of God escaped the blasphemy of their enemies, the cruelty of their oppressors, the denunciation of the learned of their age, who appeared in the guise of uprightness and piety. Day and night they passed through such agonies as none can ever measure, except the knowledge of the one true God, exalted be His glory.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983), sec. 23, pp. 56-58)

260. 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....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. 64, p. 129) <p133>

261. By My life! Mine heart groaneth and mine eyes weep sore for the Cause of God and for them that understand not what they say and imagine what they cannot comprehend.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. 100, p. 203)

262. And if a nightingale[1] soar upward from the clay of self and dwell in the rose bower of the heart, and in Arabian melodies and sweet Iranian songs recount the mysteries of God -- a single word of which quickeneth to fresh, new life the bodies of the dead, and bestoweth the Holy Spirit upon the moldering bones of this existence -- thou wilt behold a thousand claws of envy, a myriad beaks of rancor hunting after Him and with all their power intent upon His death.
[1 This refers to Baha'u'llah's own Manifestation.]

...

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.

("The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1986), p. 20; p. 41)

263. It is clear and evident that whenever the Manifestations of Holiness were revealed, the divines of their day have hindered the people from attaining unto the way of truth. To this testify the records of all the scriptures and heavenly books. Not one Prophet of God was made manifest Who did not fall a victim to the relentless hate, to the denunciation, denial, and execration of the clerics of His day!...

...

We foresee that in every city people will arise to suppress the Blessed Beauty, that the companions of that Lord of being and ultimate Desire of all men will flee from the face of the oppressor and seek refuge from him in the wilderness, whilst others will resign themselves and, with absolute detachment, will sacrifice their lives in His path....

("Kitab-i-Iqan, 2nd. ed (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983) pp. 165-166; p. 248) <p134>

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS AND UTTERANCES OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA:

264. The prestige of the Faith of God has immensely increased. Its greatness is now manifest. The day is approaching when it will have cast a tremendous tumult in men's hearts. Rejoice, therefore, O denizens of America, rejoice with exceeding gladness!

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", rev. ed. (Wilmette:Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 79)

265. In these days the Cause of God, the world over, is fast growing in power and, day by day, is spreading further and further to the utmost bounds of the earth. Its enemies, therefore, from all the kindreds and peoples of the world, are growing aggressive, malevolent, envious and bitterly hostile. It is incumbent upon the loved ones of God to exercise the greatest care and prudence in all things, whether great or small, to take counsel together and unitedly resist the onslaught of the stirrers up of strife and the movers of mischief...

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.] (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 194, p. 233)

266. 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 stiff-neckedness 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!"[1]
[1 Qur'an 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 Baha 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 <p135> 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?

How else could the cockcrow of Heaven have penetrated those ears?

How else could the sweet parrots of India have come upon this sugar, or nightingales have lifted up their warblings out of the land of 'Iraq?

What else could set the east and west to dancing, how else could this Consecrated Spot become the throne of the Beauty of God?

How else could Sinai behold this burning brightness, how could the Advent's flame adorn that mount?

How else could the Holy Land be made the footstool of God's beauty, and the holy vale of Towa[1] become the site of excellence and grace, the sacred spot where Moses put off His shoes?

How could the breaths of heaven be carried across the Vale of Holiness, how could the sweet- scented, airy streams that blow out of the Abha gardens ever be perceived by those that dwell on the Verdant Isle?

How else could the pledges of the Prophets, the joyous tidings of the holy Seers of old, the stirring promises given unto this Sacred Place by the Manifestations of God, ever have been fulfilled?

All these blessings and bestowals, the very means of proclaiming the Faith, have come about through the scorn of the ignorant, the opposition of the foolish, the stubbornness of the dull-witted, the violence of the aggressor.

Had it not been for these things, the news of the Bab's advent would not, to this day, have reached even into lands hard by.

Wherefore we should never grieve over the blindness of the unwitting, the attacks of the foolish, the hostility of the low and base, the heedlessness of the divines, the charges of infidelity brought against us by the empty of mind.

Such too was their way in ages past, nor would it be thus if they were of those who know; but they are benighted, and they come not close to understanding what is told them.[2]

[1 Qur'an 20:12. Also referred to as the "Sacred Vale".]
[2 cf. Qur'an 4:80]

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" sec. 195, pp. 234-36)

267 ...the friends in the West will unquestionably have their share of the calamities befalling the friends in the East. It is inevitable that, walking <p136> the pathway of Baha'u'llah, they too will become targets for persecution by the oppressors.

Now ye, as well, must certainly become my partners to some slight degree, and accept your share of tests and sorrows. But these episodes shall pass away, while that abiding glory and eternal life shall remain unchanged forever. Moreover, these afflictions shall be the cause of great advancement.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" sec. 196, pp. 238-39)

268. This day the powers of all the leaders of religion are directed towards the dispersion of the congregation of the All-Merciful, and the shattering of the Divine Edifice. The hosts of the world, whether material, cultural or political are from every side launching their assault, for the Cause is great, very great. Its greatness is, in this day, clear and manifest to men's eyes. It is therefore incumbent upon all who have come within the shade of the protecting wing of God's gracious providence to evince, by His divine and merciful assistance, such conspicuous steadfastness and firmness as will arrest the gaze and astound the minds of all.

At the time of the ascension of the Spirit (Jesus Christ), the company of those who accepted the new Revelation numbered no more than a few souls. So intense was the alarm and perturbation to which that event gave rise that, for a time, these souls were quite overcome by their agitation and confusion. Then, a few days later, a woman by the name of Mary Magdalene arose, and, by her own example, instilled into them a constancy and firmness which enabled them to arise for the propagation of the Word of God. Although to outward seeming they were no more than fishermen and dyers, yet, through the holy confirmations of the Cause of God, they carried the divine fragrances far and wide, sweetening the breaths of all who inhaled their fragrance and bringing new life to every understanding heart.

Take courage, then, O ye trusted friends of God, from the appearance of this mighty and all-swaying power, which was like unto a spirit that permeated the body of the world, making it vibrant with its pulse, and causing the pillars of idolatry to shake and tremble.

(The first three sentences are from Shoghi Effendi's translation cited in "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 6. The remainder of the extract is newly translated.) <p137>

269. ...a large multitude of people will arise against you, showing oppression, expressing contumely and derision, shunning your society, and heaping upon you ridicule. However, the Heavenly Father will illumine you to such an extent

that, like unto the rays of the sun, you shall scatter the dark clouds of superstition, shine gloriously in the midst of Heaven and illumine the face of the earth. You must make firm the feet at the time when these trials transpire, and demonstrate forbearance and patience. You must withstand them with the utmost love and kindness; consider their oppression and persecution as the caprice of children, and do not give any importance to whatever they do. For at the end the illumination of the Kingdom will overwhelm the darkness of the world and the exaltation and grandeur of your station will become apparent and manifest... Rest ye assured.

(Cited in "Baha'i News" ["Star of the West"], vol. 1, no. 10 (8 September 1910), pp. 1-2)

270. Erelong the wicked-doers in that land will arise to heap denunciations upon the true believers, and vent their spite upon the company of the faithful. Each day they will inflict a galling wound, each hour a stunning blow. Rebuking the friends for the love they bear Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l- Baha, they will consider justified their denunciations, their scorn and malice, and spare no effort to do the friends whatever injury it lieth within their power to inflict. Such conduct is at one with the modes and practices of the people aforetime: in bygone centuries, in the days of the appearance of the holy Manifestations, the people acted in just this manner; and now, in these days, it is inevitable that they will repeat such actions, nay, act with greater perversity than before... Hence it is certain that thou wilt be afflicted with adversities, tests and injuries for the sake of the Blessed Beauty; yet these afflictions shall be the purest bounties and bestowals, and a token of thy acceptance at the Divine Threshold.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

271. 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.... <p138> Therefore, my purpose is to warn and strengthen you against accusations, criticisms, revilings and derision in newspaper articles or other publications. Be not disturbed by them. They are the very confirmation of the Cause, the very source of upbuilding to the Movement. May God confirm the day when a score of ministers of the churches may arise and with bared heads cry at the top of their voices that the Baha'is are misguided. I would like to see that day, for that is the time when the Cause of God will spread. Baha'u'llah has pronounced such as these the couriers of the Cause. They will proclaim from pulpits that the Baha'is are fools, that they are a wicked and unrighteous people, but be ye steadfast and unwavering in the Cause of God. They will spread the message of Baha'u'llah.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i

Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 428-430)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

272. I am however assured and sustained by the conviction, never dimmed in my mind, that whatsoever comes to pass in the Cause of God, however disquieting, in its immediate effects, is fraught with infinite Wisdom and tends ultimately to promote its interests in the world. Indeed, our experiences of the distant past, as well as of recent events, are too numerous and varied to permit of any misgiving or doubt as to the truth of this basic principle- -a principle which throughout the vicissitudes of our sacred mission in this world we must never disregard or forget.

...

True, the Cause as every other movement has its own obstacles, complications and unforeseen difficulties, but unlike any other human organization it inspires a spirit of Faith and Devotion which can never fail to induce us to make sincere and renewed efforts to face these difficulties and smooth any differences that may and must arise.

(From a letter dated 23 December 1922 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" [rev.ed.], (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), pp. 27-28) <p139>

273. On one hand the remarkable revelations of the Beloved's Will and Testament, so amazing in all its aspects, so emphatic in its injunctions, have challenged and perplexed the keenest minds, whilst the ever-increasing confusion of the world, threatened as never before with disruptive forces, fierce rivalries, fresh commotions and grave disorder, have wellnigh overwhelmed the heart and damped the zeal of even the most enthusiastic believer in the destiny of mankind.

And yet, how often we seem to forget the clear and repeated warnings of Our beloved Master, Who, in particular during the concluding years of His mission on earth, laid stress on the "severe mental tests" that would inevitably sweep over His loved ones of the West - tests that would purge, purify and prepare them for their noble mission in life.

(From a letter dated 14 November 1923 to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" p. 50)

274. That the Cause of God should in the days to come witness many a challenging hour and pass through critical stages in preparation for the glories of its promised ascendancy in the New World has been time and again undeniably affirmed by our departed Master, and is abundantly proved to us all by its heroic past and turbulent history....

(From a letter dated 23 February 1924 to the Baha'is of America, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", pp. 60-61)

275. We cannot believe that as the Movement grows in strength, in authority and in influence, the perplexities and the sufferings it has had to contend with in the past will correspondingly decrease and vanish. Nay, as it grows from strength to strength, the fanatical defendants of the strongholds of Orthodoxy, whatever be their denomination, realizing the penetrating influence of this growing Faith, will arise and strain every nerve to extinguish its light and discredit its name....

(From a letter dated 12 February 1927 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 123)

276. For let every earnest upholder of the Cause of Baha'u'llah 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 <p140> 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 Baha'u'llah becomes to be recognized by those time- honoured and powerful strongholds of orthodoxy, whose deliberate aim is to maintain their stranglehold over the thoughts and consciences of men, that 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!

We have only to refer to the warnings uttered by 'Abdu'l- Baha in order to realize the extent and character of the forces that are destined to contest with God's holy Faith. In the darkest moments of His life, under 'Abdu'l Hamid's regime, when He stood ready to be deported to the most inhospitable regions of Northern Africa, and at a time when the auspicious light of the Baha'i Revelation had only begun to break upon the West, He in His parting message to the cousin of the Bab, uttered these prophetic and ominous words: "HOW GREAT, HOW VERY GREAT IS THE CAUSE! HOW VERY FIERCE THE ONSLAUGHT OF ALL THE PEOPLES AND KINDREDS OF THE EARTH! ERE LONG SHALL THE CLAMOUR OF THE MULTITUDE THROUGHOUT AFRICA, THROUGHOUT AMERICA, THE CRY OF THE EUROPEAN AND THE TURK, THE GROANING OF INDIA AND CHINA, BE HEARD FROM FAR AND NEAR. ONE AND ALL THEY SHALL ARISE WITH ALL THEIR POWER TO RESIST HIS CAUSE. THEN SHALL THE KNIGHTS OF THE LORD, ASSISTED BY HIS GRACE FROM ON HIGH, STRENGTHENED BY FAITH, AIDED BY THE POWER OF UNDERSTANDING, AND REINFORCED BY THE LEGIONS OF THE COVENANT, ARISE AND MAKE MANIFEST THE TRUTH OF THE VERSE: 'BEHOLD THE CONFUSION THAT HATH BEFALLEN THE TRIBES OF THE DEFEATED!'"

Stupendous as is the struggle which His words foreshadow, they also testify to the complete victory which the upholders of the Greatest Name are destined eventually to achieve. Peoples, nations, adherents of divers faiths, will jointly and successively arise to shatter its unity, to sap its force, and to degrade its holy name. They will assail not only the spirit which it <p141> inculcates, but the administration which is the channel, the instrument, the embodiment of that spirit. For as the authority with which Baha'u'llah has

invested the future Baha'i Commonwealth becomes more and more apparent, the fiercer shall be the challenge which from every quarter will be thrown at the verities it enshrines.

(From a letter dated 21 March 1930 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters, pp. 17-18)

277.

The separation that has set in between the institutions of the Baha'i Faith and the Islamic ecclesiastical organizations that oppose it -- a movement that has originated in Egypt and is now spreading steadily throughout the Middle East, and will in time communicate its influence to the West -- imposes upon every loyal upholder of the Cause the obligation of refraining from any word or action that might prejudice the position which our enemies have, in recent years and of their own accord, proclaimed and established.

This historic development, the beginnings of which could neither be recognized nor even anticipated in the years immediately preceding 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing, may be said to have signalized the Formative Period of our Faith and to have paved the way for the consolidation of its Administrative Order.

As this movement gains momentum, as it receives added impetus from the attitude and future action of the civil authorities in Persia, it will inevitably manifest its repercussions in the West and will rouse the leaders of the Church and finally the civil authorities to challenge the claims and eventually to recognize the independent status of the Religion of Baha'u'llah....

Our adversaries in the East have initiated the struggle.

Our future opponents in the West will, in their turn, arise and carry it a stage further.

Ours is the duty, in anticipation of this inevitable contest, to uphold unequivocally and with undivided loyalty the integrity of our Faith and demonstrate the distinguishing features of its divinely appointed institutions.

(From a letter dated 15 June 1935 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America, 1932-1946" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1947), pp. 4-5) <p142>

278. That the forces of irreligion, of a purely materialistic philosophy, of unconcealed paganism have been unloosed, are now spreading, and, by consolidating themselves, are beginning to invade some of the most powerful Christian institutions of the western world, no unbiased observer can fail to admit. That these institutions are becoming increasingly restive, that a few among them are already dimly aware of the pervasive influence of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, that they will, as their inherent strength deteriorates and their discipline relaxes, regard with deepening dismay the rise of His New World Order, and will gradually determine to assail it, that such an opposition will in turn accelerate their decline, few, if any, among those who are attentively

watching the progress of His Faith would be inclined to question.

This menace of secularism that has attacked Islam and is undermining its remaining institutions, that has invaded Persia, has penetrated into India, and raised its triumphant head in Turkey, has already manifested itself in both Europe and America, and is, in varying degrees, and under various forms and designations, challenging the basis of every established religion...

(From a letter dated 11 March 1936 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", pp. 180-81)

279. Pregnant indeed are the years looming ahead of us all. The twin processes of internal disintegration and external chaos are being accelerated every day and are inexorably moving towards a climax.... The Community of the Most Great Name, the leaven that must leaven the lump, the chosen remnant that must survive the rolling up of the old, discredited, tottering Order and assist in the unfoldment of a new one in its stead, is standing ready, alert, clear-visioned, and resolute.... Fierce and manifold will be the assaults with which governments, races, classes and religions, jealous of its rising prestige and fearful of its consolidating strength, will seek to silence its voice and sap its foundations. Unmoved by the relative obscurity that surrounds it at the present time, and undaunted by the forces that will be arrayed against it in the future, this community, I cannot but feel confident, will, no matter how afflictive the agonies of a travailing age, pursue its destiny, undeflected in its course, <p143> undimmed in its serenity, unyielding in its resolve, unshaken in its convictions.

(From a letter dated 5 July 1938 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America, 1932-1946"), pp. 13-14)

280. How can the beginnings of a world upheaval, unleashing forces that are so gravely deranging the social, the religious, the political, and the economic equilibrium of organized society, throwing into chaos and confusion political systems, racial doctrines, social conceptions, cultural standards, religious associations, and trade relationships -- how can such agitations, on a scale so vast, so unprecedented, fail to produce any repercussions on the institutions of a Faith of such tender age whose teachings have a direct and vital bearing on each of these spheres of human life and conduct? Little wonder, therefore, if they who are holding aloft the banner of so pervasive a Faith, so challenging a Cause, find themselves affected by the impact of these world-shaking forces. Little wonder if they find that in the midst of this whirlpool of contending passions their freedom has been curtailed, their tenets contemned, their institutions assaulted, their motives maligned, their authority jeopardized, their claim rejected.

...

Nor should any of the manifold opportunities, of a totally different order, be

allowed to pass unnoticed which the evolution of the Faith itself, whether at its world center, or in the North American continent, or even in the most outlying regions of the earth, must create, calling once again upon the American believers to play a part, no less conspicuous than the share they have previously had in their collective contributions to the propagation of the Cause of Baha'u'llah. I can only for the moment cite at random certain of these opportunities which stand out preeminently, in any attempt to survey the possibilities of the future:

... the deliverance of Baha'i communities from the fetters of religious orthodoxy in such Islamic countries as Persia, 'Iraq, and Egypt, and the consequent recognition, by the civil authorities in those states, of the independent status and religious character of Baha'i National and Local Assemblies; the precautionary and defensive measures to be devised, coordinated, <p144> and carried out to counteract the full force of the inescapable attacks which organized efforts of ecclesiastical organizations of various denominations will progressively launch and relentlessly pursue; and, last but not least, the multitudinous issues that must be faced, the obstacles that must be overcome, and the responsibilities that must be assumed, to enable a sore-tried Faith to pass through the successive stages of unmitigated obscurity, of active repression, and of complete emancipation, leading in turn to its being acknowledged as an independent Faith, enjoying the status of full equality with its sister religions, to be followed by its establishment and recognition as a State religion, which in turn must give way to its assumption of the rights and prerogatives associated with the Baha'i state, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, a stage which must ultimately culminate in the emergence of the worldwide Baha'i Commonwealth, animated wholly by the spirit, and operating solely in direct conformity with the laws and principles of Baha'u'llah.

In the conduct of this twofold crusade the valiant warriors struggling in the name and for the Cause of Baha'u'llah must, of necessity, encounter stiff resistance, and suffer many a setback. Their own instincts, no less than the fury of conservative forces, the opposition of vested interests, and the objections of a corrupt and pleasure-seeking generation, must be reckoned with, resolutely resisted, and completely overcome. As their defensive measures for the impending struggle are organized and extended, storms of abuse and ridicule, and campaigns of condemnation and misrepresentation, may be unloosed against them. Their Faith, they may soon find, has been assaulted, their motives misconstrued, their aims defamed, their aspirations derided, their institutions scorned, their influence belittled, their authority undermined, and their Cause, at times, deserted by a few who will either be incapable of appreciating the nature of their ideals, or unwilling to bear the brunt of the mounting criticisms which such a contest is sure to involve. "Because of 'Abdu'l-Baha," the beloved Master has prophesied, many a test will be visited upon you. Troubles will befall you, and suffering afflict you."

Let not, however, the invincible army of Baha'u'llah, who in the West, and at

one of its potential storm-centers is to fight, in His name and for <p145> His sake, one of its fiercest and most glorious battles, be afraid of any criticism that might be directed against it. Let it not be deterred by any condemnation with which the tongue of the slanderer may seek to debase its motives. Let it not recoil before the threatening advance of the forces of fanaticism, of orthodoxy, of corruption, and of prejudice that may be leagued against it. The voice of criticism is a voice that indirectly reinforces the proclamation of its Cause. Unpopularity but serves to throw into greater relief the contrast between it and its adversaries, while ostracism is itself the magnetic power that must eventually win over to its camp the most vociferous and inveterate amongst its foes....

(From a letter dated 25 December 1938 to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "The Advent of Divine Justice, pp. 2-3; pp. 14-15; pp. 41-42)

281. Nor should a survey of the outstanding features of so blessed and fruitful a ministry omit mention of the prophecies which the unerring pen of the appointed Center of Baha'u'llah's Covenant has recorded! These foreshadow the fierceness of the onslaught that the resistless march of the Faith must provoke in the West, in India and in the Far East when it meets the time-honored sacerdotal orders of the Christian, the Buddhist and Hindu religions. They foreshadow the turmoil which its emancipation from the fetters of religious orthodoxy will cast in the American, the European, the Asiatic and African continents....

("God Passes By", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987) p. 315)

282. No matter how long the period that separates them from ultimate victory; however arduous the task; however formidable the exertions demanded of them; however dark the days which mankind, perplexed and sorely-tried, must, in its hour of travail, traverse; however severe the tests with which they who are to redeem its fortunes will be confronted; however afflictive the darts which their present enemies, as well as those whom Providence, will, through His mysterious dispensations raise up from within or from without, may rain upon them, however grievous the ordeal of temporary separation from the heart and nerve-center of their Faith which future unforeseeable disturbances may impose upon them, I adjure them, by the precious blood that flowed in such great profusion, by the lives of the unnumbered saints and heroes who were immolated, <p146> by the supreme, the glorious sacrifice of the Prophet-Herald of our Faith, by the tribulations which its Founder, Himself, willingly underwent, so that His Cause might live, His Order might redeem a shattered world and its glory might suffuse the entire planet - I adjure them, as this solemn hour draws nigh, to resolve never to flinch, never to hesitate, never to relax, until each and every objective in the Plans to be proclaimed, at a later date, has been fully consummated.

(From a letter dated 30 June 1952 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, published in "Messages to the Baha'i World, 1950-1957"

(Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 38-39)

283. ...undeterred by the clamor which the exponents of religious orthodoxy are sure to raise, or by the restrictive measures which political leaders may impose; undismayed by the smallness of their numbers and the multitude of their potential adversaries; armed with the efficacious weapons their own hands have slowly and laboriously forged in anticipation of this glorious and inevitable encounter with the organized forces of superstition, of corruption and of unbelief; placing their whole trust in the matchless potency of Baha'u'llah's teachings, in the all-conquering power of His might and the infallibility of His glorious and oft- repeated promises, let them press forward...

(From a letter dated 25 June 1953 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, published in "Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947-1957" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 120)

284. The administrative problems which face you are divers and complex. The opposition which a nascent Faith must needs meet, particularly from the leaders of religious orthodoxy in the Islamic countries of the North, will, as the institutions of that Faith multiply, become more apparent and grow in severity....

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 2 July 1956 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of North West Africa)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

285. For the history of the Cause, particularly in Persia, is a clear illustration of the truth that such persecutions invariably serve to <p147> strengthen the believers in their faith, by stimulating the spiritual powers latent in their hearts, and by awakening in them a new and deeper consciousness of their duties and responsibilities towards the Faith. Indeed, the mere progress of the Cause, by provoking the hatreds and jealousies of peoples and nations, creates for itself such difficulties and obstacles as only its divine spirit can overcome. 'Abdu'l-Baha has emphatically stated that the enmity and opposition of the world will increase in direct proportion to the extension and progress of the Faith. The greater the zeal of the believers and the more striking the effect of their achievements, the fiercer will be the opposition of the enemy.

(20 January 1935 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma)

286. He is, indeed, fully alive to the difficulties which the friends, not only in your centre but all around the world, are daily encountering in their attempt to establish and perfect the administrative machinery of the Faith. These difficulties and obstacles, however, he considers to be inevitable, inherent as they are in the very process through which the Cause of Baha'u'llah is destined to develop and to eventually establish its ascendancy in the world. Not only are such difficulties inevitable, but they should be viewed, indeed, as constituting a God-given test whereby the friends can, and will assuredly,

enrich and perfect the spiritual and moral energies latent in them, and in this way help in establishing that Divine civilization promised to them by God.

Trials and sufferings, Baha'u'llah has repeatedly warned us in His Tablets, are even as the oil that feeds the lamp. The Cause cannot reveal its full splendour unless and until it encounters and successfully overcomes the very obstacles that every now and then stand in its way, and for some time appear to threaten its very foundations. Such obstacles, tests and trials are indeed blessings in disguise, and as such are bound to help in promoting the Faith.

(31 July 1935 to an individual believer)

287. ...though he has been made truly grieved to learn of the continued and malignant opposition which the enemies of the Cause in ..., and particularly the clerical element, are directing against the believers in that centre. He wishes you, however, to urge the friends not to feel in the least disheartened or discouraged, but to pursue with renewed determination, <p148> 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 Baha'u'llah, and the greater their zeal to help in hastening is complete fulfilment.

This Cause, as every 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 blessings in disguise, as through them their faith will be quickened, purified and strengthened. Baha'u'llah compares 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 them as [a] 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.

(24 June 1936 to an individual believer)

288. His fears are rather for those friends who, due to their insufficient

realization of the divine power that mysteriously operates in the Faith, are prone to look at such developments as constituting the death-knell of the Cause. In his communications to the ... friends during the last few weeks he has always stressed the fact, and he wishes you to do the same in all your conversations and correspondence with them, that the Cause is bound sooner or later to suffer from all kinds of attacks and persecutions, <p149> that these in fact constitute the life-blood of its institutions, and as such constitute an inseparable and intrinsic part of its development and growth. Trials and tribulations, as Baha'u'llah says, are the oil that feed the lamp of the Cause, and are indeed blessings in disguise. The friends should therefore be confident that all these attacks to which the Cause is now subjected in ... are a necessary part of the development of the Cause, and that their outcome would be beneficial to its best interests.

(31 August 1937 to an individual believer)

289. Later on, when the very progress of the Cause on the one hand, and the corresponding decline in ecclesiastical organizations on the other will inevitably incite Christian ecclesiastical leaders to vehemently oppose and undermine the Faith, the believers will then have a real chance to defend and vindicate the Cause....

(25 May 1938 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

290. It seems both strange and pitiful that the Church and clergy should always, in every age, be the most bitter opponents of the very Truth they are continually admonishing their followers to be prepared to receive! They have become so violently attached to the form that the substance itself eludes them!

However, such denunciations as those your minister made publicly against you and the Baha'i Faith can do no harm to the Cause at all; on the contrary they only serve to spread its name abroad and mark it as an independent religion.

(7 February 1945 to an individual believer)

291. It is too bad that some of the Friends have left the Faith due to the pressure of the Church leaders. Of course, it was inevitable that Church leaders would oppose us. The Master has predicted that this would occur; and likewise the very nature of events whereby the Faith grows and develops taking members away from the Church will cause a reaction of the Church against us. We must bear in mind that every attack from the religious leaders in the past has been a means for the development of the <p150> Faith itself because those who listen to the attacks can't help but be affected by the purity and sincerity of the Faith.

(19 June 1957 to an individual believer)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

292. The marvellous victories won in the name of Baha'u'llah, ... and the triumphs increasingly being achieved by His dedicated and ardent lovers in

every land, will no doubt serve to rouse the internal and external enemies of the Faith to fresh attempts to attack the Faith and dampen the enthusiasm of is supporters...

...the progressive unfoldment and onward march of the Faith of God are bound to raise up adversaries, indubitably foreshadowing the world-wide opposition which is to come, and unequivocally giving the assurance of ultimate victory.

We feel strongly that ... the time has come for them [the friends] to clearly grasp the inevitability of the critical contests which lie ahead, give you their full support in repelling with confidence and determination "the darts" which will be levelled against them by "their present enemies, as well as those whom Providence will, through His mysterious dispensations raise up from within or from without," and aid and enable the Faith of God to scale loftier heights, win more signal triumphs, and traverse more vital stages in is predestined course to complete victory and world-wide ascendancy.

(26 November 1974 to all National Spiritual Assemblies)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

293. ...the Universal House of Justice instructs us to say that it is to be expected that books will be written against the Faith attempting to distort is teachings, to denigrate is accomplishments, to vilify is Founders and leaders and to destroy is very foundations. The friends should not be unduly exercised when these books appear and certainly no issue should be made of them.

(30 March 1976 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Hong Kong) <p151>

294. As your teaching and proclamation work progresses there is bound to be more and more confrontation with the older religious institutions in ..., and it is the kind of staunchness evinced by ... which will bring respect to the Cause and attract the confirmations of Baha'u'llah.

(7 June 1981 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ireland)

295. ...ln these days Baha'is can expect the flame of fanaticism to be kindled among the enemies of the Faith in Muslim countries. In meeting attacks the friends should learn to combine the spirit of steadfastness and courage with love and wisdom. They should avoid argument and conflict and conduct themselves in such manner that they do not provoke retaliation. This includes the use of discretion in their teaching activities.

(22 August 1983 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bangladesh)

296. Given the rise in most parts of the world of religious bigotry and fundamentalism, it may be timely for your National Assembly to try to arm the Baha'is against such attacks as appear in this book,[1] which is so typical of the approach of Christian churches. Sooner or later, as you know, these churches will rise against the Cause.
[1 "A Guide to Cults and New Religions", John Boykin]

You are therefore requested to consider asking a qualified person or group of

persons to prepare suitable materials, perhaps for a booklet, which the friends may use in dealing with misrepresentations of the Baha'i Teachings by Christians.

(18 October 1984 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

II. "The resistless march of the Faith of Baha'u'llah (Shoghi Effendi, "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America, p. 51)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHA'U'LLAH

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

Follow thou the footsteps of thy Lord, and remember His servants even as He doth remember thee, undeterred by either the clamor of the <p152> heedless ones or the sword of the enemy.... Spread abroad the sweet savors of thy Lord, and hesitate not, though it be for less than a moment, in the service of His Cause. The day is approaching when the victory of thy Lord, the Ever- Forgiving, the Most Bountiful, will be proclaimed.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. 17, pp. 42-43)

298. Behold how in this Dispensation the worthless and foolish have fondly imagined that by such instruments as massacre, plunder and banishment they can extinguish the Lamp which the Hand of Divine power hath lit, or eclipse the Day Star of everlasting splendor. How utterly unaware they seem to be of the truth that such adversity is the oil that feedeth the flame of this Lamp! Such is God's transforming power. He changeth whatsoever He willeth; He verily hath power over all things....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, sec. 29, p. 72)

299. Say: The fierce gales and whirlwinds of the world and its peoples can never shake the foundation upon which the rocklike stability of My chosen ones is based. Gracious God! What could have prompted these people to enslave and imprison the loved ones of Him Who is the Eternal Truth? ... The day, however, is approaching when the faithful will behold the Day Star of justice shining in its full splendor from the Day Spring of glory. Thus instructeth thee the Lord of all being in this, His grievous Prison.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. 162, pp. 341-342)

300. With every fresh tribulation He manifested a fuller measure of Thy Cause, and exalted more highly Thy word.

("Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), sec. 31, p. 37)

301. Should they attempt to conceal His light on the continent, He will assuredly rear His head in the midmost heart of the ocean and, raising His

voice, proclaim: "I am the lifegiver of the world!" ... And if they cast Him into a darksome pit, they will find Him seated on earth's loftiest heights calling aloud to all mankind: "Lo, the Desire of the world is come in His majesty, His sovereignty, His transcendent dominion!" And if He be buried beneath the depths of the earth, His Spirit soaring to the apex <p153> of heaven shall peal the summons: "Behold ye the coming of the Glory; witness ye the Kingdom of God, the most Holy, the Gracious, the All-Powerful!..."

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", p. 108)

302. At this moment We call to remembrance Our loved ones and bring them the joyous tidings of God's unfailing grace and of the things that have been provided for them in My lucid Book. Ye have tolerated the censure of the enemies for the sake of My love and have steadfastly endured in My Path the grievous cruelties which the ungodly have inflicted upon you. Unto this I Myself bear witness, and I am the All- Knowing. How vast the number of places that have been ennobled with your blood for the sake of God. How numerous the cities wherein the voice of your lamentation hath been raised and the wailing of your anguish uplifted. How many the prisons into which ye have been cast by the hosts of tyranny. Know ye of a certainty that He will render you victorious, will exalt you among the peoples of the world and will demonstrate your high rank before the gaze of all nations. Surely He will not suffer the reward of His favoured ones to be lost.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), pp. 246-47)

303. Verily God rendereth His Cause victorious at one time through the aid of His enemies and at another by virtue of the assistance of His chosen ones. Concerning those pure and blessed souls, Our Pen of Glory hath revealed that which excelleth the whole world, its treasures and whatsoever existeth therein. Erelong shall the heedless and the doers of wickedness be repaid for that which their hands have wrought.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

304. Whatsoever occurreth in the world of being is light for His loved ones and fire for the people of sedition and strife. Even if all the losses of the world were to be sustained by one of the friends of God, he would still profit thereby, whereas true loss would be borne by such as are wayward, <p154> ignorant and contemptuous. Although the author[1] of the following saying had intended it otherwise, yet We find it pertinent to the operation of God's immutable Will:
[1 Sa'di, Muslihu'd-Din of Shiraz (d. 691 A.H./1292 A.D.),famed author of the "Gulistan" and other poetical works.]

"Even or odd, thou shalt win the wager." The friends of God shall win and profit under all conditions, and shall attain true wealth. In fire they remain cold, and from water they emerge dry. Their affairs are at variance with the

affairs of men. Gain is their lot, whatever the deal. To this testifieth every wise one with a discerning eye, and every fair-minded one with a hearing ear.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS AND UTTERANCES OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA

305. 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.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 279)

306.

Soon will the Western regions become as radiant as the horizons of the East, and the Sun of Truth shine forth with a refulgence that will cause the darkness of error to fade away and vanish.

Great is the multitude who will rise up to oppose you, who will oppress you, heap blame upon you, rejoice at your misfortunes, account you people to be shunned, and visit injury upon you; yet shall your heavenly Father confer upon you such spiritual illumination that ye shall become even as the rays of the sun which, as they chase away the sombre clouds, break forth to flood the surface of the earth with light.

It is incumbent upon you, whensoever these tests may overtake you, to stand firm, and to be patient and enduring.

Instead of repaying like with like, ye should requite opposition with the utmost benevolence and loving-kindness, and on no account attach importance to cruelties and injuries, but rather regard them as the wanton acts of children.

For ultimately the radiance of the Kingdom will overwhelm the darkness of the world of being, and the holy, exalted character of your aims will become unmistakably apparent.

Nothing shall <p155> remain concealed: the olive oil, though stored within the deepest vault, shall one day burn in brightness from the lamp atop the beacon.

The small shall be made great, and the powerless shall be given strength; they that are of tender age shall become the children of the Kingdom, and those that have gone astray shall be guided to their heavenly home.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

307. Thou hadst written concerning the growth in stature of the Cause of God in thy country. There is no doubt that the Faith of God will progress from day to day in that land, for it will be aided by the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit and the confirmation of the Word of God. Nor is there any doubt that members of the Christian clergy will rise up against it in implacable hostility, wishing to injure and oppress you, and seeking to assail you with doubts; for the spread of the Cause of God will lead to the waning of their fortunes -- as the fortunes of the Pharisees had waned before them -- and

entail the loss of the dignity and standing that they now enjoy amongst men.

Reflect upon the time of Jesus and the deeds wrought by the Jewish divines and Pharisees. Such deeds will, in this day, be repeated at the hands of these Christian clergymen. Be not perturbed, however; be firm and constant, for it is certain that a company of souls shall, with infinite love, arise to enter into the Kingdom of God. These souls shall recompense you for the vexations, the humiliations, and disdain to which you are subjected by the clergy: to the injuries inflicted by these latter they shall respond with acts of kindness, until eventually, as the experience of former times hath shown, the children of the Kingdom shall gain the ascendancy, and victory shall be theirs. Rest ye confident of this.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

308. All who stand up in the cause of God will be persecuted and misunderstood. It hath ever been so, and will ever be. Let neither enemy nor friend disturb your composure, destroy your happiness, deter your accomplishment. Rely wholly upon God. Then will persecution and slander make you the more radiant. The designs of your enemies will rebound upon them. They, not you, will suffer.

Oppression is the wind that doth fan the fire of the Love of God. Welcome persecution and bitterness. A soldier may bear arms, but until <p156> he hath faced the enemy in battle he hath not earned his place in the king's army. Let nothing defeat you. God is your helper. God is invincible. Be firm in the Heavenly Covenant. Pray for strength. It will be given to you, no matter how difficult the conditions.

("Star of the West", vol. 4, no. 5 (5 June 1913), p. 88 - revised translation)

309. And now, if you act in accordance with the teachings of Baha'u'llah, you may rest assured that you will be aided and confirmed. You will be rendered victorious in all that you undertake, and all the inhabitants of the earth will be unable to withstand you. You are conquerors, because the power of the Holy Spirit assisteth you. Above and beyond all physical and phenomenal forces, the Holy Spirit itself shall aid you.

("Star of the West", vol. 8. no. 8 (1 August 1917), p. 103 - revised translation)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFENDI:

310.

If, in days to come, that land[1] should be overtaken by diverse afflictions and calamities; if, to the rigours of the present times there should be added the outbreak of widespread civil upheavals; if the country's already dark horizons should become still gloomier and more foreboding, you should neither be filled with trepidation and despondency, nor allow yourselves to be deflected, though it be to the extent of a hair's breadth, from that sound and well-considered course that you have been following up till now -- from continuing, in other words, your persistent, tireless, and unremitting labours

to increase the number of the Baha'i administrative institutions, to strengthen their foundations, to enhance the fair name that they enjoy, and to consolidate the respect and standing in which they are held.

The release of this innocent and wronged community from the bonds of captivity, and its deliverance from the clutches of the enemy and oppressor, cannot but be accompanied by general commotions and disturbances; likewise the attainment by the people of Baha to a position in which they will enjoy true honour, comfort and tranquillity must inevitably encounter the hostility and resistance, the clamorous opposition and tumultuous protests of all those who harbour enmity and rancour towards them.

If, therefore,the troubled waters of the sea of adversity should grow yet more <p157> turbulent, if the storm of tribulation should increase in vehemence and assail that sore-tried community from all six sides with fresh disasters, then know unhesitatingly and with unwavering conviction, that the hour of deliverance, the appointed time when the promises of old are to reach their glorious fulfilment, has drawn nigh, and that the means for the accomplishment of supreme and overwhelming victory by the hard-pressed followers of the Greatest Name in that land have all been readied and prepared.

Fixity of purpose and unfaltering resolution are the qualities that must needs be manifested by the people of Baha if they are successfully to traverse these last remaining stages, and witness, at the highest levels, and in a manner that will fill them with astonishment, the realization of their profoundest hopes and of their most deeply cherished desires.

Such is the way of God -- "and no change canst thou find in the way of God".[2]
[1 Iran]
[2 Qur'an, 33:62, and 48:23]

(From a letter dated 11 January 1928 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia - translated from the Persian)

311. ...it behooves us, while expectantly watching from a distance the moving spectacle of the struggling Faith of Baha'u'llah, to seek abiding solace and strength from the reflection that whatever befalls this Cause, however grievous and humiliating the visitations that from time to time may seem to afflict the organic life or interfere with the functions of the administrative machinery of the Baha'i Faith, such calamities cannot but each eventually prove to be a blessing in disguise designed, by a Wisdom inscrutable to us all, to establish and consolidate the sovereignty of Baha'u'llah on this earth.

(From a letter dated 1 January 1929 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 164)

312. Numerous and powerful have been the forces that have schemed, both from within and from without, in lands both far and near, to quench its light and abolish its holy name. Some have apostatized from its principles, and betrayed ignominiously its cause. Others have hurled against it the fiercest anathemas which the embittered leaders of any ecclesiastical institution are able to

pronounce. Still others have heaped <p158> upon it the afflictions and humiliations which sovereign authority can alone, in the plentitude of its power, inflict.

The utmost its avowed and secret enemies could hope to achieve was to retard its growth and obscure momentarily its purpose. What they actually accomplished was to purge and purify its life, to stir it to still greater depths, to galvanize its soul, to prune its institutions, and cement its unity. A schism, a permanent cleavage in the vast body of its adherents, they could never create.

They who betrayed its cause, its lukewarm and faint-hearted supporters, withered away and dropped as dead leaves, powerless to cloud its radiance or to imperil its structure. Its most implacable adversaries, they who assailed it from without, were hurled from power, and, in the most astonishing fashion, met their doom. Persia had been the first to repress and oppose it. Its monarchs had miserably fallen, their dynasty had collapsed, their name was execrated, the hierarchy that had been their ally and had propped their declining state, had been utterly discredited. Turkey, which had thrice banished its Founder and inflicted on Him cruel and lifelong imprisonment, had passed through one of the severest ordeals and far-reaching revolutions that its history has recorded, had shrunk from one of the most powerful empires to a tiny Asiatic republic, its Sultanate obliterated, its dynasty overthrown, its Caliphate, the mightiest institution of Islam, abolished.

Meanwhile the Faith that had been the object of such monstrous betrayals, and the target for such woeful assaults, was going from strength to strength, was forging ahead, undaunted and undivided by the injuries it had received. In the midst of trials it had inspired its loyal followers with a resolution that no obstacle, however formidable, could undermine. It had lighted in their hearts a faith that no misfortune, however black, could quench. It had infused into their hearts a hope that no force, however determined, could shatter.

(From a letter dated 11 March 1936 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters" pp. 195-96)

313. ...every apparent trial with which the unfathomable wisdom of the Almighty deems it necessary to afflict His chosen community serves only to demonstrate afresh its essential solidarity and to consolidate its inward strength... <p159> For such demonstrations of the interpositions of an ever- watchful Providence they who stand identified with the Community of the Most Great Name must feel eternally grateful. From every fresh token of His unfailing blessing on the one hand, and of His visitation on the other, they cannot but derive immense hope and courage....

Though small in numbers, and circumscribed as yet in your experiences, powers, and resources, yet the Force which energizes your mission is limitless in its range and incalculable in its potency. Though the enemies which every acceleration in the progress of your mission must raise up be fierce, numerous, and unrelenting, yet the invisible Hosts which, if you persevere, must, as

promised, rush forth to your aid, will, in the end, enable you to vanquish their hopes and annihilate their forces. Though the ultimate blessings that must crown the consummation of your mission be undoubted, and the Divine promises given you firm and irrevocable, yet the measure of the goodly reward which every one of you is to reap must depend on the extent to which your daily exertions will have contributed to the expansion of that mission and the hastening of its triumph.

(From a letter dated 25 December 1938 to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "The Advent of Divine Justice" p. 2; p. 16)

314. Dear friends! Manifold, various, and at times extremely perilous, have been the tragic crises which the blind hatred, the unbounded presumption, the incredible folly, the abject perfidy, the vaulting ambition of the enemy have intermittently engendered within the pale of the Faith. From some of its most powerful and renowned votaries, at the hands of its once trusted and ablest propagators, champions, and administrators, from the ranks of its most revered and highly-placed trustees whether as companions, amanuenses, or appointed lieutenants of the Herald of the Faith, of its Author, and of the Centre of His Covenant, from even those who were numbered among the kindred of the Manifestation, not excluding the brother, the sons and daughters of Baha'u'llah, and the nominee of the Bab Himself, a Faith, of such tender age, and enshrining so priceless a promise, has sustained blows as dire and treacherous as any recorded in the world's religious history. <p160>

From the record of its tumultuous history, almost every page of which portrays a fresh crisis, is laden with the description of a new calamity, recounts the tale of a base betrayal, and is stained with the account of unspeakable atrocities, there emerges, clear and incontrovertible, the supreme truth that with every fresh outbreak of hostility to the Faith, whether from within or from without, a corresponding measure of outpouring grace, sustaining its defenders and confounding its adversaries, has been providentially released, communicating a fresh impulse to the onward march of the Faith, while this impetus, in its turn, would, through its manifestations, provoke fresh hostility in quarters heretofore unaware of its challenging implications -- this increased hostility being accompanied by a still more arresting revelation of Divine Power and a more abundant effusion of celestial grace, which, by enabling the upholders of that Faith to register still more brilliant victories, would thereby generate issues of still more vital import and raise up still more formidable enemies against a Cause that cannot but in the end resolve those issues and crush the resistance of those enemies, through a still more glorious unfoldment of its inherent power.

The resistless march of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, 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. As opposition to the Faith, from whatever source it may spring, whatever form it may assume, however violent its outbursts, is admittedly the motive-power that galvanizes, on the one hand, the souls of its valiant defenders, and taps for them, on the other, fresh springs of that Divine and inexhaustible Energy, we who are called upon to represent, defend, and promote its interests, should, far from regarding any manifestation of hostility as an evidence of the weakening of the pillars of the Faith, acclaim it as both a God-sent gift and a God-sent opportunity which, if we remain undaunted, we can utilize for the furtherance of His Faith and the routing and complete elimination of its adversaries.

The Heroic Age of the Faith, born in anguish, nursed in adversity, and terminating in trials as woeful as those that greeted its birth, has been <p161> succeeded by that Formative Period which is to witness the gradual crystallization of those creative energies which the Faith has released, and the consequent emergence of that World Order for which those forces were made to operate.

Fierce and relentless will be the opposition which this crystallization and emergence must provoke. The alarm it must and will awaken, the envy it will certainly arouse, the misrepresentations to which it will remorselessly be subjected, the set-backs it must, sooner or later, sustain, the commotions to which it must eventually give rise, the fruits it must in the end garner, the blessings it must inevitably bestow and the glorious, the Golden Age it must irresistibly usher in, are just beginning to be faintly perceived, and will, as the old Order crumbles beneath the weight of so stupendous a Revelation, become increasingly apparent and arresting.

(From a letter dated 12 August 1941 to the Baha'is of America, published in "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America, 1932-1946, pp. 50-52)

315. We can discover a no less distinct gradation in the character of the opposition it has had to encounter ... an opposition which, now, through the rise of a divinely appointed Order in the Christian West, and its initial impact on civil and ecclesiastical institutions, bids fair to include among its supporters established governments and systems associated with the most ancient, the most deeply entrenched sacerdotal hierarchies in Christendom. We can, at the same time, recognize, through the haze of an ever- widening hostility, the progress, painful yet persistent, of certain communities within its pale through the stages of obscurity, of proscription, of emancipation, and of recognition -- stages that must needs culminate in the course of succeeding centuries, in the establishment of the Faith, and the founding, in the plenitude of its power and authority, of the world-embracing Baha'i Commonwealth....

...

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 Baha'u'llah 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 <p162> a series of pulsations, of alternating crises and triumphs, leading it ever nearer to its divinely appointed destiny....

The tribulations attending the progressive unfoldment of the Faith of Baha'u'llah 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.

Whatever may befall this infant Faith of God in future decades or in succeeding centuries, whatever the sorrows, dangers and tribulations which the next stage in its world- wide development may engender, from whatever quarter the assaults to be launched by its present or future adversaries may be unleashed against it, however great the reverses and setbacks it may suffer, we, who have been privileged to apprehend, to the degree our finite minds can fathom, the significance of these marvelous phenomena associated with its rise and establishment, can harbor no doubt that what it has already achieved in the first hundred years of its life provides sufficient guarantee that it will continue to forge ahead, capturing loftier heights, tearing down every obstacle, opening up new horizons and winning still mightier victories until its glorious mission, stretching into the dim ranges of time that lie ahead, is totally fulfilled.

("God Passes By", Foreward p. xvii; p. 409; p.410; p. 412)

316. Such reflections, far from engendering in our minds and hearts the slightest trace of perplexity, of discouragement or doubt, should reinforce the basis of our convictions, demonstrate to us the incorruptibility, the strange workings and the invincibility of a Faith which, despite the assaults which malignant and redoubtable enemies from the ranks of kings, princes and ecclesiastics have repeatedly launched against it, and the violent internal tests that have shaken it for more than a century, and the relative obscurity of its champions, and the unpropitiousness of the times and the perversity of the generations contemporaneous with its rise and growth, has gone from strength to strength, has preserved its unity and integrity, has diffused its light over <p163> five continents, reared the institutions of its Administrative Order and spread its ramifications to the four corners of the earth, and launched its systematic campaigns in both the Western and Eastern Hemispheres.

For such benefits, for such an arresting and majestic vindication of the undefeatable powers inherent in our precious Faith, we can but bow our heads in humility, awe and thanksgiving, renew our pledge of fealty to it, and, each

covenanting in his own heart, resolve to prove faithful to that pledge, and persevere to the very end, until our earthly share of servitude to so transcendent and priceless a Cause has been totally and completely fulfilled.

(From a letter dated 15 June 1946 to the Baha'is of America, published "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America, 1932-1946", p. 104)

317. Indeed this fresh ordeal that has, in pursuance of the mysterious dispensations of Providence, afflicted the Faith, at this unexpected hour, far from dealing a fatal blow to its institutions or existence, should be regarded as a blessing in disguise, not a "calamity" but a "providence" of God, not a devastating flood but a "gentle rain" on a "green pasture," a "wick" and "oil" unto the "lamp" of His Faith, a "nurture" for His Cause, "water for that which has been planted in the hearts of men," a "crown set on the head" of His Messenger for this Day.[1]
[1 "The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah", Arabic no. 51, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985), p. 15 "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 1]

Whatever its outcome, this sudden commotion that has seized the Baha'i world, that has revived the hopes and emboldened the host of the adversaries of the Faith intent on quenching its light and obliterating it from the face of the earth, has served as a trumpet call in the sounding of which the press of the world, the cries of its vociferous enemies, the public remonstrances of both men of good will and those in authority have joined, proclaiming far and wide its existence, publicizing its history, defending its verities, unveiling its truths, demonstrating the character of its institutions and advertising its aims and purposes. <p164> For though the newly launched World Spiritual Crusade -- constituting at best only the Minor Plan in the execution of the Almighty's design for the redemption of mankind -- has, as a result of this turmoil paralyzing temporarily the vast majority of the organized followers of Baha'u'llah within His birthplace, suffered a severe setback, yet the over-all Plan of God, moving mysteriously and in contrast to the orderly and well-known processes of a clearly devised Plan, has received an impetus the force of which only posterity can adequately assess.

(In a letter dated 20 August 1954 to the Baha'is of the United States, published in "Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947-1957", pp. 139-40)

318. However severe their trials, and disheartening the present situation may appear, they must remember that the Faith to which they owe allegiance has weathered, not so very long ago, storms of a far greater severity that seemed, at times, capable of engulfing and of obliterating its nascent institutions. The newly planted sapling of a divinely conceived administrative order, having driven deep its roots in German soil, bent momentarily under the hurricane which so violently swept over it, and no sooner had the tempest spent its force than it righted itself, and, growing with a fresh vigour, put forth branches and offshoots that now overshadow the entire land, and even stretch out as far

as the heart of Austria.

The experience of so miraculous a recovery from so devastating an ordeal should, alone, prove sufficient to infuse an invigorating spirit into those who have been subjected to it, as well as into the new generation who are still close enough to those events to appreciate its extreme violence, such as will not only enable them to withstand onslaughts of still greater severity, but impel them, both young and old, men and women alike, to struggle, with redoubled vigour and deeper consecration, to meet the pressing and the manifold requirements of the present hour.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 14 August 1957 written on his behalf to a National Spiritual Assembly, in "The Light of Divine Guidance, vol. 1 (Hofheim-Langenhain: Baha'i-Verlag GmbH, 1982), pp. 303-304) <p165>

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

319. There is always an important difference between friends and tested friends. No matter how precious the first type may be, the future of the Cause rests upon the latter. Up to the present the German friends were considered as loving Baha'is, from now on they can be ranked as tested ones.

In every country where such difficulties arise, they generally end with added energy and more intensive service of the Cause....

(4 April 1930 to an individual believer, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 34-35)

320. The friends . . . should not feel bewildered, for they have the assurance of Baha'u'llah that whatever the nature and character of the forces of opposition facing His Cause, its eventual triumph is indubitably certain.

(30 August 1937 to an individual believer)

321. Let them know, however, for a certainty that the onslaught of both the disbeliever and the oppressor will become a means of promulgating this Divine Cause, of proclaiming the Word of God and of consolidating the foundations of His holy Faith; and that its enemies will ultimately be completely overwhelmed, that the Cause of God will emerge victorious, and that His Word will reign supreme.

(21 October 1946 to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

322. He very deeply appreciates your Assembly's assurance of its abiding loyalty to him and to the Master's Will and Testament. As you can well imagine this disaffection of the Master's Family has been a very sad and heavy blow to him; but, although for many years he shielded them with his silence, in the end he was forced to speak out in order to protect the Faith. For a hundred years our beloved Cause has suffered from these internal afflictions, and the way the believers, generation after generation, have met this test with steadfast faith, loyalty and devotion, is one of the signs that this is the Cause of God,

divinely protected through the Covenants of Baha'u'llah and the Master.

(30 June 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, p. 149) <p166>

323. He urges you not to be discouraged or depressed, but rest assured that Baha'u'llah will assist you. Every set- back this Cause receives is invariably a means of ensuring a future victory, for God will never permit His Faith to be put out or uprooted.

(From a letter dated 26 January 1950 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Panama)

324. Although this may temporarily prove an embarrassment to your work, and a set-back, there is no doubt that it signalizes a step forward in the advance of the Faith; for we know that our beloved Faith must eventually clash with the entrenched orthodoxies of the past; and that this conflict cannot but lead to greater victories, and to ultimate emancipation, recognition and ascendancy.

(From a letter dated 8 April 1951 to two believers)

325. The Faith is moving at a tremendous rate, and with tremendous force at the present time. Certainly if it is suppressed in one place, the power of the Cause is such that it must rise with greater strength in another place; and thus the persecutions of the Persian Baha'is have caused the Faith to surge ahead in Africa. This certainly must be a solace to the suffering of the Baha'is of Persia.

(From a letter dated 26 September 1955 to an individual believer)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

326. It should not be surmised that the events which have taken place in all corners of the globe, including the sacred land of Iran, have occurred as isolated incidents without any aim and purpose. According to the words of our beloved Guardian, "The invisible hand is at work and the convulsions taking place on earth are a prelude to the proclamation of the Cause of God". This is but one of the mysterious forces of this supreme Revelation which is causing the limbs of mankind to quake and those who are drunk with pride and negligence to be thunderstruck and shaken....

In such an afflicted time, when mankind is bewildered and the wisest of men are perplexed as to the remedy, the people of Baha, who have confidence in His unfailing grace and divine guidance, are assured that each of these tormenting trials has a cause, a purpose, and a definite <p167> result, and all are essential instruments for the establishment of the immutable Will of God on earth. In other words, on the one hand humanity is struck by the scourge of His chastisement which will inevitably bring together the scattered and vanquished tribes of the earth; and on the other, the weak few whom He has nurtured under the protection of His loving guidance are, in this Formative Age and period of transition, continuing to build amidst these tumultuous waves an impregnable stronghold which will be the sole remaining refuge for those lost multitudes. Therefore, the dear friends of God who have such a broad and clear vision

before them are not perturbed by such events, nor are they panic-stricken by such thundering sounds, nor will they face such convulsions with fear and trepidation, nor will they be deterred, even for a moment, from fulfilling their sacred responsibilities.

(10 February 1980 to the Iranian believers resident in other countries throughout the world)

327. The inveterate enemies of the Faith imagine that their persecutions will disrupt the foundations of the Faith and tarnish its glory. Alas! Alas for their ignorance and folly! These acts of oppression, far from weakening the resolve of the friends, have always served to inflame their zeal and galvanize their beings. In the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha, "...they thought that violence and interference would cause extinction and silence and lead to suppression and oblivion; whereas interference in matters of conscience causes stability and firmness and attracts the attention of men's sight and souls, which fact has received experimental proof many times and often."

Every drop of blood shed by the valiant martyrs, every sigh heaved by the silent victims of oppression, every supplication for divine assistance offered by the faithful, has released, and will continue mysteriously to release, forces over which no antagonist of the Faith has any control, and which, as marshalled by an All-Watchful Providence, have served to noise abroad the name and fame of the Faith to the masses of humanity in all continents, millions of whom had previously been totally ignorant of the existence of the Faith or had but a superficial, and oft- times erroneous, understanding of its teachings and history.

The current persecution has resulted in bringing the name and character of our beloved Faith to the attention of the world as never <p168> before in its history. As a direct result of the protests sent by the world-wide community of the Most Great Name to the rulers in Iran, of the representations made to the media when those protests were ignored, of direct approach by Baha'i institutions at national and international level to governments, communities of nations, international agencies and the United Nations itself, the Faith of Baha'u'llah has not only been given sympathetic attention in the world's councils, but also its merits and violated rights have been discussed and resolutions of protest sent to the Iranian authorities by sovereign governments, singly and in unison. The world's leading newspapers, followed by the local press, have presented sympathetic accounts of the Faith to millions of readers, while television and radio stations are increasingly making the persecutions in Iran the subject of their programmes. Commercial publishing houses are beginning to commission books about the Faith.

...

Indeed, this new wave of persecution sweeping the Cradle of the Faith may well be seen as a blessing in disguise, a "providence" whose "calamity" is, as always, borne heroically by the beloved Persian community. It may be regarded as the latest move in God's Major Plan, another trumpet blast to awaken the

heedless from their slumber and a golden opportunity offered to the Baha'is to demonstrate once again their unity and fellowship before the eyes of a declining and skeptical world, to proclaim with full force the Message of Baha'u'llah to high and low alike, to establish the reverence of our Faith for Islam and its Prophet, to assert the principles of non-interference in political activities and obedience to government which stand at the very core of our Faith, and to provide comfort and solace to the breasts of the serene sufferers and steadfast heroes in the forefront of a persecuted community....

(26 January 1982 to the Baha'is of the World)

328. Shoghi Effendi perceived in the organic life of the Cause a dialectic of victory and crisis. The unprecedented triumphs, generated by the adamantine steadfastness of the Iranian friends, will inevitably provoke opposition to test and increase our strength. Let every Baha'i in the world be assured that whatever may befall this growing Faith of God is but incontrovertible evidence of the loving care with which the King of Glory and His martyred Herald, through the incomparable Centre of His <p169> Covenant and our beloved Guardian, are preparing His humble followers for ultimate and magnificent triumph....

(2 January 1986 to the Baha'is of the World)

329. The opening of that Plan coincided with the recrudescence of savage persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran, a deliberate effort to eliminate the Cause of God from the land of its birth. The heroic steadfastness of the Persian friends has been the mainspring of tremendous international attention focussed on the Cause, eventually bringing it to the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and, together with world-wide publicity in all the media, accomplishing its emergence from the obscurity which characterized and sheltered the first period of its life. This dramatic process impelled the Universal House of Justice to address a Statement on Peace to the Peoples of the World and arrange for its delivery to Heads of State and the generality of the rulers.

(Ridvan 1986 to the Baha'is of the World)

III. "The security of our precious Faith..." (Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Baha'i World 1950-1957", p. 123)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHA'U'LLAH:

330. ..."Say: O people of God! Beware lest the powers of the earth alarm you, or the might of the nations weaken you, or the tumult of the people of discord deter you, or the exponents of earthly glory sadden you. Be ye as a mountain in the Cause of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the Unconstrained." "Say: Beware, O people of Baha, lest the strong ones of the earth rob you of your strength, or they who rule the world fill you with fear. Put your trust in God, and commit your affairs to His keeping. He, verily, will, through the power of truth, render you victorious, and He, verily, is powerful to do what He willeth, and in His grasp are the reins of omnipotent might."

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 82)

331. It is incumbent upon all men, each according to his ability, to refute the arguments of those that have attacked the Faith of God. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Powerful, the Almighty. He that <p170> 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.... If any man were to arise to defend, in his writings, the Cause of God against its assailants, such a man, however inconsiderable his share, shall be so honored in the world to come that the Concourse on high would envy his glory. No pen can depict the loftiness of his station, neither can any tongue describe its splendor. For whosoever standeth firm and steadfast in this holy, this glorious, and exalted Revelation, such power shall be given him as to enable him to face and withstand all that is in heaven and on earth. Of this God is Himself a witness.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah" sec. 154, pp.329-30)

332. We exhort the men of the House of Justice and command them to ensure the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children. It is incumbent upon them to have the utmost regard for the interests of the people at all times and under all conditions. Blessed is the ruler who succoureth the captive, and the rich one who careth for the poor, and the just one who secureth from the wrong doer the rights of the downtrodden, and happy the trustee who observeth that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days hath prescribed unto him.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas" pp. 69-70)

333. And likewise, He saith: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart: be strong, fear not, behold your God."[1] This blessed verse is a proof of the greatness of the Revelation, and of the greatness of the Cause, inasmuch as the blast of the trumpet must needs spread confusion throughout the world, and fear and trembling amongst all men. Well is it with him who hath been illumined with the light of trust and detachment. The tribulations of that Day will not hinder or alarm him. Thus hath the Tongue of Utterance spoken, as bidden by Him Who is the All-Merciful. He, verily, is the Strong, the All-Powerful, the All-Subduing, the Almighty....
[1 Isaiah 35:4]

("Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", p. 147) <p171>

334. You should exhort all the friends to patience, to acquiescence, and to tranquillity, saying: O ye loved ones of God in that land! Ye are glorified in all the worlds of God because of your relationship to Him Who is the Eternal Truth, but in your lives on this earthly plane, which pass away as a fleeting moment, ye are afflicted with abasement. For the sake of the one true God, ye have been reviled and persecuted, ye have been imprisoned, and surrendered your lives in His path. Ye should not, however, by reason of the tyrannical acts of some heedless souls, transgress the limits of God's commandments by contending with anyone.

Whatever hath befallen you, hath been for the sake of God. This is the truth,

and in this there is no doubt. You should, therefore, leave all your affairs in His Hands, place your trust in Him, and rely upon Him. He will assuredly not forsake you. In this, likewise, there is no doubt. No father will surrender his sons to devouring beasts; no shepherd will leave his flock to ravening wolves. He will most certainly do his utmost to protect his own.

If, however, for a few days, in compliance with God's all- encompassing wisdom, outward affairs should run their course contrary to one's cherished desire, this is of no consequence and should not matter. Our intent is that all the friends should fix their gaze on the Supreme Horizon, and cling to that which hath been revealed in the Tablets. They should strictly avoid sedition, and refrain from treading the path of dissension and strife. They should champion their one true God, exalted be He, through the hosts of forbearance, of submission, of an upright character, of goodly deeds, and of the choicest and most refined words.

("The Baha'i World" vol. XVIII (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1986) pp. 10-11)

EXTRACTS FROM THE Writings OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA:

335. O army of God! When calamity striketh, be ye patient and composed. However afflictive your sufferings may be, stay ye undisturbed, and with perfect confidence in the abounding grace of God, brave ye the tempest of tribulations and fiery ordeals.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 74) <p172>

336. 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.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 258)

337. O ye beloved of the Lord! The greatest of all things is the protection of the True Faith of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Cause and service unto His Word....

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 Baha (may my life be offered up for them)...

("Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha", (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust,

1971), p. 4; p. 19)

EXTRACTS FROM THE Writings OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

338. It is incumbent upon them to be vigilant and cautious, discreet and watchful, and protect at all times the Temple of the Cause from the dart of the mischief-maker and the onslaught of the enemy.

(12 March 1923 to the Baha'is of America, Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Japan and Australasia, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 38)

339. As the Movement grows in prestige, fame and influence, as the ambitions, malice and ill-will of strangers and enemies correspondingly wax greater, it becomes increasingly important for every individual and <p173> Spiritual Assembly to be on their guard lest they fall innocent victims of the evil designs of the malevolent, the self-seeking and greedy.

Touching the publication of articles and pamphlets bearing on the controversial and political issues of the day, I desire to remind my dearly-beloved fellow-workers that at the present stage when the Cause is still in its infancy, any minute and detailed analysis by the friends of subjects that are in the forefront of general discussion would often be misconstrued in certain quarters and give rise to suspicions and misunderstandings that would react unfavorably on the Cause.

They would tend to create a misconception of the real object, the true mission, and the fundamental character of the Baha'i Faith.

We should, while endeavoring to uphold loyally and expound conscientiously our social and moral principles in all their essence and purity, in all their bearings upon the divers phases of human society, insure that no direct reference or particular criticism in our exposition of the fundamentals of the Faith would tend to antagonize any existing institution, or help to identify a purely spiritual movement with the base clamorings and contentions of warring sects, factions and nations.

We should strive in all our utterances to combine the discretion and noble reticence of the wise with the frankness and passionate loyalty of the ardent advocate of an inspiring Faith.

While refusing to utter the word that would needlessly alienate or estrange any individual, government or people, we should fearlessly and unhesitatingly uphold and assert in their entirety such truths the knowledge of which we believe is vitally and urgently needed for the good and betterment of mankind.

(10 January 1926 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 102)

340. We can prove ourselves worthy of our Cause only if in our individual conduct and corporate life we sedulously imitate the example of our beloved

Master, Whom the terrors of tyranny, the storms of incessant abuse, the oppressiveness of humiliation, never caused to deviate a hair's breadth from the revealed Law of Baha'u'llah.

(12 April 1927 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 132) <p174>

341.

Be moreover assured beyond all shadow of doubt that no matter how strenuously the enemies of God's Faith may exert themselves to extinguish its fire, they will but cause its flame to burn the more fiercely, its light to shine the more brightly, and its heat to grow the more intense.

People of wisdom and discernment, who are closely but unobtrusively surveying the progress of the Faith, and are resolved to subject it to the most careful examination and research, will be neither shaken nor swayed by these absurd and baseless claims, these scurrilous publications and self- contradictory pronouncements.

So far from being blinded by such propaganda to the verities of the Cause, they will rather be moved by it to pursue their investigations and inquiries with greater meticulousness and enthusiasm than before; to make themselves thoroughly familiar with the teachings, principles and aspirations of the followers of Baha'u'llah; and even, through the grace and guidance of an Almighty and Omniscient Lord, to arise in time of need for the defence and protection of the Cause; to put to rout the hosts of suspicion, doubt and misconception; to raze to its foundations the edifice of calumny and falsehood; and to demonstrate and establish, before the eyes of all the world, the sacred, exalted and indomitable reality of the resistless Faith of God.

These various distressful occurrences, contrived and instigated by the enemies and ill-wishers of the Cause -- their insidious rumours, their defamatory reports, their flagrant and unprincipled attacks- -should be viewed as dispositions and instrumentalities of Providence, designed to hasten the advent of that promised day, that mighty and compelling victory, and that perspicuous triumph, which have been so clearly foretold in the scriptures, and so explicitly and emphatically set forth by the Pen of the Most High.

(From a letter dated August 1927 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia - translated from the Persian)

342. The permanence and stability achieved by any association, group or nation is a result of -- and dependent upon -- the soundness and worth of the principles upon which it bases the running of its affairs and the direction of its activities. The guiding principles of the Baha'is are: honesty, love, charity and trustworthiness; the setting of the common good above private interest; and the practice of godliness, virtue and moderation. Ultimately, then, their preservation and happiness are <p175> assured. Whatever misfortunes they may encounter, wrought by the wiles of the schemer and ill-wisher, shall

all pass away like waves, and hardship shall be succeeded by joy. The friends are under the protection of the resistless power and inscrutable providence of God. There is no doubt that every blessed soul who brings his life into harmony with this all- swaying power shall give lustre to his works and win an ample recompense. The actions of those who choose to set themselves against it should provoke not antipathy on our part, but prayers for their guidance. Such was the way of the Baha'is in days gone by, and so must it be, now and for always.

(18 December 1928 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran - translated from the Persian)

343.

Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions.

In such controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system prejudicial to the best interests of that world-wide Fellowship which it is their aim to guard and foster.

Let them beware lest they allow themselves to become the tools of unscrupulous politicians, or to be entrapped by the treacherous devices of the plotters and the perfidious among their countrymen.

Let them so shape their lives and regulate their conduct that no charge of secrecy, of fraud, of bribery or of intimidation may, however ill-founded, be brought against them.

Let them rise above all particularism and partisanship, above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, the transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the attention, of a changing world.

It is their duty to strive to distinguish, as clearly as they possibly can, and if needed with the aid of their elected representatives, such posts and functions as are either diplomatic or political from those that are purely administrative in character, and which under no circumstances are affected by the changes and chances that political activities and party government, in every land, must necessarily involve.

Let them affirm their unyielding determination to stand, firmly and unreservedly, for the way of Baha'u'llah, to avoid the entanglements and bickerings inseparable from the pursuits of the politician, and to <p176> become worthy agencies of that Divine Polity which incarnates God's immutable Purpose for all men.

...

As the number of the Baha'i communities in various parts of the world multiplies and their power, as a social force, becomes increasingly apparent, they will no doubt find themselves increasingly subjected to the pressure which

men of authority and influence, in the political domain, will exercise in the hope of obtaining the support they require for the advancement of their aims.

These communities will, moreover, feel a growing need of the good-will and the assistance of their respective governments in their efforts to widen the scope, and to consolidate the foundations, of the institutions committed to their charge.

Let them beware lest, in their eagerness to further the aims of their beloved Cause, they should be led unwittingly to bargain with their Faith, to compromise with their essential principles, or to sacrifice, in return for any material advantage which their institutions may derive, the integrity of their spiritual ideals.

Let them proclaim that in whatever country they reside, and however advanced their institutions, or profound their desire to enforce the laws, and apply the principles, enunciated by Baha'u'llah, they will, unhesitatingly, subordinate the operation of such laws and the application of such principles to the requirements and legal enactments of their respective governments.

Theirs is not the purpose, while endeavoring to conduct and perfect the administrative affairs of their Faith, to violate, under any circumstances, the provisions of their country's constitution, much less to allow the machinery of their administration to supersede the government of their respective countries.

It should also be borne in mind that the very extension of the activities in which we are engaged, and the variety of the communities which labor under divers forms of government, so essentially different in their standards, policies, and methods, make it absolutely essential for all those who are the declared members of any one of these communities to avoid any action that might, by arousing the suspicion or exciting the antagonism of any one government, involve their brethren in fresh persecutions or complicate the nature of their task. How else, might I ask, could such a far-flung Faith, which transcends political and social boundaries, which includes within its pale so great a variety of races and nations, which will have to rely increasingly, as it forges ahead, on the <p177> good-will and support of the diversified and contending governments of the earth -- how else could such a Faith succeed in preserving its unity, in safeguarding its interests, and in ensuring the steady and peaceful development of its institutions?

Such an attitude, however, is not dictated by considerations of selfish expediency, but is actuated, first and foremost, by the broad principle that the followers of Baha'u'llah will, under no circumstances, suffer themselves to be involved, whether as individuals or in their collective capacities, in matters that would entail the slightest departure from the fundamental verities and ideals of their Faith. Neither the charges which the uninformed and the malicious may be led to bring against them, nor the allurements of honors and rewards, will ever induce them to surrender their trust or to deviate from their path. Let their words proclaim, and their conduct testify, that they who follow Baha'u'llah, in whatever land they reside, are actuated by no selfish

ambition, that they neither thirst for power, nor mind any wave of unpopularity, of distrust or criticism, which a strict adherence to their standards might provoke.

(21 March 1932 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters, pp. 6467)

344. Such a rectitude of conduct must manifest itself, with ever-increasing potency, in every verdict which the elected representatives of the Baha'i community, in whatever capacity they may find themselves, may be called upon to pronounce. It must be constantly reflected in the business dealings of all its members, in their domestic lives, in all manner of employment, and in any service they may, in the future, render their government or people. It must be exemplified in the conduct of all Baha'i electors, when exercising their sacred rights and functions. It must characterize the attitude of every loyal believer towards nonacceptance of political posts, nonidentification with political parties, nonparticipation in political controversies, and nonmembership in political organizations and ecclesiastical institutions....

It must be demonstrated in the impartiality of every defender of the Faith against its enemies, in his fair-mindedness in recognizing any merits that enemy may possess, and in his honesty in discharging any obligations he may have towards him.... <p178>

...

No greater demonstration can be given to the peoples of both continents of the youthful vitality and the vibrant power animating the life, and the institutions of the nascent Faith of Baha'u'llah than an intelligent, persistent, and effective participation of the Baha'i youth, of every race, nationality, and class, in both the teaching and administrative spheres of Baha'i activity. Through such a participation the critics and enemies of the Faith, watching with varying degrees of skepticism and resentment, the evolutionary processes of the Cause of God and its institutions, can best be convinced of the indubitable truth that such a Cause is intensely alive, is sound to its very core, and its destinies in safe keeping....

(25 December 1938 to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "The Advent of Divine Justice, pp. 26-27;pp. 69-70)

345. Obstacles, varied and numerous, will no doubt arise to impede the onward march of this community [Australia]. Reverses may temporarily dim the radiance of its mission. The forces of religious orthodoxy may well, at a future date, be leagued against it. The exponents of theories and doctrines fundamentally opposed to its religious tenets and social principles may challenge its infant strength with persistence and severity. The Administrative Order -- the Ark destined to preserve its integrity and carry it to safety- -must without delay, without exception, claim the attention of the members of this community, its ideals must be continually cherished in their hearts, its purposes studied and

kept constantly before their eyes, its requirements wholeheartedly met, its laws scrupulously upheld, its institutions unstintingly supported, its glorious mission noised abroad, and its spirit made the sole motivating purpose of their lives.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 22 August 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, published in "Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, 1923-1957" (Sydney: National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Australia, 1970), p. 80-81)

346. The strife and bloodshed, with their attendant misery, sorrow and confusion, that have afflicted the entire subcontinent of India, in recent months, have caused me the gravest concern. The disorders, following in <p179> the wake of this great crisis in the life of its people, constitute a challenge, which the community of the steadfast followers of Baha'u'llah in that land must resolutely face, and demonstrate in meeting it the quality of their faith, the depth of their devotion, the strength of their unity, the solidity of their institutions and the heroic character of their resolve. They must neither feel alarmed, nor falter or hesitate in the execution of their Plan. Shielded by the institutions which their hands have reared, abiding securely in the strong-hold of their love for Baha'u'llah and their devotion to His Faith, pursuing with unrelaxing vigilance and singleness of purpose the course set by the Plan they themselves have inaugurated, heartened by the initial success already achieved since that Plan was set in motion, they, however much buffeted by present circumstances, and no matter how perilous the path they now tread, must press forward, unafraid of persecution, scorn or calumny, towards the shining goals they have set themselves to attain.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 24 October 1947 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, Pakistan and Burma, published in "Dawn of a New Day" (New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1970), p.127)

347. RECENT EVENTS TRIUMPHANT CONSUMMATION SERIES HISTORIC ENTERPRISES SUCH AS CONSTRUCTION SUPERSTRUCTURE BAB'S SEPULCHRE DEDICATION MOTHER TEMPLE WEST WORLD-WIDE CELEBRATIONS HOLY YEAR CONVOCATION FOUR INTERCONTINENTAL TEACHIN CONFERENCES LAUNCHING TEN YEAR CRUSADE UNPRECEDENTED DISPERSAL ITS VALIANT PROSECUTORS FACE GLOBE EXTRAORDINARY PROGRESS AFRICAN PACIFIC CAMPAIGNS RISE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER ARABIAN PENINSULA HEART ISLAMIC WORLD DISCOMFITURE POWERFUL ANTAGONISTS CRADLE FAITH ERECTION INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES HERALDING ESTABLISHMENT SEAT WORLD ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER HOLY LAND SERVED INFLAME UNQUENCHABLE ANIMOSITY MUSLIM OPPONENTS RAISED UP NEW SET ADVERSARIES CHRISTI FOLD ROUSED INTERNAL ENEMIES OLD NEW COVENANT- BREAKERS FRESH ATTEMPTS ARREST MARCH CAUSE GOD MISREPRESENT ITS PURPOSE <p180> DISRUPT ITS ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS DAMPEN ZEAL SAP LOYALTY ITS SUPPORTERS. EVIDENCES INCREASING HOSTILITY WITHOUT PERSISTENT MACHINATIONS WITHIN FORESHADOWING DIRE CONTEST DESTINED RANGE ARMY LIGHT FORCES DARKNESS BOTH SECULAR RELIGIOUS PREDICTED UNEQUIVOCAL LANGUAGE 'ABDU'L- BAHA NECESSITATE THIS CRUCIAL HOUR CLOSER ASSOCIATION HANDS FIVE CONTINENTS BODIES ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES NATIONAL

BAHA'I COMMUNITIES WORLD OVER JOINT INVESTIGATION NEFARIOUS ACTIVITIES INTERNAL ENEMIES ADOPTION WISE EFFECTIVE MEASURES COUNTERACT THEIR TREACHEROUS SCHEME PROTECT MASS BELIEVERS ARREST SPREAD EVIL INFLUENCE. CALL UPON HANDS[1]
[1 The Continental Boards of Counselors ... are charged with specific functions relating to the protection and propagation of the Faith in the areas under their jurisdiction. They will operate in a manner similar to that set forth by the beloved Guardian for the Hands of the Cause in his communications outlining the responsibilities they are called upon to discharge in collaboration with National Spiritual Assemblies. We particularly draw your attention to his message of June 4, 1957.(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice dated 24 June 1968 to a Continental Board of Counsellors)]

NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES EACH CONTINENT SEPARATELY ESTABLISH HENCEFORTH DIRECT CONTACT DELIBERATE WHENEVER FEASIBLE AS FREQUENTLY POSSIBLE EXCHANGE REPORTS BE SUBMITTED TO THEIR RESPECTIVE AUXILIARY BOARDS NATIONAL COMMITTEES EXERCISE UNRELAXING VIGILANCE CARRY OUT UNFLINCHINGLY SACRED INESCAPABLE DUTIES. SECURITY PRECIOUS FAITH PRESERVATION SPIRITUAL HEALTH BAHA'I COMMUNITIES VITALITY FAITH ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS PROPER FUNCTIONING ITS LABORIOUSLY ERECTED INSTITUTIONS FRUITION ITS WORLD-WIDE ENTERPRISES FULFILMENT ITS ULTIMATE DESTINY ALL DIRECTLY DEPENDENT BEFITTING DISCHARGE WEIGHTY RESPONSIBILITIES NOW RESTING MEMBERS THESE TWO INSTITUTIONS OCCUPYING WITH UNIVERSAL HOUSE JUSTICE NEXT INSTITUTION <p181> GUARDIANSHIP FOREMOST RANK DIVINELY ORDAINED ADMINISTRATIVE HIERARCHY WORLD ORDER BAHA'U'LLAH.

(Cablegram dated 4 June 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, published in "Messages to the Baha'i World 1950-1957" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 122-23)

EXTRACT'S FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

348. Undoubtedly, as the influence of God's Faith becomes more pervasive, the number of those who wish to obstruct its progress will also grow; new and increasingly formidable adversaries will come to the fore; and mischief-makers, appearing under various extraordinary guises, will seek surreptitiously to goad to action all those who harbour resentment or bear ill will towards this Cause, and will raise aloft the standards of sedition. Under these circumstances it is essential for the friends on the one hand to be alert and watchful, and on the other to arouse the vigilance and strengthen the allegiance of their fellow-believers, to guard the integrity of the Word of God, and to maintain harmony and unity amongst His loved ones. Herein lies the supreme duty of the friends of God, and the highest means by which they can render service to His Cause.

(24 May 1927 to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

349. In the face of such distressing conditions you should realize, more keenly than ever, your supreme obligation of protecting the body of the Cause from any further injuries and attacks, and of adhering scrupulously and intelligently to the spirit and the principles of the Administration....

(12 July 1937 to an individual believer)

350. The matter of refuting attacks and criticisms directed against the Cause through the press is, he feels, one which devolves on the National Spiritual Assembly to consider. This body, whether directly or through the agency of its committees, should decide as to the advisability of answering any such attacks, and also should carefully examine and pass upon any statements which the friends wish to send to the press to this effect. Only through such supervision and control of all Baha'i press activities can the friends hope to avoid confusion and misunderstanding <p182> in their own minds and in the mind of the general public whom they can reach through the press.

(28 September 1928 to an individual believer)

351. It is incumbent upon the friends to confront these difficulties with constancy and firmness, thankfulness and patience, unity and solidarity; to endure with fortitude these consecutive disasters; to traverse successfully these last remaining stages in their destined course; and to become neither restive nor disheartened on account of the hardships and exertions, the injustice and oppression that they are constrained to undergo. Let them at all times keep in mind the following clear and solemn warning recorded by the pen of the Centre of the Covenant and, with a tranquil heart, a radiant spirit, a steadfast purpose and a high resolve, watchfully anticipate the unfoldment and fulfilment of the Master's utterance:

Beware the weeping of the wronged and orphaned children and the sighing of the victims of oppression, lest their tears should turn to floods and their breaths should turn to fire.

The violent disturbances, the afflictive trials and overwhelming dangers which now beset the froward band of ill-wishers, mischief- makers and oppressors from every stratum of society, whether in your own or neighbouring countries, and which have assailed their peoples, kings and subjects, governments and citizens alike on every hand, are the results of those grievous trespasses and violations wrought in that land by the hand of the tyrant and the aggressor. Now, after the passage of a century, the baleful outcome of those deeds has become apparent and their evil consequences revealed for all to see. The day is fast approaching when the hosts of hatred and iniquity will be called to answer for their deeds: erelong shall they be seized by the agents of the retributive anger of an All- Powerful and All-Compelling God.

In counselling the friends, and conveying condolences to the victims of this latest outrage, your Assembly should urge them to cleave now as never before to the firm cord of God's holy ordinances and teachings, never to deviate by so much as a hair's breadth from the Straight Path; and to bide the advent of that day when it shall please Him to accomplish <p183> His foreordained decree. He, verily, is the Protector of the wronged ones, and He, verily, is the Succourer of all those who stand fast and firm.

(2 July 1942 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persian - translated from the Persian)

352. The Cause of God must be protected from the enemies of the Faith, and from those who sow seeds of doubt in the hearts of the believers, and the greatest of all protections is knowledge...

(11 May 1948 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance, vol. 1, p. 134)

353. ...the believers need to be deepened in their knowledge and appreciation of the Covenants of both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. This is the stronghold of the Faith of every Baha'i, and that which enables him to withstand every test and the attacks of the enemies outside the Faith, and the far more dangerous, insidious, lukewarm people inside the Faith who have no real attachment to the Covenant, and consequently uphold the intellectual aspect of the teachings while at the same time undermining the spiritual foundation upon which the whole Cause of God rests.

(15 April 1949 to an individual believer, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 2, p. 84)

354. Attacks by missionaries, and others, such as that by Elder, should most certainly be vigorously defended publicly by your Assembly and Local Assemblies as well.

(18 August 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

EXTRACT FROM LETTER WRITTEN BY THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

355.

The need to protect the Faith from the attacks of its enemies is not generally appreciated by the friends because such attacks, particularly in the West, have so far been intermittent.

However, we know that these attacks will increase and will become concerted and universal.

The writings of our Faith clearly foreshadow not only an intensification of the machinations of internal enemies, but a rise in the hostility and opposition of its external enemies, whether religious or secular, as our <p184> beloved Faith pursues its onward march towards ultimate victory.

Therefore, in the light of the warnings of Shoghi Effendi, the Auxiliary Boards for Protection should keep "constantly" a "watchful eye" on those "who are known to be enemies or to have been put out of the Faith", discreetly "investigate" their activities, warn intelligently the friends of the opposition inevitably to come, explain how each crisis in God's Faith has always proved to be a blessing in disguise, prepare them for the "dire contests" which are "destined to range the Army of Light against the forces of darkness", and, when the influence of the enemies spreads and reaches their fold, the members of these Auxiliary Boards should be alert to their schemes to "dampen the zeal and sap the loyalty" of the believers and, by adopting "wise and effective measures",[1] counteract these schemes and arrest the spread of

their influence.

Above all, the members of the Protection Boards should concentrate on deepening the friends' knowledge of the Covenant and increasing their love and loyalty to it, on clearly and frankly answering, in conformity with the teachings, whatever questions may trouble any of the believers, on fostering the spiritual profundity and strength of their faith and certitude, and on promoting whatever will increase the spirit of loving unity in Baha'i communities.
[1 "Messages to the Baha'i World, 1950-1957", p. 123]

The primary tasks of the Propagation Boards, however, are to direct the believers' attention to the goals of whatever plans have been placed before them, to stimulate and assist them to promote the teaching work in the fields of proclamation, expansion, consolidation and pioneering, to encourage contributions to the funds, and to act as standard-bearers of the teachers of the Faith, leading them to new achievements in the diffusion of God's Message to their fellow human beings....

It should, furthermore, be remembered that these self-same functions are being carried out by the Assemblies, national and local, and their committees, which have at this time the great responsibility for actually executing the teaching plans and for administering, consolidating and protecting the Baha'i communities. The Auxiliary Board members should thus watch carefully that their work reinforces and complements that of the administrative institutions.

(10 October 1976 to the International Teaching Centre) <p185>

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

356. One of the vital functions of the Protection Boards is the deepening of the friends' knowledge of the Covenant and increasing their love and loyalty to it, and fostering the spirit of love and unity within the Baha'i community.

It is the duty of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies to refer to the Auxiliary Board members for protection matters which may involve not only possible Covenant-breaking, but also problems of disunity within the community, the removal of voting rights or any other matters in which you feel the guidance and advice of the Protection Boards may be helpful to the institutions of the Faith. The Auxiliary Board members of course keep the Continental Board of Counsellors informed and the Counsellors then take whatever steps they feel are called for.

You are free at any time to refer to the Continental Board of Counsellors and the Auxiliary Board members for protection any matters about which you are not clear involving the security of the Faith in your area and you will always find them willing to assist you in dealing with such problems.

(1 October 1979 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Venezuela)

357. Hostility to the Faith is something all Baha'is can expect; how we react to it is of great importance. You are urged to avoid confrontation and dissension; these would tend to increase the antagonism. Maintain a dignified

and friendly attitude and, in order to put forward well-founded reasoning where indicated, make a point of becoming better informed about issues affecting Christianity and the Baha'i Faith.

(12 September 1985 to the National Spiritual Assembly of St. Vincent)

358. ...as the Faith becomes known, we can expect opposition and persecution. Nevertheless, in our presentations and relationships we should always try to build bridges so that our beautiful Teachings can be understood and accepted, and the power which they have to establish unity amongst men will be exemplified.

(18 December 1985 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Tuvalu)

Revised July 1990 <p187>

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEEPENING OUR KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE FAITH

359. Recite ye the verses of God every morning and evening. Whoso reciteth them not hath truly failed to fulfil his pledge to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso in this day turneth away therefrom hath indeed turned away from God since time immemorial. Fear ye God, O concourse of My servants!

("Kitab-i-Aqdas" - provisional translation from the Arabic)

360. 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 Dayspring of His bountiful care and loving-kindness.

("A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah" (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1973), p. 12)

361. Whoso hath inhaled the sweet fragrance of the All- Merciful, and recognized the Source of this utterance, will welcome with his own eyes the shafts of the enemy, that he may establish the truth of the laws of God amongst men. Well is it with him that hath turned thereunto, and apprehended the meaning of His decisive decree.

("A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah", p. 12-13)

362. Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths. Take heed that ye do not vacillate in your determination to embrace the truth of this Cause -- a Cause through which the potentialities of the might of God have been revealed, and His sovereignty established. With faces beaming with joy, hasten ye unto Him. This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, <p188> attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it -- verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures.

("A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah, p. 27-28)

363. Peruse ye every day the verses revealed by God. Blessed is the man who reciteth them and reflecteth upon them. He truly is of them with whom it shall be well.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

364. Gather ye together with the utmost joy and fellowship and recite the verses revealed by the merciful Lord. By so doing the doors to true knowledge will be opened to your inner beings, and ye will then feel your souls endowed with steadfastness and your hearts filled with radiant joy.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Arabic)

365. Peruse My verses with joy and radiance. Verily they will attract you unto God and will enable you to detach yourselves from aught else save Him. Thus have ye been admonished in God's Holy Writ and in this resplendent Tablet.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Arabic)

366. 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....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983), p. 10)

367. Know thou that, according to what thy Lord, the Lord of all men, hath decreed in His Book, the favors vouchsafed by Him unto mankind have been, and will ever remain, limitless in their range. First and foremost among these favors, which the Almighty hath confessed upon man, is the gift of understanding. His purpose in conferring such a gift is none other except to enable His creature to know and recognize the one true God -- exalted be His glory. This gift giveth man the power to <p189> discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", p. 194)

368. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", p. 250)

369. 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....

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....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", p. 262)

370. 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.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", p. 295) <p190>

371. O My servant! 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....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah" p. 326)

372. 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?...

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah" pp. 327-28)

373. Were any man to ponder in his heart that which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed and to taste of its sweetness, he would, of a certainty, find himself emptied and delivered from his own desires, and utterly subservient to the Will of the Almighty. Happy is the man that hath attained so high a

station, and hath not deprived himself of so bountiful a grace.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah" p. 343)

374. 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 <p191> 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....

("Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 12)

375. Know thou that he is truly learned who hath acknowledged My Revelation, and drunk from the Ocean of My knowledge, and soared in the atmosphere of My love, and cast away all else besides Me, and taken firm hold on that which hath been sent down from the Kingdom of My wondrous utterance. He, verily, is even as an eye unto mankind, and as the spirit of life unto the body of all creation. Glorified be the All-Merciful Who hath enlightened him, and caused him to arise and serve His great and mighty Cause. Verily, such a man is blessed by the Concourse on high, and by them who dwell within the Tabernacle of Grandeur, who have quaffed My sealed Wine in My Name, the Omnipotent, the All Powerful....

("Epistle to the Son of the Wolf ' p. 83)

376. Incline your ears to the words of this unlettered One, wherewith He summoneth you unto God, the Ever-Abiding. Better is this for you than all the treasures of the earth, could ye but comprehend it....

("Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", p. 129)

377. With fixed and steady gaze, born of the unerring eye of God, scan for a while the horizon of divine knowledge, and contemplate those words of perfection which the Eternal hath revealed, that haply the mysteries of divine wisdom, hidden ere now beneath the veil of glory and treasured within the tabernacle of His grace, may be made manifest unto you....

("Kitab-i-Iqan", 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983) pp. 16-17)

378. 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 Daysprings of Holiness. Thus will these mysteries be unravelled, not by the aid of acquired learning, but solely <p192> 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."[1]
[1 Qur'an 16:43]

("Kitab-i-Iqan", p. 191-92)

379. 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....

("Kitab-i-Iqan", p. 211)

380. O brother, we should open our eyes, meditate upon His Word, and seek the sheltering shadow of the Manifestations of God, that perchance we may be warned by the unmistakable counsels of the Book, and give heed to the admonitions recorded in the holy Tablets; that we may not cavil at the Revealer of the verses, that we may resign ourselves wholly to His Cause, and embrace wholeheartedly His law, that haply we may enter the court of His mercy, and dwell upon the shore of His grace. He, verily, is merciful, and forgiving towards His servants.

("Kitab i-Iqan", p. 217)

381. The wine of renunciation must needs be quaffed, the lofty heights of detachment must needs be attained, and the meditation referred to in the words "One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship" must needs be observed, so that the secret of the wretched behaviour of the people might be discovered, those people who, despite the love and yearning for truth which they profess, curse the followers of Truth when once He hath been made manifest. To this truth the above-mentioned tradition beareth witness....

("The Kitab-i-Iqan", p. 238)

382. 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.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", 1st pocket-sized ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 143) <p193>

383. 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.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", p. 200)

384. 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....

("Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 83)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA:

385. And from amongst all creatures He hath singled out man, to grant him His most wondrous gift, and hath made him to attain the bounties of the Company on High. That most precious of gifts is attainment unto His unfailing guidance, that the inner reality of humankind should become as a niche to hold this lamp; and when the scattering splendours of this light do beat against the bright glass of the heart, the heart's purity maketh the beams to blaze out even stronger than before, and to shine in glory on the minds and souls of men. The attainment of the most great guidance is dependent upon knowledge and wisdom, and on being informed as to the mysteries of the Holy Words. Wherefore must the loved ones of God, be they young or old, be they men or women, each one according to his capabilities, strive to acquire the various branches of knowledge, and to increase his <p194> understanding of the mysteries of the Holy Books, and his skill in marshalling the divine proofs and evidences.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

386. When your hearts are wholly attracted to the one true God you will acquire divine knowledge, will become attentive to the proofs and testimonies and will commit to memory the glad-tidings concerning the Manifestation of the Beauty of the All-Merciful, as mentioned in the heavenly Scriptures. Then ye shall behold how wondrous are His confirmations and how gracious is His assistance.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

387. It is imperative to acquire the knowledge of divine proofs and evidences, and to acquaint oneself with convincing testimonies which demonstrate the revelation of God's resplendent Light. The study group thou didst organize hath imparted much joy and happiness to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Thou must exert much effort and show forth perseverance and constancy that, God willing, through the reviving breaths of His mercy, souls may be so educated as to become like radiant candles shining in the assemblage of divine knowledge and understanding. This matter is highly important. It is binding on every one and must be regarded as an obligation....

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

388. In truth thou art now rendering a great service to the basic foundations of the Cause of God, inasmuch as the cornerstone of its structure is the promotion of His Faith, the awakening of the people, the diffusion of the divine teachings and the education of mankind; and all this dependeth on instructing the friends in the teaching work. I beseech God that within a short

time thou mayest be able to acquaint the children of the Abha Paradise with the divine mysteries and truths and to rend asunder the veils of idle imaginings, that each one of them may become a fluent speaker and be able to guide many others to the Cause of God. Then will the outpourings of the heavenly bounties become manifest and the invisible hosts of the Kingdom, armed with conclusive proofs and evidences, will conquer the realms of the inner realities and domains of <p195> the hearts of men, even as a single seed developing into seven ears of grain.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

389. In this day there is nothing more important than the instruction and study of clear proofs and convincing, heavenly arguments, for therein lie the source of life and the path of salvation....

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

390. The method of instruction which ye have established, beginning with proofs of the existence of God and the oneness of God, the mission of the Prophets and Messengers and Their teachings, and the wonders of the universe, is highly suitable. Keep on with this. It is certain that the confirmations of God will attend you. It is also highly praiseworthy to memorize the Tablets, divine verses and sacred traditions. Ye will surely exert every effort in teaching, and in furthering understanding.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

391. Whatever meeting is held to celebrate the memory of the Abha Beauty and to listen to the recital of the divine utterances is indeed a rose-garden of the Kingdom; that gathering is strengthened by the reviving breaths of holiness that waft from the unseen world, inasmuch as the outpourings of divine grace are the light of that gathering and in it the effulgent splendours of His mercy are made manifest. I beseech God that those radiant faces may be enabled to shine resplendent in the assemblage of the realm of holiness and that those enraptured beings may be gathered together in the heaven of His mercifulness, that they may chant the verses of divine unity amidst the celestial concourse, sing the melody of His praise and glorification in the Abha Kingdom, raise the voice of jubilation in the realm on high and the cry of exultation and ecstasy in the Abha Paradise.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

392. There is no doubt that thou art assiduously engaged in serving the Cause, giving eloquent talks at the meetings of the friends, and elucidating divine mysteries. These exertions will cause the outpourings <p196> of His invisible assistance to descend, and, as a magnet, will attract divine bounties. I earnestly hope that through the vitalizing breath of the Holy Spirit thou mayest be strengthened day by day, and be empowered to deliver more eloquent addresses.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

393. ...the Bab hath said: "Should a tiny ant desire in this day to be possessed of such power as to be able to unravel the abstrusest and most bewildering passages of the Qur'an, its wish will no doubt be fulfilled, inasmuch as the mystery of eternal might vibrates within the innermost being of all created things."[1] If so helpless a creature can be endowed with so subtle a capacity, how much more efficacious must be the power released through the liberal effusions of the grace of Baha'u'llah!... Wherefore, O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and to grasp the secrets of the Day of God. Inform yourselves of the evidences that the Most Great Name hath dawned....
[1 Cf. "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters" [rev. ed.] (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 126-27.]

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

394. If it were possible that in every city a few of the awakened ones, when opportunity offered, could hold a meeting, and therein habitually present the proofs and arguments of God, this would do much to expand the consciousness of men; provided, however, that the discourse be kept to this one theme.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

395. It behoveth us one and all to recite day and night both the Persian and Arabic Hidden Words, to pray fervently and supplicate tearfully that we may be enabled to conduct ourselves in accordance with these divine counsels. These holy Words have not been revealed to be heard but to be practiced.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian) <p197>

396. We should memorize the Hidden Words, follow the exhortations of the Incomparable Lord, and conduct ourselves in a manner which befitteth our servitude at the threshold of the one true God.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

397. Be thou assured in thyself that if thou dost conduct thyself in accordance with the Hidden Words revealed in Persian and in Arabic, thou shalt become a torch of the fire of the love of God, an embodiment of humility, of lowliness, of evanescence and of selflessness.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

398. The Hidden Words is a treasury of divine mysteries. When thou ponderest its contents, the doors of the mysteries will open.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

399. Praise thou God that at last, through the divine teachings, thou hast obtained both sight and insight to the highest degree, and hast become firmly rooted in certitude and faith. It is my hope that others as well will achieve illumined eyes and hearing ears, and attain to everlasting life...

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.] (Haifa: Baha'i World

Centre, 1982), p. 30)

400. Read ye The Hidden Words, ponder the inner meanings thereof, act in accord therewith. Read, with close attention, the Tablets of Tarazat (Ornaments), Kalimat (Words of Paradise), Tajalliyat (Effulgences), Ishraqat (Splendours), and Bisharat (Glad Tidings), and rise up as ye are bidden in the heavenly teachings. Thus may each one of you be even as a candle casting its light, the centre of attraction wherever people come together; and from you, as from a bed of flowers, may sweet scents be shed.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 35-36)

401. Direct thine attention to the holy Tablets; read thou the Ishraqat, Tajalliyat, the Words of Paradise, the Glad Tidings, the Tarazat, the Most Holy Book. Then wilt thou see that today these heavenly Teachings are the remedy for a sick and suffering world, and a healing balm for the sores on the body of mankind. They are the spirit of life, the ark of salvation, <p198> the magnet to draw down eternal glory, the dynamic power to motivate the inner self of man.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 61)

402. We hear that the Tablets of Ishraqat (Splendours), Tarazat (Ornaments), Bisharat (Glad Tidings), Tajalliyat (Effulgences), and Kalimat (Words of Paradise) have been translated and published in those regions. In these Tablets will ye have a model of how to be and how to live.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 79)

403. Whatsoever gathering is arranged with the utmost love, and where those who attend are turning their faces toward the Kingdom of God, and where the discourse is of the Teachings of God, and the effect of which is to cause those present to advance -- that gathering is the Lord's, and that festive table hath come down from heaven.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 89)

404. Whensoever a company of people shall gather in a meeting place, shall engage in glorifying God, and shall speak with one another of the mysteries of God, beyond any doubt the breathings of the Holy Spirit will blow gently over them, and each shall receive a share thereof.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 94)

405. O thou true friend! Read, in the school of God, the lessons of the spirit, and learn from love's Teacher the innermost truths. Seek out the secrets of Heaven, and tell of the overflowing grace and favour of God.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 110)

406. There are certain pillars which have been established as the unshakable supports of the Faith of God. The mightiest of these is learning and the use of the mind, the expansion of consciousness, and insight into the realities of the

universe and the hidden mysteries of Almighty God.

(Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 126) <p199>

407. Thou didst ask as to acquiring knowledge: read thou the Books and Tablets of God, and the articles written to demonstrate the truth of this Faith. Included among them are the Iqan, which hath been translated into English, the works of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, and those of some others among the believers. In the days to come a great number of holy Tablets and other sacred writings will be translated, and thou shouldst read these as well. Likewise, ask thou of God that the magnet of His love should draw unto thee the knowledge of Him. Once a soul becometh holy in all things, purified, sanctified, the gates of the knowledge of God will open wide before his eyes.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha' p. 190-191)

408. It is incumbent upon you to ponder in your hearts and meditate upon His words, and humbly to call upon Him, and to put away self in His heavenly Cause. These are the things that will make of you signs of guidance unto all mankind, and brilliant stars shining down from the all-highest horizon, and towering trees in the Abha Paradise.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha' p. 241)

409. O maid-servant of God! Chant the Words of God and, pondering over their meaning, transform them into actions! I ask God to cause thee to attain a high station in the Kingdom of Life forever and ever.

('Abdu'l-Baha, "Tablets of Abdul Baha Abbas" vol I (Chicago: Bahai Publishing Committee, 1930), p. 85)

410. Hold meetings and read and chant the heavenly teachings, so that city may be illumined with the light of reality and that country become a veritable paradise by the strength of the Holy Spirit, for this cycle is the cycle of the Glorious Lord and the melody of oneness and solidarity of the world of mankind must reach the ears of the East and West.

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas' vol. 3 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1930), p. 631) <p200>

EXTRACTS FROM THE UTTERANCES OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA:

411. Both before and after putting off this material form, there is progress in perfection but not in state. So beings are consummated in perfect man. There is no other being higher than a perfect man. But man when he has reached this state can still make progress in perfections but not in state because there is no state higher than that of a perfect man to which he can transfer himself. He only progresses in the state of humanity, for the human perfections are infinite. Thus, however learned a man may be, we can imagine one more learned.

("Some Answered Questions", 1st pocket-sized ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 237)

412. The principles of the Teachings of Baha'u'llah 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.

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912", 11th ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 22)

413. The Spirit breathing through the Holy Scriptures is food for all who hunger. God Who has given the revelation to His Prophets will surely give of His abundance daily bread to all those who ask Him faithfully.

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912", p. 57)

414. God sent His Prophets into the world to teach and enlighten man, to explain to him the mystery of the Power of the Holy Spirit, to enable him to reflect the light, and so in his turn, to be the source of guidance to others. The Heavenly Books, the Bible, the Qur'an, and the other Holy Writings have been given by God as guides into the paths of Divine virtue, love, justice and peace. Therefore I say unto you that ye should strive to follow the counsels of these Blessed Books, and so order your lives that ye may, following the examples set before you, become yourselves the saints of the Most High!

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912", p. 61-62) <p201>

415. Seek with all your hearts this Heavenly Light, so that you may be enabled to understand the realities, that you may know the secret things of God, that the hidden ways may be made plain before your eyes.

This light may be likened unto a mirror, and as a mirror reflects all that is before it, so this Light shows to the eyes of our spirits all that exists in God's Kingdom and causes the realities of things to be made visible. By the help of this effulgent Light all the spiritual interpretation of the Holy Writings has been made plain, the hidden things of God's Universe have become manifest, and we have been enabled to comprehend the Divine purposes for man. I pray that God in His mercy may illumine your hearts and souls with His glorious Light, then shall each one of you shine as a radiant star in the dark places of the world.

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912" p. 69-70)

416. I counsel you that you study earnestly the teachings of Baha'u'llah, so that, God helping you, you may in deed and truth become Baha'is.

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912" p. 96)

417. Baha'u'llah says there is a sign (from God) in every phenomenon: the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for a man to do two things at one time -- he cannot both speak and meditate.

...

You cannot apply the name "man" to any being void of this faculty of meditation; without it he would be a mere animal, lower than the beasts. Through the faculty of meditation man attains to eternal life; through it he receives the breath of the Holy Spirit -- the bestowal of the Spirit is given in reflection and meditation.

...

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves....

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912" p. 175-6)
<p202>

418. Praise be to God! you have heard the call of the Kingdom. Your eyes are opened; you have turned to God. Your purpose is the good-pleasure of God, the understanding of the mysteries of the heart and investigation of the realities. Day and night you must strive that you may attain to the significances of the heavenly kingdom, perceive the signs of divinity, acquire certainty of knowledge and realize that this world has a creator, a vivifier, a provider, an architect, -- knowing this through proofs and evidences and not through susceptibilities, -- nay, rather, through decisive arguments and real vision; that is to say, visualizing it as clearly as the outer eye beholds the sun. In this way may you behold the presence of God and attain to the knowledge of the holy, divine Manifestations.

("Foundations of World Unity", (Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1972), p. 65)

419. I have been informed that the purpose of your class meeting is to study the significances and mysteries of the Holy Scriptures and understand the meaning of the divine Testaments. It is a cause of great happiness to me that you are turning unto the Kingdom of God, that you desire to approach the presence of God and to become informed of the realities and precepts of God. It is my hope that you may put forth your most earnest endeavor to accomplish this end, 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....

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 458-9)

420. May your souls be illumined by the light of the Words of God, and may you become repositories of the mysteries of God, for no comfort is greater and no happiness is sweeter than spiritual comprehension of the divine teachings. If a man understands the real meaning of a poet's verses such as those of

Shakespeare, he is pleased and rejoiced. How much greater his joy and pleasure when he perceives the reality of the Holy Scriptures and becomes informed of the mysteries of the Kingdom! <p202>

I pray that the divine blessings may descend upon you day by day, that your hearts may be opened to perceive the inner significances of the Word of God....

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 460)

421. ...Divine things are too deep to be expressed by common words. The heavenly teachings are expressed in parable in order to be understood and preserved for ages to come. When the spiritually minded dive deeply into the ocean of their meaning they bring to the surface the pearls of their inner significance. There is no greater pleasure than to study God's Word with a spiritual mind.

("'Abdu'l-Baha in London: Addresses, and Notes of Conversations", Commemorative ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 80)

422. It is very good to memorize the logical points and the proofs of the Holy Books. Those proofs and evidences which establish the fact that Baha'u'llah is the fulfillment of the Promises of the Holy Books. These proofs ought to be collected and memorized. As soon as someone will ask you -- What are your proofs? -- you may cry out at the top of your voice and say: 'Here they are!'

("Star of the West" Vol 3, No. I 1, p. 4)

423. ... (Live thou in accord with the teachings of Baha'u'llah. Do not only read them. There is a vast difference between the soul who merely reads the words of Baha'u'llah and the one who tries to live them. Read thou "The Hidden Words". Ponder over their meanings and embody the behests into thy life....

("Star of the West" Vol. 7, No. 18, p. 178)

424. The cause of God is like unto a college. The believers are like unto the students. The college is founded for the sake of the acquirements of science, arts and literature. If the sciences are not therein and the scholars are not educated the object of the college is not achieved. The students must show the results of their study in their deportment and deeds; otherwise they have wasted their lives. Now the friends must so live and conduct themselves as to bring greater glory and results to the religion of <p204> God. To them the cause of God must be a dynamic force transforming the lives of men and not a question of meetings, committees, futile discussions, unnecessary debates and political wire-pulling.

("Star of the West" Vol. 7, No. 18, p. 178)

425. The first thing to do is to acquire a thirst for Spirituality, then Live the Life! Live the Life! Live the Life! The way to acquire this thirst is to meditate upon the future life. Study the Holy Words, read your Bible, read the Holy Books, especially study the Holy Utterances of Baha'u'llah; Prayer and

Meditation, take much time for these two. Then will you know this Great Thirst, and then only can you begin to Live the Life!

("Star of the West" Vol. 19, No. 3, p. 69)

426. Knowledge is love. Study, listen to exhortations, think, try to understand the wisdom and greatness of God. The soil must be fertilized before the seed can be sown.

("Star of the West" Vol. 20, No. 10, p. 314)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY SHOGHI EFFENDI:

427. Praise be to God that the spirit of the Holy Writings and Tablets which have been revealed in this wondrous Dispensation concerning matters of major or minor importance, whether essential or otherwise, related to the sciences and the arts, to natural philosophy, literature, politics or economics, have so permeated the world that since the inception of the world in the course of past Dispensations and bygone ages nothing like it has ever been seen or heard. Indeed if an avowed follower of Baha'u'llah were to immerse himself in, and fathom the depths of, the ocean of these heavenly teachings, and with utmost care and attention deduce from each of them the subtle mysteries and consummate wisdom that lie enshrined therein, such a person's life, materially, intellectually and spiritually, will be safe from toil and trouble, and unaffected by setbacks and perils, or any sadness or despondency.

(13 January 1923 to the Baha'is of Adhirbayjan) <p205>

428. Now surely, if ever, is the time for us, the chosen ones of Baha'u'llah and the bearers of His Message to the world, to endeavour, by day and by night, to deepen, first and foremost, the Spirit of His Cause in our own individual lives, and then labour, and labour incessantly to exemplify in all our dealings with our fellow-men that noble Spirit of which His beloved Son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, has been all the days of His life a true and unique exponent....

Let us, with a pure heart, with humility and earnestness, turn afresh to His counsels and exhortations, and seek from that Source of Celestial Potency all the guidance, the Spirit, the power which we shall need for the fulfilment of our mission in this life.

(12 March 1923 to the Baha'is of America, Australasia, France, Germany, British Isles, Italy, Japan and Switzerland, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" [rev. ed.], (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 35)

429. What you have undertaken to achieve, under the guidance and instruction, of that valiant and indefatigable servant of the Abha

Threshold, my well-beloved brother Dr. Bagdadi, is highly praiseworthy and of supreme importance. Never flinch in your great enterprise. Deepen your knowledge of the Cause. Strive to extend the sphere of your activities and seek to understand and promote the harmony that must exist between true science and

Divine Revelation. I will never fail to pray for you. I have great hopes in the ultimate triumph of the task before you.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 23 January 1924 written on his behalf to the Baha'i Youth of Chicago, 11. U.S.A.)

430. If you read the utterances of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l- Baha with selflessness and care and concentrate upon them, you will discover truths unknown to you before and will obtain an insight into the problems that have baffled the great thinkers of the world. God in His essence can not be comprehended nor assume bodily form. We can only approach Him through the knowledge of His Manifestations. I pray that you may drink deep at the fountain-head of Their Sacred Teachings. I assure you of my prayers for your recovery and success.

(In the hand writing of Shoghi Effendi appended to a letter dated 30 January 1925 written on his behalf to an individual believer) <p206>

431. The Baha'i youth must be taught how to teach the Cause of God. Their knowledge of the fundamentals of the Faith must be deepened and the standard of their education in science and literature enhanced. They must become thoroughly familiar with the language used and the example set by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His public addresses throughout the West. They must also be acquainted with those essential prerequisites of teaching as recorded in the Holy Books and Tablets.

(9 June 1925 to the Local Spiritual Assemblies of the East - translated from the Persian)

432. I strongly urge you to devote, while you are pursuing your studies, as much time as you possibly can to a thorough study of the history and Teachings of our Beloved Cause. This is the prerequisite of a future successful career of service to the Baha'i Faith in which I hope and pray you will distinguish yourself in the days to come.

(In the hand writing of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 18 May 1926 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

433. I will pray for you that you may be inspired to do whatever is His will and pleasure, that your vision may be clarified, your heart emptied of every vain desire, and your mind purified from whatsoever hinders you from grasping the truths that underlie the Faith. Study the Teachings profoundly that the light of Divine Guidance may illumine your path and remove every obstacle from your way.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 26 April 1927 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

434. The youthful and eager workers for the Cause in Montreal occupy a warm place in my heart. I will remember their hopes, their plans, their activities in my hours of prayer at the Holy Shrine. I urge them to study profoundly the revealed utterances of Baha'u'llah and the discourses of 'Abdu'l-Baha and not to rely unduly on the representation and interpretation of the Teachings given

by Baha'i speakers and teachers. May the Almighty sustain you and guide you in your work.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 20 March 1929 written on his behalf to an individual believer) <p207>

435. Ours is the duty to ponder these things in our heart, to strive to widen our vision, and to deepen our comprehension of this Cause, and to arise, resolutely and unreservedly, to play our part, however small, in this greatest drama of the world's spiritual history.

(21 March 1930 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of the West, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 26)

436. I would strongly urge you to utilize, to the utmost possible extent, the wealth of authentic material gathered in Nabil's stirring Narrative and to encourage the youth to master and digest the facts recorded therein as a basis for their future work in the teaching field, and as a sustenance to their spiritual life and activities in the service of the Cause....

(In the hand writing of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 9 November 1932 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

437. I certainly advise you to concentrate next year on "The Dawn-Breakers" as well as on the needs, the principles and the purpose of Baha'i Administration. The Cause in your land is still in its formative period. It needs men and women of vision, of capacity and understanding. May your newly- established school render inestimable services in this as well as in other fields of activity. I will pray for your high endeavours from the depths of my heart. Rest assured and persevere.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 25 September 1933 written on his behalf to two believers)

438. To strive to obtain a more adequate understanding of the significance of Baha'u'llah's stupendous Revelation must, it is my unalterable conviction, remain the first obligation and the object of the constant endeavor of each one of its loyal adherents. An exact and thorough comprehension of so vast a system, so sublime a revelation, so sacred a trust, is for obvious reasons beyond the reach and ken of our finite minds. We can, however, and it is our bounden duty to seek to derive fresh inspiration and added sustenance as we labor for the propagation of His Faith through a clearer apprehension of the truths it enshrines and the principles on which it is based.

(The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", p. 100) <p208>

439. I grieve to learn of the situation which the disharmony of the believers has created. Emphasis should be laid by all members, and with increasing force and determination, upon the essentials of the administrative order as explained in the book entitled "Baha'i Administration". Whatever is not provided, should be referred to your National Assembly. The decision of the majority must, under

all circumstances, be upheld and enforced. Persevere and never lose heart and courage.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 9 May 1934 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

440. I would urge you to concentrate from now on upon the essentials of Baha'i belief and the distinguishing features of the Administrative Order and endeavour to teach these truths to whomsoever may seem to you to be receptive. It would constitute a magnificent act of service in your long record of devoted endeavours on behalf of this glorious Cause.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 31 July 1934 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

441. Those who participate in such a campaign, whether in an organizing capacity, or as workers to whose care the execution of the task itself has been committed, must, as an essential preliminary to the discharge of their duties, thoroughly familiarize themselves with the various aspects of the history and teachings of their Faith. In their efforts to achieve this purpose they must study for themselves, conscientiously and painstakingly, the literature of their Faith, delve into its teachings, assimilate its laws and principles, ponder its admonitions, tenets and purposes, commit to memory certain of its exhortations and prayers, master the essentials of its administration, and keep abreast of its current affairs and latest developments....

("The Advent of Divine Justice" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 49)

442.

As the processes impelling a rapidly evolving Order on the highroad of its destiny multiply and gather momentum, attention should be increasingly directed to the vital need of ensuring, by every means possible, the deepening of the faith, the understanding and the spiritual life of the individuals who, as the privileged members of this community, <p209> are called upon to participate in this glorious unfoldment and are lending their assistance to this historic evolution.

A profound study of the Faith which they have espoused, its history, its spiritual as well as administrative principles; a thorough understanding of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Baha; a deeper realization of the implication of the claims advanced by the Founders of the Faith; strict adherence to the laws and principles which They have established; a greater dedication to the fundamentals and verities enshrined in Their teachings -- these constitute, I feel convinced, the urgent need of the members of this rapidly expanding community.

For upon this spiritual foundation must depend the solidity of the institutions which they are now so painstakingly erecting.

Every outward thrust into new fields, every multiplication of Baha'i

institutions, must be paralleled by a deeper thrust of the roots which sustain the spiritual life of the community and ensure its sound development.

From this vital, this ever-present need attention must, at no time, be diverted; nor must it be, under any circumstances, neglected, or subordinated to the no less vital and urgent task of ensuring the outer expansion of Baha'i administrative institutions....

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 30 December 1948 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand)

443. ...the paramount duty of deepening the spiritual life of these newly fledged, these precious and highly esteemed co-workers, and of enlightening their minds regarding the essential verities enshrined in their Faith and its fundamental institutions, its history and genesis -- the twin Covenants of Baha'u'llah and of 'Abdu'l-Baha, the present Administrative Order, the Future World Order, the Laws of the Most Holy Book, the inseparable Institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice, the salient events of the Heroic and Formative Ages of the Faith, and its relationship with the Dispensations that have preceded it, its attitude towards the social and political organizations by which it is surrounded -- must continue to constitute the most vital aspect of the great spiritual Crusade launched by the champions of the Faith <p210> from the shores of their native land among the peoples of their sister Republics in the South.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

444. The deepening and enrichment of the spiritual life of the individual believer, his increasing comprehension of the essential verities underlying this Faith, his training in its administrative processes, his understanding of the fundamentals of the Covenants established by its Author and the authorized Interpreter of its teachings should be made the supreme objectives of the national representatives responsible for the edification, the progress and consolidation of these communities.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 1 March 1951 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand)

445. Nor must the elected representatives of this Community neglect their supreme responsibility to safeguard the spiritual life of its members, to continually enrich that life by every means in their power, to deepen their grasp of the distinguishing features and the fundamental verities of the Baha'i Faith, and to encourage and inspire them to reflect its spirit and precepts in their personal lives and conduct.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 14 June 1954 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of South America)

446. As the process of internal expansion and consolidation gains momentum, the elected national representatives of this Community must not fail to consecrate themselves to the no less fundamental task of enriching continually the spiritual life of its members, of deepening their understanding of the essential verities, tenets and principles underlying their Faith, of demanding a strict adherence to its laws and statutes, and of setting an example to their fellow- believers through a fuller reflection, in their personal lives and conduct, of the ennobling truths animating the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 24 June 1954 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central America) <p211>

447. Above all, the utmost endeavour should be exerted by your Assembly to familiarize the newly enrolled believers with the fundamental and spiritual verities of the Faith, and with the origins, the aims and purposes, as well as the processes of a divinely appointed Administrative Order, to acquaint them more fully with the history of the Faith, to instil in them a deeper understanding of the Covenants of both Baha'u'llah and of 'Abdu'l-Baha, to enrich their spiritual life, to rouse them to a greater effort and a closer participation in both the teaching of the Faith and the administration of its activities, and to inspire them to make the necessary sacrifices for the furtherance of its vital interests. For as the body of the avowed supporters of the Faith is enlarged, and the basis of the structure of its Administrative Order is broadened, and the fame of the rising community spreads far and wide, a parallel progress must be achieved, if the fruits already garnered are to endure, in the spiritual quickening of its members and the deepening of their inner life.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 26 June 1956 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada)

448. ...a firmer grasp of the essential verities of the Faith; a more profound study of its history and a deeper understanding of the genesis, the significance, the workings, and the present status and achievements of its embryonic World Order and of the Covenant to which it owes its birth and vitality -- these remain the rock-bottom requirements which alone can guarantee the opening, and hasten the advent, of that blissful era which every British Baha'i heart so eagerly anticipates, and the glories of which can, at present, be but dimly discerned.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi appended to a letter dated 30 August 1957 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles) <p212>

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

(The following are from letters to individual believers unless otherwise stated)

449. The Sacred Books are full of allusions to this new dispensation. In the

"Book of Iqan", Baha'u'llah gives the keynote and explains some of the outstanding passages hoping that the friends will continue to study the Sacred Books by themselves, and unfold the mysteries found therein. The people, failing to comprehend the meaning of the symbols and the truth of the Sacred Verses, thought them to be myths and unrealizable dreams. It is the duty of the friends who have been endowed by Baha'u'llah with the power of discernment to study these Sacred Books, ponder upon their passages and teach the disheartened people of the earth the treasures of knowledge they enclose.

(11 March 1923)

450. If the younger Baha'i generation, in whom Shoghi Effendi has great hopes, take the pain of studying the Cause deeply and thoroughly, read its history, find its underlying principles and become both well informed and energetic, they surely can achieve a great deal. It is upon their shoulders that the Master has laid the tremendous work of teaching. They are the ones to raise the call of the Kingdom and arouse the people from slumber. If they fail the Cause is doomed to stagnation....

(26 April 1923 to an individual believer)

451. To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Baha'u'llah 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 under 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 and the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous.

(25 August 1926) <p213>

452. Shoghi Effendi is especially delighted to know that the younger group are studying the Will and Testament as this document is indispensable for a complete understanding of the spirit, of the mission and of the future state of the Baha'i Cause. It would be well to have a competent friend explain to them some of the passages.

(28 February 1928)

453. Shoghi Effendi is sure that the more you study the Cause and its teachings the more you will realize what a mission it has to give to this world at this time. Dr. Jowett of Balliol rightly said that this is the greatest light that has appeared in the world since Christianity, that the present generation is too near to it to appreciate its import, that only in the future its significance will become manifest. I do not believe that even the Baha'is can conceive the wonderful and fundamental change the tenets of this Movement and the spirit of the teachings and the life of its Founders, are going to make in the heart and mind of this generation and the future ones....

(17 December 1928)

454. He sincerely hopes that your group will daily increase in number and gradually begin to radiate its light of guidance to the neighbouring regions. Before that stage is reached, however, you should exert all your efforts upon deepening your knowledge of the teachings and literature of the Cause. The Writings of Baha'u'llah and the Master are like vast seas, the deeper you go into them, the more priceless treasures you will find. And it is only after acquiring those treasures that we can hope to share them with others.

(4 March 1931 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Columbus, Oh., U. S.A.)

455. ...Shoghi Effendi hopes that you will exert all your efforts first in deepening your own knowledge of the teachings and then strive to attract other people. You should form study classes and read the important books that have been published, especially the "Iqan", which contains the basic tenets of the Faith. The one who ponders over that book and grasps its full significance will obtain a clear insight into the old scriptures and appreciate the true Mission of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

(27 March 1931 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of St. Louis, Mo., U.S.A) <p214>

456. Being a Baha'i you are certainly aware of the fact that Baha'u'llah considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful, should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects. This should be the programme of the Baha'i youth all over the world.

(9 July 1931)

457. Concerning the course of study you may follow: Shoghi Effendi prefers you to find what subject you like most and for which you are best fitted especially after consulting with your Mother. The Cause is such that we can serve it no matter what our profession may be. The only necessity is that we be spiritually minded and not be guided by purely material considerations. We should also not let our studies detain us from deepening our knowledge of the literature of the Cause.

(9 November 1931)

458. Shoghi Effendi feels that the real purpose of these Summer Schools is to deepen the knowledge of the friends. Lectures are very essential for they give a wonderful picture of the subject-matter. But it is not sufficient to have a picture; the friends should deepen their knowledge and this can be achieved if together with the lectures there are study classes and seminar work carried on by the same lecturer.

The world is undoubtedly facing a great crisis and the social, economic and political conditions are becoming daily more complex. Should the friends desire to take the lead in reforming the world, they should start by educating themselves and understand what the troubles and problems really are which

baffle the mind of man. It is in these Summer Schools that this training should be provided for the friends.

(27 January 1932)

459. Besides this the friends should arrange proper study classes and deepen their knowledge of the teachings. It is only through such thorough understanding of the literature of the Cause that you can appreciate the real message that Baha'u'llah has brought to the world. <p215>

Only then would you see how incomplete and futile is the work of the other societies and movements that at present exist in the world....

(1 February 1932)

460. Shoghi Effendi hopes that you will exert all your effort to deepen your knowledge of the literature of the Movement, until you become fully acquainted with its spirit and tenets. Unless you do obtain such a firm hold you will never be able to teach others and render real service to the promulgation of the Faith. Of special importance is the Book of the Iqan which explains the attitude of the Cause towards the prophets of God and their mission in the history of society. Besides this there is "Some Answered Questions" of the Master and "The Dawn-Breakers" of Nabil. Every Baha'i should master these books and be able to explain their contents to others. Besides their importance, they are interesting and most absorbing.

(9 February 1932)

461. Surely the ideal way of teaching is to prove our points by constant reference to the actual words of Baha'u'llah and the Master. This will save the Cause from being misinterpreted by individuals. It is what these divine Lights say that is truth and therefore they should be the authorities of our statements. This, however, does not mean that our freedom of expression is limited. We can always find new ways of approach to that truth or explain how they influence our life and condition. The more deep our studies the more we can understand the significance of the teachings. In the Cause we cannot divorce the letter from the spirit of the words. As Baha'u'llah says we should take the outward significance and superimpose upon it the inner. Either without the other is wrong and defective.

(16 February 1932)

462. Another essential thing is that those who do embrace the Faith should be constantly urged to study the literature of the Cause. It is not sufficient that our numbers should increase, we want people whose faith stands on a rock and no trial can move. We want people who will in turn arise and carry the Message to other people and guide other souls.

(13 April 1932 to a Local Spiritual Assembly and an individual believer) <p216>

463. Shoghi Effendi undertook the translation of "The Dawn- Breakers" only after being convinced that its publication will arouse the friends to greater

self-sacrifice and a more determined way of teaching. Otherwise he would not have devoted so much time to it. Reading about the life and activities of those heroic souls is bound to influence our mode of living and the importance we attach to our services in the Cause. Shoghi Effendi therefore hopes that the friends will read, nay rather study that book, and encourage their young people to do that as well.

...

It is also very important to hold study classes and go deep in the teachings. A great harm is done by starting to teach without being firmly grounded in the literature. "Little knowledge is dangerous" fully applies to the teaching work. The friends should read the writings and be able to quote from the Tablets when discussing subjects pertaining to the Faith.

(9 May 1932)

464. He fully approves the idea of holding study classes, for the deeper the friends go in their understanding of their teachings the more firm and steadfast they will become and the more unwavering in their support of the institutions of the Faith. Books such as the "Iqan", "Some Answered Questions" and "The Dawn-Breakers" should be mastered by every Baha'i. They should read these books over and over again. The first two books will reveal to them the significance of this divine revelation as well as the unity of all the Prophets of old. The last book will show you how the Faith was ushered into the world and how its early adherents heroically faced martyrdom and suffering in their desire to establish the Cause throughout the world. Knowing the life of those heroes will create in us the urge to follow their footsteps and achieve the same.

(9 June 1932)

465. He sincerely hopes that every one of those individuals who expressed his desire to join the Movement will gradually become so confirmed that no amount of trials and tribulations will deter him from sharing in the work of spreading the Faith throughout the world. Before undertaking such a task, however, it is necessary that they should deepen their knowledge of the teachings. They should learn to <p217> study the words for themselves and both grasp their significance and also become imbued with their spirit. The hope of Shoghi Effendi is not only to increase the number of the friends but also to have truer and more understanding Baha'is. The task of the teachers is to produce such efficient servants for our beloved Faith.

(18 October 1932)

466. The Master used to attach much importance to the learning by heart of Tablets of Baha'u'llah and the Bab. During His days it was a usual work of the children of the household to learn Tablets by heart; now, however, those children are grown up and do not have time for such a thing. But the practice is most useful to implant the ideas and spirit those words contain into the mind of the children.

(19 October 1932 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of West England and the Teaching Committee of New Jersey, U.S.A.)

467. Books such as the "Iqan", "Some Answered Questions", the "Tablets of Baha'u'llah", Nabil's Narrative and Dr. Esslemont's book should be read and read over again by every soul who desires to serve the Movement or considers himself an active member of the group.

(9 November 1932)

468. Definite courses should be given along the different phases of the Baha'i Faith and in a manner that will stimulate the students to proceed in their studies privately once they return home, for the period of a few days is not sufficient to learn everything. They have to be taught the habit of studying the Cause constantly, for the more we read the Words the more will the truth they contain be revealed to us.

(24 November 1932)

469. It is, however, very important that these newcomers should study the teachings and become thoroughly familiar with them, otherwise their faith will be established upon shifting sand and could be easily demolished. The words of Baha'u'llah and the Master, however, have a creative power and are sure to awaken in the reader the undying fire of the love of God.

(17 February 1933) <p218>

470. He does not ask us to follow Him blindly; as He says in one of His Tablets, God had endowed man with a mind to operate as a torchlight and guide him to truth. Read His words, consider His teachings, and measure their value in the light of contemporary problems and the truth will surely be revealed to you....

(26 February 1933 to an individual believer, published in "Baha'i News" 80 (January 1934), p. 5)

471. Shoghi Effendi found great pleasure and spiritual upliftment while working on the translation of Nabil's Narrative. The life of those who figure in it is so stirring that everyone who reads those accounts is bound to be affected and impelled to follow their footsteps of sacrifice in the path of the Faith. The Guardian believes, therefore, that it should be studied by the friends, especially the youth who need some inspiration to carry them through these troubled days.

(11 March 1933)

472. The second point which the Guardian wishes you to stress and to keep always in mind is the necessity for every loyal and active member of your committee to fully concentrate on the thorough study and understanding of the spiritual and administrative principles of the Faith, as a necessary step for active and fruitful teaching. You should first equip yourselves with the necessary amount of knowledge about the Cause and then, and only then, try to

teach....

(August 1933 to the Baha'i Youth Committee of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i World", Vol. 5 (1932-1934) (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee 1936), p. 372)

473. Your thorough and continued study of the Teachings, as expressed by your readiness to be in close and constant touch with all Baha'i publications, is, indeed, remarkable, for besides deepening your knowledge of the basic tenets of the Faith and of keeping you in close contact with its administrative developments it gives you an opportunity to prepare yourself for the teaching of the Cause. To study and to teach, these are the twofold and sacred obligations of every responsible and active follower of the Faith.

(13 August 1933) <p219>

474. In these gloomy days, when the world is caught into the whirlpool of agnosticism and of materialism, the Guardian is eagerly looking to such devoted and ardent believers like you, to arise and proclaim the Holy Word of God which is humanity's unique and most effective ark of salvation. Nothing short of that can save our civilization from falling into chaos and anarchy. It is, therefore, the sacred responsibility of every loyal follower of the Faith to fully realize the tremendous task he is called upon to fulfil, and to seek all those measures which can enable him to contribute his share, however modest, to the progress of the Cause. And it is evident that such a goal cannot be attained unless we are adequately imbued with the spirit and informed of the basic tenets and teachings of the Faith. The Guardian would, therefore, strongly urge you to get increasingly familiar with the literature of the Cause, to study and investigate all its aspects, whether spiritual, social or administrative, so that you may, in a not distant future, be able to rank among the distinguished and outstanding teachers and exponents of the Movement.

(10 September 1933)

475. His brotherly advice to you, and to all loyal and ardent young believers like you, is that you should deepen your knowledge of the history and of the tenets of the Faith, not merely by means of careful and thorough study, but also through active, whole-hearted and continued participation in all the activities, whether administrative or otherwise, of your community. The Baha'i community life provides you with an indispensable laboratory, where you can translate into living and constructive action the principles which you imbibe from the Teachings. By becoming a real part of that living organism you can catch the real spirit which runs throughout the Baha'i Teachings. To study the principles, and to try to live according to them, are, therefore, the two essential mediums through which you can ensure the development and progress of your inner spiritual life and of your outer existence as well. May Baha'u'llah enable you to attain this high station, and may He keep the torch of faith forever burning in your heart!

(2 November 1933) <p220>

476. These sources of disagreement and of difference are all due to the lack of thorough understanding, on the part of many of the believers, of the basic laws and principles of Baha'i Administration. Despite our Guardian's repeated and emphatic instructions and recommendations that the friends should deepen their knowledge, through both study and practice, of all the administrative teachings of the Faith, yet, some have, for some reason or another, neglected to do so. The result has been that they are working in the dark, not knowing where to look for guidance in all such matters.

(11 November 1933)

477. The Guardian ... was gratified to learn of the progress of your academic studies, and of your future plans for the study and the teaching of the Cause. The spirit which is moving and sustaining you in the service of the Faith is, indeed, remarkable, and through it you will undoubtedly be moved to render great and imperishable services to the Cause of Baha'u'llah. The university training which you are receiving at present will be of immense help to you in your efforts to present the Message in intellectual circles. In these days when people are so sceptical about religion and look with so much contempt towards religious organizations and movements, there seems to be more need than ever for our young Baha'is to be well equipped intellectually, so that they may be in a position to present the Message in a befitting way, and in a manner that would convince every unbiased observer of the effectiveness and power of the Teachings. In view of that Shoghi Effendi would urge you to persevere in your studies, and trusts that as a result you will be greatly assisted in your teaching activities....

(5 May 1934)

478. The Guardian would strongly urge each and every member of the National Spiritual Assembly to carefully peruse, and to quietly ponder upon the outer meaning and upon the inner spirit as well, of all his communications on the subject of the origin, nature and present-day functioning of the administrative order of the Faith. A compilation of these letters has been lately published in the States under the title "Baha'i Administration", and a complete knowledge of that book seems to be <p221> quite essential to the right handling of the administrative problems facing your National Spiritual Assembly at present....

(9 May 1934)

479. Shoghi Effendi was also pleased to learn of the response which his last general communication addressed to the friends in the West has awakened in your community. It is his hope that the Urbana believers will, through their careful and continued study of this important communication, acquire a new vision of the Cause, and will be stimulated to redouble their efforts for the expansion and consolidation of their work for the Faith.

(11 May 1934)

480. Shoghi Effendi wishes me also to express his deep-felt appreciation of your intention to study the Qur'an. The knowledge of this revealed holy Book

is, indeed, indispensable to every Baha'i who wishes to adequately understand the writings of Baha'u'llah. And in view of that the Guardian has been invariably encouraging the friends to make as thorough a study of this Book as possible, particularly in their Summer Schools. Sale's translation is the most scholarly we have, but Rodwell's version is more literary, and hence easier for reading.

(23 November 1934)

481. He feels, indeed, that the time has come for the German believers to acquire a thorough knowledge as well as a full understanding of such important Tablets as Baha'u'llah's "Book of Covenant" and 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament, both of which constitute the very bedrock upon which the entire administrative system of the Faith has been raised and established. As to "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah" it also constitutes an invaluable supplement to these aforementioned Tablets....

(10 January 1935)

482. Your emphasis on the study of the Administration, he feels, is most timely and of a vital practical importance, inasmuch as it serves to consolidate and direct towards a definite objective your general teaching work. Without the study and application of the Administration the <p222> teaching of the Cause becomes not only meaningless, but loses in effectiveness and in scope.

(31 May 1935)

483. With regard to the School's programme for the next summer: the Guardian would certainly advise, and even urge the friends to make a thorough study of the Qur'an, as the knowledge of this Sacred Scripture is absolutely indispensable for every believer who wishes to adequately understand, and intelligently read the Writings of Baha'u'llah. Although there are very few persons among our Western Baha'is who are capable of handling such a course in a scholarly way yet, the mere lack of such competent teachers should encourage and stimulate the believers to get better acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures of Islam. In this way, there will gradually appear some distinguished Baha'is who will be so well versed in the teachings of Islam as to be able to guide the believers in their study of that religion.

(2 December 1935)

484. The Guardian feels particularly appreciative of the emphasis your Committee has laid on the study of the "Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah" -- which book, he believes, should be the continued guide and companion of every believer, especially those who are actively engaged in teaching the Cause. It is his fervent hope that this book will kindle in the heart of all the friends a new light, whereby they will receive a fuller guidance and a greater measure of inspiration in their labours for the Cause.

(28 January 1936)

485. He is particularly pleased to realize that the book of "Gleanings" is of

such a tremendous inspiration to the Baha'i youth, and that they all are making a careful study of its contents with the view of preparing themselves for proper teaching work. His hope is that this volume will enable them to gain a fuller consciousness of their functions and responsibilities, and to arise and set the example before the rest of the believers, not only in the field of teaching, but in all the other fields of Baha'i activity as well. He is ardently supplicating Baha'u'llah on your behalf, and on behalf of the whole body of young Baha'is throughout the <p223> States, and especially the National Youth Committee, that you may be given the inspiration, knowledge and guidance to press forward to efficient and loyal service.

(2 February 1936)

486. An effort should be made to raise the standard of studies, so as to provide the Baha'i student with a thorough knowledge of the Cause that would enable him to expound it befittingly to the educated public.

(8 November 1937)

487. He has noted, in particular, with genuine satisfaction the recommendations issued by the National Youth Committee to the members of our Baha'i youth to make a deeper study of the Master's Will and to ponder more carefully on its manifold and far-reaching implications. He hopes that the Regional Youth Conferences recently held in New York and Chicago have devoted all the time necessary for the study and discussion of this all-important subject, and have given it the full emphasis it deserves. He will pray that the results obtained may be such as to give all the attendants a clear and wider vision of the tasks, responsibilities and obligations they will be called upon to discharge during this year, and a renewed stimulus to contribute their full share to the success and complete fulfilment of the Seven Year Plan.

The Guardian would advise that in their studies of the Will and Testament the young believers should use the "Dispensation", which will undoubtedly help them considerably to grasp the full implications of that sacred and historic Document which he has described as the "Charter of the New World Order".

(9 January 1939)

488. It is his fervent hope and his heart's ardent prayer that you may increasingly deepen in your faith, and steadily gain in your understanding and appreciation of the Teachings, and display such earnestness and perseverance in your Baha'i studies as to gradually acquire the full knowledge, training and experience necessary for active and effective service to the Faith in the future. Although still young in age, you should endeavour from now, through close association with your fellow-believers, and through your <p224> faithful application to your Baha'i studies, to prepare yourself for that day when you will be called upon, as a grown-up and responsible member of the Community, to take full part in the activities of the Cause, and thus prove yourself worthy of being a member of this world-wide Fellowship created by Baha'u'llah. The Guardian was truly pleased to note that you have already started reading some

Baha'i books, and would specially advise you to endeavour [to] commit to memory certain passages from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, and in particular, some of His prayers. This training would undoubtedly be of tremendous help to you in your future studies of the Cause, and would also serve to considerably deepen and enrich your own spiritual life at present.

(10 April 1939)

489. These standards of Baha'i conduct, which he himself has set forth in his last general epistle, "The Advent of Divine Justice", and which it should be the paramount duty of every loyal and conscientious believer to endeavour to uphold and promote, deserve serious study and meditation. . .

The principles and methods laid down by the Guardian in his "Advent of Divine Justice" on the vital subject of Baha'i ethics should indeed prove of valuable inspiration and guidance to all the students and friends attending the Summer School classes, and thus prepare them to better appreciate the privileges, and more adequately discharge the responsibilities, of their citizenship in the World Order of Baha'u'llah.

(20 May 1939)

490. Surely, the believers, no matter how qualified they may be, whether as teachers or administrators, and however high their intellectual and spiritual merits, should never be looked upon as a standard whereby to evaluate and measure the divine authority and mission of the Faith. It is to the Teachings themselves, and to the lives of the Founders of the Cause that the believers should look for their guidance and inspiration, and only by keeping strictly to such [a] true attitude can they hope to establish their loyalty to Baha'u'llah upon an enduring and unassailable basis. You should take heart, therefore, and with unrelaxing vigilance and <p225> unremitting effort endeavour to play your full share in the gradual unfoldment of this Divine World Order.

(23 August 1939)

491. His advice to you is to continue deepening your knowledge and understanding of this Revelation, both by means of patient and thorough study of Baha'i writings, and through active association with your fellow-believers and close participation in the activities of your local Baha'i community.

(12 February 1940)

492. The responsibility of young believers is very great, as they must not only fit themselves to inherit the work of the older Baha'is and carry on the affairs of the Cause in general, but the world which lies ahead of them -- as promised by Baha'u'llah -- will be a world chastened by its sufferings, ready to listen to His Divine Message at last; and consequently a very high character will be expected of the exponents of such a religion. To deepen their knowledge, to perfect themselves in the Baha'i standards of virtue and upright conduct, should be the paramount duty of every young Baha'i.

(6 June 1941 to the Baha'i Youth of Bombay)

493. You Baha'i children and young people have both great privileges and great obligations ahead of you, for your generation will be the ones to help build up a new, better and more beautiful world after the dark years of this war are passed. You should prepare yourselves for this great task by trying to grasp the true meaning of the teachings and not just merely accepting them as something you are taught. They are like a wonderful new world of thought just beginning to be explored, and when we realize that Baha'u'llah has brought teachings and laws for a thousand years to come, we can readily see that each new generation may find some greater meaning in the writings than the ones gone before did.

(14 October 1942 to the Children of Stanley Bolton)

494. Regarding your question concerning your studies: as this is a purely personal matter that concerns your own future, the Guardian feels you should decide it yourself, in consultation with your parents. He urges you, <p226> however, to devote yourself as much as possible to studying and spreading the Baha'i teachings, whatever your other occupations may be.

(26 May 1943)

495. The Cause needs more Baha'i scholars, people who not only are devoted to it and believe in it and are anxious to tell others about it, but also who have a deep grasp of the Teachings and their significance, and who can correlate its beliefs with the current thoughts and problems of the people of the world.

The Cause has the remedy for all the world's ills. The reason why more people don't accept it is because the Baha'is are not always capable of presenting it to them in a way that meets the immediate needs of their minds. Young Baha'is like yourself must prepare themselves to really bring the Message to their generation, who need it so desperately and who can understand the language it speaks so well. He would advise you among other books to study the Talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha, as His method of approaching the mind of the public cannot be surpassed...

(21 October 1943)

496. The Guardian hopes that along with whatever other studies you take up, you will continually study the teachings and endeavour to acquire a profound knowledge of them. The importance of young Baha'is becoming thoroughly steeped in every branch of the teachings cannot be overemphasized, as they have great teaching tasks ahead of them to accomplish.

(22 January 1944)

497. Young men and women in the Faith must be deep and thoughtful scholars of its teachings, so that they can teach in a way that will convince people that all the problems facing them have a remedy. They must grasp the Administration, so that they can wisely and efficiently administer the ever-growing affairs of the Cause; and they must exemplify the Baha'i way of living. All this is not easy -- but the Guardian is always encouraged to see the spirit animating such

young believers as yourself. He has high hopes of what your generation will accomplish.

(12 May 1944) <p227>

498. He feels that in your contact with the believers and in teaching new souls, you should help them to obtain a full knowledge and understanding of the Covenant and the Will and Testament. This will strengthen them to meet every test, and to understand the nature of the spiritual disease which afflicts those who turn against the Institutions of the Faith. These are, indeed, times of testing and of trial, for the whole world and for the believers too.

(15 August 1945)

499. He quite agrees with you that the Baha'is need deepening in the teachings -- a course of adult education would be excellent if it could be carried out and the friends would participate. The principles, administration and fundamentals of the Faith are well known, but the friends need greatly to study the more profound works, which would give them spiritual maturity to a greater degree, unify their Community life, and enable them to better exemplify the Baha'i way of living; in other words to "lead the life".

(24 February 1946)

500. By promoting the vital interests of the Faith's institutions the Guardian means, amongst other things, that we should help our Assemblies by electing wise and capable members, upholding their decisions, making suggestions for the work at Feasts, and consulting properly on the affairs of the Cause; contributing to the Fund; deepening our knowledge of the administrative order, etc.

(18 March 1946)

501. The Guardian feels that a sound knowledge of history, including religious history, and also of social and economic subjects, is of great help in teaching the Cause to intelligent people; as to what subjects within the Faith you should concentrate on he feels that the young Baha'is should gain a mastery of such books as the "Gleanings", "The Dawn- Breakers", "God Passes By", the "Iqan", "Some Answered Questions" and the more important Tablets. All aspects of the Faith should be deeply studied...

(4 May 1946) <p228>

502. There is no objection to the friends memorizing prayers; on the contrary it is excellent for them to do so.

(6 September 1946)

503. Great tasks remain ahead: not only must the work the Master, in His mercy, gave to the North American friends to do, be accomplished, but a deeper spirit of love and unity must be cultivated by the believers within their own communities. The friends themselves are still in many ways spiritually immature; they must study the Teachings more profoundly, and learn to function

as truly mature souls in all their relationships, both within the Cause and with their fellow men.

(5 February 1947 to the Baha'is of Teaneck, New Jersey)

504. He feels that many of the perplexities that arise in your mind could be dissipated if you always conceived of the teachings as one great whole with many facets. Truth may, in covering different subjects, appear to be contradictory, and yet it is all one if you carry the thought through to the end....

He hopes you will ... rest assured inwardly that for these things which sometimes seem difficult to understand there is usually a quite simple and reasonable explanation....

(24 February 1947)

505. By "verities of the Faith" he means the great teachings and fundamentals enshrined in our Baha'i literature; these we can find by reading the books, studying under Baha'i scholars at summer schools and in classes, and through the aid of study outlines.

(19 April 1947)

506. Shoghi Effendi has for years urged the Baha'is (who asked his advice, and in general also) to study history, economics, sociology, etc., in order to be au courant with all the progressive movements and thoughts being put forth today, and so that they could correlate these to the Baha'i teachings. What he wants the Baha'is to do is to study more, not to study less. The more general knowledge, scientific and otherwise, they possess, the better. Likewise he is constantly urging them to really study the Baha'i <p229> teachings more deeply. One might liken Baha'u'llah's teachings to a sphere; there are points poles apart, and in between the thoughts and doctrines that unite them....

(5 July 1947)

507. ...He is indeed pleased to know that the book of "Prayers and Meditations" by Baha'u'llah has been out in time to enable the friends to read it during the Fast, and he has every hope that the perusal of such a precious volume will help to deepen, more than any other publication, the spirit of devotion and faith in the friends, and thus charge them with all the spiritual power they require for the accomplishment of their tremendous duties towards the Cause....

(Published in "Baha'i News" 212 (October 1948), p. 1)

508. He feels that what the German Baha'is need -- and must have -- more than anything else in the world is a far deeper understanding of the Covenants of both Baha'u'llah and the Master. This is the rock-foundation without which no sound superstructure can be built. Neither the administration, nor the general teaching work of the Cause in Germany, will progress, or be able to accomplish anything, unless the believers are truly firm, deep, spiritually convinced Baha'is. An intellectual grasp of the Teachings is purely superficial; with the

first real test such believers are shaken from the bough! But once a Baha'i has the profound conviction of the authority from God, vested in the Prophet, passed on to the Master, and by Him, to the Guardians, and which flows out through the Assemblies and creates order based on obedience -- once a Baha'i has this, nothing can shake him....

(11 April 1949)

509. As he has cabled the N.S.A. a few days ago, he feels that the difficulties which have arisen ... are mainly due to the fact that the believers need to be deepened in their knowledge and appreciation of the Covenants of both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. This is the stronghold of the faith of every Baha'i, and that which enables him to withstand every test and the attacks of the enemies outside the Faith, and the far more dangerous, insidious, lukewarm people inside the Faith who have no real attachment to the Covenant, and consequently uphold the intellectual aspect of the <p230> teachings while at the same time undermining the spiritual foundation upon which the whole Cause of God rests.

(15 April 1949)

510. It seems what we need now is a more profound and co- ordinated Baha'i scholarship in order to attract such men as you are contacting. The world has -- at least the thinking world -- caught up by now with all the great and universal principles enunciated by Baha'u'llah over 70 years ago, and so of course it does not sound "new" to them. But we know that the deeper teachings, the capacity of His projected World Order to re-create society, are new and dynamic. It is these we must learn to present intelligently and enticingly to such men!

(3 July 1949)

511. If the Baha'is want to be really effective in teaching the Cause they need to be much better informed and able to discuss intelligently, intellectually, the present condition of the world and its problems. We need Baha'i scholars, not only people far, far more deeply aware of what our teachings really are, but also well-read and well-educated people, capable of correlating our teachings to the current thoughts of the leaders of society. We Baha'is should, in other words, arm our minds with knowledge in order to better demonstrate to, especially, the educated classes, the truths enshrined in our Faith....

(5 July 1949)

512. He was grieved to hear of some of the things you describe. It shows great spiritual immaturity on the part of some of the Baha'is and an astonishing lack of understanding and study of the teachings....

You must not make the great mistake of judging our Faith by one community which obviously needs to study and obey the Baha' i teachings. Human frailties and peculiarities can be a great test. But the only way, or perhaps I should say the first and best way, to remedy such situations, is to oneself do what is

right. One soul can be the cause of the spiritual illumination of a continent. Now that you have seen, and remedied, a great fault in your own life, now that you see more clearly what is lacking <p231> in your own community, there is nothing to prevent you from arising and showing such an example, such a love and spirit of service, as to enkindle the hearts of your fellow Baha'is. He urges you to study deeply the teachings, teach others, study with those Baha'is who are anxious to do so, the deeper teachings of our Faith, and through example, effort and prayer, bring about a change.

(30 September 1949)

513. Mature teachers are needed in so many places. Unfortunately there are not enough of them to go around and do all the work waiting to be done! That is why it is so important for the new European Baha'is, like yourself, to study deeply the teachings and qualify themselves to take over the work begun by their American brothers and sisters, in order to release these pioneers for work in places where the need is greater. Just one mature soul, with spiritual understanding and a profound knowledge of the Faith, can set a whole country ablaze -- so great is the power of the Cause to work through a pure and selfless channel.

(6 November 1949)

514. ...whilst actively teaching, the friends must themselves be taught and deepened in the spirit of the Faith, which brings love and unity.

(17 July 1951)

515. He was very pleased to hear you do a lot of lecturing for the Cause; this is a very important field of service and one you should devote as much time to as possible. The public must hear of the Faith, and new ways and means must be devised to bring it to their attention. He also urges you to study the teachings themselves deeper. Baha'i scholarship is needed really more than worldly scholarship, for one is spiritual, the other more or less transient. There is a real lack in the Cause of people who know the Teachings thoroughly, especially their deeper truths, and who can consequently teach the souls properly and lay a permanent foundation, one that tests and trials will not shake down.

(27 August 1951)

516. When a person becomes a Baha'i, actually what takes place is that the seed of the spirit starts to grow in the human soul. This seed must be <p232> watered by the outpourings of the Holy Spirit. These gifts of the spirit are received through prayer, meditation, study of the Holy Utterances and service to the Cause of God.... Naturally there will be periods of distress and difficulty, and even severe tests, but if that person turns firmly toward the divine Manifestation, studies carefully His spiritual teachings and receives the blessings of the Holy Spirit, he will find that in reality these tests and difficulties have been the gifts of God to enable him to grow and develop.

(6 October 1954)

517. It is better to have one Baha'i who understands the Teachings and is wholeheartedly convinced of their truth, than a number of Baha'is, who are not well aware of the Cause, and deep-rooted in the Covenant.

(22 January 1955)

518. He is very happy to have this opportunity of welcoming you into the service of our glorious Faith, and he urges you to quietly and steadily read the Teachings, as in this way you will fit yourself to teach others, and also deepen your own understanding and lay a foundation in your own soul and character which no amount of tests and trials can change or destroy.

(28 April 1955)

519. Success will crown the efforts of the Friends on the home front, when they meditate on the teachings, pray fervently for divine confirmations for their work, study the teachings so they may carry their spirit to the seeker, and then act, and above all persevere in action. When these steps are followed, and the teaching work carried on sacrificially and with devoted enthusiasm, the Faith will spread rapidly.

(11 March 1956)

520. There is a desperate need for deepening the Baha'is themselves in their own faith. They do not study the Teachings enough. They do not therefore either act as whole- heartedly as Baha'is as they should, or derive the spiritual strength from the Faith which studying, praying and meditating brings.

(26 March 1956) <p233>

521. Some of the younger believers, from letters and reports received here, seem to lack a firm grounding on such matters as the Will and Testament and the deeper spiritual teachings of the Faith. Whenever the grasp of these fundamentals is weak, the friends are almost sure to pay undue attention to secondary procedures, to quibble over details, to lose themselves in personalities, and to founder in a sea of unnecessary inharmony. This has nothing to do with their devotion, their loyalty, their zeal, their eagerness to serve. It is merely a question of not having received, perhaps through lack of sufficient teachers to carry on the all-important work of deepening the friends in their own faith, a strong enough education in the Covenant before the duties and responsibilities of the Administrative Order were thrust upon them.

(26 June 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada)

522. It is evident that one of the reasons that the work on the home front in America is so seriously lagging is that the Baha'is themselves, though undoubtedly devoted, loyal and conscientious, are not always very deeply grounded in the spiritual fundamentals of their Faith. This produces a maladjustment, so to speak, in the nature of their service to the Cause; and

only through a deeper understanding of their Faith and the inner spiritual strength that this understanding brings will they be able to reinforce themselves to meet their tasks, to see the joy of discharging their duties and grasping their privileges.

(19 July 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

523. The friends need only read the Writings; the answers are all in them; we have no priests in this Faith to interpret or answer for us.

(23 April 1957)

524. It is not enough to bring people into the Faith, one must educate them and deepen their love for it and their knowledge of its teachings, after they declare themselves. As the Baha'is are few in number, especially the active teachers, and there is a great deal of work to be done, the education of these new believers is often sadly neglected, and then results are seen such as the resignations you have had recently. In this respect, the summer schools can be of the greatest help to the friends, new and old Baha'is alike, for in them they can study, and enjoy the feeling of <p234> Baha'i companionship which is, alas, usually lacking in their home communities, owing to the smallness of their numbers.

(18 July 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada)

Revised July 1990 <p235>

EXTRACTS FROM THE BAHA'I TEACHINGS DISCOURAGING DIVORCE

From the Writings of Baha'u'llah:

525. God doth verily love union and concord, and abhorreth separation and divorce.

("Kitab-i-Aqdas" - translated from the Arabic)

526. At all times hath union and association been well- pleasing in the sight of God, and separation and dissension abhorred. Hold fast unto that which God loveth and is His command unto you. He, verily, is the All-Knowing and the All-Seeing, and He is the All-Wise Ordainer.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian and Arabic)

527. God, exalted be His glory, disliketh divorce...

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

528. Thou hast asked about affection and reconciliation, in the case of Mirza .... This matter was mentioned in the Holy Presence. This is what the tongue of our All-Merciful Lord uttered in response: "This is regarded with favour and is well-pleasing. After man's recognition of God, and becoming steadfast in His Cause, the station of affection, of harmony, of concord and of unity is superior to that of most other goodly deeds. This is what He Who is the Desire of the world hath testified at every morn and eve. God grant that ye may follow

that which hath been revealed in the Kitab-i- Aqdas."

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

529. O ye two believers in God! The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other. If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine <p236> grace and favour in the Kingdom of heaven. But if they do other than this, they will live out their lives in great bitterness, longing at every moment for death, and will be shamefaced in the heavenly realm. Strive, then, to abide, heart and soul, with each other as two doves in the nest, for this is to be blessed in both worlds.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 92, p. 122)

530. Formerly in Persia divorce was very easily obtained. Among the people of the past Dispensation a trifling matter would cause divorce. However, as the light of the Kingdom shone forth, souls were quickened by the spirit of Baha'u'llah, then they totally eschewed divorce. In Persia now divorce doth not take place among the friends, unless a compelling reason existeth which makes harmony impossible. Under such rare circumstances some cases of divorce take place.

Now the friends in America must live and conduct themselves in this way. They must strictly refrain from divorce unless something ariseth which compelleth them to separate because of their aversion for each other, in that case with the knowledge of the Spiritual Assembly they may decide to separate. They must then be patient and wait one complete year. If during this year, harmony is not re- established between them, then their divorce may be realized. It should not happen that upon the occurrence of a slight friction or displeasure between husband and wife, the husband would think of union with some other woman, or, God forbid, the wife also think of another husband. This is contrary to the standard of heavenly value and true chastity. The friends of God must so live and conduct themselves, and evince such excellence of and conduct, as to make others astonished. The love between husband and wife should not be purely physical, nay, rather it must be spiritual and heavenly. These two souls should be considered as one soul. How difficult it would be to divide a single soul! Nay, great would be the difficulty!

In short, the foundation of the Kingdom of God is based upon harmony and love, oneness, relationship and union, not upon differences, especially between husband and wife. If one of these two becomes the cause of divorce, that one will unquestionably fall into great <p237> difficulties, will become the victim of formidable calamities and experience deep remorse. Upon you be the glory of Abha!

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

From the writings of Shoghi Effendi:

531. The recrudescence of religious intolerance, of racial animosity, and of patriotic arrogance; the increasing evidences of selfishness, of suspicion, of fear and of fraud; the spread of terrorism, of lawlessness, of drunkenness and of crime; the unquenchable thirst for, and the feverish pursuit after, earthly vanities, riches and pleasures; the weakening of family solidarity; the laxity in parental control; the lapse into luxurious indulgence; the irresponsible attitude towards marriage and the consequent rising tide of divorce; the degeneracy of art and music, the infection of literature, and the corruption of the press; the extension of the influence and activities of those "prophets of decadence" who advocate companionate marriage, who preach the philosophy of nudism, who call modesty an intellectual fiction, who refuse to regard the procreation of children as the sacred and primary purpose of marriage, who denounce religion as an opiate of the people, who would, if given free rein, lead back the human race to barbarism, chaos, and ultimate extinction -- these appear as the outstanding characteristics of a decadent society, a society that must either be reborn or perish.

("The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters" rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 187-88)

532. Not only must irreligion and its monstrous offspring, the triple curse that oppresses the soul of mankind in this day, be held responsible for the ills which are so tragically besetting it, but other evils and vices, which are, for the most part, the direct consequences of the "weakening of the pillars of religion," must also be regarded as contributory factors to the manifold guilt of which individuals and nations stand convicted. The signs of moral downfall, consequent to the dethronement of religion and the enthronement of these usurping idols, are too numerous and too patent for even a superficial observer of the state of present-day society to fail to notice. The spread of lawlessness, of drunkenness, of gambling, and of crime; the inordinate love of pleasure, of riches, and other earthly <p238> vanities; the laxity in morals, revealing itself in the irresponsible attitude towards marriage, in the weakening of parental control, in the rising tide of divorce, in the deterioration in the standard of literature and of the press, and in the advocacy of theories that are the very negation of purity, of morality and chastity -- these evidences of moral decadence, invading both the East and the West, permeating every stratum of society, and instilling their poison in its members of both sexes, young and old alike, blacken still further the scroll upon which are inscribed the manifold transgressions of an unrepentant humanity.

("The Promised Day is Come", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), pp. 114-15)

From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi:

533. On behalf of the Guardian I wish to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated December 15th, and to express his sorrow at the disharmony existing between you and your husband. He is the more grieved to learn that the situation has reached such a state as to compel you to ask for separation from Mr.... -- a step which, though legally valid from the standpoint of the Cause, is nevertheless most sad and painful to you and to those concerned. The Guardian, however, appreciates the fact that, in conformity with the Teachings, you have laid the matter before the Local Spiritual Assembly. He sincerely hopes that under the guidance of that body, and through your own efforts as well, conditions between you and your husband will gradually improve, and that you will not feel it necessary to ask for divorce after the one year period of separation has been terminated.

He is fervently en treating Baha'u'llah that He may guide you and Mr. Clark in solving this most delicate problem of your life, and that the solution reached may be such as to bring peace and satisfaction to your heart, and thus bring happiness to you, and also protection to the Cause whose interests you have so devotedly served for many years.

(14 January 1936 to an individual believer)

534. Regarding the Baha'i teachings on divorce. While the latter has been made permissible by Baha'u'llah yet he has strongly discouraged its <p239> practice, for if not checked and seriously controlled it leads gradually to the disruption of family life and to the disintegration of society....

(16 November 1936 to an individual believer)

535. Regarding divorce, the Guardian stated that it is discouraged, deprecated and against the good pleasure of God. The Assembly must circulate among the friends whatever has been revealed from the Pen of 'Abdu'l-Baha in this connection so that all may be fully reminded. Divorce is conditional upon the approval and permission of the Spiritual Assembly. The members of the Assembly must in such matters independently and carefully study and investigate each case. If there should be valid grounds for divorce and it is found that reconciliation is utterly impossible, that antipathy is intense and its removal is not possible, then the Assembly may approve the divorce.

(From a Tablet to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran - translated from the Persian)

536. While he wishes me to assure you that he will pray for the solution of your domestic troubles, he would urge you to endeavour, by every means in your power, to compose your differences, and not to allow them to reach such proportions as to lead to your complete and final separation from your husband.

For while, according to the Baha'i law, divorce is permissible, yet it is highly discouraged, and should be resorted to only when every effort to prevent it has proved to be vain and ineffective.

It is for you, and for Mr.... as well, to ponder carefully over the spiritual

implications which any act of divorce on either part would involve, and strengthened by the power of faith and confident in the blessings which strict adherence to the principles and laws of Baha'u'llah is bound to confer upon every one of His faithful followers, to make a fresh resolve to solve your common difficulties and to restore the harmony, peace and happiness of your family life.

(11 September 1938 to an individual believer)

537. The situation facing you is admittedly difficult and delicate, but no less grave and indeed vital are the responsibilities which it entails and which, as a faithful and loyal believer, you should conscientiously and <p240> thoroughly assume. The Guardian, therefore, while fully alive to the special circumstances of your case, and however profound his sympathy may be for you in this challenging issue with which you are so sadly faced, cannot, in view of the emphatic injunctions contained in the Teachings, either sanction your demand to contract a second marriage while your first wife is still alive and is united with you in the sacred bonds of matrimony, or even suggest or approve that you divorce her just in order to be permitted to marry a new one.

For the Baha'i Teachings do not only preclude the possibility of bigamy, but also, while permitting divorce, consider it a reprehensible act, which should be resorted to only in exceptional circumstances, and when grave issues are involved, transcending such considerations as physical attraction or sexual compatibility and harmony. The institution of marriage, as established by Baha'u'llah, while giving due importance to the physical aspect of marital union, considers it as subordinate to the moral and spiritual purposes and functions with which it has been invested by an all-wise and loving Providence. Only when these different values are given each their due importance, and only on the basis of the subordination of the physical to the moral, and the carnal to the spiritual can such excesses and laxity in marital relations as our decadent age is so sadly witnessing be avoided, and family life be restored to its original purity, and fulfil the true function for which it has been instituted by God.

The Guardian will most fervently pray that, inspired and guided by such a divine standard, and strengthened by Baha'u'llah's unfailing assistance and confirmations, you may be able to satisfactorily adjust your relations with the persons concerned, and thus reach the one right solution to this assuredly challenging problem of your life.

(8 May 1939 to an individual believer who, having married his first wife out of compassion, now wished to be permitted to marry a woman with whom he had fallen in love, saying that his wife was agreeable to his taking this second wife.)

538. As regards the action you contemplate in seeking divorce from him: He leaves the final decision in this matter to you and your husband, though of course, from the standpoint of the Cause, he thinks it preferable for you both not to resort to such drastic action, unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

(24 February 1940 to an individual believer) <p241>

539. Marriage is, in the "Aqdas", set forth as a most sacred and binding tie, and the Baha'is should realize that divorce is viewed as a last resort, to be avoided at all costs if possible and not to be lightly granted.

(17 October 1944 to an individual believer)

540. Marriage is viewed by Baha'u'llah as a very sacred tie which should under no circumstances be severed unless the reasons are very grave. He hopes and will pray that you and your wife, as believers, will reconsider this matter and do your utmost to live together in the service of the Cause you both love so dearly.

(17 October 1944 to an individual believer)

541. He was very sorry to hear that you and your husband are still so unhappy together. It is always a source of sorrow in life when married people cannot get on well together, but the Guardian feels that you and your husband, in contemplating divorce, should think of the future of your children and how this major step on your part will influence their lives and happiness. If you feel the need of advice and consultation he suggests you consult your Local Assembly; your fellow Baha'is will surely do all they can to counsel and help you, protect your interests and those of the Cause.

(16 November 1945 to an individual believer)

542. Shoghi Effendi wishes me to add this note in connection with your marriage: he does not feel that any believer, under any circumstances whatsoever, can ever use the Cause or service to it as a reason for abandoning their marriage; divorce, as we know, is very strongly condemned by Baha'u'llah, and only grounds of extreme gravity justify it....

(7 April 1947 to an individual believer)

543. As Baha'u'llah was so very much against divorce (even though He permits it) and considered marriage a most sacred responsibility, believers should do everything in their power to preserve the marriages they have contracted, and to make of them exemplary unions, governed by the noblest motives.

(19 October 1947 to an individual believer) <p242>

544. Baha'u'llah has clearly stated the consent of all living parents is required for a Baha'i marriage. This applies whether the parents are Baha'is or non-Baha'is, divorced for years or not. This great law He has laid down to strengthen the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a certain gratitude and respect in the hearts of children for those who have given them life and sent their souls out on the eternal journey towards their Creator. We Baha'is must realize that in present-day society the exact opposite process is taking place: young people care less and less for their parents' wishes, divorce is considered a natural right, and obtained on the flimsiest and most unwarrantable and shabby pretexts. People separated from each other,

especially if one of them has had full custody of the children, are only too willing to belittle the importance of the partner in marriage also responsible as a parent for bringing those children into this world. The Baha'is must, through rigid adherence to the Baha'i laws and teachings, combat these corrosive forces which are so rapidly destroying home life and the beauty of family relationships, and tearing down the moral structure of society.

(25 October 1947 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

545. He wishes me to tell you that he regrets extremely the sorrow that has come into your life, and that he agrees with all you have stated in general on the subject of divorce. There is no doubt about it that the believers in America, probably unconsciously influenced by the extremely lax morals prevalent and the flippant attitude towards divorce which seems to be increasingly prevailing, do not take divorce seriously enough and do not seem to grasp the fact that although Baha'u'llah has permitted it, He has only permitted it as a last resort and strongly condemns it. The presence of children, as a factor in divorce, cannot be ignored, for surely it places an even greater weight of moral responsibility on the man and wife in considering such a step. Divorce under such circumstances no longer just concerns them and their desires and feelings but also concerns the children's entire future and their own attitude towards marriage.

(19 December 1947 to an individual believer) <p243>

546. Divorce should be avoided most strictly by the believers, and only under rare and urgent circumstances be resorted to. Modern society is criminally lax as to the sacred nature of marriage, and the believers must combat this trend assiduously.

(5 January 1948 to an individual believer)

547. He will pray for your husband and son and your daughter-in-law, that, through drawing near to Baha'u'llah, they may be united and uplifted into a happier and more harmonious atmosphere, for the Cause can heal friction if people will let it and make the effort themselves as well.

(11 June 1948 to an individual believer)

548. He was very sorry to hear that you are contemplating separation from your husband. As you no doubt know, Baha'u'llah considers the marriage bond very sacred; and only under very exceptional and unbearable circumstances is divorce advisable for Baha'is. The Guardian does not tell you that you must not divorce your husband; but he does urge you to consider prayerfully, not only because you are a believer and anxious to obey the laws of God, but also for the sake of the happiness of your children, whether it is not possible for you to rise above the limitations you have felt in your marriage hitherto, and make a go of it together. We often feel that our happiness lies in a certain direction; and yet, if we have to pay too heavy a price for it in the end we may discover that we have not really purchased either freedom or happiness, but just some new

situation of frustration and disillusion.

(5 April 1951 to an individual believer)

549. As regards the problem of your marriage, you are free to refer this to the National Spiritual Assembly. As both you and your wife know, however, Baha'u'llah was not in favour of divorce, and the friends should make every effort to avoid bringing it about. If it is absolutely impossible, they then are free to divorce, but they should bear in mind the will of God in such matters.

(13 March 1953 to an individual believer) <p244>

550. He has been very sorry to hear that your marriage seems to have failed utterly. I need not tell you as a Baha'i that every effort should be made by any Baha'i to salvage their marriage for the sake of God, rather than for their own sake. In the case of pioneers, it is even more important, because they are before the public eye. However, in such matters it is neither befitting nor right that the Guardian should bring pressure on individuals. He can only appeal to you and...to try again; but if you cannot rise to this test, that is naturally a personal matter.

(13 January 1956 to an individual believer)

551. Wherever there is a Baha'i family, those concerned should by all means do all they can to preserve it, because divorce is strongly condemned in the Teachings, whereas harmony, unity and love are held up as the highest ideals in human relationships. This must always apply to the Baha'is, whether they are serving in the pioneering field or not.

(9 November 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central America)

Revised November 1990 <p245>

A COMPILATION ON BAHA'I EDUCATION COMPILED BY THE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

BAHA'I WORLD CENTRE

AUGUST 1976

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....

(The Bab, quoted in "The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Revelation" trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1975), p. 65)

I. FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHA'U'LLAH:

552. The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the

hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah" rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), Sec. 81, pp. 156-7)

553. We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge...

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", Sec. 98, p. 199)

554. Consider ... the revelation of the light of the Name of God, the Educator. Behold, how in all things the evidences of such a revelation are manifest, how the betterment of all beings dependeth upon it. This education is of two kinds. The one is universal. Its influence pervadeth all things and sustaineth them. It is for this reason that God hath assumed <p246> the title, "Lord of all worlds". The other is confined to them that have come under the shadow of this Name, and sought the shelter of this most mighty Revelation. They, however, that have failed to seek this shelter, have deprived themselves of this privilege, and are powerless to benefit from the spiritual sustenance that hath been sent down through the heavenly grace of this Most Great Name. How great the gulf fixed between the one and the other!...

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", Sec. 93, pp. 189-90)

555. Man is the supreme Talisman. Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess. Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded. The Great Being saith: Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", Sec. 122, pp. 259-60)

556. Bend your minds and wills to the education of the peoples and kindreds of the earth, that haply the dissensions that divide it may, through the power of the Most Great Name, be blotted out from its face, and all mankind become the upholders of one Order, and the inhabitants of one City....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", Sec. 154, pp. 333-4)

557. We prescribe unto all men that which will lead to the exaltation of the Word of God amongst His servants, and likewise, to the advancement of the world of being and the uplift of souls. To this end, the greatest means is education of the child. To this must each and all hold fast. We have verily laid this charge upon you in manifold Tablets as well as in My Most Holy Book. Well is it with him who deferreth thereto. We ask of God that He will assist each and every one to obey this inescapable command that hath appeared and been caused to descend through the Pen of the Ancient of Days.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian) <p247>

558. Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet. He that putteth away that which is commanded unto him, the Trustees are then to take from him that which is required for their instruction, if he be wealthy, and if not the matter devolveth upon the House of Justice. Verily, have We made it a shelter for the poor and needy. He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My Glory, My loving kindness, My Mercy, that have compassed the world.

("A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book Baha'u'llah", 1st ed. (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1973), pp. 15-16)

559. ...Everyone, whether man or woman, should hand over to a trusted person a portion of what he or she earneth through trade, agriculture or occupation, for training and education of children, to be spent for this purpose with the knowledge of the Trustees of the House of Justice.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), p.90)

560. Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

561. Man is even as steel, the essence of which is hidden: through admonition and explanation, good counsel and education, that essence will be brought to light. If, however, he be allowed to remain in his original condition, the corrosion of lusts and appetites will effectively destroy him.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

562. There are many things which will, if neglected, be wasted, and come to nothing. How often in this world do we see a child who has lost his parents and who, unless attention be devoted to his education and <p248> training, can produce no fruit. And better off dead than alive is he who produceth no fruit.

(From a Tablet - translated from the persian)

563. It is the bounden duty of parents to rear their children to be staunch in faith, the reason being that a child who removeth himself from the religion of God will not act in such a way as to win the good pleasure of his parents and his Lord. For every praiseworthy deed is born out of the light of religion, and lacking this supreme bestowal the child will not turn away from any evil, nor will he draw nigh unto any good.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

564. The fear of God hath ever been the prime factor in the education of His creatures. Well is it with them that have attained thereunto!

("Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 27)

565. That which is of paramount importance for the children, that which must precede all else, is to teach them the oneness of God and the laws of God. For lacking this, the fear of God cannot be inculcated, and lacking the fear of God an infinity of odious and abominable actions will spring up, and sentiments will be uttered that transgress all bounds... parents must exert every effort to rear their offspring to be religious, for should the children not attain this greatest of adornments, they will not obey their parents, which in a certain sense means that they will not obey God. Indeed, such children will show no consideration to anyone, and will do exactly as they please.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

566. ...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.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", p. 68) <p249>

567. ...Arts, crafts and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words.... truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him. Happy the man that cleaveth unto it, and woe betide the heedless.

("Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pp. 26-27)

568. ...The learned of the day must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom. Such academic pursuits as begin and end in words alone have never been and will never be of any worth. The majority of Persia's learned doctors devote all their lives to the study of a philosophy the ultimate yield of which is nothing but words.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", p. 169)

569. It is incumbent upon the children to exert themselves to the utmost in acquiring the art of reading and writing.... Writing skills that will provide for urgent needs will be enough for some; and then it is better and more fitting that they should spend their time in studying those branches of knowledge which are of use.

As for what the Supreme Pen hath previously set down, the reason is that in every art and skill, God loveth the highest perfection.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

570. In 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....[1]
[1 Regarding this passage, an extract from a letter dated 5 January 1948 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer states: "Unfortunately it would seem that the knowledge 'which could largely eliminate fear' has not been disclosed or identified by Baha'u'llah; so we do not know what it is'. This extract is also published in Baha'i News 210 (August 1948), p. 3.]

("Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", p. 32) <p250>

571. It beseemeth ... the ... officials of the Government to convene a gathering and choose one of the divers languages, and likewise one of the existing scripts, or else to create a new language and a new scripts or else to create a new language and a new script to be taught children in schools throughout the world. They would, in this way, be acquiring only two languages, one their own native tongue, the other the language in which all the peoples of the world would converse. Were men to take fast hold on that which hath been mentioned, the whole earth would come to be regarded as one country, and the people would be relieved and freed from the necessity of acquiring and teaching different languages....

("Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 138)

572. Teach ye your children the verses that have been divinely revealed, that they may recite them in most melodious voices. This is what hath been set down in His mighty Book.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

573. Teach your children that which hath been sent down from the heaven of majesty and power that they may recite the Tablets of the Merciful in the halls of the Mashriqu'l- Adhkars in most melodious tones....

("Kitab-i-Aqdas" - provisional translation from the Arabic)

574. At the outset of every endeavour, it is incumbent to look to the end of it. Of all the arts and sciences, set the children to studying those which will result in advantage to man, will ensure his progress and elevate his rank. Thus the noisome odours of lawlessness will be dispelled, and thus through the high endeavours of the nation's leaders, all will live cradled, secure and in peace.

The Great Being saith: The man of consummate learning and the sage endowed with penetrating wisdom are the two eyes to the body of mankind. God willing, the earth shall never be deprived of these two greatest gifts....

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", pp. 168-71)

575. As to the children: We have directed that in the beginning they should be trained in the observances and laws of religion; and thereafter, <p251> in such branches of knowledge as are of benefit, and in commercial pursuits that are distinguished for integrity, and in deeds that will further the victory of God's Cause or will attract some outcome which will draw the believer closer to his Lord. We beg of God to assist the children of His loved ones and adorn them with wisdom, good conduct, integrity and righteousness. He, verily, is the Forgiving, the Clement.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian and Arabic)

576. O Husayn! O thou Preceptor! From His Most Great Prison, the countenance of the Ancient of Days is turned towards thee, and He teacheth thee that which will draw thee nigh unto God, the Lord of mankind. Blessed is that teacher who shall arise to instruct the children, and to guide the people into the pathways of God, the Bestower, the Well-Beloved.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

577. Blessed is that teacher who remaineth faithful to the Covenant of God, and occupieth himself with the education of children. For him hath the Supreme Pen inscribed that reward which is revealed in the Most Holy Book. Blessed, blessed is he!

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

II. FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA:

578. O God, O Thou Who hast cast Thy splendour over the luminous realities of men, shedding upon them the resplendent lights of knowledge and guidance, and hast chosen them out of all created things for this supernal grace, and hast caused them to encompass all things, to understand their inmost essence, and to disclose their mysteries, bringing them forth out of darkness into the visible world! "He verily showeth His special mercy to whomsoever He will."[1] O Lord, help Thou Thy loved ones to acquire knowledge and the sciences and arts, and to unravel the secrets that are treasured up in the <p252> inmost reality of all created beings. Make them to hear the hidden truths that are written and embedded in the heart of all that is. Make them to be ensigns of guidance amongst all creatures, and piercing rays of the mind shedding forth their light in this, the "first life".[2] Make them to be leaders unto Thee, guides unto Thy path, runners urging men on to Thy Kingdom.
[1 Qur'an 3:67]
[2 Qur'an 56:62]

Thou verily art the Powerful, the Protector, the Potent, the Defender, the Mighty, the Most Generous.

O Company of God! To each created thing, the Ancient Sovereignty hath portioned out its own perfection, its particular virtue and special excellence, so that each in its degree may become a symbol denoting the sublimity of the true

Educator of humankind, and that each, even as a crystalline mirror, may tell of the grace and splendour of the Sun of Truth.

And from amongst all creatures He hath singled out man, to grant him His most wondrous gift, and hath made him to attain the bounties of the Company on High. That most precious of gifts is attainment unto His unfailing guidance, that the inner reality of humankind should become as a niche to hold this lamp; and when the scattering splendours of this light do beat against the bright glass of the heart, the heart's purity maketh the beams to blaze out even stronger than before, and to shine in glory on the minds and souls of men.

The attainment of the most great guidance is dependent upon knowledge and wisdom, and on being informed as to the mysteries of the Holy Words. Wherefore must the loved ones of God, be they young or old, be they men or women, each one according to his capabilities, strive to acquire the various branches of knowledge, and to increase his understanding of the mysteries of the Holy Books, and his skill in marshalling the divine proofs and evidences.

The eminent Sadru's-Sudur, who hath verily attained a most exalted station in the Retreats of Bliss, inaugurated the teaching meeting. He was the first blessed soul to lay the foundation of this momentous institution. God be praised, during the course of his life he educated persons who today are strong and eloquent advocates of the Lord God, disciples who are indeed pure and spiritual descendants of him who was so close to the Holy Threshold. After his passing, certain blessed individuals took steps <p253> to perpetuate his teaching work, and when He learned of it, this Captive's heart rejoiced.

At this time, likewise, I most urgently request the friends of God to make every effort, as much as lieth within their competence, along these lines. The harder they strive to widen the scope of their knowledge, the better and more gratifying will be the result. Let the loved ones of God, whether young or old, whether male or female, each according to his capabilities, bestir themselves and spare no efforts to acquire the various current branches of knowledge, both spiritual and secular, and of the arts. Whensoever they gather in their meetings let their conversation be confined to learned subjects and to information on the knowledge of the day.

If they do thus, they will flood the world with the Manifest Light, and change this dusty earth into gardens of the Realm of Glory.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

579. O thou true friend! Read, in the school of God, the lessons of the spirit, and learn from love's Teacher the innermost truths. Seek out the secrets of Heaven, and tell of the overflowing grace and favour of God.

Although to acquire the sciences and arts is the greatest glory of mankind, this is so only on condition that man's river floweth into the mighty Sea, and draweth from God's ancient source His inspiration. When this cometh to pass, then every teacher is as a shoreless ocean, every pupil a prodigal fountain of knowledge. If, then, the pursuit of knowledge leadeth to the beauty of Him Who

is the object of all knowledge, how excellent that goal; but if not, a mere drop will perhaps shut a man off from flooding grace, for with learning cometh arrogance and pride, and it bringeth on error and indifference to God.

The sciences of today are bridges to reality; if then they lead not to reality, naught remains but fruitless illusion. By the one true God! If learning be not a means of access to Him, the Most Manifest, it is nothing but evident loss.

It is incumbent upon thee to acquire the various branches of knowledge, and to turn thy face toward the beauty of the Manifest Beauty, that thou mayest be a sign of saving guidance amongst the peoples of the world, and a focal centre of understanding in this sphere from which the wise and their wisdom are shut out, except for whoso setteth foot in the <p254> Kingdom of Lights and becometh informed of the veiled and hidden mystery, the well-guarded secret.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), Sec. 72, p. 110)

580. Man is in the highest degree of materiality, and at the beginning of spirituality -- that is to say, he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. He is at the last degree of darkness, and at the beginning of light; that is why it has been said that the condition of man is the end of the night and the beginning of day, meaning that he is the sum of all the degrees of imperfection, and that he possesses the degrees of perfection. He has the animal side as well as the angelic side, and the aim of an educator is to so train human souls that their angelic aspect may overcome their animal side....

("Some Answered Questions" rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985), pp. 235)

581. Man is said to be the greatest representative of God, and he is the Book of Creation because all the mysteries of beings exist in him. If he comes under the shadow of the True Educator and is rightly trained, he becomes the essence of essences, the light of lights, the spirit of spirits; he becomes the centre of the divine appearances, the source of spiritual qualities, the rising-place of heavenly lights, and the receptacle of divine inspirations. If he is deprived of this education, he becomes the manifestation of satanic qualities, the sum of animal vices, and the source of all dark conditions. The reason of the mission of the Prophets is to educate men, so that this piece of coal may become a diamond, and this fruitless tree may be engrafted and yield the sweetest, most delicious fruits. When man reaches the noblest state in the world of humanity, then he can make further progress in the conditions of perfection, but not in state; for such states are limited, but the divine perfections are endless.

("Some Answered Questions", pp. 236-37)

582. Close investigation will show that the primary cause of oppression and injustice, of unrighteousness, irregularity and disorder, is the people's lack of religious faith and the fact that they are uneducated. When, for <p255> example, the people are genuinely religious and are literate and well-schooled,

and a difficulty presents itself, they can apply to the local authorities; if they do not meet with justice and secure their rights and if they see that the conduct of the local government is incompatible with the Divine good pleasure and the king's justice, they can then take their case to higher courts and describe the deviation of the local administration from the spiritual law. Those courts can then send for the local records of the case and in this way justice will be done. At present, however, because of their inadequate schooling, most of the population lack even that vocabulary to explain what they want.

("The Secret of Divine Civilization", 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983), p. 18)

583. The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uniformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time.

("The Secret of Divine Civilization", p. 109)

584. Observe carefully how education and the arts of civilization bring honour, prosperity, independence and freedom to a government and its people.

("The Secret of Divine Civilization", p. 111)

585. But education is of three kinds: material, human, and spiritual. Material education is concerned with the progress and development of the body, through gaining its sustenance, its material comfort and ease. This education is common to animals and man. Human education signifies civilization and progress -- that is to say, government, administration, charitable works, trades, arts and handicrafts, sciences, great inventions and discoveries and elaborate institutions, which are the activities essential to man as distinguished from the animal. <p256>

Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true education; for in this state man becomes the focus of divine blessings, the manifestation of the words, "Let Us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness."[1] This is the goal of the world of humanity.
[1 Cf Gen. 1:26]

Now we need an educator who will be at the same time a material, human, and spiritual educator, and whose authority will be effective in all conditions. So if anyone should say, "I possess perfect comprehension and intelligence, and I have no need of such an educator", he would be denying that which is clear and evident, as though a child should say, "I have no need of education; I will act according to my reason and intelligence, and so I shall attain the perfections of existence"; or as though the blind should say, "I am in no need of sight, because many other blind people exist without difficulty."

Then it is plain and evident that man needs an educator, and this educator must be unquestionably and indubitably perfect in all respects and distinguished above all men. Otherwise, if he should be like the rest of humanity, he could not be their educator, more particularly because he must be at the same time their material and human as well as their spiritual educator -- that is to say, he must teach men to organize and carry out physical matters, and to form a social order in order to establish cooperation and mutual aid in living so that material affairs may be organized and regulated for any circumstances that may occur. In the same way he must establish human education -- that is to say, he must educate intelligence and thought in such a way that they may attain complete development, so that knowledge and science may increase, and the reality of things, the mysteries of beings, and the properties of existence may be discovered; that, day by day, instructions, inventions, and institutions may be improved; and from things perceptible to the senses conclusions as to intellectual things may be deduced.

He must also impart spiritual education, so that intelligence and comprehension may penetrate the metaphysical world, and may receive benefit from the sanctifying breeze of the Holy Spirit, and may enter into relationship with the Supreme Concourse. He must so educate the human reality that it may become the center of the divine appearance, to <p257> such a degree that the attributes and the names of God shall be resplendent in the mirror of the reality of man, and the holy verse, "We will make man in Our image and likeness", shall be realized."[1]
[1 Cf Gen. 1:26]

("Some Answered Questions", pp. 8-9)

586.

There are some who imagine that an innate sense of human dignity will prevent man from committing evil actions and insure his spiritual and material perfection.

That is, that an individual who is characterized with natural intelligence, high resolve, and a driving zeal, will, without any consideration for the severe punishments consequent on evil acts, or for the great rewards of righteousness, instinctively refrain from inflicting harm on his fellow men and will hunger and thirst to do good.

And yet, if we ponder the lessons of history it will become evident that this very sense of honor and dignity is itself one of the bounties deriving from the instructions of the Prophets of God.

We also observe in infants the signs of aggression and lawlessness, and that if a child is deprived of a teacher's instructions his undesirable qualities increase from one moment to the next.

It is therefore clear that the emergence of this natural sense of human dignity and honor is the result of education.

Secondly, even if we grant for the sake of the argument that instinctive intelligence and an innate moral quality would prevent wrongdoing, it is obvious that individuals so characterized are as rare as the philosopher's stone.

An assumption of this sort cannot be validated by mere words, it must be supported by the facts.

Let us see what power in creation impels the masses toward righteous aims and deeds!

Aside from this, if that rare individual who does exemplify such a faculty should also become an embodiment of the fear of God, it is certain that his strivings toward righteousness would be strongly reinforced.

("The Secret of Divine Civilization", pp. 97-8)

587. As to the differences among human beings and the superiority or inferiority of some individuals to others, the materialists are of two schools of thought: one group is of the opinion that these differences and the superior qualities of some individuals are inborn, and are, as they would put it, an exigency of nature. According to them, it is obvious that <p258> differences within the species are inherent. For example, there are, in nature, different kinds of trees; animals, too, are varied in their nature; even minerals vary naturally among themselves, and you have here a quarry filled with stones, there a mine of rubies, translucent and richly red; here a shell with pearl enclosed, there only a bit a clay.

The other school of traditional philosophers holdeth to the view that the differences among individuals and the varying levels of intellects and talents derive from education: for with training, a crooked branch can grow straight, and a barren tree of the desert can be domesticated, it can be grafted and made to bear fruit, which may be bitter, but with time turneth sweet. At first, its fruit may be small; but it will grow large and full of flavour, a delight to the taste.

The strongest proof adduced by the second group is this, that the tribes of Africa are, generally speaking, ignorant and wild, while the civilized peoples of America are, in general, possessed of wisdom and understanding, which proveth that the difference between these two peoples is due to education and experience. Such are the stated views of the philosophers.

The Manifestations of God, on the other hand, affirm that differences are demonstrably and indisputably innate, and that "We have caused some of you to excel others"[1] is a proven and inescapable fact. It is certain that human beings are, by their very nature, different one from the other. Observe a small group of children, born of the same parents, attending the same school, receiving the same education, living on the same diet: some, becoming well educated, will achieve a high degree of advancement; some will reach a middle level; and some will not prove educable at all. It is therefore clear that the disparity among individuals is due to differences of degree which are innate.

[1 Qur'an 17:22]

But the Manifestations also consider that training and education demonstrably exert a tremendous influence. If, for example, a child is deprived of schooling he will certainly remain ignorant, and his knowledge will be limited to what he is able to find out for himself; but if he is brought to a qualified teacher to study the sciences and arts, he will learn of the discoveries made by thousands of other human beings. Thus education is a guide to those who have gone astray; it maketh the blind <p259> to see; it bestoweth judgement on the foolish, and a yield of greatness on the unproductive; it causeth the mute to speak, and turneth the false dawn into the true morning's light; through it the tiny seed will become a towering palm, and the runaway slave, a reigning king.

Thus is it certain that education exerteth an influence, and for this reason the Manifestation of God, the Well-Springs of His mercy, are raised up in the world, that through the breaths of holiness They may educate the human race, and make of the sucking child a strong and valiant man. Through Them will the outcasts of the earth become the cherished companions of Heaven, and the portionless receive their due.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

588. Question. -- How many kinds of character has man, and what is the cause of the differences and varieties in men?

Answer. -- He has the innate character, the inherited character, and the acquired character which is gained by education.

With regard to the innate character, although the divine creation is purely good, yet the varieties of natural qualities in man come from the difference of degree; all are excellent, but they are more or less so, according to the degree. So all mankind possess intelligence and capacities, but the intelligence, the capacity, and the worthiness of men differ. This is evident.

For example, take a number of children of one family, of one place, of one school, instructed by one teacher, reared on the same food, in the same climate, with the same clothing, and studying the same lessons -- it is certain that among these children some will be clever in the sciences, some will be of average ability, and some dull. Hence it is clear that in the original nature there exists a difference of degree and varieties of worthiness and capacity. This difference does not imply good or evil but is simply a difference of degree. One has the highest degree, another the medium degree, and another the lowest degree. So man exists; the animal, the plant and the mineral exist also -- but the degrees of these four existences vary. What a difference between the existence of man and of the animal! Yet both are existences. It is evident that in existence there are differences of degrees.

The variety of inherited qualities comes from strength and weakness of constitution -- that is to say, when the two parents are weak, the <p260> children will be weak; if they are strong, the children will be robust.

In the same way, purity of blood has a great effect; for the pure germ is like the superior stock which exists in plants and animals.

For example, you see that children born from a weak and feeble father and mother will naturally have a feeble constitution and weak nerves; they will be afflicted and will have neither patience, nor endurance, nor resolution, nor perseverance, and will be hasty; for the children inherit the weakness and debility of their parents.

Besides this, an especial blessing is conferred on some families and some generations.

Thus it is an especial blessing that from among the descendants of Abraham should have come all the Prophets of the children of Israel.

This is a blessing that God has granted to this descent: to Moses from his father and mother, to Christ from his mother's line; also to Muhammad and the Bab, and to all the Prophets and the Holy Manifestations of Israel.

The Blessed Beauty[1] is also a lineal descendant of Abraham, for Abraham had other sons besides Ishmael and Isaac who in those days migrated to the lands of Persia and Afghanistan, and the Blessed Beauty is one of their descendants.

Hence it is evident that inherited character also exists, and to such a degree that if the characters are not in conformity with their origin, although they belong physically to that lineage, spiritually they are not considered members of the family, like Canaan,[2] who is not reckoned as being of the race of Noah.
[1 Baha'u'llah]
[2 Cf. Genesis 9:25]

But the difference of the qualities with regard to culture is very great, for education has great influence. Through education the ignorant become learned; the cowardly become valiant. Through cultivation the crooked branch becomes straight; the acid, bitter fruit of the mountains and woods becomes sweet and delicious; and the five-petaled flower becomes hundred-petaled. Through education savage nations become civilized, and even the animals become domesticated. Education must be considered as most important, for as diseases in the world of bodies are extremely contagious, so, in the same way, qualities of spirit and heart are extremely contagious. Education has a universal influence, and the differences caused by it are very great. <p261>

Perhaps someone will say that, since the capacity and worthiness of men differ, therefore, the difference of capacity certainly causes the difference of characters.[1]
[1 i.e. therefore people cannot be blamed for their character.]

But this is not so, for capacity is of two kinds: natural capacity and acquired capacity. The first, which is the creation of God, is purely good -- in the creation of God there is no evil; but the acquired capacity has become the cause of the appearance of evil. For example, God has created all men in such a

manner and has given them such a constitution and such capacities that they are benefited by sugar and honey and harmed and destroyed by poison. This nature and constitution is innate, and God has given it equally to all mankind. But man begins little by little to accustom himself to poison by taking a small quantity each day, and gradually increasing it, until he reaches such a point that he cannot live without a gram of opium every day. The natural capacities are thus completely perverted. Observe how much the natural capacity and constitution can be changed, until by different habits and training they become entirely perverted. One does not criticize vicious people because of their innate capacities and nature, but rather for their acquired capacities and nature.

In creation there is no evil; all is good. Certain qualities and natures innate in some men and apparently blameworthy are not so in reality. For example, from the beginning of his life you can see in a nursing child the signs of greed, of anger and of temper. Then, it may be said, good and evil are innate in the reality of man, and this is contrary to the pure goodness of nature and creation. The answer to this is that greed, which is to ask for something more, is a praiseworthy quality provided that it is used suitably. So if a man is greedy to acquire science and knowledge, or to become compassionate, generous, and just, it is most praiseworthy. If he exercises his anger and wrath against the bloodthirsty tyrants who are like ferocious beasts, it is very praiseworthy; but if he does not use these qualities in a right way, they are blameworthy.

("Some Answered Questions", pp. 212-15)

589. As to the difference between that material civilization now prevailing, and the divine civilization which will be one of the benefits to derive from <p262> the House of Justice, it is this: material civilization, through the power of punitive and retaliatory laws, restraineth the people from criminal acts; and notwithstanding this, while laws to retaliate against and punish a man are continually proliferating, as ye can see, no laws exist to reward him. In all the cities of Europe and America, vast buildings have been erected to serve as jails for the criminals.

Divine civilization, however, so traineth every member of society that no one, with the exception of a negligible few, will undertake to commit a crime. There is thus a great difference between the prevention of crime through measures that are violent and retaliatory, and so training the people, and enlightening them, and spiritualizing them, that without any fear of punishment or vengeance to come, they will shun all criminal acts. They will, indeed, look upon the very commission of a crime as a great disgrace and in itself the harshest of punishments. They will become enamoured of human perfections, and will consecrate their lives to whatever will bring light to the world and will further those qualities which are acceptable at the Holy Threshold of God.

See then how wide is the difference between material civilization and divine. With force and punishments, material civilization seeketh to restrain the

people from mischief, from inflicting harm on society and committing crimes. But in a divine civilization, the individual is so conditioned that with no fear of punishment, he shunneth the perpetration of crimes, seeth the crime itself as the severest of torments, and with alacrity and joy, setteth himself to acquiring the virtues of humankind, to furthering human progress, and to spreading light across the world.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 105, pp. 132-33)

590. Among the safeguards of the Holy Faith is the training of children, and this is among the weightiest of principles in all the Divine Teachings. Thus from the very beginning mothers must rear their infants in the cradle of good morals -- for it is the mothers who are the first educators - -so that, when the child cometh to maturity, he will prove to be endowed with all the virtues and qualities that are worthy of praise.

And further, according to the Divine commandments, every child must learn reading and writing, and acquire such branches of knowledge as are useful and necessary, as well as learning an art or skill. The utmost <p263> care must be devoted to these matters; any neglect of them, any failure to act on them, is not permissible.

Observe how many penal institutions, houses of detention and places of torture are made ready to receive the sons of men, the purpose being to prevent them, by punitive measures, from committing terrible crimes -- whereas this very torment and punishment only increaseth depravity, and by such means the desired aim cannot be properly achieved.

Therefore must the individual be trained from his infancy in such a way that he will never undertake to commit a crime, will, rather, direct all his energies to the acquisition of excellence, and will look upon the very commission of an evil deed as in itself the harshest of all punishments, considering the sinful act itself to be far more grievous than any prison sentence. For it is possible so to train the individual that, although crime may not be completely done away with, still it will become very rare.

The purport is this, that to train the character of humankind is one of the weightiest commandments of God, and the influence of such training is the same as that which the sun exerteth over tree and fruit. Children must be most carefully watched over, protected and trained; in such consisteth true parenthood and parental mercy.

Otherwise, the children will turn into weeds growing wild, and become the cursed, Infernal Tree,[1] knowing not right from wrong, distinguishing not the highest of human qualities from all that is mean and vile; they will be brought up in vainglory, and will be hated of the Forgiving Lord.
[1 The Zaqqum, Qur'an 37:60, 44:43]

Wherefore doth every child, new-risen in the garden of Heavenly love, require the utmost training and care.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

591. The root cause of wrongdoing is ignorance, and we must therefore hold fast to the tools of perception and knowledge. Good character must be taught. Light must be spread afar, so that, in the school of humanity, all may acquire the heavenly characteristics of the spirit, and see for themselves beyond any doubt that there is no fiercer Hell, no more fiery abyss, than to possess a character that is evil and unsound; no more <p264> darksome pit nor loathsome torment than to show forth qualities which deserve to be condemned.

The individual must be educated to such a high degree that he would rather have his throat cut than tell a lie, and would think it easier to be slashed with a sword or pierced with a spear than to utter calumny or be carried away by wrath.

Thus will be kindled the sense of human dignity and pride, to burn away the reapings of lustful appetites. Then will each one of God's beloved shine out as a bright moon with qualities of the spirit, and the relationship of each to the Sacred Threshold of his Lord will be not illusory but sound and real, will be as the very foundation of the building, not some embellishment on its facade.

It followeth that the children's school must be a place of utmost discipline and order, that instruction must be thorough, and provision must be made for the rectification and refinement of character; so that, in his earliest years, within the very essence of the child, the divine foundation will be laid and the structure of holiness raised up.

Know that this matter of instruction, of character rectification and refinement, of heartening and encouraging the child, is of the utmost importance, for such are basic principles of God.

Thus, if God will, out of these spiritual schools illumined children will arise, adorned with all the fairest virtues of humankind, and will shed their light not only across Persia, but around the world.

It is extremely difficult to teach the individual and refine his character once puberty is passed. By then, as experience has shown, even if every effort be exerted to modify some tendency of his, it all availeth nothing. He may, perhaps, improve somewhat today; but let a few days pass and he forgetteth, and turneth backward to his habitual condition and accustomed ways. Therefore it is in early childhood that a firm foundation must be laid. While the branch is green and tender it can easily be made straight.

Our meaning is that qualities of the spirit are the basic and divine foundation, and adorn the true essence of man; and knowledge is the cause of human progress. The beloved of God must attach great importance to this matter, and carry it forward with enthusiasm and zeal.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 111) pp. 136-37) <p265>

592. Were there no educator, all souls would remain savage, and were it not for the teacher, the children would be ignorant creatures.

It is for this reason that, in this new cycle, education and training are recorded in the Book of God as obligatory and not voluntary. That is, it is enjoined upon the father and mother, as a duty, to strive with all effort to train the daughter and the son, to nurse them from the breast of knowledge and to rear them in the bosom of sciences and arts. Should they neglect this matter, they shall be held responsible and worthy of reproach in the presence of the stern Lord.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 98, pp. 126-27)

593. And among the teachings of Baha'u'llah is the promotion of education. Every child must be instructed in sciences as much as is necessary. If the parents are able to provide the expenses of this education, it is well, otherwise the community must provide the means for the teaching of that child.

(From a letter written by 'Abdu'l-Baha to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace, The Hague, (December 17, 1919), p.12; also published in "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 227, p. 304)

594. There are certain pillars which have been established as the unshakable supports of the Faith of God. The mightiest of these is learning and the use of the mind, the expansion of consciousness, and insight into the realities of the universe and the hidden mysteries of Almighty God.

To promote knowledge is thus an inescapable duty imposed on every one of the friends of God. It is incumbent upon that Spiritual Assembly, that assemblage of God, to exert every effort to educate the children, so that from infancy they will be trained in Baha'i conduct and the ways of God, and will, even as young plants, thrive and flourish in the soft-flowing waters that are the counsels and admonitions of the Blessed Beauty. Work then with heart and soul, loose your tongues to further this endeavour, sacrifice your possessions so that the School of 'Ishqabad will ever advance in discipline and order.[1]
[1 Cf. "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.] (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), Sec. 97, p. 126]

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian) <p266>

595. Thou didst write as to the children: From the very beginning, the children must receive divine education and must continually be reminded to remember their God. Let the love of God pervade their inmost being, commingled with their mother's milk.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 99, p. 127)

596. My wish is that these children should receive a Baha'i education, so that they may progress both here and in the Kingdom, and rejoice thy heart.

In a time to come, morals will degenerate to an extreme degree. It is essential that children be reared in the Baha'i way, that they may find happiness both in this world and the next. If not, they shall be beset by sorrows and troubles, for human happiness is founded upon spiritual behaviour.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 100, p. 127)

597. Child education is a matter of the utmost importance. The infant, while yet a suckling, must receive Baha'i training, and the loving spirit of Christ and Baha'u'llah must be breathed into him, that he may be reared in accord with the verities of the Gospel and the Most Holy Book.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

598. O thou who gazest upon the Kingdom of God!
Thy letter was received and we note that thou art engaged in teaching the children of the believers, that these tender little ones have been learning the Hidden Words and the prayers and what it meaneth to be a Baha'i.

The instruction of these children is even as the work of a loving gardener who tendeth his young plants in the flowering fields of the All-Glorious. There is no doubt that it will yield the desired results; especially is this true of instruction as to Baha'i obligations and Baha'i conduct, for the little children must needs be made aware in their very heart and soul that "Baha'i" is not just a name but a truth. Every child must be trained in the things of the spirit, so that he may embody all the virtues and become a source of glory to the Cause of God. Otherwise, the mere word "Baha'i", if it yield no fruit, will come to nothing. <p267>

Strive then to the best of thine ability to let these children know that a Baha'i is one who embodieth all the perfections, that he must shine out like a lighted taper -- not be darkness upon darkness and yet bear the name "Baha'i".

Name thou this school the Baha'i Sunday School.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

599. We have previously written and sent out a detailed letter regarding the education of children in faith, certitude, learning and spiritual knowledge, and their being taught to call upon the Heavenly Kingdom with suppliant hearts.

It is certain that ye will exert every effort toward this end.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

600. As to thy question regarding the education of children: It behoveth thee to nurture them at the breast of the love of God, and urge them onward to the things of the spirit -- that they may turn their faces unto God; that their ways may conform to the rules of good conduct and their character be second to none; that they make their own all the graces and praiseworthy qualities of humankind; that they acquire a sound knowledge of the various branches of learning -- so that from the very beginning of life they may become spiritual beings, dwellers in the Kingdom, enamoured of the sweet breaths of holiness, and may receive an education religious, spiritual, and of the Heavenly Realm. Verily will I call upon God to grant them a happy outcome in this.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 122, p. 142)

601. Exert every effort to acquire the various branches of knowledge and true understanding. Strain every nerve to achieve both material and spiritual accomplishments. Encourage the children from their earliest years to master every kind of learning, and make them eager to become skilled in every art -- the aim being that through the favouring grace of God, the heart of each one may become even as a mirror disclosing the secrets of the universe, penetrating the innermost reality of all things; and that each may earn world-wide fame in all branches of knowledge, science and the arts. <p268>

Certainly, certainly, neglect not the education of the children. Rear them to be possessed of spiritual qualities, and be assured of the gifts and favours of the Lord.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

602. O ye two servants at the Holy Threshold! We have been greatly cheered and refreshed to know that ye have organized meetings for the education of children. Whoso is active in those meetings whether as a teacher of the children or a sponsor, will certainly become the recipient of confirmations from the invisible Realm, and endless bounties will compass him about.

With great joy, therefore, encouragement is offered for this highly laudable endeavour that ye may witness an exceeding great reward.

Await ye the sure and certain confirmations of the All-Merciful.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

603. O ye two well-loved handmaids of God! Whatever a man's tongue speaketh, that let him prove by his deeds. If he claimeth to be a believer, then let him act in accordance with the precepts of the Abha Kingdom.

Praised be God, ye two have demonstrated the truth of your words by your deeds, and have won the confirmations of the Lord God. Every day at first light, ye gather the Baha'i children together and teach them the communes and prayers. This is a most praiseworthy act, and bringeth joy to the children's hearts: that they should, at every morn, turn their faces toward the Kingdom and make mention of the Lord and praise His Name, and in the sweetest of voices, chant and recite.

These children are even as young plants, and teaching them the prayers is as letting the rain pour down upon them, that they may wax tender and fresh, and the soft breezes of the love of God may blow over them, making them to tremble with joy.

Blessedness awaiteth you, and a fair haven.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 115, p. 139)

604. O thou steadfast in the Covenant!
Your letter hath come and imparted great delight, with its word that, praised be God, the youth of the Abha paradise are verdant and tender, from showers scattered out of clouds of heavenly grace; that they thrive <p269> and flourish

in the April rains of heavenly guidance, and are progressing day by day.

It is certain that each and every one of them will grow to be as a banner of guidance, a symbol of the bestowals that come from the Realm of the All-Glorious. They will be sweet-singing nightingales in the gardens of knowledge, gazelles delicate and comely, roaming the plains of the love of God. You must attach the greatest importance to the education of children, for this is the foundation of the Law of God, and the bedrock of the edifice of His Faith.

If it were known how much joy you have imparted through what hath been done for the children, the believers would surely educate all their children in the same way.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

605. O true companions!
All humankind are as children in a school, and the Dawning-Points of Light, the Sources of divine revelation, are the teachers, wondrous and without peer. In the school of realities they educate these sons and daughters, according to teachings from God, and foster them in the bosom of grace, so that they may develop along every line, show forth the excellent gifts and blessings of the Lord, and combine human perfections; that they may advance in all aspects of human endeavour, whether outward or inward, hidden or visible, material or spiritual, until they make of this mortal world a wide-spread mirror, to reflect that other world which dieth not.

... Because, in this most momentous of ages, the Sun of Truth hath risen at the highest point of the spring equinox, and cast its rays on every clime, it shall kindle such tremulous excitement, it shall release such vibrations in the world of being, it shall stimulate such growth and development, it shall stream out with such a glory of light, and clouds of grace shall pour down such plentiful waters, and fields and plains shall teem with such a galaxy of sweet-smelling plants and blooms, that this lowly earth will become the Abha Kingdom, and this nether world the world above. Then will this fleck of dust be as the vast circle of the skies, this human place the palace-court of God, this spot of clay the Dayspring of the endless favours of the Lord of Lords. <p270>

Wherefore, O loved ones of God! Make ye a mighty effort till you yourselves betoken this advancement and all these confirmations, and become focal centres of God's blessings, daysprings of the light of His unity, promoters of the gifts and graces of civilized life. Be ye in that land vanguards of the perfections of humankind; carry forward the various branches of knowledge, be active and progressive in the field of inventions and the arts. Endeavour to rectify the conduct of men, and seek to excel the whole world in moral character. While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly grace, foster them in the cradle of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to

dedicate their lives to matters of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies that will benefit mankind.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 102, pp. 128-29)

606. 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 <p271> 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'an 25:55, 35:13, 55:19-25. See also Marriage Prayer revealed by 'Abdu'l-Baha beginning "He is God! O Peerless Lord! In thine almighty wisdom Thou hast enjoined marriage..."]
[2 See "Some Answered Questions, pp. 328-29 for 'Abdu'l-Baha's comments on the arc of descent and ascent.]

Every child is potentially the light of the world -- and at the same time its triple darkness; wherefore must the question of education be accounted as of primary importance. From his infancy, the child must be nursed at the breast of God's love, and nurtured in the embrace of His knowledge, that he may radiate light, grow in spirituality, be filled with wisdom and learning, and take on the characteristics of the angelic host. Since ye have been assigned to this holy task, ye must therefore exert every effort to make that school famed in all respects throughout the world; to make it the cause of exalting the Word of the Lord.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 103, pp. 129-31)

607. Among the greatest of all services that can possibly be rendered by man to Almighty God is the education and training of children, young plants of the Abha Paradise, so that these children, fostered by grace in the way of salvation, growing like pearls of divine bounty in the shell of education, will one day bejewel the crown of abiding glory. It is, however, very difficult to undertake this service, even harder to succeed in it. I hope that thou wilt acquit thyself well in this most important of tasks, and successfully carry the day, and become an ensign of God's abounding grace; that these children, reared one and all in the holy Teachings, will develop natures like unto the sweet airs that blow across the gardens of the All-Glorious, and will waft their fragrance around the world.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 106, pp. 133-34) <p272>

608. Blessed art thou, since thou art engaged in rendering a service which will make thy face to shine in the Abha Kingdom, and that is the education and training of children. If one should, in the right way, teach and train the children, he will be performing a service than which none is greater at the sacred Threshold. According to what we have heard, you are succeeding in this. You must, however, struggle unceasingly to perfect yourself and win ever higher achievements.

At all times, I implore Almighty God to make you the means of illuminating the minds of those children, of bringing their hearts to life and sanctifying their souls.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

609. It is the hope of 'Abdu'l-Baha that those youthful souls in the schoolroom of the deeper knowledge will be tended by one who traineth them to love. May they all, throughout the reaches of the spirit, learn well of the hidden mysteries; so well that in the Kingdom of All- Glorious, each one of them, even as a nightingale endowed with speech, will cry out the secrets of the Heavenly Realm, and like unto a longing lover pour forth his sore need and utter want of the Beloved.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 107, p. 134)

610. O thou handmaid of God! Do thou establish a heavenly school and be thou a teacher in that house of learning. Educate the children in the things of God; and, even as pearls, rear them in the heart of the shell of divine guidance. Strive thou with heart and soul; see to it that the children are raised up to embody the highest perfections of humankind, to such a degree that every one of them will be trained in the use of the mind, in acquiring knowledge, in humility and lowliness, in dignity, in ardour and love.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

611. Make ye inquiries as to a woman teacher. She must be extremely modest, even-tempered, forbearing, and well bred, and she must be expert in the English language.

(From a Tablet - translated from the persian) <p273>

612. In thy school, instruct thou God's children in the customs of the Kingdom. Be thou a teacher of love, in a school of unity. Train thou the children of the friends of the Merciful in the rules and ways of His loving-kindness. Tend the young trees of the Abha Paradise with the welling waters of His grace and peace and joy. Make them to flourish under the downpour of His bounty. Strive with all thy powers that the children may stand out and grow fresh, delicate, and sweet, like the ideal trees in the gardens of Heaven.

All these gifts and bounties depend upon love for the Beauty of the All-Glorious, and on the blessings in the teachings of the Most High, and the spiritual instructions of the Supreme Concourse, and on ecstasy and ardour and diligent pursuit of whatsoever will redound to the eternal honour of the community of man.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

613. Make every effort to acquire the advanced knowledge of the day, and strain every nerve to carry forward the divine civilization. Establish schools that are well organized, and promote the fundamentals of instruction in the various branches of knowledge through teachers who are pure and sanctified, distinguished for their high standards of conduct and general excellence, and strong in faith; scholars and educators with a thorough knowledge of sciences and arts.

It is incumbent upon the exalted body of the Hands of the Cause of God to watch over and protect these schools in every way, and see to their requirements, so that all the means of progress will continually be at hand, and the lights of learning will illumine the whole world.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

614. O thou steadfast in the Covenant!
In reply to thy letter, I am obliged to be brief: Praise thou God that thou hast succeeded in becoming a teacher of young Baha'is, young trees of the Abha Paradise, and at the same time art able to benefit the other children as well. According to the explicit divine Text, teaching the children is indispensable and obligatory. It followeth that teachers are servants of the Lord God, since they have arisen to perform this task, which is the same <p274> as worship. You must therefore offer praise with every breath, for you are educating your spiritual children. The spiritual father is greater than the physical one, for the latter bestoweth but this world's life, whereas the former endoweth his child with life everlasting. This is why, in the Law of God, teachers are listed among the heirs.

Now you in reality have acquired all these spiritual children free and gratis, and that is better than having physical children; for such children are not grateful to their fathers, since they feel that the father serveth them because he must -- and therefore no matter what he doeth for them, they pay it no mind. Spiritual children, however, are always appreciative of their father's loving

kindness. This verily is out of the grace of thy Lord, the Beneficent.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

615. O thou who art steadfast in the Covenant!
Thou hast exerted strenuous efforts for the education of children and I have been, and am, infinitely pleased with thee. Praise God, thou hast been enabled to serve in this field, and it is certain that the confirmations of the Abha Kingdom will encompass thee, and thou shalt achieve prosperity and success.

Today the training and education of the believers' children is the pre-eminent goal of the chosen. It is the same as servitude to the Sacred Threshold and waiting upon the Blessed Beauty. Joyously, therefore, canst thou pride thyself on this.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

616. O thou teacher of the children of the kingdom! Thou hast arisen to perform a service which would justly entitle thee to vaunt thyself over all the teachers on earth. For the teachers of this world make use of human education to develop the powers, whether spiritual or material, of humankind, whilst thou art training these young plants in the gardens of God according to the education of Heaven, and art giving them the lessons of the Kingdom. The result of this kind of teaching will be that it will attract the blessings of God, and make manifest the perfections of man. <p275>

Hold thou fast to this kind of teaching, for the fruits of it will be very great. The children must, from their infancy, be raised to be spiritual and godly Baha'is. If such be their training, they will remain safe from every test.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

617. O ye recipients of the favours of God!
In this new and wondrous Age, the unshakable foundation is the teaching of sciences and arts. According to explicit Holy Texts, every child must be taught crafts and arts, to the degree that is needful. Wherefore, in every city and village, schools must be established and every child in that city or village is to engage in study to the necessary degree.

It followeth that whatever soul shall offer his aid to bring this about will assuredly be accepted at the Heavenly Threshold, and extolled by the Company on High.

Since ye have striven hard toward this all important end, it is my hope that ye will reap your reward from the Lord of clear tokens and signs, and that the glances of heavenly grace will turn your way.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 109, pp. 13435)

618. O ye of high resolve and noble aims!
Your letter was eloquent, its contents original and sensitively expressed, and it betokened your great and praiseworthy efforts to educate the children, both

girls and boys. This is among the most important of all human endeavours. Every possible means of education must be made available to Baha'i children, tender plants of the divine garden, for in this consisteth the illumination of humankind.

Praised be God, the friends in 'Ishqabad have laid a solid foundation, an unassailable base. It was in the City of Love that the first Baha'i House of Worship was erected; and today in this city the means for the education of children are also being developed, inasmuch as even during the war years this duty was not neglected, and indeed deficiencies were made up for. Now must ye widen the scope of your endeavours and draw up plans to establish schools for higher education, so that the City of Love will become the Baha'i focal centre for science and the arts. Thanks to the bountiful assistance of the Blessed Beauty, means for this will be provided. <p276>

Devote ye particular attention to the school for girls, for the greatness of this wondrous Age will be manifested as a result of progress in the world of women. This is why ye observe that in every land the world of women is on the march, and this is due to the impact of the Most Great Manifestation, and the power of the teachings of God.

Instruction in the schools must begin with instruction in religion. Following religious training, and the binding of the child's heart to the love of God, proceed with his education in the other branches of knowledge.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

619. One of the friends hath sent us a letter regarding the school at 'Ishqabad, to the effect that, praised be God, the friends there are now working hard to get the school in order, and have appointed teachers well qualified for their task, and that from this time forward the greatest care will be devoted to the supervision and management of the school.

It is likewise my hope that the favours and bestowals of God, the bountiful King, will encompass you, so that the friends may come to excel the others in all things.

One of the most important of undertakings is the education of children, for success and prosperity depend upon service to and worship of God, the Holy, the All- Glorified.

Among the greatest of all great services is the education of children, and promotion of the various sciences, crafts and arts. Praised be God, ye are now exerting strenuous efforts toward this end. The more ye persevere in this most important task, the more will ye witness the confirmations of God, to such a degree that ye yourselves will be astonished.

This verily is a matter beyond all doubt, a pledge that shall certainly be redeemed.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

620. The services ye are rendering in support of the Ta'yid School merit the highest praise. It is certain that God in His bounty will send down His manifold, heavenly blessings upon you.

The believers are in duty bound to establish schools where children can acquire knowledge, and since these friends have pledged themselves to make sacrifices in this connection, and are contributing to the support <p277> of the Ta'yid School, 'Abdu'l-Baha in all lowliness and submission offereth thanks and praise to the Kingdom of Mysteries. He asketh that bounties will be sent down unto you, and peace of mind, so that ye may succeed in rendering this most laudable service with ease and joy.

O Thou Provider! These souls are doing good. Make them dear to both worlds, make them the recipients of measureless grace. Thou art the Powerful, Thou art the Able, Thou art the Giver, the Bestower, the Incomparable Lord.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

621. What thou hadst written as to the school is a cause for great rejoicing, and delighteth the heart. The friends one and all were cheered and refreshed by this news.

This school is one of the vital and essential institutions which indeed support and bulwark the edifice of humankind. God willing, it will develop and be perfected along every line. Once this school hath, in every respect, been perfected, once it hath been made to flourish and to surpass all other schools, then, each following the other, more and more schools must be established.

Our meaning is that the friends must direct their attention toward the education and training of all the children of Persia, so that all of them, having, in the school of true learning, achieved the power of understanding and come to know the inner realities of the universe, will go on to uncover the signs and mysteries of God, and will find themselves illumined by the lights of the knowledge of the Lord, and by His love. This truly is the very best way to educate all peoples.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

622. Make ye every effort to improve the Tarbiyat School and to develop order and discipline in this institution. Utilize every means to make this School a garden of the All- Merciful, from which the lights of learning will cast their beams, and wherein the children, whether Baha'i or other, will be educated to such a degree as to become God's gifts to man, and the pride of the human race. Let them make the greatest progress in the shortest span of time, let them open wide their eyes and uncover the inner realities of all things, become proficient in every art and skill, and learn <p278> to comprehend the secrets of all things even as they are -- this faculty being one of the clearly evident effects of servitude to the Holy Threshold. It is certain that ye will make every effort to bring this about, will also draw up plans for the opening of a number of schools. These schools for academic studies must at the same time be training centres in behaviour and conduct, and they must favour character and

conduct above the sciences and arts. Good behaviour and high moral character must come first, for unless the character be trained, acquiring knowledge will only prove injurious. Knowledge is praiseworthy when it is coupled with ethical conduct and virtuous character; otherwise it is a deadly poison, a frightful danger. A physician of evil character, and who betrayeth his trust, can bring on death, and become the source of numerous infirmities and diseases.

Devote ye the utmost attention to this matter, for the basic, the foundation-principle of a school is first and foremost moral training, character and the rectification of conduct.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

623. The All-Merciful hath created humankind for the adornment of this contingent world, so that men may array the earth with the manifold blessings of Heaven; that the inner reality of the human being may, like unto a lamp of the spirit, cause the community of man to become as a mirror for the assemblage on high.

It is clear that learning is the greatest bestowal of God; that knowledge and the acquirement thereof is a blessing from Heaven. Thus is it incumbent upon the friends of God to exert such an effort and strive with such eagerness to promote divine knowledge, culture and the sciences, that erelong those who are schoolchildren today will become the most erudite of all the fraternity of the wise. This is a service rendered unto God Himself; and it is one of His inescapable commandments.

Wherefore, O loving friends, strive with heart and soul and strength to make the Tarbiyat School a center of enlightenment, and a well-spring of truth, that the children of God may shine with the rays of boundless learning, and that these tender plants of the divine garden may grow and flourish in the grace that showereth down from the clouds of knowledge and true understanding, and advance to such a degree as to astonish the company of those who know. <p279>

I swear by the bounty of God's wisdom that if they win this great prize, the members of the Tarbiyat School will be admitted to the assemblage of God, and that unto them, beyond a peradventure, the portals of His grace will open wide.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

624. God be praised that ye have succeeded in establishing a school in Mihdiyabad and are, with great energy and enthusiasm, engaged in educating the children.

In this new and wondrous Cause, the advancement of all branches of knowledge is a fixed and vital principle, and the friends, one and all, are obligated to make every effort toward this end, so that the Cause of the Manifest Light may be spread abroad, and that every child, according to his need, will receive his share of the sciences and arts -- until not even a single peasant's child will be found who is completely devoid of schooling.

It is essential that the fundamentals of knowledge be taught; essential that

all should be able to read and write. Wherefore is this new institution most worthy of praise, and its programme to be encouraged. The hope is that other villages will take you for a model, and that in every village where there is a certain number of believers, a school will be founded where the children can study reading, writing, and basic knowledge.

This is what bringeth joy to the heart of 'Abdu'l-Baha, cheer and peace to His soul.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

625. The method of instruction which ye have established, beginning with proofs of the existence of God and the oneness of God, the mission of the Prophets and Messengers and Their teachings, and the wonders of the universe, is highly suitable. Keep on with this. It is certain that the confirmations of God will attend you. It is also highly praiseworthy to memorize the Tablets, divine verses and sacred traditions.

Ye will surely exert every effort in teaching, and in furthering understanding.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian) <p280>

626. As to the children: From the age of five their formal education must begin. That is, during the daytime they should be looked after in a place where there are teachers, and should learn good conduct.

Here they should be taught, in play, some letters and words and a little reading -- as it is done in certain countries where they fashion letters and words out of sweets and give them to the child. For example, they make an "a" out of candy and say its name is "a", or make a candy "b" and call it "b", and so on with the rest of the alphabet, giving these to the young child. In this way, children will soon learn their letters...

When the children are ready for bed, let the mother read or sing them the Odes of the Blessed Beauty, so that from their earliest years they will be educated by these verses of guidance.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

627. Thou didst ask as to the education of children. Those children who, sheltered by the Blessed Tree, have set foot upon the world, those who are cradled in the Faith and are nurtured at the breast of grace -- such must from the beginning receive spiritual training directly from their mothers. That is, the mother must continually call God to mind and make mention of Him, and tell of His greatness, and instill the fear of Him in the child, and rear the child gently, in the way of tenderness, and in extreme cleanliness. Thus from the very beginning of life every child will be refreshed by the gentle wafting of the love of God and will tremble with joy at the sweet scent of heavenly guidance. In this lieth the beginning of the process; it is the essential basis of all the rest.

And when the child hath reached the age where he can make distinctions, let him

be placed in a Baha'i school, in which at the beginning the Holy Texts are recited and religious concepts are taught. At this school the child is to study reading and writing as well as some fundamentals of the various branches of knowledge, such as can be learned by children.

At the start the teacher must place a pen in the child's hand, arrange the children in groups, and instruct each group according to its capacity. When the children have, in a given place, been seated in rows, and each holdeth a pen, and each hath a paper before him, and the teacher hath suspended a blackboard in front of the children, let him write thereon with his chalk and have the children copy what he hath written. For <p281> example, let the teacher write an alif (a) and say, "This is an alif." Let the children then copy it and repeat: "This is an alif." And so on, till the end of the alphabet. As soon as they properly recognize the letters, let the teacher make combinations of the letters, while the children follow his lead, writing the combinations on their paper, until, by this method, they come to recognize all the letters, singly and combined in words. Let the teacher then proceed to writing sentences, while the children copy what he hath written, each on his own sheet of paper. Let the teacher then explain the meaning of the sentence to the children.

And once they have become skilled in the Persian tongue, let the teacher first translate and write out single words and ask the students the meaning of those words. If a pupil hath grasped a little of this, and hath translated the word, let the teacher praise him; if all the students are unable to accomplish this, let the teacher write the foreign language translation beneath the given word. For example, let him write sama (heaven) in Arabic, and ask: "How do we say this in Persian?" If one of the children replieth, "The Persian translation of this word is asiman", let the teacher praise and encourage him. If they are unable to answer, let the teacher himself give the translation and write it down, and let the children copy it.

Later, let the teacher ask: "How do they say this in Russian, or French, or Turkish?" If they know the answer, excellent. If not, let the teacher say, "In Russian, or French, the translation is thus and so", write the word on the board, and have the children copy it down. When the children have become skilled in translating single words, let the teacher combine the words into a sentence, write this on the board and ask the children to translate it. If they are unable, let the teacher himself translate the sentence and write down the translation. It would of course be preferable for him to make use of several languages.

In this way, over a short period -- that is, three years- -the children will, as a result of writing the words down, become fully proficient in a number of languages, and will be able to translate a passage from one language to another. Once they have become skilled in these fundamentals, let them go on to learning the elements of the other branches of knowledge, and once they have completed this study, let each one who is able and hath a keen desire for it, enroll in higher institutions of learning and study advanced courses in the sciences and arts. <p282>

Not all, however, will be able to engage in these advanced studies. Therefore, such children must be sent to industrial schools where they can also acquire technical skills, and once the child becomes proficient in such a skill, then let consideration be given to the child's own preference and inclinations. If a child hath a liking for commerce, then let him choose commerce; if industry, then industry; if for higher education, then the advancement of knowledge; if for some other of the responsibilities of humankind, then that. Let him be placed in the field for which he hath an inclination, a desire, and a talent.

But the indispensable basis of all is that he should develop spiritual characteristics and the praiseworthy virtues of humankind. This is the primary consideration. If a person be unlettered, and yet clothed with divine excellence, and alive in the breaths of the Spirit, that individual will contribute to the welfare of society, and his inability to read and write will do him no harm. And if a person be versed in the arts and every branch of knowledge, and not live a religious life, and not take on the characteristics of God, and not be directed by a pure intent, and be engrossed in the life of the flesh -- then he is harm personified, and nothing will come of all his learning and intellectual accomplishments but scandal and torment.

If, however, an individual hath spiritual characteristics, and virtues that shine out, and his purpose in life be spiritual and his inclinations be directed toward God, and he also study other branches of knowledge -- then we have light upon light:[1] his outer being luminous, his private character radiant, his heart sound, his thought elevated, his understanding swift, his rank noble.
[1 Qur'an 24:35]

Blessed is he who attaineth this exalted station. (From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

628. The subjects to be taught in children's school are many, and for lack of time We can touch on only a few: First and most important is training in behaviour and good character; the rectification of qualities; arousing the desire to become accomplished and acquire perfections, and to cleave unto the religion of God and stand firm in His Laws: to accord total obedience to every just government, to show forth loyalty and <p283> trustworthiness to the ruler of the time, to be well wishers of mankind, to be kind to all.

And further, as well as in the ideals of character, instruction in such arts and sciences as are of benefit, and in foreign tongues. Also, the repeating of prayers for the well-being of ruler and ruled; and the avoidance of materialistic works that are current among those who see only natural causation, and tales of love, and books that arouse the passions.

To sum up, let all the lessons be entirely devoted to the acquisition of human perfections. Here, then, in brief are directions for the curriculum of these schools.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

629. As to the organization of the schools: If possible the children should all wear the same kind of clothing, even if the fabric is varied. It is preferable that the fabric as well should be uniform; if, however, this is not possible, there is no harm done. The more cleanly the pupils are, the better; they should be immaculate. The school must be located in a place where the air is delicate and pure. The children must be carefully trained to be most courteous and well-behaved. They must be constantly encouraged and made eager to gain all the summits of human accomplishment, so that from their earliest years they will be taught to have high aims, to conduct themselves well, to be chaste, pure, and undefiled, and will learn to be of powerful resolve and firm of purpose in all things. Let them not jest and trifle, but earnestly advance unto their goals, so that in every situation they will be found resolute and firm.

Training in morals and good conduct is far more important than book learning. A child that is cleanly, agreeable, of good character, well-behaved -- even though he be ignorant -- is preferable to a child that is rude, unwashed, ill-natured, and yet becoming deeply versed in all the sciences and arts. The reason for this is that the child who conducts himself well, even though he be ignorant, is of benefit to others, while an ill-natured, ill-behaved child is corrupted and harmful to others, even though he be learned. If, however, the child be trained to be both learned and good, the result is light upon light.

Children are even as a branch that is fresh and green; they will grow up in whatever way you train them. Take the utmost care to give them <p284> high ideals and goals, so that once they come of age, they will cast their beams like brilliant candles on the world, and will not be defiled by lusts and passions in the way of animals, heedless and unaware, but instead will set their hearts on achieving everlasting honour and acquiring all the excellences of humankind.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 110, pp. 135-36)

630. As to the education of children, exert every effort to further this; it is of the utmost importance. So too, the education of girls in all the rules of righteous conduct, that they may grow up with a good character and high standards of behaviour. For mothers are the first educators of the child, and every child at the beginning of life is like a fresh and tender branch in his parents' hands. His father and mother can train him in any way they choose.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

631. The school for girls taketh precedence over the school for boys, for it is incumbent upon the girls of this glorious era to be fully versed in the various branches of knowledge, in sciences and the arts and all the wonders of this pre-eminent time, that they may then educate their children and train them from their earliest days in the ways of perfection.

If, as she ought, the mother possesseth the learning and accomplishments of humankind, her children, like unto angels, will be fostered in all excellence, in right conduct and beauty. Therefore the School for Girls that hath been

established in that place must be made the object of the deep concern and high endeavours of the friends. The teachers of that school are handmaids close to the Sacred Threshold, for they are of those who, obedient to the commandments of the Blessed Beauty, have arisen to educate the girl children.

The day will come when those children will be mothers, and each one of them in her deep gratitude will offer up prayers and supplications to Almighty God and ask that her teachers will be granted joy and well-being forever, and a high station in the Kingdom of God.

Name ye this school the Mawhibat School (The School of Bounty).

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

632. Our hearts rejoiced at thy letter concerning a school for girls. <p285>

Praised be God that there is now a school of this type in Tihran where young maidens can, through His bounty, receive an education and with all vigour acquire the accomplishments of humankind. Erelong will women in every field keep pace with the men.

Until now, in Persia, the means for women's advancement were non-existent. But now, God be thanked, ever since the dawning of the Morn of Salvation, they have been going forward day by day. The hope is that they will take the lead in virtues and attainments, in closeness to the Court of Almighty God, in faith and certitude -- and that the women of the East will become the envy of the women of the West.

Praised be God, thou art confirmed in thy service, art exerting every effort in this work and taking great pains; and so, too, the teacher in the school, Miss Lillian Kappes. Give her my most affectionate greetings.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

633. In past centuries the girl children of Persia were deprived of all instruction. They had neither school nor academy, no kindly tutor and no teacher. Now in this greatest of centuries the bounty of the All-Bountiful hath encompassed the girls as well, and many schools have been founded in Persia for the education of girl children -- but what is missing from them is character training, and this despite the fact that such training is more important than instruction, for it is the primary accomplishment of humankind.

Praised be God, a school for girls hath now been established in Hamadan. Ye who are the teachers thereof must devote more of your efforts to character training than instruction, and must raise up your girl children to be modest and chaste, of good character and conduct -- and in addition must teach them the various branches of knowledge.

If ye follow this course, the confirmations of the All- Glorious Kingdom, in a great rolling swell, will rise and surge above that school.

My hope is that ye will succeed in this.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

634. In this holy Cause the question of orphans hath the utmost importance. The greatest consideration must be shown towards orphans; they must be taught, trained and educated. The Teachings of Baha'u'llah, especially, must by all means be given to them as far as is possible. <p286>

I supplicate God that thou mayest become a kind parent to orphaned children, quickening them with the fragrances of the Holy Spirit, so that they will attain the age of maturity as true servants of the world of humanity and as bright candles in the assemblage of mankind.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 112, p. 138)

635. Your letter hath come and hath occasioned the utmost joy, with its news that, praised be God, in Hamadan a welfare and relief association hath been established. I trust that this will become a source of general prosperity and assistance, and that means will be provided to set the hearts of the poor and weak at rest, and to educate the orphans and other children.

The question of training the children and looking after the orphans is extremely important, but most important of all is the education of girl children, for these girls will one day be mothers, and the mother is the first teacher of the child. In whatever way she reareth the child, so will the child become, and the results of that first training will remain with the individual throughout his entire life, and it would be most difficult to alter them. And how can a mother, herself ignorant and untrained, educate her child? It is therefore clear that the education of girls is of far greater consequence than that of boys. This fact is extremely important, and the matter must be seen to with the greatest energy and dedication.

God sayeth in the Qur'an that they shall not be equals,
those who have knowledge and those who have it not.[1]
Ignorance is thus utterly to be blamed, whether in male or
female; indeed, in the female its harm is greater. I hope,
therefore, that the friends will make strenuous efforts to
educate their children, sons and daughters alike. This is
verily the truth, and outside the truth there is manifestly
naught save perdition.
[1 Qur'an 39:12]

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian and Arabic)

636. Thou didst write about the believers' daughters who attend the schools of other faiths. It is true that, while these children do learn a little in such schools, still the character and behaviour of the women teachers have an effect on them, and through the inculcation of doubts and ambiguities, the minds of these girls are influenced and changed. <p287>

It is incumbent upon the friends to provide a school for Baha'i girls whose women teachers will educate their pupils according to the teachings of God.

There must the girls be taught spiritual ethics and holy ways.

A child is as a young plant: it will grow in whatever way you train it. If you rear it to be truthful, and kind, and righteous, it will grow straight, it will be fresh and tender, and will flourish. But if not, then from faulty training it will grow bent, and stand awry, and there will be no hope of changing it.

Certainly, the women teachers from Europe give instruction in language and scripts, and housekeeping, and embroidery and sewing; but their pupils' character is completely altered, to such a point that the girls no longer care for their mothers, their disposition is spoiled, they misbehave, they become self-satisfied and proud.

Rather, girls ought to be trained in such a manner that from day to day they will become more self-effacing, more humble, and will defer to and obey their parents and forebears, and be a comfort and a solace to all.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

637. Consider that if the mother is a believer, the children will become believers too, even if the father denieth the Faith; while, if the mother is not a believer, the children are deprived of faith, even if the father be a believer convinced and firm. Such is the usual outcome, except in rare cases.

For this reason both fathers and mothers must carefully watch over their little daughters and have them thoroughly taught in the schools by highly qualified women teachers, so that they may familiarize themselves with all the sciences and arts and become acquainted with and reared in all that is necessary for human living, and will provide a family with comfort and joy.

It is therefore incumbent upon the Spiritual Assembly of 'Ishqabad to take the lead in this most urgent matter, so that by the grace and favour of God they may establish an institution which will be a source of security and happiness forever and ever.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian) <p288>

638. O handmaids of the beauty of Abha! Your letter hath come, and its perusal brought great joy. Praised be God, the women believers have organized meetings where they will learn how to teach the Faith, will spread the sweet savours of the Teachings and make plans for training the children.

This gathering must be completely spiritual. That is, the discussions must be confined to marshalling clear and conclusive proofs that the Sun of Truth hath indeed arisen. And further, those present should concern themselves with every means of training the girl children; with teaching the various branches of knowledge, good behaviour, a proper way of life, the cultivation of a good character, chastity and constancy, perseverance, strength, determination, firmness of purpose; with household management, the education of children, and whatever especially applieth to the needs of girls -- to the end that these girls, reared in the stronghold of all perfections, and with the protection of a goodly character, will, when they themselves become mothers, bring up their

children from earliest infancy to have a good character and conduct themselves well.

Let them also study whatever will nurture the health of the body and its physical soundness, and how to guard their children from disease.

When matters are thus well arranged, every child will become a peerless plant in the gardens of the Abha Paradise.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 94, pp.123-24)

639. Today it is obligatory for the loved ones of God, and their imperative duty, to educate the children in reading, writing, the various branches of knowledge, and the expansion of consciousness, that on all levels they may go forward day by day.

The mother is the first teacher of the child. For children, at the beginning of life, are fresh and tender as a young twig, and can be trained in any fashion you desire. If you rear the child to be straight, he will grow straight, in perfect symmetry. It is clear that the mother is the first teacher and that it is she who establisheth the character and conduct of the child.

Wherefore, O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God's sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in <p289> all the perfections of humankind; and no nobler deed than this can be imagined.[1]
[1 Cf. "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.] (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), Sec. 114, p. 139.]

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

640. O Handmaids of the Lord! The spiritual assemblage that ye established in that illumined city is most propitious. Ye have made great strides; ye have surpassed the others, have arisen to serve the Holy Threshold, and have won heavenly bestowals. Now with all spiritual zeal must ye gather in that enlightened assemblage and recite the Holy Writings and engage in remembering the Lord. Set ye forth His arguments and proofs. Work ye for the guidance of the women in that land, teach the young girls and the children,so that the mothers may educate their little ones from their earliest days, thoroughly train them, rear them to have a goodly character and good morals, guide them to all the virtues of humankind, prevent the development of any behaviour that would be worthy of blame, and foster them in the embrace of Baha'i education. Thus shall these tender infants be nurtured at the breast of the knowledge of God and His love. Thus shall they grow and flourish, and be taught righteousness and the dignity of humankind, resolution and the will to strive and to endure. Thus shall they learn perseverance in all things, the will to advance, high-mindedness and high resolve, chastity and purity of life. Thus shall they be enabled to carry to a successful conclusion whatsoever they undertake.

Let the mothers consider that whatever concerneth the education of children is of the first importance. Let them put forth every effort in this regard, for

when the bough is green and tender it will grow in whatever way ye train it. Therefore is it incumbent upon the mothers to rear their little ones even as a gardener tendeth his young plants. Let them strive by day and by night to establish within their children faith and certitude, the fear of God, the love of the Beloved of the worlds, and all good qualities and traits. Whensoever a mother seeth that her child hath done well, let her praise and applaud him and cheer his heart; and if the slightest undesirable trait should manifest itself, let her counsel the child and punish him, and use means based on reason, even a slight verbal <p290> chastisement should this be necessary. It is not, however, permissible to strike a child, or vilify him, for the child's character will be totally perverted if he be subjected to blows or verbal abuse.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 95, pp. 124-125)

641. ... O maid-servants of the Merciful! It is incumbent upon you to train the children from their earliest babyhood! It is incumbent upon you to beautify their morals! It is incumbent upon you to attend to them under all aspects and circumstances, inasmuch as God -- glorified and exalted is He! -- hath ordained mothers to be the primary trainers of children and infants. This is a great and important affair and a high and exalted position, and it is not allowable to slacken therein at all!

If thou walkest in this right path, thou wouldst become a real mother to the children, both spiritually and materially....

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas" vol. III (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1916), Vol. III, p. 606)

642. Deliver my longings and greetings to the consolation of thine eye[1]... and to thy younger son ... Verily I love them both even as a compassionate father loveth his dear children. As to thee, have for them an abundant love and exert thine utmost in training them, so that their being may grow through the milk of the love of God, forasmuch as it is the duty of parents to perfectly and thoroughly train their children.
[1 "Consolation of thine eye" - idiomatic Persian expression meaning "child"]

There are also certain sacred duties on children toward parents which duties are written in the Book of God, as belonging to God.[1] The (children's) prosperity in this world and the Kingdom depends upon the good pleasure of parents, and without this they will be in manifest loss.
[1 In Questions and Answers, an appendix to the Kitab-i-Aqdas, Baha'u'llah lays upon children the obligation of serving their parents and categorically states that after the recognition of the oneness of God, the most important of all duties for children is to have due regard for the rights of their parents.]

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. II (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1915), Vol. II, pp. 262-3)

643. ...O dear one of 'Abdu'l-Baha! Be the son of thy father and be the fruit of that tree. Be a son that hath been born of his soul and heart and not only

of the water and clay. A real son is such an one as hath branched <p291> from the spiritual part of a man. I ask God that thou mayest be at all times confirmed and strengthened.

("Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Vol. II, p. 342)

644. O ye dear children!
Your father is compassionate, clement and merciful unto you and desireth for you success, prosperity and eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you, dear children, to seek his good pleasure, to be guided by his guidance, to be drawn by the magnet of the love of God and be brought up in the lap of the love of God; that ye may become beautiful branches in the Gardens of EL-ABHA, verdant and watered by the abundance of the gift of God.

("Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Vol. III, p. 622)

645. It is incumbent upon the youth to walk in the footsteps of Hakim[1] and to be trained in his ways, for such important souls as he and his like have now ascended to the Kingdom of Abha. The youth must grow and develop and take the place of their fathers, that this abundant grace, in the posterity of each one of the loved ones of God who bore great agonies, may day by day increase, until in the end it shall yield its fruit on earth and in Heaven.
[1 One of the distinguished believers of Qazvin]

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

646. The Sunday school for the children in which the Tablets and Teachings of Baha'u'llah are read, and the Word of God is recited for the children is indeed a blessed thing. Thou must certainly continue this organized activity without cessation, and attach importance to it, so that day by day it may grow and be quickened with the breaths of the Holy Spirit. If this activity is well organized, rest thou assured that it will yield great results. Firmness and steadfastness, however, are necessary, otherwise it will continue for some time, but later be gradually forgotten. Perseverance is an essential condition. In every project firmness and steadfastness will undoubtedly lead to good results; otherwise it will exist for some days, and then be discontinued.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", Sec. 124, pp. 143-44) <p292>

647. O ye children of the Kingdom:
Your letters with your photographs have been received. From the perusal of the letters the utmost heartfelt emotions were experienced and at the sight of the portraits a spiritual joy and gladness was felt. Praise be to God the letters were indicative of the turning of the faces toward the Kingdom and from those faces it was evident that the light of the love of God is manifest and resplendent upon the brows.

I pray to God that in this school on Sundays ye may acquire heavenly knowledge, ye may secure a training of merciful characteristics and that ye may advance from day to day so that each of you may become a peerless shrub in the Divine Rose-garden and may be adorned with full foliage, and fruits.

(From a Tablet to the children of the Baha'i school, Urbana, Illinois, published in "The Magazine of The Children of the Kingdom" Vol. I, No. 2 (March, 1920), p. 2)

648. O young trees and plants, matchless and tender, that grow in the meadows of guidance! O ye newcomers to the Fraternity of Truth!

Although now ye be learners, the hope is that through showerings from the clouds of grace, ye will become teachers; that ye will flourish even as flowers and fragrant herbs in the garden of that knowledge which is both of the mind and of the heart; that each one of you will grow as a tree rich in yield, fair, fresh and strong, heavy with sweet fruit.

May the hidden confirmations of God make each one of you to become a well-spring of knowledge. May your hearts ever receive inspiration from the Denizens of the Concourse on high. May the drop become as the great sea; may the mote dazzle as the shining sun.

His Holiness the Bab hath said: "Should a tiny ant desire in this day to be possessed of such power as to be able to unravel the abstrusest and most bewildering passages of the Qur'an, its wish will no doubt be fulfilled, inasmuch as the mystery of eternal might vibrates within the innermost being of all created things."[1] If so helpless a creature can be endowed with so subtle a capacity, how much more efficacious must be the power released through the liberal effusions of the grace of <p293> Baha'u'llah! What confirmations will be garnered, what influxes of the heart!
[1 Cf. "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters" [rev. ed.] (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 126-27.]

Wherefore, O ye illumined youth, strive by night and by day to unravel the mysteries of the mind and spirit, and to grasp the secrets of the Day of God. Inform yourselves of the evidences that the Most Great Name hath dawned. Open your lips in praise. Adduce convincing arguments and proofs. Lead those who thirst to the fountain of life; grant ye true health to the ailing. Be ye apprentices of God; be ye physicians directed by God, and heal ye the sick among humankind. Bring those who have been excluded into the circle of intimate friends. Make the despairing to be filled with hope. Waken them that slumber; make the heedless mindful.

Such are the fruits of this earthly life. Such is the station of resplendent glory.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Persian)

III. FROM THE WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI AND LETTERS WRITTEN ON HIS BEHALF:

649. For the members of the Children's Educational Work Committee ... I supplicate Divine Assistance, that He may graciously aid them in a work which was so near and dear to the Master's heart and enable them to assist in the rise of future devoted and efficient servants to the Cause of God.

(From a letter dated 23 December 1922 written by Shoghi Effendi to the National

Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" [rev. ed.], (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 29)

650. They must promote by every means in their power the material as well as the spiritual enlightenment of youth, the means for the education of children, institute, whenever possible, Baha'i educational institutions, organize and supervise their work and provide the best means for their progress and development.

(From a letter dated 12 March 1923 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of America, Australasia, France, Germany, British Isles, Italy, Japan and Switzerland, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 38) <p294>

651. As to the spiritual activities of the "Children of the Kingdom" in America, my hope and prayer is that they may grow to become efficient servants of the Cause of Baha'u'llah. Their devotion and self-sacrifice, their readiness to help the cause of the Baha'i Temple, their activity in connection with the "Baha'i Magazine" are all unmistakable signs of the glorious future of the Cause in that land. May the care and loving-kindness of the Heavenly Father guide them, protect them and aid them in their future mission in life.

(From a letter dated 26 November 1923 written by Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

652. A basic and vital requirement of these days is the matter of educating the boys and girls. One of the duties devolving upon the members of Spiritual Assemblies is that, with the support of the friends, they should exert all their powers to establish schools for the instruction of boys and girls in the things of the spirit, the fundamentals of teaching the Faith, reading the Sacred Writings, learning the history of the Faith, the secular branches of knowledge, the various arts and skills, and the different languages -- so that Baha'i methods of instruction will become so widely known that children from every level of society will seek to acquire divine teachings as well as secular knowledge in Baha'i schools, and thereby means for the promotion of the Cause of God will be provided.

(From a letter dated 19 December 1923 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Tihran, Iran - translated from the Persian)

653. The "Magazine of the Children of the Kingdom", the latest issue of which I have just received from that indefatigable pioneer of your cause, ... has kindled in me such fresh hopes that I feel moved to send you this message of love and confidence in the great part you are destined to play for the future of the Cause.

I feel it is urgent and important that this first and only organ of the Baha'i youth throughout the world should, in whatever it publishes, instil in its readers, and particularly in every Baha'i child, the sense of his unique opportunities and future responsibilities in the great task that awaits him in

future.

Its duty is to initiate, promote and mirror forth the various activities of the rising generation throughout the Baha'i world, to establish and <p295> strengthen a bond of true fellowship amongst all the children of 'Abdu'l-Baha whether in the East or in the West, and to unfold to their eyes the vision of a golden future before them. It should impress upon their hearts the vital necessity of establishing, now, whilst in their tender age, a firm foundation for their mission in life.

The cause of the Children of the Kingdom, whom the Master so loved, and on whom He showered many a blessing and infinite loving-kindness, is, I assure you, still dear and close to our hearts. In you, the descendants of the heroic pioneers of a world Movement, rests the hope of achieving the task which they have so nobly begun -- their task for the service and salvation of all mankind.

As to my humble share of service and support, I can but pray on your behalf, and supplicate during my hours of prayer at the three Holy Shrines, the guidance, the blessings, and the assistance of Baha'u'llah, beseeching Him most fervently to enable you, in the happy days to come, to establish His Kingdom and fulfil His Word. May your Magazine inspire you to achieve this end.

(From a Letter dated 30 December 1923 written by Shoghi Effendi to the Magazine of the Children of the Kingdom, Boston, U.S.A)

654. 'Abdu'l-Baha has always attached very great importance to the education of children and we take this opportunity to congratulate you on your signal success in this field of service. We hope some day your work will extend into the East extensively where it is so badly needed.

(From a letter dated 9 April 1925 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

655. In connection with the question that you had asked as to whether you should take a trip to the Holy Land or keep the sum to defray the expense of a young man you are educating. Shoghi Effendi wishes me to write you that although it means profound pleasure to him and to the members of the holy family, to welcome you in the home of our beloved Master and to share with you the eternal outpourings of His Grace in and around His blessed Shrine, he deems it of greater importance for you to keep up helping the young boy whom you have undertaken to educate. This he would advise you with a deep realization of Baha'u'llah's most pregnant <p296> utterance that he who educates his child or another's it is just as though he is educating a child of Baha'u'llah Himself.

(From a letter dated 29 May 1925 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

656. Among the sacred obligations devolving upon the Spiritual Assemblies is the promotion of learning, the establishing of schools and creation of the necessary academic equipment and facilities for every boy and girl.

Every child, without exception, must from his earliest years make a thorough

study of the art of reading and writing, and according to his own tastes and inclinations and the degree of his capacity and powers, devote extreme diligence to the acquisition of learning beneficial arts and skills, various languages, speech, and contemporary technology.

To assist the children of the poor in the attainment of these accomplishments, and particularly in learning the basic subjects, is incumbent upon the members of the Spiritual Assemblies, and is accounted as one of the obligations laid upon the conscience of the trustees of God in every land.

"He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My Glory, My Loving-Kindness, My Mercy, that have compassed the world."[1]
[1 "Tablet of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", rev. ed. (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), p. 128.]

(From a letter dated 8 June 1925 written by Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia)

657. Shoghi Effendi was very interested to hear of the plans you are making for the education of your children. He hopes that they will all grow to be ardent adherents of the Baha'i Cause, able servants of the Blessed Threshold, and eloquent speakers on religious and social subjects. He desires to be remembered to them as well as to their dear father.

(From a letter dated 24 December 1925 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

658. We had heard through various channels the wonderful way your children had grown to speak about the Cause in public. Shoghi Effendi's <p297> hope is that they will, the three of them, become able and devoted speakers on the Cause and subjects akin to it. To do this properly they will need a firm foundation of scientific and literary training which fortunately they are obtaining. It is just as important for the Baha'i young boys and girls to become properly educated in colleges of high standing as it is to be spiritually developed. The mental as well as the spiritual side of the youth has to be developed before he can serve the Cause efficiently.

From Shoghi Effendi's postscript:

...

I will specially pray for your dear children, that they, too, firmly-grounded through a well-guided plan of sound education, may in days to come serve efficiently and effectively the Cause of God. They are richly endowed with gifts, and my prayer is that a proper training may enable them to utilize those gifts for the propagation of God's Faith.

(From a letter dated 28 November 1926 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

659. In philanthropic enterprises and acts of charity, in promotion of the

general welfare and furtherance of the public good including that of every group without any exceptions whatever, let the beloved of God attract the favourable attention of all, and lead all the rest.

Let them, freely and without charge, open the doors of their schools and their higher institutions for the study of sciences and the liberal arts, to non-Baha'i children and youth who are poor and in need.

...and next is the propagation of learning and the promulgation of Baha'i rules of conduct, practices and laws. At this time, when the nation has awakened out of its sleep of negligence, and the Government has begun to consider the promotion and expansion of its educational establishment, let the Baha'i representatives in that country arise in such a manner that as a result of their high endeavours in every hamlet, village and town, of every province and district, preliminary measures will be taken for the setting up of institutions for the study of sciences, the liberal arts and religion. Let Baha'i children without any exceptions learn the fundamentals of reading and writing and familiarize themselves with the rules of conduct, the customs, practices and laws as set forth in the Book of God; and let them, in the new branches of knowledge, in the arts and technology of the day, in pure and praiseworthy characteristics -- Baha'i conduct, the Baha'i way of life -- become so distinguished above the rest <p298> that all other communities, whether Islamic, Zoroastrian, Christian, Judaic or materialist, will of their own volition and most gladly enter their children in such advanced Baha'i institutions of learning and entrust them to the care of Baha'i instructors.

So too is the promotion and execution of the laws set forth in the Book of God.

(From a letter dated January 1929 written by Shoghi Effendi to the believers of the East- translated from the Persian)

660. Your short but impressive letter addressed to Shoghi Effendi was received. He perused it with deep interest and charged me to thank you on his behalf and to express his fondest hopes that you will pursue with an abiding zeal your academic studies. Being a Baha'i you are certainly aware of the fact that Baha'u'llah considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful, should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects. This should be the programme of the Baha'i youth all over the world.

(From a letter dated 9 July 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

661. We hope that before long the Baha'is will even afford to have schools that would provide the children the intellectual and spiritual education as prescribed in the writings of Baha'u'llah and the Master.

(From a letter dated 25 December 1931 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Local Spiritual Assembly of New York City)

662. He is very glad to know that you attach importance to the training of the children, for whatever they learn in that early stage of their development will leave its traces upon their whole life. It becomes part of their nature.

There is no especial book which the Guardian can recommend. It is for the older friends to attempt a compilation that would suit that purpose, and after many attempts a good one will ultimately be produced.

The Master used to attach much importance to the learning by heart of Tablets of Baha'u'llah and the Bab. During His days it was a usual work <p299> of the children of the household to learn Tablets by heart; now, however, those children are grown up and do not have time for such a thing. But the practice is most useful to implant the ideas and spirit those words contain into the mind of the children.

With "The Dawn-Breakers" in your possession you could also arrange interesting stories about the early days of the Movement which the children would like to hear. There are also stories about the life of Christ, Muhammad and the other prophets which if told to the children will break down any religious prejudice they may have learned from older people of little understanding.

Such stories regarding the life of different prophets together with their sayings will also be useful to better understand the literature of the Cause for there is constant reference to them. It is however the work of experienced people to bring together such materials and make of them interesting text books for the children.

The Cause will gradually produce people who would answer these needs. It is only a question of time. What we should strive to do is to stimulate different individuals who have the talent to attempt the task.

(From a letter dated 19 October 1932 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a Local Spiritual Assembly and a State Teaching Committee)

663. He was deeply gratified to hear that the friends are attaching such a great importance to the teaching and training of Baha'i children. The education of the youth is, undoubtedly, of paramount importance as it serves to deepen their understanding of the Cause and to canalize their energies along the most profitable lines. Inasmuch, however, as the national expenses of the Cause in America are daily increasing, the members of your Committee should be very careful not to extend beyond their financial resources the sphere of their activities. The plans your Committee has made should not develop to such an extent as to hamper the progress of the Temple work.

(From a letter dated 20 April, 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the members of the Committee on the Teaching and Training of Children, published in "Baha'i News" 77 (September 1933), p.2)

664. Shoghi Effendi wishes you particularly to give all your attention to the education of your boys so that they may become sincere, loyal and <p300> active Baha'is. It is to the youth that we should look for help, and it is, therefore,

the sacred obligation of the parents to provide their children with a thorough Baha'i training.

(From a letter dated 31 May 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

665. The Baha'i Faith ... advocates compulsory education...

(From a letter dated June 1933 written by Shoghi Effendi to the High Commissioner for Palestine)

666. He was deeply gratified to learn that your material conditions are improving and he sincerely hopes that they will give you an opportunity to give to ... and ... the best educational training, so that they may become, in a not distant future, devoted servants and champions of the Cause.

Your responsibility as a mother, and especially as a Baha'i mother, whose sacred obligation is to look after the training of the children along Baha'i lines, is indeed immense. It is hoped that through God's help and guidance you will be enabled to fully discharge your duties.

(From a letter dated 22 July 1933 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

667. Shoghi Effendi was deeply saddened to learn from your letter... of the rather serious situation which your daughter's conduct and her general attitude towards the Cause have created...

Although he highly deplores this fact, and is fully aware of the bad repercussions which it may have on the Cause, yet he feels that nothing short of your motherly care and love and of the counsels which you and the friends can give her, can effectively remedy this situation. Above all, you should be patient, and confident that your efforts to that end are being sustained and guided through the confirmations of Baha'u'llah. He is surely hearing your prayers, and will no doubt accept them, and thus hasten the gradual and complete materialization of your hopes and expectations for your daughter and for the Cause.

The Guardian would advise you, therefore, not to take any drastic action with regard to your daughter's attendance at the meetings... For in this way there is much greater chance to reform her character than through force or any other drastic method. Love and kindness have far <p301> greater influence than punishment upon the improvement of human character.

The Guardian, therefore, trusts that by this means you will succeed in gradually introducing a fundamental change in your daughter's life, and also in making of her a better and truer believer. He is fervently praying on her behalf that she may fully attain this station.

(From a letter dated 26 January 1935 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

668. The Guardian sees no objection that reference be made to the fact that the

teaching classes and conferences which the believers are now organizing might evolve in the distant future into departments of education, or such institutions of learning as will be established in the future Baha'i social order.

(From a letter dated 12 July 1938 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

669. As regards your plans: the Guardian fully approves indeed of your view that no matter how urgent and vital the requirements of the teaching work may be you should under no circumstances neglect the education of your children, as towards them you have an obligation no less sacred than towards the Cause.

Any plan or arrangement you may arrive at which would combine your twofold duties towards your family and the Cause, and would permit you to resume active work in the field of pioneer teaching, and also to take good care of your children so as to not jeopardize their future in the Cause would meet with the whole-hearted approval of the Guardian.

(From a letter dated 17 July 1938 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

670. The Guardian wishes me to assure you, in particular, of his supplications on behalf of your children, that they may, through Divine confirmations and assistance, and under your loving care and protection, receive such training as may lead them to fully recognize and unreservedly accept the Faith, and provide them with the necessary spiritual equipment to effectively and loyally serve and promote its interests in the future. <p302>

As a Baha'i mother you have certainly a most sacred and weighty responsibility for their spiritual development in the Cause, and you should from now endeavour to instil into their hearts the love of Baha'u'llah and thus prepare them for the full recognition and acceptance of His Station once they attain the age and capacity to do so.

(From a letter dated 20 April, 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

671. With regard to your activities in connection with the training and education of Baha'i children: needless to tell you what a vital importance the Guardian attaches to such activities, on which so much of the strength, welfare and growth of the Community must necessarily depend. What a more sacred privilege, and also what a weightier responsibility than the task of rearing up the new generation of believers, and of inculcating into their youthful and receptive minds the principles and teachings of the Cause, and of thus preparing them to fully assume, and properly discharge the weighty responsibilities and obligations of their future life in the Baha'i Community.

(From a letter dated 28 April, 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Committee and an individual believer)

672. You have asked him for detailed information concerning the Baha'i

educational programme: there is as yet no such thing as a Baha'i curriculum, and there are no Baha'i publications exclusively devoted to this subject, since the teachings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha do not present a definite and detailed educational system, but simply offer certain basic principles and set forth a number of teaching ideals that should guide future Baha'i educationalists in their efforts to formulate an adequate teaching curriculum which would be in full harmony with the spirit of the Baha'i Teachings, and would thus meet the requirements and needs of the modern age.

These basic principles are available in the sacred writings of the Cause, and should be carefully studied, and gradually incorporated in various college and university programmes. But the task of formulating a system of education which would be officially recognized by the Cause, and enforced as such throughout the Baha'i world is one which [the] present-day generation of believers cannot obviously undertake, and <p303> which has to be gradually accomplished by Baha'i scholars and educationalists of the future.

(From a letter dated 7 June, 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

673.

With regard to the statement attributed to 'Abdu'l-Baha and which you have quoted in your letter regarding a "problem child": these statements of the Master, however true in their substance, should never be given a literal interpretation. 'Abdu'l-Baha could have never meant that a child should be left to himself, entirely free.

In fact Baha'i education, just like any other system of education, is based on the assumption that there are certain natural deficiencies in every child, no matter how gifted, which his educators, whether his parents, schoolmasters, or his spiritual guides and preceptors, should endeavour to remedy.

Discipline of some sort, whether physical, moral or intellectual, is indeed indispensable, and no training can be said to be complete and fruitful if it disregards this element.

The child when born is far from being perfect.

It is not only helpless, but actually is imperfect, and even is naturally inclined towards evil.

He should be trained, his natural inclinations harmonized, adjusted and controlled, and if necessary suppressed or regulated, so as to ensure his healthy physical and moral development.

Baha'i parents cannot simply adopt an attitude of non-resistance towards their children, particularly those who are unruly and violent by nature.

It is not even sufficient that they should pray on their behalf.

Rather they should endeavour to inculcate, gently and patiently, into their youthful minds such principles of moral conduct and initiate them into the

principles and teachings of the Cause with such tactful and loving care as would enable them to become "true sons of God" and develop into loyal and intelligent citizens of His Kingdom.

This is the high purpose which Baha'u'llah Himself has clearly defined as the chief goal of every education.

(From a letter dated 9 July 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

674. The task of bringing up a Baha'i child, as emphasized time and again in Baha'i writings, is the chief responsibility of the mother, whose unique privilege is indeed to create in her home such conditions as would be <p304> most conducive to both his material and spiritual welfare and advancement. The training which a child first receives through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for his future development, and it should therefore be the paramount concern of your wife...to endeavour from now imparting to her new-born son such spiritual training as would enable him later on to fully assume and adequately discharge all the responsibilities and duties of Baha'i life.

(From a letter dated 16 November 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

675. With regard to your little daughter ...; he is truly rejoiced and encouraged to realize how eager you both are to provide her with a thoroughly Baha'i training, and is confident that under your wise and devoted care, and through the unfailing protection and guidance of Baha'u'llah she will in time develop into a devoted and loyal servant of the Faith.

With this in mind, the Guardian thinks it would be preferable not to place the child in a purely Catholic institution, and to give her instead a broad spiritual and intellectual training that would enable her, at a later age, to fully appreciate the spirit of the Cause. While it should be your constant endeavour to bring her up in a thoroughly religious atmosphere, you should also be careful in keeping her away from all such influences that would tend to breed in her the spirit of religious bigotry, and thus narrow down the horizon of her spiritual understanding.

(From a letter dated 12 December 1939 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers)

676. With reference to the question of the training of children: given the emphasis placed by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha on the necessity for the parents to train their children while still in their tender age, it would seem preferable that they should receive their first training at home at the hand of their mother, rather than be sent to a nursery. Should circumstances, however, compel a Baha'i mother to adopt the latter course there can be no objection.

(From a letter dated 13 November 1940 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer) <p305>

677. The question of the training and education of children in case one of the parents is a non-Baha'i is one which solely concerns the parents themselves, who should decide about it the way they find best and most conducive to the maintenance of the unity of their family, and to the future welfare of their children. Once the child comes of age, however, he should be given full freedom to choose his religion, irrespective of the wishes and desires of his parents.

(From a letter dated 14 December 1940 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma)

678. The Guardian was delighted to hear of your youth group. The children who are trained in the world-embracing teachings of Baha'u'llah cannot but grow up to be a truly new race of men. He hopes these young people will prepare themselves for the great task which will face them in the future, that of helping to rebuild the world with the aid and inspiration of the Baha'i teachings.

(From a letter dated 25 December 1941 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Baha'is of Hobart, Australia)

679. These Baha'i children are of such great importance to the future. They will live in times, and have to meet problems, which never faced their elders. And the Cause alone can equip them to properly serve the needs of a future, war-weary, disillusioned, unhappy humanity. So their task will be very great and a very responsible one, and too much care cannot be devoted to their upbringing and preparation.

(From a letter dated 11 January 1942 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

680. ...The Guardian feels that it would be better for either the mothers of Baha'i children -- or some Committee your Assembly might delegate the task to -- to choose excerpts from the Sacred Words to be used by the child rather than just something made up. Of course prayer can be purely spontaneous, but many of the sentences and thoughts combined in Baha'i writings of a devotional nature are easy to grasp, and the revealed Word is endowed with a power of its own.

(From a letter dated 8 August 1942 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles) <p306>

681. You Baha'i children and young people have both great privileges and great obligations ahead of you, for your generation will be the ones to help build up a new, better and more beautiful world after the dark years of this war are passed. You should prepare yourselves for this great task by trying to grasp the true meaning of the teachings and not just merely accepting them as something you are taught. They are like a wonderful new world of thought just beginning to be explored, and when we realize that Baha'u'llah has brought teachings and laws for a thousand years to come, we can readily see that each new generation may find some greater meaning in the writings than the ones gone before did.

(From a letter dated 14 October 1942 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to some individual believers)

682. The Guardian, in his remarks to ... about parents' and children's, wives' and husbands' relations in America, meant that there is a tendency in that country for children to be too independent of the wishes of their parents and lacking in the respect due to them....

(From a letter dated 22 July 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

683. Regarding your question about children fighting: the statement of the Master, not to strike back, should not be taken so extremely literally that Baha'i children must accept to be bullied and thrashed. If they can manage to show a better way of settling disputes than by active self- defence, they should naturally do so.

(From a letter dated 11 May 1945 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

684. You ask him about the fear of God: perhaps the friends do not realize that the majority of human beings need the element of fear in order to discipline their conduct? Only a relatively very highly evolved soul would always be disciplined by love alone. Fear of punishment, fear of the anger of God if we do evil, are needed to keep people's feet on the right path. Of course we should love God -- but we must fear Him in the sense of a child fearing the righteous anger and chastisement of a parent; not cringe before Him as before a tyrant, but know His mercy exceeds His justice!

(From a letter dated 26 July 1946 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer) <p307>

685. He is sorry to hear your little boy is not developing satisfactorily; very few children are really bad. They do, however, sometimes have complicated personalities and need very wise handling to enable them to grow into normal, moral, happy adults. If you feel convinced your son will really benefit from going to Father Flanagan's school you could send him there. But in general we should certainly always avoid sending Baha'i children to orthodox religious schools, especially Catholic, as the children receive the imprint of religious beliefs we as believers know are outdated and no longer for this age. He will especially pray for the solution of this problem.

(From a letter dated 30 May 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

686. Regarding the questions you asked him: there is no objection to children who are as yet unable to memorize a whole prayer learning certain sentences only.

He does not feel that the friends should make a practice of saying grace or of teaching it to children. This is not part of the Baha'i Faith, but a Christian practice, and as the Cause embraces members of all races and religions we

should be careful not to introduce into it the customs of our previous beliefs. Baha'u'llah has given us the obligatory prayers, also prayers before sleeping, for travellers, etc. We should not introduce a new set of prayers He has not specified, when He has given us already so many, for so many occasions.

Your work for child education is certainly important, and he urges you to keep it up.

(From a letter dated 27 September 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

687. In regard to your question: he feels this is a matter for you and your husband to decide, especially in view of his attitude towards the Cause; the children, being minors, are under your jurisdiction, and you both have sacred rights and responsibility as regards their future.

(From a letter dated 24 November 1947 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer) <p308>

688. Any Baha'i can give to the Cause's Funds, adult or child. No statement is required on this subject; Baha'i children have always given to the Cause, everywhere. Whatever situation may arise in a class which non- Baha'i children attend is for the teacher of the class to solve. No ruling should be made to cover such things.

(From a letter dated 18 August 1949 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

689. Just because you are children does not mean you cannot serve the Faith, and teach it, by your example and by the way you let people see that you are better and more intelligent than most other children.

(From a letter dated 16 March 1952 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Santa Monica Children's Class)

690. The general principle ... is that a request for excuse from School sessions on Baha'i Holy Days is desirable. This applies to all Baha'i children regardless of their age. Children of Baha'i parents, under the age of 15, are considered Baha'is.

What a Baha'i parent or your Assembly should do is apply to the School Board to grant to their children permission to remain away from School on Baha'i Holy Days, and then abide by whatever decision the School Board may make, and not try in any way to force the matter.

(From a letter dated 19 August 1952 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

691. The beloved Guardian was greatly delighted to learn of the success of the institute for teaching the Indian children. He feels this is a very fine method of implanting the teachings of the Faith in the hearts and the minds of the young children, so that they may grow and develop into strong and virile men and women who will serve the Cause. Likewise through this effort, he hopes you

will be able to attract some of the parents.

(From a letter dated 18 February 1954 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

692. The Guardian will pray for the spiritual development of your dear son. On the shoulders of the youth today rests the future of the Faith. <p309>
Therefore they should be well educated and trained not only in the Teachings of the Faith, but also in secular matters.

(From a letter dated 24 May 1954 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

693. The Guardian is happy to see you are teaching the children, as a firm foundation of the Teachings in their minds will greatly assist in forming their characters, and enable them to become well-balanced and useful believers when they mature.

(From a letter dated 6 March 1955 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer)

694. In explaining the fear of God to children, there is no objection to teaching it as 'Abdu'l-Baha so often taught everything, in the form of parables. Also the child should be made to understand that we don't fear God because He is cruel, but we fear Him because He is just, and, if we do wrong and deserve to be punished, then in His justice He may see fit to punish us. We must both love God and fear Him.

(From a letter dated 15 February 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to some individual believers)

695. Individual Baha'is may press for getting religion taught in the public schools, but this should not be done officially, as we don't yet carry enough weight.

(From a letter dated 15 August 1957 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer) <p310>

SUPPLEMENT

IV. EXTRACTS FROM THE TALKS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA:

696.

Among these children many blessed souls will arise, if they be trained according to the Baha'i Teachings.

If a plant is carefully nurtured by a gardener, it will become good, and produce better fruit.

These children must be given a good training from their earliest childhood.

They must be given a systematic training which will further their development from day to day, in order that they may receive greater insight, so that their spiritual receptivity be broadened.

Beginning in childhood they must receive instruction.

They cannot be taught through books.

Many elementary sciences must be made clear to them in the nursery; they must learn them in play, in amusement.

Most ideas must be taught them through speech, not by book learning.

One child must question the other concerning these things, and the other child must give the answer.

In this way, they will make great progress.

For example, mathematical problems must also be taught in the form of questions and answers.

One of the children asks a question and the other must give the answer.

Later on, the children will of their own accord speak with each other concerning these same subjects.

The children who are at the head of the class must receive premiums.

They must be encouraged and when any one of them shows good advancement, for the further development they must be praised and encouraged therein.

Even so in Godlike affairs.

Oral questions must be asked and the answers must be given orally.

They must discuss with each other in this manner.

("The Baha'i World", Vol. 9 (1940-1944)(Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1945), p. 543)

697. Educate the children in their infancy in such a way that they may become exceedingly kind and merciful to the animals. If the animal is sick they should endeavour to cure it; if it is hungry they should feed it; if it is thirsty, they should satisfy its thirst; if it is tired they should give it rest.

Man is generally sinful and the animal is innocent; unquestionably one must be more kind and merciful to the innocent. The harmful animals, such as the bloodthirsty wolf, the poisonous snake and other <p311> injurious animals are excepted, because mercy towards these is cruelty to man, and other animals.

("The Baha'i World", Vol. 9, p. 544)

698. The art of music is divine and effective. It is the food of the soul and spirit. Through the power and charm of music the spirit of man is uplifted. It has wonderful sway and effect in the hearts of children, for their hearts are pure and melodies have great influence in them. The latent talents with which the hearts of these children are endowed will find expression through the medium of music. Therefore, you must exert yourselves to make them proficient; teach them to sing with excellence and effect. It is incumbent upon each child to know something of music, for without knowledge of this art the melodies of

instrument and voice cannot be rightly enjoyed. Likewise, it is necessary that the schools teach it in order that the souls and hearts of the pupils may become vivified and exhilarated and their lives be brightened with enjoyment.

Today illumined and spiritual children are gathered in this meeting.

They are the children of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of heaven is for such souls as these, for they are near to God.

They have pure hearts.

They have spiritual faces.

The effect of the divine teachings is manifest in the perfect purity of their hearts.

That is why Christ has addressed the world, saying, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" -- that is, men must become pure in heart to know God.

The teachings have had great effect.

Spiritual souls!

Tender souls!

The hearts of all children are of the utmost purity.

They are mirrors upon which no dust has fallen.

But this purity is on account of weakness and innocence, not on account of any strength and testing, for as this is the early period of their childhood, their hearts and minds are unsullied by the world.

They cannot display any great intelligence.

They have neither hypocrisy nor deceit.

This is on account of the child's weakness, whereas the man becomes pure through his strength.

Through the power of intelligence he becomes simple; through the great power of reason and understanding and not through the power of weakness he becomes sincere.

When he attains to the state of perfection, he will receive these qualities; his heart becomes purified, his spirit enlightened, his soul is sensitized and tender -- all through his great strength.

This is the difference between the perfect man and the child.

Both have the <p312> underlying qualities of simplicity and sincerity -- the child through the power of weakness and the man through the power of strength.

...

I give you my advice, and it is this: Train these children with divine

exhortations. From their childhood instill in their hearts the love of God so they may manifest in their lives the fear of God and have confidence in the bestowals of God. Teach them to free themselves from human imperfections and to acquire the divine perfections latent in the heart of man. The life of man is useful if he attains the perfections of man. If he becomes the center of the imperfections of the world of humanity, death is better than life, and nonexistence better than existence. Therefore, make ye an effort in order that these children may be rightly trained and educated and that each of them may attain perfection in the world of humanity. Know ye the value of these children for they are all my children.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 52-54)

699. If a pupil is told that his intelligence is less than his fellow pupils, it is a very great drawback and handicap to his progress. He must be encouraged to advance...

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace", pp. 76-77)

700. ...According to the teachings of Baha'u'llah the family, being a human, unit must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother -- none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace", p. 168) <p313>

701. He promulgated the adoption of the same course of education for man and woman. Daughters and sons must follow the same curriculum of study, thereby promoting unity of the sexes. When all mankind shall receive the same opportunity of education and the equality of men and women be realized, the foundations of war will be utterly destroyed. Without equality this will be impossible because all differences and distinction are conducive to discord and strife. Equality between men and women is conducive to the abolition of warfare for the reason that women will never be willing to sanction it. Mothers will not give their sons as sacrifices upon the battlefield after twenty years of anxiety and loving devotion in rearing them from infancy, no matter what cause they are called upon to defend. There is no doubt that when women obtain equality of rights, war will entirely cease among mankind.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace", p. 175)

702. The child must not be oppressed or censured because it is undeveloped; it must be patiently trained....

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 180-1)

703. Baha'u'llah has announced that inasmuch as ignorance and lack of education are barriers of separation among mankind, all must receive training and instruction. Through this provision the lack of mutual understanding will be remedied and the unity of mankind furthered and advanced. Universal education is a universal law....

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 300)

704. The education of each child is compulsory.... In addition to this wide-spread education each child must be taught a profession, art, or trade, so that every member of the community will be enabled to earn his own livelihood. Work done in the spirit of service is the highest form of worship....

("'Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy, p. 83) (Compiled for inclusion with a letter dated 31 August 1976 written by the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies)

Revised July 1990 <p315>

EXTRACTS ON THE SPIRITUAL CHARACTER OF BAHA'I ELECTIONS

From letters written by Shoghi Effendi

705. Beware, beware lest the foul odour of the parties and peoples of foreign lands in the West, and their pernicious methods, such as intrigues, party politics and propaganda- -practices which are abhorrent even in name -- should ever reach the Baha'i community, exert any influence whatsoever upon the friends, and thus bring all spirituality to naught. The friends should, through their devotion, love, loyalty and altruism, abolish these evil practices, not imitate them. It is only after the friends completely ignore and sanctify themselves from these evils, that the spirit of God can penetrate and operate in the body of humanity, and in the Baha'i community.

(30 January 1923 to the Central Spiritual Assembly of Iran -- translated from the Persian)

706. On the election day, the friends must wholeheartedly participate in the elections, in unity and amity, turning their hearts to God, detached from all things but Him, seeking His guidance and supplicating His aid and bounty.

(27 February 1923 to the Baha'i in the East -- translated from the Persian)

707. ...I earnestly appeal to every one of you ... to make ... yet another effort, this time more spontaneous and selfless than before, and endeavour to approach your task .. . with that purity of spirit that can alone obtain our Beloved's most cherished desire. Let us recall His explicit and often repeated assurances that every Assembly elected in that rarefied atmosphere of selflessness and detachment is in truth appointed of God...

(23 February 1924 to the Baha'is in North America, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 65)

708. If we but turn our gaze to the high qualifications of the members of Baha'i Assemblies, ... we are filled with feelings of unworthiness and dismay, and would feel truly disheartened but for the comforting thought <p316> that if we rise to play nobly our part every deficiency in our lives will be more than compensated by the all- conquering spirit of His grace and power. Hence it is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience....

(3 June 1925 to the Baha'i Convention, published in "Baha'i Administration" p. 88)

709. I feel that reference to personalities before the election would give rise to misunderstanding and differences. What the friends should do is to get thoroughly acquainted with one another, to exchange views, to mix freely and discuss among themselves the requirements and qualifications for such a membership without reference or application, however indirect, to particular individuals. We should refrain from influencing the opinion of others, of canvassing for any particular individual, but should stress the necessity of getting fully acquainted with the qualifications of membership referred to in our Beloved's Tablets and of learning more about one another through direct, personal experience rather than through the reports and opinions of our friends.

(14 May 1927 to a Local Spiritual Assembly, published in "Baha'i News Letter", June 1927, p. 9)

710. ...the elector ... is called upon to vote for none but those whom prayer and reflection have inspired him to uphold. Moreover, the practice of nomination, so detrimental to the atmosphere of a silent and prayerful election, is viewed with mistrust inasmuch as it gives the right to deny that God-given right of every elector to vote only in favour of those whom he is conscientiously convinced are the most worthy candidates....

(27 May 1927 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration", p. 136)

711. Baha'i elections of the Community are ... sanctified from all traces of canvassing and plotting that characterize the activities of the perfidious.

(13 December 1932 to the Baha'is in Iran -- translated from the Persian) <p317>

712. I greatly value your suggestions, but I do not feel it to be in keeping with the spirit of the Cause to impose any limitation upon the freedom of the believers to choose those of any race, nationality or temperament who best

combine the essential qualifications for membership of administrative institutions. They should disregard personalities and concentrate their attention on the qualities and requirements of office, without prejudice, passion or partiality. The Assembly should be representative of the choicest and most varied and capable elements in every Baha'i community....

(11 August 1933 to an individual believer)

From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

713. One's vote should be kept confidential. It is not permissible to make any reference whatsoever to individual names. The friends must avoid the evil methods and detestable practices of the politicians. They must turn completely to God, and with a purity of motive, a freedom of spirit and a sanctity of heart, participate in the elections; otherwise the outcome will be chaos and confusion, serious difficulties will ensue, mischief will abound and the confirmation of God will be cut off.

(16 January 1923 to the Central Spiritual Assembly of Iran- -translated from the Persian)

714. Let them exercise the utmost vigilance so that the elections are carried out freely, universally and by secret ballot. Any form of intrigue, deception, collusion and compulsion must be stopped and is forbidden.

(8 March 1932 to a Local Spiritual Assembly -- translated from the Persian)

715. The strength and progress of the Baha'i community depend upon the election of pure, faithful and active souls... Canvassing is deprecated....

(9 April 1932 to a Local Spiritual Assembly -- translated from the Persian)

716. The electors ... must prayerfully and devotedly and after meditation and reflection elect faithful, sincere, experienced, capable and competent souls who are worthy of membership....

(1 July 1943 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran -- translated from the Persian) <p318>

717. In regard to your question about qualifications of delegates and Assembly members: the qualifications which he outlined are really applicable to anyone we elect to a Baha'i office, whatever its nature. But these are only an indication, they do not mean people who don't fulfil them cannot be elected to office. We must aim as high as we can....

(24 October 1947 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, published in "Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to the Baha'i Community of the British Isles" (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1981), p. 207)

Revised June 1989 <p319>

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHA'U'LLAH, 'ABDU'L-BAHA, AND SHOGHI EFFENDI REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

I. From the Writings of Baha'u'llah:

718. The endowments dedicated to charity revert to God, the Revealer of Signs. No one has the right to lay hold on them without leave from the Dawning-Place of Revelation. After Him the decision rests with the Aghsan [Branches], and after them with the House of Justice -- should it be established in the world by then -- so that they may use these endowments for the benefit of the Sites exalted in this Cause, and for that which they have been commanded by God, the Almighty, the All-Powerful. Otherwise the endowments should be referred to the people of Baha, who speak not without His leave and who pass no judgement but in accordance with that which God has ordained in this Tablet, they who are the champions of victory betwixt heaven and earth, so that they may spend them on that which has been decreed in the Holy Book by God, the Mighty, the Bountiful.

("Kitab-i-Aqdas " -- Provisional translation from the Arabic)

719. O ye Men of Justice! Be ye in the realm of God shepherds unto His sheep and guard them from the ravening wolves that have appeared in disguise, even as ye would guard your own sons. Thus exhorteth you the Counsellor, the Faithful.

("A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah", 1st ed. (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1973),p. 16)

720. The men of God's House of Justice have been charged with the affairs of the people. They, in truth, are the Trustees of God among His servants and the daysprings of authority in His countries.

O people of God! That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world. Inasmuch as for each day there is a new problem and for every problem an expedient solution, such affairs should be referred to the Ministers of the House of Justice that they may act <p320> according to the needs and requirements of the time. They that, for the sake of God, arise to serve His Cause, are the recipients of divine inspiration from the unseen Kingdom. It is incumbent upon all to be obedient unto them. All matters of State should be referred to the House of Justice, but acts of worship must be observed according to that which God hath revealed in His Book.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", [rev. ed.] (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), pp. 26-27)

721. It is incumbent upon the Trustees of the House of Justice to take counsel together regarding those things which have not outwardly been revealed in the Book, and to enforce that which is agreeable to them. God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth, and He, verily, is the Provider, the Omniscient.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah", p. 68)

722. We exhort the men of the House of Justice and command them to ensure the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children. It is incumbent upon them to have the utmost regard for the interests of the people at all times and

under all conditions. Blessed is the ruler who succoureth the captive, and the rich one who careth for the poor, and the just one who secureth from the wrong doer the rights of the downtrodden, and happy the trustee who observeth that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days hath prescribed unto him.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah", pp. 69-70)

723. First: It is incumbent upon the ministers of the House of Justice to promote the Lesser Peace so that the people of the earth may be relieved from the burden of exorbitant expenditures. This matter is imperative and absolutely essential, inasmuch as hostilities and conflict lie at the root of affliction and calamity.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah", p. 89)

724. According to the fundamental laws which We have formerly revealed in the "Kitab-i-Aqdas" and other Tablets, all affairs are committed to the care of just kings and presidents and of the Trustees of the House of Justice. Having pondered on that which We have enunciated, every man <p321> of equity and discernment will readily perceive, with his inner and outer eyes, the splendours of the day-star of justice which radiate therefrom.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah", p. 93)

725. In the abundance of Our grace and loving-kindness We have revealed specially for the rulers and ministers of the world that which is conducive to safety and protection, tranquillity and peace; haply the children of men may rest secure from the evils of oppression. He, verily, is the Protector, the Helper, the Giver of victory. It is incumbent upon the men of God's House of Justice to fix their gaze by day and by night upon that which hath shone forth from the Pen of Glory for the training of peoples, the upbuilding of nations, the protection of man and the safeguarding of his honour.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah", p. 125)

726. The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God's holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife. The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind. It behoveth the chiefs and rulers of the world, and in particular the Trustees of God's House of Justice, to endeavour to the utmost of their power to safeguard its position, promote its interests and exalt its station in the eyes of the world. In like manner it is incumbent upon them to enquire into the conditions of their subjects and to acquaint themselves with the affairs and activities of the divers communities in their dominions. We call upon the manifestations of the power of God -- the sovereigns and rulers on earth -- to bestir themselves and

do all in their power that haply they may banish discord from this world and illumine it with the light of concord.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah", pp. 129-30) <p322>

II. From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahai:

727. ...for 'Abdu'l-Baha is in a tempest of dangers and infinitely abhors differences of opinion... Praise be to God, there are no grounds for differences.

The Bab, the Exalted One, is the Morn of Truth, the splendour of Whose light shineth through all regions. He is also the Harbinger of the Most Great Light, the Abha Luminary. The Blessed Beauty is the One promised by the sacred books of the past, the revelation of the Source of light that shone upon Mount Sinai, Whose fire glowed in the midst of the Burning Bush. We are, one and all, servants of Their threshold, and stand each as a lowly keeper at Their door.

My purpose is this, that ere the expiration of a thousand years, no one has the right to utter a single word, even to claim the station of Guardianship. The Most Holy Book is the Book to which all peoples shall refer, and in it the Laws of God have been revealed. Laws not mentioned in the Book should be referred to the decision of the Universal House of Justice. There will be no grounds for difference... Beware, beware lest anyone create a rift or stir up sedition. Should there be differences of opinion, the Supreme House of Justice would immediately resolve the problems. Whatever will be its decision, by majority vote, shall be the real truth, inasmuch as that House is under the protection, unerring guidance and care of the one true Lord. He shall guard it from error and will protect it under the wing of His sanctity and infallibility. He who opposes it is cast out and will eventually be of the defeated.

The Supreme House of Justice should be elected according to the system followed in the election of the parliaments of Europe. And when the countries would be guided, the Houses of Justice of the various countries would elect the Supreme House of Justice.

At whatever time all the beloved of God in each country appoint their delegates, and these in turn elect their representatives, and these representatives elect a body, that body shall be regarded as the Supreme House of Justice.

The establishment of that House is not dependent upon the conversion of all the nations of the world. For example, if conditions were favourable and no disturbances would be caused, the friends in Persia would elect their representatives, and likewise the friends in America, in India, and other areas would also elect their representatives, and these <p323> would elect a House of Justice. That House of Justice would be the Supreme House of Justice. That is all.

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 3 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1916), pp. 499-501; cited in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968", 1st

rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976) pp. 47-48)

728. Those matters of major importance which constitute the foundation of the Law of God are explicitly recorded in the Text, but subsidiary laws are left to the House of Justice. The wisdom of this is that the times never remain the same, for change is a necessary quality and an essential attribute of this world, and of time and place. Therefore the House of Justice will take action accordingly.

Let it not be imagined that the House of Justice will take any decision according to its own concepts and opinions. God forbid! The Supreme House of Justice will take decisions and establish laws through the inspiration and confirmation of the Holy Spirit, because it is in the safekeeping and under the shelter and protection of the Ancient Beauty, and obedience to its decisions is a bounden and essential duty and an absolute obligation, and there is no escape for anyone.

Say, O people: Verily the Supreme House of Justice is under the wings of your Lord, the Compassionate, the All- Merciful, that is, under His protection, His care, and His shelter; for He has commanded the firm believers to obey that blessed, sanctified and all-subduing body, whose sovereignty is divinely ordained and of the Kingdom of Heaven and whose laws are inspired and spiritual.

Briefly, this is the wisdom of referring the laws of society to the House of Justice. In the religion of Islam, similarly, not every ordinance was explicitly revealed; nay not a tenth part of a tenth part was included in the Text; although all matters of major importance were specifically referred to, there were undoubtedly thousands of laws which were unspecified. These were devised by the divines of a later age according to the laws of Islamic jurisprudence, and individual divines made conflicting deductions from the original revealed ordinances. All these were enforced. Today this process of deduction is the right of the body of the House of Justice, and the deductions and conclusions of individual learned men have no authority, unless they are endorsed by the House of Justice. The difference is precisely this, that from the conclusions and <p324> endorsements of the body of the House of Justice whose members are elected by and known to the worldwide Baha'i community, no differences will arise; whereas the conclusions of individual divines and scholars would definitely lead to differences, and result in schism, division, and dispersion. The oneness of the Word would be destroyed, the unity of the Faith would disappear, and the edifice of the Faith of God would be shaken.

("Rahiq-i- Makhtum" vol. I, pp. 302-4; "Baha'i News" 426 (September 1966), p. 2; cited in "Wellspring of Guidance" pp. 84-6)

729. 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.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", [Rev. ed.] (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 33, p. 68.)

730. The House of Justice, however, according to the explicit text of the Law of God, is confined to men; this for a wisdom of the Lord God's, which will ere long be made manifest as clearly as the sun at high noon.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 38, p. 80)

731. Praise be to God, all such doors are closed in the Cause of Baha'u'llah for a special authoritative Centre hath been appointed -- a Centre that solveth all difficulties and wardeth off all differences. The Universal House of Justice, likewise, wardeth off all differences and whatever it prescribeth must be accepted and he who transgresseth is rejected. But this Universal House of Justice which is the Legislature hath not yet been instituted.

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. <p325>

(From a Tablet dated 24 July, 1919 to an individual believer -- translated from the Persian; published in "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 187, pp. 215-16.)

732. 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 His Holiness, 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! The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the Guardian of the Cause of God. 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....

("Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha", (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 11)

733.

And now, concerning the House of Justice which God hath ordained as the source

of all good and freed from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers.

Its members must be manifestations of the fear of God and daysprings of knowledge and understanding, must be steadfast in God's faith and the well-wishers of all mankind.

By this House is meant the Universal House of Justice, that is, in all countries a secondary House of Justice must be instituted, and these secondary Houses of Justice must elect the members of the Universal one.

Unto this body all things must be referred.

It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy <p326> Text.

By this body all the difficult problems are to be resolved and the Guardian of the Cause of God is its sacred head and the distinguished member for life of that body.

Should he not attend in person its deliberations, he must appoint one to represent him.

Should any of the members commit a sin, injurious to the common weal, the Guardian of the Cause of God hath at his own discretion the right to expel him, whereupon the people must elect another one in his stead.

This House of Justice enacteth the laws and the government enforceth them.

The legislative body must reinforce the executive, the executive must aid and assist the legislative body so that through the close union and harmony of these two forces, the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong, that all the regions of the world may become even as Paradise itself.

("Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha", pp. 14-15)

734. This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Baha (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." Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice, and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant. By this House is meant that Universal House Justice which is to be elected from all countries, that is from those parts in the East and West where the loved ones are to be found, after the manner of the customary elections in Western countries such as those of England.

It is incumbent upon these members (of the Universal House of Justice) to

gather in a certain place and deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book. Whatsoever they decide has the same effect as the Text itself. And inasmuch as this House of Justice hath power to enact laws that are not expressly recorded in the Book and bear <p327> upon daily transactions, so also it hath power to repeal the same. Thus for example, the House of Justice enacteth today a certain law and enforceth it, and a hundred years hence, circumstances having profoundly changed and the conditions having altered, another House of Justice will then have power, according to the exigencies of the time, to alter that law. This it can do because that law formeth no part of the Divine Explicit Text. The House of Justice is both the initiator and the abrogator of its own laws.

("Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha", pp. 19-20)

735. 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. The Glory of Glories rest upon you!

("Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 26)

III. From the Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

736. To epitomize: essential infallibility belongs especially to the supreme Manifestations, and acquired infallibility is granted to every holy soul. For instance, the Universal House of Justice, if it be established under the necessary conditions -- with members elected from all the people -- that House of Justice will be under the protection and the unerring guidance of God. If that House of Justice shall decide unanimously, or by a majority, upon any question not mentioned in the Book, that decision and command will be guarded from mistake. Now the members of the House of Justice have not, individually, essential infallibility; but the body of the House of Justice is under the protection and unerring guidance of God: this is called conferred infallibility.

("Some Answered Questions", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985), pp. 172-73)

737. He [Baha'u'llah] has ordained and established the House of Justice, which is endowed with a political as well as a religious function, the consummate union and blending of church and state. This institution is under the protecting power of Baha'u'llah Himself. A universal, or international, House of Justice shall also be organized. Its rulings shall be in accordance with the commands and teachings of Baha'u'llah, and that <p328> which the Universal House of Justice ordains shall be obeyed by all mankind. This international House of Justice shall be appointed and organized from the Houses of Justice of the whole world, and all the world shall come under its administration.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 455)

IV. Extracts from letters and cables written by Shoghi Effendi:

738. As to the order and the management of the spiritual affairs of the friends, that which is very important now is the consolidation of the Spiritual Assemblies in every centre, because on these fortified and unshakable foundations, God's Supreme House of Justice shall be erected and firmly established in the days to come. When this most great edifice shall be reared on such an immovable foundation, God's purpose, wisdom, universal truths, mysteries and realities of the Kingdom, which the mystic Revelation of Baha'u'llah has deposited within the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, shall gradually be revealed and made manifest.

(19 December 1922 to the Baha'is of the East -- translated from the Persian; published in "The Baha'i World", vol. XIV, p. 436)

739. With these Assemblies, local as well as national, harmoniously, vigorously, and efficiently functioning throughout the Baha'i world, the only means for the establishment of the Supreme House of Justice will have been secured. And when this Supreme Body will have been properly established, it will have to consider afresh the whole situation, and lay down the principle which shall direct, so long as it deems advisable, the affairs of the Cause.

(12 March 1923, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" [rev. ed.], (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 41)

740. We are called upon by our beloved Master in His Will and Testament not only to adopt it [Baha'u'llah's new world order] unreservedly, but to unveil its merit to all the world. To attempt to estimate its full value, and grasp its exact significance after so short a time since its inception would be premature and presumptuous on our part. We must trust to time, and <p329> the guidance of God's Universal House of Justice, to obtain a clearer and fuller understanding of its provisions and implications....

(23 February 1924, published in "Baha'i Administration", p. 62)

741. The purpose of so much perpetual and intensive emphasis on the support and consolidation of these Spiritual Assemblies is this -- that the foundation of the Cause of God must become broader and stronger day by day, that no confusion ever enter the divine order, that new and strong ties be forged between East and West, that Baha'i unity be safeguarded and illumine the eyes of the people of the world with its resplendent beauty, so that upon these Assemblies God's Houses of Justice may be firmly established and upon these secondary Houses of Justice the lofty edifice of the Universal House of Justice may, with complete order, perfection and glory, and with no delay, be raised up. When the Universal House of Justice shall have stepped forth from the realm of hope into that of visible fulfilment and its fame be established in every corner and clime of the world, then that august body -- solidly grounded and founded on the firm and unshakable foundation of the entire Baha'i community of East and West, and the recipient of the bounties of God and His inspiration -- will proceed to devise and carry out important undertakings, world-wide activities

and the establishment of glorious institutions. By this means the renown of the Cause of God will become world-wide and its light will illumine the whole earth.

(1924 to the Baha'is of the East -- translated from the Persian; published in "The Baha'i World" vol. XIV, p. 436)

742. These Spiritual Assemblies have been primarily constituted to carry out these affairs, and secondly to lay a perfect and strong foundation for the establishment of the divine and Universal House of Justice. When that central pivot of the people of Baha shall be effectively, majestically and firmly established, a new era will dawn, heavenly bounties and graces will pour out from that Source, and the all-encompassing promises will be fulfilled.

(30 October 1924 to the Spiritual Assembly of Tihran -- translated from the Persian; published in "The Baha'i World" vol. XIV, p. 436) <p330>

743. Regarding the method to be adopted for the election of the National Spiritual Assemblies, it is clear that the text of the Beloved's Testament gives us no indication as to the manner in which these Assemblies are to be elected. In one of His earliest Tablets, however, addressed to a friend in Persia, the following is expressly recorded.

"At whatever time all the beloved of God in each country appoint their delegates, and these in turn elect their representatives, and these representatives elect a body, that body shall be regarded as the Supreme Baytu'l- 'Adl (Universal House of Justice)"

These words clearly indicate that a three-stage election has been provided by 'Abdu'l-Baha for the formation of the International House of Justice, and as it is explicitly provided in His Will and Testament that the "Secondary Houses of Justice (i.e. National Assemblies) must elect the members the Universal One", it is obvious that the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies will have to be indirectly elected by the body of the believers in their respective provinces. In view of these complementary instructions the principle, set forth in my letter of March 12th, 1923, has been established requiring the believers (the beloved of God) in every country to elect a certain number of delegates who in turn will elect their national representatives (Secondary House of Justice or National Spiritual Assembly), whose sacred obligation and privilege will be to elect in time God's Universal House of Justice.

(12 May 1925, published in "Baha'i Administration", p. 84)

744.

It should be carefully borne in mind that the local as well as the international Houses of Justice have been expressly enjoined by the Kitab-i-Aqdas; that the institution of the National Spiritual Assembly, as an intermediary body, and referred to in the Master's Will as the "Secondary House of Justice," has the express sanction of 'Abdu'l-Baha; and that the method to be pursued for the election of the International and National Houses of Justice

has been set forth by Him in His Will, as well as in a number of His Tablets.

Moreover, the institutions of the local and national Funds, that are now the necessary adjuncts to all local and national spiritual assemblies, have not only been established by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Tablets He revealed to the Baha'is of the Orient, but their importance and necessity have been repeatedly emphasized by Him in His utterances and writings.

The concentration of authority in the <p331> hands of the elected representatives of the believers; the necessity of the submission of every adherent of the Faith to the considered judgment of Baha'i Assemblies; His preference for unanimity in decision; the decisive character of the majority vote; and even the desirability for the exercise of close supervision over all Baha'i publications, have been sedulously instilled by 'Abdu'l-Baha, as evidenced by His authenticated and widely-scattered Tablets.

To accept His broad and humanitarian Teachings on one hand, and to reject and dismiss with neglectful indifference His more challenging and distinguishing precepts, would be an act of manifest disloyalty to that which He has cherished most in His life.

That the Spiritual Assemblies of today will be replaced in time by the Houses of Justice, and are to all intents and purposes identical and not separate bodies, is abundantly confirmed by 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself.

He has in fact in a Tablet addressed to the members of the first Chicago Spiritual Assembly, the first elected Baha'i body instituted in the United States, referred to them as the members of the "House of Justice" for that city, and has thus with His own pen established beyond any doubt the identity of the present Baha'i Spiritual Assemblies with the Houses of Justice referred to by Baha'u'llah.

For reasons which are not difficult to discover, it has been found advisable to bestow upon the elected representatives of Baha'i communities throughout the world the temporary appellation of Spiritual Assemblies, a term which, as the position and aims of the Baha'i Faith are better understood and more fully recognized, will gradually be superseded by the permanent and more appropriate designation of House of Justice.

Not only will the present-day Spiritual Assemblies be styled differently in future, but they will be enabled also to add to their present functions those powers, duties, and prerogatives necessitated by the recognition of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, not merely as one of the recognized religious systems of the world, but as the State Religion of an independent and Sovereign Power.

And as the Baha'i Faith permeates the masses of the peoples of East and West, and its truth is embraced by the majority of the peoples of a number of the Sovereign States of the world, will the Universal House of Justice attain the plenitude of its power, and exercise, as the supreme organ of the Baha'i Commonwealth, all the rights, the duties, and responsibilities incumbent upon the world's future super- state. <p332>

It must be pointed out, however, in this connection that, contrary to what has been confidently asserted, the establishment of the Supreme House of Justice is in no way dependent upon the adoption of the Baha'i Faith by the mass of the peoples of the world, nor does it presuppose its acceptance by the majority of the inhabitants of any one country.

In fact, 'Abdu'l-Baha, Himself, in one of His earliest Tablets, contemplated the possibility of the formation of the Universal House of Justice in His own lifetime, and but for the unfavorable circumstances prevailing under the Turkish regime, would have, in all probability, taken the preliminary steps for its establishment.

It will be evident, therefore, that given favorable circumstances, under which the Baha'is of Persia and of the adjoining countries under Soviet rule, may be enabled to elect their national representatives, in accordance with the guiding principles laid down in 'Abdu'l- Baha's writings, the only remaining obstacle in the way of the definite formation of the International House of Justice will have been removed.

For upon the National Houses of Justice of the East and the West devolves the task, in conformity with the explicit provisions of the Will, of electing directly the members of the International House of Justice.

Not until they are themselves fully representative of the rank and file of the believers in their respective countries, not until they have acquired the weight and the experience that will enable them to function vigorously in the organic life of the Cause, can they approach their sacred task, and provide the spiritual basis for the constitution of so august a body in the Baha'i world.

...

It must be also clearly understood by every believer that the institution of Guardianship does not under any circumstances abrogate, or even in the slightest degree detract from, the powers granted to the Universal House of Justice by Baha'u'llah in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, and repeatedly and solemnly confirmed by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will. It does not constitute in any manner a contradiction to the Will and Writings of Baha'u'llah, nor does it nullify any of His revealed instructions. It enhances the prestige of that exalted assembly, stabilizes its supreme position, safeguards its unity, assures the continuity of its labors, without presuming in the slightest to infringe upon the inviolability of its clearly-defined sphere of jurisdiction. We stand indeed too close to so monumental a document to claim for ourselves a complete understanding of all its implications, or to <p333> presume to have grasped the manifold mysteries it undoubtedly contains. Only future generations can comprehend the value and significance attached to this Divine Masterpiece, which the Master-builder of the world has designed for the unification and triumph of the world-wide Faith of Baha'u'llah. Only those who come after us will be in a position to realize the value of the surprisingly strong emphasis that has been placed on the institution of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship....

(27 February 1929, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters" rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 5-8)

745. The National Spiritual Assemblies, like unto pillars, will be gradually and firmly established in every country on the strong and fortified foundations of the Local Assemblies. On these pillars, the mighty edifice, the Universal House of Justice, will be erected, raising high its noble frame above the world of existence. The unity of the followers of Baha'u'llah will thus be realized and fulfilled from one end of the earth to the other. The explicit ordinances of His Most Holy Book will be promulgated, applied and carried out most befittingly in the world of creation, and the living waters of everlasting life will stream forth from that fountain-head of God's World Order upon all the warring nations and peoples of the world, to wash away the evils and iniquities of the realm of dust, heal man's age-old ills and ailments. Then will the visible sovereignty of the Most Great Name shake the foundations of the countries and nations of the world, strike fear and remorse in the hearts of some of the traditional ecclesiastical divines of various creeds and nations, and cause others to become frustrated, disturbed, vanquished and obliterated...

In these days the things that are regarded as the most imperative of all and upon which will depend the development of the Cause of God, the enhancement of its position and prestige and the promulgation of the laws of His Faith, are but two momentous tasks: first, to expedite preparations for the formation of the divinely ordained, the Supreme House of Justice; second, to complete the construction of the Temple in the United States.

(27 November 1929 to the Baha'is of Persia -- translated from the Persian)

746. Then will the Throne of Baha'u'llah's sovereignty be founded in the promised land and the scales of justice be raised on high. Then will the <p334> banner of the independence of the Faith be unfurled, and His Most Great Law be unveiled and rivers of laws and ordinances stream forth from this snow-white spot with all-conquering power and awe-inspiring majesty, the like of which past ages have never seen. Then will appear the truth of what was revealed by the Tongue of Grandeur: "Call out to Zion, O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendour is revealed." "...O Carmel... 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... Ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee, and will manifest the people of Baha who have been mentioned in the Book of Names."[1]
[1 Translated by Shoghi Effendi, "Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i
Publishing Trust, 1984), pp. 15-16.]

Through it the pillars of the Faith on this earth will be firmly established and its hidden powers be revealed, its signs shine forth, its banners be unfurled and its light be shed upon all peoples.

(27 November 1929 to the Baha'is of Persia -- translated from the Arabic; published in "The Baha'i World", vol. XIV, p. 438)

747. For Baha'u'llah, we should readily recognize, has not only imbued mankind with a new and regenerating Spirit. He has not merely enunciated certain universal principles, or propounded a particular philosophy, however potent, sound and universal these may be. In addition to these He, as well as 'Abdu'l-Baha after Him, has, unlike the Dispensations of the past, clearly and specifically laid down a set of Laws, established definite institutions, and provided for the essentials of a Divine Economy. These are destined to be a pattern for future society, a supreme instrument for the establishment of the Most Great Peace, and the one agency for the unification of the world, and the proclamation of the reign of righteousness and justice upon the earth. Not only have They revealed all the directions required for the practical realization of those ideals which the Prophets of God have visualized, and which from time immemorial have inflamed the imagination of seers and poets in every age. They have also, in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as <p335> Their chosen Successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world.

(28 November 1931, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", pp. 19-20)

748. Then will all our cherished hopes and aspirations be realized, the tree of our endeavours bear fruit, the Will and Testament of our Master and our Beloved be fully and firmly established, and the hidden powers of the Cause of our Lord and God be fully manifested. Then will be unveiled before our eyes the inauguration of an era the like of which has never been witnessed in past ages....

(13 December 1932 to the Baha'is of Persia -- translated from the Arabic; published in "The Baha'i World, vol. XIV, p. 438)

749. To their Persian brethren, who in the heroic age of the Faith had won the crown of martyrdom, the American believers, forerunners of its golden age, were now worthily succeeding, bearing in their turn the palm of a hard-won victory. The unbroken record of their illustrious deeds had established beyond the shadow of a doubt their preponderating share in shaping the destinies of their Faith. In a world writhing with pain and declining into chaos this community -- the vanguard of the liberating forces of Baha'u'llah -- succeeded in the years following 'Abdu'l- Baha's passing in raising high above the institutions established by its sister communities in East and West what may well constitute the chief pillar of that future House- -a House which posterity will regard as the last refuge of a tottering civilization.

(21 April 1933, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 89)

750. In the Tablets of Baha'u'llah where institutions of the International and

Local Houses of Justice are specifically designated and formally established; in the institution of the Hands of the Cause of God which first Baha'u'llah and then 'Abdu'l-Baha brought into being; in the institution of both local and national Assemblies which in their embryonic stage were already functioning in the days preceding 'Abdu'l-Baha's <p336> ascension; in the authority with which the Author of our Faith and the Center of His Covenant have in their Tablets chosen to confer upon them; in the institution of the Local Fund which operated according to 'Abdu'l-Baha's specific injunctions addressed to certain Assemblies in Persia; in the verses of the Kitab-i-Aqdas the implications of which clearly anticipate the institution of the Guardianship; in the explanation which 'Abdu'l-Baha, in one of His Tablets, has given to, and the emphasis He has placed upon, the hereditary principle and the law of primogeniture as having been upheld by the Prophets of the past -- in these we can discern the faint glimmerings and discover the earliest intimation of the nature and working of the Administrative Order which the Will of 'Abdu'l-Baha was at a later time destined to proclaim and formally establish.

(8 February 1934, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 147)

751. Acting in conjunction with each other these two inseparable institutions administer its affairs, coordinate its activities, promote its interests, execute its laws and defend its subsidiary institutions. Severally, each operates within a clearly defined sphere of jurisdiction; each is equipped with its own attendant institutions -- instruments designed for the effective discharge of its particular responsibilities and duties. Each exercises, within the limitations imposed upon it, its powers, its authority, its rights and prerogatives. These are neither contradictory, nor detract in the slightest degree from the position which each of these institutions occupies. Far from being incompatible or mutually destructive, they supplement each other's authority and functions, and are permanently and fundamentally united in their aims.

...

Severed from the no less essential institution of the Universal House of Justice this same System of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Baha would be paralyzed in its action and would be powerless to fill in those gaps which the Author of the Kitab-i-Aqdas has deliberately left in the body of His legislative and administrative ordinances.

(8 February 1934, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 148)

752. From these statements it is made indubitably clear and evident that the Guardian of the Faith has been made the Interpreter of the Word and <p337> that the Universal House of Justice has been invested with the function of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the teachings. The interpretation of the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative and binding as the enactments of the International House of Justice, whose exclusive right and prerogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgment on such laws and ordinances as Baha'u'llah has not expressly

revealed. Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested. Though the Guardian of the Faith has been made the permanent head of so august a body he can never, even temporarily, assume the right of exclusive legislation. He cannot override the decision of the majority of his fellow members, but is bound to insist upon a reconsideration by them of any enactment he conscientiously believes to conflict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of Baha'u'llah's revealed utterances....

(8 February 1934, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", pp. 149-50)

753. The Administrative Order of the Faith of Baha'u'llah must in no wise be regarded as purely democratic in character inasmuch as the basic assumption which requires all democracies to depend fundamentally upon getting their mandate from the people is altogether lacking in this Dispensation. In the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, in the enactment of the legislation necessary to supplement the laws of the Kitab-i-Aqdas, the members of the Universal House of Justice, it should be borne in mind, are not, as Baha'u'llah's utterances clearly imply, responsible to those whom they represent, nor are they allowed to be governed by the feelings, the general opinion, and even the convictions of the mass of the faithful, or of those who directly elect them. They are to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience. They may, indeed they must, acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately in their minds the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but must reserve for themselves the right of an unfettered decision.

("God will verily inspire them with whatsoever He willeth," is Baha'u'llah's incontrovertible assurance. They, and not the body of those who either <p338> directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life- blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation.... (8 February 1934, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 153)

754. The first [a high sense of moral rectitude in their social and administrative activities] is specially, though not exclusively, directed to their elected representatives, whether local, regional, or national, who, in their capacity as the custodians and members of the nascent institutions of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, are shouldering the chief responsibility in laying an unassailable foundation for that Universal House of Justice which, as its title implies, is to be the exponent and guardian of that Divine Justice which can alone insure the security of, and establish the reign of law and order in, a strangely disordered world....

(25 December 1938, published in "The Advent of Divine Justice", (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 22)

755. For it must be clearly understood, nor can it be sufficiently emphasized,

that the conjunction of the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf with those of her brother and mother incalculably reinforces the spiritual potencies of that consecrated Spot which, under the wings of the Bab's overshadowing Sepulchre, and in the vicinity of the future Mashriqu'l-Adhkar which will be reared on its flank, is destined to evolve into the focal centre of those world-shaking, world-embracing, world-directing administrative institutions, ordained by Baha'u'llah and anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Baha, and which are to function in consonance with the principles that govern the twin institutions of the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice. Then, and then only, will this momentous prophecy which illuminates the concluding passages of the Tablet of Carmel be fulfilled: "Ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee (Carmel), and will manifest the people of Baha who have been mentioned in the Book of Names.

To attempt to visualize, even in its barest outline, the glory that must envelop these institutions, to essay even a tentative and partial description of their character or the manner of their operation, or to trace however inadequately the course of events leading to their rise and eventual <p339> establishment is far beyond my own capacity and power. Suffice it to say that at this troubled stage in world history the association of these three incomparably precious souls who, next to the three Central Figures of our Faith, tower in rank above the vast multitude of the heroes, Letters, martyrs, Hands, teachers and administrators of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, in such a potentially powerful spiritual and administrative Centre, is in itself an event which will release forces that are bound to hasten the emergence in a land which, geographically, spiritually and administratively, constitutes the heart of the entire planet, of some of the brightest gems of that World Order now shaping in the womb of this travailing age.

(21 December 1939, published in "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America 1932-1946", (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1947), pp. 32-33)

756. In this Charter of the future world civilization [Kitab-i-Aqdas] 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" ... 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" ..

("God Passes By", Rev. ed . (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 214)

757.

Parallel with this double process of consolidation and construction particular attention should be devoted to the provision of the necessary means whereby the newly fledged centres in the Dominion of Canada and throughout the Republics of Latin America can be co-ordinated and further consolidated, through the formation of three National Spiritual Assemblies, designed to participate in time in the international elections that must precede the constitution of the First Universal House of Justice.

The erection of these three pillars, raising to eleven the number of existing National Spiritual Assemblies, which are to be designated in future as Secondary Houses of Justice, and are designed to support the highest legislative body in the administrative hierarchy of the Faith, will, as the Divine Plan continues to unfold, be supplemented by the formation of similar bodies which, as they multiply, will, of necessity, broaden the <p340> basis, and reinforce the representative character, of the supreme elective Institution which, in conjunction with the institution of Guardianship, must direct and co-ordinate the activities of a world-encircling Faith.

Through the formation of these National Spiritual Assemblies, as the implications of the Divine Plan gradually unfold in the coming years, the American Baha'i Community will, in addition to its missionary activities throughout five continents and the islands of the seven seas, be contributing directly to the laying of the foundation, and hastening the formation, of an institution which, when constituted, will have consummated the threefold process involved in the erection of the total structure of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

(15 June 1946, published in "Messages to America", p. 94)

758. On the success of this enterprise [the Africa Campaign], unprecedented in its character and immense in its spiritual potentialities, must depend the initiation, at a later period in the Formative Age of the Faith, of undertakings embracing within their range all National Assemblies functioning throughout the Baha'i world -- undertakings constituting in themselves a prelude to the launching of world-wide enterprises destined to be embarked upon, in future epochs of that same Age, by the Universal House of Justice, that will symbolize the unity and co- ordinate and unify the activities of these National Assemblies.

Indeed the birth of this African enterprise, in the opening decade of the second Baha'i century, coinciding as it does with the formation of the International Baha'i Council, should be acclaimed as an event of peculiar significance in the evolution of our beloved Faith. Both events will, no doubt, be hailed by posterity as simultaneous and compelling evidences of the irresistible unfoldment of a divinely appointed Administrative Order and of the development, on an international scale, of its subsidiary agencies, heralding the establishment of the Supreme Legislative Body designed to crown the Administrative Edifice now being laboriously erected by the privileged builders of a Divine Order, whose features have been delineated by the Centre of the Covenant in His Will and Testament, whose fundamental laws have been revealed by the Founder of our Faith <p341> in His "Kitab-i-Aqdas", and whose advent has been foreshadowed by the Herald of the Baha'i Dispensation in the "Bayan", His most weighty Book.

(25 February 1951, published in "Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to the Baha'i Community of the British Isles", (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1981), p. 261)

759. HOUR NOW RIPE TAKE LONG INEVITABLY DEFERRED STEP CONFORMITY PROVISIONS 'ABDU'L-BAHA'S TESTAMENT CONJUNCTION WITH SIX ABOVE MENTIONED STEPS THROUGH APPOINTMENT FIRST CONTINGENT HANDS CAUSE GOD TWELVE IN NUMBER EQUALLY ALLOCA HOLY LAND ASIATIC AMERICAN EUROPEAN CONTINENTS. INITIAL STEP NOW TAKEN REGARDE PREPARATORY FULL DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTION PROVIDED 'ABDU'L-BAHA'S WILL PARALLELED PRELIMINARY MEASURE FORMATION INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL DESTINED CULMINATE EMERGENCE UNIVERSAL HOUSE JUSTICE. NASCENT INSTITUTION FORGING FRESH LINKS BINDING RISING WORLD CENTRE FAITH TO CONSOLIDATING WORLD COMMUNITY FOLLOWERS MOST GREAT NAME PAVING WAY ADOPTION SUPPLEMENTARY MEASURES CALCU REINFORCE FOUNDATIONS STRUCTURE BAHA'I ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER....

(24 December 1951, published in "Messages to the Baha'i World 1950-1957", (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 20)

760. In this great Tablet [of Carmel] which unveils divine mysteries and heralds the establishment of two mighty, majestic and momentous undertakings -- one of which is spiritual and the other administrative, both at the World Centre of the Faith -- Baha'u'llah refers to an "Ark", whose dwellers are the men of the Supreme House of Justice, which, in conformity with the exact provisions of the Will and Testament of the Centre of the Mighty Covenant, is the body which should lay down laws not explicitly revealed in the Text. In this Dispensation, these laws are destined to flow from this Holy Mountain, even as in the Mosaic Dispensation the law of God was promulgated from Zion. The "sailing of the Ark" of His laws is a reference to the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, which is indeed the Seat of Legislation, one of the <p342> branches of the World Administrative Centre of the Baha'is on this Holy Mountain ....

(Naw Ruz 111-1954 to the Baha'is of the East -- translated from the Persian; published in "The Baha'i World", vol. XIV, p. 438)

761. The raising of this Edifice will in turn herald the construction, in the course of successive epochs of the Formative Age of the Faith, of several other structures, which will serve as the administrative seats of such divinely appointed institutions as the Guardianship, the Hands of the Cause, and the Universal House of Justice. These Edifices will, in the shape of a far-flung arc, and following a harmonizing style of architecture, surround the resting-places of the Greatest Holy Leaf, ranking as foremost among the members of her sex in the Baha'i Dispensation, of her Brother, offered up as a ransom by Baha'u'llah for the quickening of the world and its unification, and of their Mother, proclaimed by Him to be His chosen "consort in all the worlds of God". The ultimate completion of this stupendous undertaking will mark the culmination of the development of a world-wide divinely- appointed Administrative Order whose beginnings may be traced as far back as the concluding years of the Heroic Age of the Faith.

(27 November 1954, published in "Messages to the Baha'i World 1950-1957" p. 74)

V. From the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice:

762. Baha'u'llah, the Revealer of God's Word in this Day, the Source of Authority, the Fountainhead of Justice, the Creator of a new World Order, the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization, the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Unifier and Redeemer of all mankind, has proclaimed the advent of God's Kingdom on earth, has formulated its laws and ordinances, enunciated its principles, and ordained its institutions. To direct and canalize the forces released by His Revelation He instituted His Covenant, whose power has preserved the integrity of His Faith, maintained its unity and stimulated its world-wide expansion throughout the successive ministries of 'Abdu'l-Baha and <p343> Shoghi Effendi. It continues to fulfil its life-giving purpose through the agency of the Universal House of Justice whose fundamental object, as one of the twin successors of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, is to ensure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of the Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings.

...

The provenance, the authority, the duties, the sphere of action of the Universal House of Justice all derive from the revealed Word of Baha'u'llah which, together with the interpretations and expositions of the Centre of the Covenant and of the Guardian of the Cause -- who, after 'Abdu'l-Baha, is the sole authority in the interpretation of Baha'i Scripture -- constitute the binding terms of reference of the Universal House of Justice and are its bedrock foundation. The authority of these Texts is absolute and immutable until such time as Almighty God shall reveal His new Manifestation to Whom will belong all authority and power.

There being no successor to Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause of God, the Universal House of Justice is the Head of the Faith and its supreme institution, to which all must turn, and on it rests the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God....

(pp. 3-4)

VI. From letters written by the Universal House of Justice

763. We are glad that you have brought to our attention the questions perplexing some of the believers. It is much better for these questions to be put freely and openly than to have them, unexpressed, burdening the hearts of devoted believers. Once one grasps certain basic principles of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah such uncertainties are easily dispelled. This is not to say that the Cause of God contains no mysteries. Mysteries there are indeed, but they are not of a kind to shake one's faith once the essential tenets of the Cause and the indisputable facts of any situation are clearly understood.

The questions put by the various believers fall into three groups. The first group centres upon the following queries: Why were steps taken to elect a Universal House of Justice with the foreknowledge that there <p344> would be no Guardian? Was the time ripe for such an action? Could not the International

Baha'i Council have carried on the work?

At the time of our beloved Shoghi Effendi's death it was evident, from the circumstances and from the explicit requirements of the Holy Texts, that it had been impossible for him to appoint a successor in accordance with the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha. This situation, in which the Guardian died without being able to appoint a successor, presented an obscure question not covered by the explicit Holy Text, and had to be referred to the Universal House of Justice. The friends should clearly understand that before the election of the Universal House of Justice there was no knowledge that there would be no Guardian. There could not have been any such foreknowledge, whatever opinions individual believers may have held. Neither the Hands of the Cause of God, nor the International Baha'i Council, nor any other existing body could make a decision upon this all-important matter. Only the House of Justice had authority to pronounce upon it. This was one urgent reason for calling the election of the Universal House of Justice as soon as possible.

Following the passing of Shoghi Effendi the international administration of the Faith was carried on by the Hands of the Cause of God with the complete agreement and loyalty of the National Spiritual Assemblies and the body of the believers. This was in accordance with the Guardian's designation of the Hands as the "Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth".

From the very outset of their custodianship of the Cause of God the Hands realized that since they had no certainty of divine guidance such as is incontrovertibly assured to the Guardian and to the Universal House of Justice, their one safe course was to follow with undeviating firmness the instructions and policies of Shoghi Effendi. The entire history of religion shows no comparable record of such strict self-discipline, such absolute loyalty and such complete self-abnegation by the leaders of a religion finding themselves suddenly deprived of their divinely inspired guide. The debt of gratitude which mankind for generations, nay, ages to come, owes to this handful of grief-stricken, steadfast, heroic souls is beyond estimation.

The Guardian had given the Baha'i world explicit and detailed plans covering the period until Ridvan 1963, the end of the Ten Year Crusade. <p345> From that point onward, unless the Faith were to be endangered, further divine guidance was essential. This was the second pressing reason for the calling of the election of the Universal House of Justice. The rightness of the time was further confirmed by references in Shoghi Effendi's letters to the Ten Year Crusade's being followed by other plans under the direction of the Universal House of Justice. One such reference is the following passage from a letter addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles on 25th February 1951, concerning its Two Year Plan which immediately preceded the Ten Year Crusade:

On the success of this enterprise, unprecedented in its scope, unique in its character and immense in its

spiritual potentialities, must depend the initiation, at a later period in the Formative Age of the Faith, of undertakings embracing within their range all National Assemblies functioning throughout the Baha'i world -- undertakings constituting in themselves a prelude to the launching of world-wide enterprises destined to be embarked upon, in future epochs of that same Age, by the Universal House of Justice, that will symbolize the unity and co-ordinate and unify the activities of these National Assemblies.

Having been in charge of the Cause of God for six years, the Hands, with absolute faith in the Holy Writings, called upon the believers to elect the Universal House of Justice, and even went so far as to ask that they themselves be not voted for. The sole, sad instance of anyone succumbing to the allurements of power was the pitiful attempt of Charles Mason Remey to usurp the Guardianship.

The following excerpts from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha state clearly and emphatically the principles with which the friends are already familiar from the Will and Testament of the Master and the various letters of Shoghi Effendi, and explain the basis for the election of the Universal House of Justice. This Tablet was sent to Persia by the beloved Guardian himself, in the early years of his ministry, for circulation among the believers.

...for 'Abdu'l-Baha is in a tempest of dangers and infinitely abhors differences of opinion... Praise be to God, there are no grounds for differences.

The Bab, the Exalted One, is the Morn of Truth, the splendour of Whose light shineth through all regions. He is also <p346> the Harbinger of the Most Great Light, the Abha Luminary. The Blessed Beauty is the One promised by the sacred books of the past, the revelation of the Source of light that shone upon Mount Sinai, Whose fire glowed in the midst of the Burning Bush. We are, one and all, servants of Their threshold, and stand each as a lowly keeper at Their door.

My purpose is this, that ere the expiration of a thousand years, no one has the right to utter a single word, even to claim the station of Guardianship. The Most Holy Book is the Book to which all peoples shall refer, and in it the Laws of God have been revealed. Laws not mentioned in the Book should be referred to the decision of the Universal House of Justice. There will be no grounds for difference... Beware, beware lest anyone create a rift or stir up sedition. Should there be differences of opinion, the Supreme House of Justice would immediately resolve the problems. Whatever will be its decision, by majority vote, shall be the real truth, inasmuch as that House is under the protection, unerring guidance and care of the one true Lord. He shall guard it from error and will protect it under the wing of His sanctity and infallibility. He who opposes it is cast out and will eventually be of the defeated.

The Supreme House of Justice should be elected according to the system followed

in the election of the parliaments of Europe. And when the countries would be guided, the Houses of Justice of the various countries would elect the Supreme House of Justice.

At whatever time all the beloved of God in each country appoint their delegates, and these in turn elect their representatives, and these representatives elect a body, that body shall be regarded as the Supreme House of Justice.

The establishment of that House is not dependent upon the conversion of all the nations of the world. For example, if conditions were favourable and no disturbances would be caused, the friends in Persia would elect their representatives, and likewise the friends in America, in India, and other areas would also elect their representatives, and these would elect a <p347> House of Justice. That House of Justice would be the Supreme House of Justice. That is all.

("Makatib-i-'Abdu'l-Baha", Vol. 111, pp. 500-501)

The friends should realize that there is nothing in the Texts to indicate that the election of the Universal House of Justice could be called only by the Guardian. On the contrary, 'Abdu'l-Baha envisaged the calling of its election in His own life-time. At a time described by the Guardian as "the darkest moments of His [the Master's] life, under 'Abdu'l-Hamid's regime, when He stood ready to be deported to the most inhospitable regions of Northern Africa", and when even His life was threatened, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote to Haji Mirza Taqi Afnan, the cousin of the Bab and chief builder of the 'Ishqabad Temple, commanding him to arrange for the election of the Universal House of Justice should the threats against the Master materialize. The second part of the Master's Will is also relevant to such a situation and should be studied by the friends.

The second series of problems vexing some of the friends centres on the question of the infallibility of the Universal House of Justice and its ability to function without the presence of the Guardian. Particular difficulty has been experienced in understanding the implications of the following statement by the beloved Guardian:

Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of Baha'u'llah would be mutilated and permanently deprived of that hereditary principle which, as 'Abdu'l-Baha has written, has been invariably upheld by the Law of God. "In all the Divine Dispensations," He states, in a Tablet addressed to a follower of the Faith in Persia, "the eldest son hath been given extraordinary distinctions. Even the station of prophethood hath been his birthright." Without such an institution the integrity of the Faith would be imperilled, and the stability of the entire fabric would be gravely endangered. Its prestige would suffer, the means required to enable it to take a long, an uninterrupted view over

a series of generations would be completely lacking, and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn.

("The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah", "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 148)
<p348>

Let the friends who wish for a clearer understanding of this passage at the present time consider it in the light of the many other texts which deal with the same subject, for example the following passages gleaned from the letters of Shoghi Effendi:

They have also, in unequivocal and emphatic language, appointed those twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship as their chosen Successors, destined to apply the principles, promulgate the laws, protect the institutions, adapt loyally and intelligently the Faith to the requirements of progressive society, and consummate the incorruptible inheritance which the Founders of the Faith have bequeathed to the world.

(Letter dated 21 March 1930, "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 20)

It must be also clearly understood by every believer that the institution of Guardianship does not under any circumstances abrogate, or even in the slightest degree detract from, the powers granted to the Universal House of Justice by Baha'u'llah in the "Kitabu'l-Aqdas", and repeatedly and solemnly confirmed by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will. It does not constitute in any manner a contradiction to the Will and Writings of Baha'u'llah, nor does it nullify any of His revealed instructions. It enhances the prestige of that exalted assembly, stabilizes its supreme position, safeguards its unity, assures the continuity of its labours, without presuming in the slightest to infringe upon the inviolability of its clearly-defined sphere of jurisdiction. We stand indeed too close to so monumental a document to claim for ourselves a complete understanding of all its implications, or to presume to have grasped the manifold mysteries it undoubtedly contains....

(Letter dated 27 February 1929, "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 8)

From these statements it is made indubitably clear and evident that the Guardian of the Faith has been made the Interpreter of the Word and that the Universal House of Justice has been invested with the function of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the teachings. The interpretation of the

Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative <p349> and binding as the enactments of the International House of Justice, whose exclusive right and prerogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgement on such laws and ordinances as Baha'u'llah has not expressly revealed. Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested.

("The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah", "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", pp. 149-50)

Each exercises, within the limitations imposed upon it, its powers, its authority, its rights and prerogatives. These are neither contradictory, nor detract in the slightest degree from the position which each of these institutions occupies.

("The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah", "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 148)

Though the Guardian of the Faith has been made the permanent head of so august a body he can never, even temporarily, assume the right of exclusive legislation. He cannot override the decision of the majority of his fellow-members...

("The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah", "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 150)

Above all, let the hearts of the friends be assured by these words of Baha'u'llah:

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 World Order of Baha'u'llah" p. 109)

and these of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

Verily, God effecteth that which He pleaseth; naught
can annul His Covenant; naught can obstruct His favor nor
oppose His Cause! He doeth with His will that which
pleaseth Him and He is powerful over all things!...

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", Vol. III, p. 598)

It should be understood by the friends that before legislating upon any matter the Universal House of Justice studies carefully and <p350> exhaustively both the Sacred Texts and the Writings of Shoghi Effendi on the subject. The interpretations written by the beloved Guardian cover a vast range of subjects and are equally as binding as the Text itself.

There is a profound difference between the interpretations of the Guardian and the elucidations of the House of Justice in exercise of its function to

"deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book". The Guardian reveals what the Scripture means; his interpretation is a statement of truth which cannot be varied. Upon the Universal House of Justice, in the words of the Guardian, "has been conferred the exclusive right of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the Baha'i writings". Its pronouncements, which are susceptible of amendment or abrogation by the House of Justice itself, serve to supplement and apply the Law of God. Although not invested with the function of interpretation, the House of Justice is in a position to do everything necessary to establish the World Order of Baha'u'llah on this earth. Unity of doctrine is maintained by the existence of the authentic texts of Scripture and the voluminous interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi, together with the absolute prohibition against anyone propounding "authoritative" or "inspired" interpretations or usurping the function of Guardian. Unity of administration is assured by the authority of the Universal House of Justice.

"Such", in the words of Shoghi Effendi, "is the immutability of His revealed Word. Such is the elasticity which characterizes the functions of His appointed ministers. The first preserves the identity of His Faith, and guards the integrity of His law. The second enables it, even as a living organism, to expand and adapt itself to the needs and requirements of an ever-changing society."

(Letter dated 21 March 1930, "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 25)

Every true believer, if he is to deepen in his understanding of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, must needs combine profound faith in the unfailing efficacy of His Message and His Covenant, with the humility of recognizing that no one of this generation can claim to have embraced the vastness of His Cause nor to have comprehended the manifold mysteries and potentialities it contains. The words of Shoghi Effendi bear ample testimony to this fact: <p351>

How vast is the Revelation of Baha'u'llah! How great the magnitude of His blessings showered upon humanity in this day! And yet, how poor, how inadequate our conception of their significance and glory! This generation stands too close to so colossal a Revelation to appreciate, in their full measure, the infinite possibilities of His Faith, the unprecedented character of His Cause, and the mysterious dispensations of His Providence.

(Letter dated 21 March 1930, "The World Order of Baha'u'llah", p. 24)

We are called upon by our beloved Master in His Will and Testament not only to adopt it [Baha'u'llah's new world order] unreservedly, but to unveil its merit to all the world. To attempt to estimate its full value, and grasp its exact significance after so short a time since its inception would be premature and presumptuous on our part. We must trust to time, and the guidance of God's Universal House of Justice, to obtain a clearer and fuller understanding of its provisions and implications....

(Letter dated 23 February 1924, published in "Baha'i Administration", p. 62)

As to the order and the management of the spiritual affairs of the friends, that which is very important now is the consolidation of the Spiritual Assemblies in every centre, because on these fortified and unshakable foundations, God's Supreme House of Justice shall be erected and firmly established in the days to come. When this most great Edifice shall be reared on such an immovable foundation, God's purpose, wisdom, universal truths, mysteries and realities of the Kingdom, which the mystic revelation of Baha'u'llah has deposited within the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, shall gradually be revealed and made manifest.

(Letter dated 19 December 1922 -- translated from the Persian)

Statements such as these indicate that the full meaning of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, as well as an understanding of the implications of the World Order ushered in by that remarkable Document can be revealed only gradually to men's eyes, and after the Universal House of Justice has come into being. The friends are called upon to trust to time and to await the guidance of the Universal House <p352> of Justice, which, as circumstances require, will make pronouncements that will resolve and clarify obscure matters.

The third group of queries raised by the friends concerns details of functioning of the Universal House of Justice in the absence of the Guardian, particularly the matter of expulsion of members of the House of Justice. Such questions will be clarified in the Constitution of the House of Justice, the formulation of which is a goal of the Nine Year Plan. Meanwhile the friends are informed that any member committing a "sin injurious to the common weal", may be expelled from membership of the House of Justice by a majority vote of the House itself. Should any member, God forbid, be guilty of breaking the Covenant, the matter would be investigated by the Hands of the Cause of God, and the Covenant-breaker would be expelled by decision of the Hands of the Cause of God residing in the Holy Land, subject to the approval of the House of Justice, as in the case of any other believer. The decision of the Hands in such a case would be announced to the Baha'i world by the Universal House of Justice.

We are certain that when you share this letter with the friends and they have these quotations from the Scriptures and the Writings of the Guardian drawn to their attention, their doubts and misgivings will be dispelled and they will be able to devote their every effort to spreading the Message of Baha'u'llah, serenely confident in the power of His Covenant to overcome whatever tests an inscrutable Providence may shower upon it, thus demonstrating its ability to redeem a travailing world and to upraise the Standard of the Kingdom of God on earth.

(9 March 1965 to a National Spiritual Assembly, published in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages, 1963-1968", pp. 44-56)

764. You query the timing of the election of the Universal House of Justice in

view of the Guardian's statement: "...given favourable circumstances, under which the Baha'is of Persia and of the adjoining countries under Soviet rule, may be enabled to elect their national representatives ... the only remaining obstacle in the way of the definite formation of the International House of Justice will have been removed." On 19th April 1947 the Guardian, in a letter written on his behalf by his secretary, replied to the enquiry of an individual believer about this passage: "At the time he referred to Russia there were Baha'is there, now the Community <p353> has practically ceased to exist; therefore the formation of the International House of Justice cannot depend on a Russian National Spiritual Assembly. But other strong National Spiritual Assemblies will have to be built up before it can be established."

You suggest the possibility that, for the good of the Cause, certain information concerning the succession to Shoghi Effendi is being withheld from the believers. We assure you that nothing whatsoever is being withheld from the friends for whatever reason. There is no doubt at all that in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha Shoghi Effendi was the authority designated to appoint his successor, but he had no children and all the surviving Aghsan had broken the Covenant. Thus, as the Hands of the Cause stated in 1957, it is clear that there was no one he could have appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Will. To have made an appointment outside the clear and specific provisions of the Master's Will and Testament would obviously have been an impossible and unthinkable course of action for the Guardian, the divinely-appointed upholder and defender of the Covenant. Moreover, that same Will had provided a clear means for the confirmation of the Guardian's appointment of his successor, as you are aware. The nine Hands to be elected by the body of the Hands were to give their assent by secret ballot to the Guardian's choice. In 1957 the entire body of the Hands, after fully investigating the matter, announced that Shoghi Effendi had appointed no successor and left no will. This is documented and established.

The fact that Shoghi Effendi did not leave a will cannot be adduced as evidence of his failure to obey Baha'u'llah -- rather should we acknowledge that in his very silence there is a wisdom and a sign of his infallible guidance. We should ponder deeply the writings that we have, and seek to understand the multitudinous significances that they contain. Do not forget that Shoghi Effendi said two things were necessary for a growing understanding of the World Order of Baha'u'llah: the passage of time and the guidance of the Universal House of Justice.

The infallibility of the Universal House of Justice, operating within its ordained sphere, has not been made dependent upon the presence in its membership of the Guardian of the Cause. Although in the realm of interpretation the Guardian's pronouncements are always binding, in the area of the Guardian's participation in legislation it is always the decision <p354> of the House itself which must prevail. This is supported by the words of the Guardian: "The interpretation of the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative and binding as the enactments of the International

House of Justice, whose exclusive right and prerogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgement on such laws and ordinances as Baha'u'llah has not expressly revealed. Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested.

"Though the Guardian of the Faith has been made the permanent head of so august a body he can never, even temporarily, assume the right of exclusive legislation. He cannot override the decision of the majority of his fellow-members, but is bound to insist upon a reconsideration by them of any enactment he conscientiously believes to conflict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of Baha'u'llah's revealed utterances."

However, quite apart from his function as a member and sacred head for life of the Universal House of Justice, the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, had the right and duty "to define the sphere of the legislative action" of the Universal House of Justice.

In other words, he had the authority to state whether a matter was or was not already covered by the Sacred Texts and therefore whether it was within the authority of the Universal House of Justice to legislate upon it.

No other person, apart from the Guardian, has the right or authority to make such definitions.

The question therefore arises:

In the absence of the Guardian, is the Universal House of Justice in danger of straying outside its proper sphere and thus falling into error?

Here we must remember three things:

First, Shoghi Effendi, during the thirty-six years of his Guardianship, has already made innumerable such definitions, supplementing those made by 'Abdu'l-Baha and by Baha'u'llah Himself.

As already announced to the friends, a careful study of the Writings and interpretations on any subject on which the House of Justice proposes to legislate always precedes its act of legislation.

Second, the Universal House of Justice, itself assured of divine guidance, is well aware of the absence of the Guardian and will approach all matters of legislation only when certain of its sphere of jurisdiction, a sphere which the Guardian has confidently described as "clearly defined".

Third, we must not forget the Guardian's written <p355> statement about these two Institutions: "Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other."

As regards the need to have deductions made from the Writings to help in the formulation of the enactments of the House of Justice, there is the following text from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

Those matters of major importance which constitute the foundation of the Law of God are explicitly recorded in the Text, but subsidiary laws are left to the House of Justice. The wisdom of this is that the times never remain the same, for change is a necessary quality and an essential attribute of this world, and of time and place. Therefore the House of Justice will take action accordingly.

Let it not be imagined that the House of Justice will take any decision according to its own concepts and opinions. God forbid! The Supreme House of Justice will take decisions and establish laws through the inspiration and confirmation of the Holy Spirit, because it is in the safekeeping and under the shelter and protection of the Ancient Beauty, and obedience to its decisions is a bounden and essential duty and an absolute obligation, and there is no escape for anyone.

Say, O people: Verily the Supreme House of Justice is under the wings of your Lord, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful, that is, under His protection, His care, and His shelter; for He has commanded the firm believers to obey that blessed, sanctified and all-subduing body, whose sovereignty is divinely ordained and of the Kingdom of Heaven and whose laws are inspired and spiritual.

Briefly, this is the wisdom of referring the laws of society to the House of Justice. In the religion of Islam, similarly, not every ordinance was explicitly revealed; nay not a tenth part of a tenth part was included in the Text; although all matters of major importance were specifically referred to, there were undoubtedly thousands of laws which were unspecified. These were devised by the divines of a later age according to the laws of Islamic jurisprudence, and individual divines made conflicting deductions from the original revealed ordinances. All these were enforced. Today this process of deduction is the right of the body of the House of Justice, and the deductions and conclusions of <p356> individual learned men have no authority, unless they are endorsed by the House of Justice. The difference is precisely this, that from the conclusions and endorsements of the body of the House of Justice whose members are elected by and known to the worldwide Baha'i community, no differences will arise; whereas the conclusions of individual divines and scholars would definitely lead to differences, and result in schism, division, and dispersion. The oneness of the Word would be destroyed, the unity of the Faith would disappear, and the edifice of the Faith of God

would be shaken.

In the Order of Baha'u'llah there are certain functions which are reserved to certain institutions, and others which are shared in common, even though they may be more in the special province of one or the other. For example, although the Hands of the Cause of God have the specific functions of protection and propagation, and are specialized for these functions, it is also the duty of the Universal House of Justice and the Spiritual Assemblies to protect and teach the Cause -- indeed teaching is a sacred obligation placed upon every believer by Baha'u'llah. Similarly, although after the Master authoritative interpretation was exclusively vested in the Guardian, and although legislation is exclusively the function of the Universal House of Justice, these two Institutions are, in Shoghi Effendi's words, "complementary in their aim and purpose." 'Their common, their fundamental object is to ensure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of our Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings." Whereas the Universal House of Justice cannot undertake any function which exclusively appertained to the Guardian, it must continue to pursue the object which it shares in common with the Guardianship.

("Letters, 2nd rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 148 (both quotes).

As you point out with many quotations, Shoghi Effendi repeatedly stressed the inseparability of these two institutions. Whereas he obviously envisaged their functioning together, it cannot logically be deduced from this that one is unable to function in the absence of the other. During the whole thirty-six years of his Guardianship Shoghi Effendi functioned without the Universal House of Justice. Now the Universal House of <p357> Justice must function without the Guardian, but the principle of inseparability remains. The Guardianship does not lose its significance nor position in the Order of Baha'u'llah merely because there is no living Guardian. We must guard against two extremes: one is to argue that because there is no Guardian all that was written about the Guardianship and its position in the Baha'i World Order is a dead letter and was unimportant; the other is to be so overwhelmed by the significance of the Guardianship as to underestimate the strength of the Covenant, or to be tempted to compromise with the clear texts in order to find somehow, in some way, a "Guardian".

Service to the Cause of God requires absolute fidelity and integrity and unwavering faith in Him. No good but only evil can come from taking the responsibility for the future of God's Cause into our own hands and trying to force it into ways that we wish it to go regardless of the clear texts and our own limitations. It is His Cause. He has promised that its light will not fail. Our part is to cling tenaciously to the revealed Word and to the Institutions that He has created to preserve His Covenant.

It is precisely in this connection that the believers must recognize the importance of intellectual honesty and humility. In past dispensations many

errors arose because the believers in God's Revelation were over-anxious to encompass the Divine Message within the framework of their limited understanding, to define doctrines where definition was beyond their power, to explain mysteries which only the wisdom and experience of a later age would make comprehensible, to argue that something was true because it appeared desirable and necessary. Such compromises with essential truth, such intellectual pride, we must scrupulously avoid.

If some of the statements of the Universal House of Justice are not detailed the friends should realize that the cause of this is not secretiveness, but rather the determination of this body to refrain from interpreting the teachings and to preserve the truth of the Guardian's statement that "Leaders of religion, exponents of political theories, governors of human institutions ... need have no doubt or anxiety regarding the nature, the origin, or validity of the institutions which the adherents of the Faith are building up throughout the world. For these lie embedded in the teachings themselves, unadulterated and <p358> unobscured by unwarranted inferences, or unauthorized interpretations of His Word."

A clear distinction is made in our Faith between authoritative interpretation and the interpretation or understanding that each individual arrives at for himself from his study of its teachings.

While the former is confined to the Guardian, the latter, according to the guidance given to us by the Guardian himself, should by no means be suppressed.

In fact such individual interpretation is considered the fruit of man's rational power and conducive to a better understanding of the teachings, provided that no disputes or arguments arise among the friends and the individual himself understands and makes it clear that his views are merely his own.

Individual interpretations continually change as one grows in comprehension of the teachings.

As Shoghi Effendi explained:[1] "To deepen in the Cause means to read the writings of Baha'u'llah 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 under 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 and the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous."

So, although individual insights can be enlightening and helpful, they can also

be misleading.

The friends must therefore learn to listen to the views of others without being over-awed or allowing their faith to be shaken, and to express their own views without pressing them on their fellow Baha'is.
[1 Written by the Guardian's secretary to an individual believer, on 25 August 1926.]

The Cause of God is organic, growing and developing like a living being. Time and again it has faced crises which have perplexed the believers, but each time the Cause, impelled by the immutable purpose of God, overcame the crisis and went on to greater heights. However great may be our inability to understand the mystery and the implications of the passing of Shoghi Effendi,the strong cord to which all must cling with assurance is the Covenant. The emphatic and vigorous language of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament is at this time, as at the time of His own passing, the safeguard of the Cause: <p359>

"Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice. That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant...." And again: "...All must seek guidance and turn unto the Centre of the Cause and he House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error."

The Universal House of Justice, which the Guardian said would be regarded by posterity as "the last refuge of a tottering civilization" is now, in the absence of the Guardian, the sole infallibly guided institution in the world to which all must turn, and on it rests the responsibility for ensuring the unity and progress of the Cause of God in accordance with the revealed Word.

There are statements from the Master and the Guardian indicating that the Universal House of Justice, in addition to being the Highest Legislative Body of the Faith, is also the body to which all must turn, and is the "apex" of the Baha'i Administrative Order, as well as the "supreme organ of the Baha'i Commonwealth".

The Guardian has in his writings specified for the House of Justice such fundamental functions as the formulation of future world-wide teaching plans, the conduct of the administrative affairs of the Faith, and the guidance, organisation and unification of the affairs of the Cause throughout the world.

Furthermore in "God Passes By" the Guardian makes the following statement: "the Kitab-i-Aqdas ... 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."

He has also, in "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah", written that the members of the Universal House of Justice "and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation."

As the Universal House of Justice has already announced, it cannot legislate to make possible the appointment of a successor to Shoghi <p360> Effendi,nor can it legislate to make possible the appointment of any more Hands of the Cause, but it must do everything within its power to ensure the performance of all those functions which it shares with these two mighty Institutions. It must make provision for the proper discharge in future of the functions of protection and propagation, which the administrative bodies share with the Guardianship and the Hands of the Cause; it must, in the absence of the Guardian, receive and disburse the Huququ'llah, in accordance with the following statement of 'Abdu'l-Baha: "Disposition of the Huquq, wholly or partly, is permissible, but this should be done by permission of the authority in the Cause to whom all must turn."; it must make provision in its Constitution for the removal of any of its members who commits a sin "injurious to the common weal". Above all, it must, with perfect faith in Baha'u'llah, proclaim His Cause and enforce His Law so that the Most Great Peace shall be firmly established in this world and the foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth shall be accomplished.

(27 May 1966 to an individual, published in "Wellspring of Guidance: Messages, 1963-1968", pp. 81-91)

765. Your recent letter, in which you share with us the questions that have occurred to some of the youth in studying "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah", has been carefully considered, and we feel that we should comment both on the particular passage you mention and on a related passage in the same work, because both bear on the relationship between the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice.

The first passage concerns the Guardian's duty to insist upon a reconsideration by his fellow-members in the Universal House of Justice of any enactment which he believes conflicts with the meaning and departs from the spirit of the Sacred Writings. The second passage concerns the infallibility of the Universal House of Justice without the Guardian, namely Shoghi Effendi's statement that 'Without such an institution [the Guardianship] ... the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn."

Some of the youth, you indicate, were puzzled as to how to reconcile the former of these two passages with such statements as that in the Will <p361> of 'Abdu'l-Baha which affirms that the Universal House of Justice is "freed from all error".

Just as the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha does not in any way contradict the "Kitab-i-Aqdas" but, in the Guardian's words, "confirms, supplements, and correlates the provisions of the "Aqdas", so the writings of the Guardian contradict neither the revealed Word nor the interpretations of the Master. In attempting to understand the Writings, therefore, one must first realize that there is and can be no real contradiction in them, and in the light of this we can confidently seek the unity of meaning which they contain.

The Guardian and the Universal House of Justice have certain duties and functions in common; each also operates within a separate and distinct sphere. As Shoghi Effendi explained, "...it is made indubitably clear and evident that the Guardian of the Faith has been made the Interpreter of the Word and that the Universal House of Justice has been invested with the function of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the teachings. The interpretation of the Guardian, functioning within his own sphere, is as authoritative and binding as the enactments of the International House of Justice, whose exclusive right and prerogative is to pronounce upon and deliver the final judgement on such laws and ordinances as Baha'u'llah has not expressly revealed." He goes on to affirm, "Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other. Neither will seek to curtail the specific and undoubted authority with which both have been divinely invested." It is impossible to conceive that two centres of authority, which the Master has stated "are both under the care and protection of the Abha Beauty, under the shelter and unerring guidance of His Holiness, the Exalted One", could conflict with one another, because both are vehicles of the same Divine Guidance.

The Universal House of Justice, beyond its function as the enactor of legislation, has been invested with the more general functions of protecting and administering the Cause, solving obscure questions and deciding upon matters that have caused difference. Nowhere is it stated that the infallibility of the Universal House of Justice is by virtue of the Guardian's membership or presence on that body. Indeed, 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Shoghi Effendi in his "Dispensation of Baha'u'llah" have both explicitly stated that the elected members of the Universal House of <p362> Justice in consultation are recipients of unfailing Divine Guidance. Furthermore the Guardian himself in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah" asserted that "It must be also clearly understood by every believer that the institution of Guardianship does not under any circumstances abrogate, or even in the slightest degree detract from, the powers granted to the Universal House of Justice by Baha'u'llah in the "Kitabu'l-Aqdas", and repeatedly and solemnly confirmed by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will. It does not constitute in any manner a contradiction to the Will and Writings of Baha'u'llah, nor does it nullify any of His revealed instructions."

While the specific responsibility of the Guardian is the interpretation of the Word, he is also invested with all the powers and prerogatives necessary to discharge his function as Guardian of the Cause, its Head and supreme

protector. He is, furthermore, made the irremovable head and member for life of the supreme legislative body of the Faith. It is as the head of the Universal House of Justice, and as a member of that body, that the Guardian takes part in the process of legislation. If the following passage, which gave rise to your query, is considered as referring to this last relationship, you will see that there is no contradiction between it and the other texts: "Though the Guardian of the Faith has been made the permanent head of so august a body he can never, even temporarily, assume the right of exclusive legislation. He cannot override the decision of the majority of his fellow-members, but is bound to insist upon a reconsideration by them of any enactment he conscientiously believes to conflict with the meaning and to depart from the spirit of Baha'u'llah's revealed utterances."

Although the Guardian, in relation to his fellow- members within the Universal House of Justice, cannot override the decision of the majority, it is inconceivable that the other members would ignore any objection he raised in the course of consultation or pass legislation contrary to what he expressed as being in harmony with the spirit of the Cause. It is, after all, the final act of judgement delivered by the Universal House of Justice that is vouchsafed infallibility, not any views expressed in the course of the process of enactment.

It can be seen, therefore, that there is no conflict between the Master's statements concerning the unfailing divine guidance conferred upon the Universal House of Justice and the above passage from "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah". <p363>

It may help the friends to understand this relationship if they are aware of some of the processes that the Universal House of Justice follows when legislating. First, of course, it observes the greatest care in studying the Sacred Texts and the interpretations of the Guardian as well as considering the views of all the members. After long consultation the process of drafting a pronouncement is put into effect. During this process the whole matter may well be reconsidered. As a result of such reconsideration the final judgement may be significantly different from the conclusion earlier favoured, or possibly it may be decided not to legislate at all on that subject at that time. One can understand how great would be the attention paid to the views of the Guardian during the above process were he alive.

In considering the second passage we must once more hold fast to the principle that the teachings do not contradict themselves.

Future Guardians are clearly envisaged and referred to in the Writings, but there is nowhere any promise or guarantee that the line of Guardians would endure for ever; on the contrary there are clear indications that the line could be broken. Yet, in spite of this, there is a repeated insistence in the Writings on the indestructibility of the Covenant and the immutability of God's Purpose for this Day. One of the most striking passages which envisage the possibility of such a break in the line of Guardians is in the "Kitab-i-Aqdas"

itself:

The endowments dedicated to charity revert to God, the Revealer of Signs. No one has the right to lay hold on them without leave from the Dawning-Place of Revelation. After Him the decision rests with the Aghsan [Branches], and after them with the House of Justice -- should it be established in the world by then -- so that they may use these endowments for the benefit of the Sites exalted in this Cause, and for that which they have been commanded by God, the Almighty, the All-Powerful. Otherwise the endowments should be referred to the people of Baha, who speak not without His leave and who pass no judgement but in accordance with that which God has ordained in this Tablet, they who are the champions of victory betwixt heaven and earth, so that they may spend them on that which has been decreed in the Holy Book by God, the Mighty, the Bountiful. <p364>

The passing of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 precipitated the very situation provided for in this passage, in that the line of Aghsan ended before the House of Justice had been elected.

Although, as is seen, the ending of the line of Aghsan at some stage was provided for, we must never underestimate the grievous loss that the Faith has suffered.

God's purpose for mankind remains unchanged, however, and the mighty Covenant of Baha'u'llah remains impregnable.

Has not Baha'u'llah stated categorically, "The Hand of Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, an enduring foundation."

While 'Abdu'l-Baha confirms: "Verily, God effecteth that which He pleaseth; naught can annul His Covenant; naught can obstruct His favour nor oppose His Cause!" "Everything is subject to corruption; but the Covenant of thy Lord shall continue to pervade all regions." "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 severe....

These agitations of the violators are no more than the foam of the ocean,...

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."

And Shoghi Effendi has clearly stated: "The bedrock on which this Administrative Order is founded is God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day." "...this priceless gem of Divine Revelation, now still in its embryonic state, shall evolve within the shell of His law, and shall forge ahead, undivided and unimpaired, till it embraces the whole of mankind."

In the Baha'i Faith there are two authoritative centres appointed to which the believers must turn, for in reality the Interpreter of the Word is an extension of that centre which is the Word itself.

The Book is the record of the utterance of Baha'u'llah, while the divinely inspired Interpreter is the living Mouth of that Book -- it is he and he alone who can authoritatively state what the Book means.

Thus one centre is the Book with its Interpreter, and the other is the Universal House of Justice guided by God to decide on whatever is not explicitly revealed in the Book.

This pattern of centres and their relationships is apparent at every stage in the unfoldment of the Cause.

In the "Kitab-i-Aqdas"

Baha'u'llah tells the believers to refer after His passing to the Book, and to "Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root." <p365> In the "Kitab-i-'Ahdi" (the Book of Baha'u'llah's Covenant), He makes it clear that this reference is to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

In the "Aqdas"

Baha'u'llah also ordains the institution of the Universal House of Justice, and confers upon it the powers necessary for it to discharge its ordained functions.

The Master in His Will and Testament explicitly institutes the Guardianship, which Shoghi Effendi states was clearly anticipated in the verses of the "Kitab-i-Aqdas", reaffirms and elucidates the authority of the Universal House of Justice, and refers the believers once again to the Book: "Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice.", and at the very end of the Will He says: "All must seek guidance and turn unto the Centre of the Cause and the House of Justice.

And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error."

As the sphere of jurisdiction of the Universal House of Justice in matters of legislation extends to whatever is not explicitly revealed in the Sacred Text, it is clear that the Book itself is the highest authority and delimits the sphere of action of the House of Justice. Likewise, the Interpreter of the Book must also have the authority to define the sphere of the legislative action of the elected representatives of the Cause. The writings of the Guardian and the advice given by him over the thirty-six years of his Guardianship show the way in which he exercised this function in relation to the Universal House of Justice as well as to National and Local Spiritual Assemblies.

The fact that the Guardian has the authority to define the sphere of the legislative action of the Universal House of Justice does not carry with it the corollary that without such guidance the Universal House of Justice might stray

beyond the limits of its proper authority; such a deduction would conflict with all the other texts referring to its infallibility, and specifically with the Guardian's own clear assertion that the Universal House of Justice never can or will infringe on the sacred and prescribed domain of the Guardianship. It should be remembered, however, that although National and Local Spiritual Assemblies can receive divine guidance if they consult in the manner and spirit described by 'Abdu'l-Baha, they do not share in the explicit guarantees of infallibility conferred upon the Universal House of Justice. Any careful student of the Cause can see with what care the Guardian, after the passing of 'Abdu'l- Baha, guided these elected representatives of the believers in the <p366> painstaking erection of the Administrative Order and in the formulation of Local and National Baha'i Constitutions.

We hope that these elucidations will assist the friends in understanding these relationships more clearly, but we must all remember that we stand too close to the beginnings of the System ordained by Baha'u'llah to be able fully to understand its potentialities or the inter-relationships of its component parts. As Shoghi Effendi's secretary wrote on his behalf to an individual believer on 25 March 1930, "The contents of the Will of the Master are far too much for the present generation to comprehend. It needs at least a century of actual working before the treasures of wisdom hidden in it can be revealed...."

(7 December 1969 to an individual, published in "Messages from the Universal House of Justice, 1968-1973" Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976), pp. 37-44)

Revised July 1990 <p367>

EXCELLENCE IN ALL THINGS

From the Writings of Baha'u'llah:

766. Say: Beware, O people of Baha, lest ye walk in the ways of them whose words differ from their deeds. Strive that ye may be enabled to manifest to the peoples of the earth the signs of God, and to mirror forth His commandments. Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others. Through them the brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth. Happy is the man that heedeth My counsel, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), sec. 139, p. 305)

767. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches.... Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low....

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas", (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 138)

768. The companions of God are, in this day, the lump that must leaven the peoples of the world. They must show forth such trustworthiness, such truthfulness and perseverance, such deeds and character that all mankind may profit by their example.

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 23)

769. Tell him, no one in this world can claim any relationship to Me except those who, in all their deeds and in their conduct, follow My example, in such wise that all the peoples of the earth would be powerless to prevent them from doing and saying that which is meet and seemly.

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "God Passes By", rev. ed. (Wilmette:Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 133) <p368>

770. Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

771. It is incumbent upon the children to exert themselves to the utmost in acquiring the art of reading and writing.... Writing skills that will provide for urgent needs will be enough for some; and then it is better and more fitting that they should spend their time in studying those branches of knowledge which are of use. As for what the Supreme Pen hath previously set down, the reason is that in every art and skill, God loveth the highest perfection.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

772. From amongst all mankind hath He chosen you, and your eyes have been opened to the light of guidance and your ears attuned to the music of the Company above; and blessed by abounding grace, your hearts and souls have been born into new life. Thank ye and praise ye God that the hand of infinite bestowals hath set upon your heads this gem-studded crown, this crown whose lustrous jewels will forever flash and sparkle down all the reaches of time.

To thank Him for this, make ye a mighty effort, and choose for yourselves a noble goal. Through the power of faith, obey ye the teachings of God, and let all your actions conform to His laws....

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 17, p. 35)

773. 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, <p369> 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 Baha'i, for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Baha'is." Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God....

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 35, pp. 70-71)

774. O true companions! All humankind are as children in a school, and the Dawning-Points of Light, the Sources of divine revelation, are the teachers, wondrous and without peer. In the school of realities they educate these sons and daughters, according to teachings from God, and foster them in the bosom of grace, so that they may develop along every line, show forth the excellent gifts and blessings of the Lord, and combine human perfections; that they may advance in all aspects of human endeavour, whether outward or inward, hidden or visible, material or spiritual, until they make of this mortal world a widespread mirror, to reflect that other world which dieth not.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 102, p. 128)

775. Wherefore, O loved ones of God! Make ye a mighty effort till you yourselves betoken this advancement in all these confirmations, and become focal centres of God's blessings, daysprings of the light of His unity, promoters of the gifts and graces of civilized life. Be ye in that land vanguards of the perfections of humankind; carry forward the various branches of knowledge, be active and progressive in the field of inventions and the arts. Endeavour to rectify the conduct of men, and seek to excel the whole world in moral character. While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly grace, foster them in the cradle of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies that will benefit mankind.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 102, p. 129) <p370>

776. They must be constantly encouraged and made eager to gain all the summits of human accomplishment, so that from their earliest years they will be taught to have high aims, to conduct themselves well, to be chaste, pure, and undefiled, and will learn to be of powerful resolve and firm of purpose in all things....

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 110, p. 135)

777. It is incumbent upon Baha'i children to surpass other children in the acquisition of sciences and arts, for they have been cradled in the grace of

God.

Whatever other children learn in a year, let Baha'i children learn in a month. The heart of 'Abdu'l-Baha longeth, in its love, to find that Baha'i young people, each and all, are known throughout the world for their intellectual attainments. There is no question but that they will exert all their efforts, their energies, their sense of pride, to acquire the sciences and arts.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" sec. 119, p. 141)

778. The instruction of these children is even as the work of a loving gardener who tendeth his young plants in the flowering fields of the All-Glorious. There is no doubt that it will yield the desired results; especially is this true of instruction as to Baha'i obligations and Baha'i conduct, for the little children must needs be made aware in their very heart and soul that "Baha'i" is not just a name but a truth. Every child must be trained in the things of the spirit, so that he may embody all the virtues and become a source of glory to the Cause of God. Otherwise, the mere word "Baha'i", if it yield no fruit, will come to nothing.

Strive then to the best of thine ability to let these children know that a Baha'i is one who embodieth all the perfections, that he must shine out like a lighted taper -- not be darkness upon darkness and yet bear the name "Baha'i".

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 123, p. 143)

779. It behoveth the craftsmen of the world at each moment to offer a thousand tokens of gratitude at the Sacred Threshold, and to exert their highest endeavour and diligently pursue their professions so that their <p371> efforts may produce that which will manifest the greatest beauty and perfection before the eyes of all men.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 127, p. 145)

780. Make ye then a mighty effort, that the purity and sanctity which, above all else, are cherished by 'Abdu'l- Baha, shall distinguish the people of Baha; that in every kind of excellence the people of God shall surpass all other human beings; that both outwardly and inwardly they shall prove superior to the rest; that for purity, immaculacy, refinement, and the preservation of health, they shall be leaders in the vanguard of those who know. And that by their freedom from enslavement, their knowledge, their self- control, they shall be first among the pure, the free and the wise.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 129, p. 150)

781. Let God's beloved, each and every one, be the essence of purity, the very life of holiness, so that in every country they may become famed for their sanctity, independence of spirit, and meekness. Let them be cheered by draughts from the eternal cup of love for God, and make merry as they drink from the wine-vaults of Heaven. Let them behold the Blessed Beauty, and feel the flame and rapture of that meeting, and be struck dumb with awe and wonder. This is the station of the sincere; this is the way of the loyal; this is the

brightness that shineth on the faces of those nigh unto God.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 174, p. 203)

782. Now amidst all the peoples of the world must the beloved arise, with a heart even as the day-star, a strong inward urge, a shining brow, a musk-scented breath, a tongue speaking ever of God, an exposition crystal-clear, a high resolve, a power born of heaven, a spiritual character, a confirmation nothing short of the divine. Let them one and all become as a splendour on the horizon of heaven, and in the skies of the world a dazzling star. Let them be fruitful trees in the celestial bowers, sweet-scented blooms in the divine gardens; let them be verses of perfection on the page of the universe, words of oneness in the Book of Life. This is the first age, and the early beginnings of the dispensation of the Most Great light, wherefore, within this century, virtues must be acquired, goodly qualities must be perfected within this span of time. In <p372> these very days the Abha Paradise must pitch its pavilions on the plains of the world. The lights of reality must now be revealed, and the secrets of God's bestowals must now be made known, and now must the olden grace shine forth and this world change into the pleasure-ground of heaven, the garden of God. And out of pure hearts, and through heavenly bounties, all the perfections, qualities and attributes of the divine must now be made manifest.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" sec. 193, p. 232)

783. I beg of Him to bestow His confirmations upon those loved ones, dwellers in that pure and holy land, and to grant them successful outcomes in all things: that in their character, their behaviour, their words, their way of life, in all they are and do, He will make them to achieve distinction among men; that He will gather them into the world community, their hearts filled with ecstasy and fervour and yearning love, with knowledge and certitude, with steadfastness and unity, their faces beauteous and bright.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 207, p. 260)

784. ...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 Baha'is by deeds and not by name. He is a true Baha'i who strives by day and by night to progress and advance along the path of human endeavor, 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 Baha'i. 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....

("Baha'i Year Book" ["The Baha'i World"], vol. 1 (New York: Baha'i Publishing

Committee, 1926), p. 12) <p373>

785. So, O beloved of God, endeavor with your hearts and souls, that ye may be qualified with the morals and attributes of the Blessed Perfection, and partake of the bounties of His sanctity; that ye may become signs of unity and standards of oneness, discover the essence of singleness and sing harmonies and lays in this divine garden, in merciful melodies; that ye may become as thankful birds, and sing a song in the rose-garden of existence which may astonish minds and senses; that ye may hoist a standard on the apex of the universe which may flutter in the winds of favor, and plant a tree in the field of the visible world which may bring forth fruits of the utmost delicacy and freshness.

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 2 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1915), p. 374)

786. O ye friends of God! Show ye an endeavor that all the nations and communities of the world, even the enemies, put their trust, assurance and hope in you; that if a person falls into errors for a hundred-thousand times he may yet turn his face to you, hopeful that you will forgive his sins; for he must not become hopeless, neither grieved nor despondent. This is the conduct and the manner of the people of Baha'. This is the foundation of the most high pathway! Ye should conform your conduct and manners with the advices of Abdul-Baha.

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 2, p. 436)

787. Then know thou that, verily, the people of Baha' must needs be distinguished from others in all respects, until they become the lamps of the True One among the creatures and the stars of guidance shining from the Supreme Concourse.

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas, vol. 3 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1916), p. 682)

788. The most vital duty, in this day, is to purify your characters, to correct your manners, and improve your conduct. The beloved of the Merciful must show forth such character and conduct among His creatures, that the fragrance of their holiness may be shed upon the whole world, and may quicken the dead, inasmuch as the purpose of the Manifestation of God and the dawning of the limitless lights of the Invisible is to educate the souls of men, and refine the character of every living man -- so that blessed individuals, who have freed themselves from the <p374> murk of the animal world, shall rise up with those qualities which are the adornings of the reality of man....

(From a Tablet, published in "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 10 and cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 26)

789. At this time, likewise, I most urgently request the friends of God to make every effort, as much as lieth within their competence, along these lines. The harder they strive to widen the scope of their knowledge, the better and more

gratifying will be the result. Let the loved ones of God, whether young or old, whether male or female, each according to his capabilities, bestir themselves and spare no efforts to acquire the various current branches of knowledge, both spiritual and secular, and of the arts. Whensoever they gather in their meetings let their conversation be confined to learned subjects and to information on the knowledge of the day.

If they do thus, they will flood the world with the Manifest Light, and change this dusty earth into gardens of the Realm of Glory.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Arabic)

790. It is clear that learning is the greatest bestowal of God; that knowledge and the acquirement thereof is a blessing from Heaven. Thus is it incumbent upon the friends of God to exert such an effort and strive with such eagerness to promote divine knowledge, culture and the sciences, that erelong those who are schoolchildren today will become the most erudite of all the fraternity of the wise. This is a service rendered unto God Himself, and it is one of His inescapable commandments.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

791. O loving friends! Exert every effort to acquire the various branches of knowledge and true understanding. Strain every nerve to achieve both material and spiritual accomplishments.

Encourage the children from their earliest years to master every kind of learning, and make them eager to become skilled in every art -- the aim being that through the favouring grace of God, the heart of each one may become even as a mirror disclosing the secrets of the universe, penetrating the innermost reality of all things; and that each may earn world-wide fame in all branches of knowledge, science and the arts. <p375>

Certainly, certainly, neglect not the education of the children. Rear them to be possessed of spiritual qualities, and be assured of the gifts and favours of the Lord.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

792. Utilize every means to make this School a garden of the All-Merciful, from which the lights of learning will cast their beams, and wherein the children, whether Baha'i or other, will be educated to such a degree as to become God's gifts to man, and the pride of the human race. Let them make the greatest progress in the shortest span of time, let them open wide their eyes and uncover the inner realities of all things, become proficient in every art and skill, and learn to comprehend the secrets of all things even as they are -- this faculty being one of the clearly evident effects of servitude to the Holy Threshold.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

From the Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

793. I give you my advice, and it is this: Train these children with divine exhortations. From their childhood instill in their hearts the love of God so they may manifest in their lives the fear of God and have confidence in the bestowals of God. Teach them to free themselves from human imperfections and to acquire the divine perfections latent in the heart of man. The life of man is useful if he attains the perfections of man. If he becomes the center of the imperfections of the world of humanity, death is better than life, and nonexistence better than existence. Therefore, make ye an effort in order that these children may be rightly trained and educated and that each one of them may attain perfection in the world of humanity. Know ye the value of these children, for they are all my children.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 53-54)

794. I desire distinction for you. The Baha'is must be distinguished from others of humanity. But this distinction must not depend upon wealth -- that they should become more affluent than other people. I do not desire for you financial distinction. It is not an ordinary distinction I desire; not <p376> scientific, commercial, industrial distinction. For you I desire spiritual distinction -- that is, you must become eminent and distinguished in morals. In the love of God you must become distinguished from all else. You must become distinguished for loving humanity, for unity and accord, for love and justice. In brief, you must become distinguished in all the virtues of the human world -- for faithfulness and sincerity, for justice and fidelity, for firmness and steadfastness, for philanthropic deeds and service to the human world, for love toward every human being, for unity and accord with all people, for removing prejudices and promoting international peace. Finally, you must become distinguished for heavenly illumination and for acquiring the bestowals of God. I desire this distinction for you. This must be the point of distinction among you.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace", p. 190)

795. Therefore I say that man must travel in the way of God. Day by day he must endeavor to become better, his belief must increase and become firmer, his good qualities and his turning to God must be greater, the fire of his love must flame more brightly; then day by day he will make progress, for to stop advancing is the means of going back. The bird when he flies soars ever higher and higher, for as soon as he stops flying he will come down. Every day, in the morning when arising you should compare today with yesterday and see in what condition you are. If you see your belief is stronger and your heart more occupied with God and your love increased and your freedom from the world greater then thank God and ask for the increase of these qualities. You must begin to pray and repent for all that you have done which is wrong and you must implore and ask for help and assistance that you may become better than yesterday so that you may continue to make progress.

("Star of the West", vol. 8, no. 6 (24 June 1917), p. 68)

796. You must become the shining candles of moral precepts and spiritual ideals and be the means of the illumination of others. Clothe your bodies with the robes of virtues. Characterize yourselves with the characteristics of the people of divine morality. Shun all manner of vices as you shun a poisonous snake or a leper. Let the corps of professors and the students be impressed with the purity and holiness of your lives so that they may <p377> take you as paragons of worthiness, examples of nobility of nature, observers of the moral laws, holding in subordination the lower element by the higher spirit, the conquerors of self and the masters of wholesome, vital forces in all the avenues of life. Strive always to be at the head of your classes through hard study and true merit. Be always in a prayerful state and appreciate the value of everything. Entertain high ideals and stimulate your intellectual and constructive forces.

("Star of the West", vol. 9, no. 9 (20 August 1918), p. 98)

797. I hope that while you are studying in this college you may so excel all other students in the various branches of knowledge taught therein that all of them may testify that the Bahai students have another power, are inspired with another effort, are imbued with a nobler ambition, are stimulated by higher motives and make wider and deeper exertions than others. If you do not surpass the others, then what distinction will there remain for you? Therefore, you must strive to be superior to them, so that everyone may bear testimony to this fact....

("Star of the West", vol. 9, no. 9 (20 August 1918), pp. 98-99)

798. I hope that through the favor and bounty of the Blessed Beauty, his holiness the Bab, and the ineffable blessings which hallow this holy shrine,[1] the confirmations of the Kingdom of Abha may encircle you, and that you may be characterized with the shining qualities and brilliant attributes of the Bahai life. May your morality become more defined day by day! May your faith and assurance be increased day by day! May your attraction to the Kingdom of Abha be intensified day by day! May your attainment in sciences and arts become more universal day by day! Perchance, God willing, you may become perfect and accomplished from every standpoint and be the means of the enlightenment of Persia.
[1 The students were visiting the tomb of the Bab.]

("Star of the West", vol. 9, no. 9 (20 August 1918), pp. 99-100)

From letters written by Shoghi Effendi:

799. One thing would lessen appreciably the heavy burden that weighs upon my heart and mind and that is the extent to which the Baha'is conform in their private life and <p378> by Baha'u'llah. It is an infinitely high standard and anything short of it will in the eyes of those who really count prove piteously negligible and utterly futile.

(12 October 1924 to an individual believer)

800. Let every believer, desirous to witness the swift and healthy progress of the Cause of God, realize the twofold nature of his task. Let him first turn his eyes inwardly and search his own heart and satisfy himself that in his relations with his fellow-believers, irrespective of colour and class, he is proving himself increasingly loyal to the spirit of his beloved Faith. Assured and content that he is exerting his utmost in a conscious effort to approach nearer every day the lofty station to which his gracious Master summons him, let him turn to his second task, and, with befitting confidence and vigour, assail the devastating power of those forces which in his own heart he has already succeeded in subduing. Fully alive to the unfailing efficacy of the power of Baha'u'llah, and armed with the essential weapons of wise restraint and inflexible resolve, let him wage a constant fight against the inherited tendencies, the corruptive instincts, the fluctuating fashions, the false pretences of the society in which he lives and moves.

(12 April 1927 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" [rev. ed.], (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 130)

801. We can prove ourselves worthy of our Cause only if in our individual conduct and corporate life we sedulously imitate the example of our beloved Master, Whom the terrors of tyranny, the storms of incessant abuse, the oppressiveness of humiliation, never caused to deviate a hair's breadth from the revealed Law of Baha'u'llah. Such is the path of servitude, such is the way of holiness He chose to tread to the very end of His life. Nothing short of the strictest adherence to His glorious example can safely steer our course amid the pitfalls of this perilous age, and lead us on to fulfil our high destiny.

(12 April 1927, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 132) <p379>

802. In philanthropic enterprises and acts of charity, in promotion of the general welfare and furtherance of the public good including that of every group without any exceptions whatever, let the beloved of God attract the favourable attention of all, and lead all the rest.

(January 1929 addressed to the Baha'is of the East- translated from the Persian)

803. The work in which you are engaged is dear and near to my heart and constitutes one of the most vital aspects of the manifold activities of our beloved Faith. The highest standards of purity, of integrity, of detachment and sacrifice must be maintained by the members of your group in order to enable you to play a decisive part in the spread and consolidation of the Faith. A tremendous responsibility has been laid upon you, and nothing short of a pure, a virtuous, an active and truly exemplary life can enable you to fulfil your high destiny....

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 6 September

1934 written on his behalf to the Youth Council of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

804.

Such a rectitude of conduct must manifest itself, with ever-increasing potency, in every verdict which the elected representatives of the Baha'i community, in whatever capacity they may find themselves, may be called upon to pronounce.

It must be constantly reflected in the business dealings of all its members, in their domestic lives, in all manner of employment, and in any service they may, in the future, render their government or people.

It must be exemplified in the conduct of all Baha'i electors, when exercising their sacred rights and functions.

It must characterize the attitude of every loyal believer towards nonacceptance of political posts, nonidentification with political parties, nonparticipation in political controversies, and nonmembership in political organizations and ecclesiastical institutions.

It must reveal itself in the uncompromising adherence of all, whether young or old, to the clearly enunciated and fundamental principles laid down by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His addresses, and to the laws and ordinances revealed by Baha'u'llah in His Most Holy Book.

It must be demonstrated in the impartiality of every defender of the Faith against its enemies, in his fair- mindedness in recognizing any merits that enemy may possess, and in his honesty in <p380> discharging any obligations he may have towards him.

It must constitute the brightest ornament of the life, the pursuits, the exertions, and the utterances of every Baha'i teacher, whether laboring at home or abroad, whether in the front ranks of the teaching force, or occupying a less active and responsible position.

It must be made the hallmark of that numerically small, yet intensely dynamic and highly responsible body of the elected national representatives of every Baha'i community, which constitutes the sustaining pillar, and the sole instrument for the election, in every community, of that Universal House whose very name and title, as ordained by Baha'u'llah, symbolizes that rectitude of conduct which is its highest mission to safeguard and enforce.

(25 December 1938 to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "The Advent of Divine Justice" pp. 26- 27)

805. A chaste and holy life must be made the controlling principle in the behavior and conduct of all Baha'is, both in their social relations with the members of their own community, and in their contact with the world at large. It must adorn and reinforce the ceaseless labors and meritorious exertions of those whose enviable position is to propagate the Message, and to administer the affairs, of the Faith of Baha'u'llah. It must be upheld, in all its

integrity and implications, in every phase of the life of those who fill the ranks of that Faith, whether in their homes, their travels, their clubs, their societies, their entertainments, their schools, and their universities. It must be accorded special consideration in the conduct of the social activities of every Baha'i summer school and any other occasions on which Baha'i community life is organized and fostered. It must be closely and continually identified with the mission of the Baha'i youth, both as an element in the life of the Baha'i community, and as a factor in the future progress and orientation of the youth of their own country.

(25 December 1938, published in "The Advent of Divine Justice", pp. 29-30)

From letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi:

806. The responsibility of young believers is very great, as they must not only fit themselves to inherit the work of the older Baha'is and carry on the affairs of the Cause in general, but the world which lies ahead of them -- as promised by Baha'u'llah -- will be a world chastened by its <p381> sufferings, ready to listen to His Divine Message at last; and consequently a very high character will be expected of the exponents of such a religion. To deepen their knowledge, to perfect themselves in the Baha'i standards of virtue and upright conduct, should be the paramount duty of every young Baha'i.

(6 June 1941 to the Baha'i youth of Bombay, India, published in "Dawn of a New Day" (New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, [1970]), pp. 179-80)

807. The Guardian was delighted to hear of your youth group. The children who are trained in the world-embracing teachings of Baha'u'llah cannot but grow up to be a truly new race of men. He hopes these young people will prepare themselves for the great task which will face them in the future, that of helping to rebuild the world with the aid and inspiration of the Baha'i teachings.

(25 December 1941 to the Baha'is of Hobart, Tasmania)

808. If we could perceive the true reality of things we would see that the greatest of all battles raging in the world today is the spiritual battle. If the believers like yourself, young and eager and full of life, desire to win laurels for true and undying heroism, then let them join in the spiritual battle -- whatever their physical occupation may be -- which involves the very soul of man. The hardest and the noblest task in the world today is to be a true Baha'i; this requires that we defeat not only the current evils prevailing all over the world, but the weaknesses, attachments to the past, prejudices, and selfishnesses that may be inherited and acquired within our own characters; that we give forth a shining and incorruptible example to our fellow-men.

(5 April 1942 to an individual believer)

809. He hopes that you will develop into Baha'is in character as well as in belief. The whole purpose of Baha'u'llah is that we should become a new kind of people, people who are upright, kind, intelligent, truthful, and honest and who

live according to His great laws laid down for this new epoch in man's development. To call ourselves Baha'is is not enough, our inmost being must become ennobled and enlightened through living a Baha'i life.

(25 August 1944 to the Youth Session, Louhelen School) <p382>

810. Indeed if the friends could seek, and exert themselves, to become 100 per cent Baha'is they would see how greatly their influence over others would be increased, and how rapidly the Cause would spread. The world is seeking not a compromise but the embodiment of a high and shining ideal. The more the friends live up to our teachings in every aspect of their lives, in their homes, in business, in their social relationships, the greater will be the attraction they exercise over the hearts of others.

(23 January 1945 to an individual believer)

811. The believers, as we all know, should endeavour to set such an example in their personal lives and conduct that others will feel impelled to embrace a Faith which reforms human character. However, unfortunately, not everyone achieves easily and rapidly the victory over self. What every believer, new or old, should realize is that the Cause has the spiritual power to re-create us if we make the effort to let that power influence us, and the greatest help in this respect is prayer. We must supplicate Baha'u'llah to assist us to overcome the failings in our own characters, and also exert our own will-power in mastering ourselves.

(27 January 1945 to an individual believer)

812. His constant hope is that the believers will conduct themselves, individually and in their Baha'i Community life, in such a manner as to attract the attention of others to the Cause. The world is not only starving for lofty principles and ideals, it is, above all, starving for a shining example which the Baha'is can and must provide.

(22 February 1945 to an individual believer)

813. ...the young Baha'is in every city should make a point of keeping in touch with local youth activities and clubs, and endeavouring to make their views known to as many young people in as many ways as possible. Above all they should set a high example to them; chastity, politeness, friendliness, hospitality, joyous optimism about the ultimate future happiness and well-being of mankind, should distinguish them and win <p383> over to them the love and admiration of their fellow youth. The thing which is most conspicuously lacking in modern life is a high standard of conduct and good character; the young Baha'is must demonstrate both, if they hope to seriously win over to the Faith members of their own generation, so sorely disillusioned and so contaminated by the laxity war gives rise to.

(20 October 1945 to the National Youth Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

814. We must be patient with each other's shortcomings, and always strive to

create love and unity among the believers, who, after all, are still immature in many ways and far from perfect. The Faith itself is the great thing, and the Baha'is must strive to become ever more perfect instruments for Baha'u'llah to use and to accomplish His purpose through.

(26 May 1946 to an individual believer)

815. The Guardian has urged, over and over again, the paramount necessity for Baha'i Youth to exemplify the Teachings, most particularly the moral aspect of them. If they are not distinguished for their high conduct they cannot expect other young people to take the Cause very seriously.

(6 September 1946 to an individual believer)

816. He feels that the youth, in particular, must constantly and determinedly strive to exemplify a Baha'i life. In the world around us we see moral decay, promiscuity, indecency, vulgarity, bad manners -- the Baha'i young people must be the opposite of these things, and, by their chastity, their uprightness, their decency, their consideration and good manners, attract others, old and young, to the Faith. The world is tired of words; it wants example, and it is up to the Baha'i youth to furnish it.

(19 September 1946 to the Green Acre Summer School)

817. The eyes of the people of the world are beginning to be focused on us; and, as humanity's plight goes from bad to worse, we will be watched ever more intently by non- Baha'is, to see whether we do uphold our own <p384> institutions whole-heartedly; whether we are the people of the new creation or not; whether we live up to our beliefs, principles and laws in deed as well as word. We cannot be too careful. We cannot be too exemplary.

(5 August 1955 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, published in "Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to the Baha'i Community of the British Isles" (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1981), p. 350)

Revised November 1990 <p385>

FAMILY LIFE

January 1982

Compiled by: The Research Department of the Universal House of Justice

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHA'U'LLAH:

818. Blessed is the spot, and the house, and the place, and the city, and the heart, and the mountain, and the refuge, and the cave, and the valley, and the land, and the sea, and the island, and the meadow where mention of God hath been made, and His praise glorified.

("Baha'i prayers: A Selection of Prayers Revealed by Baha'u'llah, the Bab, and 'Abdu'l-Baha", 1985 ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985)

819. The parents must exert every effort to rear their offspring to be religious, for should the children not attain this greatest of adornments, they will not obey their parents, which in a certain sense means that they will not obey God. Indeed, such children will show no consideration to anyone, and will do exactly as they please.

(Translated from the Persian, published in "Baha'i Education", compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 4)

820. We have enjoined upon every son to serve his father. Thus have We decreed this command in the Book.

(From "Questions & Answers" - translated from the Arabic)

821. The fruits of the tree of existence are trustworthiness, loyalty, truthfulness and purity. After the recognition of the oneness of the Lord, exalted be He, the most important of all duties is to have due regard for the rights of one's parents. This matter hath been mentioned in all the Books of God...

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian and Arabic)

822. Blessed is the house that hath attained unto My tender mercy, wherein My remembrance is celebrated, and which is ennobled by the <p386> presence of My loved ones, who have proclaimed My praise, cleaved fast to the cord of My grace and been honoured by chanting My verses. Verily they are the exalted servants whom God hath extolled in the Qayyumu'l-Asma' and other scriptures. Verily He is the All-Hearing, the Answerer, He Who perceiveth all things.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

823. These blessed words were uttered by the Tongue of Grandeur in the Land of Mystery,[1] exalted and glorified is His utterance:
[1 Adrianople]

One of the distinguishing characteristics of this most great Dispensation is that the kin of such as have recognized and embraced the truth of this Revelation and have, in the glory of His name, the Sovereign Lord, quaffed the choice, sealed wine from the chalice of the love of the one true God, will, upon their death, if they are outwardly non-believers, be graciously invested with divine forgiveness and partake of the ocean of His Mercy.

This bounty, however, will be vouchsafed only to such souls as have inflicted no harm upon Him Who is the Sovereign Truth nor upon His loved ones. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the Lord of the Throne on High and the Ruler of this world and of the world to come.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

824. We have caused thee to return to thy home as a token of Our mercy unto thy mother, inasmuch as We have found her overwhelmed with sorrow. We have enjoined

you in the Book "to worship no one but God and to show kindness to your parents".[1] Thus hath the one true God spoken and the decree hath been fulfilled by the Almighty, the All-Wise. Therefore We have caused thee to return unto her and unto thy sister, that your mother's eyes may thereby be cheered, and she may be of the thankful.
[1 Qur'an 46:15.]

Say, O My people! Show honour to your parents and pay homage to them. This will cause blessings to descend upon you from the clouds of the bounty of your Lord, the Exalted, the Great. <p387>

When We learned of her sadness, We directed thee to return unto her, as a token of mercy unto thee from Our presence, and as an admonishment for others.

Beware lest ye commit that which would sadden the hearts of your fathers and mothers. Follow ye the path of Truth which indeed is a straight path. Should anyone give you a choice between the opportunity to render a service to Me and a service to them, choose ye to serve them, and let such service be a path leading you to Me. This is My exhortation and command unto thee. Observe therefore that which thy Lord, the Mighty, the Gracious, hath prescribed unto thee.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE BAB:

825. It is seemly that the servant should, after each prayer, supplicate God to bestow mercy and forgiveness upon his parents. Thereupon God's call will be raised: "Thousand upon thousand of what thou hast asked for thy parents shall be thy recompense!" Blessed is he who remembereth his parents when communing with God. There is, verily, no God but Him, the Mighty, the Well-Beloved.

("Selections from the Writings of the Bab", [rev. ed.] (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), p. 94)

826. O my God! Let the outpourings of Thy bounty and blessings descend upon homes whose inmates have embraced Thy Faith, as a token of Thy grace and as a mark of loving- kindness from Thy presence....

("Selections from the Writings of the Bab", p. 200)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA:

827. As to the terminology I used in my letter, bidding thee to consecrate thyself to service in the Cause of God, the meaning of it is this: limit thy thoughts to teaching the Faith. Act by day and night according to the teachings and counsels and admonitions of Baha'u'llah. This doth not preclude marriage. Thou canst take unto thyself a husband and at the same time serve the Cause of God; the one doth not preclude the other. Know thou the value of these days; let not this chance escape thee. Beg thou God to make thee a lighted candle, so that thou mayest guide a great multitude through this darksome world. <p388>

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", [rev. ed.] (Haifa: Baha'i

World Centre, 1982), p. 100)

828. Marriage, among the mass of the people, is a physical bond, and this union can only be temporary, since it is foredoomed to a physical separation at the close.

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.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 117)

829. Baha'i marriage is the commitment of the two parties one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and heart. Each must, however, exercise the utmost care to become thoroughly acquainted with the character of the other, that the binding covenant between them may be a tie that will endure forever. Their purpose must be this: to become loving companions and comrades and at one with each other for time and eternity....

The true marriage of Baha'is is this, that husband and wife should be united both physically and spiritually, that they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other, and may enjoy everlasting unity throughout all the worlds of God. This is Baha'i marriage.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 118) <p389>

830. And above all other unions is that between human beings, especially when it cometh to pass in the love of God. Thus is the primal oneness made to appear; thus is laid the foundation of love in the spirit....
("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 119)

831. Thy wife is not in harmony with thee, but praise be to God, the Blessed Beauty is pleased with thee and is conferring upon thee the utmost bounty and blessings. But still try to be patient with thy wife, perchance she may be transformed and her heart may be illumined....

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 121)

832. As to thy respected husband: it is incumbent upon thee to treat him with great kindness, to consider his wishes and be conciliatory with him at all

times, till he seeth that because thou hast directed thyself toward the Kingdom of God, thy tenderness for him and thy love for God have but increased, as well as thy concern for his wishes under all conditions.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 122)

833. O ye two believers in God! The Lord, peerless is He, hath made woman and man to abide with each other in the closest companionship, and to be even as a single soul. They are two helpmates, two intimate friends, who should be concerned about the welfare of each other.

If they live thus, they will pass through this world with perfect contentment, bliss, and peace of heart, and become the object of divine grace and favour in the Kingdom of heaven. But if they do other than this, they will live out their lives in great bitterness, longing at every moment for death, and will be shamefaced in the heavenly realm. Strive, then, to abide, heart and soul, with each other as two doves in the nest, for this is to be blessed in both worlds.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 122)

834. O ye loving mothers, know ye that in God's sight, the best of all ways to worship Him is to educate the children and train them in all the perfections of humankind; and no nobler deed than this can be imagined.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 139) <p390>

835. O dear one of 'Abdu'l-Baha! Be the son of thy father and be the fruit of that tree. Be a son that hath been born of his soul and heart and not only of water and clay. A real son is such one as hath branched from the spiritual part of man. I ask God that thou mayest be at all times confirmed and strengthened.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 140)

836. Note ye how easily, where unity existeth in a given family, the affairs of that family are conducted; what progress the members of that family make, how they prosper in the world. their concerns are in order, they enjoy comfort and tranquility, they are secure, their position is assured, they come to be envied by all. Such a family but addeth to its stature and its lasting honour, as day succeedeth day...

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abu'l-Baha", p. 279)

837. Comfort thy mother and endeavour to do what is conducive to the happiness of her heart....

('Abdu'l-Baha, "Tablets of Abdul Baha Abbas", vol. 1 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1930), p, 74)

838. Deliver my longings and greetings to the consolation of thine eye,[1]... Verily I love them both even as a compassionate father loveth his dear children. As to thee, have for them an abundant love and exert thine utmost in training them, so that their being may grow through the milk of the love of God, forasmuch as it is the duty of parents to perfectly and thoroughly train

their children.
[1 "Consolation of thine eye" - idiomatic Persian expression meaning "son".]

There are also certain sacred duties on children toward parents, which duties are written in the Book of God, as belonging to God. The [children's] prosperity in this world and the Kingdom depends upon the good pleasure of parents, and without this they will be in manifest loss.

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 2 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1930), pp. 262-63)

839. As to thy question concerning the husband and wife, the tie between them and the children given to them by God: Know thou, verily, the <p391> husband is one who hath sincerely turned unto God, is awakened by the call of the Beauty of El-Baha and chanteth the verses of Oneness in the great assemblies; the wife is a being who wisheth to be overflowing with and seeketh after the attributes of God and His names; and the tie between them is none other than the Word of God. Verily, it [the Word of God] causeth the multitudes to assemble together and the remote ones to be united. Thus the husband and wife are brought into affinity, are united and harmonized, even as though they were one person. Through their mutual union, companionship and love great results are produced in the world, both material and spiritual. The spiritual result is the appearance of divine bounties. The material result is the children who are born in the cradle of the love of God, who are nurtured by the breast of the knowledge of God, who are brought up in the bosom of the gift of God, and who are fostered in the lap of the training of God. Such children are those of whom it was said by Christ, "Verily, they are the children of the Kingdom!"

("Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas", vol. 3 (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1930), pp. 605-6)

840. The friends of God must so live and conduct themselves, and evince such excellence of character and conduct, as to make others astonished. The love between husband and wife must not be purely physical, nay, rather, it must be spiritual and heavenly. These two souls should be considered as one soul. How difficult it would be to divide a single soul! Nay, great would be the difficulty!

In short, the foundation of the Kingdom of God is based upon harmony and love, oneness, relationship and union, not upon differences, especially between husband and wife....

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

841. You have asked whether a husband would be able to prevent his wife from embracing the divine light or a wife dissuade her husband from gaining entry into the Kingdom of God. In truth neither of them could prevent the other from entering into the Kingdom, unless the husband hath an excessive attachment to the wife or the wife to the husband. Indeed when either of the two worshippeth the other to the exclusion of <p392> God, then each could prevent the other from seeking admittance into His Kingdom.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

842. I beseech God to graciously make of thy home a centre for the diffusion of the light of divine guidance, for the dissemination of the Words of God and for enkindling at all times the fire of love in the hearts of His faithful servants and maidservants. Know thou of a certainty that every house wherein the anthem of praise is raised to the Realm of Glory in celebration of the Name of God is indeed a heavenly home, and one of the gardens of delight in the Paradise of God.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Arabic)

843. If thou wouldst show kindness and consideration to thy parents so that they may feel generally pleased, this would also please Me, for parents must be highly respected and it is essential that they should feel contented, provided they deter thee not from gaining access to the Threshold of the Almighty, nor keep thee back from walking in the way of the Kingdom. Indeed it behoveth them to encourage and spur thee on in this direction.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

844. O Lord! In this Most Great Dispensation Thou dost accept the intercession of children in behalf of their parents. This is one of the special infinite bestowals of this Dispensation. Therefore, O Thou kind Lord, accept the request of this Thy servant at the threshold of Thy singleness and submerge his father in the ocean of Thy grace, because this son hath arisen to render Thee service and is exerting effort at all times in the pathway of Thy love. Verily, Thou art the Giver, the Forgiver and the Kind!

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

845. Treat all thy friends and relatives, even strangers, with a spirit of utmost love and kindliness.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian) <p393>

846. Exert yourselves, that haply ye may be enabled to acquire such virtues as shall honour and distinguish you amongst all women. Of a surety, there is no greater pride and glory for a woman than to be a handmaid in God's Court of Grandeur; and the qualities that shall merit her this station are an alert and wakeful heart; a firm conviction of the unity of God, the Peerless; a heartfelt love for all His maidservants; spotless purity and chastity; obedience to and consideration for her husband; attention to the education and nurturing of her children; composure, calmness, dignity and self-possession; diligence in praising God, and worshipping Him both night and day; constancy and firmness in His holy Covenant; and the utmost ardour, enthusiasm, and attachment to His Cause....

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

847. Regarding thy question about consultation of a father with his son, or a son with his father, in matters of trade and commerce, consultation is one of

the fundamental elements of the foundation of the Law of God. Such consultation is assuredly acceptable, whether between father and son, or with others. There is nothing better than this. Man must consult in all things for this will lead him to the depths of each problem and enable him to find the right solution.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

848. Your affectionate brother hath written and mentioned your names, and hath highly praised and commended you. Observe how drawn he is to you, and how he loveth you. Thus should a brother be, so affectionate and soul- uplifting, unlike 'Abdu'l-Baha's brother, who is more bitter than venom.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

849. The father must always endeavour to educate his son and to acquaint him with the heavenly teachings. He must give him advice and exhort him at all times, teach him praiseworthy conduct and character, enable him to receive training at school and to be instructed in such arts and sciences as are deemed useful and necessary. In brief, let him instil into his mind the virtues and perfections of the world of humanity. Above all he should continually call to his mind the remembrance of God so that his throbbing veins and arteries may pulsate with the love of God. <p394>

The son, on the other hand, must show forth the utmost obedience towards his father, and should conduct himself as a humble and a lowly servant. Day and night he should seek diligently to ensure the comfort and welfare of his loving father and to secure his good pleasure. He must forgo his own rest and enjoyment and constantly strive to bring gladness to the hearts of his father and mother, that thereby he may attain the good pleasure of the Almighty and be graciously aided by the hosts of the unseen.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

850. Hold thy husband dear and always show forth an amiable temper towards him, no matter how ill-tempered he may be. Even if thy loving-kindness maketh him more bitter, manifest thou more kindliness, more tenderness, be more loving and tolerate his cruel actions and ill- treatment.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

EXTRACTS FROM THE UTTERANCES OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA:

851. The variety of inherited qualities comes from strength and weakness of constitution -- that is to say, when the two parents are weak, the children will be weak; if they are strong, the children will be robust. In the same way, purity of blood has a great effect; for the pure germ is like the superior stock which exists in plants and animals. For example, you see that children born from a weak and feeble father and mother will naturally have a feeble constitution and weak nerves; they will be afflicted and will have neither patience, nor endurance, nor resolution, nor perseverance, and will be hasty; for the children inherit the weakness and debility of their parents.

Besides this, an especial blessing is conferred on some families and some generations. Thus it is an especial blessing that from among the descendants of Abraham should have come all the Prophets of the children of Israel. This is a blessing that God has granted to this descent: to Moses from His father and mother, to Christ from His mother's line; also to Muhammad and the Bab, and to all the Prophets and the Holy <p395> Manifestations of Israel. The Blessed Beauty[1] is also a lineal descendant of Abraham, for Abraham had other sons besides Ishmael and Isaac who in those days migrated to the lands of Persia and Afghanistan, and the Blessed Beauty is one of their descendants.
[1 Baha'u'llah.]

Hence it is evident that inherited character also exists, and to such a degree that if the characters are not in conformity with their origin, although they belong physically to that lineage, spiritually they are not considered members of the family, like Canaan,[1] who is not reckoned as being of the race of Noah.
[1 Cf. Gen. 9:25.]

("Some Answered Questions", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 213)

852. Also a father and mother endure the greatest troubles and hardships for their children; and often when the children have reached the age of maturity, the parents pass on to the other world. Rarely does it happen that a father and mother in this world see the reward of the care and trouble they have undergone for their children. Therefore, children, in return for this care and trouble, must show forth charity and beneficence, and must implore pardon and forgiveness for their parents. So you ought, in return for the love and kindness shown you by your father, to give to the poor for his sake, with greatest submission and humility implore pardon and remission of sins, and ask for the supreme mercy.

("Some Answered Questions", pp. 231-32)

853. If love and agreement are manifest in a single family, that family will advance, become illumined and spiritual; but if enmity and hatred exist within it, destruction and dispersion are inevitable....

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 144-45)

854. According to the teachings of Baha'u'llah the family, being a human unit, must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be <p396> constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother -- none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their

certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honor of one, the honor of all.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912", p. 168)

855. The child must not be oppressed or censured because it is undeveloped; it must be patiently trained....

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912" pp. 180-81)

856. When you love a member of your family or a compatriot, let it be with a ray of the Infinite Love! Let it be in God, and for God! Wherever you find the attributes of God love that person, whether he be of your family or of another....

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912" 10th ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 38)

857. This is in truth a Baha'i house. Every time such a house or meeting place is founded it becomes one of the greatest aids to the general development of the town and country to which it belongs. It encourages the growth of learning and science and is known for its intense spirituality and for the love it spreads among the peoples.

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912" pp. 72-73)

858. Consider the harmful effects of discord and dissension in a family; then reflect upon the favours and blessings which descend upon that family when unity exists among its various members. What incalculable benefits and blessings would descend upon the great human family if unity and brotherhood were established! In this century when the <p397> beneficent results of unity and the ill effects of discord are so clearly apparent, the means for the attainment and accomplishment of human fellowship have appeared in the world. His Holiness Baha'u'llah has proclaimed and provided the way by which hostility and dissension may be removed from the human world. He has left no ground or possibility for strife and disagreement. First He has proclaimed the oneness of mankind and specialized religious teachings for existing human conditions.

(From a Tablet, published in "Star of the West" vol. 17, no. 7, (October 1926), p. 232)

859. My home is the home of peace. My home is the home of joy and delight. My home is the home of laughter and exultation. Whosoever enters through the portals of this home, must go out with gladsome heart. This is the home of light; whosoever enters here must become illumined....

(From a Tablet, published in "Star of the West", vol. 9, no. 3, (28 April

1918), p. 40)

860. It is highly important for man to raise a family. So long as he is young, because of youthful self-complacency, he does not realize its significance, but this will be a source of regret when he grows old.... In this glorious Cause the life of a married couple should resemble the life of the angels in heaven -- a life full of joy and spiritual delight, a life of unity and concord, a friendship both mental and physical. The home should be orderly and well-organized. Their ideas and thoughts should be like the rays of the sun of truth and the radiance of the brilliant stars in the heavens. Even as two birds they should warble melodies upon the branches of the tree of fellowship and harmony. They should always be elated with joy and gladness and be a source of happiness to the hearts of others. They should set an example to their fellow-men, manifest a true and sincere love towards each other and educate their children in such a manner as to blazon the fame and glory of their family.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian) <p398>

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY SHOGHI EFFENDI TO INDIVIDUAL BELIEVES:

861. I urge you to concentrate for a time upon whatever means you think will eventually secure the good-will, tolerance and sympathy of your husband. Show him the utmost kindness and consideration, and try, at the opportune moment to make him realize the purpose and spirit of the Faith. I will pray for the success of your efforts in this connection and wish you happiness from all my heart.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 20 March 1928 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

862. I cannot refrain, out of my great love and sympathy for you, from adding a few words myself in order to impress upon you the necessity of showing continually the utmost regard, consideration and love to your dear and respected husband. I have great hopes that upon your attitude, and consideration for him will chiefly depend his ultimate acceptance of the Cause which you love so dearly and serve so well. My profound sympathy is with you in your domestic cares which I know weigh heavily on your heart. I will continue to supplicate for you from the very depths of my heart. I pray that you may achieve in your manifold activities your heart's fondest desire.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi appended to a letter dated 20 December 1928 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

The following are from letters to individual believers unless otherwise stated

863. When such difference of opinion and belief occurs between husband and wife it is very unfortunate for undoubtedly it detracts from that spiritual bond which is the stronghold of the family bond, especially in times of difficulty. The way, however, that it could be remedied is not by acting in such wise as to

alienate the other party. One of the objects of the Cause is actually to bring about a closer bond in the homes. In all such cases, therefore, the Master used to advise obedience to the wishes of the other party and prayer. Pray that your husband may gradually see the light and at the same time so act as to draw him nearer rather than <p399> prejudice him. Once that harmony is secured then you will be able to serve unhampered.

(15 July 1928)

864. Under such circumstances the Master used to ask the friends to be lavish in their love and become exceptionally obedient to their husbands. Such individuals have to see through acts that the Cause has not come to break up family ties but to strengthen them; it has not come to eliminate love but to strengthen it; it has not been created to weaken social institutions but to strengthen them.

(14 October 1928)

865. Surely Shoghi Effendi would like to see you and the other friends give their whole time and energy to the Cause, for we are in great need for competent workers, but the home is an institution that Baha'u'llah has come to strengthen and not to weaken. Many unfortunate things have happened in Baha'i homes just for neglecting this point. Serve the Cause but also remember your duties towards your home. It is for you to find the balance and see that neither makes you neglect the other. We would have many more husbands in the Cause were the wives more thoughtful and moderate in their Baha'i activities.

(14 May 1929)

866. A truly Baha'i home is a true fortress upon which the Cause can rely while planning its campaigns. If ... and ... love each other and would like to marry, Shoghi Effendi does not wish them to think that by doing so they are depriving themselves of the privilege of service; in fact such a union will enhance their ability to serve. There is nothing more beautiful than to have young Baha'is marry and found truly Baha'i homes, the type Baha'u'llah wishes them to be. Please give them both the Guardian's loving greetings.

(6 November 1932)

867. A God that is only loving or only just is not a perfect God. The Divinity has to possess both of these aspects as every father ought to express both in his attitude towards his children. If we ponder a while, we will see that <p400> our welfare can be ensured only when both of these divine attributes are equally emphasized and practised.

(29 April 1933)

868. There is no limit to our offerings to the Temple. The more we give, the better it is for the Cause and for ourselves. But your case is a special one, since your husband is not a believer. If you can succeed in convincing him of the importance of your donations to the Cause, so much the better. But you should never oppose him on this matter and allow anything [to] disturb the

peace and unity of your family life....

(21 September 1933)

869. The Guardian wishes me specially to urge you to remain patient and confident, and above all to show your husband the utmost kindness and love, in return for all the opposition and hatred you receive from him. A conciliatory and friendly attitude in such cases is not only the duty of every Baha'i but is also the most effective way of winning for the Cause the sympathy and admiration of its former foes and enemies. Love is, indeed, a most potent elixir that can transform the vilest and meanest of people into heavenly souls. May your example serve to further confirm the truth of this beautiful teaching of our Faith.

(6 December 1935)

870. The Guardian ... has learned with deep concern of your family difficulties and troubles. He wishes me to assure you of his fervent prayers on your behalf and on behalf of your dear ones at home, that you may be guided and assisted from on High to compose your differences and to restore complete harmony and fellowship in your midst. While he would urge you to make any sacrifice in order to bring about unity in your family, he wishes you not to feel discouraged if your endeavours do not yield any immediate fruit. You should do your part with absolute faith that in doing so you are fulfilling your duty as a Baha'i. The rest is assuredly in God's hand.

As regards your husband's attitude towards the Cause: unfriendly though that may be you should always hope that, through conciliatory and friendly means, and with wise, tactful and patient effort you can gradually succeed in winning his sympathy for the Faith. Under no <p401> circumstances should you try to dictate and impose upon him by force your personal religious convictions. Neither should you allow his opposition to the Cause [to] seriously hinder your activities... You should act patiently, tactfully and with confidence that your efforts are being guided and reinforced by Baha'u'llah.

(23 July 1937)

871. It made him very happy to know of the recent confirmation of your ... friend, and of her earnest desire to serve and promote the Faith. He will certainly pray on her behalf that she may, notwithstanding the opposition of her parents and relatives, increasingly gain in knowledge and in understanding of the Teachings, and become animated with such zeal as to arise, and bring into the Cause a large number of her former co-religionists.

Under no circumstances, however, should she allow her parents to become completely alienated from her, but it is her bounden duty to strive, through patient, continued and loving effort, to win their sympathy for the Faith, and even, perhaps, to bring about their confirmation...

(6 July 1938)

872. As regards your plans: the Guardian fully approves indeed of your view

that no matter how urgent and vital the requirements of the teaching work may be you should under no circumstances neglect the education of your children, as towards them you have an obligation no less sacred than towards the Cause.

Any plan or arrangement you may arrive at which would combine your twofold duties towards your family and the Cause, and would permit you to resume active work in the field of pioneer teaching, and also to take good care of your children so as to not jeopardize their future in the Cause would meet with the whole-hearted approval of the Guardian.

(17 July 1938)

873. The institution of marriage, as established by Baha'u'llah, while giving due importance to the physical aspect of marital union, considers it as subordinate to the moral and spiritual purposes and functions with which it has been invested by an all-wise and loving Providence. Only when these different values are given each their due importance, and only <p402> on the basis of the subordination of the physical to the moral, and the carnal to the spiritual can such excesses and laxity in marital relations as our decadent age is so sadly witnessing be avoided, and family life be restored to its original purity, and fulfil the true function for which it has been instituted by God.

(8 May 1939)

874. While the Guardian highly appreciates your desire to take a more active part in the teaching field, he realizes also that in deference to the wishes of your husband, towards whom you have duties no less sacred and binding than those facing you as a believer, you should endeavour to so arrange your plans as not to be too far away from him, particularly as he himself is anxious that you should not break up, however temporarily, your home life.

(5 June 1939)

875. The Guardian is, nevertheless, thankful that he does not object in principle to your attending Baha'i meetings, and gives you full freedom to participate in all local Baha'i activities. Even though he may insist on your obtaining his consent in such matters, you should not feel hurt or discouraged, but rather should continue, in a friendly and conciliatory way, to endeavour [to] win his sympathy towards the Cause. You can have no serious reason for any real grievance against him, unless he unduly interferes in your Baha'i work, and prevents you from discharging your vital spiritual and administrative obligations towards the Faith. The Guardian will pray in the mean time that your hopes of seeing him well confirmed and active in the Cause may be fulfilled, and that also you may be guided to adopt towards him such [a] true Baha'i attitude as will serve to further awaken his sympathies for the Faith, and quicken the spiritual energies latent in his heart to the point of bringing about his full confirmation in the Cause. Rest assured, and confidently persist in your efforts.

(5 August 1939)

876. The task of bringing up a Baha'i child, as emphasized time and again in Baha'i writings, is the chief responsibility of the mother, whose unique privilege is indeed to create in her home such conditions as would be <p403> most conducive to both his material and spiritual welfare and advancement. The training which a child first receives through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for his future development, and it should therefore be the paramount concern of your wife ... to endeavour from now imparting to her new-born son such spiritual training as would enable him later on to fully assume and adequately discharge all the responsibilities and duties of Baha'i life.

(16 November 1939)

877. He has noted with feelings of genuine admiration your longing to serve in the field of pioneer teaching, but is sorry to hear that your domestic circumstances do not permit you to carry out this dear wish of your heart. While he heartily appreciates your eagerness to labour for the Faith in distant and hitherto unopened territories, he feels that, in view of your husband's opposition, and also in consideration of the need of your children for your close help and guidance, you should, for the present, endeavour instead to work in virgin localities in the vicinity of ... or of the adjoining towns.

(7 November 1940)

878. The question of the training and education of children in case one of the parents is a non-Baha'i is one which solely concerns the parents themselves, who should decide about it the way they find best and most conducive to the maintenance of the unity of their family, and to the future welfare of their children. Once the child comes of age, however, he should be given full freedom to choose his religion, irrespective of the wishes and desires of his parents.

(14 December 1940 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of India and Burma)

879. ...now that you both feel the sincere desire to unite in your efforts to make your married life happy, Shoghi Effendi advises you to do everything in your power, through love and kindness, to win your husband to your side and to remove his prejudice against the Cause.

(27 November 1941) <p404>

880. She should certainly not grieve if she finds that her family are not receptive to the teachings -- for not every soul is spiritually enlightened. Indeed, many members of the families of the Prophets themselves have remained unconverted even in face of the example and persuasion of the Manifestation of God; therefore, the friends should not be distressed by such things but rather leave the future of those they love in the hand of God, and by their services and devotion to the Faith, win the right to plead for their ultimate spiritual rebirth....

(9 March 1942)

881. 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 Baha'i Faith, but do not grieve too much over their actions. Turn to your Baha'i brothers and sisters who are living with you in the light of the Kingdom.

(8 May 1942)

882. Our Faith is just as much for children as for older people, and it rejoices his heart when he sees both working together to bring this great Message of good to all mankind.

(30 November 1942 to two believers)

883. Regarding the Guardian's statement that pioneering is conditioned upon the consent of parents and that it would be necessary for them to concur, you have asked whether this ruling applies equally to children who are of age and those who are not. The Guardian's reply is that the ruling applies only to those who have not yet come of age.

(From a letter dated 18 January 1943 written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia)

884. Baha'u'llah has urged marriage upon all people as the natural and rightful way of life. He has also, however, placed strong emphasis on its spiritual nature, which, while in no way precluding a normal physical life, is the most essential aspect of marriage. That two people should live their lives in love and harmony is of far greater importance than that they <p405> should be consumed with passion for each other. The one is a great rock of strength on which to lean in time of need; the other a purely temporary thing which may at any time die out.

(20 January 1943)

885. The Guardian, in his remarks ... about parents' and children's, wives' and husbands' relations in America, meant that there is a tendency in that country for children to be too independent of the wishes of their parents and lacking in the respect due to them. Also wives, in some cases, have a tendency to exert an unjust degree of domination over their husbands, which, of course, is not right, any more than that the husband should unjustly dominate his wife.

(22 July 1943)

886. He feels you should by all means show your husband the greatest love and sympathy; if we are ever in any doubt as to how we should conduct ourselves as Baha'is we should think of 'Abdu'l-Baha and study His life and ask ourselves what would He have done, for He is our perfect example in every way. And you know how tender He was, and how His affection and kindness shone like sunlight on everyone.

Your husband and your child have a right to your love, and give you a wonderful opportunity of demonstrating your faith in the Cause.

Also you should pray to Baha'u'llah to help unite you with your husband and make your home a true and happy home.

(9 March 1946)

887. He was very sorry to see you are having trouble in your home because of the Baha'i Faith. He feels that you should do all in your power to promote love and harmony between your husband and yourself, for your own sakes and for the sake of your children. You should, however, point out to him that every man is free to seek God for himself, and that, although you will never seek to influence him or even discuss the Baha'i Faith with him, if he does not want to, he should leave you free to attend the meetings. The Guardian hopes that through patience, tact and prayer, you will gradually overcome his prejudice.

(16 March 1946) <p406>

888. A Baha'i is never forced to stay in a particular place; if you could not earn a living in ... and wished to be near your aged parents, you were quite right to leave....

(1 April 1946)

889. Shoghi Effendi wishes me to add this note in connection with your marriage: he does not feel that any believer, under any circumstances whatsoever, can ever use the Cause or service to it as a reason for abandoning their marriage; divorce, as we know, is very strongly condemned by Baha'u'llah, and only grounds of extreme gravity justify it....

(7 April 1947)

890. He feels, in regard to your family problems, that you should take these matters up with your Assembly, if you desire advice; one of the duties of these Assemblies is to advise and aid the friends, and it is your privilege to turn to your Assembly....

(10 April 1947 to two believers)

891. He was very happy to hear of your desire to assist the pioneer work... He does not feel that your activities in this field, however, should be a source of inharmony between you and your dear husband, and he assures you he will pray for him in the Holy Shrines, that God may awaken him to a realization of the meaning of our Faith and quicken him in its service.

(30 April 1947)

892. Baha'u'llah has clearly stated the consent of all living parents is required for a Baha'i marriage. This applies whether the parents are Baha'is or non-Baha'is, divorced for years or not. This great law He has laid down to strengthen the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a certain gratitude and respect in the hearts of children for those who have

given them life and sent their souls out on the eternal journey towards their Creator. We Baha'is must realize that in present-day society the exact opposite process is taking place: young people care less and less for their parents' wishes, divorce is considered a natural right, and obtained on the flimsiest and most unwarrantable and shabby <p407> pretexts. People separated from each other, especially if one of them has had full custody of the children, are only too willing to belittle the importance of the partner in marriage also responsible as a parent for bringing those children into this world. The Baha'is must, through rigid adherence to the Baha'i laws and teachings, combat these corrosive forces which are so rapidly destroying home life and the beauty of family relationships, and tearing down the moral structure of society.

(25 October 1947 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

893. In regard to the questions you asked him: he feels sure that, although in some ways you may be a financial burden to your children, it is to them a privilege to look after you; you are their Mother and have given them life, and through the bounty of Baha'u'llah they are now attracted to His Faith. Anything they do for you is small recompense for all you have done for them.

(20 September 1948)

894. Your responsibility towards your son and your husband is very great, and the Guardian hopes your work will soon reach a point where you can return, at least for sometime, to them, and give them that love and encouragement which is a woman's great contribution to home life.

(5 August 1949)

895. He was particularly pleased to hear your family relationships are so satisfactory, and feels you are doing the right thing by deferring to your husband's wishes and remaining abroad longer.

The Guardian has long felt that the American Baha'is are not, in some cases, living up to the ideal of marriage set forth by Baha'u'llah. They are prone to being influenced by the current light and selfish attitude of the people towards the marriage bond. Consequently when he sees you are successfully living up to the Baha'i standard, putting your best into it and preserving this sacred tie you have with your husband, he is very happy indeed. He hopes you will be in a position to be an example to others. For he disapproves of the way some Baha'is, in the name of serving the Cause, disencumber themselves of their husbands, or go and get new ones! <p408>

(2 April 1950)

896. It is one of the essential teachings of the Faith that unity should be maintained in the home. Of course this does not mean that any member of the family has a right to influence the faith of any other member; and if this is realized by all the members, then it seems certain that unity would be feasible.

(6 July 1952)

897. The Guardian will pray that your mother may become a Baha'i, and very actively serve the Cause of God. It should be borne in mind that by your leading a consecrated Baha'i life, your mother will be affected perhaps as much or more than by reading and studying. When one sees the effect of the Baha'i Teachings on another person 's life, that very often has a very great effect.

(12 July 1952)

898. He feels that you should by all means make every effort to hold your marriage together, especially for the sake of your children, who, like all children of divorced parents, cannot but suffer from conflicting loyalties, for they are deprived of the blessing of a father and mother in one home, to look after their interests and love them jointly.

Now that you realize that your husband is ill, you should be able to reconcile yourself to the difficulties you have faced with him emotionally, and not take an unforgiving attitude, however much you may suffer.

We know that Baha'u'llah has very strongly frowned upon divorce; and it is really incumbent upon the Baha'is to make almost a superhuman effort not to allow a Baha'i marriage to be dissolved.

(6 March 1953)

899. The Guardian fully appreciates your desire to go forth as a pioneer at this time, and to help establish the Faith in the virgin areas, but you should not go against the wishes of your husband, and force him to give up everything in order that you might serve the Faith in this manner. We must bear in mind the wishes and the rights of those who are closely connected in our lives. <p409>

If your husband wishes you to remain where you are, certainly there is a vast field for teaching there....

(31 July 1953)

900. Your sons, even though they will not be able at first to serve with you in pioneering, are certainly helping you to do so because of their devoted spirit and their complete co-operation. Life at best is so full of unexpected vicissitudes that leaving your boys at home does not, he feels, present any added risks. They are devoted to the Cause and will no doubt be inspired by your example.

(10 August 1953 to two believers)

901. With regard to your question as to your going out as a pioneer ... the Guardian feels, in view of the aversion of Baha'u'llah to divorce, that it is not right for a Baha'i, even for the purpose of pioneering, to break up a marriage. He, therefore, urges you to endeavour with all your powers to become reconciled with your husband, as he considers this is more important than that you should go forth to a virgin territory to pioneer.

(27 August 1953)

902. ...he wishes me to say that he favours your pioneering. However, if you consider that your going to one of the Pacific Islands as a pioneer, will destroy your relationship with your father, then he would suggest that perhaps your wife could go now, and then you can see how things work out for your joining her later.

(27 September 1953)

903. The Guardian, in view of the fact that your husband does not really wish to be separated from you, but on the contrary is desirous of keeping your marriage together, feels that you, as a Baha'i, have no right to destroy it because of your desire to serve the Faith.

Marriage is a very sacred institution. Baha'u'llah said its purpose is to promote unity. If the friends neglect, for the sake of the Cause, this institution, they place the Faith in a poor light before the public. In these days the people of the world are so immoral, and treat the marriage institution so lightly; and we, as Baha'is, in contrast to the people of the <p410> world, are trying to create a high moral standard, an reinstate the sanctity of marriage.

If your husband will allow you to do a certain amount of teaching work, and occasionally to travel in the interests of the Faith, all the better; but he does not think the Faith should be made the thing which destroys your family life.
(6 June 1954)

904. He feels, in view of your husband's circumstances and feelings, and also considering that your two older children will naturally want to see you, and indeed should see you at times so that you can help them in their Baha'i lives, that the wise thing for you to do is to pioneer with your husband somewhere in the States, where your services will be of the greatest value.

(29 July 1954)

905. He appreciates very much the pioneer services you have rendered. He hopes that from now on you and your dear husband will be able to serve the Faith unitedly and devotedly together, as that is the highest form of Baha'i cooperation in marriage.

(3 March 1955)

906. If the condition of the health of your parents is such that your presence is really needed, then you should not leave them. If, however, there is some other relative who could care for them, then you could help with the work in ... and aid the friends in establishing the Faith on a solid foundation there.

(28 October 1955)

907. He will pray that the opposition of your husband and sister may be

changed, through your own acts of love, kindness, and the patience and tolerance you show to them.

(20 March 1956)

908. Wherever there is a Baha'i family, those concerned should by all means do all they can to preserve it, because divorce is strongly condemned in the Teachings, whereas harmony, unity and love are held <p411> up as the highest ideals in human relationships. This must always apply to the Baha'is, whether they are serving in the pioneering field or not.

(9 November 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central America)

909. He feels that, now that you have found the thing you were searching for inwardly, and have this added joy in your life of our glorious Faith, you should be kinder to your husband and more considerate than ever, and do everything in your power to make him feel that this has not taken you away from him, but only made your love for him, and your desire to be a good wife to him, greater. Whether he will ultimately be able to become a Baha'i or not, is something that only time can tell; but there is no doubt where your duty lies, and that is to make him appreciate the fact that your new affiliation has not interfered in any way with his home life or his marriage, but, on the contrary, has strengthened both.

It is difficult when one has found what one knows is the truth, to sit by and see a dear and close relative completely blind to it. The temptation is to try and "stir them up and make them see the light", but this is often disastrous. Silence, love and forbearance will win greater victories in such cases. However, your husband has no right to ask you to give up being a Baha'i. That is going too far. Nobody should trespass on the sacred bond every human being has a right to have with their Creator.

(20 April 1957)

910. However, as you no doubt know, Baha'u'llah has stated that the purpose of marriage is to promote unity, so you should bear this in mind when dealing with your non-Baha'i relatives; they cannot be expected to feel the way we do on questions of racial amity, and we must not force our views on them, but rather lovingly and wisely seek to educate them.

(30 August 1957)

EXTRACTS FROM MESSAGES OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

(The following are addressed to individual believers unless otherwise stated)

911. Regarding your other question concerning the strained relationship between you and your mother-in-law and what you can do to alleviate the situation, we feel you should, with the help and consultation of your <p412> husband, persevere in your efforts to achieve unity in the family. From your description of the unfriendly attitude your mother-in-law displays toward you it is clear that you will not have an easy task. However, the important thing is that you,

as a Baha'i, are aware of 'Abdu'l- Baha's admonition to concentrate on an individual's good qualities and that this approach to your mother-in-law can strengthen you in your resolve to achieve unity. And furthermore, perseverance in prayer will give you the strength to continue your efforts.

(6 September 1970)

912. A Baha'i who has a problem may wish to make his own decision upon it after prayer and after weighing all the aspects of it in his own mind; he may prefer to seek the counsel of individual friends or of professional counsellors such as his doctor or lawyer so that he can consider such advice when making his decision; or in a case where several people are involved, such as a family situation, he may want to gather together those who are affected so that they may arrive at a collective decision....

(19 March 1973 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada)

913. That the first teacher of the child is the mother should not be startling, for the primary orientation of the infant is to its mother. This provision of nature in no way minimizes the role of the father in the Baha'i family. Again, equality of status does not mean identity of function.

(23 June 1974)

914. In considering the problems that you and your wife are experiencing, the House of Justice points out that the unity of your family should take priority over any other consideration. Baha'u'llah came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, we must believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family, not weaken it. For example, service to the Cause should not produce neglect of the family. It is important for you to arrange your time so that your family life is harmonious and your household receives the attention it requires.

Baha'u'llah also stressed the importance of consultation. We should not think this worthwhile method of seeking solutions is confined to the administrative institutions of the Cause. Family consultation employing <p413> full and frank discussion, and animated by awareness of the need for moderation and balance, can be the panacea for domestic conflict....

(1 August 1978)

915. Although Baha'i services should be undertaken with a spirit of sacrifice, one cannot lose sight of the importance given in our Holy Writings to the responsibilities placed on parents in relationship to their children, as well as to the duties of children towards their parents.

(19 November 1 978)

916. The House of Justice suggests that all statements in the Holy Writings concerning specific areas of the relationship between men and women should be considered in the light of the general principle of equality between the sexes that has been authoritatively and repeatedly enunciated in the Sacred Texts. In

one of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Baha asserts: "In this divine age the bounties of God have encompassed the world of women. Equality of men and women, except in some negligible instances, has been fully and categorically announced. Distinctions have been utterly removed." That men and women differ from one another in certain characteristics and functions is an inescapable fact of nature; the important thing is that 'Abdu'l-Baha regards such inequalities as remain between the sexes as being "negligible".

The relationship between husband and wife must be viewed in the context of the Baha'i ideal of family life. Baha'u'llah came to bring unity to the world, and a fundamental unity is that of the family. Therefore, one must believe that the Faith is intended to strengthen the family, not weaken it, and one of the keys to the strengthening of unity is loving consultation. The atmosphere within a Baha'i family as within the community as a whole should express "the keynote of the Cause of God" which, the beloved Guardian has stated, "is not dictatorial authority, but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation."

A family, however, is a very special kind of "community".

The Research Department has not come across any statements which specifically name the father as responsible for the "security, progress and unity of the family" as is stated in Bahiyyih Nakhjavani's book, but it can be inferred from a number of the responsibilities placed upon him, that <p414> the father can be regarded as the "head" of the family.

The members of a family all have duties and responsibilities towards one another and to the family as a whole, and these duties and responsibilities vary from member to member because of their natural relationships.

The parents have the inescapable duty to educate their children -- but not vice versa; the children have the duty to obey their parents -- the parents do not obey the children; the mother -- not the father -- bears the children, nurses them in babyhood, and is thus their first educator; hence daughters have a prior right to education over sons and, as the Guardian's secretary has written on his behalf, "The task of bringing up a Baha' i child, as emphasized time and again in Baha'i Writings, is the chief responsibility of the mother, whose unique privilege is indeed to create in her home such conditions as would be most conducive to both his material and spiritual welfare and advancement.

The training which a child first receives through his mother constitutes the strongest foundation for his future development..."A corollary of this responsibility of the mother is her right to be supported by her husband -- a husband has no explicit right to be supported by his wife.

This principle of the husband's responsibility to provide for and protect the family can be seen applied also in the law of intestacy which provides that the family's dwelling place passes, on the father's death, not to his widow, but to his eldest son; the son at the same time has the responsibility to care for his mother.

It is in this context of mutual and complementary duties, and responsibilities that one should read the Tablet in which 'Abdu'l-Baha gives the following exhortation:

O Handmaids of the All-Sufficing God!
Exert yourselves, that haply ye may be enabled to acquire such virtues as shall honour and distinguish you amongst all women. Of a surety, there is no greater pride and glory for a woman than to be a handmaid in God's Court of Grandeur; and the qualities that shall merit her this station are an alert and wakeful heart; a firm conviction of the unity of God, the Peerless; a heartfelt love for all His maidservants; spotless purity and chastity; obedience to and consideration for her husband; attention to the education and nurturing of her children; composure, calmness, dignity and self-possession; diligence in <p415> praising God, and worshipping Him both night and day; constancy and firmness in His holy Covenant; and the utmost ardour, enthusiasm, and attachment to His Cause....[1]
[1 The quotation in the original letter has been replaced by this revised translation.]

This exhortation to the utmost degree of spirituality and self-abnegation should not be read as a legal definition giving the husband absolute authority over his wife, for, in a letter written to an individual believer on 22 July 1943, the beloved Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf:

The Guardian, in his remarks ... about parents' and children's, wives' and husbands' relations in America, meant that there is a tendency in that country for children to be too independent of the wishes of their parents and lacking in the respect due to them. Also wives, in some cases, have a tendency to exert an unjust degree of domination over their husbands, which, of course, is not right, any more than that the husband should unjustly dominate his wife.

In any group, however loving the consultation, there are nevertheless points on which, from time to time, agreement cannot be reached. In a Spiritual Assembly this dilemma is resolved by a majority vote. There can, however, be no majority where only two parties are involved, as in the case of a husband and wife. There are, therefore, times when a wife should defer to her husband, and times when a husband should defer to his wife, but neither should ever unjustly dominate the other. In short, the relationship between husband and wife should be as held forth in the prayer revealed by 'Abdu'l-Baha which is often read at Baha'i weddings: "Verily, they are married in obedience to Thy command. Cause them to become the signs of harmony and unity until the end of time."

These are all relationships within the family, but there is a much wider sphere of relationships between men and women than in the home, and this too we should consider in the context of Baha'i society, not in that of past or present

social norms. For example, although the mother is the first educator of the child, and the most important formative influence in his development, the father also has the responsibility of educating his children, and this responsibility is so weighty that Baha'u'llah has stated that a father who fails to exercise it forfeits his rights of fatherhood. <p416> Similarly, although the primary responsibility for supporting the family financially is placed upon the husband, this does not by any means imply that the place of woman is confined to the home. On the contrary, 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated:

> In the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, women are advancing side by side with men. There is no area or instance where they will lag behind: they have equal rights with men, and will enter, in the future, into all branches of the administration of society. Such will be their elevation that, in every area of endeavour, they will occupy the highest levels in the human world....[1]
> [1 The quotation in the original letter which was taken from "Paris Talks", p. 182, has been replaced by this revised translation.]

and again:

> So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease;...

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace" p. 135)

In the Tablet of the World, Baha'u'llah Himself has envisaged that women as well as men would be breadwinners in stating:

> Everyone, whether man or woman, should hand over to a trusted person a portion of what he or she earneth through trade, agriculture or other occupation, for the training and education of children, to be spent for this purpose with the knowledge of the Trustees of the Hot se of Justice.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i- Aqdas", p. 90)

A very important element in the attainment of such equality is Baha'u'llah's provision that boys and girls must follow essentially the same curriculum in schools.

(28 December 1980 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of New Zealand)

(Compiled for inclusion with a letter dated 18 February 1982 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies)

Revised July 1990 <p419>

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

BAHA'I WORLD CENTRE
27 August 1989

To the followers of Baha'u'llah

Dear Baha'i Friends,

The Nineteen Day Feast, its framework, purpose and possibilities, have in recent years become a subject of increasing inquiry among the friends. It occupied much of the consultation at the Sixth International Baha'i Convention last year, and we feel the time has come for us to offer clarifications.

The World Order of Baha'u'llah encompasses all units of human society; integrates the spiritual, administrative and social processes of life; and canalizes human expression in its varied forms towards the construction of a new civilization. The Nineteen Day Feast embraces all these aspects at the very base of society. Functioning in the village, the town, the city, it is an institution of which all the people of Baha are members. It is intended to promote unity, ensure progress, and foster joy.

"If this feast be held in the proper fashion," 'Abdu'l-Baha states, "the friends will, once in nineteen days, find themselves spiritually restored, and endued with a power that is not of this world." To ensure this glorious outcome the concept of the Feast must be adequately understood by all the friends. The Feast is known to have three distinct but related parts: the devotional, the administrative, and the social. The first entails the recitation of prayers and reading from the Holy Texts. The second is a general meeting where the Local Spiritual Assembly reports its activities, plans and problems to the community, shares news and messages from the World Centre and the National Assembly, and receives the thoughts and recommendations of the friends through a process of consultation. The third involves the partaking of refreshments and engaging in other activities meant to foster fellowship in a culturally determined diversity of forms which do not violate principles of the Faith or the essential character of the Feast.

Even though the Feast requires strict adherence to the threefold aspects in the sequence in which they have been defined, there is much <p420> room for variety in the total experience. For example, music may be introduced at various stages, including the devotional portion; 'Abdu'l-Baha recommends that eloquent, uplifting talks be given; originality and variety in expressions of hospitality are possible; the quality and range of the consultation are critical to the spirit of the occasion. The effects of different cultures in all these respects are welcome factors which can lend the Feast a salutary diversity, representative of the unique characteristics of the various societies in which it is held and therefore conducive to the upliftment and enjoyment of its participants.

It is notable that the concept of the Feast evolved in stages in relation to the development of the Faith. At its earliest stage in Iran, the individual friends, in response to Baha'u'llah's injunctions, hosted gatherings in their

homes to show hospitality once every nineteen days and derived inspiration from the reading and discussion of the Teachings. As the community grew. 'Abdu'l-Baha delineated and emphasized the devotional and social character of the event. After the establishment of Local Spiritual Assemblies, Shoghi Effendi introduced the administrative portion and acquainted the community with the idea of the Nineteen Day Feast as an institution. It was as if a symphony, in three movements, had now been completed.

But it is not only in the sense of its gradual unfoldment as an institution that the evolution of the Feast must be regarded; there is a broader context yet. The Feast may well be seen in its unique combination of modes as the culmination of a great historic process in which primary elements of community life -- acts of worship, of festivity and other forms of togetherness -- over vast stretches of time have achieved a glorious convergence. The Nineteen Day Feast represents the new stage in this enlightened age to which the basic expression of community life has evolved. Shoghi Effendi has described it as the foundation of the new World Order, and in a letter written on his behalf, it is referred to as constituting "a vital medium for maintaining close and continued contact between the believers themselves, and also between them and the body of their elected representatives in the local community".

Moreover, because of the opportunity which it provides for conveying messages from the national and international levels of the administration and also for communicating the recommendations of the friends to those levels, the Feast becomes a link that connects the local community in a <p421> dynamic relationship with the entire structure of the Administrative Order. But considered in its local sphere alone there is much to thrill and amaze the heart. Here it links the individual to the collective processes by which a society is built or restored. Here, for instance, the Feast is an arena of democracy at the very root of society, where the Local Spiritual Assembly and the members of the community meet on common ground, where individuals are free to offer their gifts of thought, whether as new ideas or constructive criticism, to the building processes of an advancing civilization. Thus it can be seen that aside from its spiritual significance, this common institution of the people combines an array of elemental social disciplines which educate its participants in the essentials of responsible citizenship.

If the Feast is to be properly experienced, beyond an understanding of the concept must also be the preparation of it and the preparation for it. Although the Local Spiritual Assembly is administratively responsible for the conduct of the Feast, it often calls upon an individual or a group of individuals to make preparations -- a practice which is consonant with the spirit of hospitality so vital to the occasion. Such individuals can act as hosts and are sometimes concerned with the selection of the prayers and readings for the devotional portion; they may also attend to the social portion. In small communities the aspect of personal hospitality is easy to carry out, but in large communities the Local Spiritual Assemblies, while retaining the concept of hospitality, may find it necessary to devise other measures.

Important aspects of the preparation of the Feast include the proper selection of readings, the assignment, in advance, of good readers, and a sense of decorum both in the presentation and the reception of the devotional programme. Attention to the environment in which the Feast is to be held, whether indoors or outdoors, greatly influences the experience. Cleanliness, arrangement of the space in practical and decorative ways -- play a significant part. Punctuality is also a measure of good preparation.

To a very large extent, the success of the Feast depends on the quality of the preparation and participation of the individual. The beloved Master offers the following advice: "Give ye great weight to the Nineteen Day gatherings, so that on these occasions the beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful may turn their faces toward the Kingdom, <p422> chant the communes, beseech God's help, become joyfully enamoured each of the other, and grow in purity and holiness, and in the fear of God, and in resistance to passion and self. Thus will they separate themselves from this elemental world, and immerse themselves in the ardours of the spirit."

In absorbing such advice, it is illuminating indeed to view the Nineteen Day Feast in the context in which it was conceived. It is ordained in the "Kitab-i-Aqdas" in these words: "It hath been enjoined upon you once a month to offer hospitality, even should ye serve no more than water, for God hath willed to bind your hearts together, though it be through heavenly and earthly means combined". It is clear, then, that the Feast is rooted in hospitality, with all its implications of friendliness, courtesy, service, generosity and conviviality. The very idea of hospitality as the sustaining spirit of so significant an institution introduces a revolutionary new attitude to the conduct of human affairs at all levels, an attitude which is critical to that world unity which the Central Figures of our Faith laboured so long and suffered so much cruelty to bring into being. It is in this divine festival that the foundation is laid for the realization of so unprecedented a reality.

That you may all attain the high mark set for the Feast as a "bringer of joy", the "groundwork of agreement and unity", the "key to affection and fellowship" will remain an object of our ardent supplications at the Holy Threshold.

With loving Baha'i greetings, <p423>

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THE NINETEEN DAY FEAST

1. General Statements

From the Writings of Baha'u'llah

917. It hath been enjoined upon you once a month to offer hospitality, even should ye serve no more than water; for God hath willed to bind your hearts together, though it be through heavenly and earthly means combined.

(From the "Kitab-i-Aqdas", provisional translation)

From the Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha

918. O thou steadfast in the Covenant!
Thou hast written . . . concerning the Feast. This festivity, which is held on a day of the nineteen-day month, was established by His Holiness the Bab, and the Blessed Beauty directed, confirmed and warmly encouraged the holding of it. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance. You should unquestionably see to it with the greatest care, and make its value known, so that it may become solidly established on a permanent basis. Let the beloved of God gather together and associate most lovingly and spiritually and happily with one another, conducting themselves with the greatest courtesy and self-restraint. Let them read the holy verses, as well as essays which are of benefit, and the letters of 'Abdu'l-Baha; encourage and inspire one another to love each and all; chant the prayers with serenity and joy; give eloquent talks, and praise the matchless Lord.

The host, with complete self-effacement, showing kindness to all, must be a comfort to each one, and serve the friends with his own hands.

If the Feast is befittingly held, in the manner described, then this supper will verily be the Lord's Supper, for its fruits will be the very fruits of that Supper, and its influence the same.

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

919. As to the Nineteen Day Feast, ye must give this your most careful attention, and firmly establish it. For this Feast bringeth bliss and unity and love to the lovers of God.

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian) <p426>

920. Ye have written of the Nineteen Day festivities. This Feast is a bringer of joy. It is the groundwork of agreement and unity. It is the key to affection and fellowship. It diffuseth the oneness of mankind.

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

921. O ye loyal servants of the Ancient Beauty! In every cycle and dispensation, the feast hath been favoured and loved, and the spreading of a table for the lovers of God hath been considered a praiseworthy act. This is especially the case today, in this dispensation beyond compare, this most generous of ages, when it is highly acclaimed, for it is truly accounted among such gatherings as are held to worship and glorify God. Here the holy verses, the heavenly odes and laudations are intoned, and the heart is quickened, and carried from itself.

The primary intent is to kindle these stirrings of the spirit, but at the same time it follows quite naturally that those present should partake of food, so that the world of the body may mirror the spirit's world, and flesh take on the qualities of soul; and just as the spiritual delights are here in profusion, so too the material delights.

Happy are ye, to be observing this rule, with all its mystic meanings, thus keeping the friends of God alert and heedful, and bringing them peace of mind, and joy.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 48, pp. 90- 91)

922. Thy letter hath been received. Thou didst write of the Nineteen Day festivity, and this rejoiced my heart. These gatherings cause the divine table to descend from heaven, and draw down the confirmations of the All- Merciful. My hope is that the breathings of the Holy Spirit will be wafted over them, and that each one present shall, in great assemblies, with an eloquent tongue and a heart flooded with the love of God, set himself to acclaiming the rise of the Sun of Truth, the dawn of the Day-Star that lighteth all the world.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 49, p. 91)

923. Give ye great weight to the Nineteen Day gatherings, so that on these occasions the beloved of the Lord and the handmaids of the Merciful may <p427> turn their faces toward the Kingdom, chant the communes, beseech God's help, become joyfully enamoured each of the other, and grow in purity and holiness, and in the fear of God, and in resistance to passion and self. Thus will they separate themselves from this elemental world, and immerse themselves in the ardours of the spirit.

(From a Tablet to the local Spiritual Assembly of Spokane, Washington - translated from the Persian)

924. I beg of God, out of His endless bounties, that many such gatherings will be held, and that the Nineteen Day festivity will also be observed, so that men

and women believers will occupy themselves with making mention of God, and praising and glorifying Him, and guiding the people aright.

(From a Tablet to the Baha'is of Stuttgart, Germany - translated from the Persian)

925. O thou who art steadfast in the Covenant!
Your detailed letter hath been received, but because of the press of work a brief answer must suffice. You have asked as to the Feast in every Baha'i month. This Feast is held to foster comradeship and love, to call God to mind and supplicate Him with contrite hearts, and to encourage benevolent pursuits. That is, the friends should there dwell upon God and glorify Him, read the prayers and holy verses, and treat one another with the utmost affection and love. Should trouble arise between two of the friends, let both be invited in, and efforts be made to compose their differences. Let all discussion centre on the doing of charitable acts and holy deeds, that laudable results may be the fruit thereof.[1]
[1 Cf. "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 50, p. 91.]

(From a Tablet to an individual - translated from the Persian)

926. As to the Nineteen Day Feast, it rejoiceth mind and heart. If this feast be held in the proper fashion, the friends will, once in nineteen days, find themselves spiritually restored, and endued with a power that is not of this world.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.]. (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 51, p. 91) <p428>

927. As to the Nineteen Day festivity, it is of the utmost importance that the friends should gather at a meeting where, in complete attunement and love, they should engage in the remembrance of God and His praise, and converse as to the glad tidings of God, and proofs of the Advent of Baha'u'llah, and should recount the high deeds and sacrifices of the lovers of God in Persia, and tell of the martyrs' detachment from the world, and their ecstasy, and of how the believers there stood by one another and gave up everything they had. The Nineteen Day festivity is, therefore, of very great importance.

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

928. ... make of the Feasts[1] occasions of joy and fellowship reminiscent of the feasts[2] that our forebears used to hold in connection with their commemoration of the Lord's Supper...
[1 The Nineteen Day Feasts.]
[2 The agape or "love-feast" of the early Christians.]

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

929. Vigorous steps must be taken to establish the Nineteen Day reception throughout the whole community. Since this Feast is confined to believers only, conclusive proofs must there be set forth as to the people of the Bayan, so

that newcomers, unaware of the situation, may be made aware of it.

(From a Tablet to an individual believer- translated from the Persian)

930. It befitteth the friends to hold a gathering, a meeting, where they shall glorify God and fix their hearts upon Him, and read and recite the Holy Writings of the Blessed Beauty -- may my soul be the ransom of His lovers! The lights of the All-Glorious Realm, the rays of the Supreme Horizon, will be cast upon such bright assemblages, for these are none other than the Mashriqu'l-Adhkars, the Dawning-Points of God's Remembrance, which must, at the direction of the most Exalted Pen, be established in every hamlet and city... These spiritual gatherings must be held with the utmost purity and consecration, so that from the site itself, and its earth and the air about it, one will inhale the fragrant breathings of the Holy Spirit.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 55, pp. 93-94) <p429>

931. Thou hast written of that meeting held in the quarter where standeth the city gate of 'Abdu'l-'Azim. Do not call it a meeting. Call it a confluence of holy souls; a convocation of those who love the Lord; a retreat for the people of the All-Merciful; a palace-hall for all who sing His praise. For the members of that gathering are each one a lighted taper, and that council a mansion of the moon and stars. It hath been blessed by the Lord of all mankind, and hath made current the Feast as set forth in the Most Holy Book.

(From a Tablet to an individual believer- translated from the Persian)

932. And thou, O my dear daughter, stay thou at all times in close touch with my honoured daughter, Mrs...., and be thou her friend. Rest you assured that the breaking of the Holy Spirit will loosen your tongue. Speak, therefore; speak out with great courage at every meeting. When you are about to begin your address, turn first to Baha'u'llah and ask for the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, then open your lips and say whatever is suggested to your heart; this, however, with the utmost courage, dignity and conviction. It is my hope that from day to day your gatherings will grow and flourish, and that those who are seeking after truth will hearken therein to reasoned arguments and conclusive proofs. I am with you heart and soul at every meeting; be sure of this.[1]
[1 Cf. "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" [rev. ed] (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 216, pp. 269-70]

Hold you the Nineteen Day Feasts with utmost dignity.

(From a Tablet to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

933. You must continue to keep the Nineteen Day Feast. It is very important; it is very good. But when you present yourselves in the meetings, before entering them, free yourselves from all that you have in your heart, free your thoughts and your minds from all else save God, and speak to your heart. That all may make this a gathering of love, make it the cause of illumination, make it a gathering of attraction of the hearts, surround this gathering with the Lights

of the Supreme Concourse, so that you may be gathered together with the utmost love.

O God! Dispel all those elements which are the cause of discord, and prepare for us all those things which are the cause of unity and accord! O God! Descend upon us Heavenly Fragrance and change this gathering <p430> into a gathering of Heaven! Grant to us every benefit and every food. Prepare for us the Food of Love! Give to us the Food of Knowledge! Bestow upon us the Food of Heavenly Illumination!
In your hearts remember these things, and then enter the
Unity Feast.

Each one of you must think how to make happy and pleased the other members of your Assembly, and each one must consider all those who are present as better and greater than himself, and each one must consider himself less than the rest. Know their station as high, and think of your own station as low. Should you act and live according to these behests, know verily, of a certainty, that that Feast is the Heavenly Food. That Supper is the "Lord's Supper"! I am the Servant of that gathering.

("Star of the West", vol. IV, no. 7 (13 July 1913), p. 120)

934. The Nineteen Day Feast was inaugurated by the Bab and ratified by Baha'u'llah, in His holy book, the Akdas [sic], so that people may gather together and outwardly show fellowship and love, that the divine mysteries may be disclosed. The object is concord, that through this fellowship hearts may become perfectly united, and reciprocity and mutual helpfulness be established. Because the members of the world of humanity are unable to exist without being banded together, cooperation and mutual helpfulness is the basis of human society. Without the realization of these two great principles no great movement is pressed forward...

In brief, this is my hope: that the Nineteen Day Feast become the cause of great spiritual solidarity between the friends, that it may bring believers into the bond of unity, and we will then be so united together that love and wisdom will spread from this centre to all parts. This Feast is a divine Feast. It is a Lord's supper. It attracts confirmation of God like a magnet. It is the cause of the enlightenment of hearts.

Every day great feasts and banquets are being spread with the object of material enjoyment and relish of food. People partake of certain delicacies and waters from various fountains, that they may have a good time. Balls and dances follow. All these are for the body, but this fellowship is of the enjoyment of God, for the partaking of spiritual food, for the elucidation of spiritual subjects, for the discussion and interpretation of the teachings and counsels of God. It is absolute spirituality. <p431>

It is my hope that the Nineteen Day Feast may become firmly established and organized so that the holy realities are behind this meeting may leave behind all prejudices and conflict, and make their hearts as a treasury of love. Even

if there is the slightest feeling between certain souls -- a lack of love -- it must be made to entirely disappear. There must be the utmost translucency and purity of intention.

They must enjoy the love of God, acquire the power for the promotion of the happiness of mankind and the Word of God. With such high mention must this Feast become an established institution. When they gather in this meeting, all those present must turn their faces toward the Kingdom of Abha, and from their hearts supplicate, invoke and entreat toward the lofty throne, beg of God's forgiveness for all shortcomings, read the teachings and arise to His service.

Then spread the feast and give refreshments. Assuredly great results will be the outcome of such meetings. Material and spiritual benefits will be assured. All who are present will be intoxicated with the breezes of the Love of God, and the Breath of the Holy Spirit will with tremendous power inspire the hearts.

If this meeting be established on such a rock, it will become a power which will attract heavenly confirmations, be the means of the appearance of the Light of God, and the reality of every subject will become unfolded. Such a meeting will be under the protection of God. It is my hope that you will continually hold these meetings and that each time it will become more and more the centre of all the virtues, the point for the effulgence of God.

May your hearts be enlightened!
May your faces become radiant!
May your spirits be illumined!
May your thoughts find wider range of vision!
May your spiritual susceptibilities be increased!
May the realm of God surround you, and may your
hearts become the treasury of heaven!
This is my hope.

(From a talk by 'Abdu'l-Baha given at a Nineteen Day Feast in London, England, 29 December 1912, quoted in "Baha'i News Letter" 33 (July 1929), pp. 1-2)
<p432>

2. The Threefold Feast Celebration

From the Writings of Shoghi Effendi

935. Still other factors promoting the development of that Order and contributing to its consolidation have been the systematic institution of the Nineteen Day Feast, functioning in most Baha'i communities in East and West, with its threefold emphasis on the devotional, the administrative and the social aspects of Baha'i community life...

("God Passes By". rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 342)

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi[1]
[1 To individual believers except where noted.]

936. Regarding the nature of the Nineteen Day Feasts, the Guardian feels that the excellent statement on their nature, function and purpose published in one of the recent issues of the "News Letter" is so comprehensive and faithful in its presentation that he does not find it necessary to restate and enlarge upon the matter. He has no objection, however, if you feel the need to elaborate the thought expressed in that statement, stressing particularly the spiritual, administrative and social aspects of this vital Baha'i institution.[1]
[1 The statement to which reference is made in extract 20 is as follows:
This institution, established by Baha'u'llah, has been described by the Guardian as the foundation of the new World Order. The National Spiritual Assembly understands that it is incumbent upon every believer, unless ill or absent from the city, to attend each of these Feasts.

In a general letter issued to Local Spiritual Assemblies several years ago, it was pointed out that the
Guardian instructs that the Nineteen Day Feast be held according to the following program: the first part,
entirely spiritual in character, is devoted to readings from Baha'i Sacred Writings; the second part consists of general consultation on the affairs of the Cause, at which time the Local Spiritual Assembly reports its activities to the community, asks for suggestions and consultation, and also delivers messages received from the Guardian and the National Assembly. The third part is the material feast and social meeting of all the friends. Only voting believers are invited to attend the Nineteen Day Feasts, but young people of less than twenty-one years of age, who are declared believers, especially when members of a Baha'i family, can also be present.

These meetings may be regarded as the very heart of our Baha'i community life. When properly conducted, and attended by a Baha'i community which fully appreciates their importance, the Nineteen Day Feasts serve to renew and deepen our spirit of faith, increase our capacity for united action, remove misunderstandings and keep us fully informed of all important Baha'i activities, local, national and international in scope.
(Statement of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i News" 75
(July 1933), p. 8)]

(6 September 1933 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i News" 79 (November 1933), p. 3) <p433>

937. As to your question concerning Baha'i Feasts, Shoghi Effendi strongly feels that on such occasions the friends should emphasize both the spiritual and the administrative elements. For these are equally essential to the success of every Baha'i festival. To maintain the right balance between them is, therefore, the duty and responsibility of every individual Baha'i or group. Until the believers learn to combine the two, there can be no hope of their gaining any real and permanent benefit from such religious celebrations. A good part of the Feast must of course be devoted to the reading of the Holy Words. For it is through them that the friends can get the inspiration and the vision

they need for the successful accomplishment of their work for the Cause.

(27 May 1934)

938. With regard to your question concerning the Nineteen Day Feasts: These gatherings are no doubt of a special importance to the friends, as they have both a social and an administrative significance, and as such should be regularly attended by all confirmed believers. They should also be observed according to the Baha'i calendar every nineteen days.

(12 April 1935)

939. Concerning the nature of the Nineteen Day Feast: In the "Aqdas", Baha'u'llah has clearly revealed the spiritual and social character of this institution. Its administrative significance, however, has been stressed by the Guardian in direct response to the growing needs of the Baha'i community in this formative period of the Baha'i Era for better training in the principles and practice of Baha'i administration.

(29 July 1935 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada) <p434>

940. Regarding the Nineteen Day Feast: in a previous letter to the National Spiritual Assembly the Guardian had made it clear that, although not a binding ordinance, this Feast has been regarded by Baha'u'llah as highly desirable and meritorious. In the "Aqdas" He has specially emphasized its spiritual and devotional character, and also its social importance in the Baha'i community as a means for bringing about closer fellowship and unity among the believers. The administrative significance of this Feast has been stated by the Guardian in view of the increasing need among the friends for better training in the principles and methods of Baha'i Administration.

The significance of the Nineteen Day Feast is thus threefold. It is a gathering of a devotional, social and administrative importance. When these three features are all combined, this Feast can and will surely yield the best and the maximum of results. The friends, however, should be on their guard lest they overstress the significance of this institution created by Baha'u'llah. They should also take care not to underrate or minimize its importance.

(2 October 1935 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

941. He was very glad to know you are holding the Feasts, as these form a rallying-point for the friends and help to unite them and deepen them in the Faith.

(5 March 1946)

From Letters Written by or on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice

942. A group, of course, is not an administrative body and there is no objection to the members of a group making decisions within their scope on any occasion when all of them happen to be together, even if this should be at a

Nineteen Day Feast. The Nineteen Day Feast can only be an official administrative occasion where there is a Local Spiritual Assembly to take charge of it, present reports to the friends, and receive their recommendations. But groups, spontaneous gatherings of the friends, and even isolated believers should certainly remember the day and say prayers together. In the case of a group, it may well hold the Feast <p435> in the manner in which a Local Spiritual Assembly would do so, recognizing of course that it has no official administrative standing.

(31 October 1972 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland)

943. Regarding changing the order of the Feast, it is clear from Shoghi Effendi's instructions that the Nineteen Day Feast programme should start with the spiritual part, and not with the social part, which includes refreshments, or breaking bread together... However, if it is found that some sort of association among the friends or the serving of food and refreshments will be helpful, if this takes place at the outset, there is no objection to this practice, provided it is clear that it is not part of the Feast.

(23 January 1985 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

3. Feast Times

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi

944. As to your question relative to the last Nineteen Day Feast, Shoghi Effendi sees no objection if the friends choose to celebrate it on one of the intercalary days. They may also celebrate it during the month of fasting, provided they abstain from food.

(2 August 1934 to an individual believer)

945. Your third question concerns the day on which the Feast should be held every month. The Guardian stated in reply that no special day has been fixed, but it would be preferable and most suitable if the gathering of the friends should be held on the first day of each Baha'i month.

(1 December 1936 to an individual believer - translated from the Persian)

946. Regarding the time for the holding of the Nineteen Day Feasts and elections: the Guardian would advise your Assembly to urge the friends to hold such gatherings on the prescribed day before sunset. If impossible, then it is permissible to hold them on the preceding day. In <p436> connection with the nine holy days however the friends should consider it obligatory to celebrate them on the prescribed day before sunset.

(24 December 1939 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

947. The Naw-Ruz Feast should be held on March 21 before sunset and has nothing to do with the Nineteen Day Feast. The Nineteen Day Feast is administrative in

function whereas the Naw-Ruz is our New Year, a Feast of hospitality and rejoicing.

(5 July 1950 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

From a Letter Written by the Universal House of Justice

948. As to your questions concerning the times for Feasts and Holy Days: The Baha'i Day is from sunset to sunset, therefore if in summer the sun sets too late to enable the Nineteen Day Feast to be held on the preceding evening, it should be held on the day itself. As long as the meeting begins before sunset it is considered to be held on the day which comes to an end with that sunset. Naturally Nineteen Day Feasts should be held on the first day of the Baha'i month if possible, but if it should be difficult to do so, for example if it coincides with a regular public meeting evening, it is permissible to hold it on the following day, i.e. on a succeeding day of the Baha'i month.

(23 June 1964 to the National Spiritual Assembly Finland)

4. Feast Locations

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi to Individual Believers

949. There is no objection to holding meetings in the open air as long as they are conducted with dignity.

(22 November 1941)

950. Each city will have its own Spiritual Assembly, not a number of district ones. Naturally, district Nineteen Day Feasts can be held where there are very many Baha'is in one city.

(31 March 1949) <p437>

951. The matter of where the Nineteen Day Feasts should be held is certainly one for the Spiritual Assembly to decide; but the Haziratu'l-Quds seems the logical place on most occasions. Until the friends have a place of worship in ..., this building will also be used for devotional meetings, as well as for administrative purposes.

If, under some circumstances, some special Feast is offered in the home of one of the believers, with the approval of the Spiritual Assembly, there can be no objection; but, generally speaking, he feels it is better to use the Haziratu'l-Quds.

(18 February 1954)

From Letters Written by or on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice

952. We understand and appreciate the problems involved in the holding of Nineteen Day Feasts in the large cities such as New York and Los Angeles and we have no objection to your Assembly authorizing the Local Assembly to provide for the holding of the Feast in different localities as an experiment, if the

Local Assembly so wishes, bearing in mind the following precautions: The tendency in metropolitan areas is towards segregation, and therefore the Local Assembly should be alert to prevent a similar pattern developing in Baha'i meetings by reason of the location of the Feast. The Local Assembly should be watchful that neither the unity of the community nor control by the Local Assembly is dissipated by this practice.

(23 January 1967 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

953. Your letter of August 9th posing the problem of holding Nineteen Day Feasts and other Baha'i activities in the two communities ... which have grown so large that it is impossible to conduct such activities in homes is welcomed by us, and we hope you will meet this problem before long in other communities.

We leave it to your discretion as to whether these large communities should purchase adequate facilities to accommodate the believers at <p438> Feasts and other Baha'i activities, rent facilities, or hold several simultaneous Feasts, still utilizing homes.

(21 August 1972 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska)

954. Difficulties of travelling to the Nineteen Day Feasts, and other occasions, which may be met in certain parishes can be overcome by your authorizing the Local Assembly in such a parish to hold more than one Feast within its area. There is no need to establish rigid boundaries for such a purpose, and the friends should be allowed to attend the Feast in their parish most convenient to them; but all should note that every Feast in the area is a portion of the same Feast under the jurisdiction of the Local Spiritual Assembly. Occasions should be provided for the entire Baha'i community of the parish to meet together, and Feast days need not be excluded from such occasions.

(14 January 1980 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Barbados and the Windward Islands)

955. As to the question of holding meetings to commemorate Baha'i Holy Days on a regional basis, the House of Justice has ruled that it may be desirable in certain areas for the believers in neighbouring localities to join together with other communities in observing Holy Days and certain events. Such matters should be referred to and determined by National Spiritual Assemblies. Observance of the Nineteen Day Feasts and other local activities, however, should be held in the respective civil areas.

(20 March 1986 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

956. The problems implied by your inquiry are not insurmountable. For instance, the Local Spiritual Assembly could be authorized to appoint an administrative committee in each of a number of sub-units of the city; and these committees

could deal with the urgent needs of the friends in these areas on behalf of the Assembly; and if found desirable, the Spiritual Assembly could authorize the holding of separate Nineteen Day Feasts in several sub- units. In such a decentralized system, the Local Spiritual Assembly would have to provide for the overall coordination of the efforts of the friends in all sub- units of the city. <p439>

The sub-division of the city should be seen merely as an administrative necessity meant to serve the good of the whole community; in this sense, the Assembly should guard strenuously against creating too many sub-units, contenting itself with the minimum action in this respect. Given the racial and social stratification of large cities, the Spiritual Assembly would also have to exert the utmost care not to allow the Baha'i community of . . . to become, in effect, racially or socially fragmented, even though one race or stratum may be dominant in a sub- unit of the city. One of the questions that should remain uppermost in the minds of the Assembly, the committees and the individual friends is how to uphold at all times. through their functions and deeds, the primary principle and goal of our Faith, namely, the unity of the human race.

(20 December 1987 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

5. Attendance of Believers at the Feast

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi[1]
[1 To individual believers except where noted.]

957. In regard to the Nineteen Day Feasts, Shoghi Effendi is of the opinion that the believers should be impressed with the importance of attending these gatherings which, in addition to their spiritual significance, constitute a vital medium for maintaining close and continued contact between the believers themselves, and also between them and the body of their elected representatives in the local community.

No radical action, such as the expulsion of any believer from the community, should, however, be taken in case anyone fails to attend these Feasts. It is for every individual believer to realize what the Cause requires from him in this matter. Any threat or menace can be of no avail, unless it is based on appeal to individual conscience and responsibility.

(22 December 1934)

958. Also regarding the Nineteen Day Feasts: these are not strictly obligatory, but the believers should endeavour to regularly attend them, mainly for the following two reasons: first, because they foster the spirit of service and fellowship in the community and secondly, in view of the <p440> fact that they afford the believers a splendid opportunity to fully discuss the affairs of the Cause and to find ways and means for continued improvement in the conduct of Baha'i activities.

(30 November 1936)

959. Attendance at Nineteen Day Feasts is not obligatory, but highly desirable, and effort should be made by the friends not to deprive themselves of this spiritual and communal rallying-point once in every Baha'i month.

(23 December 1948)

960. The Guardian has never heard of any ruling by which a believer who does not attend three consecutive Nineteen Day Feasts can be deprived of his voting rights. He does not consider that such action is justifiable at all. The whole question is whether a person considers himself a Baha'i or not, and is willing to adhere to the principles of the Faith and accept the authority of the Guardian and the Administration -- whether that individual is able, or always in a condition psychologically to attend Feasts and Baha'i meetings is an entirely different subject. If a person makes it quite clear that they do not wish to be considered an active member of the Baha'i Community and be affiliated with it and exert their voting right, then their name should be removed from the voting list; but if a person considers himself or herself a Baha'i, and for various reasons is not able to be active in the affairs of the Community, then they should certainly not be removed from our voting list, least of all at present, when the number of the Baha'i Community is so small.

(2 March 1951 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria)

961. He fully appreciates the difficult position your Assembly will be placed in if you adhere to the principle that the members of an Assembly and voting members of a community must live within the civic limits. However, he feels that Paris can be no exception to this general rule which he wishes the Baha'is to adhere to all over the world, in spite of any temporary inconvenience it may cause.

This does not mean that the Baha'is of Paris living outside the civic limits should not attend the Nineteen Day Feast and the Baha'i Holy Days; on the contrary, they should take an active part in the affairs of the <p441> community in the sense of assisting with the teaching work, while at the same time not being active in the administrative work. He feels sure that in the end you will find that, far from having been weakened, your community will grow and be strengthened by this adherence to principle.

(20 February 1953 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Paris)

962. It is inconceivable and wholly inadmissible that any Baha'is in a Community should be permitted to hold a Feast in their home and refuse admission to another believer; and your Assembly should write accordingly in very strong terms to the ... Assembly, pointing out that the Guardian is not only surprised to learn of this situation, but disapproves of it in the strongest terms.

Any Baha'i may attend a Feast -- a local Baha'i, a Baha'i from out of town, certainly an isolated Baha'i from the neighbourhood.

(27 May 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, published

in "Unfolding Destiny: The Message from the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to the Baha'i Community of the British Isles" (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust. 1981), p. 380)

From Letters Written by or on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice

963. In reply to your letter of November 8th we feel that all friends, whatever their circumstances, should be encouraged to observe the Nineteen Day Feast. Obviously it can only be an official administrative occasion where there is a Local Spiritual Assembly to take charge of it, present reports to the friends, and receive their recommendations. But groups, spontaneous gatherings of friends, and even isolated believers should certainly remember the day and say prayers together. In the case of a group it may well hold the Feast in the manner in which a Local Spiritual Assembly would do so, recognizing of course that it has no official administrative standing.

As to visitors to a Nineteen Day Feast, Baha'is from anywhere in the world should of course be warmly welcomed, and may take part in consultation. However, only members of the local community can vote on recommendations to the Local Spiritual Assembly.

(1 December 1968 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles) <p442>

964. It is not quite correct to say that a Nineteen Day Feast is changed into a Unity Feast as a result of the presence of non-Baha'is. What can happen is that the consultative portion of the Feast has to be postponed.... If it is decided to postpone part or all of the consultative portion of the Feast, the House of Justice states that it is within the discretion of the Local Spiritual Assembly to decide whether another meeting should be held during the Baha'i month to complete it, or whether it can be postponed until the following Nineteen Day Feast.

(5 September 1983 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany)

965. A Baha'i who is visiting another community may participate fully in the consultation of the Nineteen Day Feast, but has no right to vote on recommendations being made to the Local Spiritual Assembly. Out of courtesy, however, a visitor would normally refrain from taking too much time of the consultation. Any Baha'i, whether an isolated believer or a member of a local community or group, may convey his suggestions and recommendations to the National Spiritual Assembly at any time and thus take part in the consultative aspect of Baha'i community life. Isolated believers and the members of groups may also, of course, attend the Nineteen Day Feasts of communities when they wish to.

(23 July 1985 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

966. With respect to your question asking whether a Local Spiritual Assembly

may cancel its Nineteen Day Feast in order to attend Feast in another community, the House of Universal Justice advises that the Nineteen Day Feast should not be cancelled. However, there is no objection to two or more local communities holding a joint Nineteen Day Feast occasionally, although it is not proper to allow such joint Feasts to be held on a regular basis. If members of a community find that the plan to hold such a joint Feast would produce inconvenience to them, they should take the matter up with their Local Spiritual Assembly.

(26 April 1987 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) <p443>

6. Restrictions Upon Feast Attendance

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi

967. As regards your question concerning the Nineteen Day Feasts: this is really a matter of secondary importance, and should be decided by the Assembly; meetings which have been publicly advertised for a certain date cannot, obviously, be cancelled. As to non-Baha'is attending: this should by all means be avoided, but if non-believers come to a Nineteen Day Feast, they should not be put out, as this might hurt their feelings.

(21 September 1946 to two believers)

968. The beloved Guardian has instructed me to write you concerning an action recently taken by your National Assembly, as published in your January-February Baha'i News, that non-Baha'is may attend Nineteen Day Feasts if "the earnestness of their interest in the Faith" is vouched for by a declared believer.

The Guardian wishes me to direct your attention to the fact that none of the institutions of the Faith nor its cardinal principles may be changed under any circumstances. The Nineteen Day Feast is an institution of the Cause, first established by the Bab, later confirmed by Baha'u'llah, and now made a prominent part of the administrative order of the Faith. These Nineteen Day Feasts are for the Baha'is, and the Baha'is exclusively, and no variation from this principle is permitted.

Thus the Guardian feels you should rescind the action taken by your Assembly in opening the Feasts to "near Baha'is", as it is not consistent with the spirit of the administrative order for non-Baha'is or near Baha'is to attend the Nineteen Day Feasts, particularly the administrative portion of the Feast.

The Guardian realizes that the spirit which animated you in making the suggested proposal, in order that the teaching work might go forward more aggressively; but he feels in the long run it would be detrimental to the Faith, and therefore should be rescinded as indicated above.

(28 May 1954 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria) <p444>

From Letters Written by or on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice

969. The principle universally applicable is that non-Baha'is are not invited to the Nineteen Day Feast. If in Persia it has happened that non-Baha'is are present at a Nineteen Day Feast this is an exception and not a rule. It is well understood in Persia that if a non-Baha'i should inadvertently attend a Nineteen Day Feast he would be treated courteously. However, it is equally important for the friends to understand that they should refrain from inviting non-Baha'is to these special gatherings, ordained by Baha'u'llah not only for spiritual refreshment and unity, but also for consultation between the Spiritual Assembly and the body of believers on the domestic affairs of the community.

(4 February 1974 written by the Universal House of Justice a Local Spiritual Assembly)

970. In reply to your memorandum of 16 November 1975 requesting elucidation of a statement from the Guardian published on page 367 of Volume IV of "Amr va Khalq", ... later instructions of the beloved Guardian clearly forbid attendance at the Nineteen Day Feast by those deprived of their voting rights and the quotation published in "Amr va Khalq" should therefore be replaced by another statement by the Guardian.

(24 November 1975, memorandum written by the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre)

971. The main thing to remember is that a group is not an administrative institution within the Baha'i Administrative Order; it is, however, the embryo of a Local Spiritual Assembly and while remaining under the direct authority of the National Spiritual Assembly should obviously be encouraged to prepare itself for the time when it will establish that divine institution. There is no objection whatever to its electing officers such as a secretary, chairman and treasurer, holding Nineteen Day Feasts and observances of the Holy Days, undertaking teaching and extension work, so long as it is always understood that the directive authority is the National Spiritual Assembly and not the group itself.

(13 June 1974 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Paraguay) <p445>

972. It can be explained, in a friendly manner, that the Nineteen Day Feast is an entirely private religious and domestic occasion for the Baha'i community when its internal affairs are discussed and its members meet for personal fellowship and worship. No great issue should be made of it for there is certainly nothing secret about the Feast but it is organized for Baha'is only.

(4 November 1967 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Belgium)

973. Regarding the Nineteen Day Feast, the principle universally applicable is that non-Baha'is are not invited to attend, and if you are asked about this you can explain that the nature of the Feast is essentially domestic and administrative. During the period of consultation the Baha'is should be able to

enjoy perfect freedom to express their views on the work of the Cause, unembarrassed by the feeling that all they are saying is being heard by someone who has not accepted Baha'u'llah and who might thereby gain a very distorted picture of the Faith. It would also be very embarrassing for any sensitive Baha'i to find himself plunged into the midst of a discussion of the detailed affairs of a Baha'i community of which he is not a part. A non-Baha'i who asks to be invited to a Feast will usually understand if this matter is explained to him.

(12 August 1981 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

974. The following guidance on this subject was sent to a believer on 24 March 1970 by the House of Justice:

... when a non-Baha'i does appear at a Feast he should not be asked to leave; rather the Assembly should omit the consultative part of the Feast, and the non-Baha'i should be made welcome....

No doubt you are familiar with this instruction. Likewise, occasionally if the Feast is held in the home of the family where the spouse is not a Baha'i, it would be discourteous not to allow the non-Baha'i member of the family to attend at least the social and spiritual parts of the Feast.

(8 January 1985 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia) <p446>

975. ... if a non-Baha'i does appear at a Nineteen Day Feast he should be made to feel welcome, but a Baha'i should certainly not invite a non-Baha'i to attend. From all of the foregoing it can be seen that, basically, the resolution of this difficulty is a matter of loving education.

(23 January 1985 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

7. Youth and Children at Feasts

From Letters Written by or on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice

976. Concerning your inquiry asking if children under fifteen of non-Baha'i parents could attend Nineteen Day Feasts or other events held exclusively for Baha'is when the children consider themselves as Baha'is, such children may be permitted to attend Baha'i functions provided that their parents have given their consent. This applies only, of course, to children under the age of fifteen years.

(4 August 1970 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Nicaragua)

977. Concerning the declaration of young people under the age of 18, ... we can accept a child of the age of 15 and over as a Baha'i even if his parents do not consent and this remains true even though according to the law of Finland they cannot be officially transferred to the Baha'i register. You should not,

therefore, exclude such believers from the Nineteen Day Feasts. However, although such believers should not be swayed from their belief by their parents' objections, they should, in view of the stress that the Teachings place upon the respect due to parents and in view of the law in Finland, obey their parents as far as taking part in Baha'i activities is concerned. Their aim should be to gradually awaken in their parents' hearts the same love for Baha'u'llah that has fired their own and not to antagonize their parents needlessly or contribute in any way to disharmony in their families at this crucial point in their development.

(1 March 1972 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Finland) <p447>

978. The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 11 October 1976 inquiring whether children placed in the home of Baha'is for temporary or prolonged care are permitted to attend Baha'i functions, and we have been asked to inform you that such children may be permitted to attend the Nineteen Day Feasts and other Baha'i functions, and that no distinction should be made between them and the children of Baha'is in this regard.

(31 October 1976 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a Baha'i group)

979. ... the House of Justice has instructed us to say that children should be trained to understand the spiritual significance of the gatherings of the followers of the Blessed Beauty, and to appreciate the honour and bounty of being able to take part in them, whatever their outward form may be. It is realized that some Baha'i observances are lengthy and it is difficult for very small children to remain quiet for so long. In such cases one or other of the parents may have to miss part of the meeting in order to care for the child. The Spiritual Assembly can also perhaps help the parents by providing for a children's observance, suited to their capacities, in a separate room during part of the community's observance. Attendance at the whole of the adult celebration thus becomes a sign of growing maturity and a distinction to be earned by good behaviour.

In any case, the House of Justice points out that parents are responsible for their children and should make them behave when they attend Baha'i meetings. If children persist in creating a disturbance they should be taken out of the meeting. This is not merely necessary to ensure the properly dignified conduct of Baha'i meetings but is an aspect of the training of children in courtesy, consideration for others, reverence, and obedience to their parents.

(14 October 1982 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada)

980. It would not be administratively proper for a Baha'i youth under 21 years of age to act as Chairman of the Nineteen Day Feast. However, no great issue should be made of this as it is a purely private matter.

(22 February 1984 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the

National Spiritual Assembly of Italy) <p448>

981. In response to the question you have raised in your letter of 18 October 1984 concerning the place of children in the community, especially with regard to Nineteen Day Feasts, we are asked to share with you the following quotation from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Assembly on the subject. Since children of Baha'i parents are considered to be Baha'is, they are to be encouraged to attend all Feasts, there to share the reading of the Writings and prayers and be bathed in the spirit of the community. It is the hope of the House of Justice that every Feast will be a feast of love when the children will give and receive the tangible affection of the community and its individual members. The House of Justice noted the suggestion you have made about holding Feasts on a weekend close to the first day of the Baha'i month to facilitate the attendance of children and their parents. This is a matter for the Local Assembly to discuss and decide upon ...

(22 November 1984 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

8. The Feast Celebration: Prayers and Scriptural Readings

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi[1]
[1 To individual believers except where noted.]

982. With regard to your question concerning the use of music in the Nineteen Day Feasts, he wishes you to assure all the friends that he not only approves of such a practice, but thinks it even advisable that the believers should make use in their meetings of hymns composed by Baha'is themselves, and also of such hymns, poems and chants as are based on the Holy Words.

(April 1935)

983. Regarding your questions: the Devotional part of the Nineteen Day Feast means the reading of prayers by Baha'u'llah and the Master. If, after this, there is a period of reading of the teachings, his [the Guardian's] writings may be included, but this does not form part of the devotional aspect of the meeting.

(15 December 1947) <p448>

984. Regarding the question you asked him about the Baha'i sacred writings: These should be regarded as the writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, and only these should be read during the purely devotional part of the Feast.

(11 May 1948 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand)

985. During the devotional part of the Nineteen Day Feast any part of the writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and the Master can be read, also from the Bible and Qur'an, as these are all sacred scriptures. This part of the meeting need not be confined to prayers, though prayers can and should be read during it.

(18 October 1948)

986. The question regarding the devotional part of the Feast has been obscured because once he used the term "devotional" in its strict sense, which of course means prayer, and once loosely, in the sense in which the Baha'is usually understand it, and that is the meeting together and reading from the teachings which precedes the administrative -- or consultative -- aspect of the Nineteen Day Feast. The two statements in no way change the method of holding this part of the Feast which, in the East at any rate, is always opened with prayers and afterwards Tablets and excerpts from Baha'u'llah's, or the Master's or the Guardian's, writings may be read or, for that matter, the Bible or Qur'an quoted.

(11 April 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

987. Music is permitted during the spiritual part -- or any part -- of the Nineteen Day Feast.

(30 June 1952 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

Regarding the questions you raised in your letter:

988. First, he feels that, although in principle there is certainly no reason why excerpts from other Sacred Scriptures should not be read in the spiritual part of our Feasts, as this is particularly an occasion when Baha'is get together to deepen their own spiritual life, it is, generally speaking, advisable for them to read from their own holy Writings in the spiritual part of the Feast.

(18 February 1954) <p450>

989. The Writings of the Bab and Baha'u'llah can certainly be read any time at any place; likewise the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha are read freely during the spiritual part of the Feast. The Guardian has instructed that during the spiritual part of the Feast, his own Writings should not be read. In other words, during the spiritual part of the Feast, readings should be confined to the Writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah and, to a lesser extent, of the Master; but during that part of the Feast the Guardian's Writings should not be read. During the period of administrative discussion of the Feast, then the Guardian's Writings may be read. Of course during the administrative part of the Feast there can be no objection to the reading of the Writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha.

(27 April 1956)

990. Instrumental music may be used at the Baha'i Feasts. There is no objection to showing appreciation by the clapping of hands.

If an individual has a teaching appointment on the same evening as a Nineteen Day Feast, it is left to the individual to judge which is the most important.

(20 August 1956)

From Letters Written by the Universal House of Justice

991. We have noted in your Minutes of 27 December, page 1, a statement, "It was agreed to advise the friends in ... that it was not correct to sing a song composed by a Baha'i at the devotional part of the Nineteen Day Feast."

It is not clear what your framework of reference for consultation happened to be, nor if a direct question was referred to your National Assembly for decision. However, we feel that it will be helpful to you to know that songs whose words are the primary Writings of the Bab, Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha are all quite fitting for the devotional portion of the Feast. Indeed, the Persian chants are such songs, out of a different tradition; they are a way of giving music to the holy Word, and each person who chants does it in a way which mirrors his feeling and expression of the Words he is uttering. As for songs whose words are poetic and the composition of persons other than the Figures of the Faith, these may be <p451> desirable but in their proper place, for, as you know, "music is the language of the spirit."

Inasmuch as the spirit of our gathering is so much affected by the tone and quality of our worship, of our feeling and appreciation of the Word of God for this day, we would hope that you would encourage the most beautiful possible expression of the human spirits in your communities, through music among other modes of feeling.

(22 February 1971 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Guyana, Surinam and French Guiana)

992. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the Persian writings of Shoghi Effendi are unique in nature, and many of them, unlike his English letters and messages addressed to the western believers, are interspersed with supplications, prayers and homilies of a devotional character which are suitable for the spiritual part of Baha'i Feasts.

(15 October 1972 to an individual believer)

[See also extract 71, referring to the use of the Guardian's Persian writings in the devotional portion of the Feast in Eastern Baha'i communities.]

9. The Feast Celebration: Consultation

From Letters Written on Behalf of Shoghi Effendi

993. The main purpose of the Nineteen Day Feasts is to enable individual believers to offer any suggestion to the Local Assembly, which in its turn will pass it to the National Spiritual Assembly. The Local Assembly is, therefore, the proper medium through which local Baha'i communities can communicate with the body of the national representatives. The Convention should be regarded as a temporary gathering, having certain specific functions to perform during a limited period of time. Its status is thus limited in time to the Convention sessions, the function of consultation at all other times being vested in the entire body of the believers through the Local Spiritual Assemblies.

(18 November 1933 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada) <p452>

994. The chief opportunity which the friends have for discussion on administrative questions is during the Nineteen Day Feasts, at which time the members of the Assembly can meet with the body of the believers and discuss in common the affairs of the Cause, and suggest new policies and methods. But even then no reference to individuals should be made.

(27 March 1938 to an individual believer)

995. Now with reference to your last dear letter in which you had asked whether the believers have the right to openly express their criticism of any Assembly action or policy: it is not only the right, but the vital responsibility of every loyal and intelligent member of the Community to offer fully and frankly, but with due respect and consideration to the authority of the Assembly, any suggestion, recommendation or criticism he conscientiously feels he should in order to improve and remedy certain existing conditions or trends in his local Community, and it is the duty of the Assembly also to give careful consideration to any such views submitted to them by any one of the believers. The best occasion chosen for this purpose is the Nineteen Day Feast, which, besides its social and spiritual aspects, fulfils various administrative needs and requirements of the Community, chief among them being the need for open and constructive criticism and deliberation regarding the state of affairs within the local Baha'i Community. But again it should be stressed that all criticisms and discussions of a negative character which may result in undermining the authority of the Assembly as a body should be strictly avoided. For otherwise the order of the Cause itself will be endangered, and confusion and discord will reign in the Community.

(13 December 1939 to an individual believer)

996. The Baha'is must learn to forget personalities and to overcome the desire -- so natural in people -- to take sides and fight about it. They must also learn to really make use of the great principle of consultation. There is a time set aside at the Nineteen Day Feasts for the Community to express its views and make suggestions to its Assembly; the Assembly and the believers should look forward to this happy period of discussion, and neither fear it nor suppress it. Likewise the Assembly members should <p453> fully consult, and in their decisions put the interests of the Cause first and not personalities, the will of the majority prevailing.

(30 June 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria)

From Letters Written by or on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice

997. As you no doubt realize by this time, enrolling large numbers of new believers in a short period of time brings with it many problems of consolidation, but we are certain that you will be able to handle these problems and move on to even greater achievements.

We note from reading your minutes that the enthusiasm of some of the new believers is being tested by the reading of long, wordy letters at Nineteen Day Feasts, and we think that something should be done about this. While it is important that the believers be informed about important messages from the Holy Land and other important items, it is true that the reading of messages at Nineteen Day Feasts can become a very boring and trying experience particularly for new believers not acquainted with many aspects of Baha'i administration. We think you should consider other ways and means by which believers could be informed of vital and necessary information, such as through bulletins, institutes and other meetings.

(6 September 1971 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Hawaiian Islands)

998. As cited in Article IV of the By-Laws of a Local Spiritual Assembly, "While retaining the sacred right of final decision in all matters pertaining to the Baha'i community, the Spiritual Assembly shall ever seek the advice and consultation of all members of the community, keep the community informed of all its affairs, and invite full and free discussion on the part of the community of all matters affecting Faith".

The actual voting on recommendations made at Nineteen Day Feasts to decide whether they should be forwarded to the Local Assembly is a secondary matter which may be left for decision by the Local Spiritual Assemblies themselves. It is not prohibited that the Local Assembly secretary record suggestions made at Nineteen Day Feasts for <p454> consideration by the Assembly. The important point to keep in mind is the provision made in the By-Laws as mentioned above.

(21 January 1982, memorandum written by the Universal House of Justice to the International Teaching Centre)

999. Baha'i youth between the ages of 15 and 21 may certainly take part in discussions, and should be encouraged to do so, but they may not vote on recommendations to the Assembly until they 21.

(16 September 1979 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United Kingdom)

1000. As a Local Spiritual Assembly is responsible for the organization of Nineteen Day Feasts, and is expected to make a report of its activities to the community at the Feast, in addition to responding to suggestions submitted to it, a Local Assembly should meet at least once a Baha'i month. However, the Universal House of Justice does not wish to draw hard and fast rules in this matter, and prefers to leave this question to the discretion of each National Assembly.

If a local community, under the direction of its Local Assembly, observes Nineteen Day Feasts regularly, and it occasionally has a joint Feast with one or more other communities, you may credit in your statistics each Assembly for having held its own Nineteen Day Feast. You, of course, realize that joint Feasts do not fulfil the purpose of the Nineteen Day Feast in its strict sense,

and should not become a regular practice among the friends.

(15 February 1982 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Transkei)

1001. If the friends at a Nineteen Day Feast agree with a recommendation, either unanimously or by a majority, it constitutes a recommendation from the Feast to the Assembly. On the other hand, if an individual believer makes a suggestion that other friends do not take up, it may still be considered by the Assembly....

(27 July 1982 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany) <p455>

1002. There are a number of factors involved in understanding the nature of appropriate interaction between a believer and his or her Local Spiritual Assembly during the consultative part of the Nineteen Day Feast. Chief among these is an appreciation of the purpose of this most important Institution of the Cause. 'Abdu'l-Baha described the Feast in these terms:

This Feast is a bringer of joy. It is the groundwork of agreement and unity. It is the key to affection and fellowship. It diffuseth the oneness of mankind.

(25 July 1984 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Argentina) [see also extract 4]

1003. The By-Laws of a Local Spiritual Assembly clearly imply the roles of the chairman and vice-chairman for meetings of the Assembly. For Feasts, the chairman or an appointed representative of the Spiritual Assembly presides during the period of consultation. However, this is not specified in the By-Laws and is a secondary matter left to the discretion of the National Assembly in each country; that Assembly may either adopt a uniform procedure for Local Assemblies to follow, or leave the matter to the discretion of the Local Assembly itself....

(23 December 1986 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

10. The Feast Celebration: Socializing

From a Memorandum Written by the Universal House of Justice

1004. We can understand the desire of some of the friends to provide a warm welcome at the Feasts to newly declared believers and particularly youth, and we see no objection to the Assembly giving a reception before the actual Feast to achieve this purpose. As the Feast is frequently held in the evening, the Assembly might consider it desirable to arrange for the believers to have a light evening meal together before the Feast is held or it could, for example, arrange for social activities of an appropriate kind while the friends are gathering prior to the actual commencement of the <p456> Nineteen Day Feast. This should not, however, take the place of the social part of the Feast itself.

(21 January 1973, to the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land)

11. The Blending of Cultures in the Feast Celebration

From Letters written by or on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice

1005. We have considered your letter of March 11, 1970 concerning the difficulties you are experiencing in getting the Indian believers on reservations to hold regular Nineteen Day Feasts.

In applying instructions about Nineteen Day Feasts, as well as other matters of administration, to indigenous believers it is important that the process of weaning them away from the old forms should be accomplished gradually so as not to destroy their spirit, and your Assembly should not be too rigid in these matters.

(3 April 1970 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada)

1006. The International Teaching Centre has sent us a copy of your letter of 10 October 1982 asking about language problems brought about by the influx of Iranians who do not understand English. It is important that the Iranian friends be encouraged to make the effort to learn the language used in the country and become integrated into the life and activities of the community.

The Nineteen Day Feasts and other official gatherings of the friends should be conducted in whatever is the conventional local language. This does not mean, of course, that at such gatherings some of the readings could not be in the language of the immigrants, or that, if these friends so wish, some classes and conferences may not be held and conducted in their own language for their benefit. The essential thing is, as stated above, to promote the integration of the immigrants into the community and avoid feelings of estrangement or disunity on account of language.

(10 November 1982 written by the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer) <p457>

1007. The Local Spiritual Assembly of ... is correct in its decision to conduct the Nineteen Day Feasts in Spanish and to not translate the proceedings in Persian, especially in view of the fact that some of the Spanish friends are becoming alienated from the community. Although the Iranian believers should make every effort to attend the Nineteen Day Feasts, they should not expect such meetings to be conducted in Persian. They should try to learn Spanish, particularly if they are planning to make their home in Spain. There is no objection, however, to Persian friends if they so wish having special meetings for fellowship and deepening conducted in Persian.

(6 February 1983 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain)

1008. You have asked for suggestions regarding the preparation of the handbook on Baha'i Holy Days which you are planning to publish. It is important that

notwithstanding whatever details you set forth therein, it be made clear that the contents do not constitute procedures that must be rigidly adhered to. Dignity and reverence befitting the occasion should obviously characterize observances of Baha'i Holy Days by the friends, but this does not mean that cultural traditions which do not contravene Baha'i principles may not, and cannot, find expression in the local observances and meetings of the friends.

(1 August 1983 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

1009. In answer to your question about the presence of pets during Baha'i meetings held in homes in Europe, the House of Justice asks us to explain that the European attitude to pets is very different from that of the people of, for example, North Africa, and that this is a minor matter of which no issue should be made.

(29 August 1983 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

1010. Wherever linguistic problems exist, the House of Justice welcomes the holding of special classes and gatherings for the Iranian friends in addition to the regular community meetings, so that they will have the opportunity to study the Holy Writings in their own language and will be <p458> kept informed of what is going on in the Baha'i community of Canada. Nineteen Day Feasts and Local Spiritual Assembly meetings should be conducted in English or French, as the case may be, since these are the languages of your country. If, however, it is possible to make arrangements for the Iranians who have not yet learned the language to benefit in some way from the topics discussed at such meetings without interfering with the smooth running of the meetings, this factor could be taken into consideration.

(7 February 1984 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada)

1011. The House of Justice has given the advice to Spiritual Assemblies faced with questions of possible conflict between tribal practices and Baha'i law, that such Assemblies should distinguish between aspects of tribal community life which are related to fundamental laws (such as monogamy) and matters of lesser importance, from which the friends can and should extricate themselves gradually. Furthermore, the House of Justice has offered the advice that: The institutions of the Faith should be careful not to press the friends to arbitrarily discard those local traditions which are harmless and often colourful characteristics of particular peoples and tribes. Were a new Baha'i suddenly to cease following the customs of his people, it is possible that they might misunderstand the true nature of the Baha'i Faith, and the Baha'is could be regarded as having turned against the traditions of the land ...

(25 October 1987 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to two believers)

Revised November 1990 <p459>

SELECTIONS FROM BAHA'I WRITINGS ON SOME ASPECTS OF HEALTH, HEALING, NUTRITION AND RELATED MATTERS

April 1984 Compiled by: The Research Department of the Universal House of Justice

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHA'U'LLAH

1012. Whenever ye fall ill, refer to competent physicians. Verily, We have not abolished recourse to material means, rather have We affirmed it through this Pen which God hath made the Dawning Place of His luminous and resplendent Cause.

("Kitab-i-Aqdas" - provisional translation from the Arabic)

1013. We have granted you permission to study such sciences as will benefit you, not those which lead to idle disputes. Better is this for you, did ye but know.

("Kitab-i-Aqdas" - provisional translation from the Arabic)

1014. Whatever competent physicians or surgeons prescribe for a patient should be accepted and complied with, provided that they are adorned with the ornament of justice. If they were to be endued with divine understanding, that would certainly be preferable and more desirable.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

1015. Well is it with the physician who cureth ailments in My hallowed and dearly-cherished Name.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

1016. In all circumstances they should conduct themselves with moderation; if the meal be only one course this is more pleasing in the sight of God; however, according to their means, they should seek to have this single dish be of good quality.

("Kitab-i-Badi'" - translated from the Persian) <p460>

1017. Know thou that the soul of man is exalted above, and is independent of all infirmities of body or mind. That a sick person showeth signs of weakness is due to the hindrances that interpose themselves between his soul and his body, for the soul itself remaineth unaffected by any bodily ailments. Consider the light of the lamp. Though an external object may interfere with its radiance, the light itself continueth to shine with undiminished power. In like manner, every malady afflicting the body of man is an impediment that preventeth the soul from manifesting its inherent might and power. When it leaveth the body, however, it will evince such ascendancy, and reveal such influence as no force on earth can equal. Every pure, every refined and sanctified soul will be endowed with tremendous power, and shall rejoice with exceeding gladness.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i

Publishing Trust, 1983), sec. 80, pp. 153-54)

O BEFRIENDED STRANGER!

1018. The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. The healer of all thine ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not. Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life.

("The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah", Persian no. 32, rev. ed. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985), p. 43)

1019. Do not neglect medical treatment when it is necessary, but leave it off when health has been restored.... Treat disease through diet, by preference, refraining from the use of drugs; and if you find what is required in a single herb, do not resort to a compounded medicament. Abstain from drugs when the health is good, but administer them when necessary.

(Cited in J. E. Esslemont, "Baha'u'llah and the New Era", 5th rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), p. 106)

1020. Verily the most necessary thing is contentment under all circumstances; by this one is preserved from morbid conditions and from lassitude. Yield not to grief and sorrow: they cause the greatest misery. Jealousy consumeth the body and anger doth burn the liver: avoid these two as you would a lion.

(Cited in "Baha'u'llah and the New Era", p. 108) <p461>

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS AND UTTERANCES OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA

1021. Thou shouldst endeavour to study the science of medicine. It is extremely useful and serveth as the greatest instrument for the dissemination of the Cause. It is absolutely imperative that thou acquire this bounty. Strive day and night that thou mayest become highly qualified in this science. And when thou wishest to dispense treatment set thy heart toward the Abha Kingdom, entreating divine confirmations.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

1022. Thou shouldst continue thy profession and at the same time try to serve the Kingdom of God.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

1023. Thou hast written about thy poor sight. According to the explicit divine text the sick must refer to the doctor. This decree is decisive and everyone is bound to observe it. While thou art there thou shouldst consult the most skilled and the most famed eye specialist.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

1024. One must obey the command of God and submit to medical opinion. Thou hast undertaken this journey to comply with His command and not for the sake of healing, since healing is in the hand of God, not in the hand of doctors.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

1025. That the Most Great Name exerciseth influence over both physical and spiritual matters is sure and certain.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

1026. The child must, from the day of his birth, be provided with whatever is conducive to his health; and know ye this: so far as possible, the mother's milk is best for, more agreeable and better suited to the child, unless she should fall ill or her milk should run entirely dry....

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian) <p462>

1027. When thou wishest to treat nervous pains turn thy whole being to the realm on high with thine heart detached from aught else besides Him and thy soul enraptured by the love of God. Then seek confirmation of the Holy Spirit from the Abha Kingdom, while touching the affected part with utmost love, tenderness and attraction to God. When all these things are combined, be assured that healing will take place.

(From a Tablet- translated from the Arabic)

1028. Regarding the eating of animal flesh and abstinence therefrom, know thou of a certainty that, in the beginning of creation, God determined the food of every living being, and to eat contrary to that determination is not approved. For instance, beasts of prey, such as the wolf, lion and leopard, are endowed with ferocious, tearing instruments, such as hooked talons and claws. From this it is evident that the food of such beasts is meat. If they were to attempt to graze, their teeth would not cut the grass, neither could they chew the cud, for they do not have molars. Likewise, God hath given to the four-footed grazing animals such teeth as reap the grass like a sickle, and from this we understand that the food of these species of animal is vegetable. They cannot chase and hunt down other animals. The falcon hath a hooked beak and sharp talons; the hooked beak preventeth him from grazing, therefore his food also is meat.

But now coming to man, we see he hath neither hooked teeth nor sharp nails or claws, nor teeth like iron sickles. From this it becometh evident and manifest that the food of man is cereals and fruit. Some of the teeth of man are like millstones to grind the grain, and some are sharp to cut the fruit. Therefore he is not in need of meat, nor is he obliged to eat it. Even without eating meat he would live with the utmost vigour and energy. For example, the community of the Brahmins in India do not eat meat; notwithstanding this they are not inferior to other nations in strength, power, vigour, outward senses or intellectual virtues. Truly, the killing of animals and the eating of their meat is somewhat contrary to pity and compassion, and if one can content oneself with cereals, fruit, oil and nuts, such as pistachios, almonds and so on, it would undoubtedly be better and more pleasing.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian) <p463>

1029. Thou hast written regarding the four canine teeth in man, saying that these teeth, two in the upper jaw and two in the lower, are for the purpose of eating meat. Know thou that these four teeth are not created for meat- eating, although one can eat meat with them. All the teeth of man are made for eating fruit, cereals and vegetables. These four teeth, however, are designed for breaking hard shells, such as those of almonds. But eating meat is not forbidden or unlawful, nay, the point is this, that it is possible for man to live without eating meat and still be strong. Meat is nourishing and containeth the elements of herbs, seeds and fruits; therefore sometimes it is essential for the sick and for the rehabilitation of health. There is no objection in the Law of God to the eating of meat if it is required. So if thy constitution is rather weak and thou findest meat useful, thou mayest eat it.

(From a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

1030. Thy letter was received. I hope that thou mayest be protected and assisted under the providence of the True One, be occupied always in mentioning the Lord and display effort to complete thy profession. Thou must endeavour greatly so that thou mayest become unique in thy profession and famous in those parts, because attaining perfection in one's profession in this merciful period is considered to be worship of God. And whilst thou art occupied with thy profession, thou canst remember the True One.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu 'l-Baha" [rev. ed.], (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1982), sec. 128, pp. 145-46)

1031. O ye, God's loved ones! Experience hath shown how greatly the renouncing of smoking, of intoxicating drink, and of opium, conduceth to health and vigour, to the expansion and keenness of the mind and to bodily strength. There is today a people[1] who strictly avoid tobacco, intoxicating liquor and opium. This people is far and away superior to the others, for strength and physical courage, for health, beauty and comeliness. A single one of their men can stand up to ten men of another tribe. This hath proved true of the entire people: that is, member for member, each individual of this community is in every respect superior to the individuals of other communities. <p464> Make ye then a mighty effort, that the purity and sanctity which, above all else, are cherished by 'Abdu'l-Baha, shall distinguish the people of Baha; that in every kind of excellence the people of God shall surpass all other human beings; that both outwardly and inwardly they shall prove superior to the rest; that for purity, immaculacy, refinement, and the preservation of health, they shall be leaders in the vanguard of those who know. And that by their freedom from enslavement, their knowledge, their self-control, they shall be first among the pure, the free and the wise.
[1 Possibly 'Abdu'l-Baha was referring to the Sikhs; the description appears to apply to them.]

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 129, p. 150)

1032. O thou distinguished physician! ... Praise be to God that thou hast two powers: one to undertake physical healing and the other spiritual healing.

Matters related to man's spirit have a great effect on his bodily condition. For instance, thou shouldst impart gladness to thy patient, give him comfort and joy, and bring him to ecstasy and exultation. How often hath it occurred that this hath caused early recovery. Therefore, treat thou the sick with both powers. Spiritual feelings have a surprising effect on healing nervous ailments.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec. 130, pp. 150-51)

1033. Although ill health is one of the unavoidable conditions of man, truly it is hard to bear. The bounty of good health is the greatest of all gifts.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu 'l-Baha", sec. 132, p. 151)

1034. When giving medical treatment turn to the Blessed Beauty, then follow the dictates of thy heart. Remedy the sick by means of heavenly joy and spiritual exultation, cure the sorely afflicted by imparting to them blissful glad tidings and heal the wounded through His resplendent bestowals. When at the bedside of a patient, cheer and gladden his heart and enrapture his spirit through celestial power. Indeed, such a heavenly breath quickeneth every mouldering bone and reviveth the spirit of every sick and ailing one.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha" sec. 131, p. 151) <p465>

1035. There are two ways of healing sickness, material means and spiritual means. The first is by the treatment of physicians; the second consisteth in prayers offered by the spiritual ones to God and in turning to Him. Both means should be used and practised.

Illnesses which occur by reason of physical causes should be treated by doctors with medical remedies; those which are due to spiritual causes disappear through spiritual means. Thus an illness caused by affliction, fear, nervous impressions, will be healed more effectively by spiritual rather than by physical treatment. Hence, both kinds of treatment should be followed; they are not contradictory. Therefore thou shouldst also accept physical remedies inasmuch as these too have come from the mercy and favour of God, Who hath revealed and made manifest medical science so that His servants may profit from this kind of treatment also. Thou shouldst give equal attention to spiritual treatments, for they produce marvellous effects.

Now, if thou wishest to know the true remedy which will heal man from all sickness and will give him the health of the divine kingdom, know that it is the precepts and teachings of God. Focus thine attention upon them.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec 133, pp. 151-52)

1036. O thou who art attracted to the fragrant breathings of God! I have read thy letter addressed to Mrs. Lua Getsinger. Thou hast indeed examined with great care the reasons for the incursion of disease into the human body. It is certainly the case that sins are a potent cause of physical ailments. If humankind were free from the defilements of sin and waywardness, and lived according to a natural, inborn equilibrium, without following wherever their

passions led, it is undeniable that diseases would no longer take the ascendant, nor diversify with such intensity.

But man hath perversely continued to serve his lustful appetites, and he would not content himself with simple foods. Rather, he prepared for himself food that was compounded of many ingredients, of substances differing one from the other. With this, and with the perpetrating of vile and ignoble acts, his attention was engrossed, and he abandoned the temperance and moderation of a natural way of life. The result was the engendering of diseases both violent and diverse. <p466>

For the animal, as to its body, is made up of the same constituent elements as man. Since, however, the animal contenteth itself with simple foods and striveth not to indulge its importunate urges to any great degree, and committeth no sins, its ailments relative to man's are few. We see clearly, therefore, how powerful are sin and contumacy as pathogenic factors. And once engendered these diseases become compounded, multiply, and are transmitted to others. Such are the spiritual, inner causes of sickness.

The outer, physical causal factor in disease, however, is a disturbance in the balance, the proportionate equilibrium of all those elements of which the human body is composed. To illustrate: the body of man is a compound of many constituent substances, each component being present in a prescribed amount, contributing to the essential equilibrium of the whole. So long as these constituents remain in their due proportion, according to the natural balance of the whole -- that is, no component suffereth a change in its natural proportionate degree and balance, no component being either augmented or decreased -- there will be no physical cause for the incursion of disease.

For example, the starch component must be present to a given amount, and the sugar to a given amount. So long as each remaineth in its natural proportion to the whole, there will be no cause for the onset of disease. When, however, these constituents vary as to their natural and due amounts -- that is, when they are augmented or diminished -- it is certain that this will provide for the inroads of disease.

This question requireth the most careful investigation. The Bab hath said that the people of Baha must develop the science of medicine to such a high degree that they will heal illnesses by means of foods. The basic reason for this is that if, in some component substance of the human body, an imbalance should occur, altering its correct, relative proportion to the whole, this fact will inevitably result in the onset of disease. If, for example, the starch component should be unduly augmented, or the sugar component decreased, an illness will take control. It is the function of a skilled physician to determine which constituent of his patient's body hath suffered diminution, which hath been augmented. Once he hath discovered this, he must prescribe a food containing the diminished element in considerable amounts, to re-establish the body's essential <p467> equilibrium. The patient, once his constitution is again in balance, will be rid of his disease.

The proof of this is that while other animals have never studied medical science, nor carried on researches into diseases or medicines, treatments or cures -- even so, when one of them falleth a prey to sickness, nature leadeth it, in fields or desert places, to the very plant which, once eaten, will rid the animal of its disease. The explanation is that if, as an example, the sugar component in the animal's body hath decreased, according to a natural law the animal hankereth after a herb that is rich in sugar. Then, by a natural urge, which is the appetite, among a thousand different varieties of plants across the field, the animal will discover and consume that herb which containeth a sugar component in large amounts. Thus the essential balance of the substances composing its body is re-established, and the animal is rid of its disease.

This question requireth the most careful investigation. When highly-skilled physicians shall fully examine this matter, thoroughly and perseveringly, it will be clearly seen that the incursion of disease is due to a disturbance in the relative amounts of the body's component substances, and that treatment consisteth in adjusting these relative amounts, and that this can be apprehended and made possible by means of foods.

It is certain that in this wonderful new age the development of medical science will lead to the doctors' healing their patients with foods. For the sense of sight, the sense of hearing, of taste, of smell, of touch -- all these are discriminative faculties, their purpose being to separate the beneficial from whatever causeth harm. Now, is it possible that man's sense of smell, the sense that differentiates odours, should find some odour repugnant, and that odour be beneficial to the human body? Absurd! Impossible! In the same way, could the human body, through the faculty of sight -- the differentiator among things visible -- benefit from gazing upon a revolting mass of excrement? Never! Again, if the sense of taste, likewise a faculty that selecteth and rejecteth, be offended by something, that thing is certainly not beneficial; and if, at the outset, it may yield some advantage, in the long run its harmfulness will be established.

And likewise, when the constitution is in a state of equilibrium, there is no doubt that whatever is relished will be beneficial to health. Observe <p468> how an animal will graze in a field where there are a hundred thousand kinds of herbs and grasses, and how, with its sense of smell, it snuffeth up the odours of the plants, and tasteth them with its sense of taste; then it consumeth whatever herb is pleasurable to these senses, and benefitteth therefrom. Were it not for this power of selectivity, the animals would all be dead in a single day; for there are a great many poisonous plants, and animals know nothing of the pharmacopoeia. And yet, observe what a reliable set of scales they have, by means of which to differentiate the good from the injurious. Whatever constituent of their body hath decreased, they can rehabilitate by seeking out and consuming some plant that hath an abundant store of that diminished element; and thus the equilibrium of their bodily components is re-established, and they are rid of their disease.

At whatever time highly-skilled physicians shall have developed the healing of

illnesses by means of foods, and shall make provision for simple foods, and shall prohibit humankind from living as slaves to their lustful appetites, it is certain that the incidence of chronic and diversified illnesses will abate, and the general health of all mankind will be much improved. This is destined to come about. In the same way, in the character, the conduct and the manners of men, universal modifications will be made.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu 'l-Baha", sec. 134, pp. 152-156)

1037. According to the explicit decree of Baha'u'llah one must not turn aside from the advice of a competent doctor. It is imperative to consult one even if the patient himself be a well-known and eminent physician. In short, the point is that you should maintain your health by consulting a highly-skilled physician.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec 135, p. 156)

1038. It is incumbent upon everyone to seek medical treatment and to follow the doctor's instructions, for this is in compliance with the divine ordinance, but, in reality, He Who giveth healing is God.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec 136, p. 156)

1039. O handmaid of God! The prayers which were revealed to ask for healing apply both to physical and spiritual healing. Recite them, then, <p469> to heal both the soul and the body. If healing is right for the patient, it will certainly be granted; but for some ailing persons, healing would only be the cause of other ills, and therefore wisdom doth not permit an affirmative answer to the prayer.

O handmaid of God! The power of the Holy Spirit healeth both physical and spiritual ailments.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec 139, pp. 161-62)

1040. ...every branch of learning, conjoined with the love of God, is approved and worthy of praise; but bereft of His love, learning is barren -- indeed, it bringeth on madness. Every kind of knowledge, every science, is as a tree: if the fruit of it be the love of God, then is it a blessed tree, but if not, that tree is but dried-up wood, and shall only feed the fire.

O thou loyal servant of God and thou spiritual healer of man! Whensoever thou dost attend a patient, turn thy face toward the Lord of the heavenly Kingdom, ask the Holy Spirit to come to thine aid, then heal thou the sickness.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", sec 154, p. 181)

1041. ...if a doctor consoles a sick man by saying, "Thank God you are better, and there is hope of your recovery," though these words are contrary to the truth, yet they may become the consolation of the patient and the turning point of the illness. This is not blameworthy.

("Some Answered Questions", 1st pocket-sized ed. Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing

Trust, 1984), pp. 215-16)

1042. If the health and well-being of the body be expended in the path of the Kingdom, this is very acceptable and praiseworthy; and if it be expended to the benefit of the human world in general -- even though it be to their material benefit -- and be a means of doing good, that is also acceptable. But if the health and welfare of man be spent in sensual desires, in a life on the animal plane, and in devilish pursuits -- then disease were better than such health; nay, death itself were preferable to such a life. If thou art desirous of health, wish thou health for serving the Kingdom. I hope that thou mayest attain perfect insight, inflexible resolution, complete health, and spiritual and physical strength in order <p470> that thou mayest drink from the fountain of eternal life and be assisted by the spirit of divine confirmation.

(Cited in Baha'u'llah and the New Era", pp. 114-15)

1043. I ever pray on her behalf and beg from God His divine remedy and healing. As in this Dispensation consultation with expert doctors is highly advisable and acting in accordance with their prescriptions obligatory, it is well for her to undergo an operation if deemed necessary by such doctors.

(Cited in "Star of the West", vol. 12, no. 7 July 1921), p. 134)

1044. Therefore, it is evident that this spirit is different from the body, and that the bird is different from the cage, and that the power and penetration of the spirit is stronger without the intermediary of the body. Now, if the instrument is abandoned, the possessor of the instrument continues to act. For example, if the pen is abandoned or broken, the writer remains living and present; if a house is ruined, the owner is alive and existing. This is one of the logical evidences for the immortality of the soul.

There is another: this body becomes weak or heavy or sick, or it finds health; it becomes tired or rested; sometimes the hand or leg is amputated, or its physical power is crippled; it becomes blind or deaf or dumb; its limbs may become paralyzed; briefly, the body may have all the imperfections. Nevertheless, the spirit in its original state, in its own spiritual perception, will be eternal and perpetual; it neither finds any imperfection, nor will it become crippled. But when the body is wholly subjected to disease and misfortune, it is deprived of the bounty of the spirit, like a mirror which, when it becomes broken or dirty or dusty, cannot reflect the rays of the sun nor any longer show its bounties.

We have already explained that the spirit of man is not in the body because it is freed and sanctified from entrance and exit, which are bodily conditions. The connection of the spirit with the body is like that of the sun with the mirror. Briefly, the human spirit is in one condition. It neither becomes ill from the diseases of the body nor cured by its health; it does not become sick, nor weak, nor miserable, nor poor, nor light, nor small -- that is to say, it will not be injured because of the infirmities of the body, and no effect will be visible even if the body becomes weak, or <p471> if the hands and feet and

tongue be cut off, or if it loses the power of hearing or sight. Therefore, it is evident and certain that the spirit is different from the body, and that its duration is independent of that of the body; on the contrary, the spirit with the utmost greatness rules in the world of the body; and its power and influence, like the bounty of the sun in the mirror, are apparent and visible. But when the mirror becomes dusty or breaks, it will cease to reflect the rays of the sun.

("Some Answered Questions", pp. 228-29)

1045. Question. -- Some people heal the sick by spiritual means -- that is to say, without medicine. How is this?

Answer. -- Know that there are four kinds of curing and healing without medicine. Two are due to material causes, and two to spiritual causes.

Of the two kinds of material healing, one is due to the fact that in man both health and sickness are contagious. The contagion of disease is violent and rapid, while that of health is extremely weak and slow. If two bodies are brought into contact with each other, it is certain that microbic particles will pass from one to the other. In the same way that disease is transferred from one body to another with rapid and strong contagion, it may be that the strong health of a healthy man will alleviate a very slight malady in a sick person. That is to say, the contagion of disease is violent and has a rapid effect, while that of health is very slow and has a small effect, and it is only in very slight diseases that it has even this small effect. The strong power of a healthy body can overcome a slight weakness of a sick body, and health results. This is one kind of healing.

The other kind of healing without medicine is through the magnetic force which acts from one body on another and becomes the cause of cure. This force also has only a slight effect. Sometimes one can benefit a sick person by placing one's hand upon his head or upon his heart. Why? Because of the effect of the magnetism, and of the mental impression made upon the sick person, which causes the disease to vanish. But this effect is also very slight and weak.

Of the two other kinds of healing which are spiritual -- that is to say, where the means of cure is a spiritual power -- one results from the entire concentration of the mind of a strong person upon a sick person, when the latter expects with all his concentrated faith that a cure will be effected <p472> from the spiritual power of the strong person, to such an extent that there will be a cordial connection between the strong person and the invalid. The strong person makes every effort to cure the sick patient, and the sick patient is then sure of receiving a cure. From the effect of these mental impressions an excitement of the nerves is produced, and this impression and this excitement of the nerves will become the cause of the recovery of the sick person. So when a sick person has a strong desire and intense hope for something and hears suddenly the tidings of its realization, a nervous excitement is produced which will make the malady entirely disappear. In the same way, if a cause of terror suddenly occurs, perhaps an excitement may be

produced in the nerves of a strong person which will immediately cause a malady. The cause of the sickness will be no material thing, for that person has not eaten anything, and nothing harmful has touched him; the excitement of the nerves is then the only cause of the illness. In the same way the sudden realization of a chief desire will give such joy that the nerves will be excited by it, and this excitement may produce health.

To conclude, the complete and perfect connection between the spiritual doctor and the sick person -- that is, a connection of such a kind that the spiritual doctor entirely concentrates himself, and all the attention of the sick person is given to the spiritual doctor from whom he expects to realize health -- causes an excitement of the nerves, and health is produced. But all this has effect only to a certain extent, and that not always. For if someone is afflicted with a very violent disease, or is wounded, these means will not remove the disease nor close and heal the wound -- that is to say, these means have no power in severe maladies, unless the constitution helps, because a strong constitution often overcomes disease. This is the third kind of healing.

But the fourth kind of healing is produced through the power of the Holy Spirit. This does not depend on contact, nor on sight, nor upon presence; it is not dependent upon any condition. Whether the disease be light or severe, whether there be a contact of bodies or not, whether a personal connection be established between the sick person and the healer or not, this healing takes place through the power of the Holy Spirit.

("Some Answered Questions", pp. 254-256) <p473>

1046. Yesterday at table we spoke of curative treatment and spiritual healing, which consists in treating maladies through the spiritual powers.

Now let us speak of material healing. The science of medicine is still in a condition of infancy; it has not reached maturity. But when it has reached this point, cures will be performed by things which are not repulsive to the smell and taste of man -- that is to say, by aliments, fruits and vegetables which are agreeable to the taste and have an agreeable smell. For the provoking cause of disease -- that is to say, the cause of the entrance of disease into the human body -- is either a physical one or is the effect of excitement of the nerves.

But the principal causes of disease are physical, for the human body is composed of numerous elements, but in the measure of an especial equilibrium. As long as this equilibrium is maintained, man is preserved from disease; but if this essential balance, which is the pivot of the constitution, is disturbed, the constitution is disordered, and disease will supervene.

For instance, there is a decrease in one of the constituent ingredients of the body of man, and in another there is an increase; so the proportion of the equilibrium is disturbed, and disease occurs. For example, one ingredient must be one thousand grams in weight, and another five grams, in order that the equilibrium be maintained. The part which is one thousand grams diminishes to

seven hundred grams, and that which is five grams augments until the measure of the equilibrium is disturbed; then disease occurs. When by remedies and treatments the equilibrium is reestablished, the disease is banished. So if the sugar constituent increases, the health is impaired; and when the doctor forbids sweet and starchy foods, the sugar constituent diminishes, the equilibrium is reestablished, and the disease is driven off. Now the readjustment of these constituents of the human body is obtained by two means -- either by medicines or by aliments; and when the constitution has recovered its equilibrium, disease is banished. All the elements that are combined in man exist also in vegetables; therefore, if one of the constituents which compose the body of man diminishes, and he partakes of foods in which there is much of that diminished constituent, then the equilibrium will be established, and a cure will be obtained. So long as the aim is the readjustment of the constituents of the body, it can be effected either by medicine or by food. <p474>

The majority of the diseases which overtake man also overtake the animal, but the animal is not cured by drugs. In the mountains, as in the wilderness, the animal's physician is the power of taste and smell. The sick animal smells the plants that grow in the wilderness; he eats those that are sweet and fragrant to his smell and taste, and is cured. The cause of his healing is this. When the sugar ingredient has become diminished in his constitution, he begins to long for sweet things; therefore, he eats an herb with a sweet taste, for nature urges and guides him; its smell and taste please him, and he eats it. The sugar ingredient in his nature will be increased, and health will be restored.

It is, therefore, evident that it is possible to cure by foods, aliments and fruits; but as today the science of medicine is imperfect, this fact is not yet fully grasped. When the science of medicine reaches perfection, treatment will be given by foods, aliments, fragrant fruits and vegetables, and by various waters, hot and cold in temperature. This discourse is brief; but, if God wills, at another time, when the occasion is suitable, this question will be more fully explained.

("Some Answered Questions", pp. 257-59)

1047. We should all visit the sick. When they are in sorrow and suffering, it is a real help and benefit to have a friend come. Happiness is a great healer to those who are ill. In the East it is the custom to call upon the patient often and meet him individually. The people in the East show the utmost kindness and compassion to the sick and suffering. This has greater effect than the remedy itself. You must always have this thought of love and affection when you visit the ailing and afflicted.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912" 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 204)

1048. All true healing comes from God! There are two causes for sickness, one

is material, the other spiritual. If the sickness is of the body, a material remedy is needed, if of the soul, a spiritual remedy.

If the heavenly benediction be upon us while we are being healed then only can we be made whole, for medicine is but the outward and visible means through which we obtain the heavenly healing. Unless the <p475> spirit be healed, the cure of the body is worth nothing. All is in the hands of God, and without Him there can be no health in us!

There have been many men who have died at last of the very disease of which they have made a special study. Aristotle, for instance, who made a special study of the digestion, died of a gastronomic malady. Aviseu was a specialist of the heart, but he died of heart disease. God is the great compassionate Physician who alone has the power to give true healing.

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912", 11th ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 19)

1049. When an illness is slight a small remedy will suffice to heal it, but when the slight illness becomes a terrible disease, then a very strong remedy must be used by the Divine Healer....

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu 'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912" p. 27)

1050. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer. A physician ministering to the sick, gently, tenderly, free from prejudice and believing in the solidarity of the human race, he is giving praise.

("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912", p. 177)

1051. The healing that is by the power of the Holy Spirit needs no special concentration or contact. It is through the wish or desire and the prayer of the holy person. The one who is sick may be in the East and the healer in the West, and they may not have been acquainted with each other, but as soon as that holy person turns his heart to God and begins to pray, the sick one is healed. This is a gift belonging to the Holy Manifestations and those who are in the highest station.

(Cited in "Baha'u'llah and the New Era" p. 109)

1052. "What will be the food of the future?" "Fruit and grains. The time will come when meat will no longer be eaten. Medical science is only in its infancy, yet it has shown that our natural diet is that which grows out of the ground. The people will gradually develop up to the condition of this natural food."

(Julia M. Grundy. "Ten Days in the Light of 'Akka", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), pp. 8-9) <p476>

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

(The following are from letters to individual believers unless otherwise stated)

1053. In regard to the question as to whether people ought to kill animals for food or not, there is no explicit statement in the Baha'i Sacred Scriptures (as far as I know) in favour or against it. It is certain, however, that if man can live on a purely vegetarian diet and thus avoid killing animals, it would be much preferable. This is, however, a very controversial question and the Baha'is are free to express their views on it.

(9 July 1931)

1054. 'Abdu'l-Baha does often state that the medical science will much improve. With the appearance of every Revelation a new insight is created in man and this in turn expresses itself in the growth of science. This has happened in past dispensations and we find its earliest fruits in our present day. What we see however is only the beginning. With the spiritual awakening of man this force will develop and marvelous results will become manifest.

(14 January 1932 to two believers)

1055. Baha'u'llah tells us that in case of disease we should pray but at the same time refer to competent physicians, and abide by their considered decision. Shoghi Effendi wishes you therefore to find whether your son has really become ill, and if he is, then follow the directions of the doctor. Being versed in the medical sciences they can treat better than even a loving mother can. You can render your assistance by praying for him and at the same time helping the physicians to treat him.

(9 April 1933)

1056. In the "Book of Aqdas" Baha'u'llah urges us that when we obtain any physical ailment we should refer to the doctor and abide by his decision. Physical and spiritual forces have both to be used to secure the speedy recovery of the patients; no partial treatment is sufficient....

(1 June 1933) <p477>

1057. Healing through purely spiritual forces is undoubtedly as inadequate as that which materialist physicians and thinkers vainly seek to obtain by resorting entirely to mechanical devices and methods. The best result can be obtained by combining the two processes: spiritual and physical.

(12 March 1934)

1058. With regard to your question concerning spiritual healing: Such a healing constitutes, indeed, one of the most effective methods of relieving a person from either his mental or physical pains and sufferings. 'Abdu'l-Baha has in His "Paris Talks" emphasized its importance by stating that it should be used as an essential means for effecting a complete physical cure. Spiritual healing, however, is not and cannot be a substitute for material healing, but it is a most valuable adjunct to it. Both are, indeed, essential and complementary.

(16 February 1935)

1059. With reference to your question concerning spiritual healing: Its importance, as you surely know, has been greatly emphasized by 'Abdu'l-Baha, Who considered it, indeed, as an essential part of physical processes of healing. Physical healing cannot be complete and lasting unless it is reinforced by spiritual healing. And this last one can be best obtained through obedience to the laws and commandments of God as revealed to us through His Manifestations. Individual believers, however, can also help by imparting healing to others. But the success of their efforts depends entirely on their strict adherence to the Teachings, and also on the manner in which they impart them to others. According to Baha'u'llah man cannot obtain full guidance directly from God. He must rather seek it through His Prophets. Provided this principle is clearly understood and explained, the Guardian sees no harm that the friends should try to effect spiritual healing in others. Any such cure effected, however, should be done in the name of Baha'u'llah and in accordance with His teachings. For God, and God alone, is the Supreme and Almighty Physician, and all else are but instruments in His hands.

(23 May 1935)

1060. As to your question concerning the meaning of physical suffering and its relation to mental and spiritual healing: Physical pain is a necessary <p478> accompaniment of all human existence, and as such is unavoidable. As long as there will be life on earth, there will be also suffering, in various forms and degrees. But suffering, although an inescapable reality, can nevertheless be utilized as a means for the attainment of happiness. This is the interpretation given to it by all the Prophets and saints, who, in the midst of severe tests and trials, felt happy and joyous and experienced what is best and holiest in life. Suffering is both a reminder and a guide. It stimulates us to better adapt ourselves to our environmental conditions, and thus leads the way to self- improvement. In every suffering one can find a meaning and a wisdom. But it is not always easy to find the secret of that wisdom. It is sometimes only when all our suffering has passed that we become aware of its usefulness. What man considers to be evil turns often to be a cause of infinite blessings. And this is due to his desire to know more than he can. God's wisdom is, indeed, inscrutable to us all, and it is no use pushing too far trying to discover that which shall always remain a mystery to our mind.

(29 May 1935)

1061. Regarding your questions concerning the condition of the soul during illness: The passages in the "Gleanings" make it quite clear that physical ailments, no matter how severe, cannot bring any change in the inherent condition of the soul. As Baha'u'llah says: "The spirit is permanent and steadfast in its station".[1] The veil or hindrance that interposes between soul and body during physical disease is sickness itself. Sickness reveals a lack of balance in the human organism, an absence of equilibrium in the forces essential for the normal functioning of the human body.
[1 The words quoted here are from a translation appearing in Baha'i Scriptures p. 228. The passage as translated by Shoghi Effendi appears in Gleanings

section LXXX, as follows: "...the soul itself remaineth unaffected by any bodily ailments."]

(8 March 1936)

1062. As to your question regarding the possibility of an artificial production of life by means of an incubator: this is essentially a matter that concerns science, and as such should be investigated and studied by scientists.

(31 December 1937) <p479>

1063. As to the possibility of conception without the presence of a male sperm in the future: this is a question which lies entirely within the province of science, and which future scientists will have to investigate.

(27 February 1938)

1064. The Teachings bear no reference to the question of telepathy. It is a matter that concerns psychology.

(28 February 1938)

1065. The eating of pork is not forbidden in the Baha'i Teachings.

(27 March 1938)

1066. These investigations you have so painstakingly pursued in the field of medical science, and on a subject which is still puzzling the minds of all the leading scientists in the world, cannot but be of a captivating interest and of a great value to all medical research workers.

It is significant that you as a believer should have undertaken a work of this nature, as we all know that the powers released by the Manifestation of Baha'u'llah in this day are destined in the course of time to reveal themselves through the instrumentality of His followers, and in every conceivable field of human endeavour.

That you should increasingly prove, through your continued researches in the domain of medicine, to be one of those instruments is the fervent hope of our beloved Guardian....

(29 November 1938)

1067. Such hindrances, no matter how severe and insuperable they may at first seem, can and should be effectively overcome through the combined and sustained power of prayer and of determined and continued effort....

(6 February 1939)

1068. The Baha'i Teachings do not only encourage marital life, considering it the natural and normal way of existence for every sane, healthy and socially-conscious and responsible person, but raise marriage to the status of a divine institution, its chief and sacred purpose being the perpetuation of the human race -- which is the very flower of the entire creation -- and its elevation to the true station destined for it by God. <p480>

That there should be, however, certain individuals who by reason of some serious deficiency, physical or mental, would be incapacitated to contract marriage and enjoy the blessings of an enduring and successful marital life is only too evident, but these constitute only a very small section of humanity, and are therefore merely an exception, and their condition cannot possibly invalidate what an all-wise and loving Providence has decreed to be the normal way to a fruitful and constructive social existence.

The exact conditions and circumstances under which such incapacitated individuals should be advised or even prevented perhaps from entering into any sort of marital existence have not been specified in the Baha'i Writings, but will have to be defined later on by the Universal House of Justice. In the mean time, those believers who consider themselves as falling into the above category would do well, before taking any final decision themselves, to consult medical experts, who are both conscientious and competent, and to abide by their recommendation.

(15 April 1939)

1069. Also with regard to the practice of circumcision; the Teachings bear no reference to this matter, and it is therefore not enjoined upon the believers.

(14 December 1940 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma)

1070. Regarding your question about vaccination: these are technical matters which have not been specifically mentioned in the teachings, and consequently the Guardian cannot make any statement about them. No doubt medical science will progress tremendously as time goes by, and the treatment of disease become more perfect.

(22 January 1944)

1071. As to your question about healing: although there is no objection to your helping others to regain their health, he does not feel you should associate the name Baha'i with your work, as it gives a wrong impression; we have no "Baha'i healers" as Christian Science and various other sects have. You are a Baha'i and a healer, and that is quite different.

(13 December 1945) <p481>

1072. The Tablet to a Physician was addressed to a man who was a student of the old type of healing prevalent in the East and familiar with the terminology used in those days, and He addresses him in terms used by the medical men of those days. These terms are quite different from those used by modern medicine, and one would have to have a deep knowledge of this former school of medicine to understand the questions Baha'u'llah was elucidating.

The Guardian never goes into technical matters, as this is not his work. Baha'u'llah has recommended that people seek the help and advice of experts and doctors; He does not say which school they should belong to.

Likewise there is nothing in the teachings about whether people should eat

their food cooked or raw; exercise or not exercise; resort to specific therapies or not; nor is it forbidden to eat meat.

Baha'u'llah says teaching is the greatest of all services, but He does not mean one should give up medicine to teach.

(18 December 1945)

1073. The greatest form of healing which the Baha'is can practice is to heal the spiritually sick souls of men by giving this greatest of all Messages to them. We can also try to help them, both physically and spiritually, through prayer.

(25 March 1946)

1074. There is nothing in the teachings which would forbid a Baha'i to bequeath his eyes to another person or for a Hospital; on the contrary it seems a noble thing to do.

(6 September 1946)

1075. He feels you should certainly think of your future and earning your living, and if chiropractic is the work you wish to go in for, you should continue your education; when you are finished it would be highly meritorious to enter the pioneer field, as for many years to come Baha'i teachers will be needed in distant lands.

(31 March 1947) <p482>

1076. ...you should not neglect your health, but consider it the means which enables you to serve. It -- the body -- is like a horse which carries the personality and spirit, and as such should be well cared for so it can do its work! You should certainly safeguard your nerves, and force yourself to take time, and not only for prayer and meditation, but for real rest and relaxation....

(23 November 1947)

1077. Very little is as yet known about the mind and its workings. But one thing is certain: Baha'is can and do receive a very remarkable help and protection in this world, one which often surprises their doctors very much!

(9 April 1948)

1078. The Guardian knows nothing about your kind of healing, nor would he care to go into the question in detail, as he has no time for such matters. But he can lay down for your guidance certain broad principles: there is no such thing as Baha'i healers or a Baha'i type of healing. In His Most Holy Book (the Aqdas) Baha'u'llah says to consult the best physicians, in other words doctors who have studied a scientific system of medicine; He never gave us to believe He Himself would heal us through 'healers', but rather through prayer and the assistance of medicine and approved treatments.

Now, as long as your healing is in no opposition to these principles, as long

as you do not try and take the place of a regular doctor in trying to heal others, but only give them your kind of help through constructive suggestion -- or whatever it may be -- and do not associate this help with being a channel of the direct grace of Baha'u'llah, the Guardian sees no harm in your continuing your assistance to others. But you must conscientiously decide whether in view of the above you are really justified in continuing. He will pray for your guidance and happiness.

(8 June 1948)

1079. He does not feel that you should try to do anything special about the capacity you feel to help people when they are ill. This does not mean you should not use it, when the occasion arises, such as it did recently. But he <p483> means you should not become a "healer" such as the Christian Scientists have, and we Baha'is do not have.

(25 December 1949)

1080. We have no reason to believe that the healing of the Holy Spirit cannot be attracted by ordinary human beings. But this is rare, a mystery, and a gift of God.

(26 March 1950)

1081. There is nothing in our teachings about Freud and his method. Psychiatric treatment in general is no doubt an important contribution to medicine, but we must believe it is still a growing rather than a perfected science. As Baha'u'llah has urged us to avail ourselves of the help of good physicians Baha'is are certainly not only free to turn to psychiatry for assistance but should, when advisable, do so. This does not mean psychiatrists are always wise or always right, it means we are free to avail ourselves of the best medicine has to offer us.

(15 June 1950 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles)

1082. ...as we are a religion and not qualified to pass on scientific matters we cannot sponsor different treatments. We are certainly free to pass on what we have found beneficial to others.

(30 September 1950)

1083. The Guardian sees no reason why you should not continue to help sick people. As he wrote some of the believers regarding this matter previously, as long as you do not say you are healing them as a Baha'i, or because you are a Baha'i (because we have no "healers" in the Cause as such) there can be certainly no objection to your doing it. On the contrary, to be able to help another soul who is in suffering is a great bounty from God.

(5 October 1950)

1084. There is nothing in the Teachings about chiropractic as a method of healing. People are free to turn to it if they please and find help through it.

(10 February 1951) <p484>

1085. Regarding your question: there are very few people who can get along without eight hours sleep. If you are not one of those, you should protect your health by sleeping enough. The Guardian himself finds that it impairs his working capacity if he does not try and get a minimum of seven or eight hours.

(15 September 1951 to two believers)

1086. There is nothing in the teachings about Socialized Medicine. All these details are for the House of Justice to decide.

(18 February 1951)

1087. Every day medical science is progressing, and it is quite possible that some new form of treatment or some new doctor may be able to get you on your feet. He will certainly pray that this may be so.

(24 February 1952)

1088. So you see he cannot possibly pronounce on the merits of Dianetics. The believers are free to investigate new things, and use them if they prove of real value and no harm.

(30 August 1952)

1089. He was sorry to hear you have been ill, and urges you to cooperate fully with your doctors in order to regain your health as soon as possible and be free to serve the Cause. (19 July 1953)

1090. The beloved Guardian says that the question of circumcision has nothing to do with the Baha'i Teachings; and the believers are free to do as they please in the matter.

(27 March 1954)

1091. He is pleased to see that you are feeling better, and will certainly pray for your full recovery. Before having any serious operation, you should consult more than one qualified physician.

(8 April 1954) <p485>

1092. Regarding various matters raised in your letters: There is nothing in the Teachings to prevent a Baha'i from willing his body for medical research after death. However, it should be made clear that the remains must be buried eventually and not cremated, as this is according to Baha'i law.

(26 June 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada)

1093. There is nothing in the Teachings against leaving our bodies to medical science. The only thing we should stipulate is that we do not wish to be cremated, as it is against our Baha'i Laws.

As many people make arrangements to leave their bodies to medical science for

investigation, he suggests that you inquire, either through some lawyer friend or through some hospital, how you could do this, and then make the necessary provision in your will, stipulating that you wish your body be of service to mankind in death, and that, being a Baha'i, you request that your remains not be cremated and not be taken more than an hour's journey from the place you die.

The spirit has no more connection with the body after it departs, but, as the body was once the temple of the spirit, we Baha'is are taught that it must be treated with respect.

(22 March 1957)

EXTRACTS OF LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

(The following are from letters to individual believers unless otherwise stated)

1094. One of the friends of Persia wrote to Shoghi Effendi and asked this question: "Is it true that 'Abdu'l-Baha has said that biochemical homeopathy, which is a form of food medicine, is in conformity with the Baha'i medical concept?" The beloved Guardian's reply to this question in a letter dated 25th November, 1944 was as follows: "This statement is true, and the truth thereof will be revealed in the future."

(The question and answer are translated from the Persian.)

The Universal House of Justice has also asked us to inform you that it does not wish the above statement to be circulated in isolation from the many and varied other texts in the Writings on medicine. However, you may share it with any of your friends who are interested.

(12 November 1975) <p486>

1095. No specific school of nutrition or medicine has been associated with the Baha'i teachings. What we have are certain guidelines, indications and principles which will be carefully studied by experts and will, in the years ahead, undoubtedly prove to be invaluable sources of guidance and inspiration in the development of these medical sciences. Moreover, in this connection the Guardian's secretary has stated on his behalf that "It is premature to try and elaborate on the few general references to health and medicine made in our Holy Scriptures." The believers must guard against seizing upon any particular text which may appeal to them and which they may only partially or even incorrectly understand....

In the Kitab-i-Aqdas Baha'u'llah has stated:

"Whenever ye fall ill, refer to competent physicians. Verily, We have not abolished recourse to material means, rather have We affirmed it through this Pen which God hath made the Dawning Place of His luminous and resplendent Cause." The secretaries of the Guardian have conveyed his guidance on this point in many letters to individual believers in passages such as these:

"...refer to competent physicians, and abide by their considered decisions"; "...invariably consult and follow the treatment of competent and conscientious physicians..." and "...consult the best physicians ... doctors who have studied a scientific system of medicine." Thus the obligation to consult physicians and to distinguish between doctors who are well trained in medical sciences and those who are not is clear, but the Faith should not be associated with any particular school of medical theory or practice. It is left to each believer to decide for himself which doctors he should consult, bearing in mind the principles enunciated above.

In matters of diet, as in medicine, the Universal House of Justice feels that the believers should be aware that a huge body of scientific knowledge has been accumulated as a guide to our habits and practices. Here too, as in all other things, the believers should be conscious of the two principles of moderation and courtesy in the way they express their opinions and in deciding whether they should refuse food offered to them or request special foods. <p487>

There are, of course, instances where a believer would be fully justified in abstaining from or eating only certain foods for some medical reason, but this is a different matter and would be understood by any reasonable person.

(24 January 1977)

1096. In matters of health, particularly regarding diet and nutrition, the House of Justice advises the friends to seek the help and advice of experts and doctors. This is what Baha'u'llah has recommended and He does not indicate which school of thought or practice they should belong to. However, as you particularly ask about references in the Old Testament as they relate to meat and fish, the House of Justice has asked us to quote for you the following excerpt taken from a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary to an individual believer:

"...there is nothing in the teachings about whether people should eat their food cooked or raw; exercise or not exercise; resort to specific therapies or not; nor is it forbidden to eat meat."

(19 June 1977)

1097. The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 19th January 1978 enquiring the Baha'i point of view on the vivisection of animals. The beloved Guardian was asked a similar question to which his secretary replied on his behalf, on 29 November 1955: "As there is no definite and conclusive statement on Vivisection in the Baha'i Teachings, this is a matter which the International House of Justice will have to pass upon in the future."

The House of Justice does not wish to legislate upon this matter at the present time. It is left to the consciences of the individual friends, who should make their decisions in light of the teachings concerning animals and their treatment.

In this connection the House of Justice instructs us to say that in a Tablet in

which He stresses the need for kindness to animals, 'Abdu'l-Baha states that it would be permissible to perform an operation on a living animal for the purposes of research even if the animal were killed thereby, but that the animal must be well anaesthetized and that the utmost care must be exercised that it does not suffer.

(9 March 1978 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy) <p488>

1098. In matters of diet, as in medicine, the Universal House of Justice feels that the believers should be aware that a huge body of scientific knowledge has been accumulated as a guide to our habits and practices. But it must be clearly understood that no specific school of nutrition or medicine has been associated with the Baha'i teachings. What we have are certain guidelines, indications and principles which will be carefully studied by experts and will, in the years ahead, undoubtedly prove to be invaluable sources of guidance and inspiration in the development of these medical sciences. Moreover, in this connection the Guardian's secretary has stated on his behalf that "It is premature to try and elaborate on the few general references to health and medicine made in our Holy Scriptures."

The believers must guard against seizing upon any particular text which may appeal to them and which they may only partially or even in correctly understand.

(11 July 1978)

(Compiled for inclusion with a letter dated 3 September 1984 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Bisbee, Arizona)

Revised July 1990 <p489>

I. EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHA'U'LLAH [1]
[1 All passages are extracts from previously untranslated Tablets.]

1099. O Zayn! Upon thee be My glory and My loving- kindness. Nothing that existeth in the world of being hath ever been or ever will be worthy of mention. However, if a person be graciously favoured to offer a penny-worth -- nay even less -- in the path of God, this would in His sight be preferable and superior to all the treasures of the earth. It is for this reason that the one true God -- exalted be His glory -- hath in all his heavenly Scriptures praised those who observe His precepts and bestow their wealth for His sake. Beseech ye God that He may enable everyone to discharge the obligation of Huquq, inasmuch as the progress and promotion of the cause of God depend on material means. If His faithful servants could realize how meritorious are benevolent deeds in these days, they would all arise to do that which is meet and seemly. In His hand is the source of authority and He ordaineth as He willeth. He is the Supreme Ruler, the Bountiful, the Equitable the Revealer, the All-Wise.

1100. The one true God -- exalted be His glory -- hath ever been and will continue to be exalted above every expression of praise and is sanctified from the world of existence and all the riches therein. Whatsoever proceedeth from

Him produceth a fruit the benefits of which revert to the individuals themselves. Ere long will they perceive the truth of that which the Tongue of Grandeur hath uttered aforetime and will utter hereafter. And such benefits will indeed accrue if the Huquq is offered with the utmost joy and radiance and in the spirit of perfect humility and lowliness.

1101. Entreat thou the one true God to enable his faithful servants fulfil that which is conducive to the good of this world and the world to come. This is the commandment of God that hath been prescribed in His weighty and inviolable Book. Today is the Day of God when the preservation of the dignity of His Cause must be given precedence over all other things. He ordaineth that which will confer benefit on all mankind. Verily He is the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful. In this connection the Pen of Glory hath revealed that which will enable every <p490> man of perception to inhale the fragrance of His loving- kindness and bounty. In truth the benefits arising from the above-mentioned injunction revert to the individuals themselves. Unto this every discerning one that observeth His precepts will bear witness.

1102. It is incumbent upon everyone to discharge the obligation of Huquq. The advantages gained from this deed revert to the persons themselves. However the acceptance of the offerings dependeth on the spirit of joy, fellowship and contentment that the righteous souls who fulfil this injunction will manifest. If such is the attitude acceptance is permissible, and not otherwise. Verify thy Lord is the All-Sufficing, the All-Praised.

1103. O Zayn! Such souls as comply with the injunction of God prescribed in the Book are regarded as most excellent in the same estimation of God. There can be no doubt whatsoever is revealed from the heaven of divine commandment is by virtue of His wisdom and is in the best interests of the people themselves. Moreover, although these insignificant amounts are not worthy of mention, they are well pleasing, since the donors offer them for the sake of God. If the offering be but a single grain it is regarded as the crowning glory of all the harvests of the world.

1104. It is clear and evident that the payment of the Right of God is conducive to prosperity, to blessing, and to honour and divine protection. Well is it with them that comprehend and recognize this truth and woe betide them that believe not. And this is on condition that the individual should observe the injunctions prescribed in the Book with the utmost radiance, gladness and willing acquiescence. It behoveth you to counsel the friends to do that which is right and praiseworthy. Whoso hearkeneth to this call, it is to his own behoof, and whoso faileth bringeth loss upon himself. Verily our Lord of Mercy is the All-Sufficing, the All-Praised.

1105. Huququ'llah is indeed a great law. It is incumbent upon all to make this offering, because it is the source of grace, abundance, and of all good. It is a bounty which shall remain with every soul in every world of the worlds of God, the All-Possessing, the All-Bountiful. <p491>

1106. As to the question of Huquq: Reference to this matter is in no wise

permissible. We have formerly enjoined upon you and Jinab-i-Amin that which will redound to the glory and dignity of the Word of God and of His Cause. Touching on this particular subject We have bidden thus: Ye may relinquish the whole world but must not allow the detraction of even one jot or tittle from the dignity of the Cause of God. Jinab-i-Amin -- upon him be My glory -- must also refrain from mentioning this matter, for it is entirely dependent upon the willingness of the individuals themselves. They are well acquainted with the commandment of God and are familiar with that which was revealed in the Book. Let him who wisheth observe it, and let him who wisheth ignore it. Verily, thy Lord is the Self-Sufficing, the All-Praised. Indeed, independence of all things is a door of guidance unto His faithful servants. Well is it with them that have severed themselves from the world and have arisen to serve His Cause. Verily, they are numbered with the people of Baha at the court of His resplendent Beauty.

1107. O Abu'l Hasan:[1]
[1 Known as Jinab-i-Amin, Trustee of the Huquq in the days of Baha'u'llah.]

May my Glory rest upon thee! Fix thy gaze upon the glory of the Cause. Speak forth that which will attract the hearts and the minds. To demand the Huquq is in no wise permissible. This command was revealed in the Book of God for various necessary matters ordained by God to be dependent upon material means. Therefore, if someone, with utmost pleasure and gladness, nay with insistence, wisheth to partake of this blessing, thou mayest accept. Otherwise, acceptance is not permissible.

1108. Should a person acquire one hundred mithqals[1] of gold, nineteen mithqals thereof belong unto God, the Creator of earth and heaven. Take heed, O people, lest ye deprive yourselves of this great bounty. We have prescribed this law unto you while We are wholly independent of you and of all that are in the heavens and on the earth. Indeed there lie concealed in this command, mysteries and benefits which are beyond the comprehension of anyone save God, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Say, through this injunction God desireth to purify your possessions and <p492> enable you to draw nigh unto such stations as none can attain, except those whom God may please. Verily, He is the Generous, the Gracious, the Bountiful.
[1 See section 105]

O people! Act not treacherously in the matter of Huququ'llah and dispose not of it, except by His leave. Thus hath it been ordained in His Epistles as well as in this glorious Tablet.

Whoso dealeth dishonestly with God will in justice be exposed, and whoso fulfilleth the things he hath been commanded, divine blessings will descend upon him from the heaven of the bounty of his Lord, the Bestower, the Bountiful, the Most Generous, the Ancient of Days. Verily He desireth for you the things that are inscrutable to you at present, though the people themselves will readily discover them when their souls take their flight and the trappings of their earthly gaieties are rolled up. Thus warneth you the Author of the

Preserved tablet.

1109. Question: Payment of Huququ'llah hath been revealed in the Aqdas. Are the residence, its appendages and necessary furniture among those possessions on which the Huquq is payable?

Answer: It hath been said in the Laws revealed in Persian: "... in this most great Dispensation We have exempted the residence and the household furnishings, that is, such furnishings as are needful."

1110. Question: Is Huququ'llah payable on such equipment of a store as is necessary for the carrying on of business or is such equipment treated as are the household furnishings?

Answer: It is under the same ruling as the household furnishings.

1111. Question: If the deceased hath left the Huquq or his debts unpaid, shall payment be made proportionately from his residence, personal clothing and other property or are the residence and personal clothing set apart for the male off-spring and shall the debts be paid out of remaining property; if such property is insufficient, what shall be done with the debts?

Answer: The debts of Huquq shall be paid out of the remaining property; should the property be insufficient, payment shall be made out of the residence and personal clothing. <p493>

1112. Question: It hath been revealed in the divine Tablets that if a person acquireth the equivalent of nineteen mithqals of gold, he must pay the Right of God on that sum. How much of that sum shall be paid?

Answer: God hath commanded that nineteen be paid out of every hundred. This should be the basis of computation. The sum due on nineteen can then be determined.

1113. Question: When the possessions exceed nineteen, must they equal another nineteen before the Huquq is again payable, or is the Huquq due on any exceeding sum?

Answer: The Huquq is not payable on any exceeding sum, unless it reacheth another nineteen.

1114. Question: If a person hath, for example, one hundred tumans,[1] payeth the Huquq on this, loseth half the sum in unsuccessful transactions and then regaineth the amount on which the Huquq is payable, must he offer the Huquq or not?
[1 Tuman is a Persian unit of currency.]

Answer: In such an event the Huquq is not payable.

1115. Question: If, after payment of the Huquq, the original sum is entirely lost, and then in the course of business transactions it is regained, must the Huquq be paid a second time?

Answer: In this event as well the Huquq is not payable.

1116. The minimum amount subject to Huququ'llah is reached when one's possessions are worth the number of Vahid (19); that is, whenever one owneth 19 mithqals of gold, or acquireth possessions attaining this value, after having deducted therefrom the yearly expenses, the Huquq becometh applicable and its payment is obligatory.

1117. As to the question thou has asked concerning the minimum amount of property on which Huquq is payable, this was mentioned in His exalted and glorious presence and the following is what the Tongue of Grandeur uttered in reply: This matter was revealed in the Most Holy Book in conformity with the pronouncement in the Bayan. Later, however, as a <p494> token of wisdom on Our part, We laid down the ruling whereby the minimum amount of property liable to the payment of Huquq is fixed at Nineteen. The purpose underlying this law is to ensure that the General Treasury is strengthened in the future. Further details may be furnished later.

1118. According to that which is revealed in the Most Holy Book, Huququ'llah is fixed at the rate of 19 mithqals out of every 100 mithqals worth of gold. This applies to possessions in gold, in silver or other properties.

Moreover certain rights have been fixed for the House of Justice. However before its establishment and the appearance of its members, the appropriation of such funds is and will be subject to the approval of Him Who is the Eternal Truth. Beseech ye God -- exalted be His glory -- to enable the people to honour the obligation of Huquq, for had everyone perceived the advantage of such a deed and desisted from withholding the right of God, the friends in that region would not have experienced any hardship.

1119. Question: May a person designate in his will certain of his properties to be spent after his death for charitable purposes, apart from the Huquq and his other obligations; or hath he no right to anything except the expenses of enshrouding, transportation and burial, and is everything else for the inheritors as commanded by God?

Answer: A person is free in the disposition of his possessions. If he hath paid the Huquq and is not in debt to others, whatever he writeth in his will and testifieth to is acceptable. God hath permitted him to do as he willeth with what God hath bestowed on him.

1120. A number of people in various regions are at present illumined with the light of faith, but with the exception of a few, they have not been privileged as yet to observe the injunctions revealed from His presence.

Previously We wrote to thee[1] that had the friends there observed the payment of Huququ'llah, the people of that region would have enjoyed ease and comfort. Before this law was revealed there was no obligation on <p495> the part of any soul. The Pen of Glory held back from revealing laws and ordinances for a number of years, and this was a token of His heavenly grace. Were the people of the world to recognize what inestimable benefits the ordinances of the All-Merciful would bring forth, they would arise to fulfil His commandments and

would observe His bidding ...
[1 Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin]

The Pen of the Most High hath ordained that the Huququ'llah is payable on nineteen mithqals of gold. That is, the Huquq is levied on money equalling this amount. As to other possessions in silver or otherwise, it is payable when they equal this in value, not in number. The Huququ'llah is payable only once; for example if a person acquireth a thousand mithqals in gold and payeth the Huquq thereof, the Right of God ceaseth to be applicable to that amount, except in regard to what accrueth to it through commerce and transactions; when such profits reach the prescribed minimum, one must carry out what God hath decreed. When, however, the original sum changeth hands, the Huquq is again payable as it was the first time; in this event the Right of God must be given.

Beseech ye God -- magnified be His glory -- to grant that His loved ones may be privileged to take a portion from the ocean of His good-pleasure, for this would serve as the means for the salvation of mankind, and may of their own accordance carry out that which would purify them and cause them to attain everlasting life ...

The Primal Point hath said that they should pay Huququ'llah on the value of whatsoever they possess, but notwithstanding, We have in this greatest Dispensation exempted the residence and household furnishings; that is, such furnishings as are needful.

Thou has asked which is to take precedence: the Huququ'llah, the debts of the deceased, or the cost of burial. It is God's command that the cost of burial take precedence, then payment of debts, then the Right of God. Verily He is the One Who will pay due recompense, the All- Rewarding, the All-Generous. If the property is not equal to the debts, the estate must be distributed in direct proportion to each debt. The settlement of debts is a most important command set forth in the Book. Well is it with him who ascendeth unto God, without any obligations to Huququ'llah and to His servants. It is evident that the Huququ'llah hath priority over all other liabilities; however, as a token of mercy, He Who is <p496> the Dawning-Place of Revelation hath commanded that which hath been revealed by His life-giving and omniscient Pen in this Tablet.

1121. It hath been decreed by God that a property which is not lucrative, that is, yieldeth no profit, is not subject to the payment of Huquq. Verily He is the Ordainer, the Bountiful.

1122. The payment of the Right of God is conditional upon one's financial ability. If a person is unable to meet his obligation, God will verily excuse him. He is the All- Forgiving, the All-Generous.

1123. This is the Book of Generosity which hath been revealed by the King of Eternity. Whoso adorneth himself with this virtue hath distinguished himself and will be blessed by the All-Merciful from His exalted Kingdom of Glory. However, despite his high rank and prominent position, were he to pass beyond the limits, he would be regarded among the prodigal by the All-Knowing, the

All- Wise. Cling ye unto moderation. This is the commandment that He Who is the All-Possessing, the Most High hath enjoined upon you in His Generous Book. O ye that are the exponents of generosity and the manifestations thereof! Be generous unto them whom ye find in manifest poverty. O ye that are possessed of riches! Take heed lest outward appearance deter you from benevolent deeds in the path of God, the Lord of all mankind.

Say: I swear by God! No one is despised in the sight of the Almighty for being poor. Rather is he exalted, if he is found to be of them who are patient. Blessed are the poor that are steadfast in patience, and woe betide the rich that hold back Huququ'llah and fail to observe that which is enjoined upon them in His Preserved Tablet. Say: Pride not yourselves on earthly riches ye possess. Reflect upon your end and upon the recompense of your works that hath been ordained in the Book of God, the Exalted, the Mighty. Blessed is the rich man whom earthly possessions have been powerful to hinder from turning unto God, the Lord of all names. Verily he is accounted among the most distinguished of men before God, the Gracious, the All- Knowing.

Say: The appointed Day is come. This is the Springtime of benevolent deeds, were ye of them that comprehend. Strive ye with all your might, O <p497> people, that ye may bring forth that which will truly profit you in the worlds of your Lord, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised.

Say: Hold ye fast unto praiseworthy characteristics and goodly deeds and be not of them that tarry. It behoveth everyone to cleave tenaciously unto that which is conducive to the exaltation of the Cause of God, your Lord, the Mighty, the Powerful.

Say: Behold ye not the world, its changes and chances, and its varying colours? Wherefore are ye satisfied with it and with all the things therein? Open your eyes and be of them that are endued with insight. The day is fast approaching when all these things will have vanished as fast as the lightning, nay even faster. Unto this beareth witness the Lord of the Kingdom in this wondrous Tablet. Wert thou to be enraptured by the uplifting ecstasy of the verses of God, thou wouldst yield thanks unto thy Lord and say: "Praise be unto Thee, O Desire of the hearts of them that hasten to meet Thee!" Rejoice then with exceeding gladness, inasmuch as the Pen of Glory hath turned unto thee and hath revealed in thy honour that which the tongues of creation and the tongues of transcendence are powerless to describe.

1124. They that have kept their promises, fulfilled their obligations, redeemed their pledges and vows, rendered the Trust of God and His Right unto Him -- these are numbered among the inmates of the all-highest Paradise. Thus from His mighty Prison doth the Wronged One announce unto them this glad-tiding. Blessed are the servants and maidservants that have performed their deeds and blessed is the man that hath cleaved tenaciously unto praiseworthy acts and fulfilled that which is enjoined upon him in the Book of God, the Lord of the worlds.

1125. For a number of years Huquq was not accepted. How numerous the offerings that on reaching Our presence were returned to the donors, because they were

not needed then. However in recent years We have, in view of the exigencies of the times, accepted the payment of the Huquq, but have forbidden solicitation thereof. Everyone must have the utmost regard for the dignity of the Word of God and for the exaltation of His Cause. Were a person to offer all the treasures of the earth at the cost of debasing the honour of the Cause of God, were it even less than a grain of mustard, such an offering would not be permissible. All the world hath <p498> belonged and will always belong to God. If one spontaneously offereth Huquq with the utmost joy and radiance it will be acceptable, and not otherwise. The benefit of such deeds reverteth unto the individuals themselves. This measure hath been ordained in view of the necessity for material means, for "averse is God from putting aught into effect through its means." Thus instructions were given to receive the Huquq.

1126. Well is it with those who have met their obligations in respect of the Right of God and observed that which is prescribed in the Book ... This payment of Huquq is conclusively established in the Book of God, yet for a number of years it had been forbidden to receive it. Later, however, in view of certain considerations and in order to arrange some essential matters, permission was granted to accept such payments. Verily He is the Ordainer, the Compassionate, the Forgiving, the Bountiful.

1127. As to the Huququ'llah: This is the source of blessings, and the mainspring of God's loving-kindness and tender love vouchsafed unto men. Verily He can dispense with whatsoever hath been and will be. Until two years ago the matter of Huquq was undisclosed. When it was revealed it was by virtue of His grace. If a person be privileged to fulfil that which is prescribed in the Most Holy Book, it would assuredly be better for him, and to his greater behoof. However the observation of this injunction dependeth upon one's circumstances. Verily He speaketh the truth and guideth aright.

1128. Thou has written concerning the minimum amount of property on which Huququ'llah is payable. This is as set forth to Jinab-i-Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin -- upon him be the glory of the Most Glorious. The minimum sum liable to Huquq is based on the number Nineteen, in accordance with the text of the blessed, the Most Holy Book. Therein reference is made to the amount of Huquq payable and not to the minimum sum on which Huquq falls due. Verily, He is the Expounder both in the Beginning and in the End. Until the present year no mention had been made regarding the Huququ'llah. To wit, this servant[1] had never heard a single word uttered by the Tongue of Holiness as being <p499> indicative of payment of Huquq. However in this year.[2] His binding decree hath been put into effect and His commandment hath shone forth above the horizon of divine Revelation. Thus whosoever is willing to offer Huququ'llah spontaneously and in a spirit of radiant acquiescence it would be graciously accepted.
[1 The amanuensis of Huququ'llah]
[2 1295 A.H. -- 1878 A.D.]

The Trustees should receive these offerings and, as instructed, notify His Holy Presence. Although the Most Holy Book had been revealed some years ago with the injunction concerning the Right of God clearly set forth therein, nevertheless

the permission authorizing receipt of Huquq was not granted until this year. Verily He is the Ordainer, the Omnipotent, the Gracious, the Most Exalted.

1129. Thine intention to pay a visit to the blessed House is acceptable and well-pleasing in the sight of this Wronged One, provided it is accomplished in a spirit of joy and radiance and would not prove contrary to the dictates of wisdom.

Say: O people, the first duty is to recognize the one true God -- magnified be his Glory -- the second is to show forth constancy in His Cause and, after these, one's duty is to purify one's riches and earthly possessions according to that which is prescribed by God. Therefore it beseemeth thee to meet thine obligation to the Right of God first, then to direct thy steps toward His blessed House. This hath been brought to thine attention as a sign of favour.

1130. Whoso is privileged to pay the Right of God will be numbered with such as have observed the ordinances of the one true God -- magnified be His glory -- and have fulfilled that which is set down by the All-Glorious Pen.

Time and again have We written and commanded that no one should solicit such payment. The offering of every person that voluntarily tendereth the Huququ'llah with the utmost joy and pleasure may be accepted, otherwise acceptance was not and is not permissible. Those that are oblivious of their duty should be briefly reminded. Deeds must be performed with willingness and in all circumstances high regard must be given to the dignity of the Cause of God. Formerly We have mentioned <p500> that were a person to possess the whole world and would tender his possessions at the cost of degrading the honour of the Cause, even to the extent of a grain of mustard, it would be essential and imperative to refuse to accept such wealth. Such is the Cause of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Well is it with them that act accordingly.

The ordinance prescribing the payment of Huquq is but a favour vouchsafed by the one true God -- exalted be His glory -- and the benefits arising therefrom shall fall to the donors themselves. It behoveth all to render thanks unto God, the Most Exalted, Who hath graciously enabled them to meet the obligation of Huquq. We held back the Pen for a long period during which no instruction was issued in this respect, until such time as the requirements of His inscrutable wisdom demanded the acceptance of Huquq. "Averse is God from putting aught into effect except through its means." It is essential for certain people to receive aid, and others need attention and care, but all this must take place by the leave of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.

1131. O thou that bearest My Name! God grant that everyone may be graciously aided to honour the Huquq. The Huquq is exclusively assigned unto Him Who is the sovereign Truth, but, as you are aware, there are at present many individuals diligently engaged in the service of the Cause in various regions, who are unable to earn their living. And inasmuch as God hath made the achievement of everything conditional upon material means, therefore the injunction prescribing payment of the Huquq hath been revealed from the heaven of His Will, and the blessings flowing from this deed shall fall to the donors

themselves.

1132. In this day it is incumbent upon everyone to serve the Cause of God, while He who is the Eternal Truth -- exalted be His glory -- hath made the fulfilment of every undertaking on earth dependent on material means. Hence it is enjoined upon every individual to offer that which is the Right of God.

1133. If a person is willing to offer the Right of God, such offering should be received by the Trustees, to whom reference hath been made in the Book of God. This ordinance hath, in view of certain considerations, been revealed from the heaven of divine Revelation as a token of His grace. <p501> The advantages arising therefrom shall fall to the individuals themselves. Verily He speaketh the truth and there is none other God but Him, the Mighty, the Powerful.

The Trustees are present in the land of Ya (Yazd). Whosoever desireth to fulfil that which is enjoined upon him in the Book may refer to them. Any amount received by them will be transmitted. Great is the blessedness of them that observe His bidding.

1134. It is indeed a most excellent favour, a boundless grace vouchsafed unto whosoever is privileged in this day to render service to the Cause of God and to offer the Right of God, for its goodly results and the fruits thereof will last as long as the kingdom of earth and heaven will endure.

1135. O Zayn! It behoveth thee to entreat God to graciously enable His faithful servants to meet the obligation of Huquq. The world is evanescent, and one's life fleeting. Therefore if one is privileged to offer that which is binding upon him, such an act hath ever been and will be nearer to piety and righteousness ... It is incumbent upon everyone to fulfil that which hath been set forth in the Book of God -- exalted be His glory.

1136. The Right of God is an obligation upon everyone. This commandment hath been revealed and set down in the Book by the Pen of Glory. However, it is not permissible to solicit or demand it. If one is privileged to pay the Huquq, and doeth so in a spirit of joy and radiance, such an act is acceptable, and not otherwise. As a reminder to the friends, a general appeal should be made once at the meeting, and that should suffice. They that are assured, steadfast and endowed with insight will act spontaneously and observe what hath been prescribed by God, thereby reaping the benefit of their own deed. Verily, God is independent of all mankind.

The people of God should not be grieved. By the righteousness of God, that which is destined for them is far beyond the power of reckoners to reckon.

1137. Great God! In this glorious Dispensation the treasures laid up by kings and queens are not worthy of mention, nor will they be acceptable <p502> in the presence of God. However, a grain of mustard offered by His loved ones will be extolled in the exalted court of His holiness and invested with the ornament of His acceptance. Immeasurably exalted is His bounty, immeasurably glorified is His majesty. And yet, when an offering was adorned with the glory of His acceptance and reported by Jinab-i-Amin, twice that amount was ordered to be

paid out to the poor and the needy. Unto this beareth witness every fair-minded man of insight, and those that are truthful and trustworthy.

1138. The benefits accruing from benevolent works shall fall to the individuals concerned. In such matters only a word would suffice. Should anyone offer Huquq with utmost joy and radiance, manifesting a spirit of resignation and content, his offering shall be acceptable before God, otherwise He can dispense with all the peoples of the earth ... Well is it with them that have fulfilled that which is prescribed in the Book of God. It is incumbent upon everyone to observe that which God hath purposed, for whatsoever hath been set forth in the Book by the Pen of Glory is an effective means for the purging, the purification and sanctification of the souls of men and the source of prosperity and blessing. Happy are they that have observed His commandments.

Whenever they make reference to the Huquq, let them confine themselves to a mere word uttered for the sake of God and this will suffice; coercion is unnecessary, inasmuch as God hath never wished that those engaged in His service should experience any hardship. Verily He is the Forgiving, the Merciful, The Gracious, the All- Bountiful.... No goodly deed was or will ever be lost, for benevolent acts are treasures preserved with God for the benefit of those who act. Blessed the servant and the maidservant who have fulfilled their obligation in the path of God our Lord, the Lord of all worlds ... The Right of God must be paid whenever possible and should be offered in a spirit of joy and radiance. Those that are unable to pay will be invested with the ornament of His forgiveness.

1139. In this day it is incumbent upon everyone to meet the obligation of the Right of God as far as it lieth in his power. For a number of years it was not permitted to accept the payment of Huquq. Recently, however, We have issued instructions to receive it. Therefore the friends in that region should, as far as possible, collect the payments, and remit the <p503> amounts either to Zaynu'l-Muqarrabin -- upon him be the glory of God -- in Hadba' (Mosul) or to the Trustee of God in the land of Ya (Yazd) who will forward them. The observance of this ordinance hath been and will always be conducive to prosperity, to divine increase and to salvation. Great is the blessedness of him who hath observed that which is prescribed in the Book of God, the Gracious, the Mighty.

1140. And now concerning what thou has mentioned regarding the Huquq. This hath been ordained especially for the one true God -- exalted be His glory -- and should be forwarded to the court of His Holy Presence. In His grasp is the source of authority. He doeth what He pleaseth and ordaineth what He chooseth.

Since thou hast enquired about this subject, the following answer was revealed from the heaven of His tender mercy:

This ordinance is binding upon everyone, and by observing it one will be raised to honour inasmuch as it will serve to purify one's possessions and will impart blessing, and added prosperity. However, the people are as yet ignorant of its significance. They continually endeavour to amass riches by lawful or unlawful

means in order to transmit them to their heirs, and this to what advantage, no one can tell. Say: In this day the true Heir is the Word of God, since the underlying purpose of inheritance is the preservation of the name and traces of men. It is indubitably clear that the passing of centuries and ages will obliterate these signs, while every word that hath streamed from the Pen of Glory in honour of a certain individual will last as long as the dominions of earth and heaven will endure.

1141. If the people had not withheld the Right of God they owe but rather had paid what was due, or would pay it now, they could be recipients of God's loving-kindness. We entreat God to graciously grant them abundance.

1142. This Huquq which hath been mentioned, and the command of which hath issued forth from the horizon of God's Holy Tablet, hath benefits which are the prescribed lot of the individuals themselves. By God! Were the people to know what hath been concealed from their eyes and become fully aware of the ocean of grace which lieth hid within this divine <p504> command, all the people of the world would offer everything they possess in order to be mentioned by Him. Blessed is the man who hath been privileged to observe that which he hath been commanded by God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise....

As bidden by Him, no one is allowed to solicit payment of the Huquq. In the Book of God everyone is enjoined to offer the Huquq spontaneously and in a spirit of joy and fellowship. I beseech Him, the Most Exalted, to graciously enable everyone to do that which is pleasing and acceptable unto Him.

And now concerning the poor, thou has written to ask whether it is permissible to pay them out of the Right of God. This is conditional upon permission having been granted. In each locality where the Right of God is being received, details of it must be submitted to His exalted presence together with a statement describing the position of the needy ones. Verily He doeth what He willeth and ordaineth what He pleaseth. If permission were to be given universally it would lead to strife and give rise to trouble.

1143. It is indubitably clear and evident that whatsoever hath been sent down from the heaven of divine commandment- -magnified be His glory -- is intended to confer benefits upon His servants. The question of Huquq is highly significant. It hath been and will always be conductive to divine increase, prosperity, dignity and honour.... It is obvious and manifest that the whole world is devoid of any real value. On numerous occasions -- and to this everyone here would testify -- large sums have been sent to His holy court but were not adorned with the ornament of His acceptance. At present, however, in view of the ingathering of the friends and the requirements of the time, payment of the Huquq is accepted. The object is to show that this acceptance is but a token of divine favour and a proof of His loving-kindness and tender compassion.

1144. To discharge one's obligations is highly praiseworthy in the sight of God. However, it is not permitted to solicit Huquq from anyone. Beseech ye the one true God to enable His loved ones to offer that which is the Right of God,

inasmuch as the observance of this injunction would cause one's possessions to be purified and protected and would become the means of attracting goodly gifts and heavenly blessings. <p505>

1145. O Samandar! How many are the souls who with the utmost endeavour and effort, collect a handful of worldly goods and greatly rejoice in this act and yet in reality the Pen of the Most High hath decreed this wealth for others; that is, it is not meant to be their lot or it may even fall into the hands of their enemies! We seek shelter in God from such an evident loss. One's life is wasted; by day and by night, troubles are endured, and wealth becometh a source of affliction. Most of the wealth of men is not pure. Should they follow what is revealed by God, they would, in all circumstances, be protected under His bounty and blessed by His mercy.

1146. There can be no doubt that whatsoever hath been revealed from the All-Glorious Pen, be it ordinances of prohibitions, conferreth benefits upon the believers themselves. For example, among the commandments is that of the Huququ'llah. If the people attain the privileges of paying the Huquq, the one true God, exalted by His glory, will of a certainty confer blessing upon them. Moreover, such payment will enable them and their offspring to benefit from their possessions. As thou dost observe, large portions of people's wealth are lost to them as God causeth strangers, or heirs in comparison with whom strangers would have been preferable, to lay hands on their possessions.

God's consummate wisdom is far beyond any description or fitting mention. Verily, people see with their own eyes and yet deny; they are aware, yet they pretend not to know. Had they observed the ordinance of God they would have attained the good of this world and the next.

1147. Someone must needs remind the servants of God, that perchance they may be privileged to meet their obligations of Huquq, thus attaining a sublime station and gaining a reward that would last for ever. The payments for the Huquq should be kept in the custody of a trusted person and a report submitted so that steps may be taken according to the good-pleasure of God.

1148. The question of the Huquq dependeth on the willingness of the individuals themselves. From every true believer who is willing to tender the Right of God spontaneously and with the utmost joy and radiance, the offering is graciously accepted, but not otherwise. Verily, thy Lord is independent of all mankind. Consider that which the All-Merciful hath <p507> revealed in the Qur'an: "O men! Ye are but paupers in need of God, but God is the Self-Sufficient, the All- Praised."[1]
[1 Qur'an 35:12]

At all times one must have the utmost regard for the dignity and honour of the Cause of God.

1149. No one should demand the Huququ'llah. Its payment should depend on the volition of the individuals themselves, namely such souls that are devout, faithful and well disposed, who would make their offerings of Huququ'llah in a

spirit of willing submission and contentment.

1150. It is not permissible to solicit [Huquq]. If anyone offereth something of his own volition, thou mayest accept it, but it is not thine to demand anything from anyone. Verily thy Lord is the All-Bountiful, the Most Generous.

1151. As to what thou hast written concerning the Right of God: The binding injunction of God is set forth in the Book, but this matter is conditional upon the willingness of the individual themselves; inasmuch as the one true God -- magnified be His glory -- hath, by reason of His all- encompassing mercy, acquainted everyone with that which is enjoined in the Book. Well is it with them that act accordingly.

Demanding the Huquq hath never been regarded with favour. Every deed must be performed in a spirit of joy and radiance. If a person is willing to make his offering with utmost contentment, its acceptance is permissible, otherwise our merciful Lord is independent of all mankind. In this day one must observe that which is conductive to the glory, loftiness and exaltation of the Cause of God. Thus hath spoken the Lord of Truth, the knower of things unseen....

O My friend! Were the people to perceive the sweetness of the commandments enjoined by God and to discover the benefits arising therefrom, they would certainly, one and all, carry them out with the utmost joy and eagerness. We entreat the one true God to aid everyone to observe that which is pleasing and acceptable unto Him. Verily, He is the Helper, the Confirmer, the All-Wise.

It hath been enjoined that whatsoever the loved ones of God may offer as gifts for His holy court, should be treated as the donor wisheth, lest the <p507> hearts of the faithful and the souls of the true believers be obscured by the dust of despondency and sorrow. But in the case of gifts that are offered as Huquq it is permissible to have them sold....

At all times and under all conditions one must have high regard for the dignity of the Cause. Solicitation of Huquq is in no wise permitted. Whoso is willing to tender payments for Huquq with the utmost joy, radiance and good- pleasure, his offering may be accepted; otherwise God is the Self-Sufficient, the All-Praised.

Consider that which the All-Merciful hath revealed in the Qur'an -- exalted in His Word: "Some of them injure themselves through evil deeds, others follow a middle course, and others vie with each other in charitable works".[1] Indeed any benefits arising from praiseworthy deeds shall fall to the individuals that have performed them. Were the people to comprehend this truth, they would compete with each other in benevolent works....
[1 Qur'an 35:32]

Ye may relinquish the whole world, but must not forgo even one jot of the dignity of the Cause of God. Such is the divine exhortation that hath been inscribed in the Crimson Book by the Pen of the Most High. Well is it with them that accordingly....

1152. It is the binding command of God that in every locality whatever hath been or will be made available for the Huququ'llah should be submitted to His holy presence. Any instructions issued in this respect should be observed accordingly, so that all matters may be well-ordered.

It is highly pleasing if whatever is prescribed in the Most Holy Book be observed, so that everyone may be invested with the ornament of the purpose of the Best Beloved of the world.

1153. There is no objection to offering for sale that which is donated in the name of Huquq. Thus proclaimeth the All-Glorious Pen from His noble habitation at the behest of the King of Eternity.

1154. Whoso desireth to offer Huququ'llah with the utmost joy and eagerness should pay it to trustworthy persons like unto thyself[1] and obtain <p508> a receipt, so that whatsoever is effected may conform to His sanction and permission. Verily He is Knowing, the Wise.
[1 Haji Abu'l-Hasan-i-Ardikani]

1155. Thou has written that they have pledged themselves to observe maximum austerity in their lives with a view to forwarding the remainder of their income to His exalted presence. This matter was mentioned at His holy court. He said: Let them act with moderation and not impose hardship upon themselves. We would like them both to enjoy a life that is well-pleasing.

1156. Payments for the Huququ'llah cannot be handed over to every person. These words have been uttered by Him Who is the sovereign Truth. The Huququ'llah should be kept in the custody of trusted individuals and forwarded to His holy court through the Trustees of God.

1157. There is a prescribed ruling for the Huququ'llah. After the House of Justice hath come into being, the law thereof will be made manifest, in conformity with the Will of God.

1158. Magnified art Thou, O Lord of the entire creation, the One unto Whom all things must turn. With my inner and outer tongues I bear witness that Thou hast manifested and revealed Thyself, sent down Thy signs, and proclaimed Thy testimonies. I testify to Thy self-sufficiency from aught else except Thee, and Thy sanctity above all earthly things. I entreat Thee by the transcendent glory of Thy Cause and the supreme potency of Thy Word to grant confirmation unto him who desireth to offer what Thou hast prescribed unto him in Thy Book and to observe that which will shed forth the fragrance of Thine acceptance. Verily Thou art the All-Mighty, the All-Gracious, the All- Forgiving, the All-Generous.

II. EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA

1159. As preordained by the Fountainhead of Creation, the temple of the world hath been fashioned after the image and likeness of the human body. In fact each mirroreth forth the image of the other, wert thou but to observe with discerning eyes. By this is meant that even as the human <p509> body is this

world which is outwardly composed of different limbs and organs, is in reality a closely integrated, coherent entity, similarly the structure of the physical world is like unto a single being whose limbs and members are inseparably linked together.

Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly.

Consider for instance how one group of created things constituteth the vegetable kingdom, and another the animal kingdom. Each of these two maketh use of certain elements in the air on which its own life dependeth, while each increaseth the quantity of such elements as are essential for the life of the other. In other words, the growth and development of the vegetable world is impossible without the existence of the animal kingdom, and the maintenance of animal life is inconceivable without the co-operation of the vegetable kingdom. Of like kind are the relationships that exist among all created things. Hence it was stated that co-operation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness.

In surveying the vast range of creation thou shalt perceive that the higher a kingdom of created things is on the arc of ascent, the more conspicuous are the signs and evidences of the truth that co-operation and reciprocity at the level of a higher order are greater than those that exist at the level of a lower order. For example the evident signs of this fundamental reality are more discernible in the vegetable kingdom than in the mineral, and still more manifest in the animal world than in the vegetable.

And thus when contemplating the human world thou beholdest this wondrous phenomenon shining resplendent from all sides with the utmost perfection, inasmuch as in this station acts of co-operation, mutual assistance and reciprocity are not confined to the body and to things that pertain to the material world, but for all conditions, whether physical or <p510> spiritual, such as those related to minds, thoughts, opinions, manners, customs, attitudes, understandings, feelings or other human susceptibilities. In all these thou shouldst find these binding relationships securely established. The more this inter-relationship is strengthened and expanded, the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity. Indeed without these vital ties it would be wholly impossible for the world of humanity to attain true felicity and success.

Now consider, if among the people who are merely the manifestations of the world of being this significant matter is of such importance, how much greater must be the spirit of co-operation and mutual assistance among those who are

the essences of the world of creation, who have sought the sheltering shadow of the heavenly Tree, and are favoured by the manifestations of divine grace; and how the evidences of this spirit should, through their earnest endeavour, their fellowship and concord, become manifest in every sphere of their inner and outer lives, in the realm of the spirit and divine mysteries and in all things related to this world and the next. Thus there can be no doubt that they must be willing even to offer up their lives for each other.

This is the basic principle on which the institution of Huququ'llah is established, inasmuch as its proceeds are dedicated to the furtherance of these ends. Otherwise the one true God hath ever been and will always be independent of all else beside Him. Even as He hath enabled all created things to partake of His boundless grace and loving-kindness, likewise is He able to bestow riches upon His loved ones out of the treasuries of His power. However, the wisdom of this command is that the act of giving is well-pleasing in the sight of God. Consider how well-pleasing must this mighty act be in His estimation that He hath ascribed it unto His Own Self. Rejoice ye then, O people of generosity!

We earnestly hope that in this Most Great Cycle the wondrous attributes of the All-Merciful may, through the infinite bounty and blessings of the King of Glory, find expression in the lives of the servants of God in such wise that the sweet savours thereof will shed fragrance upon all regions.

This matter needeth further details, but We have treated it in brief.

1160. O my heavenly friends! It is certain and evident that the Incomparable One is always praised for His absolute wealth, distinguished <p511> for His all-embracing mercy, characterized by His eternal grace, and known for His gifts to the world of existence. Nonetheless, in accordance with His inscrutable wisdom and in order to apply a unique test to distinguish the friend from the stranger, He hath enjoined the Huquq upon His servants and made it obligatory.

Those who have observed this weighty ordinance have received heavenly blessings and in both worlds their faces have shone radiantly and their nostrils perfumed by the sweet savours of God's tender mercy. One of the tokens of His consummate wisdom is that the payment of the Huquq will enable the donors to become firm and steadfast and will exert a great influence on their hearts and souls. Furthermore the Huquq will be used to charitable purposes.

1161. O friends of 'Abdu'l-Baha! The Lord, as a sign of His infinite bounties, hath graciously favoured His servants by providing for a fixed money offering (Huquq), to be dutifully presented unto Him, though He, the True One and His servants have been at all times independent of all created things, and God verily is the All-Possessing, exalted above the need of any gift from His creatures. This fixed money offering, however, causeth the people to become firm and steadfast and draweth Divine increase upon them.

(The Will & Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha page 15)

1162. As regards the Huquq which hath been explicitly prescribed in the Book: This is intended for the benefit and prosperity of the individuals themselves and is conducive to their happiness and constancy. Otherwise the one true God hath been and will always be self-sufficient in all things.

1163. Thou has enquired about the Huquq. From one's annual income, all expenses during the year are deductible, and on what is left 19% is payable to the Huquq. Thus, a person hath earned 1,000 income out of his business. After deducting his annual expenses of say 600, he would have a surplus of 400 on which Huquq is payable at the rate of 19%. This would amount to 76 to be offered for charitable purposes to the Huquq.

The Huquq is not levied on one's entire possessions each year. A person's wealth may be worth 100,000. How can he be expected to pay Huquq on this property every year? For instance, whatever income thou <p512> hast earned in a particular year, you should deduct from it your expenses during that year. The Huquq will then be payable on the remainder. Possessions on which Huquq was paid the previous year will be exempt from further payment.

1164. In brief, after having deducted the yearly expenses, if there is still any surplus left, then Huquq will be applicable to this surplus at the rate of 19% and no further payment of Huquq will fall due on it. In the following year however, after the annual expenses, if there is still an excess of income over the expenditure of that second year, then Huquq will be applicable to the amount of the excess only.

1165. As to the Huquq, it is payable on whatever is left over after deducting one's yearly expenses. However, any money or possession which is necessary in producing income for one's subsistence, and on which Huquq hath once been paid is exempt from Huquq. This exemption also applieth to a property on which Huquq hath already been paid, and the income of which doth not exceed one's needs.... Disposition of the Huquq, wholly or partly, is permissible, but this should be done by permission of the authority in the Cause to whom all must turn.

1166. Huquq is applied on everything one possesseth. However, if a person hath paid the Huquq on a certain property, and the income from that property is equal to his needs, no Huquq is payable by that person. Huquq is not payable on agricultural tools and equipment, and on animals used in ploughing the land, to the extent that these are necessary.

1167. As to the way the Huquq must be paid: Having deducted the expenses incurred during the year, any excess of income derived from one's property, profession or business is subject to the payment of Huquq.

1168. As to the question of Huquq: In no wise shouldst thou make statements requiring any person to pay the Huquq. However if a devoted and self-sacrificing soul freely and spontaneously offereth thee something in the name of Huquq or for the poor then thou mayest accept. <p513>

1169. According to the explicit text of the Most Holy Book the amounts offered for the Huquq should be deposited in a place and be disbursed, as necessary.

However, thou shouldst not require anyone there to offer the Huquq unless someone is prepared to do so willingly and of his own free choice.

1170. The Blessed Beauty -- may my life be offered up for His Dust -- hath emphasized through His decisive Word that the utmost honesty hath to be observed in matters related to the Huquq. The institution of Huquq is sacred.

1171. A third requisite [for them that take counsel together] is the promulgation of the divine commandments among the friends, such as the Obligatory Prayers, Fasting, Pilgrimage, Huququ'llah and all the other ordinances.

1172. Since the loved ones of God in Persia are regarded as veteran friends, it is by virtue of the tremendous affection I cherish for them that their offerings for Huquq are accepted. They must rejoice exceedingly for having been invested with such a bounty.

1173. Render thou thanks unto God, for He hath graciously enabled thee to observe the injunction set forth in His Most Holy Book, inasmuch as thou hast arisen to fulfil the obligation of Huquq, and God hath accepted thy goodly deed. Know thou, moreover, that those who faithfully serve the All-Merciful will be enriched by Him out of His heavenly treasury, and that the Huquq offering is but a test applied by Him unto His servants and maidservants. Thus every true and sincere believer will offer Huquq to be expended for the relief of the poor, the disabled, the needy, and the orphans, and for other vital needs of the Cause of God, even as Christ did establish a Fund for benevolent purposes.

1174. It behoveth thee to render thanks unto God, inasmuch as He hath aided thee to fulfil the obligations of Huquq. This is a confirmation that God hath vouchsafed unto thee. Therefore yield thou praise unto Him <p514> for the bounty of this divine ordinance which is prescribed in the Epistles of thy Lord, the Ancient of Days. Verily He is the Clement, the Bountiful.

1175. As regards the donation thou hast offered as Huquq, We have received this as if it were a treasure, inasmuch as it was tendered with profound love and devotion. We shall use it soon for His Holy Shrine, that thy name may thereby be immortalized for ever.

III. EXTRACTS FROM AN UTTERANCE OF 'ABDU'L-BAHA

1176. Question: As to the matter of Huquq, does it mean 1/19th of one's net income or one's gross income? For example, in America, there is a tax on the gross income, after certain exemptions are made. How is the Huquq to be worked out? Answer:The substance of 'Abdu'l-Baha's explanation was: After one has paid all his necessary expenses 19% of what is left is then taken by him and given as Huquq. For example, if a person has 100 piastres left after all his expenses have been paid, then 19 piastres are taken as Huquq for the Cause of God. This is done at the end of the year after he has ascertained what his expenses are. For every hundred piastres, 19 are taken for Huquq.

He pays this once, then there is no more Huquq to be paid on that sum. It is finished. Next year he will pay on the amount he has left over in his possession after his expenses have been deducted, and after the amount he paid Huquq on the previous year is also deducted.

For example, at the end of the first year a man who has 1000 piastres left after all his expenses are paid, then 190 piastres are taken as Huquq: at the end of the next year after all expenses are determined, he may have 2000 piastres left. As he has already paid Huquq on 1000 piastres the previous year this sum is deducted from the 2000 and he pays Huquq on 1000 piastres (or 190 piastres). The third year the net amount of what he owns may be 2500 piastres, he deducts 2000 piastres from this amount and pays 19 per cent on 500 piastres or 95 piastres. If at the end of the 4th year he has 2500 Piastres, no Huquq is taken. <p515>

Question: In the deduction of our necessary expenses, are contributions to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, teaching and other activities of the Cause considered a part of Huquq or should they be taken separately?

Answer: 'Abdu'l-Baha replied that Huquq was separate and independent of these and came first. After that had been determined then the other affairs could be looked after. He smiled and said when Huquq is given 'Abdu'l-Baha will ascertain how much of it is for the Mashriqu'l- Adhkar, how much for teaching and how much for the needy, etc.

IV EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

1177. To offer contributions towards this end [in support of the activities of the Spiritual Assembly] is one of the pressing requirements of the Cause of God, is deemed highly essential, and is of fundamental importance. Next to the payment of the Huquq it is the obligation of every Baha'i.

(27 February 1923- translated from the Persian)

V. EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI

1178. Regarding the Huququ'llah...this is applied to one's merchandise, property and income. After deducting the necessary expenses, whatever is left as profit, and is an addition to one's capital, such a sum is subject to Huquq. When one has paid Huquq once on a particular sum, that sum is no longer subject to Huquq, unless it should pass from one person to another. One's residence, and the household furnishings are exempt from Huquq...Huququ'llah is paid to the Centre of the Cause.

(4 April - 3 May 1927 - translated from the Persian)

1179. You will find reference to the Huquq in the Book of Aqdas, manuscript copies of which I believe are to be found among a few believers in America. All matters not specifically provided by Baha'u'llah are to be referred to the Universal House of Justice.

(26 December 1927) <p516>

1180. Concerting Huquq, the guardian wishes me to inform you that at present it is not obligatory for the friends to pay, but that they should be urged to contribute to the local and national funds.

(19 September 1929)

1181. As regards Huquq, it is really 19 per cent of one's income payable to the Guardian. But it is not obligatory now.

(19 December 1929, Dawn of the New Day page 2 7)

1182. You enquired concerning the Huquq. Shoghi Effendi would much prefer if the friends in America concentrate their financial resources towards the completion of the Temple, rather then dissipate their energy along channels that do not as yet call for immediate attention. When the time comes that the Cause would need the enforcement of this religious donation, Shoghi Effendi would say it and would set forth the amount prescribed. It is only gradually that the teachings of Baha'u'llah can be enforced. The time has to become ripe if the desired result is to be obtained.

(15 February 1932)

1183. With reference to your question concerning the "Huquq", Shoghi Effendi wishes me to inform you that, although it has been prescribed by Baha'u'llah and referred to by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament, he is nevertheless reluctant to emphasize it, in view of the paramount necessity of preserving the dignity of the Cause, and also in view of the increasing national expenses of the Faith.

(10 February 1935)

1184. Regarding the subject of Huquq; Shoghi Effendi is reluctant to emphasize it at present, in view of the urgent needs of the Cause in America. But when the time comes for him to explain it to the friends, he will not fail to do so; suffice it to say that the Huquq constitutes nineteen per cent of one's income, and not nine as some seem to think.

(31 May 1937) <p517>

1185. One mithqal consists of nineteen nakhuds. The weight of twenty-four nakhuds equals four and three-fifths grammes. Calculations may be made on this basis.

(17 November 1937)

1186. Concerning your question whether the heirs to whom the principal residence, furniture and clothing of the deceased are transferred by way of inheritance will be exempt from the payment of Huquq or not, he said: Since the residence, furniture and the tools of trade have, in accordance with the explicit Text, been granted exemption from the Huquq, therefore when the transfer of ownership takes place such possessions continue to be exempt.

(29 September 1942 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran - translated from

the Persian)

1187. Regarding the questions raised in your letters: The Huquq is a conscientious obligation; but the Guardian has not felt the time was ripe to stress this in the West.

(24 March 1945)

1188. Great is the recompense that God has ordained for the true and devoted souls, the pure and detached beings who have spontaneously bequeathed a portion of their earthly possessions to the Cause of God, either during their own lifetimes or through their wills, and have had the privilege and honour of discharging their obligations to Huququ'llah. Give assurance on my behalf to the donors and to the survivors of those who have ascended unto God, affirming that these efforts and donations are bound to attract divine confirmations, heavenly blessings and incalculable favours, and to promote the manifold interests of the International Baha'i Community. Well is it with them, inasmuch as God has enabled them to fulfil that which shall elevate their stations in this world and in the world to come.

(23 June 1945 - translated from the Persian)

1189. The Guardian does not wish at present to go into the subject of Huquq; but the general principle is that once you have paid on your capital you don't have to pay it again.

(28 July 1946) <p518>

1190. The paying of the Huquq is a spiritual obligation; the friends must not be obliged by the assemblies to pay it, but they should be encouraged to fulfil this spiritual obligation laid upon them in the Aqdas.

(12 October 1946 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India)

1191. The Huquq is payable to the Guardian individually by the believers; but he has not, in view of the many financial demands of the work the American believers are accomplishing, thought it timely to stress this point. They are free to do as they wish in this matter; later, when the time comes, he will explain fully to them the details of this matter.

(27 March 1949)

1192. Huquq is at the present time the same as the International Fund, and therefore I am sending you a receipt stating it is for the international interests of the Faith.

(8 June 1947)

1193. As regards Huquq: it is the payment of 19 per cent, not one 19th.

(4 October 1950)

VI. EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

1194. Since the Huququ'llah has, according to the injunction in the Book, been

designated as one of the institutions of the Cause, and inasmuch as the fulfilment of this obligation is binding on the people of Baha, therefore it is deemed appropriate that your Spiritual Assembly should fully familiarize the dear friends in Persia with the significance of this momentous responsibility and to promulgate gradually in the entire community such ordinances related to Huququ'llah as are laid down in His perspicuous Book. Obviously in pursuance of the explicit Texts solicitation of the Huququ'llah is not permissible, but it is the responsibility of those Trustees of the Cause to address appeals of a general character to the dear friends, so that they may become more informed about this essential obligation. God willing, through the occasional reminders issued by your Assembly, they may gain the privilege <p519> and honour of achieving this benevolent deed -- a deed that draws forth heavenly blessings, serves as a means of purifying the earthly possessions of the devoted friends, and promotes the international activities of the people of Baha.

The Trustee of the Huququ'llah, the Hand of the Cause of God Dr. 'Ali-Muhammad Varqa, has been asked to designate, whenever advisable, certain representatives for the Huququ'llah in various townships, provinces and neighbouring countries, so that the offering of the Huququ'llah may be facilitated for the friends in those regions.

It is evident to those Trustees of the Merciful that this Body, by virtue of the explicit Text of the sacred Writings, is the Body to which all things must be referred, and the Huququ'llah can be used to promote the interests of the Cause throughout the Baha'i world only with the permission of the Authority in the Cause to which all must turn.

(27 October 1963, to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran - translated from the Persian)

1195. The payment of the Huququ'llah is one of the essential spiritual obligations that the wondrous Pen of Baha'u'llah has laid down in the Most Holy Book.

It would be preferable and more fitting if these two accounts, namely contributions to the Funds and payments of the Huququ'llah were to be kept separate. This means that in the first instance you should pay your Huququ'llah, and then you may offer your devoted contributions at your own discretion to the International Fund which is now being used for achieving the goals of the Nine-Year Plan.

(18 August 1965- translated from the Persian)

1196. Recently one of the friends asked the following question: Were a person to offer his property, partly or wholly, to the Baha'i Funds, what responsibility does he still have for payment of the Huququ'llah?

This is what was stated in reply: The payment of Huququ'llah is one of the essential spiritual obligations of the people of Baha which has been revealed in the Most Holy Book by the Pen of Glory. Therefore the friends should separate the account of Huququ'llah from that of their other contributions.

Thus they must first settle their obligations concerning Huqúqu'llah, then they may make other contributions at their own <p520> discretion, inasmuch as the disposition of the funds of the Huqúqu'llah is subject to decision by the Authority in the Cause to which ail must turn, whereas the purposes of contributions to other Funds may be determined by the donors themselves.

(22 August 1966 - translated from the Persian)

1197. Undoubtedly the friends are illumined with the light of the fear of God and are fully conscious of the need to purify and protect their possessions in accordance with the decisive Words revealed by our Lord, the Most High.

In these turbulent days, we that yearn for Him, fervently turn in prayer to the court of the Lord of mankind that He may graciously enable that august Assembly to repeatedly remind the lovers of the Beauty of the All- Merciful of the vital importance and the binding character of this sacred and heavenly injunction. Through issuing announcements, distributing leaflets and in gatherings, schools and conferences held by the followers of our Zealous Lord, they should be guided and encouraged to observe strictly and conscientiously that which His divine commandment has enjoined upon them, so that those believers who are adorned with the fear of God may be shielded from the dire consequences foreshadowed in His ominous warnings, may become the recipients of His assured blessings and be enabled to partake of the outpourings of His infallible spiritual grace.

(12 September 1969 - translated from the Persian)

1198. Some of the dear friends who observe their Huqúqu'llah obligations have written asking about the relationship that exists between contribution to the Funds and the payment of Huqúqu'llah. That is, if a person who intends to meet his Huqúqu'llah obligations offers contributions to other Funds and projects instead, would be exempted from the payment of Huqúqu'llah or not?

The Holy Texts relevant to this matter are clear but, since this question has been repeatedly asked by the friends, it was decided to elucidate it for their information.

Payment of Huqúqu'llah is a spiritual obligation binding on the people of Baha. The injunction is laid down in the Most Holy Book, and clear and conclusive explanations are embodied in various Tablets. <p521>

Every devoted believer who is able to meet the specified conditions, must pay the Huqúqu'llah, without any exception. Indeed according to the explicit Text of the Most Holy Book, failure to comply with this injunction is regarded as a betrayal of trust, and the divine call: "Whoso dealeth dishonestly with God will in justice be exposed," is a clear reference to such people.

The Centre of the Covenant has affirmed the obligation of Huquq in these words: "The Lord as a sign of His infinite bounties hath graciously favoured His servants by providing for a fixed money offering [Huquq], to be dutifully presented unto Him though He, the True One and His servants have been at all

times independent of all created things."

This weighty ordinance, as testified by the Pen of Glory is invested with incalculable benefit and wisdom. It purifies one's possessions, averts loss and disaster, conduces to prosperity and honour and imparts divine increase and blessing. It is a sacrifice offered for and related to God, and an act of servitude leading to the promotion of His Cause. As affirmed by the Centre of the Covenant, Huquq offerings constitute a test for the believers and enable the friends to become firm and steadfast in faith and certitude.

In brief, payment of Huququ'llah is one of the binding spiritual responsibilities of the followers of Baha'u'llah and the proceeds thereof revert to the Authority in the Cause to whom all must turn. Moreover, the Ancient Beauty -- magnified be His praise -- has affirmed that after the establishment of the Universal House of Justice necessary rulings would be enacted in this connection in conformity with that which God has purposed, and that no one, except the Authority to which all must turn, has the right to dispose of this Fund. In other words, whatever portion of one's wealth is due to the Huququ'llah belongs to the World Centre of the Cause of God, not to the individuals concerned.

Thus the friends should not follow their own volition and judgement in using any of the funds set aside for Huququ'llah for any other purpose, even for charitable contributions of the Faith.

We earnestly hope that everyone may be privileged to observe this sacred and blessed obligation which would ensure the attainment of true happiness and would serve to promote the execution of Baha'i enterprises throughout the world. <p522>

Verily God is Self-Sufficient above the need of His creatures.

(25 October 1970 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran -translated from the Persian)

1199. 'Abdu'l-Baha in one of His Tablets has stated: "Disposition of the Huquq, wholly or partly, is permissible, but this should be done by permission of the authority in the Cause to whom all must turn." The provision in His Will and Testament that the Huququ'llah "is to be offered through the guardian of the Cause of God..." is clearly in accord with this principle. In another Tablet 'Abdu'l-Baha referred to the Universal House of Justice as "the authority to whom all must turn" and it is clear that in the absence of the Guardian it is the supreme and central institution of the Cause. Moreover, before 'Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'u'llah had revealed the following: "There is a prescribed ruling for the Huququ'llah. After the House of Justice hath come into being the law thereof will be made manifest, in conformity with the Will of God." In accordance with these explicit texts it is clearly within the jurisdiction of the Universal House of Justice to decide about the receipt and disbursement of Huququ'llah at the present time.

(2 March 1972 to the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land)

1200. Payment of Huqúqu'llah has not yet been applied to the western world. It will undoubtedly be universal at some future time but at present the believers in the West are able to discharge their material obligations to the Cause by contribution to the Funds.

(12 July 1972)

1201. We are deeply touched by your loving letter of 27 December, 1972 expressing the wish to follow the law of Huqúqu'llah with respect to your inheritance from your mother. Although, as you correctly state, this Law is not at present applicable to the friends in the West, any believer is free to observe it if he wishes.

This Law of the Aqdas stipulates that nineteen per cent of one's capital is payable as Huqúqu'llah when such capital has reached an amount of at least "nineteen mithqals in gold" .... In determining the amount a believer should pay, he should first deduct any debts and expenses he <p523> may have, and pay nineteen per cent of the remainder of his capital if it is equal to at least nineteen mithqals of gold.

If you decide that you wish to observe this Law of the Aqdas at the present time, you should determine the total value of your inheritance in cash and other assets less any expenses or debts you may have, and consider the circumstances under which you may be able to pay Huqúqu'llah on the net value of your inheritance. The time and conditions of payment are left to each individual. For example, if one's assets include property or shares in addition to cash, he may find it disadvantageous or inconvenient to pay nineteen per cent of the value of the non-cash assets until they are disposed of, at which time he would prefer to fulfil this spiritual obligation. Any expenses that may be involved in disposing of one's assets should be deducted before calculating the net value on which Huqúqu'llah is payable.

(21 January 1973)

1202. ... The devoted believer who is privileged to pay "the Right of God", far from seeking excuses for evading this spiritual obligation, will do his utmost to meet it. On the other hand, inasmuch as obedience to this Law is a matter of conscience, and payment of Huqúqu'llah is a voluntary act, it would not be seemly to go beyond informing the Persian friends of their spiritual obligation, and leaving to them to decide what they wish to do about it.

The same principle applies to those friends who spend lavishly on their families, who purchase or build residences and furnish them far in excess of their needs, and rationalize these expenditures in their desire to avoid payment of Huqúqu'llah. Likewise those friends who marry non-Persians and reside in Europe or other countries should not be pressed, but informed and left to decide for themselves.

(26 February 1973)

1203. ... many details in the computation of Huqúqu'llah have been left by

Baha'u'llah to the judgement and conscience of the individual believer. For example, He exempts such household equipment and furnishings as are needful, but He leaves it to the individual to decide which items are necessary and which are not. Contributions to the funds of the Faith cannot be considered as part of one's payment of Huqúqu'llah; <p524> moreover, if one owes Huqúqu'llah and cannot afford to both to pay it and to make contributions to the Fund, the payment of Huqúqu'llah should take priority over making contributions. But as to whether contributions to the Fund may be treated as expenses in calculating the amount of one's assets on which Huqúqu'llah is payable; this is left to the judgement of each individual in the light of his own circumstances.

The Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf that "one mithqal consists of nineteen nakhuds. The weight of twenty-four nakhuds equals four and three-fifths grammes. Calculations may be made on this basis". Nineteen mithqals therefore equal 69.191667 grammes. One troy ounce equals 31.103486 grammes, thus 19 mithqals equal 2.224563 oz. At the current rate of $339.10 per ounce, 19 mithqals of gold would amount to $754.35. Thus on a savings of $754.35 an amount of $143.33 (i.e 19%) would be payable as Huqúqu'llah.

(16 September 1979)

1204. It is clear from the Writings that a person is exempt from paying Huqúqu'llah on his residence and such household and professional equipment as are needful. It is left to the discretion of the individual to decide which items are necessary and which are not. It is obvious that the friends should not spend lavishly on residences and furnishings and rationalize on these expenditures in their desire to avoid payment of Huqúqu'llah. No specific text has been found exempting capital used to earn income. The Universal House of Justice leaves such matters to the consciences of individual believers.

(9 April 1980)

1205. The House of Justice further points out that however weighty are the obligations resting upon the believers to pay the Huqúqu'llah and to support the other funds of the Faith, these are spiritual obligations which are to be fulfilled voluntarily, and under no circumstances may contributions to any of these funds, even the Huqúqu'llah, be demanded or solicited from individual believers. Appeals and exhortations must always be made to the generality of the friends, not to individuals.

(7 May 1980) <p525>

1206. He who after setting aside his annual expenses owns a surplus worth at least nineteen mithqals of gold is liable to the payment of Huqúqu'llah.

(20 October 1981- translated from the Persian)

1207. As to your second question asking whether, where there is perfect understanding between husband and wife and she is empowered to manage her husband's property as well as her own, she could pay the amount of Huqúqu'llah applicable to all their possessions or, since the husband owns a portion of the

property, she could pay only the amount of Huququ'llah on her own share of the property.

In answering this question one should remember that the Huququ'llah is payable on possessions that are indisputably recognized as being one's own and not on property that one merely controls or uses. However, in cases similar to the one you have mentioned above, it is incumbent on husband and wife to take counsel together and to define precisely the limits of their personal belongings, then they should either jointly or individually render to the Huquq the amount they consider to be their binding obligation.

As regards Mrs...., since her husband is an American and the law of Huququ'llah does not apply at this time to the friends in the West, the payment of Huququ'llah on the part of her husband is neither binding nor prohibited.

(10 January 1982- translated from the Persian)

1208. The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 10 September, 1982 enquiring about the responsibility of a Baha'i couple to pay Huququ'llah where one partner is American and the other Persian, and we have been instructed to provide you with the following clarification.

1. Your letter refers to basing the calculation of Huququ'llah on one's income. As you will realize from a study of the texts, however, the computation is made on the net value of one's possessions after deducting a number of exempt items such as residence and necessary furnishings, and on subsequent annual increases to this net property arising from surplus income after the payment of necessary expenses. It is, moreover, calculated on <p526> units of property equal in value to 19 mithqals of gold (2.22456 troy ounces).

2. No hard and fast rule can be laid down as to the share of a couple's property on which Huququ'llah should be paid where one partner is a westerner and the other a Persian. This depends upon the way the husband and wife themselves regard the ownership of the family's property. Thus it is basically a matter for consultation between husband and wife and, as stated previously, Baha'u'llah has left many of the details of computation of Huququ'llah to the judgement of the individual believers.

(11 October 1982)

1209. As to the question raised by Mr...., kindly inform him that in a letter to an individual believer the beloved Guardian explained that Huququ'llah is payable only once on a given property, whether personal or real, but should this property pass from one person to another, such as through inheritance, it becomes again subject to the payment of Huququ'llah. This in effect means that heirs receiving a share of their inheritance from an estate must pay Huququ'llah, if the share they are receiving increases their wealth to a level calling for the discharge of this sacred obligation.

(1 June 1983 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

1210. As regards your question concerning the principal residence and

subsidiary rulings relevant to it, we wish to let you know that in these days it is not deemed advisable to enact detailed rulings for Huqúqu'llah. Thus the friends are left free, and whenever no definite rulings exist they may fulfil in each case that which they understand from the tests, and may honour their Huqúqu'llah obligations according to their own judgement and the promptings of their own conscience.

(4 March 1984 - translated from the Persian) <p527>

VII. EXTRACT FROM A LETTER WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

1211. As you state, the obligation to Huqúqu'llah rests on individual believers, not on corporate bodies, even if these are wholly owned by Baha'is.

On the other hand, if the owners of a company which is entirely Baha'i-owned wish their company to make a donation to Huqúqu'llah, such a contribution is acceptable. It does not, of course, reduce the obligation of the individual believers concerned to pay their own Huqúqu'llah.

There is no objection in principle to a Baha'i's paying money to an agent, requesting that agent to issue a cheque on his behalf in payment of his Huqúqu'llah, whether the agent be an individual, a bank, a limited company or a firm. Such a cheque should be accepted. However, the individual who is thereby fulfilling his obligation to Huqúqu'llah should make clear that this is what he is doing, and the receipt should be issued in his name, not in that of the agent.

(30 March 1989 to an individual believer) <p529>

BAHA'I FUNDS AND CONTRIBUTIONS[1]
[1 Extracts are taken from letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi unless otherwise noted.]

I. Importance of giving

1212. We must be like the fountain or spring that is continually emptying itself of all that it has and is continually being refilled from an invisible source. To be continually giving out for the good of our fellows undeterred by fear of poverty and reliant on the unfailing bounty of the Source of all wealth and all good -- this is the secret of right living.

(Shoghi Effendi, cited in "Baha'i News" 13 (September 1926), p. 1)

1213. And as the progress and extension of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means, it is of absolute necessity that immediately after the establishment of local as well as national Spiritual Assemblies, a Baha'i Fund be established, to be placed under the exclusive control of the Spiritual Assembly. All donations and contributions should be offered to the Treasurer of the Assembly, for the express purpose of promoting the interests of the Cause, throughout that locality or country. It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Baha'u'llah, who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for

the increase of that Fund. The members of the Spiritual Assembly will at their own discretion expend it to promote the Teaching Campaign, to help the needy, to establish educational Baha'i institutions, to extend in every way possible their sphere of service. I cherish the hope that all the friends, realizing the necessity of this measure, will bestir themselves and contribute, however modestly at first, towards the speedy establishment and the increase of that Fund.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 12 March 1923 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" [rev. ed.], (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), pp. 41-42)

1214. That you may reinforce this Teaching Campaign -- so vitally needed in these days -- and conduct, properly and efficiently, the rest of your manifold activities, spiritual as well as humanitarian, it is urgently necessary to establish that Central Fund, which if generously supported <p530> and upheld by individual friends and Local Assemblies, will soon enable you to execute your plans with promptness and vigour.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 6 May 1923 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i' Administration", p. 49)

1215. With regard to the Baha'i Fund, recently established amongst the friends, I trust that the matter now stands clear to every one throughout the country. As I have previously intimated, although individual friends and Local Assemblies are absolutely free to specify the object and purpose of their donations to the National Spiritual Assembly, yet, in my opinion, I regard it of the utmost vital importance that individuals, as well as Local Assemblies, throughout the land should, in view of the paramount importance of National Teaching and as an evidence of their absolute confidence in their national representatives, endeavour, however small at first, to contribute freely towards the upkeep and the increase of the National Baha'i Fund, so that the members of the National Assembly may at their full discretion expend it for whatever they deem urgent and necessary.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 26 November 1923 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration", pp. 53-54)

1216. ...It is for the National Assembly... to exercise its judgement as to what extent the resources at their disposal enable them to aid financially the individual undertakings of the friends. Should the response of the friends and Assemblies to the appeals made on behalf of the National Fund be prompt, sustained, and generous, the National Assembly will, I am certain,justify its sympathy, goodwill and genuine co-operation with every individual Baha'i enterprise. I would, however, at this early stage of our work, strongly urge, nay entreat, the friends not to dissipate their efforts, but to seek, after frank, mature, and continuous deliberation, to arrive at a common conclusion as to the most urgent requirements and needs of the hour, and having unified their

views to strive to uphold and enforce them with promptitude, whole-heartedness, and understanding.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 16 January 1925 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration", pp. 76-77) <p531>

1217. ...That the work of the National Spiritual Assemblies may be efficiently conducted, it is incumbent upon their members to seek if feasible the establishment of an adequate and permanent centre for their activities which would be widely and officially advertised and be recognized as the headquarters of their Secretariat. To it all communications from individual friends and Local Assemblies within its province, from the Holy Land and from foreign countries should be directly addressed. It would be its first duty to keep in close and constant touch, without exception, discrimination or favour, with the various localities and isolated believers in its jurisdiction, and diligently and promptly distribute to them as well as to the friends abroad any matter of common concern and general interest.

That this cherished aim may materialize and the standard of efficiency be maintained, the institution of the National Fund is of paramount importance. I would unceasingly urge the individual believers as well as the Local Assemblies throughout India and Burma to arise with heart and soul and generously and regularly contribute toward the upkeep and the extension of a Fund upon which will greatly depend the success of their endeavours.

I am personally instructing the... Assembly, whose past services, moral as well as financial, to the Cause of Baha'u'llah in India and elsewhere are graven upon my heart, to concentrate their energies upon, and uphold with their resources the twin institutions of the National Spiritual Assembly and the National Fund. I trust that these may soon be enabled to shoulder the burden that is now weighing upon the self-sacrificing friends of....

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 25 March 1925 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma)

1218. As to material sacrifices towards the welfare of the Cause, he wishes you to understand that the general interests of the Cause take precedence over the interests of the particular individuals. For instance contributions to the welfare of individuals are secondary to contributions towards the National and Local Funds and that of the Temple.

This is a general instruction. Of course helping the individuals in case one is able to help, is also desirable and merits appreciation.

(24 November 1925 to two believers) <p532>

1219. In connection with the institution of the National Fund and the budgetary system set forth in the minutes of the National Spiritual Assembly, I feel urged to remind you of the necessity of ever bearing in mind the cardinal principle that all contributions to the Fund are to be purely and strictly

voluntary in character. It should be made clear and evident to every one that any form of compulsion, however slight and indirect, strikes at the very root of the principle underlying the formation of the Fund ever since its inception. While appeals of a general character, carefully-worded and moving and dignified in tone are welcome under all circumstances, it should be left entirely to the discretion of every conscientious believer to decide upon the nature, the amount, and purpose of his or her contribution for the propagation of the Cause.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 10 January 1926 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration", p. 101)

1220. ...The National Fund must be firmly established, generously supported and universally and continuously upheld, for it is the prerequisite of future progress and achievement. The "News Letter" should be extended, widely distributed and utilized as a means to supply information, co-ordinate activities and secure the support of all the believers to the institutions of the Cause. I strongly urge you to ensure the success of these two primary and essential organs of our work.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 25 May 1926 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

1221. In times of disappointment, stress and anxiety, which we must inevitably encounter, we should remember the sufferings of our departed Master. Your work, your energy, your vigilance and care, your loving-kindness are assets that I greatly value and prize. Keep on, persevere, redouble in your efforts, repeat and rewrite the admonitions and instructions of our Beloved in your communications with individuals and Assemblies until they sink in their hearts and minds. This was truly our Beloved's way and method and none better can we ever pursue. Your present pioneer work will surely be remembered and extolled by future generations. My prayers will always be offered for you. In matters of contribution we should not use any compulsion whatsoever and ascertain <p533> clearly the desire of the donor. We should appeal to but not coerce the friends.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 9 July 1926 written on his behalf to an individual believer)

1222. As Baha'is we should follow the prophet's method. We know that the Cause will ultimately conquer and its ranks be fully united. We know that the Master's promises will ultimately be realized, therefore why be discouraged by trivial oppositions we see on our way. We should rather add to our zeal and persist in our prayers and endeavours. Shoghi Effendi has taken the available measures, and, by letter as well as cable, has urged the... friends to give a moral and material support to the National fund. It always takes time for a people to change from one administration to another. Up to the present they have been accustomed to think of the Local Assemblies as next only to the Centre of the Cause, and it will take some time and training before they can

admit another superior. The same problem existed in America and for some time the work of the National body seemed to be paralysed but through personal contact and Shoghi Effendi's incessant reminding that problem has been solved and now we see the National Assembly considered as the only body to undertake matters that are beyond the purely local jurisdiction of the Local Assemblies.

(7 September 1926 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma, published in "Dawn of a New Day" (New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, [1970]), pp. 13-14)

1223. ...I have urged them to support consistently and whole-heartedly the very essential and vital institutions of the National Fund and the National Assembly. It must be made clear to them all that continuous support to these twin institutions is the corner-stone of all future achievements, the mainspring from which all future blessings will flow.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to the above letter)

1224. ...we should, I feel, regard it as an axiom and guiding principle of Baha'i administration that in the conduct of every specific Baha'i activity, as different from undertakings of a humanitarian, philanthropic, or charitable character, which may in future be conducted under Baha'i <p534> auspices, only those who have already identified themselves with the Faith and are regarded as its avowed and unreserved supporters should be invited to join and collaborate.

For apart from the consideration of embarrassing complications which the association of non- believers in the financing of institutions of a strictly Baha'i character may conceivably engender in the administration of the Baha'i community of the future, it should be remembered that these specific Baha'i institutions, which should be viewed in the light of Baha'u'llah's gifts bestowed upon the world, can best function and most powerfully exert their influence in the world only if reared and maintained solely by the support of those who are fully conscious of, and are unreservedly submissive to, the claims inherent in the Revelation of Baha'u'llah.

In cases, however, when a friend or sympathizer of the Faith eagerly insists on a monetary contribution for the promotion of the Faith, such gifts should be accepted and duly acknowledged by the elected representatives of the believers with the express understanding that they would be utilized by them only to reinforce that section of the Baha'i Fund exclusively devoted to philanthropic or charitable purposes.

For as the Faith of Baha'u'llah extends in scope and in influence, and the resources of Baha'i communities correspondingly multiply, it will become increasingly desirable to differentiate between such departments of the Baha'i treasury as minister to the needs of the world at large, and those that are specifically designed to promote the direct interests of the Faith itself.

From this apparent divorce between Baha'i and humanitarian activities it must not however be inferred that the animating purpose of the Faith of Baha'u'llah stands at variance with the aims and objects of the humanitarian and

philanthropic institutions of the day.

Nay, it should be realized by every judicious promoter of the Faith that at such an early stage in the evolution and crystallization of the Cause such discriminating and precautionary measures are inevitable and even necessary if the nascent institutions of the Faith are to emerge triumphant and unimpaired from the present welter of confused and often conflicting interests with which they are surrounded.

This note of warning may not be thought inappropriate at a time when, inflamed by a consuming passion to witness the early completion of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, we may not only be apt to acquiesce in the desire of those who as yet uninitiated into the Cause are willing to lend financial assistance to its institutions, <p535> but may even feel inclined to solicit from them such aid as it is in their power to render.

Ours surely is the paramount duty so to acquit ourselves in the discharge of our most sacred task that in the days to come neither the tongue of the slanderer nor the pen of the malevolent may dare to insinuate that so beauteous, so significant an Edifice has been reared by anything short of the unanimous, the exclusive, and the self-sacrificing strivings of the small yet determined body of the convinced supporters of the Faith of Baha'u'llah.

How delicate our task, how pressing the responsibility that weighs upon us, who are called upon on one hand to preserve inviolate the integrity and the identity of the regenerating Faith of Baha'u'llah, and to vindicate on the other its broad, its humanitarian, its all-embracing principles!

True, we cannot fail to realize at the present stage of our work the extremely limited number of contributors qualified to lend financial support to such a vast, such an elaborate and costly enterprise.

We are fully aware of the many issues and varied Baha'i activities that are unavoidably held in abeyance pending the successful conclusion of the Plan of Unified Action.

We are only too conscious of the pressing need of some sort of befitting and concrete embodiment of the spirit animating the Cause that would stand in the heart of the American Continent both as a witness and as a rallying centre to the manifold activities of a fast growing Faith.

But spurred by these reflections may we not bestir ourselves and resolve as we have never resolved before to hasten by every means in our power the consummation of this all-absorbing yet so meritorious a task?

I beseech you, dear friends, not to allow considerations of number, or the consciousness of the limitation of our resources, or even the experience of inevitable set-backs which every mighty undertaking is bound to encounter, to blur your vision, to dim your hopes, or to paralyse your efforts in the prosecution of your divinely appointed task.

Neither, do I entreat you, to suffer the least deviation into the paths of

expediency and compromise to obstruct those channels of vivifying grace that can alone provide the inspiration and strength vital not only to the successful conduct of its material construction, but to the fulfilment of its high destiny.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 25 October 1929 to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration", pp. 182-84) <p536>

1225. You asked concerning some plans whereby funds could be gathered for the Temple. Shoghi Effendi believes that the best and noblest method is to have free donations that are made spontaneously and with the sense of making some sacrifice in furthering the Cause. It is with sacrifice that this Temple is to be built. This is the truly worthy method. This principle therefore excludes any method whereby the help of non-Baha'is is included. A Baha'i Temple should be built by the Baha'is alone; it is not an ordinary humanitarian activity in which the help of any person could be solicited. Anyhow Shoghi Effendi has fully explained these matters to the National Spiritual Assembly and you could easily refer to them as to further light on the subject.

(14 April 1932 to the Spiritual Assembly of Kenosha, Wisconsin, published in "Baha'i News"[64] (July 1932), p. 4)

1226. Even though Shoghi Effendi would urge every believer to sacrifice as much as possible for the sake of contributing towards the fund of the National Assembly, yet he would discourage the friends to incur debts for that purpose. We are asked to give what we have, not what we do not possess, especially if such an act causes suffering to others. In such matters we should use judgement and wisdom and take into our confidence other devoted Baha'is.

(4 May 1932 to an individual believer)

1227. Shoghi Effendi wishes me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter dated May 8th 1932 telling him of some incidents that transpired during the Convention this year, especially when funds were collected for the Temple. He was very glad to learn of the wonderful spirit that prevailed in those gatherings; for it is only through such a spirit of devotion and sacrifice that the Cause can prosper and its message embrace the whole world.

It was also wonderful to see the interest shown by the public in the general gatherings that formed part of the Convention programme. Shoghi Effendi hopes that as the Temple is gradually completed this interest will increase and they will try to share in the spirit that motivates the friends and, accepting the Faith of Baha'u'llah, arise to serve it, and dedicate their life to its spread. <p537>

Such gatherings for collection of funds are permissible if it is done with a true spirit of sacrifice, not when the audience is especially aroused to a frenzy and mob psychology is used to induce them to pay. Shoghi Effendi has repeatedly stated that no pressure should be used upon the friends, and psychological pressure falls under that category. But there is much difference

between such gatherings, often used by religious bodies, and a true quiet, prayerful atmosphere when a person is of his own accord aroused to make some sacrifice. The distinction is very delicate, but it is for the chairman to use his power to see that one desirable form is not corrupted into the other. All the activities of the Cause should be carried through in a dignified manner. Shoghi Effendi is sure that the funds gathered at the last Convention were not due to the play of mob psychology but to the prayerful attitude of the friends and their desire to make further sacrifice.

(28 May 1932 to an individual believer, published in "Baha'i News" 67 (October 1932), p. 5)

1228. ...Your donations to the Temple as well as the remarkable manner in which you are assisting the believers in their efforts to widen the scope of their publicity work are real and abiding contributions you have made to the Faith. And although at present you are unable to contribute financially as much as you did in former years you should not feel discouraged, much less disappointed. For the best way in which you can effectively support the Temple cause is not through material means but by the moral help which is your primary obligation to extend to those who are in charge of the building of that sacred and unique Edifice. It is devotion, sincerity and genuine enthusiasm which in the long run can ensure the completion of our beloved Temple. Material considerations, though essential, are not the most vital by any means. Had it been otherwise the Temple would have never reached the stage of progress which it has already so well attained. For the resources of the community are limited, and have been severely affected during the last two years by an unprecedented and world-wide economic crisis. But despite all these material obstacles the Temple has made a steady progress and this alone is sufficient to convince every unbiased observer of the divine potency <p538> animating the Faith -- a potency before which all material difficulties must inevitably wane.

(30 December 1933 to two believers)

1229. ...He wishes you particularly to impress the believers with the necessity of maintaining the flow of their contributions to the Temple, and also to stress the importance of the institution of the national Baha'i Fund, which, in these early days of the administrative development of the Faith, is the indispensable medium for the growth and expansion of the Movement. Contributions to this fund constitute, in addition, a practical and effective way whereby every believer can test the measure and character of his faith, and prove in deeds the intensity of his devotion and attachment to the Cause.

(25 September 1934 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i News" 88 (November 1934), pp. 1-2)

1230. ...the Guardian would advise your Assembly to continue impressing upon the believers the necessity of their contributing regularly to the national fund, irrespective of whether there is an emergency to be met or not. Nothing short of a continuous flow of contributions to that fund can, indeed, ensure the financial stability upon which so much of the progress of the institutions

of the Faith must now inevitably depend.

(29 July 1935 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i News" 95 (October 1935), p. 1)

1231. As the activities of the American Baha'i community expand, and its world-wide prestige correspondingly increases, the institution of the national Fund, the bedrock on which all other institutions must necessarily rest and be established, acquires added importance, and should be increasingly supported by the entire body of the believers, both in their individual capacities, and through their collective efforts, whether organized as groups or as Local Assemblies. The supply of funds, in support of the national Treasury, constitutes, at the present time, the life-blood of these nascent institutions which you are labouring to erect. Its importance cannot surely be overestimated. Untold blessings shall no doubt crown every effort directed to that end. I am eagerly and prayerfully <p539> awaiting the news of an unprecedented expansion in so vital an organ of the Administrative Order of our Faith.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to the above letter)

1232. With regard to your question concerning contributions to the Temple fund: the friends should certainly be encouraged and even urged to support financially this, as well as other national institutions of the Cause. But they should, under no circumstances, be required to do so. As to the idea of "giving what one can afford": this does by no means put a limit or even exclude the possibility of self-sacrifice. There can be no limit to one's contributions to the national fund. The more one can give the better it is, especially when such offerings necessitate the sacrifice of other wants and desires on the part of the donor. The harder the sacrifice the more meritorious will it be, of course, in the sight of God. For after all it is not so much the quantity of one's offerings that matters, but rather the measure of deprivation that such offerings entail. It is the spirit, not the mere fact of contributing, that we should always take into account when we stress the necessity for a universal and whole-hearted support of the various funds of the Cause.

(31 December 1935 to an individual believer, published in "Baha'i News" 250 (December 1951), p 1)

1233. Above all he wishes through you to reiterate his wish, already expressed in his recent cable to the National Spiritual Assembly, that the National Fund, which undoubtedly constitutes the bedrock upon which all the activities of the Cause ultimately rest, should receive the continued and whole-hearted support of all the believers. Both the Local Assemblies and the individual believers should realize that unless they contribute regularly and generously to that Fund the progress of the Faith in India and Burma will not only be considerably retarded, but will inevitably come to a standstill. There should be a continual flow of funds to the national treasury of the National Spiritual Assembly, if that body wishes to properly administer the manifold and ever- increasing activities of the Faith. Every Baha'i, no matter how poor, must realize what a

grave responsibility he has to shoulder in this connection, and should have confidence that his spiritual progress as a believer in the World Order of Baha'u'llah will <p540> largely depend upon the measure in which he proves, in deeds, his readiness to support materially the divine institutions of His Faith.

(17 July 1937 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma, published in "Dawn of a New Day", p. 68)

1234. ...Each and every believer, undaunted by the uncertainties, the perils and the financial stringency afflicting the nation, must arise and ensure, to the full measure of his or her capacity, that continuous and abundant flow of funds into the national Treasury, on which the successful prosecution of the Plan must chiefly depend.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 30 January 1938 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America 1932-1946" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1947), p. 11)

1235. Regarding the state of the National Fund, which you have reported is suffering from a general slackness in contributions from both individual believers and the Local Assemblies and groups: It is only evident that unless the flow of donations is regularly maintained by means of generous and continual support by all the believers, individually and collectively, the National Fund will never be able to meet the needs and requirements of the Cause, particularly in these days when the national activities of the American believers are assuming such wide and increasing proportions.

(3 February 1941 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i News" 143 (May 1941), p. 3)

1236. Indeed the splendid spirit that animates the American believers these days is a great source of joy and inspiration of the Guardian, and as the good news comes in of new victories won and new sacrifices made, one can see his spirits rise and a wave of new strength sweep over him -- tired and over-burdened as he so often is.

In this connection the letter you so thoughtfully enclosed from that dear Baha'i who gave the difference in the price of a cheap or expensive coffin to the Fund of the Cause, greatly touched him. Such sacrifices <p541> prove the caliber of the friends and insure the very foundations of the Faith.

(4 May 1941 to the Treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i News" 144 (June 1941), pp. 2-3)

1237. Conscious of the state of the National Fund, and realizing the urgency of the task facing its administrators, I have felt the urge to devote the offering of the American believers to the International Fund to the work which is now vitally facing and challenging the friends in the teaching field. Much as I

appreciated the spirit prompting you and your fellow- members to make this monthly contribution to the Cause at its World Centre, I felt that it was my duty to consecrate this offering, while the Seven Year Plan is still operating, to that vital aspect of teaching upon which its success must ultimately depend. May the friends, in view of the vastness of the field that stretches before them, and the potentialities of their labours within it, and of the glowing promise of future blessings which such a labour must yield, rise to still greater heights of self- sacrifice and evince nobler manifestations of solidarity in the face of the critical situation that so insistently demands their support.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 26 October 1941 to the Treasurer of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i News" 149 (December 1941), p. 2)

1238. ...There is no objection to the... Spiritual Assembly keeping a record of the names of contributors, and sums received; but no pressure must ever be brought on the Baha'is to contribute, it must be voluntary, and should be considered confidential, unless the friends themselves wish to mention it openly.

(26 October 1945 to an individual believer)

1239. Regarding your questions: He does not feel that it is desirable to lay down any conditions for giving to the Baha'i Fund. This is an entirely personal matter, and each believer must act according to his own judgement and the needs of the Faith. In times of crisis, whether in the affairs of the Cause or in one's own family, people naturally behave <p542> differently than under normal circumstances. But decisions in these matters must rest with each individual Baha'i.

(19 October 1947 to an individual believer, published in "Unfolding Destiny: The Messages from the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to the Baha'i Community of the British Isles" (London. Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1981), pp. 447-48)

1240. Regarding the question you raised: in the first place every believer is free to follow the dictates of his own conscience as regards the manner in which he should spend his own money. Secondly, we must always bear in mind that there are so few Baha'is in the world, relative to the world's population, and so many people in need, that even if all of us gave all we had, it would not alleviate more than an infinitesimal amount of suffering. This does not mean we must not help the needy, we should; but our contributions to the Faith are the surest way of lifting once and for all time the burden of hunger and misery from mankind, for it is only through the System of Baha'u'llah- -Divine in origin -- that the world can be gotten on its feet and want, fear, hunger, war, etc., be eliminated. Non-Baha'is cannot contribute to our work or do it for us; so really our first obligation is to support our own teaching work, as this will lead to the healing of the nations.

(8 December 1947 to an individual believer, published in "Baha'i News" 210

(August 1948), p. 3)

1241. Regarding your question about contributions: it is up to the individual to decide; if he wishes to devote a sum to a specific purpose, he is free to do so; but the friends should recognize the fact that too much labelling of contributions will tie the hands of the Assembly and prevent it from meeting its many obligations in various fields of Baha'i activity.

(23 June 1950 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, published in "Messages to Canada" ([Toronto]: National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, 1965), p. 15)

1242. ...He suggests you give the sum you would spend on a world tour to the Cause in memory of your son. Baha'u'llah says that deeds of this nature aid the progress of the soul of the loved, departed one, in the world beyond. Your son died in suffering, in his youth. Perhaps to still have a <p543> part in the most constructive work of this world would bring him extra peace and joy.

(19 September 1951 to an individual believer)

1243. As to your question: the friends can give their contributions to the treasurer, or, if they wish to remain anonymous and give small sums, a receptacle can be provided. The Local Assembly can decide this matter.

(29 September 1951 to an individual believer)

1244. The Guardian feels sure that the contribution which has been made by your friend who has not been active in the Cause for a short time will be the means of stimulating her to renewed service. There is nothing that brings success in the Faith like service. Service is the magnet which draws the divine confirmations. Thus, when a person is active, they are blessed by the Holy Spirit. When they are inactive, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in their being, and thus they are deprived of its healing and quickening rays.

(12 July 1952 to an individual believer)

1245. ...Now is the time to build the World Centre of the Faith, and the friends are not only free, but encouraged to contribute directly to the International and Shrine of the Bab Funds.

Of course it has never been the Guardian's idea that in contributing to the International Funds, the friends would neglect their responsibilities to the Local and National Funds; but it certainly was not his intent that the friends must contribute first to the Local and then the National Funds, before contributing to the international activities of the Faith, which at this time are of paramount importance.

The general principle of contribution by the friends is unchanged, namely, that everyone is free to contribute to whatever funds they wish, and to the degree their conscience and feeling of sacrifice moves them. At this time, however, we must actively bear in mind the many instructions of the Guardian, that we must now build up the international activities of the Faith, and consequently, the

International Funds.

(25 March 1953 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States) <p544>

1246. In your letter of September 28,1953, you mentioned the sum of... as being included in the... allocated from your Assembly's Budget to the World Centre. The principle involved is as follows: The Guardian feels that your Assembly when allocating its annual budget, and having stipulated what sum is for the purposes of the International Centre of the Faith, should immediately pigeon-hole that sum to be at the Guardian's disposal. Any monies received as contributions from the Baha'is for the International Centre should not be credited to this account which represents a national joint contribution, and has nothing to do with individual or local contributions forwarded to the World Centre in your care.

(20 June 1954 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

1247. The contribution which you have made to the International Fund in memory of Mrs.... is greatly appreciated. This will be the means of much happiness to her, that her name will now be connected with the work at the World Centre.

(10 August 1956 to the Spiritual Assembly of Ann Arbor, Michigan)

1248. ...The Guardian feels that now that the new National Assembly has been established, with headquarters in Kampala, the Assembly should establish its own Bank Account. When this is done the moneys you have received for the Kampala Temple should be turned over to them, for deposit in their account. This applies not only to the munificent contribution of Mr...., but also to past contributions which you have received, and any which you may receive in the future.

(10 June 1956 to the Hand of the Cause of God in Africa, Musa Banani)

1249. In the November Minutes of the National Assembly Meeting, page 28, the Guardian has noticed that the National Assembly plans to make a contribution of ... dollars to the Australia and New Zealand Assembly for their Temple. He wishes to know whether this is the contribution that Mrs. Collins has made for that purpose, or whether this is another contribution given from the funds of the National Assembly. If it is Mrs. Collins's contribution, then it should naturally be given under her name.

(15 December 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States) <p545>

1250. ...The institution of the National Fund, so vital and essential for the uninterrupted progress of these activities must, in particular, be assured of the whole- hearted, the ever-increasing and universal support of the mass of believers, for whose welfare, and in whose name, these beneficent activities have been initiated and have been conducted. All, no matter how modest their resources, must participate.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 8 August 1957

written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central and East Africa)

II. The Responsibility of Assemblies in Administering Baha'i Funds

1251. ...The financial questions that confront the Cause are all very pressing and important. They need a judicious administration and wise policy. We should study the needs of the Cause, find which field will give the greatest yield, and then appropriate the necessary funds. And such a task is surely most difficult and responsible.

(19 December 1929 to an individual believer)

1252. Regarding his special contribution to the Teaching Fund: he feels that this is a matter to be left entirely to the discretion of the National Spiritual Assembly. He believes that the continuous expenditure of a considerable sum to provide for travelling expenses of teachers who are in need constitutes in these days the chief obligation of the national fund. An effort should be made to facilitate, as much as possible, the extension of the teaching work by helping those who are financially unable to reach their destination, and once there to encourage them to settle and earn the means of their livelihood.

(14 November 1936 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i News" 105 (February 1937), p. 1)

1253. With regard to your question concerning the National Baha'i Fund: there is nothing in the Declaration of Trust or the By-Laws which prevents the allocation of any funds to any individual who is in dire financial need. But it should be emphasized and clearly understood by the friends that the national interests and requirements of the Cause take absolute precedence over individual and private needs. It is the duty of the National Spiritual Assembly to so dispose of the national Fund as not to <p546> allow the national interests of the Faith to be jeopardized by individual considerations that are obviously transient when compared to the lasting interests of the Cause of God. In rare and exceptional cases, when a believer has absolutely no other means of material sustenance, the National Spiritual Assembly may either contribute towards his expenses from the national Fund, or make a special appeal to the body of the believers to that effect. It is for the family, the civil community and the Local Assembly to administer to such local and private needs of the individual. But in case none of these sources has the means to do so, the National Spiritual Assembly may, if it is convinced of the gravity, urgency and justice of the case, appropriate a part of its fund for that purpose.

(17 July 1937 to an individual believer)

1254. ...The Guardian can only outline to you the principle, which is that Baha'i funds should not be invested in building up a place that has dear associations for a number of the friends, but is not going to really serve a large group of the believers....

The Guardian's point is that National Bodies, when creating national institutions, should use sound judgement, because of the financial investment involved. This is only reasonable.

(8 June 1952 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, published in "Messages to Canada" p. 28)

1255. He urges your Assembly, in addition to expediting the Temple work as much as reasonably possible, to carefully supervise expenditures and prevent the architect from getting extravagant ideas. It is only through a wise economy, the elimination of non-essentials, concentration on essentials and a careful supervision, that the Guardian himself has been able to build the Shrine and the International Archives at the World ('entre, and surround the Holy Places here by what appear in the eyes of the public to be lavish gardens, but are in reality the result of rigorous and economical planning. This will not only ensure that the budget of the Temple is adhered to, but will be a salutary example to the African Baha'is, who must not be led to believe that because the Baha'is of the world are building for them a Temple in the heart of their homelands, our resources are infinite and that the affairs of the Cause can be supported from abroad. The more they see that economy and intelligent <p547> supervision of the work is carried on in connection with their own Temple, the more they will be encouraged to feel some financial responsibility toward their National Body. Having very little themselves, it is a delicate matter, and as he already informed your Assembly, under no circumstances should a heavy budget be imposed upon such weak communities, and thus discourage them from the outset, or lead them to believe that like the Missions, our money comes from abroad.

(8 August 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Central and East Africa)

III. Who can contribute to the Fund?

1256. To offer contributions towards this end [in support of the activities of the Spiritual Assembly] is one of the pressing requirements of the Cause of God, is deemed highly essential, and is of fundamental importance. Next to the payment of the Huquq, it is the obligation of every Baha'i.

(Shoghi Effendi, from a letter dated 27 February 1927 to the Baha'is of the East - translated from the Persian)

1257. I feel that only such goods as are owned by believers, whether made by Baha'is or non-Baha'is, may be sold in the interests of the Temple or any other Baha'i institutions, thus maintaining the general principle that non-believers are not, whether directly or indirectly, expected to contribute to the support of institutions that are of a strictly Baha'i character. As to the manner of the disposal of Baha'i property for such purposes, and the channel through which the sale may be effected, I feel that no rigid rule should be imposed. Individual Baha'is are free to seek the help of private individuals or of Spiritual Assemblies to act as intermediary for such transactions. We should avoid confusion on one hand and maintain efficiency on the other, and lay no

unnecessary restrictions that would fetter individual initiative and enterprise.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 4 January 1929 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i News"31 (April 1929), p. 6)

1258. In regard to Miss...'s contribution to the fund, Shoghi Effendi wishes you to make it quite clear to her that her money-offerings should be made to the Baha'i fund, and not to any individual. This being an important <p548> principle governing all Baha'i publications and publishing societies, it should be duly emphasized and clearly understood, so that no difficulty may appear in the future. Of course, contributions should be accepted only when made by the Baha'is themselves. You should, therefore, first ascertain whether Miss... is a true Baha'i, and then and only then accept her contributions to your book fund.

(14 April 1934 to an individual believer)

1259. The question you have raised in connection with the recommendation made by the Convention delegates this year to the effect of installing a Radio sending station in the Temple involves a fundamental principle governing the Temple Fund which the Guardian has already explained in several communications. He wishes me to stress again that under no circumstances should the believers accept any financial help from non-Baha'is for use in connection with specific administrative activities of the Faith such as the Temple construction fund, and other local or national Baha'i administrative funds. The reason for this is twofold: First because the institutions which the Baha'is are gradually building are in the nature of gifts from Baha'u'llah to the world; and secondly the acceptance of funds from non-believers for specific Baha'i use would, sooner or later, involve the Baha'is in unforeseen complications and difficulties with others, and thus cause incalculable harm to the body of the Cause.

(14 April 1934 to an individual believer)

1260. You may not perhaps know that in connection with all National Assemblies the Guardian is advising that rules and regulations should not be multiplied and new statements on "procedure" issued; we should be elastic in details and rigid in principles; consequently he does not want your Assembly to issue statements of a binding nature unless absolutely necessary. In this connection he will answer your questions about sanctions: there is nothing to object to in paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of your letter of March 4th, but no. 3 is incorrect; it is only those who have been spiritually excommunicated by the Guardian with whom the believers are forbidden to associate, and not a person who is being punished by being deprived of his voting rights. As contributions to Baha'i Funds are used to support the administration of the Faith, they should not be accepted <p549> from those who are deprived of their voting rights; but such believers should not be prevented from being buried in a Baha'i Cemetery or receiving charity -- which we even give to non-Baha'is...

(8 May 1947 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, Pakistan, and Burma, published in "Dawn of a New Day", p. 123)

1261. ...Any Baha'i can give to the Cause's Funds, adult or child. No statement is required on this subject; Baha'i children have always given to the Cause, everywhere. Whatever situation may arise in a class which non-Baha'i children attend is for the teacher of the class to solve. No ruling should be made to cover such things.

(18 August 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

1262. Regarding Mr....'s bequest to the Temple: your Assembly should inform his widow that, because he was not a Baha'i, we cannot use his money for our purposes, as we consider our Faith and its institutions our free gift to humanity; you can, however, and indeed should, accept it for charity and expend it in his name.

(5 July 1950 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, published in "Baha'i News" 236 (October 1950), p. 2)

1263. ...Thank you for the report you enclosed in your letter regarding the Fund, and in this connection he wishes to answer your question about Mrs....'s Trust Fund: We cannot accept money from non-Baha'is for the Cause. It would seem if the family of Mrs.... wish to do this for her (and it is certainly a highly praiseworthy idea) they must take action during her lifetime to establish such a Trust as the property of Mrs...., otherwise the Cause could only accept to use the money for charitable purposes, for Baha'i and non-Baha'i.

(4 October 1950 to an individual believer)

1264. As regards the question of the Baha'i School in India: As this institution is run by Baha'is but for the benefit of both Baha'is and any other group sending its children there, he sees no reason why a school concert should not receive money from the public attending, and use it <p550> for the school itself. It is not the same as a bazaar where the things sold are solely for the Baha'i Fund.

(30 June 1952 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

1265. As regards the question of accepting contributions from people whose voting rights are suspended, the Guardian says this is not permissible.

(21 June 1953 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, Pakistan and Burma, published in "Dawn of a New Day", p. 156)