

"Bahá'í Answers" is intended also to stimulate reading and research on these questions and further research on these question and other fundamental teachings in the Bahá'í Sacred Writings.

The Compiler

7

But, O my brother, when a true seeker determineth to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy. He must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay, from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments. He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth. Even as thou dost witness in this day how most of the people, because of such love and hate, are bereft of the immortal Face, have strayed far from the Embodiments of the divine mysteries, and, shepherdless, are roaming through the wilderness of oblivion and error.

That seeker must at all times put his trust in God, must renounce the peoples of the earth, detach himself from the world of dust, and cleave unto Him Who is the Lord of Lords. He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence, and refrain from idle talk. For the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endure a century.

That seeker should also regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul. He should be content with little, and be freed from all inordinate desire. He should treasure the companionship of those that have renounced the world, and regard avoidance of boastful and worldly people a precious benefit. At the dawn of every day he should commune with God, and with all his soul persevere in the quest of his Beloved. He should consume every wayward thought with the flame of His loving mention, and, with the swiftness of lightning, pass by all else save Him. He should succour the dispossessed, and never withhold his favour from the destitute. He should show kindness to animals, how much more unto his fellow-man, to him who is endowed with the power of ut-

8

terance. He should not hesitate to offer up his life for his Beloved, nor allow the censure of the people to turn him away from the Truth. He should not wish

for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfill. With all his heart should the seeker avoid fellowship with evil doers, and pray for the remission of their sins. He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. How often hath a sinner, at the hour of death, attained to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the celestial Concourse. And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire. Our purpose in revealing these convincing and weighty utterances is to impress upon the seeker that he should regard all else beside God as transient, and count all things save Him, Who is the Object of all adoration, as utter nothingness.

The Kitab-i-Iqan – Book of Certitude - Bahá'u'lláh, , pp. 192-5

9

TABLE OF QUESTIONS

PART I

THE NEW AGE

What is the New Age?

What is the meaning of the "Day of Resurrection?"

Who is the Báb?

What are some of the proofs of the Prophethood of Bahá'u'lláh?

(a) What achievements of Bahá'u'lláh attest His supernatural powers? (b) Substance of His Revelation.

Who is the Lord of Hosts?

Who is Abdu'l-Bahá?

What is understood by the Institution of the Covenant?

(a) Proofs of authenticity. (b) Its character and purpose. (c) Qualifications of Abdu'l-Bahá. (d) Growth of the Faith in the East and West during the ministry of Abdu'l-Bahá.

What are some of the characteristics which distinguish the Bahá'í Faith?

What are the guiding principles of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh as amplified and enunciated by Abdu'l-Bahá?

What is the fundamental basis of Bahá'í Administration?

Through what agency will the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh be safe-guarded from witnessing the breach of unity and the extinction of influence which have befallen all religious hierarchies?

(a) What are the major Bahá'í prohibitions? (b) The standard of conduct?

What is woman's position in the new civilization?

(a) What is the cause of Race Prejudice? (b) What point did Abdu'l-Bahá stress as the cause for unity in America between the black and white races?

What is the solution of the Economic Problem?

What is understood by the procedure of consultation?

How did the people of the world respond to the summons of the Promised One?

What does the unity of the human race imply, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh?

What achievements in the first century of the Bahá'í Faith testify to its divine potency and the authenticity of its

10

institutions? (a) Formative Period. (b) The Administrative Order. (c) Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Bahá. (d) Formal establishment of the Administrative Order. (e) National Assemblies. (f) National Committees. (g) Declaration of Trust. (h) Endowments. (i) Haziratu'l-Quds. (j) Summer Schools. (k) Bahá'í Youth. (l) Other factors. (m) International site – Mt. Carmel. (n) Shrines of Greatest Holy Leaf, Purest Branch and Navváb. (o) First Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West. (p) Significance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

What implications are given as to the destiny of the 'Great Republic of the West' through her labors in the unfoldment of the Divine Plan and the establishment of the Most Great Peace? (a) Abdu'l-Bahá's travels in North America. (b) America's spiritual mission

PART II

SOME TEACHINGS OF THE NEW AGE

What is the wisdom of prayer?

What is the effect of Meditation?

What is Faith?

What is the efficacy of Tests?

What is the station of sacrifice? Martyrdom? Severance?

How is the Reality of Love manifested?

(a) Does Justice play any part in the acknowledgement of the Truth? (b) How is Divine Justice characterized?

What is Capacity?

What is Character?

What is the truth of the theory that existence is an illusion?

How many kinds of pre-existence and of phenomena are there?

Does evil exist?

Wherein is the fallacy of pantheism?

What is the truth of predestination?

What are the two kinds of Fate?

Is Man a free agent?

Have the stars of the heavens any influence upon the human soul?

11

What is the truth about visions and communications with spirits?

What are the four methods of healing without medicine?

What will be the future method of treatment of disease?

What is the proper treatment of criminals?

Why are we admonished to show kindness and mercy to Animals?

What are the fundamentals of Child Training?

Is Marriage a sacrament?

What is the significance of Calamity?

PART III

THE MANIFESTATION

(a) What is the degree of power of the Manifestation of God? (b) Who assigns the Title, Name and Station of the Manifestation?

How shall we comprehend the difference in the sayings of the Manifestations?

Is man's judgment sufficient to interpret the Holy Words?

What signs attend the appearance of a Manifestation?

What proofs attest the validity of a Manifestation?

In what Worlds does the Power of God become manifest through the Manifestation?

Why the necessity of following the teachings of the Divine Manifestations?

What is the Word?

What is the Holy Spirit?

How may the Christ Spirit be defined?

What is the true meaning of The Trinity?

What is meant by "He doeth whatsoever He Willeth?" (He is God)

Are there any proofs of the existence of God?

Is Divine Revelation progressive?

What is the significance of the Prophetic Cycles?

Are the prophecies in the Book of Daniel fulfilled in the Christ, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh?

What distinguishes the two classes of Prophets?

What is the difference between Prophet and Manifestation?

12

What is essential sinlessness? Acquired?

What is the Universal, Divine Mind?

What is religion?

What is the Spirit of Faith?

How may man attain merciful powers?

What are the four methods of acquiring knowledge?

PART IV

THE RATIONAL SOUL

What is the condition and station of Man?

What is the modification of the species?

What is the origin of Man?

What is the difference between Man and the Animal?

What is the cause of differences and varieties of men?

What is meant by Human Reality?

What is the difference between the Reality of Man and his Spirit?

What is the difference between Soul and Spirit?

What is the difference between Mind and Soul?

Where was man before he appeared upon this earth?

What is the wisdom of the Spirit's appearing in the body?

Do souls choose to come to this world?

Does man in the beginning possess Mind and Spirit, or are they an outcome of his evolution?

What is the state of Man after death?

What is the condition of the Spirit after its ascension?

What becomes of the veiled spirits?

Through what means will the Spirit of Man receive help in the Divine World?

What is the significance of "rewards and punishments?"

What is the meaning of "second birth?"

What is understood by baptism?

What is the truth of the story of Adam and Eve?

What are some of the proofs of the immortality of the Spirit?

What is meant by "Return" spoken of by the Prophets?

What is the truth of the theory of reincarnation?

What are the five aspects of Spirit?

13

PART I

THE NEW AGE

1. What is the New Age?

When the holy, divine Manifestations or Prophets appear in the world, a cycle of radiance, an age of mercy dawns. Everything is renewed. ... Consider this present century of radiance, and compare it with the past centuries. What a vast difference exists between them! How minds have developed! How perceptions have deepened! How discoveries have increased! What great projects have been accomplished! How many realities have become manifest! How many mysteries of creation have been probed and penetrated! What is the cause of this? It is through the efficacy of the spiritual springtime in which we are living. Day by day the world attains a new bounty. In this radiant century neither the old customs nor the old sciences, crafts, laws and regulations have remained. The old political principles are undergoing change, and a new body politic is in process of formation. Nevertheless, some whose thoughts are congealed and whose souls are bereft of the light of the Sun of Reality seek to arrest this development in the world of the minds of men. Is this possible? ... If these material tendencies are in such need of reformation, how much greater the need in the world of the human spirit, the world of human thought, perception, virtues and bounties! Is it possible that that need has remained stationary while the world has been advancing in every other condition and direction? It is impossible. ... (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 272-4)

"This is the King of Days, ... the Day that hath seen the coming of the Best-beloved, Him Who through all eternity hath been acclaimed the Desire of the World." "The world of being shineth in this Day with the resplendency of this Divine Revelation. All created things extol its saving grace and sing its praises. The universe is wrapt in an ecstasy of joy and gladness. The Scriptures of past Dispensations celebrate the great jubilee that must needs greet this most great Day of God. Well is it with him that hath lived to see this Day and hath recognized its station." "Were mankind to give heed in a befitting manner to no more than one word of such a praise it would be so

filled with delight as to be overpowered and lost in wonder. Entranced, it would then shine forth resplendent above the horizon of true understanding."

"Be fair, ye peoples of the world, ... is it meet and seemly for you to question the authority of one Whose presence 'He

15

Who conversed with God' (Moses) hath longed to attain, the beauty of Whose countenance 'God's Well-beloved' (Muhammad) had yearned to behold, through the potency of Whose love the 'Spirit of God' (Jesus) ascended to heaven, for Whose sake the 'Primal Point' (the Bab) offered up His life?" "Seize your chance, ... inasmuch as a fleeting moment in this Day excelleth centuries of a bygone age... Neither sun nor moon hath witnessed a day such as this... It is evident that every age in which a Manifestation of God hath lived is divinely ordained and may, in a sense, be characterized as God's appointed Day. This Day, however, is unique and is to be distinguished from those that have preceded it. The designation 'Seal of the Prophets' fully reveals and demonstrates its high station."(The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 106-7)

2. What is the meaning of the "Day of Resurrection?"

When the light of Qur'ánic Revelation was kindled within the chamber of Muhammad's holy heart, He passed upon the people the verdict of the Last Day, the verdict of resurrection, of judgment, of life, and of death. Thereupon the standards of revolt were hoisted, and the doors of derision opened.... Nay, by "trumpet" is meant the trumpet-call of Muhammad's Revelation, which was sounded in the heart of the universe, and by "resurrection" is meant His own rise to proclaim the Cause of God. He bade the erring and wayward arise and speed out of the sepulchres of their bodies, arrayed them with the beauteous robe of faith, and quickened them with the breath of a new and wondrous life.... Such things have come to pass in the days of every Manifestation of God. Even as Jesus said: "Ye must be born again." (John 3:7) ... he purport of these words is that whosoever in every dispensation is born of the Spirit and is quickened by the breath of the Manifestation of Holiness, he verily is of those that have attained unto "life" and "resurrection" and have entered into the "paradise" of the love of God. And whosoever is not of them, is condemned to "death" and "deprivation," to the "fire" of unbelief, and to the "wrath" of God. ...

Therefore, whosoever, and in whatever Dispensation, hath recognized and attained unto the presence of these glorious, these resplendent and most excellent Luminaries, hath verily attained unto the "Presence of God" Himself, and entered the city of eternal and immortal life. Attainment unto such presence is possible only in the Day of Resurrection, which is the Day of the rise of God Himself through His all-embracing Revelation. This is the meaning of the "Day of Resurrection," spoken of in all

16

the scriptures, and announced unto all people. (The Kitáb-i-Iqán, p. 114-143)

A tempest, unprecedented in its violence, unpredictable in its course,

catastrophic in its immediate effects, unimaginably glorious in its ultimate consequences, is at present sweeping the face of the earth. Its driving power is remorselessly gaining in range and momentum. Its cleansing force, however much undetected, is increasing with every passing day ...

Dear friends! The powerful operations of this titanic upheaval are comprehensible to none except such as have recognized the claims of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb. Their followers know full well whence it comes, and what it will ultimately lead to. Though ignorant of how far it will reach, they clearly recognize its genesis, are aware of its direction, acknowledge its necessity, observe confidently its mysterious processes, ardently pray for the mitigation of its severity, intelligently labor to assuage its fury, and anticipate, with undimmed vision, the consummation of the fears and the hopes it must necessarily engender.

This judgment of God, as viewed by those who have recognized Bahá'u'lláh as His Mouthpiece and His greatest Messenger on earth, is both a retributory calamity and an act of holy and supreme discipline. It is at once a visitation from God and a cleansing process for all mankind. Its fires punish the perversity of the human race, and weld its component parts into one organic, indivisible, world-embracing community. Mankind, in these fateful years, which at once signalize the passing of the first century of the Bahá'í Era and proclaim the opening of a new one, is, as ordained by Him Who is both the Judge and the Redeemer of the human race, being simultaneously called upon to give account of its past actions, and is being purged and prepared for its future mission. It can neither escape the responsibilities of the past, nor shirk those of the future. God, the Vigilant, the Just, the Loving, the All-Wise Ordainer, can, in this supreme Dispensation, neither allow the sins of an unregenerate humanity, whether of omission or of commission, to go unpunished, nor will He be willing to abandon His children to their fate, and refuse them that culminating and blissful stage in their long, their slow and painful evolution throughout the ages, which is at once their inalienable right and their true destiny. (The Promised Day is Come, p. 1-3)

The world is, in truth, moving on towards its destiny. The interdependence of the peoples and nations of the earth,

17

whatever the leaders of the divisive forces of the world may say or do, is already an accomplished fact. Its unity in the economic sphere is now understood and recognized. The welfare of the part means the welfare of the whole, and the distress of the part brings distress to the whole. The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh has, in His own words, "lent a fresh impulse and set a new direction" to this vast process now operating in the world. The fires lit by this great ordeal are the consequences of men's failure to recognize it. They are, moreover, hastening its consummation. Adversity, prolonged, worldwide, afflictive, allied to chaos and universal destruction, must needs convulse the nations, stir the conscience of the world, disillusion the masses,

precipitate a radical change in the very conception of society, and coalesce ultimately the disjointed, the bleeding limbs of mankind into one body, single, organically united, and indivisible. (The Promised Day is Come, p. 127)

The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence. To this most excellent aim, this supreme objective, all the heavenly Books and the divinely-revealed and weighty Scriptures unequivocally bear witness. ... Whoso hath failed to recognize Him will have condemned himself to the misery of remoteness, a remoteness which is naught but utter nothingness and the essence of the nethermost fire. Such will be his fate, though to outward seeming he may occupy the earth's loftiest seats and be established upon its most exalted throne.

He Who is the Day Spring of Truth is, no doubt, fully capable of rescuing from such remoteness wayward souls and of causing them to draw nigh unto His court and attain His Presence. "If God had pleased He had surely made all men one people." His purpose, however, is to enable the pure in spirit and the detached in heart to ascend, by virtue of their own innate powers, unto the shores of the Most Great Ocean, that thereby they who seek the Beauty of the All-Glorious may be distinguished and separated from the wayward and perverse. ... (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 70-71)

3. Who is the Báb?

That the Báb, the inaugurator of the Bábí Dispensation, is fully entitled to rank as one of the self-sufficient Manifestations of God, that He has been invested with sovereign power and authority, and exercises all the rights and prerogatives of independent Prophethood, is yet another fundamental verity which

18

the Message of Bahá'u'lláh insistently proclaims and which its followers must uncompromisingly uphold. That He is not to be regarded merely as an inspired Precursor of the Bahá'í Revelation, that in His person, as He Himself bears witness in the Persian Bayan, the object of all the Prophets gone before Him has been fulfilled, is a truth which I feel it my duty to demonstrate and emphasize. ... Indeed the chief motive actuating me to undertake the task of editing and translating Nabil's immortal Narrative has been to enable every follower of the Faith in the West to better understand and more readily grasp the tremendous implications of His exalted station and to more ardently admire and love Him.

There can be no doubt that the claim to the twofold station ordained for the Báb by the Almighty, a claim which He Himself has so boldly advanced, which Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly affirmed, and to which the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has finally given the sanction of its testimony, constitutes the most distinctive feature of the Bahá'í Dispensation. It is a further evidence of its uniqueness, a tremendous accession to the strength, to the mysterious power and authority with which this holy cycle has been invested. Indeed the

greatness of the Báb consists primarily, not in His being the divinely-appointed Forerunner of so transcendent a Revelation, but rather in His having been invested with the powers inherent in the inaugurator of a separate religious Dispensation, and in His wielding, to a degree unrivaled by the Messengers gone before Him, the scepter of independent Prophethood.

The short duration of His Dispensation, the restricted range within which His laws and ordinances have been made to operate, supply no criterion whatever wherewith to judge its Divine origin and to evaluate the potency of its message.

"That so brief a span," Bahá'u'lláh Himself explains, "should have separated this most mighty and wondrous Revelation from Mine own previous Manifestation, is a secret that no man can unravel and a mystery such as no mind can fathom. Its duration had been foreordained, and no man shall ever discover its reason unless and until he be informed of the contents of My Hidden Book." "Behold," Bahá'u'lláh further explains in the Kitáb-i-Badí',... "how immediately upon the completion of the ninth year of this wondrous, this most holy and merciful Dispensation, the requisite number of pure, of wholly consecrated and sanctified souls had been most secretly consummated."

19

Commenting on the character and influence of those heroes and martyrs whom the spirit of the Báb had so magically transformed Bahá'u'lláh reveals the following: "If these companions be not the true strivers after God, who else could be called by this name?... If these companions, with all their marvelous testimonies and wondrous works, be false, who then is worthy to claim for himself the truth?... Has the world since the days of Adam witnessed such tumult, such violent commotion?... Methinks, patience was revealed only by virtue of their fortitude, and faithfulness itself was begotten only by their deeds."

Wishing to stress the sublimity of the Báb's exalted station as compared with that of the Prophets of the past, Bahá'u'lláh in that same epistle asserts:

"No understanding can grasp the nature of His Revelation, nor can any knowledge comprehend the full measure of His Faith." ... "Knowledge is twenty and seven letters. All that the Prophets have revealed are two letters thereof. No man thus far hath known more than these two letters. But when the Qá'im shall arise, He will cause the remaining twenty and five letters to be made manifest."

"I am the Primal Point," the Báb thus addresses Muhammad Shah from the prison-fortress of Mah-Ku, "from which have been generated all created things... I am the Countenance of God Whose splendor can never be obscured, the light of God whose radiance can never fade... All the keys of heaven God hath chosen to place on My right hand, and all the keys of hell on My left... I am one of the sustaining pillars of the Primal Word of God. Whosoever hath recognized Me, hath known all that is true and right, and hath attained all that is good and seemly... The substance wherewith God hath created Me is not the clay out of which others have been formed. He hath conferred upon Me that

which the worldly-wise can never comprehend, nor the faithful discover..." To these authoritative assertions and solemn declarations made by Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb must be added 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own incontrovertible testimony ...:

"The Revelation of the Báb may be likened to the sun, its station corresponding to the first sign of the Zodiac -- the sign Aries -- which the sun enters at the Vernal Equinox. The station of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, on the other hand, is represented by the sign Leo, the sun's mid-summer and highest station..."

"The Báb, the Exalted One," 'Abdu'l-Bahá more specifically affirms in another Tablet, "is the Morn of Truth, the splendor of Whose light shineth throughout all regions. He is also the Harbinger of the Most Great Light, the Abha Luminary. The

20

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." – (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh p. 123-127)

4. What are some of the proofs of the Prophethood of Bahá'u'lláh?

Rational Proofs:

When His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh appeared in Persia, all the contemporaneous religious sects and systems rose against Him. His enemies were kings... who could command armies and bring hundreds of thousands of soldiers into the arena of operation. These kings represented some fifty million people, all of whom under their influence and domination were opposed to Bahá'u'lláh. ... Yet these great numbers, instead of being able to dominate Him, could not withstand His wonderful personality and the power and influence of His heavenly Cause.... They made every effort to lessen His greatness, but His prestige and renown grew in proportion to their endeavors to diminish it. Surrounded by enemies who were seeking His life, He never sought to conceal Himself, did nothing to protect Himself; on the contrary, in His spiritual might and power He was at all times visible before the faces of men, easy of access, serenely withstanding the multitudes who were opposing Him..... But during the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, from the day of His appearance to the time of His departure, the people of all nations 436 acknowledged His greatness, and even those who were His most bitter enemies have said of Him, "This man was truly great; his influence was mighty and wonderful. This personage was glorious; his power was tremendous, his speech most eloquent; but, alas, he was a misleader of the people...."

His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh, speaking of these very ones who were attacking and decrying Him, said, "They are My heralds."

(The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 426-432)

If you had come to this blessed place in the days of the manifestation of the evident Light,[Bahá'u'lláh] if you had attained to the court of His presence, and had witnessed His luminous beauty, you would have understood that His teachings and perfection were not in need of further evidence....But now, as that Light of Reality has set, all are in need of proofs; so we have undertaken to demonstrate rational proofs of the truth of His claim. We will cite another which alone is

21

sufficient for all who are just, and which no one can deny. It is that this illustrious Being uplifted His Cause in the "Greatest Prison" from this Prison His light was shed abroad, His fame conquered the world, and the proclamation of His glory reached the East and West. Until our time no such thing has ever occurred. (Some Answered Questions, p. 43-4)

The Persian government believed the banishment of the Blessed Perfection from Persia would be the extermination of His Cause in that country. These rulers now realized that it spread more rapidly.... Read it and consider: one prisoner, single and solitary, without assistant or defender, a foreigner and stranger imprisoned in the fortress of 'Akká, writing such letters to the Emperor of France and Sultan of Turkey. Reflect upon this: how Bahá'u'lláh upraised the standard of His Cause in prison. Refer to history. It is without parallel. No such thing has happened before that time nor since -- a prisoner and an exile advancing His Cause and spreading His teachings broadcast so that eventually He became powerful enough to conquer the very king who banished Him.... The Blessed Perfection was a prisoner twenty-five years..... He was persecuted, mocked and put in chains. In Persia His properties were pillaged and His possessions confiscated. First, there was banishment from Persia to Baghdad, then to Constantinople, then to Adrianople, finally from Rumelia to the prison fortress of 'Akká. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 25-6)

...Mention of the sorrows, the imprisonment and afflictions inflicted upon that Essence of divine virtue hath been made in the former traditions. In the "Bihar" it is recorded: "In our Qá'im there shall be four signs from four Prophets, Moses, Jesus, Joseph, and Muhammad. The sign from Moses, is fear and expectation; from Jesus, that which was spoken of Him; from Joseph, imprisonment and dissimulation; from Muhammad, the revelation of a Book similar to the Qur'án." ... "God indeed shall make whom He will to hearken, but We shall not make those who are in their graves to hearken." (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 254)

I do not wish to mention the miracles of Bahá'u'lláh....We do not recount them, as they do not constitute proofs and evidences for all the peoples.... Most of the miracles of the Prophets which are mentioned have an inner significance.... Until now, all that we have spoken of are logical proofs.... (Some Answered Questions, p. 43-5)

22

Traditional Proofs:

... All (religions) are promised two Manifestations, Who will come, one following on the other. It has been prophesied that in the time of these two Manifestations the earth will be transformed, the world of existence will be renewed, and beings will be clothed in new garments. Justice and truth will encompass the world.... All the regions of the earth will become one; the superstitions caused by races, countries, individuals, languages and politics will disappear; and all men will attain to life eternal, under the shadow of the Lord of Hosts..... (Some Answered Questions, p. 46)

Some Prophecies and Allusions to Bahá'u'lláh in Former Books:

He Who in such dramatic circumstances was made to sustain the overpowering weight of so glorious a Mission was none other than the One Whom posterity will acclaim, and Whom innumerable followers already recognize, as the Judge, the Lawgiver and Redeemer of all mankind, as the Organizer of the entire planet, as the Unifier of the children of men, as the Inaugurator of the long-awaited millennium, as the Originator of a new "Universal Cycle," as the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, as the Fountain of the Most Great Justice, as the Proclaimer of the coming of age of the entire human race, as the Creator of a new World Order, and as the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization.

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 Shí'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.

... He derived His descent, on the one hand, from Abraham (the Father of the Faithful) through his wife Katurah, and on the other from Zoroaster, as well as from Yazdigird, the last king of the Sasanian dynasty. He was moreover a descendant of Jesse, and belonged, through His father, Mirza Abbas, better known as Mirza Buzurg -- a nobleman closely associated with the ministerial circles of the Court of Fath-'Ali Shah -- to one of the most ancient and renowned families of Mazindaran.

... To Him Isaiah, the greatest of the Jewish prophets, had alluded as the "Glory of the Lord," the "Everlasting Father," the "Prince of Peace," the "Wonderful," the "Counsellor," the "Rod

23

come forth out of the stem of Jesse" and the "Branch grown out of His roots," Who "shall be established upon the throne of David," Who "will come with strong hand," Who "shall judge among the nations," Who "shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slay the wicked," and Who "shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." Of Him David had sung in his Psalms, acclaiming Him as the "Lord of Hosts" and the "King of Glory." To Him Haggai

had referred as the "Desire of all nations," and Zachariah as the "Branch" Who "shall grow up out of His place," and "shall build the Temple of the Lord." Ezekiel had extolled Him as the "Lord" Who "shall be king over all the earth,"...

To Him Jesus Christ had referred as the "Prince of this world," as the "Comforter" Who will "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," as the "Spirit of Truth" Who "will guide you into all truth," Who "shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak," as the "Lord of the Vineyard," and as the "Son of Man" Who "shall come in the glory of His Father" "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," with "all the holy angels" about Him, and "all nations" gathered before His throne. To Him the Author of the Apocalypse had alluded as the "Glory of God," as "Alpha and Omega," "the Beginning and the End," "the First and the Last..."

To Him Muhammad... had alluded in His Book as the "Great Announcement," and declared His Day to be the "Last Day," the "Day of God," the "Day of Judgment," the "Day of Reckoning," the "Day of Mutual Deceit... Day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of the world"... the Day when "all that are in the heavens and all that are on the earth shall be terror-stricken, save him whom God pleaseth to deliver"....

The Báb had no less significantly extolled Him as the "Essence of Being," as the "Remnant of God," as the "Omnipotent Master," as the "Crimson, all-encompassing Light," as "Lord of the visible and invisible," as the "sole Object of all previous Revelations, including The Revelation of the Qá'im Himself"...

He had, moreover, declared that He was the "first servant to believe in Him,"... that "the year-old germ that holdeth within itself the potentialities of the Revelation that is to come is endowed with a potency superior to the combined forces of the whole of the Bayan."

"He around Whom the Point of the Bayan (Bab) hath re-

24

volv'd is come" is Bahá'u'lláh's confirmatory testimony to the inconceivable greatness and preeminent character of His own Revelation.... "This," He furthermore declares, "is the king of days," the "Day of God Himself," the "Day which shall never be followed by night," the "Springtime which autumn will never overtake," "the eye to past ages and centuries," for which "the soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted," for which "all the divers kindreds of the earth have yearned,"... "In this most mighty Revelation," He moreover, states, "all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation."...

And last but not least is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own tribute... "The mere contemplation of the Dispensation inaugurated by the Blessed Beauty," He furthermore affirms, "would have sufficed to overwhelm the saints of bygone

ages -- saints who longed to partake for one moment of its great glory." ...

The process whereby the effulgence of so dazzling a Revelation was unfolded to the eyes of men was of necessity slow and gradual....A period of no less than ten years had to elapse ere its far-reaching implications could be directly divulged to even those who had been intimately associated with Him.... All He did, in the course of this pre-ordained interval, was to hint, in veiled and allegorical language, in epistles, commentaries, prayers and treatises, which He was moved to reveal, that the Báb's promise had already been fulfilled, and that He Himself was the One Who had been chosen to redeem it. (God Passes By, p. 93-103)

5(a) What achievements of Bahá'u'lláh attest His supernatural powers?

(b) Substance of His Revelation.

Bahá'u'lláh appeared at a time when the Persian Empire was immersed in profound obscurantism and ignorance, and lost in the blindest fanaticism.

He arose to assist the Báb, and gave many proofs and positive evidences of His truth....Not for one moment was He in concealment; He mixed openly with the enemies.

In many changes and chances He endured the greatest misfortunes, and at every moment He ran the risk of being martyred. He was put into chains and confined in an underground prison. His vast property and inheritance were pillaged and confiscated. He was exiled from place to place four times, and found rest only in the 'Greatest Prison.'

25

He manifested such virtue, knowledge and perfections that He became a wonder to all the people of Persia.

His enemies intended that His imprisonment should completely destroy and annihilate the blessed Cause, but this prison was in reality of the greatest assistance and became means of its development.

For fifty years Bahá'u'lláh faced His enemies like a mountain; all wished to annihilate Him and sought His destruction...they planned to crucify and destroy Him, and during those fifty years He was in constant danger....How many times it happened that one of His most bitter enemies would resolve within himself: "I will say such and such things when I reach His presence, and I will dispute and argue thus with Him," but when he entered the Holy Presence he would become amazed and confounded and remain speechless.

If we carefully examine the text of the Bible, we see that the Divine manifestation never said to those who denied Him: "Whatever miracles you desire, I am ready to perform, and I will submit to whatever test you propose." But in the Epistle to the Shah, Bahá'u'lláh said clearly, "Gather the 'ulama, and summon Me, that the evidences and proofs may be established." Although you have no right to ask this, for God should test His creatures, and they should

not test God, still I allow and accept this request. But the Cause of God is not a theatrical display that is presented every hour, of which some new diversion may be asked for every day. If it were thus, the Cause of God would become mere child's play."

At the present day Bahá'u'lláh has educated thousands of souls who, while under the menace of the sword, raised to the heavens the cry of 'Ya Bahá u'l Abhá and in the fire of tests their faces became illumined like gold

We must be just, and acknowledge what an educator this Glorious Being was, what marvelous signs were manifested by Him, and what power and might have been realized in the world through Him. (Some Answered Questions, p. 32-42)

Substance of His Revelation (Adrianople)

A period of prodigious activity ensued which, in its repercussions, outshone the vernal years of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry.

26

"Day and night," an eye-witness has written, "the Divine verses were raining down in such number that it was impossible to record them. Mirza Aqa Jan wrote them as they were dictated, while the Most Great Branch was continually occupied in transcribing them. There was not a moment to spare." "A number of secretaries," Nabil has testified, "were busy day and night and yet they were unable to cope with the task. Among them was Mirza Baqir-i-Shirazi.... He alone transcribed no less than two thousand verses every day. He labored during six or seven months. Every month the equivalent of several volumes would be transcribed by him and sent to Persia. About twenty volumes, in his fine penmanship, he left behind as a remembrance for Mirza Aqa Jan." Bahá'u'lláh, Himself, referring to the verses revealed by Him, has written: "Such are the outpourings ... from the clouds of Divine Bounty that within the space of an hour the equivalent of a thousand verses hath been revealed." "So great is the grace vouchsafed in this day that in a single day and night, were an amanuensis capable of accomplishing it to be found, the equivalent of the Persian Bayan would be sent down from the heaven of Divine holiness." "I swear by God!" He, in another connection has affirmed, "In those days the equivalent of all that hath been sent down aforetime unto the Prophets hath been revealed." "That which hath already been revealed in this land (Adrianople)," He, furthermore, referring to the copiousness of His writings, has declared, "secretaries are incapable of transcribing. It has, therefore, remained for the most part untranscribed."

.... Tablets unnumbered were streaming from the pen of Bahá'u'lláh, in which the implications of His newly-asserted claims were fully expounded.... The Suriy-i-Mulúk, the most momentous Tablet revealed by Bahá'u'lláh (Surih of Kings) in which He, for the first time, directs His words collectively to the entire company of the monarchs of East and West, and in which the Sultan of Turkey, and his ministers, the kings of Christendom, the French and Persian Ambassadors accredited to the Sublime Porte, the Muslim 172 ecclesiastical

leaders in Constantinople, its wise men and inhabitants, the people of Persia and the philosophers of the world are separately addressed; the Kitáb-i-Badí', His apologia, written to refute the accusations levelled against Him by Mirza Mihdiy-i-Rashti, corresponding to the Kitáb-i-Íqán, revealed in defense of the Bábí Revelation; the Munajathay-i-Siyam (Prayers for Fasting), written in anticipation of the Book of His Laws; the first Tablet to Napoleon III, in which the Emperor of the French is addressed and the sincerity of his professions put to the test; the Lawh-i-Sultán, His detailed epistle to Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, in which the aims, pur-

27

poses and principles of His Faith are expounded and the validity of His Mission demonstrated; the Suriy-i-Ra'is, begun in the village of Kashanih on His way to Gallipoli, and completed shortly after at Gyawur-Kyuy -- these may be regarded not only as the most outstanding among the innumerable Tablets revealed in Adrianople, but as occupying a foremost position among all the writings of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation.

In His message to the kings of the earth, Bahá'u'lláh, in the Suriy-i-Mulúk, discloses the character of His Mission; exhorts them to embrace His Message; affirms the validity of the Báb's Revelation; reproves them for their indifference to His Cause; enjoins them to be just and vigilant, to compose their differences and reduce their armaments; expatiates on His afflictions; commends the poor to their care; warns them that "Divine chastisement" will "assail" them "from every direction," if they refuse to heed His counsels, and prophesies His "triumph upon earth" though no king be found who would turn his face towards Him. (God Passes By p. 170-2)

Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

... Alluded to in the Kitáb-i-Íqán; the principal repository of that Law which the Prophet Isaiah had anticipated, and which the writer of the Apocalypse had described as the 'new heaven' and the 'new earth,' as 'the Tabernacle of God,' as the 'Holy City,' as the 'Bride,' the 'New Jerusalem coming down from God,' this 'Most Holy Book,' whose provisions must remain inviolate for no less than a thousand years, and whose system will embrace the entire planet, may well be regarded as the brightest emanation of the mind of Bahá'u'lláh, as the Mother Book of His Dispensation, and the Charter of His New World Order....

In this Charter of the future world civilization its Author -- at once the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Unifier and Redeemer of mankind -- announces to the kings of the earth the promulgation of the "Most Great Law"; pronounces them to be His vassals; proclaims Himself the "King of Kings"; disclaims any intention of laying hands on their kingdoms; reserves for Himself the right to "seize and possess the hearts of men"; warns the world's ecclesiastical leaders not to weigh the "Book of God" with such standards as are current amongst them; and affirms that the Book itself is the "Unerring Balance" established amongst men. In it He formally ordains the institution of the "House of Justice",

defines its functions, fixes its revenues, and designates its members as the "Men of Justice", the "Deputies of God", the "Trus-

28

tees of the All-Merciful"; alludes to the future Centre of His Covenant, and invests Him with the right of interpreting His holy Writ; anticipates by implication the institution of Guardianship; bears witness to the revolutionizing effect of His World Order; enunciates the doctrine of the "Most Great Infallibility" of the Manifestation of God; asserts this infallibility to be the inherent and exclusive right of the Prophet; and rules out the possibility of the appearance of another Manifestation ere the lapse of at least one thousand years.

In this Book He, moreover, prescribes the obligatory prayers; designates the time and period of fasting; prohibits congregational prayer except for the dead; fixes the Qiblih; institutes the Huququ'lláh (Right of God); formulates the law of inheritance; ordains the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar; establishes the Nineteen Day Feast, the Bahá'í festivals and the Intercalary Days; abolishes the institution of priesthood; prohibits slavery, asceticism, mendicancy, monasticism, penance, the use of pulpits and the kissing of hands; prescribes monogamy; condemns cruelty to animals, idleness and sloth, backbiting and calumny; censures divorce; interdicts gambling, the use of opium, wine and other intoxicating drinks; specifies the punishments for murder, arson, adultery and theft; stresses the importance of marriage and lays down its essential conditions; imposes the obligation of engaging in some trade or profession, exalting such occupation to the rank of worship; emphasizes the necessity of providing the means for the education of children; and lays upon every person the duty of writing a testament and of strict obedience to one's government.

Apart from these provisions Bahá'u'lláh exhorts His followers to consort, with amity and concord and without discrimination, with the adherents of all religions; warns

them to guard against fanaticism, sedition, pride, dispute and contention; inculcates upon them immaculate cleanliness, strict truthfulness, spotless chastity, trustworthiness,

hospitality, fidelity, courtesy, forbearance, justice and fairness; counsels them to be "even as the fingers of one hand and the limbs of one body"; calls upon them to arise and

His Cause; and assures them of His undoubted aid. He, furthermore, dwells upon the instability of human affairs; declares that true liberty consists in man's submission to

His commandments; cautions them not to be indulgent in carrying out His statutes; prescribes the twin inseparable duties of recognizing the "Dayspring of God's Revelation" and of observing all the ordinances revealed by Him, neither of which, He affirms, is acceptable without the other.

The significant summons issued to the Presidents of the Republics of the American continent to seize their opportunity in the Day of God and to champion the cause of justice; the injunction to the members of parliaments throughout the world, urging the adoption of a universal script and language; His warnings to William I, the

conqueror of Napoleon III; the reproof He administers to Francis Joseph, the Emperor of Austria; His reference to "the lamentations of Berlin" in His apostrophe to "the banks of the Rhine"; His condemnation of "the throne of tyranny" established in Constantinople, and His prediction of the extinction of its "outward splendour" and of the tribulations destined to overtake its inhabitants; the words of cheer and comfort He addresses to His native city, assuring her that God had chosen her to be "the source of the joy of all mankind"; His prophecy that "the voice of the heroes of Khurasan" will be raised in glorification of their Lord; His assertion that men "endued with mighty valour" will be raised up in Kirman who will make mention of Him; and finally, His magnanimous assurance to a perfidious brother who had afflicted Him with such anguish, that an "ever-forgiving, all-bounteous" God would forgive him his iniquities were he only to repent -- all these further enrich the contents of a Book designated by its Author as "the source of true felicity", as the "Unerring Balance", as the "Straight Path" and as the "quickeners of mankind".

The laws and ordinances that constitute the major theme of this Book, Bahá'u'lláh, moreover, has specifically characterized as "the breath of life unto all created things", as "the mightiest stronghold", as the "fruits" of His "Tree", as "the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples", as "the lamps of His wisdom and loving-providence", as "the sweet-smelling savour of His garment",

and the "keys" of His "mercy" to His creatures. "This Book", He Himself testifies, "is a heaven which We have adorned with the stars of Our commandments and prohibitions." "Blessed the man", He, moreover, has stated, "who will read it, and ponder the verses sent down in it by God, the Lord of Power, the Almighty. Say, O men! Take hold of it with the hand of resignation... By My life! It hath been sent down in a manner that amazeth the minds of men. Verily, it is My weightiest testimony unto all people, and the proof of the All-Merciful unto all who are in heaven and all who are on earth...."

The formulation by Bahá'u'lláh, in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas, of the fundamental laws of His Dispensation was followed, as His Mission drew to a close, by the enunciation of certain precepts

and principles which lie at the very core of His Faith, by the reaffirmation of truths He had previously proclaimed, by the elaboration and elucidation of some

of the laws He had already laid down, by the revelation of further prophecies and warnings, and by the establishment of subsidiary ordinances designed to supplement the provisions of His Most Holy Book. These were recorded in unnumbered Tablets, which He continued to reveal until the last days of His earthly life, among which the "Ishraqat" (Splendors), the "Bisharat" (Glad Tidings), the "Tarazat" (Ornaments), the "Tajalliyat" (Efulgences), the "Kalimat-i-Firdawsiiyyih" (Words of Paradise), the "Lawh-i-Aqdas" (Most Holy Tablet), the "Lawh-i-Dunya" (Tablet of the World), the "Lawh-i-Maqsud" (Tablet of Maqsud), are the most noteworthy. These Tablets -- mighty and final effusions of His indefatigable pen -- must rank among the choicest fruits which His mind has yielded, and mark the consummation of His forty-year-long ministry.

Of the principles enshrined in these Tablets the most vital of them all is the principle of the oneness and wholeness of the human race, which may well be regarded as the hall-mark of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation and the pivot of His teachings. Of such cardinal importance is this principle of unity that it is expressly referred to in the Book of His Covenant, and He unreservedly proclaims it as the central purpose of His Faith. "We, verily," He declares, "have come to unite and weld together all that dwell on earth."...He further affirms that the unification of mankind, the last stage in the evolution of humanity towards maturity is inevitable... He deplors the defectiveness of the prevailing order, exposes the inadequacy of patriotism as a directing and controlling force in human society, and regards the "love of mankind" and service to its interests as the worthiest and most laudable objects of human endeavor. He, moreover, laments that "the vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land," that the "face of the world" is turned towards "waywardness and unbelief"; proclaims religion to be "a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world" and "the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world"; affirms its fundamental purpose to be the promotion of union and concord amongst men; warns lest it be made "a source of dissension, of discord and hatred"; commands that its principles be taught to children in the schools of the world, in a manner that would not be productive of either prejudice or fanaticism; attributes "the waywardness of the ungodly" to the "decline of religion"; and predicts "convulsions" of such severity as to "cause the limbs of mankind to quake."

The principle of collective security He unreservedly urges; recommends the reduction in national armaments; and proclaims as necessary and inevitable the convening of a world

31

gathering at which the kings and rulers of the world will deliberate for the establishment of peace among the nations.

Justice He extols as "the light of men" and their "guardian," as "the revealer of the secrets of the world of being, and the standard-bearer of love and

bounty"; declares its radiance to be incomparable; affirms that upon it must depend "the organization of the world and the tranquillity of mankind." He characterizes its "two pillars" -- "reward and punishment" -- as "the sources of life" to the human race; warns the peoples of the world to bestir themselves in anticipation of its advent; and prophesies that, after an interval of great turmoil and grievous injustice, its day-star will shine in its full splendor and glory.

He, furthermore, inculcates the principle of "moderation in all things"; declares that whatsoever, be it "Liberty, civilization and the like," "passeth beyond the limits of moderation" must "exercise a pernicious influence upon men"; observes that western civilization has gravely perturbed and alarmed the peoples of the world; and predicts that the day is approaching when the "flame" of a civilization "carried to excess" "will devour the cities."

Consultation He establishes as one of the fundamental principles of His Faith; describes it as "the lamp of guidance," as "the bestower of understanding," and as one of the two "luminaries" of the "heaven of Divine wisdom." Knowledge, He states, is "as wings to man's life and a ladder for his ascent"; its acquisition He regards as "incumbent upon every one"; considers "arts, crafts and sciences" to be conducive to the exaltation of the world of being; commends the wealth acquired through crafts and professions; acknowledges the indebtedness of the peoples of the world to scientists and craftsmen; and discourages the study of such sciences as are unprofitable to men, and "begin with words and end with words."

The injunction to "consort with all men in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship" He further emphasizes, and recognizes such association to be conducive to "union and concord," which, He affirms, are the establishers of order in the world and the quickeners of nations. The necessity of adopting a universal tongue and script He repeatedly stresses; deplors the waste of time involved in the study of divers languages; affirms that with the adoption of such a language and script the whole earth will be considered as "one city and one land"; and claims to be possessed of the knowledge of both, and ready to impart it to any one who might seek it from Him.

To the trustees of the House of Justice He assigns the duty of legislating on matters not expressly provided in His writings,

32

and promises that God will "inspire them with whatsoever He willeth." The establishment of a constitutional form of government, in which the ideals of republicanism and the majesty of kingship, characterized by Him as "one of the signs of God," are combined, He recommends as a meritorious achievement; urges that special regard be paid to the interests of agriculture; and makes specific reference to "the swiftly appearing newspapers," describes them as "the mirror of the world" and as "an amazing and potent phenomenon," and prescribes to all who are responsible for their production the duty to be sanctified from malice, passion and prejudice, to be just and fair-minded, to be painstaking in their

inquiries, and ascertain all the facts in every situation.

The doctrine of the Most Great Infallibility He further elaborates; the obligation laid on His followers to "behave towards the government of the country in which they reside with loyalty, honesty and truthfulness," He reaffirms; the ban imposed upon the waging of holy war and the destruction of books He reemphasizes; and He singles out for special praise men of learning and wisdom, whom He extols as "eyes" to the body of mankind, and as the "greatest gifts" conferred upon the world.

Nor should a review of the outstanding features of Bahá'u'lláh's writings during the latter part of His banishment to 'Akká fail to include a reference to the Lawh-i-Hikmat (Tablet of Wisdom), in which He sets forth the fundamentals of true philosophy, or to the Tablet of Visitation revealed in honor of the Imam Husayn, whose praises He celebrates in glowing language; or to the "Questions and Answers" which elucidates the laws and ordinances of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; or to the "Lawh-i-Burhan" (Tablet of the Proof) in which the acts perpetrated by Shaykh Muhammad-Baqir, surnamed "Dhi'b" (Wolf), and Mir Muhammad-Husayn, the Imam-Jum'ih of Isfahan, surnamed "Raqsha" (She-Serpent), are severely condemned; or to the Lawh-i-Karmil (Tablet of Carmel) in which the Author significantly makes mention of "the City of God that hath descended from heaven," and prophesies that "ere long will God sail His Ark" upon that mountain, and "will manifest the people of Baha." Finally, mention must be made of His Epistle to Shaykh Muhammad-Taqi, surnamed "Ibn-i-Dhi'b" (Son of the Wolf), the last outstanding Tablet revealed by the pen of Bahá'u'lláh, in which He calls upon that rapacious priest to repent of his acts, quotes some of the most characteristic and celebrated passages of His own writings, and adduces proofs establishing the validity of His Cause. (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 213-19)

In conclusion of this theme, I feel, it should be stated that

33

the Revelation identified with Bahá'u'lláh abrogates unconditionally all the Dispensations gone before it, upholds uncompromisingly the eternal verities they enshrine, recognizes firmly and absolutely the Divine origin of their Authors, preserves inviolate the sanctity of their authentic Scriptures, disclaims any intention of lowering the status of their Founders or of abating the spiritual ideals they inculcate, clarifies and correlates their functions, reaffirms their common, their unchangeable and fundamental purpose, reconciles their seemingly divergent claims and doctrines, readily and gratefully recognizes their respective contributions to the gradual unfoldment of one Divine Revelation, unhesitatingly acknowledges itself to be but one link in the chain of continually progressive Revelations, supplements their teachings with such laws and ordinances as conform to the imperative needs, and are dictated by the growing receptivity, of a fast evolving and constantly changing society, and proclaims its readiness and ability to fuse and incorporate the contending sects and factions into which they have fallen into a universal Fellowship,

functioning within the framework, and in accordance with the precepts, of a divinely conceived, a world-unifying, a world-redeeming Order.

A Revelation, hailed as the promise and crowning glory of past ages and centuries, as the consummation of all the Dispensations within the Adamic Cycle, inaugurating an era of at least a thousand years' duration, and a cycle destined to last no less than five thousand centuries, signaling the end of the Prophetic Era and the beginning of the Era of Fulfillment, unsurpassed alike in the duration of its Author's ministry and the fecundity and splendor of His mission....(God Passes By, p. 100)

6. Who is the LORD OF HOSTS?

This is the One of whom Muhammad, the Messenger of God, made mention; and before him the Spirit (Christ), and before him the Interlocutor (Moses)! This is the Point of the Bayan who calleth out before the Throne, saying: In Truth, ye have been created for the remembrance of this most great message and this most firm path, which was hidden in the minds of the Prophets, concealed within the breasts of the chosen ones, and written by the Supreme Pen in the Tablets of your Lord, the King of Names!

Say: Die in your wrath, O ye people of discord! He hath indeed appeared, from whose knowledge naught is concealed, and He because of whom the face of knowledge smiles (with joy) hath come, and by whom the kingdom of utterance is adorned! Every advancer toward God, the King of religions,

34

hath advanced. By Him every sitting one hath risen up and those lying down have hastened to the mount of assurance. This is the Day which God hath made to be a grace unto the pious, a punishment unto the wicked, a mercy unto those who advance and a wrath unto those who deny and turn away! Verily he hath appeared with a power from His presence and hath revealed that which naught in His heaven and earth can equal! Fear the clement One, O people of the Bayan! and commit not what was wrought by the people of El-Forkan (Qur'án) who professed faith during nights and days, but when the Lord of men came, they denied and disbelieved, until they condemned Him in such injustice, whereat the "Mother-Book" lamented in the (Day of) Return. Remember; then look at their deeds and words, their grades and stations, and at that which proceeded from them when the speaker of the mount spoke, the trumpet was sounded and all in the heavens and earth were stunned -- except a number of the "letters" of the Face... (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 98-9)

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.... And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth.... The wolf

also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.... They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah Ch. 11 v. 1-10)

This rod out of the stem of Jesse might be correctly applied to Christ, for Joseph was of the descendants of Jesse the father of David; but as Christ found existence through the Spirit of God, he called himself the Son of God. If he had not done so, this description would refer to him. Besides this, the events which he indicated as coming to pass in the days of that rod, if interpreted symbolically, were in part fulfilled in the day of Christ, but not all; and if not interpreted, then decidedly none of these signs happened. For example, the leopard and the lamb, the lion and the calf, the child and the asp, are metaphors and symbols for various nations, peoples, antagonistic sects, and hostile races, who as opposite and inimical as the wolf and the lamb....

But "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy moun-

35

tain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." These conditions did not prevail in the time of the manifestation of Christ; for until today various and antagonistic nations exist in the world: very few acknowledge the God of Israel, and the greater number are without the knowledge of God. In the same way, universal peace did not come into existence in the time of Christ.... So, even at this day, among the Christian sects and nations themselves, enmity, hatred and the most violent hostility are met with.

But these verses apply word for word to Bahá'u'lláh. Likewise in this marvelous cycle the earth will be transformed, and the world of humanity arrayed in tranquillity and beauty. Disputes, quarrels and murders will be replaced by peace, truth and concord; among the nations, peoples, races and countries, love and amity will appear. Cooperation and union will be established, and finally war will be entirely suppressed. When the laws of the Most Holy Book are enforced, contentions and disputes will find a final sentence of absolute justice before a general tribunal of the nations and kingdoms, and the difficulties that appear will be solved. The five continents of the world will form but one, the numerous nations will become one, the surface of the earth will become one land, and mankind will be a single community.... Universal peace will raise its tent in the center of the earth, and the blessed Tree of Life will grow and spread to such an extent that it will overshadow the East and the West....

Now consider, in this great century which is the cycle of Bahá'u'lláh, what progress science and knowledge have made.... Reflect also that in the short time since Bahá'u'lláh has appeared, people from all countries, nations and races 65 have entered under the shadow of this Cause. Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Hindus and Persians all associate together with the greatest friendship and love, as if indeed these people had been related and connected

together, they and theirs, for a thousand years....This is one of the meanings of the companionship of the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, and the lion and the calf.

One of the great events which is to occur in the Day of the manifestation of that Incomparable Branch (Bahá'u'lláh) is the hoisting of the Standard of God among all nations. By this is meant that all nations and kindreds will be gathered together under the shadow of this Divine Banner, which is no other than the Lordly Branch itself, and will become a single nation. Religious and sectarian antagonism, the hostility of races and peoples, and differences among nations, will be eliminated. All men will adhere

36

to one religion, will have one common faith, will be blended into one race, and become a single people. All will dwell in one common fatherland, which is the planet itself. Universal peace and concord will be realized between all the nations, and that Incomparable Branch will gather together all Israel....Now see: these events did not take place in the Christian cycle....But in this cycle of the Lord of Hosts all the nations and peoples will enter under the shadow of this Flag. (Some Answered Questions, p. 72-76)

As a further testimony to the greatness of the Revelation identified with Bahá'u'lláh may be cited the following extracts from a Tablet addressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to an eminent Zoroastrian follower of the Faith: "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 for 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 Báb. The second Dispensation referred to in this prophecy is the one inaugurated by the Báb 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 Bahá'u'lláh -- 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 Bahá'í cycle -- a cycle that must extend over a period of at least five hundred thousand years." The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 101-2)

O my friend!... The undying Fire which the Lord of the Kingdom hath kindled in the midst of the holy Tree is burning fiercely in the midmost heart of the world. The conflagration it will provoke will envelop the whole earth. Its

blazing flames will illuminate its peoples and kindreds. All the signs have been revealed; every prophetic allusion hath been manifested. Whatever hath been enshrined in all the Scriptures of the past hath been made evident. To doubt or hesitate is no more possible... (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 111)

37

7. Who is Abdu'l-Bahá?

It would be indeed difficult for us, who stand so close to such a tremendous figure and are drawn by the mysterious power of so magnetic a personality, to obtain a clear and exact understanding of the role and character of One Who, not only in the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh but in the entire field of religious history, fulfills a unique function. Though moving in a sphere of His own and holding a rank radically different from that of the Author and the Forerunner of the Bahá'í Revelation, He, by virtue of the station ordained for Him through the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, forms together with them what may be termed the Three Central Figures of a Faith that stands unapproached in the world's spiritual history. He towers, in conjunction with them, above the destinies of this infant Faith of God from a level to which no individual or body ministering to its needs after Him, and for no less a period than a full thousand years, can ever hope to rise.... He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Center and Pivot of Bahá'u'lláh's peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most exalted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring Interpreter of His Word, the embodiment of every Bahá'í ideal, the incarnation of every Bahá'í virtue, the Most Mighty Branch sprung from the Ancient Root, the Limb of the Law of God, the Being "round Whom all names revolve," the Mainspring of the Oneness of Humanity, the Ensign of the Most Great Peace, the Moon of the Central Orb of this most holy Dispensation -- styles and titles that are implicit and find their truest, their highest and fairest expression in the magic name 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He is, above and beyond these appellations, the "Mystery of God" -- an expression by which Bahá'u'lláh Himself has chosen to designate Him, and which, while it does not by any means justify us to assign to Him the station of Prophethood, indicates how in the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 131-4)

"There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntaha this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness; well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow. Verily the Limb of the Law of God hath sprung forth from this Root which God hath firmly implanted in the Ground of His Will, and Whose Branch hath been so uplifted as to encompass the whole of creation. Magnified be He, therefore, for this sublime, this blessed, this mighty, this exalted Handiwork!

38

... A Word hath, as a token of Our grace, gone forth from the Most Great Tablet -- a Word which God hath adorned with the ornament of His own Self, and made it sovereign over the earth and all that is therein, and a sign of His greatness and power among its people ...Render thanks unto God, O people, for His appearance; for verily He is the most great Favor unto you, the most perfect bounty upon you; and through Him every mouldering bone is quickened. Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God, and whoso turneth away from Him hath turned away from My beauty, hath repudiated My Proof, and transgressed against Me. He is the Trust of God amongst you, His charge within you, His manifestation unto you and His appearance among His favored servants... We have sent Him down in the form of a human temple. Blest and sanctified be God Who createth whatsoever He willeth through His inviolable, His infallible decree. They who deprive themselves of the shadow of the Branch, are lost in the wilderness of error, are consumed by the heat of worldly desires, and are of those who will assuredly perish." (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 135)

"You have written that there is a difference among the believers concerning the 'Second Coming of Christ.' Gracious God! Time and again this question hath arisen, and its answer hath emanated in a clear and irrefutable statement from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that what is meant in the prophecies by the 'Lord of Hosts' and the 'Promised Christ' is the Blessed Perfection (Bahá'u'lláh) and His holiness the Exalted One (the Bab). My name is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. My qualification is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. My reality is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. My praise is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Thralldom to the Blessed Perfection is my glorious and refulgent diadem, and servitude to all the human race my perpetual religion... No name, no title, no mention, no commendation have I, nor will ever have, except 'Abdu'l-Bahá. This is my longing. This is my greatest yearning. This is my eternal life. This is my everlasting glory." (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 139)

8. What is understood by the Institution of the Covenant?

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

39

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

years of His ministry in the prison-city of 'Akká.

To direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-sent process, and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension, an instrument divinely ordained, invested with indisputable authority, organically linked with the Author of the Revelation Himself, was clearly indispensable. That instrument Bahá'u'lláh had expressly provided through the institution of the Covenant, an institution which He had firmly established prior to His ascension.... (God Passes By, p. 237-8)

(a) Proofs of Authenticity.

This same Covenant He had anticipated in His Kitáb-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-Bahá.

Written entirely in His own hand; unsealed, on the ninth day after His ascension in the presence of nine witnesses chosen from amongst His companions and members of His Family; read subsequently, on the afternoon of that same day, before a large company assembled in His Most Holy Tomb, including His sons, some of the Báb's kinsmen, pilgrims and resident believers, this unique and epoch-making Document, designated by Bahá'u'lláh as His "Most Great Tablet," and alluded to by Him as the "Crimson Book" 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 Báb 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 Bábí Revelation, do we find any single document establishing a Covenant endowed with an authority comparable to the Covenant which Bahá'u'lláh had Himself instituted.

"So firm and mighty is this Covenant," He Who is its ap-

40

pointed Center has affirmed, "that from the beginning of time until the present day no religious Dispensation hath produced its like." "It is indubitably clear," He, furthermore, has stated, "that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant." "Know thou," He has written, "that the 'Sure Handle' mentioned from the foundation of the world in the Books, the Tablets and the Scriptures of old is naught else but the Covenant and the Testament." And again: "The lamp of the Covenant is the light of the world, and the words traced by the Pen of the Most High a limitless ocean." "The Lord, the All-Glorified," He has moreover declared, "hath, beneath the shade of the Tree of Anisa (Tree of Life), made a new Covenant and established a great Testament... Hath such a Covenant been established in any previous Dispensation, age, period or century? Hath such a Testament, set down by the Pen of the Most High, ever been witnessed? No, by God!" And finally: "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." To this same Covenant He has in His writings referred as the "Conclusive Testimony," the "Universal Balance," the "Magnet of God's grace," the "Upraised Standard," the "Irrefutable Testament," "the all-mighty Covenant, the like of which the sacred Dispensations of the past have never witnessed" and "one of the distinctive features of this most mighty cycle."

Extolled by the writer of the Apocalypse as "the Ark of His (God) Testament"; associated with the gathering beneath the "Tree of Anisa" (Tree of Life) mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh in the Hidden Words; glorified by Him, in other passages of His writings, as the "Ark of Salvation" and as "the Cord stretched betwixt the earth and the Abha Kingdom," this Covenant has been bequeathed to posterity in a Will and Testament which, together with the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and several Tablets, in which the rank and station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are unequivocally disclosed, constitute the chief buttresses designed by the Lord of the Covenant Himself to shield and support, after His ascension, the appointed Center of His Faith and the Delineator of its future institutions. (God Passes By, p. 239)

(b) Its Character and Purpose.

In this weighty and incomparable Document its Author discloses the character of that "excellent and priceless heritage" bequeathed by Him to His "heirs"; proclaims afresh the fundamental purpose of His Revelation; enjoins the "peoples of

41

the world" to hold fast to that which will "elevate" their "station"; announces to them that "God hath forgiven what is past"; stresses the sublimity of man's station; discloses the primary aim of the Faith of God; directs the faithful to pray for the welfare of the kings of the earth, "the manifestations of the power, and the daysprings of the might and riches, of God"; invests them with the rulership of the earth; singles out as His special domain the hearts of men; forbids categorically strife and contention; commands His followers to aid those rulers who are "adorned with the ornament of equity and justice"; and directs, in particular, the Aghsan (His sons) to ponder the "mighty force and the consummate power that lieth concealed in the world of being." He bids them, moreover, together with the Afnan (the Báb's kindred) and His own relatives, to "turn, one and all, unto the Most Great Branch (Abdu'l-Bahá)"; identifies Him with "the One Whom God hath purposed," "Who hath branched from this pre-existent Root," referred to in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; ordains the station of the "Greater Branch" (Mirza Muhammad-'Ali) to be beneath that of the "Most Great Branch" (Abdu'l-Bahá); exhorts the believers to treat the Aghsan with consideration and affection; counsels them to respect His family and relatives, as well as the kindred of the Bab; denies His sons "any right to the property of others"; enjoins on them, on His kindred and on that of the Báb to "fear

God, to do that which is meet and seemly" and to follow the things that will "exalt" their station; warns all men not to allow "the means of order to be made the cause of confusion, and the instrument of union an occasion for discord"; and concludes with an exhortation calling upon the faithful to "serve all nations," and to strive for the "betterment of the world."

God Passes By, p. 239-40)

(c) Qualifications of Abdu'l-Bahá.

That such a unique and sublime station should have been conferred upon 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not, and indeed could not, surprise those exiled companions who had for so long been privileged to observe His life and conduct....

He it was Whose auspicious birth occurred on that never-to-be-forgotten night when the Báb laid bare the transcendental character of His Mission to His first disciple Mulla Husayn. He it was Who, as a mere child, seated on the lap of Tahirih, had registered the thrilling significance of the stirring challenge which that indomitable heroine had addressed to her fellow-disciple, the erudite and far-famed Vahid. He it was Whose tender soul had been seared with the ineffaceable vision of a Father, haggard, dishevelled, freighted with chains, on the occasion of a visit, as a boy of nine, to the Siyah-Chal of Tihiran. Against Him, in His early childhood, whilst His Father lay a prisoner in that dungeon, had been directed the malice of a mob of street urchins who pelted Him

42

with stones, vilified Him and overwhelmed Him with ridicule. His had been the lot to share with His Father, soon after His release from imprisonment, the rigors and miseries of a cruel banishment from His native land, and the trials which culminated in His enforced withdrawal to the mountains of Kurdistan. He it was Who, in His inconsolable grief at His separation from an adored Father, had confided to Nabil, as attested by him in his narrative, that He felt Himself to have grown old though still but a child of tender years. His had been the unique distinction of recognizing, while still in His childhood, the full glory of His Father's as yet unrevealed station, a recognition which had impelled Him to throw Himself at His feet and to spontaneously implore the privilege of laying down His life for His sake....

On Him Bahá'u'lláh, as the scope and influence of His Mission extended, had been led to place an ever greater degree of reliance, by appointing Him, on numerous occasions, as His deputy, by enabling Him to plead His Cause before the public, by assigning Him the task of transcribing His Tablets, by allowing Him to assume the responsibility of shielding Him from His enemies, and by investing Him with the function of watching over and promoting the interests of His fellow-exiles and companions. He it was Who had been commissioned to undertake, as soon as circumstances might permit, the delicate and all-important task of purchasing the site that was to serve as the permanent resting-place of the Báb, of insuring the safe transfer of His remains to the

Holy Land, and of erecting for Him a befitting sepulcher on Mt. Carmel. He it was Who had been chiefly instrumental in providing the necessary means for Bahá'u'lláh's release from His nine-year confinement within the city walls of 'Akká, and in enabling Him to enjoy, in the evening of His life, a measure of that peace and security from which He had so long been debarred. It was through His unremitting efforts that the illustrious Badi' had been granted his memorable interviews with Bahá'u'lláh, that the hostility evinced by several governors of 'Akká towards the exiled community had been transmuted into esteem and admiration, that the purchase of properties adjoining the Sea of Galilee and the River Jordan had been effected, and that the ablest and most valuable presentation of the early history of the Faith and of its tenets had been transmitted to posterity. It was through the extraordinarily warm reception accorded Him during His visit to Beirut, through His contact with Midhat Pasha, a former Grand Vizir of Turkey, through His friendship with Aziz Pasha, whom He had previously known in Adrianople, and who had subsequently been promoted to the rank of Vali, and through

43

His constant association with officials, notables and leading ecclesiastics who, in increasing number had besought His presence, during the final years of His Father's ministry, that He had succeeded in raising the prestige of the Cause He had championed to a level it had never previously attained.

He alone had been accorded the privilege of being called "the Master," an honor from which His Father had strictly excluded all His other sons. Upon Him that loving and unerring Father had chosen to confer the unique title of "Sirru'llah" (the Mystery of God), a designation so appropriate to One Who, though essentially human and holding a station radically and fundamentally different from that occupied by Bahá'u'lláh and His Forerunner, could still claim to be the perfect Exemplar of His Faith, to be endowed with super-human knowledge, and to be regarded as the stainless mirror reflecting His light. To Him, whilst in Adrianople, that same Father had, in the Suriy-i-Ghusn (Tablet of the Branch), referred as "this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness," as "the Limb of the Law of God," as His "most great favor" unto men, as His "most perfect bounty" conferred upon them, as One through Whom "every mouldering bone is quickened," declaring that "whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God," and that "they who deprive themselves of the shadow of the Branch are lost in the wilderness of error." To Him He, whilst still in that city, had alluded (in a Tablet addressed to Haji Muhammad Ibrahim-i-Khalil) as the one amongst His sons "from Whose tongue God will cause the signs of His power to stream forth," and as the one Whom "God hath specially chosen for His Cause." On Him, at a later period, the Author of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, in a celebrated passage, subsequently elucidated in the "Book of My Covenant," had bestowed the function of interpreting His Holy Writ, proclaiming Him, at the same time, to be the One "Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root." To Him in a Tablet, revealed during that same period and addressed to Mirza Muhammad Quliy-i-Sabzivari, He had referred as "the Gulf

that hath branched out of this Ocean that hath encompassed all created things," and bidden His followers to turn their faces towards it. To Him, on the occasion of His visit to Beirut, His Father had, furthermore, in a communication which He dictated to His amanuensis, paid a glowing tribute, glorifying Him as the One "round Whom all names revolve," as "the Most Mighty Branch of God," and as "His ancient and immutable Mystery." He it was Who, in several Tablets which Bahá'u'lláh Himself had penned, had been personally addressed as "the Apple of Mine eye," and been referred to as "a shield unto all who are in heaven and on earth,"

44

as "a shelter for all mankind" and "a stronghold for whosoever hath believed in God." It was on His behalf that His Father, in a prayer revealed in His honor, had supplicated God to "render Him victorious," and to "ordain ... for Him, as well as for them that love Him," the things destined by the Almighty for His "Messengers" and the "Trustees" of His Revelation. And finally in yet another Tablet these weighty words had been recorded: "The glory of God rest upon Thee, and upon whosoever serveth Thee and circleth around Thee. Woe, great woe, betide him that opposeth and injureth Thee. Well is it with him that sweareth fealty to Thee; the fire of hell torment him who is Thy enemy."

And now to crown the inestimable honors, privileges and benefits showered upon Him, in ever increasing abundance, throughout the forty years of His Father's ministry in Baghdad, in Adrianople and in 'Akká, He had been elevated to the high office of Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, and been made the successor of the Manifestation of God Himself -- a position that was to empower Him to impart an extraordinary impetus to the international expansion of His Father's Faith, to amplify its doctrine, to beat down every barrier that would obstruct its march, and to call into being, and delineate the features of, its Administrative Order, the Child of the Covenant, and the Harbinger of that World Order whose establishment must needs signalize the advent of the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation. (God Passes By, p. 240-3)

As for those enemies who have sedulously sought to extinguish the light of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, the condign punishment they have been made to suffer is no less conspicuous than the doom which overtook those who, in an earlier period, had so basely endeavored to crush the hopes of a rising Faith and destroy its foundations. (God Passes By, p. 317)

(d) Growth of the Faith in the East and West during the ministry of Abdu'l-Bahá.

That divinely instituted Covenant had, shortly after its inception, demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt its invincible strength through its decisive triumph over the dark forces which its Arch-Breaker had with such determination arrayed against it. Its energizing power had soon after been proclaimed through the signal victories which its torch-bearers had so rapidly and courageously won in the far-off cities of Western Europe and the United States of America. Its high claims had, moreover, been fully vindicated through

its ability to safeguard the unity and integrity of the Faith in both the

45

East and the West. It had subsequently given further proof of its indomitable strength by the memorable victory it registered through the downfall of Sultan Abdu'l-Hamid, and the consequent release of its appointed Center from a forty-year captivity. It had provided for those still inclined to doubt its Divine origin yet another indisputable testimony to its solidity by enabling 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the face of formidable obstacles, to effect the transfer and the final entombment of the Báb's remains in a mausoleum on Mt. Carmel. It had manifested also before all mankind, with a force and in a measure hitherto unapproached, its vast potentialities when it empowered Him in Whom its spirit and its purpose were enshrined to embark on a three-year-long mission to the Western world -- a mission so momentous that it deserves to rank as the greatest exploit ever to be associated with His ministry.

Nor were these, preeminent though they were, the sole fruits garnered through the indefatigable efforts exerted so heroically by the Center of that Covenant. The progress and extension of His Father's Faith in the East; the initiation of activities and enterprises which may be said to signalize the beginnings of a future Administrative Order; the erection of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkar of the Bahá'í world in the city of Ishqabad in Russian Turkistan; the expansion of Bahá'í literature; the revelation of the Tablets of the Divine Plan; and the introduction of the Faith in the Australian continent -- these may be regarded as the outstanding achievements that have embellished the brilliant record of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's unique ministry....

More conspicuous than any of these undertakings, however, was the erection of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkar of the Bahá'í world in the city of Ishqabad, a center founded in the days of Bahá'u'lláh, where the initial steps preparatory to its construction, had been already undertaken during His lifetime... carried out according to the directions laid down by the Center of the Covenant Himself; a lasting witness to the fervor and the self-sacrifice of the Oriental believers who were resolved to execute the bidding of Bahá'u'lláh as revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, this enterprise must rank not only as the first major undertaking launched through the concerted efforts of His followers in the Heroic Age of His Faith, but as one of the most brilliant and enduring achievements in the history of the first Bahá'í century....

As the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá drew to a close signs multiplied of the resistless and manifold unfoldment of the Faith both in the East and in the West, both in the shaping and consolidation of its institutions and in the widening range of its

46

activities and its influence.... In Wilmette the excavations for the Mother Temple of the West were carried out and the contract placed for the construction of the basement of the building. In Baghdad the initial steps were

taken, according to His special instructions, to reinforce the foundations and restore the Most Great House associated with the memory of His Father. In the Holy Land an extensive property east of the Báb's Sepulcher was purchased through the initiative of the Holy Mother with the support of contributions from Bahá'ís in both the East and the West to serve as a site for the future erection of the first Bahá'í school at the world Administrative Center of the Faith. The site for a Western Pilgrim House was acquired in the neighborhood of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's residence, and the building was erected soon after His passing by American believers. The Oriental Pilgrim House, erected on Mt. Carmel by a believer from Ishqabad, soon after the entombment of the Báb's remains, for the convenience of visiting pilgrims, was granted tax exemption by the civil authorities (the first time such a privilege had been conceded since the establishment of the Faith in the Holy Land). The famous scientist and entomologist, Dr. Auguste Forel, was converted to the Faith through the influence of a Tablet sent him by 'Abdu'l-Bahá -- one of the most weighty the Master ever wrote. Another Tablet of far-reaching importance was His reply to a communication addressed to Him by the Executive Committee of the "Central Organization for a Durable Peace," which He dispatched to them at The Hague by the hands of a special delegation. A new continent was opened to the Cause when, in response to the Tablets of the Divine Plan unveiled at the first Convention after the war, the great-hearted and heroic Hyde Dunn, at the advanced age of sixty-two, promptly forsook his home in California, and, seconded and accompanied by his wife, settled as a pioneer in Australia, where he was able to carry the Message to no less than seven hundred towns throughout that Commonwealth. A new episode began when, in quick response to those same Tablets and their summons, that star-servant of Bahá'u'lláh, the indomitable and immortal Martha Root, designated by her Master "herald of the Kingdom" and "harbinger of the Covenant," embarked on the first of her historic journeys which were to extend over a period of twenty years, and to carry her several times around the globe, and which ended only with her death far from home and in the active service of the Cause she loved so greatly. These events mark the closing stage of a ministry which sealed the triumph of the Heroic Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation, and which will go down in history as one

47

of the most glorious and fruitful periods of the first Bahá'í century. (God Passes By, p. 295-308)

.... A glorious chapter in the history of the first Bahá'í century had been written. Seeds of undreamt-of potentialities had, with the hand of the Center of the Covenant Himself, been sown in some of the fertile fields of the Western world. Never in the entire range of religious history had any Figure of comparable stature arisen to perform a labor of such magnitude and imperishable worth. Forces were unleashed through those fateful journeys which even now, at a distance of well nigh thirty-five years, we are unable to measure or comprehend. Already a Queen, inspired by the powerful arguments adduced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the course of His addresses in support of the Divinity of

Muhammad, has proclaimed her faith, and borne public testimony to the Divine origin of the Prophet of Islam. Already a President of the United States, imbibing some of the principles so clearly enunciated by Him in His discourses, has incorporated them in a Peace Program which stands out as the boldest and noblest proposal yet made for the well-being and security of mankind. And already, alas! a world which proved deaf to His warnings and refused to heed His summons has plunged itself into two global wars of unprecedented severity, the repercussions of which none as yet can even dimly visualize. (God Passes By, p. 294)

(n) Writings and Prophecies.

...Through His unremitting labors, as reflected in the treatises He composed, the thousands of Tablets He revealed, the discourses He delivered, the prayers, poems and commentaries He left to posterity, mostly in Persian, some in Arabic and a few in Turkish, the laws and principles, constituting the warp and woof of His Father's Revelation, had been elucidated, its fundamentals restated and interpreted, its tenets given detailed application and the validity and indispensability of its verities fully and publicly demonstrated. Through the warnings He sounded, an unheeding humanity, steeped in materialism and forgetful of its God, had been apprized of the perils threatening to disrupt its ordered life, and made, in consequence of its persistent perversity, to sustain the initial shocks of that world upheaval which continues, until the present day, to rock the foundations of human society....

Nor should a survey of the outstanding features of so blessed and fruitful a ministry omit mention of the prophecies

48

which the unerring pen of the appointed Center of Bahá'u'lláh'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. They foreshadow the gathering of the children of Israel in their ancient homeland; the erection of the banner of Bahá'u'lláh in the Egyptian citadel of Sunni Islam; the extinction of the powerful influence wielded by the Shí'ah ecclesiastics in Persia; the load of misery which must needs oppress the pitiful remnants of the breakers of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant at the world center of His Faith; the splendor of the institutions which that triumphant Faith must erect on the slopes of a mountain, destined to be so linked with the city of 'Akká that a single grand metropolis will be formed to enshrine the spiritual as well as the administrative seats of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth; the conspicuous honor which the inhabitants of Bahá'u'lláh's native land in general, and its government in particular, must enjoy in a distant future; the unique and enviable position which the community of the Most Great Name in the North

American continent must occupy, as a direct consequence of the execution of the world mission which He entrusted to them: finally they foreshadow, as the sum and summit of all, the "hoisting of the standard of God among all nations" and the unification of the entire human race, when "all men will adhere to one religion ... will be blended into one race, and become a single people." (God Passes By, p. 314-6)

9. What are some of the characteristics which distinguish the Bahá'í Faith?

1. It is distinguished by its didactic character and method of exposition, by its practical effects and application to present world conditions, but especially distinguished from the standpoint of its spread and progress. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 426)

Method of Exposition (Spread and Promulgated from Prison)

(a) If we study historical record and review the pages of Holy Writ, we will find that none of the Prophets of the past ever spread His teachings or promulgated His Cause from a prison. But Bahá'u'lláh upheld the banner of

49

the Cause of God while He was in a dungeon, addressing the kings of the earth from His prison cell, severely arraigning them for their oppression of their subjects and their misuse of power.... The book containing these Epistles to the kings was published in India about thirty years ago....Some of the prophecies contained in them came to pass after two years; others were fulfilled after five, ten and twenty years. The most important prophecies relative to events transpiring in the Balkans are being fulfilled at the present time though written long ago.... While addressing these powerful kings and rulers He was a prisoner in a Turkish dungeon. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 427)

(b) Practical effects and application to present world conditions: New Principles: -

1. Independent Investigation of reality.
2. Oneness of the world of humanity.
3. Religion must be in conformity with science and reason.
4. Religion must be the mainspring and source of love in the world.
5. Equality of rights between men and women.
6. Equality of rights and prerogatives for all mankind.
7. Abolition of prejudice - racial, social, religious, political, national....
8. Universal education.
9. Incumbent upon all mankind to become fitted for some useful craft.
10. A universal language.

11. Solution of the economic problem.

12. A universal Tribunal.

13. Universal Peace

(The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 117).

(The Mysterious Forces of Civilization, p. 74-79).

2. O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the preeminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out

50

from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 97).

3. The precepts and teachings they contain are universal, covering every subject. He has revealed scientific explanations ranging throughout all the realms of human inquiry and investigation -- astronomy, biology, medical science, etc. In the Kitáb-i-Íqán He has given expositions of the meanings of the Gospel and other heavenly Books. He wrote lengthy Tablets upon civilization, sociology and government. Every subject is considered. His Tablets are matchless in beauty and profundity. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 150)

The mysteries of the Holy Books have become explained in the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh. Before He appeared, these mysteries were not understood. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 192)

4. As to the most great characteristic of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, 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.

To ensure unity and agreement He has entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world, including the interpreter and explainer of His teachings, so that no one may interpret or explain the religion of God according to his own view or opinion and thus create a sect founded upon his individual understanding of the divine Words. The Book of the Covenant or Testament of Bahá'u'lláh is the means of preventing such a possibility, for whosoever shall speak from the authority of himself alone shall be degraded. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 451).

5. There can be no doubt that the claim to the twofold station ordained for the Báb by the Almighty, a claim which He Himself has so boldly advanced, which

Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly affirmed, and to which the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has finally given the sanction of its testimony, constitutes the most distinctive feature of the Bahá'í Dispensa-

51

tion. It is a further evidence of its uniqueness, a tremendous accession to the strength, to the mysterious power and authority with which this holy cycle has been invested. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 123)

10. What are the guiding principles of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh as amplified and enunciated by Abdu'l-Bahá?

True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of its distinguished and high-minded sovereigns -- the shining exemplars of devotion and determination -- shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise, with firm resolve and clear vision, to establish the Cause of Universal Peace. They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking -- the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world -- should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth. All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure.... A few, unaware of the power latent in human endeavor, consider this matter as highly impracticable, nay even beyond the scope of man's utmost efforts. Such is not the case, however. On the contrary, thanks to the unfailing grace of God, the loving-kindness of His favored ones, the unrivaled endeavors of wise and capable souls, and the thoughts and ideas of the peerless leaders of this age, nothing whatsoever

52

can be regarded as unattainable. Endeavor, ceaseless endeavor, is required. Nothing short of an indomitable determination can possibly achieve it. Many a

cause which past ages have regarded as purely visionary, yet in this day has become most easy and practicable. Why should this most great and lofty Cause -- the daystar of the firmament of true civilization and the cause of the glory, the advancement, the well-being and the success of all humanity -- be regarded as impossible of achievement? Surely the day will come when its beauteous light shall shed illumination upon the assemblage of man. (The Mysterious Forces of Civilization, p. 74-77).

In one of His Tablets 'Abdu'l-Bahá, elucidating further his noble theme, reveals the following:

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

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

53

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

and assist in their realization."

Over sixty years ago, in His Tablet to Queen Victoria, Bahá'u'lláh addressing "the concourse of the rulers of the earth" revealed the following:

" Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind, and bettereth the condition thereof.... Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay, its sickness waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their personal desires, and have erred grievously. And if at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before. Thus informeth you the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.... That which God hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful, and inspired Physician. By My life! This is the truth, and all else naught but error."

In a further passage Bahá'u'lláh adds these words:

"We see you adding every year unto your expenditures and laying the burden thereof on the people whom ye rule; this verily is naught but grievous injustice. Fear the sighs and tears of this Wronged One, and burden not your peoples beyond that which they can endure.... Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need armaments no more save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions. Be united, O concourse of the sovereigns of the world, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you and your peoples find rest. Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice...." (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 38-40)

54

What else, might we not confidently affirm, but the unreserved acceptance of the Divine Program enunciated, with such simplicity and force as far back as sixty years ago, by Bahá'u'lláh, embodying in its essentials God's divinely appointed scheme for the unification of mankind in this age, coupled with an indomitable conviction in the unfailing efficacy of each and all of its provisions, is eventually capable of withstanding the forces of internal disintegration which, if unchecked, must needs continue to eat into the vitals of a despairing society. It is towards this goal -- the goal of a new World Order, Divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, equitable in principle, challenging in its features -- that a harassed humanity must strive.

To claim to have grasped all the implications of Bahá'u'lláh's prodigious scheme for world-wide human solidarity, or to have fathomed its import, would be presumptuous on the part of even the declared supporters of His Faith. To attempt to visualize it in all its possibilities, to estimate its future

benefits, to picture its glory, would be premature at even so advanced a stage in the evolution of mankind. All we can reasonably venture to attempt is to strive to obtain a glimpse of the first streaks of the promised Dawn that must, in the fullness of time, chase away the gloom that has encircled humanity. All we can do is to point out, in their broadest outlines, what appear to us to be the guiding principles underlying the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, as amplified and enunciated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Center of His Covenant with all mankind and the appointed Interpreter and Expounder of His Word. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 34-35)

" You can best serve your country," was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's rejoinder to a high official in the service of the federal government of the United States of America, who had questioned Him as to the best manner in which he could promote the interests of his government and people, "if you strive, in your capacity as a citizen of the world, to assist in the eventual application of the principle of federalism underlying the government of your own country to the relationships now existing between the peoples and nations of the world...." (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 37)

"The Tabernacle of Unity," Bahá'u'lláh proclaims in His message to all mankind, "has been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers.... Of one tree are all ye the fruit and of one bough the leaves.... The world is but one country and mankind its citizens.... Let not a man glory in that he

55

loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind."

Let there be no misgivings as to the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Bahá'u'lláh. Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided....It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity....

If long-cherished ideals and time-honored institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution? For legal standards, political and

economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 42)

How many times it has happened that a soul, adorned with all the best characteristics of humanity and equipped with the ornaments of learning, has, by following after his carnal desire, removed his pleasing qualities from the constraining form of moderation and cast them into the world of excess, so that his sincere and honest intentions have been totally altered into vicious designs, and his qualities, far from appearing in their proper light were on the contrary diverted from the righteous straight path into the false and dangerous. Good morals are most acceptable and praiseworthy both in the sight of God and of His beloved who are near to Him in the sight of God and of His beloved who are near to Him in His Court and among those who are gifted with thought. But there is this condition that the central aim of morals should be wisdom and knowledge, and its controlling idea should be true moderation...However, that may be, it should be

56

stated that it is in the terrible ocean of carnal desire that all the peoples of Europe, notwithstanding their civilization and renown, are entirely overwhelmed and drowned, so that the outcome of their civilization is futile and fruitless. No one must wonder at these statements nor be afraid; for the chief, nay, the universal purpose of establishing by great laws the principles and foundations of all kinds of civilization, is the happiness of human beings; and human happiness lies in being near to the "Threshold of the Almighty God," and in the well-being of all persons, whether of high or low station. And the perfecting of the morals of humanity are the chief means towards those ends. The outward trappings of civilization without inward moral advancement, may be likened unto confused dreams which cannot be interpreted; and sensual enjoyment, apart from spiritual perfection, is like unto the mirage which he that is athirst believes to be water....That the nations of Europe, indeed, have not yet progressed to any great height of moral civilization is manifest from the thoughts and acts of them all. Reflect, for example, that the principal design of the various states today is to seize possession of each other's territories and to destroy one another, and that, although they are thus moved by intense inward hatred, they yet make a great show and profession of extreme friendliness, love and brotherhood....Does this outward civilization, without the true inward civilization, give rise to general peace and well-being, and is it likely to meet with the Divine sanction and approval? Or is it the destroyer of the highest principles of humanity and of the foundations of happiness and prosperity? (The Mysterious Forces of Civilization, p. 68-72).

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that material civilization is incomplete, insufficient and that divine civilization must be established. Material civilization

concerns the world of matter or bodies, but divine civilization is the realm of ethics and moralities. Until the moral degree of the nations is advanced and human virtues attain a lofty level, happiness for mankind is impossible. The philosophers have founded material civilization. The Prophets have founded divine civilization....The capacity for achieving extraordinary and praiseworthy progress is bestowed by Them through the breaths of the Holy Spirit, and heavenly civilization is not possible of attainment or accomplishment otherwise....The foundation of progress and real prosperity in the human world is reality, for reality is the divine standard and the bestowal of God. Reality is reasonableness, and reasonableness is ever conducive to the honorable station of man. Reality is the guidance of God.

57

...Reality is perfect equality, the foundation of agreement between the nations, the first step toward international peace. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 370-1)

Dearly-beloved friends! This New World Order, whose promise is enshrined in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whose fundamental principles have been enunciated in the writings of the Center of His Covenant, involves no less than the complete unification of the entire human race. This unification should conform to such principles as would directly harmonize with the spirit that animates, and the laws that govern the operation of, the institutions that already constitute the structural basis of the Administrative Order of His Faith.

No machinery falling short of the standard inculcated by the Bahá'í Revelation, and at variance with the sublime pattern ordained in His teachings, which the collective efforts of mankind may yet devise can ever hope to achieve anything above or beyond that "Lesser Peace" to which the Author of our Faith has Himself alluded in His writings. "Now that ye have refused the Most Great Peace," He, admonishing the kings and rulers of the earth, has written, "hold ye fast unto this the Lesser Peace, that haply ye may in some degree better your own condition and that of your dependents." Expatiating on this Lesser Peace, He thus addresses in that same Tablet the rulers of the earth: "Be reconciled among yourselves, that ye may need no more armaments save in a measure to safeguard your territories and dominions... Be united, O kings of the earth, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you, and your peoples find rest, if ye be of them that comprehend. Should any one among you take up arms against another, rise ye all against him, for this is naught but manifest justice."

(Shoghi Effendi, The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 162)

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whose supreme mission is none other but the achievement of this organic and spiritual unity of the whole body of nations, should, if we be faithful to its implications, be regarded as signaling through its advent the (coming of age of the entire human race. It should be

viewed not merely as yet another spiritual revival in the

58

ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelations, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet. The emergence of a world community, the consciousness of world citizenship, the founding of a world civilization and culture -- all of which must synchronize with the initial stages in the unfoldment of the Golden Age of the Bahá'í Era -- should, by their very nature, be regarded, as far as this planetary life is concerned, as the furthestmost limits in the organization of human society, though man, as an individual, will, nay must indeed as a result of such a consummation, continue indefinitely to progress and develop....

Abdu'l-Bahá, elucidating this fundamental verity, has written: "All created things have their degree or stage of maturity. The period of maturity in the life of a tree is the time of its fruit-bearing... The animal attains a stage of full growth and completeness, and in the human kingdom man reaches his maturity when the light of his intelligence attains its greatest power and development... Similarly there are periods and stages in the collective life of humanity. At one time it was passing through its stage of childhood, at another its period of youth, but now it has entered its long-predicted phase of maturity, the evidences of which are everywhere apparent... That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race can neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day, this period of newness and consummation. Humanity has emerged from its former state of limitation and preliminary training. Man must now become imbued with new virtues and powers, new moral standards, new capacities. New bounties, perfect bestowals, are awaiting and already descending upon him. The gifts and blessings of the period of youth, although timely and sufficient during the adolescence of mankind, are now incapable of meeting the requirements of its maturity." (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 163-5)

Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax....The well-being

59

of mankind," Bahá'u'lláh declares, "its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established...." (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 202)

11. What is the fundamental basis of Bahá'í Administration?

The Bahá'í Commonwealth of the future, of which this vast Administrative Order is the sole framework, is, both in theory and practice, not only unique in the entire history of political institutions, but can find no parallel in the annals of any of the world's recognized religious systems. No form of democratic government; no system of autocracy or of dictatorship, whether monarchical or republican; no intermediary scheme of a purely aristocratic order; nor even any of the recognized types of theocracy, whether it be the Hebrew Commonwealth, or the various Christian ecclesiastical organizations, or the Imamate or the Caliphate in Islam -- none of these can be identified or be said to conform with the Administrative Order which the master-hand of its perfect Architect has fashioned. This new-born Administrative Order incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, without being in any sense a mere replica of any one of them, and without introducing within its machinery any of the objectionable features which they inherently possess. It blends and harmonizes, as no government fashioned by mortal hands has as yet accomplished, the salutary truths which each of these systems undoubtedly contains without vitiating the integrity of those God-given verities on which it is ultimately founded.... Whereas this Administrative Order cannot be said to have been modeled after any of these recognized systems of government, it nevertheless embodies, reconciles and assimilates within its framework such wholesome elements as are to be found in each one of them. The hereditary authority which the Guardian is called upon to exercise, the vital and essential functions which the Universal House of Justice discharges, the specific provisions requiring its democratic election by the representatives of the faithful -- these combine to demonstrate the truth that this divinely revealed Order, which can never be identified with any of the standard types of government referred to by Aristotle in his works, embodies and blends with the spiritual verities on which it is based the beneficent elements which are to be found in each one of them. The admitted evils inherent in each of these systems being rigidly and permanently excluded, this unique Order, however long it may endure and however extensive its ramifications, cannot

60

ever degenerate into any form of despotism, of oligarchy, or of demagoguery which must sooner or later corrupt the machinery of all man-made and essentially defective political institutions....

The bedrock on which this Administrative Order is founded is God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day. The Source from which it derives its inspiration is no one less than Bahá'u'lláh Himself. Its shield and defender are the embattled hosts of the Abhá Kingdom. Its seed is the blood of no less than twenty thousand martyrs who have offered up their lives that it may be born and flourish. The axis round which its institutions revolve are the authentic provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Its guiding principles are the truths which He Who is the unerring Interpreter of the teachings of our Faith has so clearly enunciated in His public addresses

throughout the West. The laws that govern its operation and limit its functions are those which have been expressly ordained in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The seat round which its spiritual, its humanitarian and administrative activities will cluster are the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar and its Dependencies. The pillars that sustain its authority and buttress its structure are the twin institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice. The central, the underlying aim which animates it is the establishment of the New World Order as adumbrated by Bahá'u'lláh. The methods it employs, the standard it inculcates, incline it to neither East nor West, neither Jew nor Gentile, neither rich nor poor, neither white nor colored. Its watchword is the unification of the human race; its standard the "Most Great Peace"; its consummation the advent of that golden millennium -- the Day when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the Kingdom of God Himself, the Kingdom of Bahá'u'lláh. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 152-7)

12. Through what agency will the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh be safe-guarded from witnessing the breach of unity and the extinction of influence which have befallen all religious hierarchies?

Bahá'u'lláh in His Book of Aqdas, and later 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will -- a document which confirms, supplements, and correlates the provisions of the Aqdas -- have set forth in their entirety those essential elements for the constitution of the world Bahá'í Commonwealth.... For Bahá'u'lláh, we should readily recognize, has not only imbued mankind with a new and regenerating Spirit. He has not merely enunciated cer-

61

tain 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-Bahá 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 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.

Should we look back upon the past, were we to search out the Gospel and the Qur'án, we will readily recognize that neither the Christian nor the Islamic

Dispensations can offer a parallel either to the system of Divine Economy so thoroughly established by Bahá'u'lláh, or to the safeguards which He has provided for its preservation and advancement....

The fundamental reason why the unity of the Church of Christ was irretrievably shattered, and its influence was in the course of time undermined, was that the Edifice which the Fathers of the Church reared after the passing of His First Apostle was an Edifice that rested in nowise upon the explicit directions of Christ Himself.... For this reason, in later generations, voices were raised in protest against the self-appointed Authority which arrogated to itself privileges and powers which did not emanate from the clear text of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and which constituted a grave departure from the spirit which that Gospel did inculcate.... Their contention centered around the fact that the vague and inconclusive words, addressed by Christ to Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church," could never justify the extreme measures, the elaborate ceremonials, the fettering creeds and dogmas, with which His successors have gradually burdened and obscured His Faith. Had it been possible

62

for the Church Fathers.... to refute the denunciations heaped upon them by quoting specific utterances of Christ regarding the future administration of His Church, or the nature of the authority of His Successors, they would surely have been capable of quenching the flame of controversy, and preserving the unity of Christendom. The Gospel, however, the only repository of the utterances of Christ, afforded no such shelter to these harassed leaders of the Church.... who eventually had to submit to the forces of schism which invaded their ranks.

In the Muhammadan Revelation, however, although His Faith as compared with that of Christ was, so far as the administration of His Dispensation is concerned, more complete and more specific in its provisions, yet in the matter of succession, it gave no written, no binding and conclusive instructions to those whose mission was to propagate His Cause. For the text of the Qur'án.... gives no definite guidance regarding the Law of Succession, the source of all the dissensions, the controversies, and schisms which have dismembered and discredited Islam....

Unlike the Dispensation of Christ, unlike the Dispensation of Muhammad, unlike all the Dispensations of the past, the apostles of Bahá'u'lláh in every land, wherever they labor and toil, have before them in clear, in unequivocal and emphatic language, all the laws, the regulations, the principles, the institutions, the guidance, they require for the prosecution and consummation of their task. Both in the administrative provisions of the Bahá'í Dispensation, and in the matter of succession, as embodied in the twin institutions of the House of Justice and of the Guardianship, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh can summon to their aid such irrefutable evidences of Divine Guidance that none can resist, that none can belittle or ignore. Therein lies

the distinguishing feature of the Bahá'í Revelation.

We should also bear in mind that the distinguishing character of the Bahá'í Revelation does not solely consist in the completeness and unquestionable validity of the Dispensation which the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have established. Its excellence lies also in the fact that those elements which in past Dispensations have, without the least authority from their Founders, been a source of corruption and of incalculable harm to the Faith of God, have been strictly excluded by the clear text of Bahá'u'lláh's writings. Those unwarranted practices, in connection with the sacrament of baptism, of communion, of confession of sins, of asceticism, of priestly domination, of elaborate ceremonials, of holy war and

63

of polygamy, have one and all been rigidly suppressed by the Pen of Bahá'u'lláh; whilst the rigidity and rigor of certain observances, such as fasting, which are necessary to the devotional life of the individual, have been considerably abated.

It should also be borne in mind that the machinery of the Cause has been so fashioned, that whatever is deemed necessary to incorporate into it in order to keep it in the forefront of all progressive movements, can, according to the provisions made by Bahá'u'lláh, be safely embodied therein. To this testify the words of Bahá'u'lláh, as recorded in the Eighth Leaf of the exalted Paradise:

"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.... And inasmuch as the House of Justice hath power to enact laws that are not expressly recorded in the Book and bear 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. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 19-23)

It should be noted in this connection that this Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Bahá'u'lláh has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret His Word and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances. Therein lies the secret of its strength, its fundamental distinction, and the guarantee against disintegration and schism....

It should be stated, at the very outset.... that these twin institutions of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh should be regarded as divine in origin, essential in their functions and complementary in their aim and purpose. Their common, their fundamental object is to insure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of our Faith, to safeguard the unity of its fol-

64

lowers and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its teachings. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 202-204)

Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh would be mutilated and permanently deprived of that hereditary principle which, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written, has been invariably upheld by the Law of God.... Without such an institution the integrity of the Faith would be imperiled, 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, 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.

Severed from the no less essential institution of the Universal House of Justice this same System of the Will of 'Abdu'l-Bahá would be paralyzed in its action and would be powerless to fill in those gaps which the Author of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas has deliberately left in the body of His legislative and administrative ordinances. (The Bahá'í World, Vol. VI, p. 243-6)

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 7 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 descendants.

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. He that opposeth him hath opposed the True One, will make a breach in the Cause of God, will subvert His word and will become a manifestation of the Center of Sedition....

It is incumbent upon the guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own life-time him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing. He that is appointed must manifest in himself detachment from all worldly things, must be the essence of purity, must show in himself the fear of God, knowledge, wisdom and learning. Thus, should the first-born of the guardian of the Cause of God not manifest in himself the truth of the words: -- "The child is the secret essence of its sire," that is, should he not inherit of the spiritual within him (the guardian of the Cause of God) and his glorious lineage not be matched with a goodly character, then must he (the guardian of the Cause of God), choose another branch to succeed him.

The Hands of the Cause of God must elect from their own number nine persons that shall at all times be occupied in the important services in the work of the guardian of the Cause of God. The election of these nine must be carried either unanimously or by majority from the company of the Hands of the Cause of God and these, whether unanimously or by a majority vote, must give their assent to the choice of the one whom the guardian of the Cause of God hath chosen as his successor. This assent must be given in such wise as the assenting and dissenting voices may not be distinguished. (secret ballot)

O friends! The Hands of the Cause of God must be nominated and appointed by the guardian of the Cause of God. All must be under his shadow and obey his command. Should any, within or without the company of the Hands of the Cause of God disobey and seek division, the wrath of God and His vengeance will be upon him, for he will have caused a breach in the true Faith of God.

The obligations of the Hands of the Cause of God are

to diffuse the Divine Fragrances, to edify the souls of men, to promote learning, to improve the character of all men and to be, at all times and under all conditions, sanctified and detached from earthly things. They must manifest the fear of God by their conduct, their manners, their deeds and their words.

This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction of the guardian of the Cause of God.... Should differences arise they shall be amicably and conclusively settled by the Supreme Tribunal, that shall include

members from all the governments and peoples of the world....

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 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....

O ye the faithful loved ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! It is incumbent upon you to take the greatest care of Shoghi Effendi, the twig that hath branched from and the fruit given forth by the two hallowed and Divine Lote-Trees, that no dust of despondency and sorrow may stain his radiant nature, that day by day he may wax greater in happiness, in joy and spirituality, and may grow to become even as a fruitful tree.

For he is, after 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the guardian of the Cause

67

of God, the Afnan, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause and the beloved of the Lord must obey him and turn unto him. He that obeyeth him not, hath not obeyed God; he that turneth away from him, hath turned away from God and he that denieth him, hath denied the True One. Beware lest anyone falsely interpret these words, and like unto them that have broken the Covenant after the Day of Ascension (of Bahá'u'lláh) advance a pretext, raise the standard of revolt, wax stubborn and open wide the door of false interpretation. To none is given the right to put forth his own opinion or express his particular convictions. All must seek guidance and turn unto the Center of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error.... (The Bahá'í World, Vol. VI, p. 207-11)

13. (a) What are the major Bahá'í prohibitions? (b) The standard of conduct?

O Son of Being! How couldst thou forget thine own faults and busy thyself with the faults of others? Whoso doeth this is accursed of Me. (Hidden Words 26

Arabic)

O Son of Man! Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. Shouldst thou transgress this command, accursed wouldst thou be, and to this I bear witness. (Hidden Words 27 Arabic)

"The drinking of wine," writes 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "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."

"Drink ye, O handmaidens of God," Bahá'u'lláh Himself has affirmed, "the Mystic Wine from the cup of My words. Cast away, then, from you that which your minds abhor, for it hath been forbidden unto you in His Tablets and His Scriptures. Beware lest ye barter away the River that is life indeed for that which the souls of the pure-hearted detest. 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. Thus hath the sun of My commandment shone forth above the horizon of My utterance, that the handmaidens who believe in Me may be illumined." (The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 27)

Be the essence of cleanliness among mankind ... under all circumstances conform yourselves to refined manners ...let no trace of uncleanness appear on your clothes. ... Immerse yourselves in pure water; a water which hath

68

been used is not allowable. ... Verily We have desired to see in you the manifestations of Paradise on earth, so that there may be diffused from you that whereat the hearts of the favored ones shall

rejoice. (Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, p. 127)

Cleanliness and sanctity in all conditions are characteristics of pure beings and necessities of free souls. The first perfection consists in cleanliness and sanctity and in purity from every defect. When man in all conditions is pure and immaculate, he will become the center of the reflection of the manifest Light. In all his actions and conduct there must first be purity, then beauty and independence.... External cleanliness, although it is but a physical thing, hath a great influence upon spirituality.... the fact of having a pure and spotless body likewise exerciseth an influence upon the spirit of man. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 581-2)

Certain prohibitions are absolute and imperative for all: he who commits that which is forbidden is detested by God and excluded from the number of the elect. This applieth to the things forbidden by an absolute prohibition and of which the perpetration is a grave sin; they are so vile that even to mention them is shameful. There are other forbidden things which do not cause an immediate evil and of which the pernicious effect is only gradually produced. They are also abhorred, blamed and rejected by God, but their prohibition is not recorded in an absolute way, although cleanliness and sanctity,

spotlessness and purity, the preservation of health and independence are required by these interdictions.

One of these last prohibitions is the smoking of tobacco, which is unclean, malodorous, disagreeable and vulgar and of which the gradual harmfulness is universally recognized. All clever physicians have judged, and have also shown by experiment, that one of the constituents of tobacco is a mortal poison and that smokers are exposed to different indispositions and maladies. That is why cleanly people have a marked aversion for its use....

I wish to say that, in the sight of God, the smoking of tobacco is a thing which is blamed and condemned, very unclean, and of which the result is by degrees injurious. Besides it is a cause of expense and of loss of time and it is a harmful habit. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 582-3)

As to the question of opium, disgusting and execrated, I resign myself to God for its punishment. The formal text of the Kitáb-el-Akdas forbids and reproves it and, according to reason, its use leads to madness. Experience hath shown

69

that he who giveth himself up to it is completely excluded from the world of humanity. Let us take refuge in God against the perpetration of so shameful a thing, which is the destruction of the foundations of humanity and which causeth a perpetual unhappiness. It taketh possession of the soul of man, killeth the reason, weakeneth the intelligence, maketh a living man dead and extinguisheth the natural heat. It is impossible to imagine anything more pernicious. Happy is he who never mentioneth the word opium....

O friends of God! Force and violence, constraint and oppression are condemned in this divine cycle, but to prevent the use of opium, all means must be employed, so that the human species may be delivered and freed from this great calamity....

Experience hath shown how much the renouncing of tobacco, wine and opium, giveth health, strength and intellectual enjoyments, penetration of judgement and physical vigor. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 583-5)

(b) The Standard of Conduct.

How great, therefore, how staggering the responsibility that must weigh upon the present generation of the American believers, at this early stage in their spiritual and administrative evolution, to weed out, by every means in their power, those faults, habits, and tendencies which they have inherited from their own nation, and to cultivate, patiently and prayerfully, those distinctive qualities and characteristics that are so indispensable to their effective participation in the great redemptive work of their Faith....

Of these spiritual prerequisites of success, which constitute the bedrock on which the security of all teaching plans, Temple projects, and financial schemes, must ultimately rest, the following stand out as preeminent and vital.... Upon the extent to which these basic requirements are met, and the

manner in which the American believers fulfill them in their individual lives, administrative activities, and social relationships, must depend the measure of the manifold blessings which the All-Bountiful Possessor can vouchsafe to them all. These requirements are none other than a high sense of moral rectitude in their social and administrative activities, absolute chastity in their individual lives, and complete freedom from prejudice in their dealings with peoples of a different race, class, creed, or color.

The first is specially, though not exclusively, directed to their elected representatives, whether local, regional, or na-

70

tional.... The second is mainly and directly concerned with the Bahá'í youth.... The third should be the immediate, the universal, and the chief concern of all and sundry members of the Bahá'í community, of whatever age, rank, experience, class, or color, as all, with no exception, must face its challenging implications, and none can claim, however much he may have progressed along this line, to have completely discharged the stern responsibilities which it inculcates.

A rectitude of conduct, an abiding sense of undeviating justice, unobscured by the demoralizing influences which a corruption-ridden political life so strikingly manifests; a chaste, pure, and holy life, unsullied and unclouded by the indecencies, the vices, the false standards, which an inherently deficient moral code tolerates, perpetuates, and fosters; a fraternity freed from that cancerous growth of racial prejudice, which is eating into the vitals of an already debilitated society -- these are the ideals which the American believers must, from now on, individually and through concerted action, strive to promote, in both their private and public lives, ideals which are the chief propelling forces that can most effectively accelerate the march of their institutions, plans, and enterprises, that can guard the honor and integrity of their Faith, and subdue any obstacles that may confront it in the future.

This rectitude of conduct, with its implications of justice, equity, truthfulness, honesty, fair-mindedness, reliability, and trustworthiness, must distinguish every phase of the life of the Bahá'í community.... "I swear by Him Who is the Most Great Ocean!" He again affirms, "Within the very breath of such souls as are pure and sanctified far-reaching potentialities are hidden. So great are these potentialities that they exercise their influence upon all created things."... "By Him Who shineth above the Dayspring of sanctity!"... If the whole earth were to be converted into silver and gold, no man who can be said to have truly ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude would deign to regard it, much less to seize and keep it.... They who dwell within the Tabernacle of God, and are established upon the seats of everlasting glory, will refuse, though they be dying of hunger, to stretch their hands, and seize unlawfully the property of their neighbor, however vile and worthless he may be. The purpose of the one true God in manifesting Himself is to summon all mankind to truthfulness and sincerity, to piety and trustworthiness, to

resignation and submissiveness to the will of God, to forbearance and kindness, to uprightness and wisdom. His object is to array every man with the mantle of

71

a saintly character, and to adorn him with the ornament of holy and goodly deeds."... "One righteous act," He, again, has written, "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...." And again, "Observe equity in your judgment, ye men of understanding heart! He that is unjust in his judgment is destitute of the characteristics that distinguish man's station."

"Beautify your tongues, O people," He further admonishes them, "with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty. Beware, O people, that ye deal not treacherously with anyone. Be ye the trustees of God amongst His creatures, and the emblems of His generosity amidst His people."....

"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...."

"The most vital duty, in this day," He, moreover, has written, "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...." "Truthfulness," He asserts, "is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also be acquired."

A chaste and holy life must be made the controlling principle in the behavior and conduct of all Bahá'ís, both in their social relations with the members of their own community, and in their contact with the world at large. It must

72

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 Bahá'u'lláh. 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 Bahá'í summer school and any other occasions on which Bahá'í community life is organized and fostered. It must be closely and continually identified with the mission of the Bahá'í youth, both as an element in the life of the Bahá'í community, and as a factor in the future progress and orientation of the youth of their own country.

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....

"A race of men," is His written promise, "incomparable in character, shall be raised up which, with the feet of detachment, will tread under all who are in heaven and on earth, and will cast the sleeve of holiness over all that hath been created from water and clay." "The civilization," is His grave warning, "so often vaunted by the learned exponents of arts and sciences, will, if allowed to overleap the bounds of moderation, bring great evil upon men.... If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of modera-

73

tion." "He hath chosen out of the whole world the hearts of His servants," He explains, "and made them each a seat for the revelation of His glory. Wherefore, sanctify them from every defilement, that the things for which they were created may be engraven upon them. This indeed is a token of God's bountiful favor." "Say," He proclaims, "He is not to be numbered with the people of Baha who followeth his mundane desires, or fixeth his heart on things of the earth. 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....

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.... "Should a man," Bahá'u'lláh 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." (The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 17-28)

14. What is woman's position in the new civilization?

The world of humanity consists of two parts: male and female. Each is the complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete, and perfection cannot be attained.... Just as physical accomplishment is complete with two hands, so man and woman, the two parts of the social body, must be perfect. It is not natural that either should remain undeveloped; and until both are perfected, the happiness of the human world will not be realized. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 130)

The most momentous question of this day is international peace and arbitration, and universal peace is impossible without universal suffrage. Children are educated by the women.... 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; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 130)

In past ages woman was wronged and oppressed. This was especially the case in Asia and Africa. In certain parts of Asia women were not considered as members of humankind....A certain people known as the Nusayris held to the belief for a long period that woman was the incarnation of the evil spirit, or Satan, and that man alone was the mani-

74

festation of God, the Merciful. At last this century of light dawned....and the mysteries long hidden from human vision were revealed. Among these revealed realities was the great principle of the equality of man and woman....

Qurratu'l-'Ayn, a Bahá'í, was a poetess. She discomfited the learned men of Persia by her brilliancy and fervor....Her courage was unparalleled; she faced her enemies fearlessly until she was killed. She withstood a despotic king, the Shah of Persia....This woman singly and alone withstood such a despot until her last breath, then gave her life for her faith....

The biblical statement "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" does not mean that woman was not created. The image and likeness of God apply to her as well....To accept and observe a distinction which God has not intended in creation is ignorance and superstition....For the world of humanity consists of

two parts or members: one is woman; the other is man. Until these two members are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 71-3)

Every influential undertaking of the human world wherein woman has been a participant has attained importance. This is historically true and beyond disproof even in religion. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 129-30)

Consider the animal kingdom, where no distinction is observed between male and female. They are equal in powers and privileges. Among birds of the air no distinction is evidenced. Their powers are equal; they dwell together in complete unity and mutual recognition of rights. Shall we not enjoy the same equality? Its absence is not befitting to mankind. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 132)

...Furthermore, the education of woman is more necessary and important than that of man, for woman is the trainer of the child from its infancy. If she be defective and imperfect herself, the child will necessarily be deficient; therefore, imperfection of woman implies a condition of imperfection in all mankind. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 129)

I believe that humanity is a divine humanity and that it must rise higher and higher; but it cannot soar with only one wing....Then we must strengthen the weaker wing,

75

otherwise the flight will always be hampered....What will you say if I prove to you that the woman is the stronger wing? (Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 104-5)

In ancient times and medieval ages woman was completely subordinated to man. The cause of this estimate of her inferiority was her lack of education. A woman's life and intellect were limited to the household....Science is praiseworthy -- whether investigated by the intellect of man or woman....There are some who declare that woman is not naturally endowed or imbued with the same capabilities as man; that she is intellectually inferior to man, weaker in willpower and lacking his courage. This theory is completely contradicted by history and facts of record....In the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh there have been women who were superior to men in illumination, intellect, divine virtues and devotion to God. Among them was Qurratu'l-'Ayn. When she spoke, she was listened to reverently by the most learned men....Some philosophers and writers have considered woman naturally and by creation inferior to man, claiming as a proof that the brain of man is larger and heavier than that of woman. This is

frail and faulty evidence, inasmuch as small brains are often found coupled with superior intellect and large brains possessed by those who are ignorant, even imbecilic....Woman must become proficient in the arts and sciences and prove by her accomplishments that her abilities and powers have merely been latent....Woman must especially devote her energies and abilities toward the industrial and agricultural sciences, seeking to assist mankind in that which is most needful....Strive that the ideal of international peace may become realized through the efforts of womankind, for man is more inclined to war than woman, and a real evidence of woman's superiority will be her service and efficiency in the establishment of universal peace. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 275-8)

The members of the House of Spirituality must give unlimited encouragement to women. In this age, both men and women are in the shadow of the Word of God. Whosoever endeavors the most will attain the greatest share, be it of men or of women, of the strong or of the weak. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. II, p. 336)

Therefore, the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful must train their children with life and heart

76

and teach them in the school of virtue and perfection. They must not be lax in this matter; they must not be inefficient. Truly, if a babe did not live at all it were better than to let it grow ignorant, for that innocent babe, in later life, would become afflicted with innumerable defects, responsible to and questioned by God, reproached and rejected by the people. What a sin this would be and what an omission!.... The command is decisive concerning both. If it be considered through the eye of reality, the training and culture of daughters is more necessary than that of sons, for these girls will come to the station of motherhood and will mould the lives of the children. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 579-80)

Forget thou entirely the ease, tranquility, composure and living of this transitory world and occupy thyself with the well-being and service of the human world and conduct thyself in accord with the advices and exhortations of God. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 658)

Verily, the tongue of the Supreme Concourse uttereth the praise of those women who are the glory of men; women who have forgotten themselves, have abandoned their own rest, attached their hearts to the Kingdom of God, raised their voice in the Name of God, diffused the signs of God and uttered clear arguments and firm proofs concerning the manifestation of the Kingdom of God. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 694)

In this Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, the women go neck and neck with the men. In no movement will they be left behind. Their rights with men are equal in degree. They will enter all the administrative branches of politics. They will attain in all such a degree as will be considered the very highest station of the world of humanity and will take part in all affairs....In the not far distant future the world of women will become all-refulgent and all-glorious, For His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh Hath Willed It so!.... His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has greatly strengthened the cause of women, and the rights and privileges of women is one of the greatest principles of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. (The Wisdom of Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 170-1)

Know thou, verily, submissiveness is the good quality of the maid-servants of God, and humility is the character of the

77

God-fearing leaves who have sprung forth from the Tree of Mercifulness. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá v1, p. 77)

I am moved, at this juncture, as I am reminded of the share which, ever since the inception of the Faith in the West, the handmaidens of Bahá'u'lláh, as distinguished from the men, have had in opening up, single-handed, so many, such diversified, and widely scattered countries over the whole surface of the globe, not only to pay a tribute to such apostolic fervor as is truly reminiscent of those heroic men who were responsible for the birth of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, but also to stress the significance of such a preponderating share which the women of the West have had and are having in the establishment of His Faith throughout the whole world. "Among the miracles," 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has testified, "which distinguish this sacred Dispensation is this, that women have evinced a greater boldness than men when enlisted in the ranks of the Faith.".... The "boldness" which, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, has characterized their accomplishments in the past must suffer no eclipse as they stand on the threshold of still greater and nobler accomplishments.... (The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 57-8)

15. (a) What is the cause of Race Prejudice? (b) What point did Abdu'l-Bahá stress as the cause for unity in America between the black and white races?

(a) It is an illusion, a superstition pure and simple! For God created us all of one race. There were no differences in the beginning, for we are all descendants of Adam. In the beginning, also, there were no limits and boundaries between the different lands; no part of the earth belonged more to one people than to another. In the sight of God there is no difference between the various races. Why should man invent

such a prejudice? How can we uphold war caused by an illusion?... The only difference lies in the degree of faithfulness, of obedience to the laws of God. (The Wisdom of Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 137-8)

O Children of Men! Know ye not why We created you all from the same dust? That no one should exalt himself over the other. Ponder at all times in your hearts how ye were created. Since We have created you all from one same substance it is incumbent on you to be even as one soul, to walk with the same feet, eat with the same mouth and dwell in the same land, that from your inmost being, by your deeds and actions, the signs of oneness and the essence of detachment may be made manifest. Such is My counsel to you, O concourse of light! Heed ye this counsel that ye may obtain the fruit of holiness from the tree of wondrous glory. (The Hidden Words, 68 Arabic)

As to racial prejudice, the corrosion of which, for well-nigh a century, has bitten into the fiber, and attacked the whole social structure of American society, it should be regarded as constituting the most vital and challenging issue confronting the Bahá'í community at the present stage of its evolution. The ceaseless exertions which this issue of paramount importance calls for, the sacrifices it must impose, the care and vigilance it demands, the moral courage and fortitude it requires, the tact and sympathy it necessitates, invest this problem, which the American believers are still far from having satisfactorily resolved, with an urgency and importance that cannot be overestimated. White and Negro, high and low, young and old, whether newly converted to the Faith or not, all who stand identified with it must participate in, and lend their assistance, each according to his or her capacity, experience, and opportunities, to the common task of fulfilling the instructions, realizing the hopes, and following the example, of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Whether colored or noncolored, neither race has the right, or can conscientiously claim, to be regarded as absolved from such an obligation, as having realized such hopes, or having faithfully followed such an example. A long and thorny road, beset with pitfalls, still remains untraveled, both by the white and the Negro exponents of the redeeming Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. On the distance they cover, and the manner in which they travel that road, must depend, to an extent which few among them can imagine, the operation of those intangible influences which are indispensable to the spiritual triumph of the American be-

lievers and the material success of their newly launched enterprise.

Let them call to mind, fearlessly and determinedly, the example and conduct of 'Abdu'l-Bahá while in their midst. Let them remember His courage, His genuine love, His informal and indiscriminating fellowship, His contempt for and impatience of criticism, tempered by His tact and wisdom. Let them revive and perpetuate the memory of those unforgettable and historic episodes and

occasions on which He so strikingly demonstrated His keen sense of justice, His spontaneous sympathy for the downtrodden, His ever-abiding sense of the oneness of the human race, His overflowing love for its members, and His displeasure with those who dared to flout His wishes, to deride His methods, to challenge His principles, or to nullify His acts.

To discriminate against any race, on the ground of its being socially backward, politically immature, and numerically in a minority, is a flagrant violation of the spirit that animates the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. The consciousness of any division or cleavage in its ranks is alien to its very purpose, principles, and ideals. Once its members have fully recognized the claim of its Author, and, by identifying themselves with its Administrative Order, accepted unreservedly the principles and laws embodied in its teachings, every differentiation of class, creed, or color must automatically be obliterated, and never be allowed, under any pretext, and however great the pressure of events or of public opinion, to reassert itself. If any discrimination is at all to be tolerated, it should be a discrimination not against, but rather in favor of the minority, be it racial or otherwise. Unlike the nations and peoples of the earth, be they of the East or of the West, democratic or authoritarian, communist or capitalist, whether belonging to the Old World or the New, who either ignore, trample upon, or extirpate, the racial, religious, or political minorities within the sphere of their jurisdiction, every organized community enlisted under the banner of Bahá'u'lláh should feel it to be its first and inescapable obligation to nurture, encourage, and safeguard every minority belonging to any faith, race, class, or nation within it. So great and vital is this principle that in such circumstances, as when an equal number of ballots have been cast in an election, or where the qualifications for any office are balanced as between the various races, faiths or nationalities within the community, priority should unhesitatingly be accorded the party representing the minority, and this for no other reason except to

80

stimulate and encourage it, and afford it an opportunity to further the interests of the community. In the light of this principle, and bearing in mind the extreme desirability of having the minority elements participate and share responsibility in the conduct of Bahá'í activity, it should be the duty of every Bahá'í community so to arrange its affairs that in cases where individuals belonging to the divers minority elements within it are already qualified and fulfill the necessary requirements, Bahá'í representative institutions, be they Assemblies, conventions, conferences, or committees, may have represented on them as many of these divers elements, racial or otherwise, as possible. The adoption of such a course, and faithful adherence to it, would not only be a source of inspiration and encouragement to those elements that are numerically small and inadequately represented, but would demonstrate to the world at large the universality and representative character of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and the freedom of His followers from the taint of those prejudices which have already wrought such havoc in the domestic affairs, as

well as the foreign relationships, of the nations.

Freedom from racial prejudice, in any of its forms, should, at such a time as this when an increasingly large section of the human race is falling a victim to its devastating ferocity, be adopted as the watchword of the entire body of the American believers, in whichever state they reside, in whatever circles they move, whatever their age, traditions, tastes, and habits. It should be consistently demonstrated in every phase of their activity and life, whether in the Bahá'í community or outside it, in public or in private, formally as well as informally, individually as well as in their official capacity as organized groups, committees and Assemblies. It should be deliberately cultivated through the various and everyday opportunities, no matter how insignificant, that present themselves, whether in their homes, their business offices, their schools and colleges, their social parties and recreation grounds, their Bahá'í meetings, conferences, conventions, summer schools and Assemblies. It should, above all else, become the keynote of the policy of that august body which, in its capacity as the national representative, and the director and coordinator of the affairs of the community, must set the example, and facilitate the application of such a vital principle to the lives and activities of those whose interests it safeguards and represents.

"O ye discerning ones!" Bahá'u'lláh has written, "Verily, the words which have descended from the heaven of the Will of God are the source of unity and harmony for the world. Close your eyes to racial differences, and welcome all with the light of oneness...."

81

A tremendous effort is required by both races if their outlook, their manners, and conduct are to reflect, in this darkened age, the spirit and teachings of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Casting away once and for all the fallacious doctrine of racial superiority, with all its attendant evils, confusion, and miseries, and welcoming and encouraging the intermixture of races, and tearing down the barriers that now divide them, they should each endeavor, day and night, to fulfill their particular responsibilities in the common task which so urgently faces them. Let them, while each is attempting to contribute its share to the solution of this perplexing problem, call to mind the warnings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and visualize, while there is yet time, the dire consequences that must follow if this challenging and unhappy situation that faces the entire American nation is not definitely remedied.

Let the white make a supreme effort in their resolve to contribute their share to the solution of this problem, to abandon once for all their usually inherent and at times subconscious sense of superiority, to correct their tendency towards revealing a patronizing attitude towards the members of the other race, to persuade them through their intimate, spontaneous and informal association with them of the genuineness of their friendship and the sincerity of their intentions, and to master their impatience of any lack of responsiveness on the part of a people who have received, for so long a period, such grievous and

slow-healing wounds. Let the Negroes, through a corresponding effort on their part, show by every means in their power the warmth of their response, their readiness to forget the past, and their ability to wipe out every trace of suspicion that may still linger in their hearts and minds. Let neither think that the solution of so vast a problem is a matter that exclusively concerns the other. Let neither think that such a problem can either easily or immediately be resolved. Let neither think that they can wait confidently for the solution of this problem until the initiative has been taken, and the favorable circumstances created, by agencies that stand outside the orbit of their Faith. Let neither think that anything short of genuine love, extreme patience, true humility, consummate tact, sound initiative, mature wisdom, and deliberate, persistent, and prayerful effort, can succeed in blotting out the stain which this patent evil has left on the fair name of their common country. Let them rather believe, and be firmly convinced, that on their mutual understanding, their amity, and sustained cooperation, must depend, more than on any other force or organization operating outside the circle of their

82

Faith, the deflection of that dangerous course so greatly feared by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the materialization of the hopes He cherished for their joint contribution to the fulfillment of that country's glorious destiny. (The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 28-34)

(b) What point did Abdu'l-Bahá stress as the cause for unity in America between the black and white races?

The black man must ever be grateful to the white man, for he has manifested great courage and self-sacrifice in behalf of the black race. Four years he fought their cause, enduring severe hardships, sacrificing life, family, treasure, all for his black brother until the great war ended in the proclamation of freedom. By this effort and accomplishment the black race throughout the world was influenced and benefited. Had this not been accomplished, the black man in Africa would still be bound by the chains of slavery. Therefore, his race should everywhere be grateful, for no greater evidence of humanism and courageous devotion could be shown....The comfort and civilization under which they live here are due to the white man's effort and sacrifice....This variety in forms and colorings which is manifest in all the kingdoms is according to creative wisdom and has a divine purpose. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 108-9)

The mineral kingdom abounds with many-colored substances and compositions but we find no strife among them on that account. In the kingdom of the plant and vegetable, distinct and variegated hues exist but the fruit and flowers are not in conflict for that reason....The world of humanity is like a garden and the various races are the flowers which constitute its adornment and decoration. In

the animal kingdom also we find variety of color. See how the doves differ in beauty yet they live together in perfect peace, and love each other....If we do not find color distinction drawn in a kingdom of lower intelligence and reason, how can it be justified among human beings, especially when we know that all have come from the same source and belong to the same household? In origin and intention of creation mankind is one. Distinctions of race and color have arisen afterward. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 42)

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. What

83

is the difference between the people of America and the inhabitants of central Africa? All are human beings. Why have the people of America advanced to a high degree of civilization while the tribes of central Africa remain in extreme ignorance and barbarism? The difference and distinction between them is the degree of education. This is unquestioned. The people of Europe and America have been uplifted by education and training from the world of defects and have ascended toward the realm of perfection, whereas the people of Africa, denied educational development, remain in a natural condition of illiteracy and deprivation, for nature is incomplete and defective.... If a piece of ground be left in its natural and original state, it will either become a thorny waste or be covered by worthless weeds. When cleared and cultivated, this same unproductive field will yield plentiful harvests of food for human sustenance. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 323)

In the human kingdom itself there are points of contact, properties common to all mankind; likewise, there are points of distinction which separate race from race, individual from individual. If the points of contact, which are the common properties of humanity, overcome the peculiar points of distinction, unity is assured....One of the important questions which affect the unity and the solidarity of mankind is the fellowship and equality of the white and colored races. Between these two races certain points of agreement and points of distinction exist which warrant just and mutual consideration....In this country, the United States of America, patriotism is common to both races; all have equal rights to citizenship, speak one language, receive the blessings of the same civilization, and follow the precepts of the same religion. In fact numerous points of partnership and agreement exist between the two races; whereas the one point of distinction is that of color. Shall this, the least of all distinctions, be allowed to separate you as races and individuals? (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 65)

Character is the true criterion of humanity. Anyone who possesses a good

character, who has faith in God and is firm, whose actions are good, whose speech is good -- that one is accepted at the threshold of God no matter what color he may be....My hope is that the white and the black will be united in perfect love and fellowship, with complete unity and brotherhood. Associate with each other, think of each

84

other, and be like a rose garden. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 422)

Because of the climatic differences of the zones, through the passing of ages, colors have become different. In the torrid zone, on account of the intensity of the effect of the sun throughout the ages the black race appeared. In the frigid zone, an account of the severity of the cold and the ineffectiveness of the heat of the sun throughout the year, the white race appeared. In the temperate zone, the yellow, brown and red races came into existence. But in reality mankind is one race....But man is peculiar that he has made color the means of strife....Difference of color is the adornment of the world of humanity. (Star of the West. Vol. XIII, p. 307)

I wish to say one thing of importance to both in order that the white race may be just and kind to the colored and that the colored race may in turn be grateful and appreciative toward the white. The great proclamation of liberty and emancipation from slavery was made upon this continent....The colored population of the United States of America are possibly not fully informed of the wide-reaching effect of this freedom and emancipation upon their colored brethren in Asia and Africa where even more terrible conditions of slavery existed. Influenced and impelled by the example of the United States, the European powers proclaimed universal liberty to the colored race and slavery ceased to exist. This effort and accomplishment by the white nations should never be lost sight of. Both races should rejoice in gratitude, for the institution of liberty and equality here became the cause of liberating your fellow-beings elsewhere. The colored people of this country are especially fortunate, for, praise be to God! conditions here are so much higher than in the East and comparatively few differences exist in the possibility of equal attainments with the white race. May both develop toward the highest degree of equality and altruism. May you be drawn together in friendship and may extraordinary development make brotherhood a reality and truth. I pray in your behalf that there shall be no name other than that of humanity among you....For the accomplishment of unity between the colored and whites will be an assurance of the world's peace. (Bahá'í World Faith, p. 268-9)

85

16. What is the solution of the economic problem?

The essence of the Bahá'í spirit is that, in order to establish a better

social order and economic condition, there must be allegiance to the laws and principles of government. Under the laws which are to govern the world, the socialists may justly demand human rights but without resort to force and violence. The governments will enact these laws, establishing just legislation and economics in order that all humanity may enjoy a full measure of welfare and privilege; but this will always be according to legal protection and procedure. Without legislative administration, rights and demands fail, and the welfare of the commonwealth cannot be realized....

The fundamentals of the whole economic condition are divine in nature and are associated with the world of the heart and spirit. This is fully explained in the Bahá'í teaching, and without knowledge of its principles no improvement in the economic state can be realized. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 233-4)

The arrangements of the circumstances of the people must be such that poverty shall disappear, that everyone, as far as possible, according to his rank and position, shall share in comfort and well-being....It cannot be done by bringing to pass absolute equality between men....The law of order must always obtain in the world of humanity. Heaven has so decreed in the creation of Man....

It is important to limit riches, as it is also of importance to limit poverty....A financier with colossal wealth should not exist whilst near him is a poor man in dire necessity. When we see poverty allowed to reach a condition of starvation it is a sure sign that somewhere we shall find tyranny....The rich must give of their abundance, they must soften their hearts and cultivate a compassionate intelligence....

There must be special laws made, dealing with these extremes of riches and of want. The members of the Government should consider the laws of God when they are framing plans for the ruling of the people. The general rights of mankind must be guarded and preserved. (The Wisdom of Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 140-3)

The twelfth glad tidings: It is made incumbent on every one of you to engage in some one occupation, such as arts, trades, and the like. We have made this -- your occupation -- identical with the worship of God, the True One. Re-

86

flect, O people, upon the mercy of God and upon His favors, then thank Him at dawn and at dusk.

Waste not your time in idleness and indolence, and occupy yourselves with that which will profit yourselves and others beside yourselves. Thus hath the matter been decreed in this Tablet from the horizon of which the sun of wisdom and divine utterance is gleaming. The most despised of men before God is he who sits and begs. Cling unto the rope of means, relying upon God, the Causer of Causes. Every soul who occupies himself in an art or trace -- this will be

accounted an act of worship before God.... Verily, this is from naught else than His great and abundant favor! (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 98-9)

First and foremost is the principle that to all the members of the body politic shall be given the greatest achievements of the world of humanity. Each one shall have the utmost welfare and well-being. To solve this problem we must begin with the farmer; there will we lay a foundation for system and order because the peasant class and the agricultural class exceed other classes in the importance of their service. In every village there must be established a general storehouse which will have a number of revenues.

The first revenue will be that of the tenth or tithes.

The second revenue (will be derived) from the animals.

The third revenue, from the minerals, that is to say, every mine prospected or discovered, a third thereof will go to this vast storehouse.

The fourth is this: whosoever dies without leaving any heirs all his heritage will go to the general storehouse.

Fifth, if any treasures shall be found on the land they should be devoted to this storehouse.

All these revenues will be assembled in this storehouse.

As to the first, the tenths or tithes: we will consider a farmer....Now, if his income be equal to his expenditures, from such a farmer nothing whatever will be taken. That is, he will not be subjected to taxation of any sort, needing as he does all his income. Another farmer may have expenses running up to one thousand dollars we will say, and his income is two thousand dollars. From such an one a tenth will be required, because he has a surplus. But if his income be ten thousand dollars and his expenses one thousand dollars or his income twenty thousand dollars, he will have to pay as taxes, one-fourth. If his income be one hundred thousand dollars and his expenses five thousand, one-third will he have to pay because he has still a surplus....Such a scale as this will determine allotment of taxes....

87

Then there must be considered such emergencies as follows: a certain farmer whose expenses run up to ten thousand dollars and whose income is only five thousand, he will receive necessary expenses from the storehouse....

Then the orphans will be looked after....the cripples in the village....the poor in the village....and other members who for valid reasons are incapacitated....

Certain trustees will be elected by the people in a given village to look after these transactions. The farmers will be taken care of and if after all these expenses are defrayed any surplus is found in the storehouse it must be transferred to the national treasury....For larger cities, naturally, there will be a system on a larger scale. (The Bahá'í World, Vol. II, p. 435-460)

The solution of the economic problem is one of the fundamental principles of His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh. But it must be solved with justice and not with force. If this problem is not solved lovingly it will result in war. Perfect communism and equality are an impossibility because they would upset the affairs and the order of the world. But there is a fair method which will not leave the poor in such need nor the rich in such wealth. The poor and the rich, according to their degrees, can live happily, with ease and tranquillity. The first person in the world who had this idea was the king of Sparta. He sacrificed his kingdom for this work. He lived before the Alexander the Great was born....The name of this king was Lycurgus....Equality of distribution in a short time became the cause of discord....Differences accrued and the whole thing was upset....

But here is the real solution. The rich should be merciful to the poor, but with their free-will, not with force. Should it be with force it will be useless. It should be according to law and not by violence, so that through a general law everyone might know his duty. For example, a rich person has a large income and a poor person a small income....Now is it fair to tax them equally? Nay, rather the poor person in this case must be exempt from taxes....Laws must do away with the present system of wages and earnings. If today the owners of factories increase the wages of their employees, after a month or a year they will again cry and strike and ask for more increase....According to the divine law no wages should be given to employees. Nay, rather, indeed they are partners in every work....

88

The question of socialization is very important. It will not be solved by strikes for wages. All the governments of the world must be united and organize and assembly, the members of which should be elected from the parliaments and the nobles of the nations. These must plan with the utmost wisdom and power, so that neither the capitalists suffer from enormous losses, nor the laborers become needy. In the utmost moderation they should make the law, then announce to the public that the rights of the working people are to be strongly preserved. When such a general plan is adopted by the will of both sides, should a strike occur, all the governments of the world collectively should resist it. Otherwise, the work will lead to much destruction, especially in Europe. Terrible things will take place. One of the several causes of a universal European war will be this question. For instance, the owners of properties, mines and factories should share their incomes with their employees, and give a certain fair percentage of their products to their workmen, in order that the employees may receive, besides their wages, some of the general income of the factory so that the employee may strive with his soul in the work.

No more trusts will remain in the future. The question of the trusts will be wiped away entirely. Also, every factory that has ten thousand shares, will

give two thousand shares of these ten thousand to its employees and will write them in their names, that they may have them, and the rest will belong to the capitalists. Then at the end of the month, or year, whatever they may earn, after the expenses and wages are paid according to the number of shares, should be divided among both. In reality, so far, great injustice has befallen the common people. Laws must be made because it is impossible for the laborers to be satisfied with the present system. They will strike every month and every year. Finally the capitalists will lose. In the ancient times a strike occurred among the Turkish soldiers....The government was forced to give them their demands. Shortly afterwards they struck again. Finally all the incomes went to the pockets of the soldiers, to the extent that they killed the king, saying: "Why didst thou not increase the income so that we might have received more?...."

To solve this problem strong laws must be made, so that all the governments of the world may be the protectors thereof.

The essence of this matter is that strikes are conducive to

89

destruction, but laws are the cause of life. Laws must be framed. Demands should be according to the laws, and not with strikes, force and harshness. (Star of the West Vol. VII, p. 84)

What could be better before God than thinking of the poor?.... Their lives are full of difficulties, their trials continual, their hopes are in God alone. Therefore, you must assist the poor as much as possible, even by sacrifice of yourself....The greatest means for prevention is that whereby the laws of the community will be so framed and enacted that it will not be possible for a few to be millionaires and many destitute....For the community needs financier, farmer, merchant and laborer just as an army must be composed of commander, officers and privates....Each in his station in the social fabric must be competent....but with justness of opportunity for all.

Difference of capacity in human individuals is fundamental. It is impossible for all to be alike, all to be equal, all to be wise. Bahá'u'lláh has revealed principles and laws which will accomplish the adjustment of varying human capacities....The fundamental basis of the community is agriculture, tillage of the soil.

All must be producers....A man's capacity for production and his needs will be equalized and reconciled through taxation. If his production exceeds, he will pay a tax; if his necessities exceed his production, he shall receive an amount sufficient to equalize or adjust. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 211-12)

Among the results of the manifestation of spiritual forces will be that the human world will adapt itself to a new social form, the justice of God will become manifest throughout human affairs, and human equality will be

universally established....The rich will enjoy the privilege of this new economic condition as well as the poor, for owing to certain provisions and restrictions they will not be able to accumulate so much as to be burdened by its management, while the poor will be relieved from the stress of want and misery. The rich will enjoy his palace, and the poor will have his comfortable cottage. The essence of the matter is that divine justice will become manifest in human conditions and affairs, and all mankind will find comfort and enjoyment in life....In the future there will be no very rich nor extremely poor....This will be an eternal and blessed outcome of the glorious

90

twentieth century which will be realized universally. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 128)

O Children of Dust! Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues. (Hidden Words 49 Persian)

O Oppressors on Earth! Withdraw your hands from tyranny, for I have pledged Myself not to forgive any man's injustice. This is My covenant which I have irrevocably decreed in the preserved tablet and sealed with My seal. (Hidden Words 64 Persian)

O Ye That Pride Yourselves on Mortal Riches! Know ye in truth that wealth is a mighty barrier between the seeker and his desire, the lover and his beloved. The rich, but for a few, shall in no wise attain the court of His presence nor enter the city of content and resignation. Well is it then with him, who, being rich, is not hindered by his riches from the eternal kingdom, nor deprived by them of imperishable dominion. By the Most Great Name! The splendor of such a wealthy man shall illuminate the dwellers of heaven even as the sun enlightens the people of the earth! (Hidden Words 53 Persian)

17. What is understood by the procedure of consultation?

In this Cause consultation is of vital importance, but spiritual conference and not the mere voicing of personal views is intended.... 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.... 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 pre-

91

viously expressed opinion is more true and worthy, he should accept it immediately and not willfully hold to an opinion of his own.... Opposition and division are deplorable.... 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. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 68-9)

Pending the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, whose function it is to lay more definitely the broad lines that must guide the future activities and administration of the Movement, it is clearly our duty to strive to obtain as clear a view as possible of the manner in which to conduct the affairs of the Cause, and then arise with single-mindedness and determination to adopt and maintain it in all our activities and labors....

Let us also remember that at the very root of the Cause lies the principle of the undoubted right of the individual to self-expression, his freedom to declare his conscience and set forth his views. If certain instructions of the Master are today particularly emphasized and scrupulously adhered to, let us be sure that they are but provisional measures designed to guard and protect the Cause in its present state of infancy and growth until the day when this tender and precious plant shall have sufficiently grown to be able to withstand the unwisdom of its friends and the attacks of its enemies.

Let us also bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority but humble fellowship, not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. Nothing short of the spirit of a true Bahá'í can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other.

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

92

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 promoters of its teachings and principles. They should approach their task with extreme humility, and endeavor, by their open-mindedness, their high sense of justice and duty, their candor, 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 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. (Bahá'í Administration, p. 43-5)

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. In this day, assemblies of consultation are of the greatest importance and a vital necessity. Obedience unto them is essential and obligatory. The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should any one oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions. 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....

93

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 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 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. Discussions must all be confined to spiritual matters that pertain to the training of souls, the instruction of children, the relief of the poor, the help of the feeble throughout all classes in the world, kindness to all peoples, the diffusion of the fragrances of God and the exaltation of His Holy Word. Should they endeavor to fulfill 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. (Bahá'í Administration, p. 21-3)

18. How did the people of the world respond to the summons of the Promised One?

It should not be forgotten that it was the kings of the earth and the world's religious leaders who, above all other cate-

94

gories of men, were made the direct recipients of the Message proclaimed by both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.... It would be no exaggeration to say that in most of the countries of the European and Asiatic continents absolutism, on the one hand, and complete subservience to ecclesiastical hierarchies, on the other, were still the outstanding features of the political and religious life of the masses. These, dominated and shackled, were robbed of the necessary freedom that would enable them to either appraise the claims and merits of the Message proffered to them, or to embrace unreservedly its truth.

Small wonder, then, that the Author of the Bahá'í Faith, and to a lesser degree its Herald, should have directed at the world's supreme rulers and religious leaders the full force of Their Messages, and made them the recipients of some of Their most sublime Tablets, and invited them, in a language at once clear and insistent, to heed Their call. Small wonder that They should have taken the pains to unroll before 20 their eyes the truths of Their respective Revelations, and should have expatiated on Their woes and

sufferings. Small wonder that They should have stressed the preciousness of the opportunities which it was in the power of these rulers and leaders to seize, and should have warned them in ominous tones of the grave responsibilities which the rejection of God's Message would entail, and should have predicted, when rebuffed and refused, the dire consequences which such a rejection involved. Small wonder that He Who is the King of kings and Vicegerent of God Himself should, when abandoned, contemned and persecuted, have uttered this epigrammatic and momentous prophecy: "From two ranks amongst men power hath been seized: kings and ecclesiastics."...

The Emperor of the French, the most powerful ruler of his day on the European continent, Napoleon III; Pope Pius IX, the supreme head of the highest church in Christendom, and wielder of the scepter of both temporal and spiritual authority; the omnipotent Czar of the vast Russian Empire, Alexander II; the renowned Queen Victoria, whose sovereignty extended over the greatest political combination the world has witnessed; William I, the conqueror of Napoleon III, King of Prussia and the newly acclaimed monarch of a unified Germany; Francis Joseph, the autocratic king-emperor of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the heir of the far-famed Holy Roman Empire; the tyrannical Abdu'l-'Aziz, the embodiment of the concentrated power vested in the Sultanate and the Caliphate; the notorious Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, the despotic ruler of Persia and the mightiest potentate of Shi'ih Islam -- in a word, most

95

of the preeminent embodiments of power and of sovereignty in His day became, one by one, the object of Bahá'u'lláh's special attention, and were made to sustain, in varying degrees, the weight of the force communicated by His appeals and warnings. (The Promised Day is Come, p. 18-19)

It should be borne in mind, however, that Bahá'u'lláh has not restricted the delivery of His Message to a few individual sovereigns, however potent the scepters they severally wielded, and however vast the dominions which they ruled. All the kings of the earth have been collectively addressed by His Pen, appealed to, and warned, at a time when the star of His Revelation was mounting its zenith, and whilst He lay a prisoner in the hands, and in the vicinity of the court, of His royal enemy. In a memorable Tablet, designated as the Suriy-i-Mulúk (Surih of Kings) in which the Sultan himself and his ministers, and the kings of Christendom, and the French and Persian Ambassadors accredited to the Sublime Porte, and the Muslim ecclesiastical leaders in Constantinople, and its wise men and its inhabitants, and the people of Persia, and the philosophers of the world have been specifically addressed and admonished, He thus directs His words to the entire company of the monarchs of East and West." (The Promised Day is Come, p. 20)

For a whole century God has respited mankind, that it might acknowledge the Founder of such a Revelation, espouse His Cause, proclaim His greatness, and establish His Order. In a hundred volumes, the repositories of priceless

precepts, mighty laws, unique principles, impassioned exhortations, reiterated warnings, amazing prophecies, sublime invocations, and weighty commentaries, the Bearer of such a Message has proclaimed, as no Prophet before Him has done, the Mission with which God had entrusted Him. To emperors, kings, princes and potentates, to rulers, governments, clergy and peoples, whether of the East or of the West, whether Christian, Jew, Muslim, or Zoroastrian, He addressed, for well-nigh fifty years, and in the most tragic circumstances, these priceless pearls of knowledge and wisdom that lay hid within the ocean of His matchless utterance. Forsaking fame and fortune, accepting imprisonment and exile, careless of ostracism and obloquy, submitting to physical indignities and cruel deprivations, He, the Vicegerent of God on earth, suffered Himself to be banished from place to place and from country to country, till at length He, in the Most Great Prison, offered up

96

His martyred son as a ransom for the redemption and unification of all mankind.

"We verily," He Himself has testified, "have not fallen short of Our duty to exhort men, and to deliver that whereunto I was bidden by God, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Had they hearkened unto Me, they would have beheld the earth another earth." And again: "Is there any excuse left for anyone in this Revelation? No, by God, the Lord of the Mighty Throne! My signs have encompassed the earth, and My power enveloped all mankind, and yet the people are wrapped in a strange sleep!" (The Promised Day is Come, p. 4-5)

What response to His call?... A clamor, unparalleled in the history of Shi'ih Islam, greeted, in the land of its birth, the infant light of the Faith, in the midst of a people notorious for its crass ignorance, its fierce fanaticism, its barbaric cruelty, its ingrained prejudices, and the unlimited sway held over the masses by a firmly entrenched ecclesiastical hierarchy....

To the bodily agonies inflicted upon these sufferers, the charges, so unmerited, of Nihilism, occultism, anarchism, eclecticism, immorality, sectarianism, heresy, political partisanship -- each conclusively disproved by the tenets of the Faith itself and by the conduct of its followers -- were added, swelling thereby the number of those who, unwittingly or maliciously, were injuring its cause.

Unmitigated indifference on the part of men of eminence and rank; unrelenting hatred shown by the ecclesiastical dignitaries of the Faith from which it had sprung; the scornful derision of the people among whom it was born; the utter contempt which most of those kings and rulers who had been addressed by its Author manifested towards it; the condemnations pronounced, the threats hurled, and the banishments decreed by those under whose sway it arose and first spread; the distortion to which its principles and laws were subjected by the envious and the malicious, in lands and among peoples far beyond the country of its origin -- all these are but the evidences of the treatment meted out by a generation sunk in self-content, careless of its God, and oblivious of the omens, prophecies, warnings and admonitions revealed by His Messengers.... (The

Promised Day is Come, p. 5-6).

The Báb -- "the Point," as affirmed by Bahá'u'lláh, "round Whom the realities of the Prophets and Messengers revolve" -- was the One first swept into the maelstrom which engulfed His supporters. Sudden arrest and confinement in the very first year of His short and spectacular career; public affront deliberately inflicted in the presence of the ecclesiastical digni-

97

taries of Shiraz; strict and prolonged incarceration in the bleak fastnesses of the mountains of Adhirbayjan; a contemptuous disregard and a cowardly jealousy evinced respectively by the Chief Magistrate of the realm and the foremost minister of his government; the carefully staged and farcical interrogatory sustained in the presence of the heir to the Throne and the distinguished divines of Tabriz; the shameful infliction of the bastinado in the prayer house, and at the hands of the Shaykhu'l-Islam of that city; and finally suspension in the barrack-square of Tabriz and the discharge of a volley of above seven hundred bullets at His youthful breast under the eyes of a callous multitude of about ten thousand people, culminating in the ignominious exposure of His mangled remains on the edge of the moat without the city gate -- these were the progressive stages in the tumultuous and tragic ministry of One Whose age inaugurated the consummation of all ages, and Whose Revelation fulfilled the promise of all Revelations.

"I swear by God!" the Báb Himself in His Tablet to Muhammad Shah has written, "Shouldst thou know the things which in the space of these four years have befallen Me at the hands of thy people and thine army, thou wouldst hold thy breath from fear of God.... Alas, alas, for the things which have touched Me!... (The Promised Day is Come, p. 6-7).

What of Bahá'u'lláh, the germ of Whose Revelation, as attested by the Báb, is endowed with a potency superior to the combined forces of the Bábí Dispensation? Was He not -- He for Whom the Báb had suffered and died in such tragic and miraculous circumstances -- made, for nearly half a century and under the domination of the two most powerful potentates of the East, the object of a systematic and concerted conspiracy which, in its effects and duration, is scarcely paralleled in the annals of previous religions?...

Was it not He Who, at the early age of twenty-seven, spontaneously arose to champion, in the capacity of a mere follower, the nascent Cause of the Bab? Was He not the One Who by assuming the actual leadership of a proscribed and harrassed sect exposed Himself, and His kindred, and His possessions, and His rank, and His reputation to the grave perils, the bloody assaults, the general spoliation and furious defamations of both government and people? Was it not He -- the Bearer of a Revelation, Whose day "every Prophet hath announced," for which "the soul of every Divine Messenger hath thirsted," and in which "God hath proved the hearts of

98

the entire company of His Messengers and Prophets" -- was not the Bearer of such a Revelation, at the instigation of Shi'ih ecclesiastics and by order of the Shah himself forced, for no less than four months, to breathe, in utter darkness, whilst in the company of the vilest criminals and freighted down with galling chains, the pestilential air of the vermin-infested subterranean dungeon of Tihran -- a place which, as He Himself subsequently declared, was mysteriously converted into the very scene of the annunciation made to Him by God of His Prophethood?... (The Promised Day is Come, p. 8-9)

And what of the other tribulations which, before and immediately after this dreadful episode, touched Him? What of His confinement in the home of one of the kad-khudas of Tihran? What of the savage violence with which He was stoned by the angry people in the neighborhood of the village of Niyala? What of His incarceration by the emissaries of the army of the Shah in Mazindaran, and His receiving the bastinado by order, and in the presence, of the assembled siyyids and mujtahids into whose hands He had been delivered by the civil authorities of Amul? What of the howls of derision and abuse with which a crowd of ruffians subsequently pursued Him? What of the monstrous accusation brought against Him by the Imperial household, the Court and the people, when the attempt was made on the life of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh? What of the infamous outrages, the abuse and ridicule heaped on Him when He was arrested by responsible officers of the government, and conducted from Niyavaran "on foot and in chains, with bared head and bare feet," and exposed to the fierce rays of the midsummer sun, to the Siyah-Chal of Tihran? What of the avidity with which corrupt officials sacked His house and carried away all His possessions and disposed of His fortune? What of the cruel edict that tore Him from the small band of the Báb's bewildered, hounded, and shepherdless followers, separated Him from His kinsmen and friends, and banished Him, in the depth of winter, despoiled and defamed, to Iraq? (The Promised Day is Come, p. 9-10)

Severe as were these tribulations which succeeded one another with bewildering rapidity as a result of the premeditated attacks and the systematic machinations of the court, the clergy, the government and the people, they were but the prelude to a harrowing and extensive captivity which that edict had formally initiated. Extending over a period of more than forty years, and carrying Him successively to Iraq, Sulaymaniyyih, Constantinople, Adrianople and finally to the penal colony of 'Akká, this long banishment was at last ended by His death, at the age of over three score years and ten, terminat-

99

ing a captivity which, in its range, its duration and the diversity and severity of its afflictions, is unexampled in the history of previous Dispensations. (The Promised Day is Come, p. 10)

Who is the ruler, may it not be confidently asked, whether of the East or of the West, who, at any time since the dawn of so transcendent a Revelation, has been prompted to raise his voice either in its praise or against those who persecuted it? Which people has, in the course of so long a captivity, felt

urged to arise and stem the tide of such tribulations? Who is the sovereign, excepting a single woman, shining in solitary glory, who has, in however small a measure, felt impelled to respond to the poignant call of Bahá'u'lláh? Who amongst the great ones of the earth was inclined to extend this infant Faith of God the benefit of his recognition or support? Which one of the multitudes of creeds, sects, races, parties and classes and of the highly diversified schools of human thought, considered it necessary to direct its gaze towards the rising light of the Faith, to contemplate its unfolding system, to ponder its hidden processes, to appraise its weighty message, to acknowledge its regenerative power, to embrace its salutary truth, or to proclaim its eternal verities? Who among the worldly wise and the so-called men of insight and wisdom can justly claim, after the lapse of nearly a century, to have disinterestedly approached its theme, to have considered impartially its claims, to have taken sufficient pains to delve into its literature, to have assiduously striven to separate facts from fiction, or to have accorded its cause the treatment it merits? Where are the preeminent exponents, whether of the arts or sciences, with the exception of a few isolated cases, who have lifted a finger, or whispered a word of commendation, in either the defense or the praise of a Faith that has conferred upon the world so priceless a benefit, that has suffered so long and so grievously, and which enshrines within its shell so enthralling a promise for a world so woefully battered, so manifestly bankrupt? (The Promised Day is Come, p. 12-13)

To the mounting tide of trials which laid low the Báb, to the long-drawn-out calamities which rained on Bahá'u'lláh, to the warnings sounded by both the Herald and the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation, must be added the sufferings which, for no less than seventy years, were endured by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as well as His pleas, and entreaties, uttered in the evening of His life, in connection with the dangers that increasingly threatened the whole of mankind. Born in the very year that witnessed the inception of the Bábí Revelation; baptized with the initial fires of persecution that raged around that nascent Cause;

100

an eyewitness, when a boy of eight, of the violent upheavals that rocked the Faith which His Father had espoused; sharing with Him, the ignominy, the perils, and rigors consequent upon the successive banishments from His native-land to countries far beyond its confines; arrested and forced to support, in a dark cell, the indignity of imprisonment soon after His arrival in 'Akká; the object of repeated investigations and the target of continual assaults and insults under the despotic rule of Sultan Abdu'l-Hamid, and later under the ruthless military dictatorship of the suspicious and merciless Jamal Pasha -- He, too, the Center and Pivot of Bahá'u'lláh's peerless Covenant and the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, was made to taste, at the hands of potentates, ecclesiastics, governments and peoples, the cup of woe which the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, as well as so many of their followers, had drained.

With the warnings which both His pen and voice have given in countless Tablets and discourses, during an almost lifelong incarceration and in the course of

His extended travels in both the European and American continents, they who labor for the spread of His Father's Faith in the Western world are sufficiently acquainted. How often and how passionately did He appeal to those in authority and to the public at large to examine dispassionately the precepts enunciated by His Father? With what precision and emphasis He unfolded the system of the Faith He was expounding, elucidated its fundamental verities, stressed its distinguishing features, and proclaimed the redemptive character of its principles? How insistently did He foreshadow the impending chaos, the approaching upheavals, the universal conflagration which, in the concluding years of His life, had only begun to reveal the measure of its force and the significance of its impact on human society?

A co-sharer in the woeful trials and momentary frustrations afflicting the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh; reaping a harvest in His lifetime wholly incommensurate to the sublime, the incessant and strenuous efforts He had exerted; experiencing the initial perturbations of the world-shaking catastrophe in store for an unbelieving humanity; bent with age, and with eyes dimmed by the gathering storm which the reception accorded by a faithless generation to His Father's Cause was raising, and with a heart bleeding over the immediate destiny of God's wayward children -- He, at last, sank beneath a weight of troubles for which they who had imposed them upon Him, and upon those gone before Him, were soon to be summoned to a dire reckoning....

101

Alas, a thousand times alas, that a Revelation so incomparably great, so infinitely precious, so mightily potent, so manifestly innocent, should have received, at the hands of a generation so blind and so perverse, so infamous a treatment! (The Promised Day is Come, p. 13-14)

"Be thankful to God for having enabled you to recognize His Cause. Whoever has received this blessing must, prior to his acceptance, have performed some deed which, though he himself was unaware of its character, was ordained by God as a means whereby he has been guided to find and embrace the Truth. As to those who have remained deprived of such a blessing, their acts alone have hindered them from recognising the truth of this Revelation. We cherish the hope that you, who have attained to this light, will exert your utmost to banish the darkness of superstition and unbelief from the midst of the people. May your deeds proclaim your faith and enable you to lead the erring into the paths of eternal salvation. The memory of this night will never be forgotten. May it never be effaced by the passage of time, and may its mention linger for ever on the lips of men." (The Dawn-Breakers, Nabíl's Narrative, p. 586)

19. What does the unity of the human race imply, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh?

Beset on every side by the cumulative evidences of disintegration, of turmoil and of bankruptcy, serious-minded men and women, in almost every walk of life, are beginning to doubt whether society, as it is now organized, can, through its unaided efforts, extricate itself from the slough into which it is steadily sinking. Every system, short of the unification of the human race, has been

tried, repeatedly tried, and been found wanting. Wars again and again have been fought, and conferences without number have met and deliberated. Treaties, pacts and covenants have been painstakingly negotiated, concluded and revised. Systems of government have been patiently tested, have been continually recast and superseded. Economic plans of reconstruction have been carefully devised, and meticulously executed. And yet crisis has succeeded crisis, and the rapidity with which a perilously unstable world is declining has been correspondingly accelerated. A yawning gulf threatens to involve in one common disaster both the satisfied and dissatisfied nations, democracies and dictatorships, capitalists and wage-earners, Europeans and Asiatics, Jew and Gentile, white and colored. An angry Providence, the cynic might well observe, has abandoned a hapless planet to its fate, and fixed irrevocably its doom....

102

How clear, how prophetic, must sound the words uttered by Bahá'u'lláh in the light of recent international developments: -- "Be united, O concourse of the sovereigns of the world, for thereby will the tempest of discord be stilled amongst you, and your peoples find rest.... The time must come," He, foreshadowing the tentative efforts that are now being made, has written, "when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace among men... Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him...."

Whatever the present status of the League or the outcome of its historic verdict, whatever the trials and reverses which, in the immediate future, it may have to face and sustain, the fact must be recognized that so important a decision marks one of the most distinctive milestones on the long and arduous road that must lead it to its goal, the stage at which the oneness of the whole body of nations will be made the ruling principle of international life....

Much suffering will still be required ere the contending nations, creeds, classes and races of mankind are fused in the crucible of universal affliction, and are forged by the fires of a fierce ordeal into one organic commonwealth, one vast, unified, and harmoniously functioning system. Adversities unimaginably appalling, undreamed of crises and upheavals, war, famine, and pestilence, might well combine to engrave in the soul of an unheeding generation those truths and principles which it has disdained to recognize and follow. A paralysis more painful than any it has yet experienced must creep over and further afflict the fabric of a broken society ere it can be rebuilt and regenerated....

The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has assimilated, by virtue of its creative, its regulative and ennobling energies, the varied races, nationalities, creeds and classes that have sought its shadow, and have pledged unswerving fealty to its cause. It has changed the hearts of its adherents, burned away their

prejudices, stilled their passions, exalted their conceptions, ennobled their motives, coordinated their efforts, and transformed their outlook. While preserving their patriotism and safeguarding their lesser loyalties, it has made them lovers of mankind, and the determined upholders of its best and truest interests. While maintaining intact their belief in the Divine origin of their respective religions, it has enabled them to visualize the underlying purpose of these religions, to discover their merits,

103

to recognize their sequence, their interdependence, their wholeness and unity, and to acknowledge the bond that vitally links them to itself. This universal, this transcending love which the followers of the Bahá'í Faith feel for their fellow-men, of whatever race, creed, class or nation, is neither mysterious nor can it be said to have been artificially stimulated.... They whose hearts are warmed by the energizing influence of God's creative love cherish His creatures for His sake, and recognize in every human face a sign of His reflected glory....

Though loyal to their respective governments, though profoundly interested in anything that affects their security and welfare, though anxious to share in whatever promotes their best interests, the Faith with which the followers of Bahá'u'lláh stand identified is one which they firmly believe God has raised high above the storms, the divisions, and controversies of the political arena. Their Faith they conceive to be essentially non-political, supra-national in character, rigidly non-partisan, and entirely dissociated from nationalistic ambitions, pursuits, and purposes. Such a Faith knows no division of class or of party. It subordinates, without hesitation or equivocation, every particularistic interest, be it personal, regional, or national, to the paramount interests of humanity, firmly convinced that in a world of inter-dependent peoples and nations the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole, and that no abiding benefit can be conferred upon the component parts if the general interests of the entity itself are ignored or neglected.

How can a Faith, it should moreover be borne in mind, whose divinely-ordained institutions have been established within the jurisdiction of no less than forty different countries, the policies and interests of whose governments are continually clashing and growing more complex and confused every day -- how can such a Faith, by allowing its adherents, whether individually or through its organized councils, to meddle in political activities, succeed in preserving the integrity of its teachings and in safeguarding the unity of its followers? How can it insure the vigorous, the uninterrupted and peaceful development of its expanding institutions? How can a Faith, whose ramifications have brought it into contact with mutually incompatible religious systems, sects and confessions, be in a position, if it permits its adherents to subscribe to obsolescent observances and doctrines, to claim the unconditional allegiance of those whom it is striving to incorporate into its divinely-appointed system? How can it avoid the constant friction, the misunderstandings and controversies

which formal affiliation, as distinct from association, must inevitably engender?....

104

Must humanity, tormented as she now is, be afflicted with still 202 severer tribulations ere their purifying influence can prepare her to enter the heavenly Kingdom destined to be established upon earth? Must the inauguration of so vast, so unique, so illumined an era in human history be ushered in by so great a catastrophe in human affairs as to recall, nay surpass, the appalling collapse of Roman civilization in the first centuries of the Christian Era? Must a series of profound convulsions stir and rock the human race ere Bahá'u'lláh can be enthroned in the hearts and consciences of the masses, ere His undisputed ascendancy is universally recognized, and the noble edifice of His World Order is reared and established?

Unification of the whole of mankind is the hall-mark of the stage which human society is now approaching. Unity of family, of tribe, of city-state, and nation have been successively attempted and fully established. World unity is the goal towards which a harassed humanity is striving. Nation-building has come to an end. The anarchy inherent in state sovereignty is moving towards a climax. A world, growing to maturity, must abandon this fetish, recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life....

The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá'u'lláh, 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. This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will, as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity. A world metropolis will act

105

as the nerve center of a world civilization, the focus towards which the unifying forces of life will converge and from which its energizing influences will radiate. A world language will either be invented or chosen from among the existing languages and will be taught in the schools of all the federated

nations as an auxiliary to their mother tongue. A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind. In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will cooperate, and will harmoniously develop. The press will, under such a system, while giving full scope to the expression of the diversified views and convictions of mankind, cease to be mischievously manipulated by vested interests, whether private or public, and will be liberated from the influence of contending governments and peoples. The economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated.

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 xiii 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

106

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." (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 190-204)

20. What achievements in the first century of the Bahá'í Faith testify to its divine potency and the authenticity of its institutions?

Rise and establishment of the Administrative Order.

With the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá the first century of the Bahá'í era, whose inception had synchronized with His birth, had run more than three quarters of

its course. Seventy-seven years previously the light of the Faith proclaimed by the Báb had risen above the horizon of Shiraz and flashed across the firmament of Persia, dispelling the age-long gloom which had enveloped its people. A blood bath of unusual ferocity, in which government, clergy and people, heedless of the significance of that light and blind to its splendor, had jointly participated, had all but extinguished the radiance of its glory in the land of its birth. Bahá'u'lláh had at the darkest hour in the fortunes of that Faith been summoned, while Himself a prisoner in Tihiran, to reinvigorate its life, and been commissioned to fulfil its ultimate purpose. In Baghdad, upon the termination of the ten-year delay interposed between the first intimation of that Mission and its Declaration, He had revealed the Mystery enshrined in the Báb's embryonic Faith, and disclosed the fruit which it had yielded. In Adrianople Bahá'u'lláh's Message, the promise of the Bábí as well as of all previous Dispensations, had been proclaimed to mankind, and its challenge voiced to the rulers of the earth in both the East and the West. Behind the walls of the prison-fortress of 'Akká the Bearer of God's newborn Revelation had ordained the laws and formulated the principles that were to constitute the warp and woof of His World Order. He had, moreover, prior to His ascension, instituted the Covenant that was to guide and assist in the laying of its foundations and to safeguard the unity of its builders. Armed with that peerless and potent Instrument, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His eldest Son and Center of His Covenant, had erected the standard of His Father's Faith in the North American continent, and established an impregnable basis for its institutions in Western Europe, in the Far East and in Australia. He had, in His works, Tablets and addresses, elucidated its principles, interpreted its laws, amplified its doctrine, and erected the rudimentary institutions of its future Administrative Order. In Russia He had raised its first House of Worship, whilst on the

107

slopes of Mt. Carmel He had reared a befitting mausoleum for its Herald, and deposited His remains therein with His Own hands. Through His visits to several cities in Europe and the North American continent He had broadcast Bahá'u'lláh's Message to the peoples of the West, and heightened the prestige of the Cause of God to a degree it had never previously experienced. And lastly, in the evening of His life, He had through the revelation of the Tablets of the Divine Plan issued His mandate to the community which He Himself had raised up, trained and nurtured, a Plan that must in the years to come enable its members to diffuse the light, and erect the administrative fabric, of the Faith throughout the five continents of the globe. (God Passes By, p. 323-4)

(a) Formative Period:

The moment had now arrived for that undying, that world-vitalizing Spirit... to incarnate itself in institutions designed to canalize its outspreading energies and stimulate its growth....

The Formative Period, the Iron Age, of that Dispensation was now beginning, the

Age in which the institutions, local, national and international, of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh were to take shape, develop and become fully consolidated, in anticipation of the third, the last, the Golden Age destined to witness the emergence of a world-embracing Order enshrining the ultimate fruit of God's latest Revelation to mankind, a fruit whose maturity must signalize the establishment of a world civilization and the formal inauguration of the Kingdom of the Father upon earth as promised by Jesus Christ Himself.

To this World Order the Báb Himself had, whilst a prisoner in the mountain fastnesses of Adhirbayjan, explicitly referred in His Persian Bayan, the Mother-Book of the Bábí Dispensation, had announced its advent, and associated it with the name of Bahá'u'lláh, Whose Mission He Himself had heralded. "Well is it with Him," is His remarkable statement in the sixteenth chapter of the third Vahid, "who fixeth his gaze upon the Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and rendereth thanks unto his Lord! For He will assuredly be made manifest..." To this same Order Bahá'u'lláh Who, in a later period, revealed the laws and principles that must govern the operation of that Order, had thus referred in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the Mother-Book of His Dispensation: "The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this Most Great Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System, the like of which mortal

108

eyes have never witnessed." Its features 'Abdu'l-Bahá, its great Architect, delineated in His Will and Testament, whilst the foundations of its rudimentary institutions are now being laid after Him by His followers in the East and in the West in this, the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Dispensation.

The last twenty-three years of the first Bahá'í century may thus be regarded as the initial stage of the Formative Period of the Faith, an Age of Transition to be identified with the rise and establishment of the Administrative Order, upon which the institutions of the future Bahá'í World Commonwealth must needs be ultimately erected in the Golden Age that must witness the consummation of the Bahá'í Dispensation. The Charter which called into being, outlined the features and set in motion the processes of, this Administrative Order is none other than the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His greatest legacy to posterity, the brightest emanation of His mind and the mightiest instrument forged to insure the continuity of the three ages which constitute the component parts of His Father's Dispensation.

The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh had been instituted solely through the direct operation of His Will and purpose. The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, on the other hand, may be regarded as the offspring resulting from that mystic intercourse between Him Who had generated the forces of a God-given Faith and the One Who had been made its sole Interpreter and was recognized as its perfect Exemplar. The creative energies unleashed by the Originator of the Law of God in this age gave birth, through their impact upon the mind of Him Who had been chosen as its unerring Expounder, to that Instrument, the vast

implications of which the present generation, even after the lapse of twenty-three years, is still incapable of fully apprehending. This Instrument can, if we would correctly appraise it, no more be divorced from the One Who provided the motivating impulse for its creation than from Him Who directly conceived it. The purpose of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation had, as already observed, been so thoroughly infused into the mind of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and His Spirit had so profoundly impregnated His being, and their aims and motives been so completely blended, that to dissociate the doctrine laid down by the former from the supreme act associated with the mission of the latter would be tantamount to a repudiation of one of the most fundamental verities of the Faith. (God Passes By, p. 324-6)

109

(b) Formative Period:

The Administrative Order which this historic Document has established, it should be noted, is, by virtue of its origin and character, unique in the annals of the world's religious systems. No Prophet before Bahá'u'lláh, it can be confidently asserted, not even Muhammad Whose Book clearly lays down the laws and ordinances of the Islamic Dispensation, has established, authoritatively and in writing, anything comparable to the Administrative Order which the authorized Interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings has instituted, an Order which, by virtue of the administrative principles which its Author has formulated, the institutions He has established, and the right of interpretation with which He has invested its Guardian, must and will, in a manner unparalleled in any previous religion, safeguard from schism the Faith from which it has sprung. Nor is the principle governing its operation similar to that which underlies any system, whether theocratic or otherwise, which the minds of men have devised for the government of human institutions. Neither in theory nor in practice can the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh be said to conform to any type of democratic government, to any system of autocracy, to any purely aristocratic order, or to any of the various theocracies, whether Jewish, Christian or Islamic which mankind has witnessed in the past. It incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognized forms of secular government, is devoid of the defects which each of them inherently possesses, and blends the salutary truths which each undoubtedly contains without vitiating in any way the integrity of the Divine verities on which it is essentially founded. The hereditary authority which the Guardian of the Administrative Order is called upon to exercise, and the right of the interpretation of the Holy Writ solely conferred upon him; the powers and prerogatives of the Universal House of Justice, possessing the exclusive right to legislate on matters not explicitly revealed in the Most Holy Book; the ordinance exempting its members from any responsibility to those whom they represent, and from the obligation to conform to their views, convictions or sentiments; the specific provisions requiring the free and democratic election by the mass of the faithful of the Body that constitutes the sole legislative organ in the world-wide Bahá'í community --

these are among the features which combine to set apart the Order identified with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh from any of the existing systems of human government.

Nor have the enemies who, at the hour of the inception of

110

this Administrative Order, and in the course of its twenty-three year existence, both in the East and in the West, from within and from without, misrepresented its character, or derided and vilified it, or striven to arrest its march, or contrived to create a breach in the ranks of its supporters, succeeded in achieving their malevolent purpose. (God Passes By, p. 326-7)

(c) Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Bahá

The Document establishing that Order, the Charter of a future world civilization, which may be regarded in some of its features as supplementary to no less weighty a Book than the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; signed and sealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá; entirely written with His own hand; its first section composed during one of the darkest periods of His incarceration in the prison-fortress of 'Akká, proclaims, categorically and unequivocally, the fundamental beliefs of the followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh; reveals, in unmistakable language, the twofold character of the Mission of the Bab; discloses the full station of the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation; asserts that "all others are servants unto Him and do His bidding"; stresses the importance of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; establishes the institution of the Guardianship as a hereditary office and outlines its essential functions; provides the measures for the election of the International House of Justice, defines its scope and sets forth its relationship to that Institution; prescribes the obligations, and emphasizes the responsibilities, of the Hands of the Cause of God; and extolls the virtues of the indestructible Covenant established by Bahá'u'lláh. That Document, furthermore, lauds the courage and constancy of the supporters of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant; expatiates on the sufferings endured by its appointed Center; recalls the infamous conduct of Mirza Yahya and his failure to heed the warnings of the Bab; exposes, in a series of indictments, the perfidy and rebellion of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, and the complicity of his son Shu'a'u'llah and of his brother Mirza Badi'u'llah; reaffirms their excommunication, and predicts the frustration of all their hopes; summons the Afnan (the Báb's kindred), the Hands of the Cause and the entire company of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh to arise unitedly to propagate His Faith, to disperse far and wide, to labor tirelessly and to follow the heroic example of the Apostles of Jesus Christ; warns them against the dangers of association with the Covenant-breakers, and bids them shield the Cause from the assaults of the insincere and the hypocrite; and counsels them to demonstrate by their conduct the universality of the Faith they have espoused, and vindicate its high principles. In that same Document its Author reveals the significance and purpose

111

of the Huququ'lláh (Right of God), already instituted in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas; enjoins submission and fidelity towards all monarchs who are just; expresses His longing for martyrdom, and voices His prayers for the repentance as well as the forgiveness of His enemies. (God Passes By, p. 328)

(d) Formal establishment of the Administrative Order.

Obedient to the summons issued by the Author of so momentous a Document; conscious of their high calling; galvanized into action by the shock sustained through the unexpected and sudden removal of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; guided by the Plan which He, the Architect of the Administrative Order, had entrusted to their hands; undeterred by the attacks directed against it by betrayers and enemies, jealous of its gathering strength and blind to its unique significance, the members of the widely-scattered Bahá'í communities, in both the East and the West, arose with clear vision and inflexible determination to inaugurate the Formative Period of their Faith by laying the foundations of that world-embracing Administrative system designed to evolve into a World Order which posterity must acclaim as the promise and crowning glory of all the Dispensations of the past. Not content with the erection and consolidation of the administrative machinery provided for the preservation of the unity and the efficient conduct of the affairs of a steadily expanding community, the followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh resolved, in the course of the two decades following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, to assert and demonstrate by their acts the independent character of that Faith, to enlarge still further its limits and swell the number of its avowed supporters.

In this triple world-wide effort, it should be noted, the role played by the American Bahá'í community, since the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá until the termination of the first Bahá'í century, has been such as to lend a tremendous impetus to the development of the Faith throughout the world, to vindicate the confidence placed in its members by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself, and to justify the high praise He bestowed upon them and the fond hopes He entertained for their future. Indeed so preponderating has been the influence of its members in both the initiation and the consolidation of Bahá'í administrative institutions that their country may well deserve to be recognized as the cradle of the Administrative Order which Bahá'u'lláh Himself had envisaged and which the Will of the Center of His Covenant had called into being.

It should be borne in mind in this connection that the preliminary steps aiming at the disclosure of the scope and

112

working of this Administrative Order, which was now to be formally established after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing, had already been taken by Him, and even by Bahá'u'lláh in the years preceding His ascension. The appointment by Him of certain outstanding believers in Persia as "Hands of the Cause"; the initiation of local Assemblies and boards of consultation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in leading Bahá'í centers in both the East and the West; the formation of the Bahá'í Temple Unity in the United States of America; the establishment of local funds

for the promotion of Bahá'í activities; the purchase of property dedicated to the Faith and its future institutions; the founding of publishing societies for the dissemination of Bahá'í literature; the erection of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkar of the Bahá'í world; the construction of the Báb's mausoleum on Mt. Carmel; the institution of hostels for the accommodation of itinerant teachers and pilgrims -- these may be regarded as the precursors of the institutions which, immediately after the closing of the Heroic Age of the Faith, were to be permanently and systematically established throughout the Bahá'í world.

No sooner had the provisions of that Divine Charter, delineating the features of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh been disclosed to His followers than they set about erecting, upon the foundations which the lives of the heroes, the saints and martyrs of that Faith had laid, the first stage of the framework of its administrative institutions....In Persia, in the United States of America, in the Dominion of Canada, in the British Isles, in France, in Germany, in Austria, in India, in Burma, in Egypt, in Iraq, in Russian Turkistan, in the Caucasus, in Australia, in New Zealand, in South Africa, in Turkey, in Syria, in Palestine, in Bulgaria, in Mexico, in the Philippine Islands, in Jamaica, in Costa Rica, in Guatemala, in Honduras, in San Salvador, in Argentina, in Uruguay, in Chile, in Brazil, in Ecuador, in Colombia, in Paraguay, in Peru, in Alaska, in Cuba, in Haiti, in Japan, in the Hawaiian Islands, in Tunisia, in Puerto Rico, in Baluchistan, in Russia, in Transjordan, in Lebanon, and in Abyssinia such councils, constituting the basis of the rising Order of a long-persecuted Faith, were gradually established. Designated as "Spiritual Assemblies" -- an appellation that must in the course of time be replaced by their permanent and more descriptive title of "Houses of Justice," bestowed upon them by the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation; instituted, without any exception, in every city, town and village where nine or more adult believers are resident; annually and directly elected, on the first day of the greatest Bahá'í Festival by all adult believers, men and women

113

alike; invested with an authority rendering them unanswerable for their acts and decisions to those who elect them; solemnly pledged to follow, under all conditions, the dictates of the "Most Great Justice" that can alone usher in the reign of the "Most Great Peace" which Bahá'u'lláh has proclaimed and must ultimately establish; charged with the responsibility of promoting at all times the best interests of the communities within their jurisdiction, of familiarizing them with their plans and activities and of inviting them to offer any recommendations they might wish to make; cognizant of their no less vital task of demonstrating, through association with all liberal and humanitarian movements, the universality and comprehensiveness of their Faith; dissociated entirely from all sectarian organizations, whether religious or secular; assisted by committees annually appointed by, and directly responsible to, them, to each of which a particular branch of Bahá'í activity is assigned for study and action; supported by local funds to which all believers

voluntarily contribute; these Assemblies, the representatives and custodians of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, numbering, at the present time, several hundred, and whose membership is drawn from the diversified races, creeds and classes constituting the world-wide Bahá'í community, have, in the course of the last two decades, abundantly demonstrated, by virtue of their achievements, their right to be regarded as the chief sinews of Bahá'í society, as well as the ultimate foundation of its administrative structure.

"The Lord hath ordained," is Bahá'u'lláh's injunction in His Kitáb-i-Aqdas, "that in every city a House of Justice be established, wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Baha (9), and should it exceed this number, it doth not matter. It behoveth them to be the trusted ones of the Merciful among men, and to regard themselves as the guardians appointed of God for all that dwell on earth. It is incumbent upon them to take counsel together, and to have regard for the interests of the servants of God, for His sake, even as they regard their own interests, and to choose that which is meet and seemly." "These Spiritual Assemblies," is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's testimony, in a Tablet addressed to an American believer, "are aided by the Spirit of God. Their defender is 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Over them He spreadeth His Wings. What bounty is there greater than this?" "These Spiritual Assemblies," He, in that same Tablet has declared, "are shining lamps and heavenly gardens, from which the fragrances of holiness are diffused over all regions, and the lights of knowledge are shed abroad over all created things. From them the spirit of life streameth in every direction. They, indeed, are the potent sources of the progress of man, at

114

all times and under all conditions." Establishing beyond any doubt their God-given authority, He has written: "It is incumbent upon every one not to take any step without consulting the Spiritual Assembly, and all must assuredly obey with heart and soul its bidding, and be submissive unto it, that things may be properly ordered and well arranged." "If after discussion," He, furthermore has written, "a decision be carried unanimously, well and good; but if, the Lord forbid, differences of opinion should arise, a majority of voices must prevail." (God Passes By, p. 329-332)

(e) National Assemblies

Having established the structure of their local Assemblies -- the base of the edifice which the Architect of the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh had directed them to erect -- His disciples, in both the East and the West, unhesitatingly embarked on the next and more difficult stage, of their high enterprise. In countries where the local Bahá'í communities had sufficiently advanced in number and in influence measures were taken for the initiation of National Assemblies, the pivots round which all national undertakings must revolve. Designated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Will as the "Secondary Houses of Justice," they constitute the electoral bodies in the formation of the International House of Justice, and are empowered to direct,

unify, coordinate and stimulate the activities of individuals as well as local Assemblies within their jurisdiction. Resting on the broad base of organized local communities, themselves pillars sustaining the institution which must be regarded as the apex of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, these Assemblies are elected, according to the principle of proportional representation, by delegates representative of Bahá'í local communities assembled at Convention during the period of the Ridvan Festival; are possessed of the necessary authority to enable them to insure the harmonious and efficient development of Bahá'í activity within their respective spheres; are freed from all direct responsibility for their policies and decisions to their electorates; are charged with the 333 sacred duty of consulting the views, of inviting the recommendations and of securing the confidence and cooperation of the delegates and of acquainting them with their plans, problems and actions; and are supported by the resources of national funds to which all ranks of the faithful are urged to contribute. Instituted in the United States of America (1925) (the National Assembly superseding in that country the institution of Bahá'í Temple Unity formed during 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry), in the British Isles (1923), in Germany (1923), in Egypt (1924), in Iraq (1931),

115

in India (1923), in Persia (1934) and in Australia (1934); their election renewed annually by delegates whose number has been fixed, according to national requirements, at 9, 19, 95, or 171 (9 times 19), these national bodies have through their emergence signaled the birth of a new epoch in the Formative Age of the Faith, and marked a further stage in the evolution, the unification and consolidation of a continually expanding community. Aided by national committees responsible to and chosen by them, without discrimination, from among the entire body of the believers within their jurisdiction, and to each of which a particular sphere of Bahá'í service is allocated, these Bahá'í National Assemblies have, as the scope of their activities steadily enlarged, proved themselves, through the spirit of discipline which they have inculcated and through their uncompromising adherence to principles which have enabled them to rise above all prejudices of race, nation, class and color, capable of administering, in a remarkable fashion, the multiplying activities of a newly-consolidated Faith. (God Passes By, p. 332-3)

(f) National Committees

Nor have the national committees themselves been less energetic and devoted in the discharge of their respective functions. In the defense of the Faith's vital interests, in the exposition of its doctrine; in the dissemination of its literature; in the consolidation of its finances; in the organization of its teaching force; in the furtherance of the solidarity of its component parts; in the purchase of its historic sites; in the preservation of its sacred records, treasures and relics; in its contacts with the various institutions of the society of which it forms a part; in the education of its youth; in the training of its children; in the improvement of the status of its women adherents in the East; the members of these diversified agencies, operating

under the aegis of the elected national representatives of the Bahá'í community, have amply demonstrated their capacity to promote effectively its vital and manifold interests. (God Passes By, p. 333)

(g) Declaration of Trusts

The text of this national constitution comprises a Declaration of Trust, whose articles set forth the character and objects of the national Bahá'í community, establish the functions, designate the central office, and describe the official seal, of the body of its elected representatives, as well as a set of by-laws which define the status, the mode of election, the powers and duties of both local and national Assemblies, describe the relation of

116

the National Assembly to the International House of Justice as well as to local Assemblies and individual believers, outline the rights and obligations of the National Convention and its relation to the National Assembly, disclose the character of Bahá'í elections, and lay down the requirements of voting membership in all Bahá'í communities.

The framing of these constitutions, both local and national, identical to all intents and purposes in their provisions, provided the necessary foundation for the legal incorporation of these administrative institutions in accordance with civil statutes controlling religious or commercial bodies. Giving these Assemblies a legal standing, this incorporation greatly consolidated their power and enlarged their capacity.... (God Passes By, p. 335)

(h) Endowments

Just as the formulation of Bahá'í constitutions had provided the foundation for the incorporation of Bahá'í Spiritual Assemblies, so did the recognition accorded by local and national authorities to the elected representatives of Bahá'í communities pave the way for the establishment of national and local Bahá'í endowments -- a historic undertaking which, as had been the case with previous achievements of far-reaching importance, the American Bahá'í Community was the first to initiate. In most cases these endowments, owing to their religious character, have been exempted from both government and municipal taxes, as a result of representations made by the incorporated Bahá'í bodies to the civil authorities, though the value of the properties thus exempted has, in more than one country, amounted to a considerable sum. (God Passes By, p. 337)

(i) Haziratu'l-Quds

Originating first in Persia, now universally known by its official and distinctive title signifying "the Sacred Fold," marking a notable advance in the evolution of a process whose beginnings may be traced to the clandestine gatherings held at times underground and in the dead of night, by the persecuted followers of the Faith in that country, this institution, still in the early stages of its development, has already lent its share to the

consolidation of the internal functions of the organic Bahá'í community, and provided a further visible evidence of its steady growth and rising power. Complementary in its functions to those of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar -- an edifice exclusively reserved for Bahá'í worship -- this institution, whether local or national, will, as its component parts, such as the Secretariat, the Treasury, the Archives, the Library, the Publishing Office,

117

the Assembly Hall, the Council Chamber, the Pilgrims' Hostel, are brought together and made jointly to operate in one spot, be increasingly regarded as the focus of all Bahá'í administrative activity, and symbolize, in a befitting manner, the ideal of service animating the Bahá'í community in its relation alike to the Faith and to mankind in general. (God Passes By, p. 339-40)

(j) Summer Schools

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 Bahá'í atmosphere, to afford the necessary training for Bahá'í 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.

Established in three regional centers, for the three major divisions of the North American continent, in Geyserville, in the Californian hills (1927), at Green Acre, situated on the banks of the Piscataqua in the state of Maine (1929), and at Louhelen Ranch near Davison, Michigan (1931), and recently supplemented by the International School founded at Pine Valley, Colorado Springs, dedicated to the training of Bahá'í teachers wishing to serve in other lands and especially in Latin America, these three embryonic Bahá'í educational institutions have, through a steady expansion of their programs, set an example worthy of emulation by other Bahá'í communities in both the East and the West. (God Passes By, p. 340-1)

(k) Bahá'í Youth.

These activities comprise annual world-wide Bahá'í Youth Symposiums, Youth sessions at Bahá'í summer schools, youth bulletins and magazines, an international correspondence Bureau, facilities for the registration of young people desiring to join the Faith, the publication of outlines and references for the study of the teachings and the organization of a Bahá'í study group as an official university activity in a leading American university. They include, moreover, "study days" held in Bahá'í homes and centers, classes for the study of Esperanto and other languages, the organization of Bahá'í libraries, the opening of reading rooms, the production of Bahá'í plays and pageants, the holding of oratorical contests, the education of orphans, the organization of classes in public speak-

ing, the holding of gatherings to perpetuate the memory of historical Bahá'í personalities, inter-group regional conferences and youth sessions held in connection with Bahá'í annual conventions. (God Passes By, p. 341-2)

(1) 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 Bahá'í communities in East and West, with its threefold emphasis on the devotional, the administrative and the social aspects of Bahá'í community life; the initiation of activities designed to prepare a census of Bahá'í children, and provide for them laboratory courses, prayer books and elementary literature, and the formulation and publication of a body of authoritative statements on the non-political character of the Faith, on membership in non-Bahá'í religious organizations, on methods of teaching, on the Bahá'í attitude towards war, on the institutions of the Annual Convention, of the Bahá'í Spiritual Assembly, of the Nineteen Day Feast and of the National Fund. Reference should, moreover, be made to the establishment of National Archives for the authentication, the collection, the translation, the cataloguing and the preservation of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and for the preservation of sacred relics and historical documents; to the verification and transcription of the original Tablets of the Báb, of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the possession of Oriental believers; to the compilation of a detailed history of the Faith since its inception until the present day; to the opening of a Bahá'í International Bureau in Geneva; to the holding of Bahá'í district conventions; to the purchase of historic sites; to the establishment of Bahá'í memorial libraries, and to the initiation of a flourishing children's Savings Bank in Persia.

Nor should mention be omitted of the participation, whether official or non-official, of representatives of these newly founded national Bahá'í communities in the activities and proceedings of a great variety of congresses, associations, conventions and conferences, held in various countries of Europe, Asia and America for the promotion of religious unity, peace, education, international cooperation, inter-racial amity and other humanitarian purposes....

Nor should we ignore or underestimate the contacts established between these same agencies and some of the highest governmental authorities, in both the East and the West, as well as with the heads of Islam in Persia, and with the League of Nations, and with even royalty itself for the purpose of defending the rights, or of presenting the literature, or of setting forth

the aims and purposes of the followers of the Faith in their unremitting efforts to champion the cause of an infant Administrative Order.... (God Passes By, p. 342-3)

(m) International Site - Mt. Carmel.

Collateral with these first stirrings of the Bahá'í Administrative Order, and synchronizing with the emergence of National Bahá'í communities and with the institution of their administrative, educational, and teaching agencies, the mighty process set in motion in the Holy Land, the heart and nerve-center of that Administrative Order, on the memorable occasions when Bahá'u'lláh revealed the Tablet of Carmel and visited the future site of the Báb's sepulcher, was irresistibly unfolding. That process had received a tremendous impetus through the purchase of that site, shortly after Bahá'u'lláh's ascension, through the subsequent transfer of the Báb's remains from Tihiran to 'Akká, through the construction of that sepulcher during the most distressful years of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's incarceration, and lastly through the permanent interment of those remains in the heart of Mt. Carmel, through the establishment of a pilgrim house in the immediate vicinity of that sepulcher, and the selection of the future site of the first Bahá'í educational institution on that mountain.

Profiting from the freedom accorded the world center of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, ever since the ignominious defeat of the decrepit Ottoman empire during the war of 1914-18, the forces released through the inception of the stupendous Plan conceived by Him could now flow unchecked, under the beneficent influence of a sympathetic regime, into channels designed to disclose to the world at large the potencies with which that Plan had been endowed. The interment of 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself within a vault of the Báb's mausoleum, enhancing still further the sacredness of that mountain; the installment of an electric plant, the first of its kind established in the city of Haifa, flooding with illumination the Grave of One Who, in His own words, had been denied even "a lighted lamp" in His fortress-prison in Adhirbayjan; the construction of three additional chambers adjoining His sepulcher, thereby completing 'Abdu'l-Bahá's plan for the first unit of that Edifice; the vast extension, despite the machinations of the Covenant-breakers, of the properties surrounding that resting-place, sweeping from the ridge of Carmel down to the Templar colony nestling at its foot, and representing assets estimated at no less than four hundred thousand pounds, together with the acquisition of four tracts of land, dedicated to the Bahá'í Shrines, and situated in the plain of 'Akká to the north, in the district of Beersheba to the south,

120

and in the valley of the Jordan to the east, amounting to approximately six hundred acres; the opening of a series of terraces which, as designed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, are to provide a direct approach to the Báb's Tomb from the city lying under its shadow; the beautification of its precincts through the laying out of parks and gardens, open daily to the public, and attracting tourists and residents alike to its gates -- these may be regarded as the initial evidences of the marvelous expansion of the international institutions and endowments of the Faith at its world center. Of particular significance, moreover, has been the exemption granted by the Palestine High Commissioner to

the entire area of land surrounding and dedicated to the Shrine of the Báb, to the school property and the archives in its vicinity, to the Western pilgrim-house situated in its neighborhood, and to such historic sites as the Mansion in Bahji, the House of Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká, and the garden of Ridvan to the east of that city; the establishment, as a result of two formal applications submitted to the civil authorities, of the Palestine Branches of the American and Indian National Spiritual Assemblies, as recognized religious societies in Palestine (to be followed, for purposes of internal consolidation, by a similar incorporation of the branches of other National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the Bahá'í world); and the transfer to the Branch of the American National Spiritual Assembly, through a series of no less than thirty transactions, of properties dedicated to the Tomb of the Báb, and approximating in their aggregate fifty thousand square meters, the majority of the title-deeds of which bear the signature of the son of the Arch-breaker of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant in his capacity as Registrar of lands in Haifa.

Equally significant has been the founding on Mt. Carmel of two international Archives, the one adjoining the shrine of the Báb, the other in the immediate vicinity of the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf, where, for the first time in Bahá'í history, priceless treasures, hitherto scattered and often hidden for safekeeping, have been collected and are now displayed to visiting pilgrims.... (God Passes By, p. 347)

Archives

Equally significant has been the founding on Mt. Carmel of two international Archives, the one adjoining the shrine of the Báb, the other in the immediate vicinity of the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf, where, for the first time in Bahá'í history, priceless treasures, hitherto scattered and often hidden for safekeeping, have been collected and are now displayed to visiting pilgrims....(God Passes By, p. 347)

(n) Shrines of Greatest Holy Leaf, Purest Branch and Navváb

Moreover, as a further testimony to the majestic unfoldment and progressive consolidation of the stupendous undertaking launched by Bahá'u'lláh on that holy mountain, may be mentioned the selection of a portion of the school property situated in the precincts of the Shrine of the Báb as a permanent rest-

121

ing-place for the Greatest Holy Leaf, the "well-beloved" sister of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the "Leaf that hath sprung" from the "Pre-existent Root," the "fragrance" of Bahá'u'lláh's "shining robe," elevated by Him to a "station such as none other woman hath surpassed," and comparable in rank to those immortal heroines such as Sarah, Asiyih, the Virgin Mary, Fatimih and Tahirih, each of whom has outshone every member of her sex in previous Dispensations. And lastly, there should be mentioned, as a further evidence of the blessings flowing from the Divine Plan, the transfer, a few years later, to that same

hallowed spot, after a separation in death of above half a century, and notwithstanding the protests voiced by the brother and lieutenant of the arch-breaker of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant, of the remains of the Purest Branch, the martyred son of Bahá'u'lláh, "created of the light of Baha," the "Trust of God" and His "Treasure" in the Holy Land, and offered up by his Father as a "ransom" for the regeneration of the world and the unification of its peoples. To this same burial-ground, and on the same day the remains of the Purest Branch were interred, was transferred the body of his mother, the saintly Navvab, she to whose dire afflictions, as attested by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a Tablet, the 54th chapter of the Book of Isaiah has, in its entirety, borne witness, whose "Husband," in the words of that Prophet, is "the Lord of Hosts," whose "seed shall inherit the Gentiles," and whom Bahá'u'lláh in His Tablet, has destined to be "His consort in every one of His worlds..." (God Passes By, p. 347-8)

(o) First Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West.

Scarcely less significant has been the erection of the superstructure and the completion of the exterior ornamentation of the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkar of the West, the noblest of the exploits which have immortalized the services of the American Bahá'í community to the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh. Consummated through the agency of an efficiently functioning and newly established Administrative Order, this enterprise has itself immensely enhanced the prestige, consolidated the strength and expanded the subsidiary institutions of the community that made its building possible....

The 1920 Convention, held in New York, having been previously directed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to select the design of that Temple, chose from among a number of designs competitively submitted to it that of Louis J. Bourgeois, a French-Canadian architect, a selection that was later confirmed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself.... It is consecrated exclusively to worship, devoid of all ceremony and ritual, is provided with an auditorium

122

which can seat 1600 people, and is to be supplemented by accessory institutions of social service....

"When the foundation of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is laid in America," 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has predicted, "and that Divine Edifice is completed, a most wonderful and thrilling motion will appear in the world of existence... From that point of light the spirit of teaching, spreading the Cause of God and promoting the teachings of God, will permeate to all parts of the world." "Out of this Mashriqu'l-Adhkar," He has affirmed in the Tablets of the Divine Plan, "without doubt, thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkars will be born." "It marks," He, furthermore, has written, "the inception of the Kingdom of God on earth." And again: "It is the manifest Standard waving in the center of that great continent." "Thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkars," He, when dedicating the grounds of the Temple, declared, "...will be built in the East and in the West, but this, being the first erected in the Occident, has great importance." "This

organization of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar," He, referring to that edifice, has moreover stated, "will be a model for the coming centuries, and will hold the station of the mother." (God Passes By, p. 348-51)

(p) Significance of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár.

Today the establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is of paramount importance....It is an expression of the elevation of the Word of God....When the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár with its accessories is established in the world, aside from its religious or spiritual influence, it will have a tremendous effect upon civilization. Aside from the religionists who will feel its influence, materialists will not be exempt therefrom. Moreover, it contains divine wisdoms, spiritual effects upon the intellects and thoughts. Subsequent to its erection these will become evident....

The day has arrived on which the edifice of God, the divine sanctuary, the spiritual temple, shall be erected in America....Its building is the most important of all things. This is the spiritual foundation, for that reason it is the most important of all foundations; from the that spiritual foundation will come forth all manner of advancement and progress in the world of humanity. Therefore, how great is its importance....

In brief, the purpose of places of worship and edifices for adoration is simply that of unity, in order that various nations, different races, varying souls may gather there and among them love, amity and accord may be realized. The original purpose is this. That is why His Holiness, Bahá'u'lláh, has

123

commanded that a place be built for all the religionists of the world. That all religions and races and sects may gather together. That the oneness of the world may be proclaimed. That all the human race is the servant of God, and that all are submerged in the ocean of God's mercy. The world of existence may be likened to this place. It is the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár. Just as the external world is a place where various peoples of different hues and colors, of various faiths and denominations meet; just as they are submerged in the same sea of favors; so may meet under the dome of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, and adore the one God in the spirit of truth. For the ages of darkness have passed away and the century of Light has arrived. The imaginary prejudices are in the process of dispersion and the light of unity is shining. The differences which exist among the nations and the peoples are soon to pass away and the fundamentals of divine religions, which are no other than the solidarity and the oneness of the human race, are to be established. (The Bahá'í World, Vol. III, p. 148-54)

The Temple is the most great foundation of the world of humanity and it hath many branches. Although the Temple is the place of worship, with it is connected a hospital, pharmacy, pilgrims' house, school for the orphans, and a university for the study of high sciences. Every Temple is connected with these five things. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 627)

Thousands of Mashriqu'l-Adhkars...ill be built in the Orient and Occident, but this being the first one erected in the Occident has great importance. In the future there will be many here and elsewhere; in Asia, Europe, even in Africa, New Zealand and Australia; but this edifice in Chicago is of especial significance. It has the same importance as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár in Ishqábád, Caucasus Russia...It possesses superlative importance because it was the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár built...It is centrally located; nine avenues leading into it; nine gardens, nine fountains; all the arrangement and construction is according to the principle and proportion of the number nine. It is like a beautiful bouquet...Now they are building a hospital, a school for orphans, a home for cripples, a hospice and large dispensary. God-willing, when it is fully completed it will be a paradise....The Mash-

The term Mashriqu'l-Adhkár means "Dawning-place of the praise of God." *See Bahá'í World, Vol. IV, 1930-32.

124

riqu'l-Adhkár...must be in the form of a circle. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p.68)

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkar is the most important matter and the greatest divine institute. Consider how the first institute of His Holiness Moses, after His exodus from Egypt, was the "Tent of Martyrdom" which He raised and which was the traveling Temple. It was a tent which they pitched in the desert, wherever they abode, and worshipped in it. Likewise, after His Holiness Christ -- may the spirit of the world be a sacrifice to Him! -- the first institute by the disciples was a Temple.... (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. I, p. 633)

"But however inspiring the conception of Bahá'í worship, as witnessed in the central Edifice of this exalted Temple, it cannot be regarded as the sole, nor even the essential, factor in the part which the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, as designed by Bahá'u'lláh, is destined to play in the organic life of the Bahá'í community. Divorced from the social, humanitarian, educational and scientific pursuits centering around the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, Bahá'í worship, however exalted in its conception, however passionate in fervor, can never hope to achieve beyond the meagre and often transitory results produced by the contemplations of the ascetic or the communion of the passive worshiper. It cannot afford lasting satisfaction and benefit to the worshiper himself, much less to humanity in general, unless and until translated and transfused into that dynamic and disinterested service to the cause of humanity which it is the supreme privilege of the Dependencies of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar to facilitate and promote. Nor will the exertions, no matter how disinterested and strenuous, of those who within the precincts of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar will be engaged in administering the affairs of the future Bahá'í Commonwealth, fructify and prosper unless they are brought into close and daily communion

with those spiritual agencies centering in and radiating from the central Shrine of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar. Nothing short of direct and constant interaction between the spiritual forces emanating from this House of Worship centering in the heart of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, and the energies consciously displayed by those who administer its affairs in their service to humanity can possibly provide the necessary agency capable of removing the ills that have so long and so grievously afflicted humanity. For it is assuredly upon the consciousness of the efficacy of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, reinforced on one hand by spiritual communion with His Spirit, and on the other by the intelligent application and the

125

faithful execution of the principles and laws He revealed, that the salvation of a world in travail must ultimately depend. (Bahá'í World, Vol. V, p.277)

21. What implications are given as to the destiny of the 'Great Republic of the West' through her labors in the unfoldment of the Divine Plan and the establishment of the Most Great Peace? (a) Abdu'l-Bahá's travels in North America. (b) America's spiritual mission

In the North American continent, more particularly, the members of a flourishing community, inspired by the blessings bestowed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as well as by His example and the acts He performed in the course of His prolonged visit to their country, gave an earnest of the magnificent enterprise they were to carry through in later years....

The war of 1914-18, repeatedly foreshadowed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the dark warnings He uttered in the course of His western travels, and which broke out eight months after His return to the Holy Land, once more cast a shadow of danger over His life, the last that was to darken the years of His agitated yet glorious ministry....

And yet during these somber days, the darkness of which was reminiscent of the tribulations endured during the most dangerous period of His incarceration in the prison-fortress of 'Akká, 'Abdu'l-Bahá....was moved to confer once again, and for the last time in His life, on the community of His American followers a signal mark of His special favor by investing them, on the eve of the termination of His earthly ministry, through the revelation of the Tablets of the Divine Plan, with a world mission, whose full implications even now, after the lapse of a quarter of a century, still remain undisclosed, and whose unfoldment thus far, though as yet in its initial stages, has so greatly enriched the spiritual as well as the administrative annals of the first Bahá'í century.... (God Passes By, p. 303-5)

(a) Abdu'l-Bahá's travels in North America.

A visit which entailed a journey of over five thousand miles, which lasted from April to December, which carried Him from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast and

back, which elicited discourses of such number as to fill no less than three volumes, was to mark the climax of those journeys, and was fully justified by the far-reaching results which He well knew such labors on His part would produce. "This long voyage," He told His assembled followers on the occasion of His first meet-

126

ing with them in New York, "will prove how great is My love for you. There were many troubles and vicissitudes, but in the thought of meeting you, all these things vanished and were forgotten." (God Passes By, p. 287-8)

(b) America's spiritual mission.

As far back as the year which witnessed the birth of the Faith in Shiraz the Báb had, in the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', after having warned in a memorable passage the peoples of both the Orient and the Occident, directly addressed the "peoples of the West," and significantly bidden them "issue forth" from their "cities" to aid God, and "become as brethren" in His "one and indivisible religion." "In the East," Bahá'u'lláh Himself had, in anticipation of this development, written, "the light of His Revelation hath broken; in the West the signs of His dominion have appeared." "Should they attempt," He, moreover, had predicted, "to conceal its light on the continent, it will assuredly rear its head in the midmost heart of the ocean, and, raising its voice, proclaim: 'I am the lifegiver of the world!'" "Had this Cause been revealed in the West," He, shortly before His ascension, is reported by Nabil in his narrative to have stated, "had Our verses been sent from the West to Persia and other countries of the East, it would have become evident how the people of the Occident would have embraced Our Cause. The people of Persia, however, have failed to appreciate it." "From the beginning of time until the present day," is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own testimony, "the light of Divine Revelation hath risen in the East and shed its radiance upon the West. The illumination thus shed hath, however, acquired in the West an extraordinary brilliancy. Consider the Faith proclaimed by Jesus. Though it first appeared in the East, yet not until its light had been shed upon the West did the full measure of its potentialities become manifest." "The day is approaching," He has affirmed, "when ye shall witness how, through the splendor of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, the West will have replaced the East, radiating the light of Divine guidance." And again: "The West hath acquired illumination from the East, but, in some respects, the reflection of the light hath been greater in the Occident." Furthermore, "The East hath, verily, been illumined with the light of the Kingdom. Ere long will this same light shed a still greater illumination upon the West." (God Passes By, p. 253-4)

More specifically has the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation Himself chosen to confer upon the rulers of the American continent the unique honor of addressing them collectively in

127

the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, His most Holy Book, significantly exhorting them to "adorn the temple of dominion with the ornament of justice and of the fear of God, and its head with the crown of the remembrance" of their Lord, and bidding them "bind with the hands of justice the broken," and "crush the oppressor" with the "rod of the commandments" of their "Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise." "The continent of America," wrote 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "is, in the eyes of the one true God, the land wherein the splendors of His light shall be revealed, where the mysteries of His Faith shall be unveiled, where the righteous will abide and the free assemble." "The American continent," He has furthermore predicted, "giveth signs and evidences of very great advancement. Its future is even more promising, for its influence and illumination are far reaching. It will lead all nations spiritually."

"The American people," 'Abdu'l-Bahá, even more distinctly, singling out for His special favor the Great Republic of the West, the leading nation of the American continent, has revealed, "are indeed worthy of being the first to build the Tabernacle of the Most Great Peace, and proclaim the oneness of mankind." And again: "This American nation is equipped and empowered to accomplish that which will adorn the pages of history, to become the envy of the world, and be blest in both the East and the West for the triumph of its people." Furthermore: "May this American democracy be the first nation to establish the foundation of international agreement. May it be the first nation to proclaim the unity of mankind. May it be the first to unfurl the standard of the Most Great Peace." "May the inhabitants of this country," He, moreover has written, "...rise from their present material attainment to such heights that heavenly illumination may stream from this center to all the peoples of the world."

"O ye apostles of Bahá'u'lláh!," 'Abdu'l-Bahá has thus addressed the believers of the North American continent, "...consider how exalted and lofty is the station you are destined to attain... The full measure of your success is as yet unrevealed, its significance still unapprehended." And again: "Your mission is unspeakably glorious. Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a center from which waves of spiritual power will emanate, and the throne of the Kingdom of God, will in the plenitude of its majesty and glory, be firmly established." And finally, this stirring affirmation: "The moment this Divine Message is carried forward by the American believers from the shores of America, and is propagated through the continents of

128

Europe, of Asia, of Africa and of Australasia, and as far as the islands of the Pacific, this community will find itself securely established upon the throne of an everlasting dominion... Then will the whole earth resound with the praises of its majesty and greatness." (God Passes By, p. 253-5)

.... Appeal to assembled delegates ponder historic appeal voiced by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Tablets of the Divine Plan. Urge earnest deliberation with

incoming National Assembly to insure its complete fulfilment. First Century of Bahá'í era drawing to a close. Humanity entering outer fringes most perilous stage its existence. Opportunities of present hour unimaginably precious. Would to God every State within American Republic and every Republic in American continent might ere termination of this glorious century embrace the light of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh and establish structural basis of His World Order.(Cablegram May 1, 1936. Messages from the Guardian, p.14)

129

PART II

SOME TEACHINGS OF THE NEW AGE

22. What is the wisdom of Prayer and Fasting?

Know thou that prayer is indispensable and obligatory, and man under no pretext whatsoever is excused from performing the prayer unless he be mentally unsound, or an insurmountable obstacle prevent him. The wisdom of prayer is this: That it causeth a connection between the servant and the True One, because in that state (i.e., prayer) man with all heart and soul turneth his face towards His Highness the Almighty, seeking His association and desiring His love and compassion.... Beside all this, prayer and fasting is the cause of awakening and mindfulness and conducive to protection and preservation from tests. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 683-4)

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 Bahá'u'lláh, p. 295)

Whatsoever question thou hast in thy heart, turn thou thy heart toward the Kingdom of Abha and entreat in the Threshold of the Almighty and reflect upon that problem, then unquestionably the light of truth shall dawn and the reality of that problem will become evident and clear to thee. For the teachings of His Highness Bahá'u'lláh are the keys to all doors. Every hidden secret will become discovered and every hidden mystery will become manifest and apparent. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 692)

"Fasting is illumination, prayer is light." (The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 39)

Arise and wash thy body, wear a pure gown, and , directing thyself to the Kingdom of God, supplicate and pray

131

to Him. Sleep in a clean, well prepared and ventilated place, and ask for appearance (or display) in the world of vision. Thou wilt have visions which will cause the doors of doubts to be closed, which will give you new joy, wonderful dilation, brilliant glory. Thou wilt comprehend realities and meanings. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 673)

Spirit has influence; prayer has spiritual effect. Therefore, we pray, "O God! Heal this sick one!" The plant prays potentially, "O God! Send me rain!" God answers the prayer, and the plant grows. God will answer anyone. He answers prayers potentially. Before we were born into this world did we not pray, "O God! Give me a mother; give me two fountains of bright milk; purify the air for my breathing; grant me rest and comfort; prepare food for my sustenance and living"? Did we not pray potentially for these needed blessings before we were created? When we came into this world, did we not find our prayers answered?... But we ask for things which the divine wisdom does not desire for us, and there is no answer to our prayer. His wisdom does not sanction what we wish. We pray, "O God! Make me wealthy!" If this prayer were universally answered, human affairs would be at a standstill....The affairs of the world would be interfered with, energies crippled and progress hindered. But whatever we ask for which is in accord with divine wisdom, God will answer. Assuredly! (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Vol. II, p. 241-2)

Chant (or recite) the Words of God every morning and evening. The one who neglects this has not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His agreement, and he

who turns away from it today is of those who have turned away from God. Fear God, O my people! Let not too much reading (of the Sacred Word) and actions by day or

night make you proud. To chant but one verse with joy and gladness is better for you than reading all the Revelations of the Omnipotent God with carelessness. Chant the

Tablets of God in such measure that ye be not overtaken with fatigue and depression. Burden not the soul so as to cause exhaustion and langour, but rather refresh it that

thus it may soar on the wings of Revelation to the Dawning-place of proofs. This brings you nearer to God, were ye of those who understand. (The Kitáb-i-Aqdas-Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, p. 114-5)

132

It is enjoined upon every one of you to engage in some form of occupation, such

as crafts, trades and the like. We have graciously exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship unto God, the True One. Ponder ye in your hearts the grace and the blessings of God and render thanks unto Him at eventide and at dawn. Waste not your time in idleness and sloth. Occupy yourselves with that which profiteth yourselves and others. Thus hath it been decreed in this Tablet from whose horizon the day-star of wisdom and utterance shineth resplendent.

The most despised of men in the sight of God are those who sit idly and beg. Hold ye fast unto the cord of material means, placing your whole trust in God, the Provider of all means. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 89)

The traditions established the fact that in all Dispensations the law of prayer hath constituted a fundamental element of the Revelation of all the Prophets of God -- a law the form and the manner of which hath been adapted to the varying requirements of every age. (The Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 39)

As regards fasting, it constitutes, together with the obligatory prayers, the two pillars, the two pillars that sustain the revealed Law of God. They act as stimulants to the soul, strengthen, revive and purify it, and thus insure its steady development.

The ordinance of fasting is, as is the case with these three prayers, a spiritual and vital obligation enjoined by Bahá'u'lláh upon every believer who has attained the age of fifteen. In the Aqdas He thus writes: " We have commanded you to pray and fast from the beginning of maturity; this is ordained by God, your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers. He hath exempted from this those who are weak from illness or

age, as a bounty from His Presence, and He is the Forgiving, the Generous." And in another passage He says: "We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period, and at its close have designated for you Naw-Ruz as a feast.... The traveller, the ailing, those who are with child or giving suck, are not bound by the Fast.... Abstain

from food and drink from sunrise to sundown, and beware lest desire deprive you of this grace that is appointed in the Book."

Also in the "Question and Answers" that form an appendix to the Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh reveals the following: "Verily, I say that God has appointed a great station for fasting and prayer. But during good health its benefit is evident, and when one is ill, it is not permissible to fulfill them."

Concerning the age of maturity, He reveals in the appendix of that same book: "The age of maturity is in the fifteenth year; women and men are alike in this respect."

133

Regarding the vital character and importance of the Divine ordinances and laws, and the necessity of complete obedience to them by the believers, we thus read in the Gleanings, p. 175: " Know verily that the essence of justice and the

source thereof are both embodied in the ordinances prescribed by Him Who is the Manifestation of the Self of God amongst men, if ye be of them that recognize this truth. He doth verily incarnate the highest, the infallible standard of justice unto all creation. Were His law to be such as to strike terror into the hearts of all that are in heaven and on earth, that law is naught but manifest justice. The fears and agitation which the revelation of this law provokes in men's hearts should indeed be likened to the cries of the suckling babe weaned from his mother's milk, if ye be of them that perceive...."

The fasting period, which lasts nineteen days, starting as a rule from the second of March every year and ending on the twentieth of the same month, involves complete abstention from food and drink from sunrise till sunset. It is essentially a period of meditation and prayer, of spiritual recuperation, during which the believer must strive to make the necessary readjustments in his inner life, and to refresh and reinvigorate the spiritual forces latent in his soul. Its significance and purposes are, therefore, fundamentally spiritual in character. Fasting is symbolic, and a reminder of abstinence from selfish and carnal desires. (Bahá'í News Letter No. 98)

Thou seest, O God of Mercy, Thou Whose power pervadeth all created things, these servants of Thine, Thy thralls, who, according to the good-pleasure of Thy Will, observe in the daytime the fast prescribed by Thee, who arise, at the earliest dawn of day, to make mention of Thy Name, and to celebrate Thy praise, in the hope of obtaining their share of the goodly things that are treasured up within the treasuries of Thy grace and bounty. I beseech Thee, O Thou that holdest in Thine hands the reins of the entire creation, in Whose grasp is the whole kingdom of Thy names and of Thine attributes, not to deprive, in Thy Day, Thy servants from the showers pouring from the clouds of Thy mercy, nor to hinder them from taking their portion of the ocean of Thy good-pleasure.

All the atoms of the earth bear witness, O my Lord, to the greatness of Thy power and of Thy sovereignty; and all the signs of the universe attest the glory of Thy majesty and of Thy might. Have mercy, then, O Thou Who art the sovereign Lord of all, Who art the King of everlasting days, and

134

Ruler of all nations, upon these Thy servants, who have clung to the cord of Thy commandments, who have bowed their necks to the revelations of Thy laws which have been sent down from the heaven of Thy Will.

Behold, O my Lord, how their eyes are lifted up towards the dawning-place of Thy loving-kindness, how their hearts are set upon the oceans of Thy favors, how their voices are lowered before the accents of Thy most sweet Voice, calling, from the most sublime Station, in Thy name the All-Glorious. Help Thou Thy loved ones, O my Lord, them that have forsaken their all, that they may obtain the things Thou dost possess, whom trials and tribulations have encompassed for having renounced the world and set their affections on Thy

realm of glory. Shield them, I entreat Thee, O my Lord, from the assaults of their evil passions and desires, and aid them to obtain the things that shall profit them in this present world and in the next.

I pray Thee, O my Lord, by Thy hidden, Thy treasured Name, that calleth aloud in the kingdom of creation, and summoneth all peoples to the Tree beyond which there is no passing, the seat of transcendent glory, to rain down upon us, and upon Thy servants, the overflowing rain of Thy mercy, that it may cleanse us from the remembrance of all else but Thee, and draw us nigh unto the shores of the ocean of Thy grace. Ordain, O Lord, through Thy most exalted Pen, that which will immortalize our souls in the Realm of glory, will perpetuate our names in Thy Kingdom, and safeguard our lives in the treasuries of Thy protection and our bodies in the stronghold of Thy inviolable fastness. Powerful art Thou over all things, be they of the past or of the future. No God is there but Thee, the omnipotent Protector, the Self-Subsisting.

Thou seest, O Lord, our suppliant hands lifted up towards the heaven of Thy favor and bounty. Grant that they may be filled with the treasures of Thy munificence and bountiful favor. Forgive us, and our fathers, and our mothers, and fulfil whatsoever we have desired from the ocean of Thy grace and Divine generosity. Accept, O Beloved of our hearts, all our works in Thy path. Thou art, verily, the Most Powerful, the Most Exalted, the Incomparable, the One, the Forgiving, the Gracious. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 299-302)

23. What is the effect of Meditation?

The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror; if you put

135

it before earthly objects it will reflect them...But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained. (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 164).

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. It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers...Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries....In that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects....To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight; when the power of insight is being used the outward power of vision does not see. (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 162-3).

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. The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view....This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts....(The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 163).

24. What is Faith?

There are three kinds of Faith: first, that which is from tradition and birth. For example: a child is born of Muhammadan parents, he is a Muhammadan. This faith is weak traditional faith: second, that which comes from Knowledge, and is the faith of understanding. This is good, but there is a better, the faith of practice. This is real faith....We know and we see the Light, we go close to it, are warmed by it, and reflect its rays on others; this is real faith. (Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 59)

Faith in God, and the knowledge of Him cannot be fully realized except through believing in all that hath proceeded from Him, and by practising all that He hath commanded and all that is revealed in the Book from the Supreme Pen. Those submerged in the sea of divine utterance must at all times observe the commands and prohibitions of God. His commandments are the greatest fortress for the pro-

136

tection of the world and for the preservation of mankind. Light is upon those who confess and acknowledge them, and fire is on those who reject and oppose them. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 75)

Tear asunder, in My Name, the veils that have grievously blinded your vision, and, through the power born of your belief in the unity of God, scatter the idols of vain imitation. Enter, then, the holy paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful. Sanctify your souls from whatsoever is not of God, and taste ye the sweetness of rest within the pale of His vast and mighty Revelation, and beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority. Suffer not yourselves to be wrapt in the dense veils of your selfish desires, inasmuch as I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure? If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, whilst standing in the presence of God, be asked: "Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self," and if such a man should reply and say: "Inasmuch as all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I, too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the

Beauty of the Eternal," such a plea will, assuredly, be rejected. For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 143)

By the faith is meant, first, conscious knowledge, and second, the practice of good deeds. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá p. 549)

Faith is the magnet which draws the confirmation of the Merciful One. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. I, p. 62)

25. What is the efficacy of Tests?

But regarding the tests: Undoubtedly they must be violent so that those souls who are weak may fall back, while the souls who are firm and sincere may shine forth from the horizon of the Most Great Guidance like unto the sparkling stars. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. II, p. 470)

137

Reflect upon his holiness Job: What trials, calamities and perplexities did he not endure! But these tests were like unto the fire and his holiness Job was like unto pure gold. Assuredly gold is purified by being submitted to the fire and if it contain any alloy or imperfection, it will disappear. That is the reason why violent tests become the cause of the everlasting glory of the righteous and are conducive to the destruction and disappearance of the unrighteous. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 655)

Thou hast written concerning the tests that have come upon thee. To the sincere ones, tests are as a gift from God, the Exalted, for a heroic person hasteneth, with the utmost joy and gladness, to the tests of a violent battlefield, but the coward is afraid and trembles and utters moaning and lamentation. Likewise, an expert student prepareth and memorizeth his lessons and exercises with the utmost effort, and in the day of examination he appeareth with infinite joy before the master. Likewise, the pure gold shineth radiantly in the fire of test. Consequently, it is made clear that for holy souls, trials are as the gift of God, the Exalted; but for weak souls they are an unexpected calamity. This test is just as thou hast written: it removeth the rust of egotism from the mirror of the heart until the Sun of Truth may shine therein. For, no veil is greater than egotism and no matter how thin that covering may be, yet it will finally veil man entirely and prevent him from receiving a portion from the eternal bounty. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 722-3)

Tests lead to the development of holy souls and the ardor of the flame of fire

causeth the pure gold to shine and the violence of winds is conducive to the growth and thriving of a firm and well rooted tree. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. II, p. 297)

Let us pray to God that in these days of world-encircling gloom, when the dark forces of nature, of hate, rebellion, anarchy and reaction are threatening the very stability of human society, when the most precious fruits of civilization are undergoing severe and unparalleled tests, we may all realize, more profoundly than ever, that though but a mere handful amidst the seething masses of the world, we are in this day the chosen instruments of God's grace, that our mission is most urgent and vital to the fate of humanity, and, fortified by these sentiments, arise to achieve God's holy purpose for mankind. (Bahá'í Administration, p. 45)

138

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, 61 and is abundantly proved to us all by its heroic past and turbulent history. And yet, if it is the lot of the chosen ones of God, the people of Baha, to face adversity and suffer tribulation before achieving ultimate victory, are we to believe that whatever befalls us is divinely ordained, and in no wise the result of our faint-heartedness and negligence? Surely now, if ever, is the time to turn our eyes inwardly, to bestir ourselves, to invoke the Most Great Name, and standing together, summon to our aid and support all the faith, the strength, and the courage that we shall need to meet our pressing obligations and discharge our trust....What, let us ask ourselves, should be our attitude as we stand under the all-seeing eye of our vigilant Master, gazing at a sad spectacle so utterly remote from the spirit which He breathed into the world?.... Is it not incumbent upon us....to make still greater effort, to manifest that love in all its purity and power in our dealings with our fellow-men?.... I assure you, dear friends, that progress in such matters as these is limitless and infinite, and that upon the extent of our achievements along this line will ultimately depend the success of our mission in life....

Are we to doubt that the ways of God are not necessarily the ways of man? Is not faith but another word for implicit obedience, whole-hearted allegiance, uncompromising adherence to that which we believe is the revealed and express will of God, however perplexing it might first appear, however at variance with the shadowy views, the impotent doctrines, the crude theories, the idle imaginings, the fashionable conceptions of a transient and troublous age? If we are to falter or hesitate, if our love for Him should fail to direct us and keep us within His path, if we desert Divine and emphatic principles, what hope can we any more cherish for healing the ills and sicknesses of this world? (Bahá'í Administration, p. 51-53)

Could anything less than the fire of a civil war with all its violence and vicissitudes -- a war that nearly rent the great American Republic -- have welded the states, not only into a Union of independent units, but into a Nation, in spite of all the ethnic differences that characterized its component parts?... We have but to turn our gaze to humanity's blood-stained

139

history to realize that nothing short of intense mental as well as physical agony has been able to precipitate those epoch-making changes that constitute the greatest landmarks in the history of human civilization. Great and far-reaching as have been those changes in the past, they cannot appear, when viewed in their proper perspective, except as subsidiary adjustments prelude that transformation of unparalleled majesty and scope which humanity is in this age bound to undergo. That the forces of a world catastrophe can alone precipitate such a new phase of human thought is, alas, becoming increasingly apparent. That nothing short of the fire of a severe ordeal, unparalleled in its intensity, can fuse and weld the discordant entities that constitute the elements of present-day civilization, into the integral components of the world commonwealth of the future, is a truth which future events will increasingly demonstrate. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 45-6)

"The Call of God," 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written, "when raised, breathed a new life into the body of mankind, and infused a new spirit into the whole creation. It is for this reason that the world hath been moved to its depths, and the hearts and consciences of men been quickened. Erelong the evidences of this regeneration will be revealed, and the fast asleep will be awakened." (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 169)

26. What is the station of Sacrifice, Martyrdom, Severance?

Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things. Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, are now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His all-pervasive, and resplendent Spirit. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 85-6)

As to the zodiac of the stations of the Sun of Truth, it is the station of the attainment of the mystery of sacrifice, whereupon the lights of love, harmony and salvation shine forth and the manifestation of firmness dawns, in a cause unendurable

140

by the lofty mountains. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 519)

Were it not for the chain, sword and affliction, how should the people of faithfulness be distinguished from the people of hatred?... This wound cannot be remedied save by a host of calamities, and this illness cannot be cured except by the cup of affliction. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. II, p. 352)

The moth is a sacrifice to the candle. The spring is a sacrifice to the thirsty one....The point lies in this: He must wholly forget himself....He must consign to oblivion the body and soul, the life, comfort and existence....This is the first station of sacrifice. The second station of sacrifice is as follows: Man must become severed from the human world....the illumination of mercifulness must shine and radiate in him, the nether world become as non-existent and the Kingdom become manifest. He must become like unto the iron thrown within the furnace of fire. The qualities of iron, such as blackness, coldness and solidity which belong to the earth disappear and vanish while the characteristics of fire, such as redness, glowing and heat, which belong to the Kingdom become apparent and visible. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. II, p. 354)

The mystery of sacrifice is that man should sacrifice all his conditions for the divine station of God. The station of God is mercy, kindness, forgiveness, sacrifice, favor, grace and giving life to the spirits and lighting the fire of His love in the hearts and arteries. I asked God to make thee a sign of mercy, the banner of kindness among His maid-servants. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. I, p. 65)

To me prison is freedom; to me incarceration is an open court; to me humility is identical with glory; to me adversity is a gift and death is life. I hope that thou wilt also take a portion from this sea and seek a reflection from these lights, becoming an ignited lamp so that the winds of contradiction will not blow it out, and day by day more revelation and vision may descend....(Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 725)

O Son of Man! If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee. (The Hidden Words, 7 Arabic)

141

O My Servant! Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more. (The Hidden Words, 40 Persian)

The disciples of Christ forgot themselves and all earthly things, forsook all their cares and belongings, purged themselves of self and passion and with absolute detachment scattered far and wide and engaged in calling the peoples of the world to the Divine Guidance, till at last they made the world another world, illumined the surface of the earth and even to their last hour proved self-sacrificing in the pathway of that Beloved One of God. Finally in various lands they suffered glorious martyrdom. Let them that are men of action follow in their footsteps! (Bahá'í Administration, p. 6)

By self-surrender and perpetual union with God is meant that men should merge their will wholly in the Will of God, and regard their desires as utter nothingness beside His Purpose....The station of absolute self-surrender transcendeth, and will ever remain exalted above, every other station. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 337)

O my brother! Take thou the step of the spirit, so that, swift as the twinkling of an eye, thou mayest flash through the wilds of remoteness and bereavement, attain the Ridvan of everlasting reunion, and in one breath commune with the heavenly Spirits. For with human feet thou canst never hope to traverse these immeasurable distances, nor attain thy goal. Peace be upon him whom the light of truth guideth unto all truth, and who, in the name of God, standeth in the path of His Cause, upon the shore of true understanding. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 43)

Forget self and work for the whole race. Remember always that one is working for the world, not for a town or even for a country; because, as all are brethren, so every country is, as it were, one's own. (Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 13)

27. How is the reality of Love manifested?

O Son of Man! For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials. (The Hidden Words, 48 Arabic)

We declare that love is the cause of the existence of all phenomena and that the absence of love is the cause of disintegration or nonexistence. Love is the conscious bestowal

142

of God, the bond of affiliation in all phenomena....The power of cohesion expressed in the mineral kingdom is in reality love or affinity manifested in a low degree according to the exigencies of the mineral world. We take a step higher into the vegetable kingdom where we find an increased power of attraction....Through this degree of attraction a cellular admixture is produced among these elements which make up the body of a plant. Therefore, in

the degree of the vegetable kingdom there is love. We enter the animal kingdom and find the attractive power binding together single elements as in the mineral, plus the cellular admixture as in the vegetable, plus the phenomena of feelings or susceptibilities....This elemental attraction, this admixture and selective affinity is love manifest in the degree of the animal kingdom.

Finally, we come to the kingdom of man. As this is the superior kingdom, the light of love is more resplendent. In man we find the power of attraction among the elements which compose his material body, plus the attraction which produces cellular admixture or augmentative power, plus the attraction which characterizes the sensibilities of the animal kingdom, but still beyond and above all these lower powers we discover in the being of man the attraction of heart, the susceptibilities and affinities which bind men together, enabling them to live and associate in friendship and solidarity. It is, therefore, evident that in the world of humanity the greatest king and sovereign is love. If love were extinguished, the power of attraction dispelled, the affinity of human hearts destroyed, the phenomena of human life would disappear....But these are only degrees of love which exist in the natural or physical world....

Real love is the love which exists between God and His servants, the love which binds together holy souls. This is the love of the spiritual world, not the love of physical bodies and organisms....Among the signs of His love which appear in the world are the dawning points of His Manifestations....If Bahá'u'lláh had not been aflame with love for humanity, He would not have willingly accepted forty years' imprisonment. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 249-51)

The four kinds of love:

1. The love of God towards the Self or Identity of God. This is the....reflection of Himself in the mirror of His Creation. This is the reality of love, the Ancient Love, the Eternal Love. Through one ray of this Love all other love exists.

143

2. The love that flows from God to man....Through this love man is endowed with physical existence, until, through the breath of the Holy Spirit -- this same love -- he receives eternal life and becomes the image of the Living God....Through this love the world of being receives life.

3. The love that flows from man to God. This is faith, attraction to the Divine....This love causes the hearts of men to reflect the rays of the Sun of Reality.

4. The love of man for man....This love is attained through the knowledge of God, so that men see the Divine Love reflected in the heart.

These are rays from the Sun of Reality;

These are the Breathings of the Holy Spirit.

These are the Signs of the Reality. (The
Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 167-9).

All God's prophets have brought the message of love...Love manifests its reality in deeds, not only in words -- these alone are without effect. In order that love may manifest its power there must be an object, an instrument, a motive...Love is unlimited, boundless, infinite! (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 30-31).

The proof is clear that in all degrees and kingdoms unity and agreement, love and fellowship are the cause of life, whereas dissension, animosity and separation are ever conducive to death. Therefore, we must strive with life and soul in order that day by day unity and agreement may be increased among mankind and that love and affinity may become more resplendently glorious and manifest. In the animal kingdom you will observe that domestic species live together in the utmost fellowship...Ferocious animals -- beasts of prey such as the wolf, bear, tiger and hyena -- are never amicable....They attack one another....Better that man should resemble the domestic animals than the ferocious beasts of prey, for in the estimation of God love is acceptable, whereas hatred and animosity are rejected....Why should we act contrary to the good pleasure of God?...God is great!...God is kind! He does not behold human shortcomings....Man is a creature of His mercy, and to His mercy He summons all. Why then should we despise or detest His creatures because this one is a Jew, another a Buddhist or Zoroastrian and so on? This is ignorance, for the

144

oneness of humanity as servants of God is an assured and certain fact.
(Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 263)

Love is the mystery of divine revelations!

Love is the effulgent manifestation!

Love is the spiritual fulfillment!

Love is the light of the Kingdom!

Love is the breath of the Holy Spirit inspired into the human spirit!

Love is the cause of the manifestation of the Truth (God) in the phenomenal world!

Love is the necessary tie proceeding from the realities of things through divine creation!

Love is the means of the most great happiness in both the material and spiritual worlds!

Love is a light of guidance in the dark night!

Love is a bond between the Creator and the creature in the inner world!

Love is the cause of development to every enlightened man!

Love is the greatest law in this vast universe of God!

Love is the one law which causeth and controlleth order among the existing atoms!

Love is the universal magnetic power between the planets and stars shining in the lofty firmament! 526

Love is the cause of unfoldment to a searching mind, of the secrets deposited in the universe by the Infinite!

Love is the spirit of life in the bountiful body of the world!

Love is the cause of the civilization of nations in this mortal world!

Love is the highest honor to every righteous nation!

(Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 525)

28. (a) Does Justice play any part in the acknowledgement of the Truth?

(b) How is Divine Justice characterized?

O Son of Spirit! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy

145

heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes. (Hidden Words, 2 Arabic)

The world is in confusion, and the opinions of men are discordant. I beg of God to adorn them with the light of His justice, and to make known unto them that which will profit them under all circumstances. Verily, He is the self-sufficient, the most high! (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 34)

Be fair: Is the testimony of those acceptable and worthy of attention whose deeds agree with their words, whose outward behaviour conforms with their inner life? The mind is bewildered at their deeds, and the soul marvelleth at their fortitude and bodily endurance. Or is the testimony of these faithless souls who breathe naught but the breath of selfish desire, and who lie imprisoned in the cage of their idle fancies, acceptable?... In the day-time they strive

with all their soul after worldly benefits, and in the night-season their sole occupation is to gratify their carnal desires. By what law or standard could men be justified in cleaving to the denials of such petty-minded souls, and in ignoring the faith of them that have renounced, for the sake of the good-pleasure of God, their life, and substance, their fame and renown, their reputation and honour?... Furthermore, the sign of truth and falsehood is designated and appointed in the Book. By this divinely-appointed touchstone, the claims and pretensions of all men must needs be assayed, so that the truthful may be known and distinguished from the imposter. This touchstone is no other than this verse: "Wish for death, if ye are men of truth."
(Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 224-7)

Blessed are the just souls who seek the truth. But failing justice, the people attack, dispute and openly deny the evidence, like the Pharisees who, at the manifestation of Christ, denied with the greatest obstinacy the explanations of Christ and of His disciples. They obscured Christ's Cause before the ignorant people, saying, "These prophecies are not of Jesus, but of the Promised One Who shall come later, according to the conditions mentioned in the Bible." Some of these conditions were that He must have a kingdom, be seated on the throne of David, enforce the Law of the Bible, and manifest such justice that the wolf and the lamb shall gather at the same spring. And thus they prevented the people from knowing Christ. (Some Answered Questions, p. 82)

146

Observe what was the degree of the sincerity, the zeal, the spiritual feeling, the obligation of friendship, and the good actions of a believer in Christ, so that Galen, the philosophical physician, although he was not of the Christian religion, should yet bear witness to the good morals and the perfections of these people, to the point of saying that they were true philosophers....Moreover, if you reflect justly, you will see that these good actions of other men who do not know God are also fundamentally caused by the teachings of God....But justice is needed to see this, and not controversy and discussion. (Some Answered Questions, p. 384-9)

"Be fair to yourselves and to others," He thus counseleth them, "that the evidences of justice may be revealed through your deeds among Our faithful servants." "Equity," He also has written, "is the most fundamental among human virtues. The evaluation of all things must needs depend upon it." And again, "Observe equity in your judgment, ye men of understanding heart! He that is unjust in his judgment is destitute of the characteristics that distinguish man's station."

Such a rectitude of conduct must manifest itself, with ever-increasing potency, in every verdict which the elected representatives of the Bahá'í 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 Bahá'í 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-Bahá in His addresses, and to the laws and ordinances revealed by Bahá'u'lláh 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 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 Bahá'í

147

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 Bahá'í 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 Bahá'u'lláh, symbolizes that rectitude of conduct which is its highest mission to safeguard and enforce.

So great and transcendental is this principle of Divine justice, a principle that must be regarded as the crowning distinction of all Local and National Assemblies, in their capacity as forerunners of the Universal House of Justice, that Bahá'u'lláh Himself subordinates His personal inclination and wish to the all-compelling force of its demands and implications. "God is My witness!" He thus explains, "were it not contrary to the Law of God, I would have kissed the hand of My would-be murderer, and would cause him to inherit My earthly goods. I am restrained, however, by the binding Law laid down in the Book, and am Myself bereft of all worldly possessions." "Know thou, of a truth," He significantly affirms, "these great oppressions that have befallen the world are preparing it for the advent of the Most Great Justice...." "The light of men is Justice," He moreover states, "Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men." "No radiance," He declares, "can compare with that of justice. The organization of the world and the tranquillity of mankind depend upon it." "O people of God!" He exclaims, "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." "Justice and equity," is yet another assertion, "are two guardians for the protection of man. They have appeared arrayed in their mighty and sacred names to maintain the world in uprightness and protect

the nations." "Bestir yourselves, O people," is His emphatic warning, "in anticipation of the days of Divine justice, for the promised hour is now come. Beware lest ye fail to apprehend its import, and be accounted among the erring." "The day is approaching," He similarly has written, "when the faithful will behold the daystar of justice shining in its full splendor from the dayspring of glory." "The shame I was made to bear," He significantly remarks, "hath uncovered the glory with which the whole of creation had been invested, and through the cruel-

148

ties I have endured, the daystar of justice hath manifested itself, and shed its splendor upon men." "The world," He again has written, "is in great turmoil, and the minds of its people are in a state of utter confusion. We entreat the Almighty that He may graciously illuminate them with the glory of His Justice, and enable them to discover that which will be profitable unto them at all times and under all conditions." And again, "There can be no doubt whatever that if the daystar of justice, which the clouds of tyranny have obscured, were to shed its light upon men, the face of the earth would be completely transformed."

"God be praised!" 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His turn, exclaims, "The sun of justice hath risen above the horizon of Bahá'u'lláh. For in His Tablets the foundations of such a justice have been laid as no mind hath, from the beginning of creation, conceived." "The canopy of existence," He further explains, "resteth upon the pole of justice, and not of forgiveness, and the life of mankind dependeth on justice and not on forgiveness." (The Advent of Divine Justice, p. 20-4)

Lay not aside the fear of God, O ye the learned of the world, and judge fairly the Cause of this unlettered One to Whom all the Books of God, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting, have testified. ...Will not the dread of Divine displeasure, the fear of Him Who hath no peer or equal, arouse you?... How long will ye persist in your injustice? Witness the habitation in which He, Who is the incarnation of justice, hath been forced to dwell. Open your eyes, and, beholding His plight, meditate diligently upon that which your hands have wrought, that haply ye may not be deprived of the light of His Divine utterance, nor remain bereft of your share of the ocean of His knowledge.

Certain ones among both commoners and nobles have objected that this wronged One is neither a member of the ecclesiastical order nor a descendant of the Prophet. Say: O ye that claim to be just! Reflect a little while, and ye shall recognize how infinitely exalted is His present state above the station ye claim He should possess. The Will of the Almighty hath decreed that out of a house wholly devoid of all that the divines, the doctors, the sages, and scholars commonly possess His Cause should proceed and be made manifest....We have been moved to reveal these words in consideration of the weakness and frailty of men; otherwise, the Cause We have proclaimed is such as no pen can

ever describe,

149

nor any mind conceive its greatness. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 98-99)

29. What is capacity?

Capacity is of two kinds: natural capacity and acquired capacity. The first, which is the creation of God, is purely good....but the acquired capacity has become the cause of the appearance of evil....God has given equally to all mankind....the natural capacity and constitution to benefit from certain compositions and to be harmed and destroyed by others (poison)....Man gradually accustoms himself to poison until he reaches such a point that he cannot live without it....The natural capacities are thus completely perverted. 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 in creation and nature evil does not exist at all; but when the natural qualities of man are used in an unlawful way, they are blameworthy. (Some Answered Questions, p. 249-50)

Consider the visible sun which, by the command of God, shines with the same rays upon all things and beings and confers its light equally upon all existence. But upon each object, it reflects and sheds its bounty commensurate with the capacity of the object. For instance, upon a mirror it reflects in its splendor and full glory, which is due to the mirror's clear surface. And in a crystal it generates fire, while upon other objects it shows only a trace of its reflection and not its full disk. And yet, through that trace, by the command of the Creator, it trains each thing in accord with the nature of that thing; and this is evident. (Seven Valleys and Four Valleys, p.18)

From the exalted source, and out of the essence of His favor and bounty He hath entrusted every created thing with a sign of His knowledge, so that none of His creatures may be deprived of its share in expressing, each according to its capacity and rank, this knowledge. This sign is the mirror of His beauty in the world of creation. The greater the effort exerted for the refinement of this sublime and noble mirror, the more faithfully will it be made to reflect the glory of the names and attributes of God, and reveal the wonders of His signs and knowledge. Every created thing will be enabled (so great is this reflecting power) to reveal the potentialities of its pre-ordained station, will recognize its capacity and limi-

150

tations, and will testify to the truth that "He, verily, is God; there is none other God besides Him...."

In pursuance, however, of the principle that for every thing a time hath been fixed, and for every fruit a season hath been ordained, the latent energies of

such a bounty can best be released, and the vernal glory of such a gift can only be manifested, in the Days of God....The Days immediately associated with the Manifestation of God possess a unique distinction and occupy a station which no mind can ever comprehend....If the hearts of all that dwell in the heavens and the earth were....to be brought face to face with that Day Star of unfading glory and attained to His Will, each would find itself exalted above all earthly things.... (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 262-3)

The whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of grace which God poureth forth for him. Let none, therefore, consider the largeness or smallness of the receptacle. The portion of some might lie in the palm of a man's hand, the portion of others might fill a cup, and of others even a gallon-measure. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 8)

The All-Merciful hath conferred upon man the faculty of vision, and endowed him with the power of hearing. Some have described him as the "lesser world," when, in reality, he should be regarded as the "greater world." The potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested in this promised Day of God. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 340)

The republic of wise men believes that the difference in minds and opinions is due to the difference of education and the acquisition of ethics....The prophets also acknowledge this opinion, to wit: That education hath a great effect upon the human race, but they declare that minds and comprehensions are originally different. And this matter is self-evident; it cannot be refuted. We see that certain children of the same age, nativity and race, nay, from the same household, under the tutorship of one teacher, differ in their minds and comprehensions....No matter how much the shell is educated or polished, it can never become radiant pearl. The black stone will not become the world illumining gem. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 576-8)

151

30. What is character?

In man are three kinds of character; innate, inherited and acquired.

1. Innate. 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. (Example: As shown among children of one family; also degrees of difference between the various kingdoms) (Some Answered Questions, p. 247-8)

2. Inherited qualities come from strength or weakness of constitution....For example....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....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....to Christ; also to Muhammad and the Báb, and to all the Prophets and the Holy Manifestations of Israel.

3. Acquired character....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 civilization the crooked branch becomes straight, the acid, bitter fruit of the mountains and woods becomes sweet and delicious, and the five-petalled flower become hundred-petalled. Through education savage nations become civilized, and even the animals become civilized, and even the animals become domesticated. Education must be considered as most important....Education has a universal influence. (Some Answered Questions, p. 249)

...Every soul is known by conduct, manners, words and deeds. Therefore, we must strive with life and heart that, day by day, our deeds may be better, our conduct more beautiful and our forbearance greater. That is, to cultivate love for all the world; to attain beatific character. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. II, p. 306)

152

...The reality underlying this question is that the evil spirit, Satan or whatever is interpreted as evil, refers to the lower nature in man....In man there are two expressions: One is the expression of nature; the other, the expression of the spiritual realm. The world of nature is defective. Look at it clearly, casting aside all superstition and imagination. If you should leave a man uneducated and barbarous in the wilds of Africa, would there be any doubt about his remaining ignorant?... It is an essential condition of the soil of earth that thorns, weeds and fruitless trees may grow from it. Relatively speaking, this is evil; it is simply the lower state and baser product of nature. It is evident, therefore, that man is in need of divine education and inspiration....The prophets are....the divine gardeners who till the earth of human hearts and minds....The wisdom and purpose of their training is that man must pass from degree to degree of progressive unfoldment until perfection is attained....Man must walk in many paths and be subjected to various processes in his evolution upward....He would not know the difference between young and old without experiencing the old....If there was no wrong how would you recognize the right?...Ignorance is simply the lack of knowledge. Death is the absence of life. Therefore, on one hand we have existence; on the other,

non-existence, negation or absence of existence...Without training and guidance the soul could never progress beyond the conditions of its lower nature which is ignorant and defective.(Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 289-90)

31. What is the truth of the theory that existence is an illusion?

This theory is erroneous; for though the existence of beings in relation to the existence of God is an illusion, nevertheless, in the condition of being it has a real and certain existence. It is futile to deny this. For example, the existence of the mineral in comparison with that of man is nonexistence, for when man is apparently annihilated, his body becomes mineral; but the mineral has existence in the mineral world. Therefore, it is evident that earth, in relation to the existence of man, is nonexistent, and its existence is illusory; but in relation to the mineral it exists.

In the same manner the existence of beings in comparison with the existence of God is but illusion and nothingness; it is an appearance, like the image reflected in a mirror. But though an image which is seen in a mirror is an illusion,

153

the source and the reality of that illusory image is the person reflected, whose face appears in the mirror.

Then it is evident that although beings in relation to the existence of God have no existence, but are like the mirage or the reflections in the mirror, yet in their own degree they exist. (Some Answered Questions, p. 319-20)

32. How many kinds of pre-existence and of phenomena are there?

Essential preexistence is an existence which is not preceded by a cause, but essential phenomena are preceded by causes. Preexistence of time is without beginning, but the phenomena of time have beginnings and endings; for the existence of everything depends upon four causes -- the efficient cause, the matter, the form and the final cause. For example, this chair has a maker who is a carpenter, a substance which is wood, a form which is that of a chair, and a purpose which is that it is to be used as a seat.

The second proposition is that existence and nonexistence are both relative. If it be said that such a thing came into existence from nonexistence, this does not refer to absolute nonexistence, but means that its former condition in relation to its actual condition was nothingness. For absolute nothingness cannot find existence, as it has not the capacity of existence. Man, like the mineral, is existing; but the existence of the mineral in relation to that of man is nothingness, for when the body of man is annihilated it becomes dust and mineral. But when dust progresses into the human world, and this dead body becomes living, man becomes existing.... Though the world of contingency exists, in relation to the existence of God it is nonexistent and

nothingness.... The names and attributes of God require the existence of beings, and the Eternal Bounty does not cease. If it were to, it would be contrary to the perfections of God. (Some Answered Questions, p. 321-23)

There are two kinds of priorities: one is essential and is not preceded by a cause, but its existence is in itself, as, for example, the sun has light in itself, for its shining is not dependent on the light of other stars. This is called an essential light....The former is the ancient, the precedent, the antecedent, while the latter is the preceded and the last.

The second sort of preexistence is the preexistence of time, and that has no beginning. The

154

Word of God is sanctified from time. The past, the present, the future, all, in relation to God, are equal....In the same way there is a priority with regard to glory -- that is to say, the most glorious precedes the glorious. (Some Answered Questions, p. 132)

33. Does evil exist?

Know that beings are of two kinds: material and spiritual, those perceptible to the senses and those intellectual....sensible things are those which are perceived by the five exterior senses;... Intellectual things are conceptions of the mind....Evil is simply their nonexistence. (Such as all the qualities and admirable perfections of man...) So ignorance is the want of knowledge; error is the want of guidance; forgetfulness is the want of memory; stupidity is the want of good sense....

Nevertheless a doubt occurs to the mind -- that is, scorpions and serpents are poisonous. Are they good or evil?....A scorpion is evil in relation to man....but in relation to themselves they are not evil, for their poison is their weapon, and by their sting they defend themselves. But as the elements of their poison do not agree with our elements -- that is to say, as there is antagonism between these different elements,.... this antagonism is evil....The epitome of this discourse is that it is possible that one thing in relation to another may be evil, and at the same time within the limits of its proper being it may not be evil....(Some Answered Questions, p. 301-2)

....The greatest evil is (man's) going astray and being veiled from Truth....If we say that according to the text of the Bible, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart" that he might not believe in Moses, this signifies that, verily, He did not soften his heart....The darkness spoken of in the Bible as being created by God, signifieth that, verily, God hath not caused light to shine; inasmuch as where there is no light, there will be darkness; when there is no sight, there

will be blindness; when there is no life, there will be death; when there is no riches, there will be poverty; and when there is no knowledge, there will be ignorance. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 609-10)

34. Wherein is the fallacy of Pantheism?

The reality of the Essence of Unity through which all

155

creatures have come into the world -- is admitted by everyone. The difference resides in that which the Sufis say, "The reality of the things is the manifestation of the Real Unity." But the Prophets say, "it emanates from the Real Unity"; and great is the difference between manifestation and emanation. The appearance in manifestation means that a single thing appears in infinite forms. For example, the seed, which is a single thing possessing the vegetative perfections, which it manifests in infinite forms, resolving itself into branches, leaves, flowers and fruits: this is called appearance in manifestation; whereas in the appearance through emanation this Real Unity remains and continues in the exaltation of Its sanctity, but the existence of creatures emanates from It and is not manifested by It.... To recapitulate: the Sufis admit God and the creature, and say that God resolves Himself into the infinite forms of the creatures, and manifests like the sea, which appears in the infinite forms of the waves. These phenomenal and imperfect waves are the same thing as the Preexistent Sea, which is the sum of all the divine perfections.

The Prophets, on the contrary, believe that there is the world of God, the world of the Kingdom, and the world of Creation: three things. The first emanation from God is the bounty of the Kingdom, which emanates and is reflected in the reality of the creatures, like the light which emanates from the sun and is resplendent in creatures; and this bounty, which is the light, is reflected in infinite forms in the reality of all things, and specifies and individualizes itself according to the capacity, the worthiness and the intrinsic value of things....

Briefly, the superior reality does not descend nor abase itself to inferior states; then how could it be that the Universal Reality of God, which is freed from all descriptions and qualifications, notwithstanding Its absolute sanctity and purity, should resolve Itself into the forms of the realities of the creatures, which are the source of imperfections? This is a pure imagination. (Some Answered Questions, p. 333-40)

...Each elemental atom of the universe is possessed of a capacity to express all the virtues of the universe. This is a subtle and abstract realization. Meditate upon it, for within it lies the true explanation of pantheism. From this point of view and perception pantheism is a truth, for every

atom in the universe possesses or reflects all the virtues of life, the manifestation of which is effected through change and transformation. Therefore, the origin and outcome of phenomena is, verily, the omnipresent God; for the reality of all phenomenal existence is through Him. There is neither reality nor the manifestation of reality without the instrumentality of God. Existence is realized and possible through the bounty of God, just as the ray or flame emanating from this lamp is realized through the bounty of the lamp, from which it originates. Even so, all phenomena are realized through the divine bounty, and the explanation of true pantheistic statement and principle is that the phenomena of the universe find realization through the one power animating and dominating all things, and all things are but manifestations of its energy and bounty. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 279)

35. What is the truth of predestination? (If God has knowledge of an action which will be performed by some one and it has been written on the tablet of Faith, is it possible to resist it?)

foreknowledge of a thing is not the cause of its realization; for the essential knowledge of God surrounds, in the same way, the realities of things, before as well as after their existence, and it does not become the cause of their existence.... The hidden secrets of the future were revealed to the Prophets, and They thus became acquainted with the future events which They announced.... Therefore, the knowledge of God in the realm of contingency does not produce the forms of the things. On the contrary, it is purified from the past, present and future.... For example, tonight everyone knows that after seven hours the sun will rise; but this general fore-knowledge does not cause the rising and appearance of the sun.... The mathematicians by astronomical calculations know that at a certain time an eclipse of the moon or the sun will occur. Surely this discovery does not cause the eclipse to take place. This is, of course, only an analogy and not an exact image. (Some Answered Questions, p. 158-9)

Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a pre-ordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a re-

sult of your own volition. Be fair in your judgement. Every good thing is of God, and every evil thing is from yourselves.... This same truth hath been revealed in all the Scriptures, as clear to Him as is that act when already accomplished All stands revealed before Him; all is recorded in His holy and hidden Tablets. This fore-knowledge of God, however, should not be regarded as having caused the actions of men, just as your own previous knowledge that a certain event is to occur, or your desire that it should happen, is not and can never be the reason for its occurrence. (Gleanings from the Writings of

36. What are the two kinds of fate?

Fate is of two kinds: One is decreed; so for this lamp, the decreed fate is that the oil burns and will be consumed....In the body of man a power of life has been created, and as soon as it is destroyed....Decreed fate cannot change or be altered....Conditional (or impending) fate may be likened to this: while there is still oil a violent wind blows on the lamp, which extinguishes it....It is wise to avoid it, to protect oneself from it, to be cautious and circumspect. (Some Answered Questions, p. 283)

Know thou, O fruit of My Tree, that the decrees of the Sovereign Ordainer, as related to fate and predestination, are of two kinds. Both are to be obeyed and accepted. The one is irrevocable, the other is, as termed by men, impending. To the former all must unreservedly submit, inasmuch as it is fixed and settled. God, however, is able to alter or repeal it. As the harm that must result from such a change will be greater than if the decree had remained unaltered, all, therefore, should willingly acquiesce in what God hath willed and confidently abide by the same. The decree that is impending, however, is such that prayer and entreaty can succeed in averting it. God grant that thou who art the fruit of My Tree, and they that are associated with thee, may be shielded from its evil consequences. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 133)

37. Is Man a free agent?

Some things are subject to the free-will of man, such as justice, equity, tyranny and injustice, as well as all the good and evil actions....But there are certain things to which man is forced and compelled; such as sleep, death, sickness, sickness, de-

158

cline of power, injuries and misfortune; these are not subject to the will of man and he is not responsible for them....

It is said in the Gospel that God is like a potter who makes "one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour." Now the dishonored vessel has no right to find fault with the potter saying, "Why did you not make me a precious cup, which is passed from hand to hand?" The meaning of this verse is that the states of beings are different.... the mineral, has no right to complain, saying, "O God, why have You not given me the vegetable perfections?" In the same way, the plant has no right to complain.... all these things are perfect in their own degree, and they must strive after the perfections of their own degree. The inferior beings.... have neither the right to, nor the fitness for, the states of the superior perfections.... The rudder of the ship turns it to either side, and the power of the steam moves it in the desired direction.... This motion does not come from the ship; no, it comes from the wind or the

steam. In the same way, in all the action or inaction of man, he receives power from the help of God; but the choice of good or evil belongs to the man himself. (Some Answered Questions, p. 287-9)

Consider the pettiness of men's minds. They ask for that which injureth them, and cast away the thing that profiteth them. They are, indeed, of those that are far astray. We find some men desiring liberty, and priding themselves therein. Such men are in the depths of ignorance.

Liberty must, in the end, lead to sedition, whose flames none can quench. Thus warneth you He Who is the Reckoner, the All-Knowing. 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

159

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 Bahá'u'lláh, p. 335-6)

38. Have the stars of the heavens any influence upon the human soul?

...This limitless universe is like the human body, all the members of which are connected and linked...with the greatest strength...The parts of the infinite universe have their members and elements connected with one another and influence one another spiritually and materially. (Some Answered Questions, p. 284-5)

Some of the celestial stars have a clear and apparent material effect upon the terrestrial globe and the earthly beings, which needs no explanation. See the connection which exists between the spirit of man and the atmospheric vibration, so that the movement of the air becomes the cause of transporting

him from one state to another, and of entirely overpowering him... The decrees of those former astrologers were forms of imagination which were originated by Egyptian, Assyrian and Chaldean priests; nay, rather, they were due to the fancies of Hindus, to the myths of the Greeks, Romans and other star worshipers.... To conclude: the beings, whether great or small, are connected with one another by the perfect wisdom of God, and affect and influence one another.... Although by existing rules and actual science these connections cannot be discovered, nevertheless, their existence between all beings is certain and absolute.... This subject is worthy of examination. (Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 284-6)

Thou hast, moreover, asked Me concerning the nature of the celestial spheres. To comprehend their nature, it would be necessary to inquire into the meaning of the allusions that have been made in the Books of old to the celestial spheres and the heavens, and to discover the character of their relationship to this physical world, and the influence which they exert upon it. Every heart is filled with wonder at so bewildering a theme, and every mind is perplexed by its

160

mystery. God, alone, can fathom its import. The learned men, that have fixed at several thousand years the life of this earth, have failed, throughout the long period of their observation, to consider either the number or the age of the other planets. Consider, moreover, the manifold divergencies that have resulted from the theories propounded by these men. Know thou that every fixed star hath its own planets, and every planet its own creatures, whose number no man can compute. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 162-3)

39. What is the truth about visions and communications with spirits?

Spiritual discoveries are of two kinds: one kind is of the imagination and is only the assertion of a few people; the other kind resembles inspiration, and this is real -- such are the revelations of Isaiah, of Jeremiah and of St. John, which are real.

Reflect that man's power of thought consists of two kinds. One kind is true, when it agrees with a determined truth. Such conceptions find realization in the exterior world; such are accurate opinions, correct theories, scientific discoveries and inventions.

The other kind of conceptions is made up of vain thoughts and useless ideas which yield neither fruit nor result, and which have no reality. No, they surge like the waves of the sea of imaginations, and they pass away like idle dreams.

In the same way, there are two sorts of spiritual discoveries. One is the revelations of the Prophets, and the spiritual discoveries of the elect. The visions of the Prophets are not dreams; no, they are spiritual discoveries and have reality....

The other kind of spiritual discoveries is made up of pure imaginations, but

these imaginations become embodied in such a way that many simple-hearted people believe that they have a reality. That which proves it clearly is that from this controlling of spirits no result or fruit has ever been produced. No, they are but narratives and stories....(Some Answered Questions, p. 290-2)

As to the question that the holy and spiritual souls influence, help and guide the creatures after they have cast off this elemental mould -- this is an established truth of the Bahais. Nay even the Holy Manifestations of God extend a great Bounty and an evident Light after their ascent from this world. For His Holiness Christ there was more and

161

greater promotion of the Word, manifestation of divine power, conversion of holy souls, and the giving of eternal life, after His martyrdom. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 543)

To tamper with psychic forces while in this world interferes with the condition of the soul in the world to come. These forces are real, but are not to be active on this plane. The child in the womb has its eyes, ears, hands and feet, but these powers are not in activity. The whole purpose of the womb-life is the coming forth....into this world of Reality, where all these forces will be active. They belong to that world. (Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of the West. Vol. X, p. 344)

40. What are the four methods of healing without medicine?

Know that there are four kinds of curing and healing without medicine. Two are due to material causes, and two to spiritual causes.... 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....

1. The strong power of a healthy body can overcome a slight weakness of a sick body, and health results....

2. The other kind of healing without medicine is through the magnetic force.... 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....

3. The complete and perfect connection between the spiritual doctor and the sick person....the entire concentration of the mind of a strong person upon a sick person....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. (this kind of healing is spiritual).

4. The fourth kind of healing.... 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, p. 293-5)

162

41. What will be the future method of treatment of disease?

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.... The majority of the diseases which overtake man also overtake the animal, but the animal is not cured by drugs.... The science of medicine is still in a condition of infancy.... 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. (Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 296-8)

There are two ways of healing diseases, the material and the spiritual way. The first is the remedies of the physicians; the second prayers and turning one's self to God. Both must be practiced and followed. The diseases that happen to be caused by physical accident are cured by medical aid; others, which are due to spiritual causes, will disappear by spiritual means. For instance: For a disease due to grieving, fear, nervous impressions, the spiritual remedies will take more effect than the physical. Therefore, these two kinds of remedies must be followed; neither is an obstacle to the other. You must take care of the physical remedies. These also came from the bounty and mercy of God who revealed and made evident the science of medicine, so that His servants may also be benefited by this mode of healing....And if thou art looking for the divine remedy which will cure the spirit of man of all diseases and make him obtain the health of the divine Kingdom, know that it is the precepts and teachings of God. Take the greatest care of them.(Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 654)

The powers of the sympathetic nerve are neither entirely physical nor spiritual, but are between the two systems). The nerve is connected with both. Its phenomena shall be perfect when its spiritual and physical relations are normal. When the material world and the divine world are well co-related, when the hearts become heavenly and the aspirations grow pure and divine, perfect connection shall take place. Then shall this power produce a perfect manifestation. Physical and spiritual diseases will then receive absolute healing. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. II, p. 309)

163

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 compound medicament.... Abstain from drugs when the health is good, but administer them when necessary. (Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, p. 131)

42. What is the proper treatment of criminals?

The most essential thing is that the people must be educated in such a way that no crimes will be committed; for it is possible to educate the masses so effectively that they will avoid and shrink from perpetrating crimes, so that the crime itself will appear to them as the greatest chastisement, the utmost condemnation and torment....There are two sorts of retributory punishments. One is vengeance, the other, chastisement. Man has not the right to take vengeance, but the community has the right to punish the criminal....Vicious people, like wolves, would destroy the sheep of God....Some people are like bloodthirsty wolves: if they see no punishment forthcoming, they will kill men merely for pleasure and diversion. One of the tyrants of Persia killed his tutor merely for the sake of making merry....if one person assaults another, the injured one should forgive him. But the communities must protect the rights of man....

The communities are....occupied in making penal laws....and in preparing and organizing instruments and means of punishment....whereas, in reality, they are causing destruction of morals and perversion of characters. The community, on the contrary, ought day and night to strive and endeavor with the utmost zeal and effort to accomplish the education of men, to cause them day by day to progress and to increase in science and knowledge, to acquire virtues, to gain good morals and to avoid vices, so that crimes may not occur....As ignorance is the cause of crimes, the more knowledge and science increases, the more crimes will diminish....Therefore, the communities must think of preventing crimes, rather than of rigorously punishing the criminal.

To recapitulate: the constitution of the communities depends upon justice, not upon forgiveness. Then what Christ meant by forgiveness and pardon is not that, when nations attack you....that you should be submissive in the presence of these tyrannical foes....No, the words of Christ refer to the conduct of two individuals toward each other....If at this moment a wild Arab were to enter this place with a

164

drawn sword, wishing to assault, wound and kill you, most assuredly I would prevent him....But if he injure me personally, I would forgive him. (Some Answered Questions, p. 307-12)

Know that to do justice is to give to everyone according to his deserts. For

example, when a workman labors from morning until evening, justice requires that he shall be paid his wages; but when he has done no work and taken no trouble, he is given a gift: this is bounty. If you give alms and gifts to a poor man although he has taken no trouble for you, nor done anything to deserve it, this is bounty....Now the question of the good or evil of things is determined by reason or by law. Some believe that it is determined by law; such are the Jews, who, believing all the commandments of the Pentateuch to be absolutely obligatory, regard them as matters of law, not of reason....But the theologians think that the good and evil of things depend upon both reason and law. The chief foundation of the prohibition of murder, theft, treachery, falsehood, hypocrisy and cruelty, is reason....If a man commits a murder, he will be responsible....But in a place where the commands of a Prophet are not known, and where the people do not act in conformity with the divine instructions, such as the command of Christ to return good for evil, but act according to the desires of nature.... from the point of view of religion they are excused because the divine command has not been delivered to them. Though they do not deserve mercy and beneficence, nevertheless, God treats them with mercy and forgives them.

Now vengeance, according to reason, is also blameworthy, because through vengeance no good result is gained by the avenger. So if a man strikes another, and he who is struck takes revenge by returning the blow, what advantage will he gain?... In truth the two actions are the same: both are injuries; the only difference is that one occurred first, and the other afterward. Therefore, if he who is struck forgives, nay, if he acts in a manner contrary to that which has been used toward him, this is laudable. The law of the community will punish the aggressor but will not take revenge.... (Some Answered Questions, p. 304-6)

Necessarily there will be some who are defective amongst men, but it is our duty to enable them by kind methods of guidance and teaching to become perfected. Some will be found who are morally sick; they should be treated in order that they may be healed. Others are immature and like children; they must be trained and educated so that they

165

may become wise and mature. Those who are asleep must be awakened; the indifferent must become mindful and attentive. But all this must be accomplished in the spirit of kindness and love and not by strife, antagonism nor in a spirit of hostility and hatred, for this is contrary to the good pleasure of God. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 391)

43. Why are we admonished to show kindness and mercy to animals?

The foundation of the Kingdom of God is laid upon justice, fairness, mercy, sympathy and kindness to every soul....Ye must not only have kind and merciful

feelings for mankind, but ye should also exercise the utmost kindness towards every living creature. The physical sensibilities and instincts are common to animal and man. Man is, however, negligent of this reality and imagines that sensibility is peculiar to mankind, therefore he practices cruelty to the animal. In reality what difference is there in physical sensations! Sensibility is the same whether you harm man or animal: there is no difference. Nay, rather, cruelty to the animal is more painful because man has a tongue and he sighs, complains and groans when he receives an injury and complains to the government and the government protects him from cruelty; but the poor animal cannot speak, it can neither show its suffering nor is it able to appeal to the government. If it is harmed a thousand times by man it is not able to defend itself in words nor can it seek justice or retaliate. Therefore one must be very considerate towards animals and show greater kindness to them than to man. Educate the children in their infancy in such a way that they may become exceedingly kind and merciful to the animals. If an animal is sick they should endeavor 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 injurious animals are excepted, because mercy towards these is cruelty to man, and other animals....so they (ferocious animals) should be done away with. To the blessed animals, however, the utmost kindness should be exercised: the more the better it will be. This sympathy and kindness is one of the fundamental principles of the divine kingdom. Ye should pay great attention to this question. (Bahá'í World Faith, p. 373-4)

166

The world of nature is the kingdom of the animal. In its natural condition and plane of limitation the animal is perfect. The ferocious beasts of prey have been completely subject to the laws of nature in their development....captives of nature and the sense world. In reality they are like the great philosophers of this day who are not in touch with God and the Holy Spirit -- deniers of the Prophets, ignorant of spiritual susceptibilities, deprived of the heavenly bounties and without belief in the supernatural power. The animal lives this kind of life blissfully and untroubled, whereas the material philosophers labor and study for ten or twenty years in schools and colleges, denying God, the Holy Spirit and divine inspirations. The animal is even a greater philosopher, for it attains the ability to do this without labor and study. For instance....Like the philosophers, the cow is a captive of nature and knows nothing beyond the range of the senses....But the cow, without study or proficiency in the sciences, modestly and quietly views life from the same standpoint, living in harmony with nature's laws in the utmost dignity and nobility. This is not the glory of man. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 305-6)

We find when we observe nature, that the gentler animals group themselves together into flocks and herds, whereas the savage, ferocious creatures, such as the lion, the tiger, and the wolf, live in wild forests, apart from civilization. Two wolves, or two lions, may live amicably together; but a thousand lambs may share the same fold and a large number of deer can form one herd. Two eagles can dwell in the same place, but a thousand doves can gather into one habitation. Man should, at least, be numbered among the gentler animals; but when he becomes ferocious he is more cruel and malicious than the most savage of the animal creation! (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 129-30).

If the animals are savage and ferocious, it is simply a means for their subsistence and preservation. They are deprived of that degree of intellect which can reason and discriminate between right and wrong, justice and injustice; they are justified in their actions and not responsible. When man is ferocious and cruel toward his fellowman, it is not for subsistence or safety. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 346)

All creation below the kingdom of man is the captive of nature; it cannot deviate in the slightest degree from nature's laws....In the physical powers and senses, however, man and

167

the animal are partners. In fact, the animal is often superior to man in sense perception. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 236-7)

The power of the understanding differs in degree in the various kingdoms of creation. The mineral, vegetable, and animal realms are each incapable of understanding any creation beyond their own. The mineral cannot imagine the growing power of the plant. The tree cannot understand the power of movement in the animal, neither can it comprehend what it would mean to possess sight, hearing or the sense of smell....The animal cannot realize the intelligence of a human being, he only knows that which is perceived by his animal senses, he cannot imagine anything in the abstract....The superiority of man over the rest of the created world is seen again in this, that man has a soul in which dwells the divine spirit; the souls of the lower creatures are inferior in their essence. (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 19-21).

Verily, God has created the animal in the image and likeness of man, for though man outwardly is human, yet in nature he possesses animal tendencies. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 263)

In the animal kingdom we see that the male and the female have equal rights; and that they each share the advantages of their kind. (The Wisdom of

'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 150).

Among the animals racial prejudice does not exist. Consider the doves; there is no distinction as to whether it is an oriental or an occidental dove. The sheep are all of one race; there is no assumption of distinction between an eastern and a western sheep. When they meet, they associate with perfect fellowship. If a dove from the West should go to the Orient, it will associate with the eastern doves unhesitatingly....Enmity is human disobedience.... (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 300)

The love of God haloes all created things. Were it not for the love of God, no animate being would exist. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 309)

When we look upon the kingdoms of creation below man, we find three forms or planes of existence which await education and development....We observe that animals which have undergone training in their sphere of limitation will prog-

168

ress and advance unmistakably, become more beautiful in appearance and increase in intelligence. For instance, how intelligent and knowing the Arabian horse has become through training, even how polite this horse has become through education. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 74)

First the vegetable spirit: this is a power which results from the combination of elements and the mingling of substances by the decree of the Supreme God, and from the influence, the effect and connection of other existences. When these substances and elements are separated from each other, the power of growth also ceases to exist....After this is the animal spirit, which also results from the mingling and combination of elements. But this combination is more complete, and through the decree of the Almighty Lord a perfect mingling is obtained, and the animal spirit -- in other words, the power of the senses -- is produced. It will perceive the reality of things from that which is seen and visible, audible, edible, tangible, and that which can be smelled. After the dissociation and decomposition of the combined elements this spirit also will naturally disappear. It is like this lamp which you see: when the oil and wick and fire are brought together, light is the result; but when the oil is finished and the wick consumed, the light will also vanish and be lost. (Some Answered Questions, p. 163-4)

...Concerning hunting of innocent animals. Be not surprised at this. Ponder over the contingent realities, their mysteries, wisdom, connection and relations. The world is harmonious in all things and the connection therein is

mighty and nothing is missing.

All things are eaters and eaten in the physical creation. The plant sucks from the mineral, the animal eats and swallows the plant, and human eats the animal. Then the mineral (in turn) eats the human body. Physical bodies are transferred from death to death and life to life. Therefore, all things are subject to transfer and change except the Cause of existence, which cannot be changed or transferred, because it is the foundation for life in all kinds and species and in all possible realities in the world of creation.

If thou observest closely through a microscope the water which man drinks and the air which he breathes, thou wilt see that in every breath which man breathes, that breath contains numerous animals, and in every draught of water great numbers of animals exist. This could not be prevented

169

because the existent beings are eaters and eaten and, by this, existence is caused; otherwise, the relations between existent things would cease. When a thing decomposes and decays, being bereft of life, it becomes promoted to a world of life greater than the former. For instance, it ceased in a mineral life and was promoted to the vegetable life; then leaves the vegetable life and is elevated to that of the animal; then leaving the animal life it advances to the human (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. I, p. 55-6)

Although a blind man produceth a most wonderful and exquisite art, yet he is deprived of seeing it. Consider how most animals labor for man, draw loads and facilities travel; yet, as they are ignorant, they receive no reward for this toil and labor. The cloud raineth, roses and hyacinths grow; the plain and meadow, the garden and trees become green and blossom; yet they do not realize the results and outcome of all these. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 549)

The minerals, vegetables and animals have elemental bodies in common with each other. Likewise, they have place in the order of creation. This is the common tie or point of contact between them. All of them pass through the process of composition and decomposition; this is a natural law to which all are subject. This law is ruling throughout creation and constitutes a bond of connection among created things. But at the same time there are certain distinguishing features between these objects....Likewise, there are distinctions between kinds and species of each kingdom. When we consider the mineral kingdom in detail, we observe not only points of similarity between objects but points of distinction as well. Some are immovable bodies, some hard and solid,...some gaseous; some have weight; others, like fire and electricity, have not. In the vegetable kingdom also we observe distinction between the various sorts and species of organisms....In the animal kingdom the same law rules, as many distinctions in form, color and function are noticeable. (Promulgation of

God has created all earthly things under a law of progression in material degrees, but He has created man and endowed him with powers of advancement toward spiritual and transcendental kingdoms. He has not created material phenomena after His own image and likeness, but He has created man after that image and with potential power to attain that likeness....All created things except man are

170

captives of nature and the sense world....Consider that the highest type of creation below man is the animal, which is superior to all degrees of life except man. Manifestly, the animal has been created for the life of this world. Its highest virtue is to express excellence in the material plane of existence. The animal is perfect when its body is healthy and its physical senses are whole....When food and surrounding conditions minister to its needs, it has attained the ultimate perfection of its kingdom. But man does not depend upon these things for his virtues. No matter how perfect his health and physical powers, if that is all, he has not yet risen above the degree of a perfect animal. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 296-7)

Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 65)

Know ye that the embodiment of liberty and its symbol is the animal. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 335)

44. What are the fundamentals of Child Training?

Training doth not change the human gem (i. e., human nature or entity), but it produceth a marvelous effect. By this effective power all that is registered latent of virtues and capacities in the human reality will be revealed.

Cultivation by the farmer maketh of the grain the harvest, and the effort of the gardener maketh of the seed a noble tree. The gentle teacher promoteth the children of the school to the lofty altitude and the bestowal of the trainer placeth the little child upon the throne of ether....Minds are different in the original entity or nature, and that education commandeth a decided and great influence. 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.

171

This is a sin unpardonable, for they have made that poor babe a wanderer in the Sahara of ignorance, unfortunate and tormented; to remain during a lifetime a captive of ignorance and pride, negligent and without discernment. Verily, if that babe depart from this world at the age of infancy, it is sweeter and better. In this sense, death is better than life; deprivation than salvation; non-existence lovelier than existence; the grave better than the palace; and the narrow, dingy tomb better than the spacious, regal home; for in the sight of mankind that child is abased and degraded and in the sight of God weak and defective. In gatherings it is ashamed and humiliated and in the arena of examination subdued and defeated by young and old. What a mistake is this! What an everlasting humiliation!

Therefore, the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful must train their children with life and heart and teach them in the school of virtue and perfection. They must not be lax in this matter; they must not be inefficient. Truly, if a babe did not live at all it were better than to let it grow ignorant, for that innocent babe, in later life, would become afflicted with innumerable defects, responsible to and questioned by God, reproached and rejected by the people. What a sin this would be and what an omission!

The first duty of the beloved of God and the maid-servants of the Merciful is this: They must strive by all possible means to educate both sexes, male and female; girls like boys; there is no difference whatsoever between them. The ignorance of both is blameworthy, and negligence in both cases is reprobable. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 579-80)

(A prayer) I am a child of tender years. Nourish me from the breast of Thy mercy, train

172

me in the bosom of Thy love, educate me in the school of Thy guidance and develop me under the shadow of Thy bounty! Deliver me from darkness, make me a brilliant light; free me from unhappiness, make me a flower of the rose-garden; suffer me to become the servant of Thy Threshold and confer upon me the disposition and nature of the righteous ones; make me a cause of bounty to the human world and crown my head with the diadem of eternal life! Verily, Thou art the Powerful, the Mighty, the Seer, the Hearer! (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 595)

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....

The hearts of all children are of the utmost purity. They are mirrors upon which no dust has fallen.... 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. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 49-51)

In this holy Cause the question of the education and the maintenance of the orphans has the utmost importance. Towards the orphans the utmost consideration must be shown, they must be taught and instructed; especially the teachings of his holiness Bahá'u'lláh must be given freely to every orphan according to the means at hand. I beg of God that to the orphaned children thou mayst become a kind father and mother, to quicken them with the fragrances of the Holy Spirit thus they may attain to the age of maturity, and each one may become the real servant of the world of humanity, nay

173

rather, they may become as bright candles in the assemblages of mankind. (Star of the West, Vol. IX, p. 88)

It is decreed that every father must educate his sons and daughters in learning and in writing and also in that which hath been ordained in the Tablet. He who neglects that which hath been commanded (in this matter), if he is rich, it is incumbent on the trustees (of the House of Justice) to recover from him the amount required for the education of the children; otherwise (i.e., if the parent is not capable) the matter shall devolve on the House of Justice. Verily We have made it (The House of Justice) an asylum for the poor and needy. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 128-9)

As to the subject of babies and infants and weak ones who are afflicted by the hands of oppressors: This contains great wisdom and this subject is of paramount importance. In brief, for those souls there is a recompense in another world and many details are connected with this matter. For those souls that suffering is the greatest mercy of God. Verily, that mercy of the Lord is

far better and preferable to all the comfort of this world and the growth and the development of this place of mortality. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. VII, p. 337)

Those infants (who die before attaining the age of discretion, or before the appointed time of birth) are under the shadow of the favor of God; and as they have not committed any sin and are not soiled with the impurities of the world of nature, they are the centers of the manifestation of bounty, and the Eye of Compassion will be turned upon them. (Some Answered Questions, p. 278)

45. Is marriage a sacrament?

Regarding the question of matrimony: Know thou that the command of marriage is eternal. It will never be changed nor altered. This is divine creation and there is not the slightest possibility that change or alteration affect this divine creation (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. II, p. 474)

Say: O Concourse of monks! Seclude not yourselves in churches and cloisters. Come forth by My leave, and occupy yourselves with that which will profit your souls and the souls of men. Thus biddeth you the King of the Day of Reckoning. Seclude yourselves in the stronghold of My love. This, verily, is a befitting seclusion, were ye of them that perceive it. He that shutteth himself up in a house is indeed as one dead.

174

It behoveth man to show forth that which will profit all created things, and he that bringeth forth no fruit is fit for fire. Thus counselleth you your Lord, and He, verily, is the Almighty, the All-Bounteous. Enter ye into wedlock, that after you someone may fill your place. We have forbidden you perfidious acts, and not that which will demonstrate fidelity. Have ye clung to the standards fixed by your own selves, and cast the standards of God behind your backs? Fear God, and be not of the foolish. But for man, who would make mention of Me on My earth, and how could My attributes and My name have been revealed? Ponder ye, and be not of them that are veiled and fast asleep. He that wedded not (Jesus) found no place wherein to dwell or lay His head, by reason of that which the hands of the treacherous had wrought. His sanctity consisteth not in that which ye believe or fancy, but rather in the things We possess. (Bahá'í World Faith, p. 106)

The pious practices of the monks and priests among the people of His Holiness the Spirit -- upon Him is the peace of God and His glory! -- are remembered before God; but, in this day, they must abandon solitude for open places, and engage in that which may profit both themselves and other men. We have

conferred permission on them all to engage in matrimony, so that there may appear from them those who may celebrate the praise of God, the Lord of the seen and unseen and the Lord of the lofty throne! (Bahá'í World Faith, p. 193)

She must not rest until she makes him her spiritual as well as physical partner in life. But the Bahai engagement is the perfect communication and the entire consent of both parties. However, they must show forth the utmost attention and become informed of one another's character and the firm covenant made between each other must become an eternal binding, and their intentions must be everlasting affinity, friendship, unity and life. The bridegroom must, before the bridesman and a few others, say: "Verily, we are content with the will of God." And the bride must rejoin: "Verily, we are satisfied with the desire of God." This is Bahai matrimony.

Among the majority of the people marriage consists of

175

physical relationship and this union and relationship is temporary for at the end physical separation is destined and ordained. But the marriage of the people of Baha must consist of both physical and spiritual relationship for both of them are intoxicated with the wine of one cup, are attracted by one Peerless Countenance, are quickened with one Life and are illumined with one Light. This is the spiritual relationship and everlasting union. Likewise in the physical world they are bound together with strong and unbreakable ties.

When relationship, union and concord exist between the two from a physical and spiritual standpoint, that is the real union, therefore everlasting. But if the union is merely from the physical point of view, unquestionably it is temporal and at the end separation is inevitable.

Consequently when the people of Baha desire to enter the sacred union of marriage, eternal connection and ideal relationship, spiritual and physical association of thoughts and conceptions of life must exist between them, so that in all the grades of existence and all the worlds of God this union may continue forever and ever for this real union is a splendor of the light of the love of God.

Likewise if the souls become real believers they will find themselves ushered into this exalted state of relationship, becoming the manifestors of the love of the Merciful and exhilarated with the cup of the love of God. Undoubtedly that union and relationship is eternal.

The souls who sacrifice self, become detached from the imperfections of the realm of man and free from the shackles of this ephemeral world, assuredly the splendors of the rays of divine union shall shine in their hearts and in the eternal paradise they shall find ideal relationship, union and happiness.

(Bahá'í World Faith, p. 372)

"He is the Bestower, the Bounteous!"

Praise be to God, the Ancient, the Ever-Abiding, the Changeless, the Eternal! He Who hath testified in His Own Being that verily He is 104 the One, the Single, the Untrammelled, the Exalted. We bear witness that verily there is no God but Him, acknowledging His oneness, confessing His singleness. He hath ever dwelt in unapproachable heights, in the summits of His loftiness, sanctified from the mention of aught save Himself, free from the description of aught but Him.

"And when He desired to manifest grace and beneficence to men, and to set the world in order, He revealed observances and created laws; among them He established the law of marriage, made it as a fortress for well-being and salvation, and en-

176

joined it upon us in that which was sent down out of the heaven of sanctity in His Most Holy Book. He saith, great is His glory: "Marry, O people, that from you may appear he who will remember Me amongst My servants; this is one of My commandments unto you; obey it as an assistance to yourselves."

"And we greet and salute those of the Báyan who became the people of Bahá, those who expended their efforts for the upraising of this luminous Faith, and whom the blame of the blamer did not withhold from God. Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds!

" He is God! O peerless Lord! In Thine almighty wisdom Thou hast enjoined marriage upon the peoples, that the generations of men may succeed one another in this contingent world, and that ever, so long as the world shall last, they may busy themselves at the Threshold of Thy oneness with servitude and worship, with salutation, adoration and praise. "I have not created spirits and men, but that they should worship me." [1] Wherefore, wed Thou in the heaven of Thy mercy these two birds of the nest of Thy love, and make them the means of attracting perpetual grace; that from the union of these two seas of love a wave of tenderness may surge and cast the pearls of pure and goodly issue on the shore of life. "He hath let loose the two seas, that they meet each other: Between them is a barrier which they overpass not. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will ye deny? From each He bringeth up greater and lesser pearls." [2]

O Thou kind Lord! Make Thou this marriage to bring forth coral and pearls. Thou art verily the All-Powerful, the Most Great, the Ever-Forgiving." (Signed)
'Ayn'Ayn

[1.] Qur'án 51:56 [2.] Qur'án 55:19-20 (Bahá'í News, No. 192)

46. What is the significance of calamity?

I refer to the "Titanic" disaster....Although such an event is indeed regrettable, we must realize that everything which happens is due to some

wisdom and that nothing happens without a reason. Therein is a mystery; but whatever the reason and mystery, it was a very sad occurrence....But when I consider this calamity in another aspect, I am consoled by the realization that the worlds of God are infinite; that though they were deprived of this existence, they have other opportunities in the life beyond, even as Christ has said, "In my Father's house are many mansions." They were called away from the temporary and transferred to the eternal; they abandoned this material existence and

177

entered the portals of the spiritual world. Foregoing the pleasures and comforts of the earthly, they now partake of a joy and happiness far more abiding and real, for they have hastened to the Kingdom of God. The mercy of God is infinite, and it is our duty to remember these departed souls in our prayers and supplications that they may draw nearer and nearer to the Source itself.

These human conditions may be likened to the matrix of the mother from which a child is to be born into the spacious outer world. At first the infant finds it very difficult to reconcile itself to its new existence....but nature forces it into this world. Having come into its new conditions, it finds that it has passed from darkness into a sphere of radiance; from gloomy and restricted surroundings it has been transferred to a spacious and delightful environment. Its nourishment was the blood of the mother; now it finds delicious food to enjoy. Its new life is filled with brightness and beauty;....and then it praises God for its release from the confinement of its former condition and attainment to the freedom of a new realm....At first it is very difficult to welcome death, but after attaining its new condition the soul is grateful, for it has been released from the bondage of the limited to enjoy the liberties of the unlimited. It has been freed from a world of sorrow, grief and trials to live in a world of unending bliss and joy. The phenomenal and physical have been abandoned in order that it may attain the opportunities of the ideal and spiritual....

Furthermore, these events have deeper reasons. Their object and purpose is to teach man certain lessons. We are living in a day of reliance upon material conditions. Men imagine that the great size and strength of a ship, the perfection of machinery or the skill of a navigator will ensure safety, but these disasters sometimes take place that men may know that God is the real Protector. If it be the will of God to protect man, a little ship may escape destruction, whereas the greatest and most perfectly constructed vessel with the best and most skillful navigator may not survive a danger such as was present on the ocean. The purpose is that the people of the world may turn to God, the One Protector; that human souls may rely upon His preservation and know that He is the real safety. These events happen in order that man's faith may be increased and strengthened....

Let no one imagine that these words imply that man should not be thorough and

careful in his undertakings. God has endowed man with intelligence so that he may safeguard and protect himself...yet, withal, let him rely upon God and consider God as the one Keeper. If God protects, nothing

178

can imperil man's safety; and if it be not His will to safeguard, no amount of preparation and precaution will avail. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 44-6)

The divine call of the celestial Herald from beyond the Veil of Glory, summoning mankind to renounce utterly all the things to which they cleave, is repugnant to their desire; and this is the cause of the bitter trials and violent commotions which have occurred. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 239)

O Son of Man! My calamity is My providence, outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy. Hasten thereunto that thou mayest become an eternal light and an immortal spirit. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it. (Hidden Words, 51 Arabic)

"Soon," Bahá'u'lláh's own words proclaim it, "will the present day Order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead....He, verily, is powerful over all things." "The world's equilibrium," He explains, "hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this Most Great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System, the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed." "The signs of impending convulsions and chaos," He warns the peoples of the world, "can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing Order appeareth to be lamentably defective...."

"The heights," Bahá'u'lláh Himself testifies, "which, through the most gracious favor of God, mortal man can attain in this Day are as yet unrevealed to his sight. The world of being hath never had, nor doth it yet possess, the capacity for such a revelation. The day, however, is approaching when the potentialities of so great a favor will, by virtue of His behest, be manifested unto men."

For the revelation of so great a favor a period of intense turmoil and wide-spread suffering would seem to be indispensable. Resplendent as has been the Age that has witnessed the inception of the Mission with which Bahá'u'lláh has been entrusted, the interval which must elapse ere that Age yields its choicest fruit must, it is becoming increasingly apparent, be overshadowed by such moral and social gloom as can alone prepare an unrepentant humanity for the prize she is destined to inherit....

We may well believe, we who are called upon to experience the operation of the

dark forces destined to unloose a flood of agonizing afflictions, that the darkest hour that must precede the dawn of the Golden Age of our Faith has not yet

179

struck. Deep as is the gloom that already encircles the world, the afflictive ordeals which that world is to suffer are still in preparation, nor can their blackness be as yet imagined. We stand on the threshold of an age whose convulsions proclaim alike the death-pangs of the old order and the birth-pangs of the new. Through the generating influence of the Faith announced by Bahá'u'lláh this New World Order may be said to have been conceived. We can, at the present moment, experience its stirrings in the womb of a travailing age -- an age waiting for the appointed hour at which it can cast its burden and yield its fairest fruit....

As we view the world around us, we are compelled to observe the manifold evidences of that universal fermentation which, in every continent of the globe and in every department of human life, be it religious, social, economic or political, is purging and reshaping humanity in anticipation of the Day when the wholeness of the human race will have been recognized and its unity established. A twofold process, however, can be distinguished, each tending, in its own way and with an accelerated momentum, to bring to a climax the forces that are transforming the face of our planet. The first is essentially an integrating process, while the second is fundamentally disruptive. The former, as it steadily evolves, unfolds a System which may well serve as a pattern for that world polity towards which a strangely-disordered world is continually advancing; while the latter, as its disintegrating influence deepens, tends to tear down, with increasing violence, the antiquated barriers that seek to block humanity's progress towards its destined goal. The constructive process stands associated with the nascent Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, and is the harbinger of the New World Order that Faith must ere long establish. The destructive forces that characterize the other should be identified with a civilization that has refused to answer to the expectation of a new age, and is consequently falling into chaos and decline.

A titanic, a spiritual struggle, unparalleled in its magnitude yet unspeakably glorious in its ultimate consequences, is being waged as a result of these opposing tendencies, in this age of transition through which the organized community of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh and mankind as a whole are passing....

To the catastrophic fall of mighty kingdoms and empires, on the eve of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's departure, Whose passing may be said to have ushered in the opening phase of the Age of Transition in which we now live, I have, in a previous communication, briefly alluded. The dissolution of the German Empire,

180

the humiliating defeat inflicted upon its ruler, the successor and lineal

descendant of the Prussian King and Emperor to whom Bahá'u'lláh had addressed His solemn and historic warning, together with the extinction of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the remnant of the once-great Holy Roman Empire, were both precipitated by a war whose outbreak signaled the opening of the Age of Frustration destined to precede the establishment of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh. Both of these momentous events may be viewed as the earliest occurrences of that turbulent Age, into the outer fringes of whose darkest phase we are now beginning to enter....

The downfall of the Qajar Dynasty, the avowed defender and the willing instrument of a decaying clergy, almost synchronized with the humiliation which the Shi'ih ecclesiastical leaders had suffered. From Muhammad Shah down to the last and feeble monarch of that dynasty, the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh was denied the impartial consideration, the disinterested and fair treatment which its cause had rightly demanded. It had, on the contrary, been atrociously harassed, consistently betrayed and prosecuted. The martyrdom of the Bab; the banishment of Bahá'u'lláh; the confiscation of His earthly possessions; His incarceration in Mazindaran; the reign of terror that confined Him in the most pestilential of dungeons; the intrigues, the protests, and calumnies which thrice renewed His exile and led to His ultimate imprisonment in the most desolate of cities; the shameful sentences passed, with the connivance of the judicial and ecclesiastical authorities, against the person, the property, and the honor of His innocent followers -- these stand out as among the blackest acts for which posterity will hold this blood-stained dynasty responsible....

Under the jurisdiction of the Sultan of Turkey, the arch-enemy of His Cause, a new chapter in the history of His ever-recurring trials had opened. The overthrow of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, the twin pillars of Sunni Islam, can be regarded in no other light except as the inevitable consequence of the fierce, the sustained and deliberate persecution which the monarchs of the tottering House of Uthman, the recognized successors of the Prophet Muhammad, had launched against it. From the city of Constantinople, the traditional seat of both the Sultanate and the Caliphate, the rulers of Turkey had, for a period covering almost three quarters of a century, striven, with unabated zeal, to stem the tide of a Faith they feared and abhorred. From the time Bahá'u'lláh set foot on Turkish soil and was made a virtual prisoner of the most powerful potentate of Islam to the year of the Holy Land's liberation from Turkish yoke, successive Caliphs, and in par-

181

ticular the Sultans Abdu'l-'Aziz and Abdu'l-Hamid, had, in the full exercise of the spiritual and temporal authority which their exalted office had conferred upon them, afflicted both the Founder of our Faith and the Center of His Covenant with such pain and tribulation as no mind can fathom nor pen or tongue describe. They alone could have measured or borne them....To these afflictive trials Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly testified....

"Every morning I arose from my bed, I discovered the hosts of countless

afflictions massed behind My door; and every night when I lay down, lo, My heart was torn with agony at what it had suffered from the fiendish cruelty of its foes...."

The murder of that arrogant despot in the year 1876; the Russo-Turkish conflict that soon followed in its wake; the wars of liberation which succeeded it; the rise of the Young Turk movement; the Turkish Revolution of 1909 that precipitated the downfall of Abdu'l-Hamid; the Balkan wars with their calamitous consequences; the liberation of Palestine enshrining within its bosom the cities of 'Akká and Haifa, the world center of an emancipated Faith; the further dismemberment decreed by the Treaty of Versailles; the abolition of the Sultanate and the downfall of the House of Uthman; the extinction of the Caliphate; the disestablishment of the State Religion; the annulment of the Shari'ah Law and the promulgation of a universal Civil Code; the suppression of various orders, beliefs, traditions and ceremonials believed to be inextricably interwoven with the fabric of the Muslim Faith -- these followed with an ease and swiftness that no man had dared envisage. In these devastating blows, administered by friend and foe alike, by Christian nations and professing Muslims, every follower of the persecuted Faith of Bahá'u'lláh recognized evidences of the directing Hand of the departed Founder of his religion, Who, from the invisible Realm, was unloosing a flood of well-deserved calamities upon a rebellious religion and nation....

Might not this disintegrating tendency, from which Sunni and Shi'ih Islam have so conspicuously suffered, unloose, as it reaches its climax, still further calamities upon the various denominations of the Christian Church?....

"The vitality of men's belief in God," Bahá'u'lláh has testified, "is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it?" "The world is in travail," He has further written, "and its agi-

182

tation waxeth day by day. Its face is turned towards waywardness and unbelief. Such shall be its plight that to disclose it now would not be meet and seemly...."

An angry Providence, the cynic might well observe, has abandoned a hapless planet to its fate, and fixed irrevocably its doom. Sore-tried and disillusioned, humanity has no doubt lost its orientation, and would seem to have lost as well its faith and hope. It is hovering, unshepherded and visionless, on the brink of disaster. A sense of fatality seems to pervade it. An ever-deepening gloom is settling on its fortunes as she recedes further and further from the outer fringes of the darkest zone of its agitated life and penetrates its very heart....

The process of disintegration must inexorably continue, and its corrosive influence must penetrate deeper and deeper into the very core of a crumbling

age. Much suffering will still be required ere the contending nations, creeds, classes and races of mankind are fused in the crucible of universal affliction, and are forged by the fires of a fierce ordeal into one organic commonwealth, one vast, unified, and harmoniously functioning system. Adversities unimaginably appalling, undreamed of crises and upheavals, war, famine, and pestilence, might well combine to engrave in the soul of an unheeding generation those truths and principles which it has disdained to recognize and follow. A paralysis more painful than any it has yet experienced must creep over and further afflict the fabric of a broken society ere it can be rebuilt and regenerated....

The whole of mankind is groaning, is dying to be led to unity, and to terminate its age-long martyrdom. And yet it stubbornly refuses to embrace the light and acknowledge the sovereign authority of the one Power that can extricate it from its entanglements, and avert the woeful calamity that threatens to engulf it.

Ominous indeed is the voice of Bahá'u'lláh that rings through these prophetic words: "O ye peoples of the world! Know, verily, that an unforeseen calamity followeth you, and grievous retribution awaiteth you. Think not that which ye have committed hath been effaced in My sight." And again: "We have a fixed time for you, O peoples. If ye fail, at the appointed hour, to turn towards God, He, verily, will lay violent hold on you, and will cause grievous afflictions to assail you from every direction. How severe, indeed, is the chastisement with which your Lord will then chastise you!"

Must humanity, tormented as she now is, be afflicted with still severer tribulations ere their purifying influence can prepare her to enter the heavenly Kingdom destined to be estab-

183

lished upon earth? Must the inauguration of so vast, so unique, so illumined an era in human history be ushered in by so great a catastrophe in human affairs as to recall, nay surpass, the appalling collapse of Roman civilization in the first centuries of the Christian Era? Must a series of profound convulsions stir and rock the human race ere Bahá'u'lláh can be enthroned in the hearts and consciences of the masses, ere His undisputed ascendancy is universally recognized, and the noble edifice of His World Order is reared and established? (World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 161-202)

184

PART III

THE MANIFESTATION

(PROPHET)

47. (a) What is the degree of power of the Manifestation of God?
- (b) Who assigns the Title, Name and Station of the Manifestation?
- (a) Verily He Who is the Day-star of Truth and Revealer of the Supreme Being

holdeth, for all time, undisputed sovereignty over all that is in heaven and on earth, though no man be found on earth to obey Him. He verily is independent of all earthly dominion, though He be utterly destitute....They Who are the Luminaries of truth and the Mirrors reflecting the light of divine Unity, in whatever age and cycle they are sent down from their invisible habitations of ancient glory unto this world, to educate the souls of men and endue with grace all created things, are invariably endowed with an all-compelling power, and invested with invincible sovereignty....To every discerning and illumined heart it is evident that God, the unknowable Essence, the divine Being, is immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress....The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace...hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence. These sanctified Mirrors, these Day-springs of ancient glory are one and all the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom....Even as He hath said: "There is no distinction whatsoever between Thee and them; except that they are Thy servants, and are created of Thee." This is the significance of the tradition: "I am He, Himself, and He is I, myself.".... From that which hath been said it becometh evident that all things, in their inmost reality, testify to the revelation of the names and at-

185

tributes of God within them....These Tabernacles of holiness, these primal Mirrors which reflect the light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles. By the revelation of these gems of divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty and grace, are made manifest. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 97-103)

What has an atom of dust to do with the pure world, and what relation is there between the limited mind and the infinite world? Minds are powerless to comprehend God, and the souls become bewildered in explaining Him....But for this Essence of the essences, this Truth of truths, this Mystery of mysteries, there are reflections, auroras, appearances and resplendencies in the world of existence. The dawning-places of these splendors....are the Holy Dawning-places, the Universal Realities and the Divine Beings, Who are the true mirrors of the sanctified Essence of God....If it be said that the mirrors are the manifestations of the sun and the dawning-places of the rising star, this does not mean that the sun has descended from the height of its sanctity and become

incorporated in the mirror, nor that the Unlimited Reality is limited to this place of appearance....No; all the praises, the descriptions and exaltations refer to the Holy Manifestations....Therefore, all that the human reality knows, discovers and understands of the names, the attributes and the perfections of God refer to these Holy Manifestations. (Some Answered Questions, p. 168-9)

"All that you have distinguished through the illusion of your imagination in your subtle mental images is but a creation like unto yourself, and returns to you." [1] It is clear that if we wish to imagine the Reality of Divinity, this imagination is the surrounded, and we are the surrounding one; and it is sure that the one who surrounds is greater than the surrounded. From this it is certain and evident that if we imagine a Divine Reality outside of the Holy Manifestations, it is pure imagination (Some Answered Questions, p. 170-1)

This divine intellectual power is the especial attribute of the Holy Manifestations and the Dawning-places of prophethood; a ray of this light falls upon the mirrors of the hearts of the righteous, and a portion and a share of this power comes to them through the Holy Manifestations. The Holy Manifestations have three conditions: one, the physical condition; one, that of the rational soul; and one, that of the manifestation of

186

perfection and of the lordly splendor. (Some Answered Questions, p. 253-4)

Know that there are two kinds of knowledge: the knowledge of the essence of a thing and the knowledge of its qualities. The essence of a thing is known through its qualities; otherwise, it is unknown and hidden....Knowing God, therefore, means the comprehension and the knowledge of His attributes, and not of His Reality....The splendors of the perfections, bounties and attributes of God shine forth and radiate from the reality of the Perfect Man -- that is to say, the Unique One, the supreme Manifestation of God. Other beings receive only one ray, but the supreme Manifestation is the mirror for this Sun, which appears and becomes manifest in it, with all its perfections, attributes, signs and wonders. (Some Answered Questions, p. 255-7)

Briefly, the supreme Manifestations of God are aware of the reality of the mysteries of beings. Therefore, They establish laws which are suitable and adapted to the state of the world of man, for religion is the essential connection which proceeds from the realities of things. The Manifestation -- that is, the Holy Lawgiver -- unless He is aware of the realities of beings, will not comprehend the essential connection which proceeds from the realities of things....The Prophets of God, the supreme Manifestations, are like skilled

physicians, and the contingent world is like the body of man: the divine laws are the remedy and treatment. (Some Answered Questions, p. 181-2)

Know that the Holy Manifestations, though They have the degrees of endless perfections, yet, speaking generally, have only three stations. The first station is the physical; the second station is the human, which is that of the rational soul; the third is that of the divine appearance and the heavenly splendor....it is the Word of God, the Eternal Bounty, the Holy Spirit. It has neither beginning nor end, for these things are related to the world of contingencies and not to the divine world....Therefore, the reality of prophethood, which is the Word of God and the perfect state of manifestation, did not have any beginning and will not have any end. (Some Answered Questions, p. 173-4)

"Such are the verses of God: with truth do We recite them

187

to Thee. But in what revelation will they believe, if they reject God and His verses?"[Qur'án 45:5] If thou wilt grasp the implication of this verse, thou wilt recognize the truth that no manifestation greater than the Prophets of God hath ever been revealed, and no testimony mightier than the testimony of their revealed verses hath ever appeared upon the earth. Nay, this testimony no other testimony can ever excel, except that which the Lord thy God willeth. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 206)

Behold, how lofty is the station, and how consummate the virtue, of these verses which He hath declared to be His surest testimony, His infallible proof, the evidence of His all-subduing power, and a revelation of the potency of His will. He, the divine King, hath proclaimed the undisputed supremacy of the verses of His Book over all things that testify to His truth. For compared with all other proofs and tokens, the divinely-revealed verses shine as the sun, whilst all others are as stars. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 205)

The Prophets "endowed with constancy," whose loftiness and glory shine as the sun, were each honoured with a Book which all have seen, and the verses of which have been duly ascertained. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 216)

These attributes of God are not, and have never been, vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favored, His holy and chosen Messengers are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light. Even as He hath revealed: "Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel

the others."

It hath, therefore, become manifest and evident that within the tabernacles of these Prophets and chosen Ones of God the light of His infinite names and exalted attributes hath been reflected, even though the light of some of these attributes may or may not be outwardly revealed from these luminous Temples to the eyes of men. That a certain attribute of God hath not been outwardly manifested by these Essences of

188

Detachment doth in no wise imply that they who are the Day Springs of God's attributes and the Treasuries of His holy names did not actually possess it. Therefore, these illuminated Souls, these beauteous Countenances have, each and every one of them, been endowed with all the attributes of God, such as sovereignty, dominion, and the like, even though to outward seeming they be shorn of all earthly majesty.... (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 48-9)

Influence.

What then is the mission of the divine prophets? Their mission is the education and advancement of the world of humanity. They are the real teachers and educators, the universal instructors of mankind. If we wish to discover whether any one of these great souls or messengers was in reality a prophet of God we must investigate the facts surrounding His life and history; and the first point of our investigation will be the education He bestowed upon mankind. If He has been an educator, if He has really trained a nation or people....then we are sure that He was a Prophet....We do not need to mention miracles, saying that out of rock water gushed forth, for such miracles and statements may be denied and refused by those who hear them. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 358)

The world of humanity may be likened to the individual man himself; it has its illness and ailments. A patient must be diagnosed by a skillful physician. The Prophets of God are the real Physicians. In whatever age or time They appear They prescribe for human conditions. They know the sicknesses; They discover the hidden sources of disease and indicate the necessary remedy. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 199)

All-praise to the unity of God, and all-honor to Him, the sovereign Lord, the incomparable and all-glorious Ruler of the universe, Who, out of utter nothingness, hath created the reality of all things, Who, from naught, hath brought into being the most refined and subtle elements of His creation, and Who, rescuing His creatures from the abasement of remoteness and the perils of ultimate extinction, hath received them into His kingdom of incorruptible glory.

Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him -- a

capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating im-

189

pulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation.... Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty.

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

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

190

spiration of Their words, the effusions of Their infallible grace and the sanctifying breeze of Their Revelation for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitations. Then, and only then, will the Trust of God, latent in the reality of man, emerge, as resplendent as the rising Orb of Divine Revelation, from behind the

veil of concealment, and implant the ensign of its revealed glory upon the summits of men's hearts. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 64-7)

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. Divine education is that of the Kingdom of God: it consists in acquiring divine perfections, and this is true education.... This is the supreme goal of the world of humanity.

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.... It is clear that human power is not able to fill such a great office, and that reason alone could not undertake the responsibility of so great a mission. How can one solitary person without help and without support lay the foundations of such a noble construction? He must depend on the help of the spiritual and divine power to be able to undertake this mission. One Holy Soul gives life to the world of humanity, changes the aspect of the terrestrial globe, causes intelligence to progress, vivifies souls, lays the basis of a new life, establishes new foundations, organizes the world, brings nations and religions under the shadow of one standard, delivers man from the world of imperfections and vices, and inspires him with the desire and need of natural and acquired perfections....

Therefore the perfect educator must be at the same time not only a material, but also a human and spiritual educator; and he must possess a supernatural power, so that he may hold the position of a divine teacher. If he does not show forth such a holy power, he will not be able to educate, for if he be imperfect, how can he give a perfect education? If

191

he be ignorant how can he make others wise? If he be unjust, how can he make others just? If he be earthly, how can he make others heavenly?... There is no doubt that this divine power is due to inspiration, and that the world must be educated through this power which is above human power. (Some Answered Questions, p. 9-13)

We are commanded to quicken the souls, to train the characters, to illumine the realm of man, to guide all the inhabitants of the earth, to create concord and unity among all men and to lead the world of humanity to the Fountain of the Everlasting Glory. The reformation of one empire is not our aim; nay, rather we

invoke from God that all the regions of the world be reformed and cultivated; the republic of men become the manifestors of the bounty of the most glorious Lord; the East and the West be brought nearer together; and that the Turk and Tajik, Iran and America, India and Arabia, Japan and Persia, China and Germany; in brief, all the nations and peoples of the world become as one soul and one spirit, in order that strife and warfare be entirely removed and the rancor and hostility disappear so that all become as the waves of one ocean, the drops of one sea, the flowers of one rose-garden, the trees of one orchard, the grains of one harvest and the plants of one meadow. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 490)

(b) Who assigns the Title, Name and Station of the Manifestation?

Let the future disclose the hour when the Brides of inner meaning will, as decreed by the Will of God, hasten forth, unveiled, out of their mystic mansions, and manifest themselves in the ancient realm of being. Nothing whatsoever is possible without His permission; no power can endure save through His power, and there is none other God but He. His is the world of creation, and His the Cause of God. All proclaim His Revelation, and all unfold the mysteries of His Spirit.

We have already in the foregoing pages assigned two stations unto each of the Luminaries arising from the Daysprings of eternal holiness. One of these stations, the station of essential unity, We have already explained. "No distinction do We make between any of them." [Qur'án 2:136.] The other is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation and to the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a

192

definitely prescribed mission, a predestined Revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfills a definite Mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 175-6)

48. How shall we comprehend the difference in the sayings of the Manifestations?

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

Viewed in the light of their second station -- the station of distinction, differentiation, temporal limitations, characteristics and standards, -- they

manifest absolute servitude, utter destitution and complete self-effacement. Even as He saith: "I am the servant of God. I am but a man like you."...For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 177-9)

49. Is Man's judgment sufficient to interpret the Holy Words?

Those words uttered by the Luminaries of Truth must needs be pondered, and should their significance be not grasped, enlightenment should be sought from the Trustees of the depositories of Knowledge, that these may expound their meaning, and unravel their mystery. For it behooveth no man to interpret the holy words according to his own imperfect understanding, nor, having found them to be contrary to his inclination and desires, to reject and repudiate their truth. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 181-2)

50. What signs attend the appearance of a Manifestation?

.... when the hour draweth nigh on which the Day-star of the heaven of justice shall be made manifest, and the Ark of divine guidance shall sail upon the sea of glory, a star will appear in the heaven, heralding unto its people the advent of that most great light. In like manner, in the in-

193

visible heaven a star shall be made manifest who, unto the peoples of the earth, shall act as a harbinger of the break of that true and exalted Morn. These twofold signs, in the visible and the invisible heaven, have announced the Revelation of each of the Prophets of God, as is commonly believed.

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

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

In like manner, when the hour of the Revelation of Jesus drew nigh, a few of the Magi, aware that the star of Jesus had appeared in heaven, sought and followed it, till they came unto the city which was the seat of the Kingdom of Herod....As to the sign of the invisible heaven-it was Yahyá, son of Zachariah....Moreover, in the heavenly Scriptures it is written: "John the Baptist was preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying Repent ye; for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 3-1-2)

Likewise, ere the beauty of Muhammad was unveiled, the signs of the visible heaven were made manifest. As to the signs of the invisible heaven, there appeared four men who successively announced unto the people the joyful tidings of the rise of that divine Luminary. Ruz-bih, later named Salman, was honoured by being in their service. As the end of one of these approached, he would send Ruz-bih unto the other, until the fourth who, feeling his death to be nigh, addressed Ruz-bih saying: "O Ruz-bih! when thou hast taken up my body and buried it, go to Hijaz for there the Day-star of Muhammad will arise. Happy art thou, for thou shalt behold His face!"

And now concerning this wondrous and most exalted Cause. Know thou verily that many an astronomer hath announced the appearance of its star in the visible heaven. Likewise, there appeared on earth Ahmad and Kázim

194

(Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i and Siyyid Kázim-i-Rashti), those twin resplendent lights -- may God sanctify their resting-place! (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 62-5)

And yet, is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall...affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 240-41)

And now, ponder upon these things. What could have caused such contention and conflict? Why is it that the advent of every true Manifestation of God hath been accompanied by such strife and tumult, by such tyranny and upheaval? This notwithstanding the fact that all the Prophets of God, whenever made manifest unto the peoples of the world, have invariably foretold the coming of yet another Prophet after them, and have established such signs as would herald the advent of the future Dispensation. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 12-13)

This station is also one of the signs of the Day of Revelation; even as it is said: "The abased amongst you, He shall exalt; and they that are exalted, He shall abase." (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 146)

51. What proofs attest the validity of a Manifestation?

The first and foremost testimony establishing His Truth is His own Self. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 105)

Next to this testimony is His Revelation (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 105)

The penetration and potency of His Word, the cultivation of heavenly attributes in the hearts and lives of His followers and the bestowal of divine education upon the world of humanity. This is absolute proof. The world is a school in which there must be Teachers of the Word of God. The evidence of the ability of

these Teachers is efficient education of the graduating classes.(Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 335)

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

195

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 Bahá'u'lláh, p. 57-8)

Do not wish to mention the miracles of Bahá'u'lláh....we do not recount them, as they do not constitute proofs and evidences for all the peoples....Most of the miracles of the Prophets which are mentioned have an inner significance....Until now, all that we have spoken of are rational proofs. (Some Answered Questions, p. 43-5)

Fulfillment of Prophecies (Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, p. 8-10) (Also see Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 12-13)

52. In what Worlds does the Power of God become manifest through the Manifestation?

....By virtue of this station, they have claimed for themselves the Voice of Divinity and the like, whilst by virtue of their station of Messengership, they have declared themselves the Messengers of God. In every instance they have voiced an utterance that would conform to the requirements of the occasion, and have ascribed all these declarations to Themselves, declarations ranging from the realm of divine Revelation to the realm of creation, and from the domain of Divinity even unto the domain of earthly existence. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 181)

53. Why the necessity of following the teachings of the Divine Manifestations?

.... All that the sages and mystics have said or written have never exceeded, nor can they ever hope to exceed, the limitations to which man's finite mind hath been strictly subjected. To whatever heights the mind of the most exalted of men may soar, however great the depths which the detached and understanding heart can penetrate, such mind and heart can never transcend that which is the creature of their own conceptions and the product of their own thoughts. The meditations of the profoundest thinker, the devotions of the holiest of saints, the highest expressions of praise from either human pen or tongue, are but a reflection of that which hath been created within themselves, through the revelation of the Lord, their God. Whoever pondereth this truth in his heart will readily admit that there are certain limits which no human being can possibly transgress. Every attempt which, from the beginning that hath no beginning, hath been made to visualize and know God is limited by the exigencies of His

196

own creation -- a creation which He, through the operation of His own Will and for the purposes of none other but His own Self, hath called into being. Immeasurably exalted is He above the strivings of human mind to grasp His Essence, or of human tongue to describe His mystery. No tie of direct intercourse can ever bind Him to the things He hath created, nor can the most abstruse and most remote allusions of His creatures do justice to His being. Through His world-pervading Will He hath brought into being all created things. He is and hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His own exalted and indivisible Essence, and will everlastingly continue to remain concealed in His inaccessible majesty and glory. All that is in heaven and all that is in the earth have come to exist at His bidding, and by His Will all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being. How can, therefore, the creature which the Word of God hath fashioned comprehend the nature of Him Who is the Ancient of Days? (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 317-18)

Know thou of a certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His Essence and reveal it unto men. He is, and hath ever been, immensely exalted beyond all that can either be recounted or perceived. From His retreat of glory His voice is ever proclaiming: "Verily, I am God; there is none other God besides Me, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. I have manifested Myself unto men, and have sent down Him Who is the Day Spring of the signs of My Revelation. Through Him I have caused all creation to testify that there is none other God except Him, the Incomparable, the All-Informed, the All-Wise." He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation, and His Manifestation can adduce no greater proof of the truth of His Mission than the proof of His own Person. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 49)

O Salman! The door of the knowledge of the Ancient Being hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, closed in the face of men. No man's understanding shall ever gain access unto His holy court. As a token of His mercy, however, and as a proof of His loving-kindness, He hath manifested unto men the Day Stars of His divine guidance, the Symbols of His divine unity, and hath ordained the knowledge of these sanctified Beings to be identical with the knowledge of His own Self. Whoso recognizeth them hath recognized God. Whoso hearkeneth to their call, hath hearkened to the Voice

197

of God, and whoso testifieth to the truth of their Revelation, hath testified to the truth of God Himself. Whoso turneth away from them, hath turned away from God, and whoso disbelieveth in them, hath disbelieved in God. Every one of them is the Way of God that connecteth this world with the realms above, and the Standard of His Truth unto every one in the kingdoms of earth and heaven. They are the Manifestations of God amidst men, the evidences of His Truth, and the signs of His glory. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p.

From the foregoing passages and allusions it hath been made indubitably clear that in the kingdoms of earth and heaven there must needs be manifested a Being, an Essence Who shall act as a Manifestation and Vehicle for the transmission of the grace of the Divinity Itself, the Sovereign Lord of all...It is for this very purpose that in every age and dispensation the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones have appeared amongst men, and have evinced such power as is born of God and such might as only the Eternal can reveal. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 66-8)

54. What is the Word?

...The Apostles were the Letters and His Highness Christ the Essence of the Word and the significance of the Word; which is the everlasting outpouring, casts a splendor upon those Letters. Since a letter is a part of the word itself, it is intrinsically identical with the word. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 539)

...The Holy Spirit and the Word are the appearance of God. The Spirit and the Word mean the divine perfections that appear in the reality of Christ...The Word does not signify the body of Christ; no, but the divine perfections manifested in Him...The divine perfections are not different from the Essence of Oneness. The perfections of Christ are called the Word, because all the beings are in the conditions of letters, and one letter has not a complete meaning; whilst the perfections of Christ have the power of the word, because a complete meaning can be inferred from a Word...The Sun of Reality...has always been in one condition (the One Sun even if it appears in numerous mirrors)...The Holy Reality of the Word of God is in the condition of the pure, fine and shining mirror...the perfections of the Sun of reality appear in it. (Some Answered Questions, p. 240-2)

198

55. What is the Holy Spirit?

Just as the human spirit of life is the cause of coordination among the various parts of the human organism, the Holy Spirit is the controlling cause of the unity and coordination of mankind. That is to say, the bond or oneness of humanity cannot be effectively established save through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the world of humanity is a composite body, and the Holy Spirit is the animating principle of its life...Today the greatest need of the world is the animating, unifying presence of the Holy Spirit. Until it becomes effective, penetrating and interpenetrating hearts and spirits, and until perfect, reasoning faith shall be implanted in the minds of men, it will be impossible for the social body to be inspired with security and confidence. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 315)

...And know that the proceeding of the Word and the Holy Spirit from God,

which is the proceeding and appearance of manifestation, must not be understood to mean that the Reality of Divinity had been divided into parts, or multiplied, or that it had descended from the exaltation of holiness and purity. God forbid! If a pure, fine mirror faces the sun, the light and heat, the form and the image of the sun will be resplendent in it with such manifestation that if a beholder says of the sun, which is brilliant and visible in the mirror, "This is the sun," it is true. Nevertheless, the mirror is the mirror, and the sun is the sun. (Some Answered Questions, p. 241)

Unless the Holy Spirit become intermediary, one cannot attain directly to the bounties of God.... (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 591)

56. How may the Christ be defined?

The Holy Spirit is the Bounty of God which becomes visible and evident in the Reality of Christ. The Sonship station is the heart of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the station of the spirit of Christ. (Some Answered Questions, p. 131)

...Christ came with His Kingdom from the beginning which hath no beginning and will come with His Kingdom to the eternity of eternities, inasmuch as in this sense Christ is an expression of the divine reality, the simple essence and heavenly entity which hath no beginning or ending. It hath

199

appearance, arising and manifestation and setting in each of the cycles. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. I, p. 138)

The Christ is the central point of the Holy Spirit: He is born of the Holy Spirit; He is raised up by the Holy Spirit; He is the descendant of the Holy Spirit -- that is to say, that the Reality of Christ does not descend from Adam; no, it is born of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, this verse in Corinthians, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," means, according to this terminology, that Adam [1] is the father of man -- that is to say, He is the cause of the physical life of mankind; His was the physical fatherhood. He is a living soul, but He is not the giver of spiritual life, whereas Christ is the cause of the spiritual life of man, and with regard to the spirit, His was the spiritual fatherhood. Adam is a living soul; Christ is a quickening spirit. (Some Answered Questions, p. 135)

The reality of Christ was the embodiment of divine virtues and attributes of God.... (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 149)

57. What is the true meaning of the Trinity?

Know, O advancer unto God, that in each one of the cycles wherein the Lights have shone forth upon the horizons (i. e., in each prophetic dispensation) and the Forgiving Lord hath revealed Himself on Mount Paran or Mount Sinai, or Mount Seir, there are necessarily three things: The Giver of Grace, and the Grace, and the Recipient of the Grace; the Source of the Effulgence, and the Effulgence, and the Recipient of the Effulgence; the Illuminator, and the Illumination, and Illuminated. Look at the Mosaic cycle: The Lord, and Moses, and the Fire, the Intermediary; and [at] the Messianic cycle: The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost the Intermediary; and in the Mohammedan cycle: The Lord, the Apostle, and Gabriel, the intermediary. Look at the sun and its rays and the heat which results from its rays; the rays and the heat are but two effects of the sun, but inseparable from it; yet the sun is one in its essence, unique in its real identity, single in its attributes, neither is it possible that anything should resemble it. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol I, p. 117)

The Divine Reality, which is purified and sanctified from the understanding of human beings and which can never be imagined by the people of wisdom and of intelligence, is exempt from all conception. That Lordly Reality admits of

200

no division; for division and multiplicity are properties of creatures....All that is measured of the Manifestations and Dawning-places of God signifies the divine reflection and not a descent into the conditions of existence....So the Reality of Christ was a clear and polished mirror of the greatest purity and fineness. The Sun of Reality, the Essence of Divinity, reflected itself in this mirror and manifested its light and heat in it; but from the exaltation of its holiness, and the heaven of its sanctity, the Sun did not descend to dwell and abide in the mirror. (Some Answered Questions, p. 129-30)

58. What is meant by "He doeth whatsoever He Willeth?" (He is God)

By this word it is intended that no one hath any access to the Invisible Essence. The way is barred and the road is impassable. In this world all men must turn their faces toward "Him-whom God-shall-Manifest." He is the "Dawning-place of Divinity" and the "Manifestation of Deity." He is the "Ultimate Goal," the "Adored One" of all and the "Worshipped One" of all. Otherwise, whatever flashes through the mind is not that Essence of essences and the Reality of realities; nay, rather it is pure imagination woven by man and is surrounded, not the surrounding. Consequently, it returns finally to the realm and conjectures. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 485)

And if the knowers are those who have attained unto the beauty of Mahbub (i.e. "the Beloved One") this state is the throne of the conscience and the mystery of true guidance. This is the seat of the secret "He Doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordereth Whatsoever He Desireth (Qur'an). "Were all in the heavens and the earth to describe this glorious allegory and subtle mystery until the

Day when the Trumpet soundeth, they will never be able to set forth or fathom a single letter thereof. For, this is the state of the divine decree and the preordained mystery...." It is a fathomless sea which none shall ever sound."...."It is the gloomiest night, through which none can find his way."...This plane is the plane of absolute awareness and pure self-effacement. Love has no road to this state, and affection occupies no seat therein; as it is said: "Love is a veil betwixt the lover and the Beloved." (Holy utterance of Islam)....This is the world of Command and is purified from all worldly allusions....This is the state of favors, not an exposition of differences....In this state wonderment is highly prized, and absolute poverty is greatly needed. Wherefore, it is said "Poverty is my glory."

201

Likewise it is said: "God has a people under the Dome of Glory, whom he conceals in the garb of glorious poverty. (Arabian poem)." Those are they who see with His eyes, and hear with His ears...."Oh, My Servant! Obey Me and I shall make thee like unto Myself. I say 'Be' and 'It is' and thou shalt say 'Be' and it 'shall be....' (Seven Valleys and Four Valleys, p. 53-58)

59. Are there any proofs of the existence of God?

How, then, can the reality of man, which is accidental, ever comprehend the Reality of God, which is eternal? It is self-evidently an impossibility. Hence we can observe the traces and attributes of God, which are resplendent in all phenomena and shining as the sun at midday, and know surely that these emanate from an infinite source.... (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 418)

When we consider the world of existence, we find that the essential reality underlying any given phenomenon is unknown. Phenomenal, or created, things are known to us only by their attributes....how much more this is true concerning the reality of Divinity....The unlimited always comprehends the limited. The limited can never comprehend, surround nor take in the unlimited. Therefore, every concept of Divinity which has come within the intellection of a human being is finite, or limited, and is a pure product of imagination, whereas the reality of Divinity is holy and sacred above and beyond all such concepts. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 416-17)

It is a philosophical principle that the existence of phenomena implies composition and that mortality, or nonexistence, is equivalent to decomposition....Now if life means composition of elements, then the materialist may come to the conclusion of the nonnecessity of a composer....a creator; for composition is all there is to it, and that is accomplished by adhesion or cohesion. In response to this we say that composition must needs be of three kinds: One form of composition is termed philosophically the accidental, another the involuntary, and a third the voluntary. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 416-17)

Accidental composition, this would signify that certain elements, through inherent qualities and powers of attraction or affinity have been gathered together....and so composed a certain form, being or organism. This can be proven to be false; for composition is an effect, and philosophically no effect is conceivable without causation....For

202

example, this heat is an effect; but that energy which gives forth this phenomenon of heat is the cause....Accidental composition is therefore a false theory and may be excluded.

Involuntary composition, this means that each element has within itself as an inherent property the power of composition....For example....heat is a property of fire. Humidity is the inherent nature....of water. The power of repulsion has its function-repelling, sending off. You cannot separate the effect from the cause. If these premises be true....then it would be impossible for a composite being....to ever be decomposed because the inherent nature of each element would be to hold fast together. As fire cannot be separated from heat, likewise the elemental being could not be subjected to decomposition....Hence this theory is untrue, inasmuch as we observe that after each composition there is a process of decomposition....

Voluntary,....which means that composition is effected through a superior will, that there is will expressed in this motive or action. It is thus proved that the existence of phenomena is effected through the eternal Will....Furthermore, it is quite evident that our kind of life, our form of existence is limited and that the reality of all accidental phenomenon is likewise limited....Therefore our limited existence is a proof conclusive that there is a reality unlimited....(Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 418-20)

O affectionate seeker! Shouldst thou soar in the holy realm of the spirit, thou wouldst recognize God manifest and exalted above all things, in such wise that thine eyes would behold none else but Him. "God was alone; there was none else besides Him." So lofty is this station that no testimony can bear it witness, neither evidence do justice to its truth. Wert thou to explore the sacred domain of truth, thou wilt find that all things are known only by the light of His recognition, that He hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, known through Himself. And if thou dwellest in the land of testimony, content thyself with that which He, Himself, hath revealed: "Is it not enough for them that We have sent down unto Thee the Book?"[Qur'án 29:51] This is the testimony which He, Himself, hath ordained; greater proof than this there is none, nor ever will be: "This proof is His Word; His own Self, the testimony of His truth." (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 91-2)

One of the proofs and demonstrations of the existence of

God is the fact that man did not create himself: nay, his creator and designer is another than himself....It is certain that the whole contingent world is subjected to a law and rule which it can never disobey; even man is forced to submit to death, to sleep and to other conditions -- that is to say, man in certain particulars is governed, and necessarily this state of being governed implies the existence of a governor. Because a characteristic of contingent beings is dependency, and this dependency is an essential necessity, therefore, there must be an independent being whose independence is essential....Thus, when man feels the indwelling spirit, he is in no need of arguments for its existence; but for those who are deprived of the bounty of the spirit, it is necessary to establish external arguments. (Some Answered Questions, p. 5-7)

God is the Creator. The word creator presupposes or connotes creation. God is the Provider. The word provider implies recipients of provision. Another name for the Creator is the Resuscitator, which demands the existence of creatures to be resuscitated. If He be not the Provider, how could we conceive of creatures to receive His bounty? If He be not the Lord, how could we conceive of subjects? If He be not the Knower, how could we conceive of those known? If we should say that there was a time in past ages when God was not possessed of His creation or that there was a beginning for the world, it would be a denial of creation and the Creator. Or if we should declare that a time may come when there will be a cessation of divine bounties, we should virtually deny the existence of Divinity. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 377)

Know thou for a certainty that whoso disbelieveth in God is neither trustworthy nor truthful. This, indeed, is the truth, the undoubted truth. He that acteth treacherously towards God will, also, act treacherously towards his king. Nothing whatever can deter such a man from evil, nothing can hinder him from betraying his neighbor, nothing can induce him to walk uprightly. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 232)

60. Is Divine Revelation progressive?

To believe that all revelation is ended, that the portals of Divine mercy are closed, that from the daysprings of eternal holiness no sun shall rise again, that the ocean of everlasting bounty is forever stilled, and that out of the tabernacle of ancient glory the Messengers of God have ceased to be made manifest" must constitute in the eyes of every follower

of the Faith a grave, an inexcusable departure from one of its most cherished and fundamental principles.... (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 115-6)

Know verily that the veil hiding Our countenance hath not been completely lifted. We have revealed Our Self to a degree corresponding to the capacity of the people of Our age. Should the Ancient Beauty be unveiled in the fullness of

His glory mortal eyes would be blinded by the dazzling intensity of His revelation. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 116)

God hath sent down His Messengers to succeed to Moses and Jesus, and He will continue to do so till 'the end that hath no end'; so that His grace may, from the heaven of Divine bounty, be continually vouchsafed to mankind. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 116)

In a more circumstantial passage the Báb upholds the same truth in His writings. "It is clear and evident," He writes in the Persian Bayan, "that the object of all preceding Dispensations hath been to pave the way for the advent of Muhammad, the Apostle of God. These, including the Muhammadan Dispensation, have had, in their turn, as their objective the Revelation proclaimed by the Qá'im. The purpose underlying this Revelation, as well as those that preceded it, has, in like manner, been to announce the advent of the Faith of Him Whom God will make manifest. And this Faith -- the Faith of Him Whom God will make manifest -- in its turn, together with all the Revelations gone before it, have as their object the Manifestation destined to succeed it. And the latter, no less than all the Revelations preceding it, prepare the way for the Revelation which is yet to follow. The process of the rise and setting of the Sun of Truth will thus indefinitely continue -- a process that hath had no beginning and will have no end." (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 117)

...Inasmuch as these Birds of the celestial Throne are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they, therefore, are regarded as one soul and the same person....They all abide in the same tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech, and proclaim the same Faith... They only differ in the intensity of their revelation and the comparative potency of their light... That a certain attribute of God hath not been outwardly

205

manifested by these Essences of Detachment doth in no wise imply that they Who are the Day-Springs of God's attributes and the Treasuries of His holy names did not actually possess it. (The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 115)

We, verily, believe in Him Who, in the person of the Báb, hath been sent down by the Will of the one true God, the King of Kings, the All-Praised. We, moreover, swear fealty to the One Who, in the time of Mustaghath, is destined to be made manifest, as well as to those Who shall come after Him till the end that hath no end. We recognize in the manifestation of each one of them, whether outwardly or inwardly, the manifestation of none but God Himself, if ye be of those that comprehend. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 73-4)

Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth. Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Whoso maketh the slightest possible difference between their persons, their words, their messages, their acts and manners, hath indeed disbelieved in God, hath repudiated His signs, and betrayed the Cause of His Messengers (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 59-60)

61. What is the significance of the Prophetic Cycles?

In this material world time has cycles; places change through alternating seasons, and for souls there are progress,

206

retrogression and education....Thus the spring is the cause of new life and infuses a new spirit. Afterwards comes summer....the fruit appears and the time of harvest ripens; a seed has become a sheaf and the food is stored for winter. Afterwards comes tumultuous autumn when unwholesome and sterile winds blow; it is the season of sickness, when all things are withered, and the balmy air is vitiated....Following this comes the season of winter....all plants die, and animals languish and are wretched. When this state is reached, again a new life-giving spring returns, and the cycle is renewed....It is the same with the spiritual cycle of the Prophets. (Some Answered Questions, p. 83-84)

Each one of the luminous bodies in this limitless firmament has a cycle of revolution which is of a different duration, and every one revolves in its own orbit, and again begins a new cycle....In the same way, for the whole universe, whether for the heavens or for men, there are cycles of great events, of important facts and occurrences....

Briefly, we say a universal cycle in the world of existence signifies a long duration of time, and innumerable and incalculable periods and epochs. In such a cycle the Manifestations appear with splendor in the realm of the visible, until a great and universal Manifestation makes the world the center of his radiance. His appearance causes the world to attain to maturity, and the extension of his cycle is very great. Afterwards other Manifestations will arise under his shadow, who according to the needs of the time will renew certain commandments relating to material questions and affairs, while remaining under his shadow. We are in the cycle which began with Adam, and its universal Manifestation is Bahá'u'lláh. (Some Answered Questions, p. 183-84)

The people of perception are the seekers of the truth, and not of the places of its appearance, nor of its dawning points; therefore, they will adore the Sun from whatever point in the zodiac it may appear, and they will seek the Reality in every Sanctified Soul Who manifests it....(Some Answered Questions, p. 87)

Briefly, there were many universal cycles preceding this one in which we are living. They were consummated, completed and their traces obliterated. The divine and creative purpose in them was the evolution of spiritual man, just as it is in this cycle. The circle of existence is the same circle;

207

it returns. The tree of life has ever borne the same heavenly fruit.
(Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 215)

62. Are the prophecies in the Book of Daniel fulfilled in the Christ, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh?

All the peoples of the world are awaiting two Manifestations, Who must be contemporaneous.... In the Bible the Jews have the promise of the Lord of Hosts and the Messiah; in the Gospel the return of Christ and Elijah is promised. In the religion of Muhammad there is the promise of the Mihdi and the Messiah, and it is the same with the Zoroastrian and the other religions.... The essential fact is that all are promised two Manifestations, Who will come, one following on the other.... All the regions of the earth will become one; the superstitions caused by races, countries, individuals, languages and politics will disappear; and all men will attain to life eternal, under the shadow of the Lord of Hosts....

In the Book of Daniel, (Ch. IX, 2) from the rebuilding of Jerusalem to the martyrdom of Christ, seventy weeks are appointed; for by the martyrdom of Christ the sacrifice is accomplished and the altar destroyed. This is a prophecy of the manifestation of Christ. These seventy weeks begin with the restoration and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, concerning which four edicts were issued by three kings.

The first was issued by Cyrus in the year 536 B.C.; this is recorded in the first chapter of the Book of Ezra. The second edict, with reference to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, is that of Darius of Persia in the year 519 B.C.; this is recorded in the sixth chapter of Ezra. The third is that of Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign -- that is, in 457 B.C.; this is recorded in the seventh chapter of Ezra. The fourth is that of Artaxerxes in the year 444 B.C.; this is recorded in the second chapter of Nehemiah.

But Daniel refers especially to the third edict which was issued in the year 457 B.C. Seventy weeks make four hundred and ninety days. Each day, according to the text of the Holy Book, is a year.... Therefore, four hundred and ninety days are four hundred and ninety years. The third edict of Artaxerxes was

issued four hundred and fifty-seven years before the birth of Christ, and Christ when He was martyred and ascended was thirty-three years of age. When you add thirty-three to four hundred and fifty-seven, the result is four hundred and ninety, which is the time announced by Daniel for the manifestation of Christ.

208

But in the twenty-fifth verse of the ninth chapter of the Book of Daniel this is expressed in another manner, as seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; and apparently this differs from the first saying.... But Daniel mentions two dates. One of these dates begins with the command of Artaxerxes to Ezra to rebuild Jerusalem: this is the seventy weeks which came to an end with the ascension of Christ, when by His martyrdom the sacrifice and oblation ceased.

The second period, which is found in the twenty-sixth verse, means that after the termination of the rebuilding of Jerusalem until the ascension of Christ, there will be sixty-two weeks: the seven weeks are the duration of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, which took forty-nine years. When you add these seven weeks to the sixty-two weeks, it makes sixty-nine weeks, and in the last week (69-70) the ascension of Christ took place. These seventy weeks are thus completed, and there is no contradiction.

Now that the manifestation of Christ has been proved by the prophecies of Daniel, let us prove the manifestations of Bahá'u'lláh and of the Báb.... In the eighth chapter of the Book of Daniel, verse thirteen, it is said: "Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?" Then he answered (v. 14): "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed"; (v. 17) "But he said unto me ... at the time of the end shall be the vision.,....

Briefly, the purport of this passage is that he appoints two thousand three hundred years, for in the text of the Bible each day is a year. Then from the date of the issuing of the edict of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem until the day of the birth of Christ there are 456 years, and from the birth of Christ until the day of the manifestation of the Báb there are 1844 years. When you add 456 years to this number it makes 2300 years. That is to say, the fulfillment of the vision of Daniel took place in the year A.D. 1844, and this is the year of the Báb's manifestation according to the actual text of the Book of Daniel. Consider how clearly he determines the year of manifestation; there could be no clearer prophecy for a manifestation than this.

In Matthew, chapter 24, verse 3, Christ clearly says that what Daniel meant by this prophecy was the date of the manifestation, and this is the verse: "As He sat upon the

209

mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when

shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" One of the explanations He gave them in reply was this (v. 15): "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)." In this answer He referred them to the eighth chapter of the Book of Daniel, saying that everyone who reads it will understand that it is this time that is spoken of. Consider how clearly the manifestation of the Báb is spoken of in the Old Testament and in the Gospel.

To conclude, let us now explain the date of the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh from the Bible. The date of Bahá'u'lláh is calculated according to lunar years from the mission and the Hejira of Muhammad; for in the religion of Muhammad the lunar year is in use....

In Daniel, chapter 12, verse 6, it is said: "And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and that when He shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.'....

Thus three years and a half make forty-two months, and forty-two months are twelve hundred and sixty days. The Báb, the precursor of Bahá'u'lláh, appeared in the year 1260 from the Hejira of Muhammad, by the reckoning of Islam.

Afterward, in verse 11, it is said: "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolation be set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days."

The beginning of this lunar reckoning is from the day of the proclamation of the prophethood of Muhammad in the country of Hijaz; and that was three years after His mission, because in the beginning the prophethood of Muhammad was kept secret, and no one knew it save Khadijah and Ibn Nawfal.[
Varaqaat-Ibn-Nawfal, Khadijah's cousin]. After three years it was announced. And Bahá'u'lláh, in the year 1290 from the proclamation of the mission of Muham-

210

mad, caused His manifestation to be known. (Some Answered Questions, p. 46-52)

63. What distinguishes the two classes of Prophets?

Independent Prophets are the lawgivers and the founders of a new cycle. Through Their appearance the world puts on a new garment, the foundations of religion are established, and a new book is revealed. Without an intermediary They receive bounty from the Reality of the Divinity, and Their illumination is an essential illumination. They are like the sun which is luminous in itself: the light is its essential necessity; it does not receive light from any other

star. These Dawning-places of the morn of Unity are the sources of bounty and the mirrors of the Essence of Reality. The other Prophets are followers and promoters, for they are branches and not independent; they receive the bounty of the independent Prophets, and they profit by the light of the Guidance of the universal Prophets.... Of themselves they have no power and might, except what they receive from the independent Prophets. (Some Answered Questions, p. 188-91)

64. What is the difference between Prophet and Manifestation?

The Reality of all is One. Truth is one. Religions are like the branches of one Tree. One branch is high, one is low and one in the centre, yet all draw their life from the one stem. One branch bears fruit and others are not laden so abundantly. All the Prophets are lights, they only differ in degree; they shine like brilliant heavenly bodies, each have their appointed place and time of ascension. Some are like lamps, some like the moon, some like distant stars, and a few are like the sun, shining from one end of the earth to the other. All have the same Light to give, yet they are different in degree. (Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 57)

65. What is Essential sinlessness? Acquired?

Essential sinlessness is peculiar to the supreme Manifestation, for it is His essential requirement, and an essential requirement cannot be separated from the thing itself. The rays are the essential necessity of the sun and are inseparable from it. Knowledge....and power are essential necessities of God, and are inseparable from Him. If they could be separated from Him, He would not be God....

But acquired sinlessness is not a natural necessity; on the contrary, it is a ray of the bounty of infallibility which shines from the Sun of Reality upon hearts, and grants a share and portion of itself to souls.... Thus many of the holy beings who were not dawning-points of the Supreme sinless-

211

ness, were yet kept and preserved from error under the shadow of the protection and guardianship of God, for they were the mediators of grace between God and men. If God did not protect them from error, their error would cause believing souls to fall into error, and thus the foundation of the Religion of God would be overturned, which would not be fitting nor worthy of God. (Some Answered Questions, p. 197-8)

So Christ...was the manifestation of these words, "He doeth whatsoever He willeth," but the disciples were not partakers of this condition; for as they were under the shadow of Christ, they could not deviate from His command and will. (Some Answered Questions, p. 201)

66. What is the Universal, Divine Mind? (Spirit or Prophecy)

...But the universal divine mind, which is beyond nature, is the bounty of the Preexistent Power. This universal mind is divine; it embraces existing realities, and it receives the light of the mysteries of God. It is a conscious power, not a power of investigation and of research. The intellectual power of the world of nature is a power of investigation, and by its researches it discovers the realities of beings and the properties of existences; but the heavenly intellectual power, which is beyond nature, embraces things and is cognizant of things, knows them, understands them, is aware of mysteries, realities and divine significations, and is the discoverer of the concealed verities of the Kingdom. This divine intellectual power is the special attribute of the Holy Manifestations and the Dawning-places of prophethood. (Some Answered Questions, p. 253)

And if the wayfarers dwell in the chamber of Mahmud (i.e, "Trustworthy" which is one of the titles of Muhammad) this station belongs to reason which is known as the Prophet and the most great Pillar. But by the reason is here meant the divine universal Mind, on whose sovereignty, in this state, depends the training of the whole of creation; and not every limited, inane mentality....

In this state, the wayfarer encounters countless vicissitudes and upheavals. Now he is lifted heavenwards and now lowered into the depths, as it is said "Now thou attractest me to the loftiest throne of Divinity, and again thou destroyeth me with the fire of perplexity." (Islámic holy utterance)....

And in this state, seeking after knowledge is needless,

212

for concerning the instruction of wayfarers on this plane, He hath said: "Fear God and God will teach you. (Qur'án)" Likewise He hath said: "Knowledge is a light which God depositeth within the heart of whomsoever He willeth." (Qur'án). Wherefore, one should prepare the place, to make it worthy the descending of favor, in order that All-Sufficient Cup-bearer may cause one to drink the Wine of Bounty from the Chalice of mercy. (Seven Valleys and Four Valleys, p. 48-50)

67. What is Religion?

Religion, then, is the necessary connection which emanates from the reality of things; and as the supreme Manifestations of God are aware of the mysteries of beings, therefore, They understand this essential connection, and by this knowledge establish the Law of God. (Some Answered Questions, p. 182)

The great question appertaining to humanity is religion. The first condition is that man must intelligently investigate its foundations. The second condition is that he must admit and acknowledge the oneness of the world of

humanity....Man must spiritually perceive that religion has been intended by God to be the means of grace, the source of life and cause of agreement. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 321-2)

Consider the civilization of the people of the Occident - how it has occasioned commotion and agitation to the people of the world. Infernal instruments have been devised, and such atrocity is displayed in the destruction of life as has not been seen by the eye of the world, nor heard by the ear of nations. It is impossible to reform these violent, overwhelming evils, except the peoples of the world become united upon a certain issue or under the shadow of One Religion....

O people of Baha! Each one of the revealed commands is a mighty stronghold for the protection of the world. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 49-55)

....And yet, is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 240)

213

We are considering the divine plan for the reconciliation of the religious systems of the world. Bahá'u'lláh has said that if one intelligent member be selected from each of the varying religious systems, and these representatives come together seeking to investigate the reality of religion, they would establish an interreligious body before which all disputes and differences of belief could be presented for consideration and settlement. Such questions could then be weighed and viewed from the standpoint of reality and all imitations be discarded. By this method and procedure all sects, denominations and systems would become one.... (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 228-9)

Religion is the revelation of the will of God, the divine fundamental of which is love. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 310)

The immortality of the spirit is mentioned in the Holy Books; it is the fundamental basis of the divine religions. (Some Answered Questions, p. 259)

Men should consider how true religion becomes the means of civilization, fame, prosperity, the enhancer of dignity and education and a source of progress for the degraded and captive, the submissive and the ignorant. And when it falls into the hands of ignorant and superstitious leaders, the great light of religion is changed by their evil acts into a great darkness. (The Mysterious Forces of Civilization, p. 91)

The Law of God is divided into two parts. One is the fundamental basis which comprises all spiritual things....this does not change nor alter: it is the Holy of Holies, which is the essence of the Law of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, and which lasts and is established in all the prophetic cycles. It will never be abrogated, for it is spiritual and not material truth; it is faith, knowledge, certitude, justice, piety, righteousness, trustworthiness, love of God, benevolence, purity, detachment, humility, meekness, patience and constancy. It shows mercy to the poor, defends the oppressed, gives to the wretched and uplifts the fallen.

These foundations of the Religion of God....cannot be abrogated; they are irremovable and eternal, and are renewed in the cycle of every Prophet.

214

The second part of the Religion of God, which refers to the material world, and which comprises fasting, prayer, forms of worship, marriage and divorce, the abolition of slavery, legal processes....is modified and altered in each prophetic cycle in accordance with the necessities of the times. (Some Answered Questions, p. 55-7)

Temples are symbols of the reality and divinity of God -- the collective center of mankind....It is evident that the church of God is the law of God and that the actual edifice is but one symbol thereof. For the law of God is a collective center which unites various peoples, nativities, tongues and opinions....Consider how nothing but a spiritual power can bring about this unification; for material conditions and mental aspects are so widely different that agreement and unity are not possible through outer means....The collective center has always appeared in the Orient. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 158-9)

And now concerning thy question regarding the nature of religion. Know thou that they who are truly wise have likened the world unto the human temple. As the body of man needeth a garment to clothe it, so the body of mankind must needs be adorned with the mantle of justice and wisdom. Its robe is the Revelation vouchsafed unto it by God. Whenever this robe hath fulfilled its purpose, the Almighty will assuredly renew it. For every age requireth a fresh measure of the light of God. Every Divine Revelation hath been sent down in a manner that befitted the circumstances of the age in which it hath appeared. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 81)

There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God. The difference between the ordinances under which they abide should be attributed to the varying requirements and exigencies of the

age in which they were revealed. All of them, except a few which are the outcome of human perversity, were ordained of God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 217)

The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves.

215

That the divers communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence of the Faith of God and His Religion. These principles and laws, these firmly-established and mighty systems, have proceeded from one Source, and are the rays of one Light. That they differ one from another is to be attributed to the varying requirements of the ages in which they were promulgated....Religious fanaticism and hatred are a world-devouring fire, whose violence none can quench. The Hand of Divine power can, alone, deliver mankind from this desolating affliction....

The utterance of God is a lamp, whose light is these words: Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship. He Who is the Day Star of Truth beareth Me witness! So powerful is the light of unity that it can illuminate the whole earth. The one true God, He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to the truth of these words. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 287-8)

The ordinances of God have been sent down from the heaven of His most august Revelation. All must diligently observe them. Man's supreme distinction, his real advancement, his final victory, have always depended, and will continue to depend, upon them. Whoso keepeth the commandments of God shall attain everlasting felicity. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 289)

Religion....is the greatest of all means for the establishment of order in the world and for the peaceful contentment of all that dwell therein. The weakening of the pillars of religion hath strengthened the hands of the ignorant and made them bold and arrogant. Verily, I say, whatsoever hath lowered the lofty station of religion hath increased the waywardness of the wicked and the result cannot be but anarchy....Religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world, for the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast to that which is good and shun all evil. Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness, of justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine. (Bahá'í World, Vol. II, p. 26-7)

The divine religions of the Holy Manifestations of God are

in reality one, though in name and nomenclature they differ. Man must be a lover of the light, no matter from what dayspring it may appear.The counterfeit or imitation of true religion has adulterated human belief, and the foundations have been lost sight of. The variance of these imitations has produced enmity and strife, war and bloodshed. ... The time has come when all mankind shall be united, when all races shall be loyal to one fatherland, all religions become one religion, and racial and religious bias pass away. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 146-8)

Religion must be in harmony with science and reason. If it does not conform to science and reconcile with reason, it is superstition. Down to the present day it has been customary for man to accept a religious teaching, even though it was not in accord with human reason and judgment. The harmony of religious belief with reason is a new vista which Bahá'u'lláh has opened for the soul of man.His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh has announced that the foundation of all the religions of God is one, that oneness is truth and truth is oneness which does not admit of plurality. This teaching is new and specialized to this Manifestation. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 337-8)

There is no contradiction between True Religion and Science.If religion were contrary to logical reason then it would cease to be a religion and be merely a tradition. Religion and science are the two wings upon which man's intelligence can soar into the heights, with which the human soul can progress. It is not possible to fly with one wing alone! Should a man try to fly with the wing of religion alone he would quickly fall into the quagmire of superstition, whilst on the other hand, with the wing of science alone he

would also make no progress, but fall into the despairing slough of materialism.The spiritual aspect of religion is the greater, the more important of the two, and this is the same for all time, it never changes!It is impossible for Religion to be contrary to Science, even though some intellects are too weak or too immature to understand Truth. God made Religion and Science to be the measure, as it were, of our understanding. Take heed that you neglect not such a wonderful power. Weigh all things in this balance.When religion shorn of its superstitions, traditions and unintelligent dogmas, shows its conformity with science, then will there be a great unifying, cleansing force in the world, which will sweep before it all wars, disagreements, discords and struggles - and then will mankind be united in the Power of the Love of God. (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 132-5).

Muhammad recognized the sublime grandeur of Christ and the greatness of Moses

and the prophets. If only the whole world would acknowledge the greatness of Muhammad and all the Heaven-sent Teachers, strife and discord would soon vanish from the face of the earth, and God's Kingdom would come among men. The people of Islam who glorify Christ are not humiliated by so doing. (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 43).

68. What is the Spirit of Faith?

Know that spirit in general is divided into five sorts -- the vegetable spirit, the animal spirit, the human spirit, the spirit of faith, and the divine spirit of sanctity.

The vegetable spirit is the virtue augmentative, or growing or vegetative faculty, which results from the admixture of the simple elements, with the co-operation of water, air and heat.

The animal spirit is the virtue perceptive resulting from the admixture and absorption of the vital elements generated in the heart, which apprehend sense-impressions.

The human spirit consists of the rational, or logical, reasoning faculty, which apprehends general ideas and things intelligible and perceptible.

Now these "spirits" are not reckoned as Spirit in the terminology of the Scriptures and the usage of the people of the Truth, inasmuch as the laws governing them are as the laws which govern all phenomenal being (i.e., all existences belonging to the phenomenal or material universe, called "the

218

world of generation and corruption")....In brief, for these three spirits there is no restitution or "return," but they are subordinate to reversions and production and corruption.

But the Spirit of Faith which is of the Kingdom (of God) consists of the all-comprehending Grace and the perfect attainment (or salvation, fruition, achievement) and the power of sanctity and the divine effulgence from the Sun of Truth on luminous light-seeking essences from the presence of the divine Unity. And by this Spirit is the life of the spirit of man, when it is fortified thereby, as Christ saith: "That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." And this Spirit hath both restitution and return, inasmuch as it consists of the Light of God and the unconditioned Grace. So, having regard to this state and station, Christ announced that John the Baptist was Elias, who was to come before Christ (Matt. 11:14). And the likeness of this station is as that of lamps kindled (from one another): for these in respect to their glasses and oil-holders, are different, but in respect to their light, One, and in respect to their illumination, One; nay, each one is identical with the other, without imputation of plurality, or diversity or multiplicity or separateness. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. I, p. 115)

69. How may man attain merciful powers?

Shouldst thou desire to add perception and understanding, to become fully aware of the mysteries as deposited in the Holy Books and to spread the divine significances, it is incumbent upon thee to be straightforward in the Right Path, to be firm in the teachings and to be patient under the great test. He who is steadfast shall grow and he who is straightforward shall succeed. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 686)

Make firm your feet in the Cause with such firmness as cannot be shaken by the most great disasters of this world. Be not troubled by anything under any condition....Be signs of guidance....attracted toward God; sanctified from all things and from the (natural) qualities of people, and characterized with the attributes of the angels of heaven-so ye may attain to the greatest gift in this great century and new age....No one will obtain this great favor save he who cuts himself from this world....who is dead to the desires and appetites of self, sincere to God in all things and meek, humble imploring, pleading and lowly before God. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. I, p. 5)

219

...Cut thyself from the world and be quit of self and desire. Exert thyself night and day until spiritual powers may penetrate thy heart and soul. Abandon the body and the material, until the merciful powers may become manifest; because not until the soil is become pure will it develop through the heavenly bounty... I beg of God that thou wilt day by day increase the purity of thy heart, the cheerfulness of thy soul, the light of thy insight and the search for Truth. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 512)

Do ye not look upon the beginning of the affairs; attach your hearts to the ends and results. The present period is like unto the sowing time. Undoubtedly it is impregnated with perils and difficulties, but in the future many a harvest shall be gathered and benefits and results will become apparent. When one considers the issue and the end, exhaustless joy and happiness will dawn. Live thou as far as thou art able according to the divine commands and advices, because they are conducive to eternal life. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. II, p. 265)

First, through the knowledge of God. Second, through the love of God. Third, through faith. Fourth, through philanthropic deeds. Fifth, through self-sacrifice. Sixth, through severance from this world. Seventh, through sanctity and holiness. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 221)

70. What are the four methods of acquiring knowledge?

By the senses. Today this method is considered the most perfect by all the European philosophers....For example, the greatest of all the senses is the power of sight....The sight believes the earth to be motionless, and sees the

sun in motion, and many similar cases it makes mistakes. Therefore we cannot trust it.

Reason...this is the method of the understanding...Plato at first logically proved the immobility of the earth and the movement of the sun; later by logical arguments he proved that the sun was the stationary center and that the earth was moving...Therefore, it is evident that the method of the reason is not perfect for the differences of the ancient philosophers, the want of stability and the variations of their opinions prove this.

Tradition...This is the method of the religious leaders; whatever they understand and comprehend from the text of the books is that which their reason understands from

220

the text, and not necessarily the real truth. (Some Answered Questions, p. 341-3)

The fourth standard is that of inspiration. In past centuries many philosophers have claimed illumination or revelation, prefacing their statements by the announcement that "this subject has been revealed through me" or "thus do I speak by inspiration." Of this class were the philosophers of the Illuminati. Inspirations are the promptings or susceptibilities of the human heart. The promptings of the heart are sometimes satanic. How are we to differentiate them?...Consequently it has become evident that the four...standards are judgments by which the human mind reaches its conclusions are faulty and inaccurate.

But a statement presented to the mind accompanied by proofs which the senses can perceive to be correct, which the faculty of reason can accept, which is in accord with traditional authority and sanctioned by the promptings of the heart, can be adjudged and relied upon as perfectly correct...(Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 248-9)

But a statement presented to the mind accompanied by proofs which the senses can perceive to be correct, which the faculty of reason can accept, which is in accord with traditional authority and sanctioned by the promptings of the heart, can be adjudged and relied upon as perfectly correct.... (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 248-9)

The bounty of the Holy Spirit gives the true method of comprehension which is infallible and indubitable...This is the condition in which certainty can alone be attained. (Some Answered Questions, p. 341-3)

Unlock, O people, the gates of the hearts of men with the keys of the remembrance of Him Who is the Remembrance of God and the Source of wisdom amongst you. He hath chosen out of the whole world the hearts of His servants,

and made them each a seat for the revelation of His glory. Wherefore, sanctify them from every defilement, that the things for which they were created may be engraven upon them. This indeed is a token of God's bountiful favor. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 296-7)

221

PART IV

MAN (THE RATIONAL SOUL)

71. What is the condition and station of man?

Man is the highest degree of materiality, and at the beginning of spirituality....He is at the least degree of darkness and at the beginning of light....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.... 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, p. 272-4)

The body is the physical or animal degree of man....The bodies alike of men and animals are composed of elements held together by the law of attraction....Unlike the animal, man has a rational soul, the human intelligence. This intelligence of man is the intermediary between his body and his spirit. (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 88).

God has created man lofty and noble, made him a dominant factor in creation. He has specialized man with supreme bestowals, conferred upon him mind, perception, memory, abstraction and the powers of the senses. These gifts of God to man were intended to make him the manifestation of divine virtues, a radiant light in the world of creation, a source of life and the agency of constructiveness in the infinite fields of existence....The battlefield is the acme of human degradation, the cause of the wrath of God, the destruction of the divine foundation of man. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 346-7)

When man allows the spirit, through his soul, to enlighten his understanding, then does he contain all Creation; because man, being the culmination of all that went before and thus superior to all previous evolutions, contains all the lower world within himself.... (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 88).

The human embryo when examined microscopically is at first a mere germ or worm. Gradually as it develops....rudiments of hands and feet appear....Afterward it undergoes certain distinct changes until it reaches its actual human

form and is born into this world. But at all times, even when the embryo resembled a worm, it was human in potentiality and character, not animal....Throughout this progression there has been a transference of type, a conservation of species or kind. Realizing this, we may acknowledge the fact that at one time man was an inmate of the sea, at another period an invertebrate, then a vertebrate and finally a human being standing erect....In each of these stages are signs and evidences of his human existence and destination....Therefore, in the protoplasm, man is man....The world of humanity is distinct from the animal kingdom....The animals are captives of nature....but man breaks the laws of nature and makes them subservient to his uses....Furthermore, it is evident that in the world of nature conscious knowledge is absent....Nature is devoid of memory. Man possesses both. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 353-4)

Man has two aspects: the physical, which is subject to nature, and the merciful or divine, which is connected with God. If the physical or natural disposition in him should overcome the heavenly and merciful, he is, then, the most degraded of animal beings; and if the divine and spiritual should triumph over the human and natural, he is, verily, an angel. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 38)

The human body is in reality very weak; there is no physical body more delicately constituted. One mosquito will distress it; the smallest quantity of poison will destroy it; if respiration ceases for a moment, it will die....A blade of grass severed from the root may live an hour, whereas a human body deprived of its forces may die in one minute. But in the proportion that the human body is weak, the spirit of man is strong....If all the kingdoms of life arise against the immortal spirit of man and seek its destruction, this immortal spirit, singly and alone, can withstand their attacks....because it....is empowered with supreme natural virtues. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 257-8)

Man is My mystery, and I am his mystery. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 101)

72. What is the modification of the species?

All existing beings, terrestrial and celestial, as well as this limitless space and all that is in it, have been created and organized, composed, arranged and perfected as they

ought to be; the universe has no imperfections....If, however, the creation in

the past had not been adorned with utmost perfection, then existence would have been imperfect and meaningless, and in this case creation would have been incomplete. This question needs to be considered with the greatest attention and thought....Now, if we imagine a time when man belonged to the animal world, or when he was merely an animal, we shall find that existence would have been imperfect -- that is....this chief member, which in the body of the world is like the brain and mind in man, would have been missing....the perfection of existence would have been destroyed....We consider man as the greatest member because, among the creatures, he is the sum of all existing perfections. When we speak of man, we mean the perfect one. (Some Answered Questions, p. 205-6)

There is another more subtle proof (that man is not descended from the animal).... all beings are connected together like a chain; and reciprocal help, assistance and interaction belonging to the properties of things are the causes of the existence, development and growth of created beings. It is confirmed through evidences and proofs that every being universally acts upon other beings, either absolutely or through association. Then, since man was produced ten or a hundred thousand years ago from these earthly elements with the same measure and balance, the same method of combination and mingling, and the same influence of the other beings, exactly the same man existed then as now....A thousand million years hence, if these elements of man are gathered together and arranged in this special proportion, and if the elements are combined according to the same method, and if they are affected by the same influence of other beings, exactly the same man will exist. For example....if....there is oil, fire, a wick, a lamp and the lighter of the lamp, exactly the same lamp will be obtained. (Some Answered Questions, p. 207-8)

73. What is the origin of man?

....The world of existence, this endless universe, has neither beginning nor end. Absolute non-existence could not become existence....The Names and Attributes of the Divinity themselves require the existence of beings....A creator without a creature is impossible....If we could imagine a time when no beings existed, this imagination would be the denial of the Divinity of God....As the Essence of Unity....is everlasting and eternal....it is certain that this world

225

of existence....has neither beginning nor end. It may be that one of the parts of the universe....may come into existence or may be disintegrated....As each globe has a beginning, necessarily it has end....(Some Answered Questions, p. 209-10)

....There is no doubt that in the beginning the origin was one....One matter appeared in different aspects in each element thus various forms were produced and these various aspects as they were produced became permanent and each

element was specialized (after a very long time)...From the composition and combination of these elements innumerable beings resulted....From this it is evident that it is the creation of God and a fortuitous composition and arrangement. This is why from every natural composition a being can come into existence....A composition made by men produces nothing because man cannot create....So you will find the smallest atoms in the universal system are similar to the greatest beings of the universe. It is clear that they came into existence from one laboratory of might under one natural system and one universal law....Man in the beginning of his existence and in the womb of the earth, like the embryo in the womb of the mother, gradually grew and developed, and passed from one form to another....until he appeared with this beauty and perfection; this force and this power....There is no doubt that the human embryo did not at once appear in this form;....it passes through different states and traverses numerous degrees;....until the signs of reason and maturity appear....But from the beginning of man's existence he is a distinct species....a man, not an animal. His species and essence undergo no change. (Some Answered Questions, p. 210-4)

Some Scientific Proofs of the Origin of Man.

The species of vegetable, animal and man have changed as revealed by the discovery in the strata of the earth of remains of these species....Traces of members proves that they once existed....While the perfect and necessary members have remained, those which are unnecessary have gradually disappeared by the modification of the species....The fact that the animal preceded man is not a proof of the evolution....of the species nor that man was raised from the animal world to the human world....It is possible that man came into existence after the animal....This priority does not prove that the later fruit of one tree was pro-

226

duced from the earlier fruit of another tree. (Some Answered Questions, p. 222-3)

The signs and traces of members have perhaps a great reason of which the mind is not yet cognizant....it is known that the pupil of the eye is black so as to attract the rays of the sun, for if it were another color -- that is, uniformly white -- it would not attract the rays of the sun....but the reason and cause of the difference in the colors of animals, and of the hair of men, of the redness of the lips, and of the variety of the colors of birds, is still unknown. (Some Answered Questions, p. 224)

Let us suppose that there was a time when some animals, or even man, possessed some members which have now disappeared; this is not a sufficient proof of the

change and evolution of the species....As man in the womb of the mother passes from form to form, from shape to shape, changes and develops, and is still the human species from the beginning of the embryonic period -- in the same way man, from the beginning of his existence in the matrix of the world, is also a distinct species -- that is, man -- and has gradually evolved from one form to another....Man from the beginning was in this perfect form and composition, and possessed capacity and aptitude for acquiring material and spiritual perfections, and was the manifestation of these words, "We will make man in Our image and likeness...." Civilization has brought him out of his wild state. (Some Answered Questions, p. 224-6)

Some Spiritual Proofs of the Origin of Man.

....It cannot be said there was a time when man was not. All that we can say is that this terrestrial globe at one time did not exist, and at its beginning man did not appear upon it. But from the beginning which has no beginning, to the end which has no end, a Perfect Manifestation always exists. This Man of Whom we speak is not every man; we mean the Perfect Man. For the noblest part of the tree is the fruit, which is the reason of its existence. If the tree had no fruit, it would have no meaning. Therefore, it cannot be imagined that the worlds of existence, whether the stars or this earth, were once inhabited by the donkey, cow, mouse and cat, and that they were without man! (Some Answered Questions, p. 229)

The world, indeed each existing being, proclaims to us one of the names of God, but the reality of man is the collect-

227

ive reality....and is the center where the glory of all the perfections of God shine forth....for each name, each attribute, each perfection which we affirm of God there exists a sign in man. If it were otherwise, man could not imagine these perfections and could not understand them. So we say that God is the seer, and the eye is the sign of His vision; if this sight were not in man, how could we imagine the vision of God? For the blind (that is, one born blind) cannot imagine sight....Man, then, is the perfect mirror facing the Sun of Truth and is the center of radiation....The reflection of the divine perfections appears in the reality of man, so he is the representative of God, the messenger of God. (Some Answered Questions, p. 228-9)

74. What is the difference between man and the animal?

....The philosophers of the present state....that there was once a time when man was an animal, that then the species changed, and progressed little by little until it reached the present status of man...."It is not" they say, "that he has a special power and spirit which the other animals lack....but man

in some powers has more sensation."

But the theologians say: No, that is not so. Though man has powers and outer senses in common with the animal, yet an extraordinary power exists in him of which the animal is bereft....The animal is the captive of the senses;...all that is beyond the senses....the animal can never understand, although in the outer senses it is greater than man. Man from known things proves unknown things, and discovers unknown truths....Hence it is proved and verified that in man there is a power of discovery by which he is distinguished from the animals, and this is the spirit of man....He always desires to reach a greater world than the one in which he is, and to mount to a higher sphere....He can resist nature while all other creatures are captives of nature....

Modern philosophers say: "We have never seen the spirit in man, and in spite of our researches into the secrets of the human body, we do not perceive a spiritual power...."

Since in the animal there are signs which are not in the plant, you say this power of sensation is a property of the animal spirit; you also see in man signs, powers and perfections which do not exist in the animal; therefore, you infer that there is a power in him which the animal is without....

The power of attraction is not sensible, though it certainly

228

exists....light is the vibration of....ethereal matter, and from this vibration we infer the existence of ether....From what do we infer these existences? From their signs. (Some Answered Questions, p. 215-21)

75. What is the cause of differences and varieties of men?

.... 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.... 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. (Some Answered Questions, p. 247-8)

The elemental atoms which constitute all phenomenal existence and being in this illimitable universe are in perpetual motion, undergoing continuous degrees of progression. For instance, let us conceive of an atom in the mineral kingdom progressing upward to the kingdom of the vegetable by entering into the composition and fibre of a tree or plant. From thence it is assimilated and transferred into the kingdom of the animal and finally by the law and process of composition becomes a part of the body of man. That is to say, it has traversed the intermediate degrees and stations of phenomenal existence,

entering into the composition of various organisms in its journey. This motion or transference is progressive and perpetual, for after disintegration of the human body into which it has entered, it returns to the mineral kingdom whence it came, and will continue to traverse the kingdoms of phenomena as before....In its ceaseless progression and journeyings the atom becomes imbued with the virtues and powers of each degree or kingdom it traverses. In the degree of the mineral it possessed mineral affinities; in the kingdom of the vegetable it manifested the virtue augmentative or power of growth; in the animal organism it reflected the intelligence of that degree, and in the kingdom of man it was qualified with human attributes or virtues. Furthermore, the forms and organisms of phenomenal being and existence in each of the kingdoms of the universe are myriad and numberless....Each leaf has its own particular identity, so to speak, its own individuality as a leaf. Therefore each atom of the innumerable elemental atoms....not only becomes imbued with the powers and virtues of the kingdoms it traverses but also reflects the attributes and qualities of the

229

forms and organisms of those kingdoms....No atom is bereft or deprived of this opportunity or right of expression. Nor can it be said of any given atom that it is denied equal opportunities with other atoms....not only becomes imbued with the powers and virtues of the kingdoms it traverses but also reflects the attributes and qualities of the forms and organisms of those kingdoms....No atom is bereft or deprived of this opportunity or right of expression. Nor can it be said of any given atom that it is denied equal opportunities with other atoms. It is evident, then, that each elemental atom of the universe is possessed of a capacity to express all the virtues of the universe. (The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 278-9)

Evolution of the Spirit.

76. What is meant by Human Reality? (Rational Soul)

It is evident that human personality appears in two aspects: the image or likeness of God, and the aspect of Satan. The human reality stands between these two: the divine and the satanic. It is manifest that beyond this material body, man is endowed with another reality, which is the world of exemplars constituting the heavenly body of man. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 460)

Be it known that to know the reality or essence of the soul of man is impossible, for in order to know a thing one must comprehend it, and since a thing cannot comprehend itself to know oneself in substance or essence is impossible.... This much can be stated, that the reality of man is a pure and unknown essence constituting a depository emanating from the light of the Ancient Entity, God. This essence or soul of man because of its innate purity

and its connection with the unseen Ancient Entity is old as regards time but new as regards individuality.... It is the same reality which is given different names according to the different conditions wherein it is manifested. Because of its relation to matter and the phenomenal world when it governs the physical functions of the body it is called the human soul; when it manifests itself as the thinker, the comprehended it is called the mind. And when it soars into the atmosphere of God and travels in the spiritual world it becomes designated as spirit. (Star of the West, Vol. XIV, p. 11-12)

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

230

its allegiance to its Creator, it will become a victim to self and passion, and will, in the end, sink in their depths....

Verily I say, the human soul is, in its essence, one of the signs of God, a mystery among His mysteries. It is one of the mighty signs of the Almighty, the harbinger that proclaimeth the reality of all the worlds of God. Within it lieth concealed that which the world is now utterly incapable of apprehending....

Verily I say, the human soul is exalted above all egress and regress. It is still, and yet it soareth; it moveth, and yet it is still. It is, in itself, a testimony that beareth witness to the existence of a world that is contingent, as well as to the reality of a world that hath neither beginning nor end.... (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 158-62)

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

have been revealed, and by the suspension of its action they are all destroyed and perish.

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

This same relationship bindeth this faculty with whatsoever hath been the recipient of these names and attributes within the human temple. These diverse names and revealed attributes have been generated through the agency of this sign of God. Immeasurably exalted is this sign, in its

231

essence and reality, above all such names and attributes. Nay, all else besides it will, when compared with its glory, fade into utter nothingness and become a thing forgotten. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 164-5)

The reasonable or intellectual reality with which man is endowed enables him to transcend the laws of physical nature. It is then self-evident that in man there exists an intellectual reality which is superior to his physical reality. There is, however, a third reality in man, that is the spiritual reality. Through that medium come spiritual revelations. This is a celestial power which is infinite as regards the intellectual as well as the physical realms. This power is conferred upon him by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is an eternal reality, an indestructible reality, a reality which belongs to the Divine Kingdom. This celestial reality...is the power which enables man to escape from the world of nature. (Star of the West, Vol. VII, p. 117-8)

The human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the rational soul; and these two names -- the human spirit and the rational soul -- designate one thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is the rational soul, embraces all beings, and as far as human ability permits discovers the realities of things....But the human spirit, unless assisted by the spirit of faith, does not become acquainted with the divine secrets and the heavenly realities....The mind is the power of the human spirit. Spirit is the lamp; mind is the light which shines from the lamp. Spirit is the tree, and the mind is the fruit. (Some Answered Questions, p. 243-4)

...For only the reality of man can become the mirror wherein the lights of God are revealed. The reality of man will then be as the spirit of this world, for just as the animus of life quickens the physical human body, so the body of the world will receive its vivification through the animating virtue of the sanctified spirit of man. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 330)

77. What is the difference between the Reality of man and his Spirit?

Man is the life of the world, and the life of man is the spirit. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 235)

When you wish to reflect upon or consider a matter, you

232

consult something within you. You say, shall I do it, or shall I not do it? Is it better to make this journey or abandon it? Whom do you consult? Who is within you deciding this question? Surely there is a distinct power, an intelligent ego. Were it not distinct from your ego, you would not be consulting it. It is greater than the faculty of thought. It is your spirit which teaches you, which advises and decides upon matters....The spirit is ever the same....and because there is no change of transformation it is everlasting and permanent. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 237-8)

.... Therefore, that reality in man is clearly and obviously other than his body -- an ego with which man enters into consultation and whose opinion man seeks.... This other and inner reality is called the heavenly body, the ethereal form which corresponds to this body. This is the conscious reality which discovers the inner meaning of things....It is the inner reality which comprehends things, throws light upon the mysteries of life and being....unseals the mysteries of God and differentiates man from brute.... (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 460-1)

Know that the human spirit is one, but it manifests itself in various members of the body in a certain (measure or) form. The human spirit is existent in the sight (eyes); it is also existent in the brain, which is the location of great functions and powers; it is also existent in the heart, which organ is largely connected with the brain or the center of the mind, and the heart, or that the center which is connected with the brain, has a distinct and separate function, effect and appearance. In this connection, the hair and the nails have no command (or direct feeling). (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. I, p. 102-3)

Know that, although the human soul has existed on the earth for prolonged times and ages, yet it is phenomenal. As it is a divine sign, when once it has come into existence, it is eternal. The spirit of man has a beginning, but it has no end; it continues eternally. (Some Answered Questions, p. 173)

O Son of the Wondrous Vision! I have breathed within thee a breath of My own Spirit, that thou mayest be My lover. Why hast thou forsaken Me and sought a beloved other than Me? (Hidden Words, 19 Arabic)

78. What is the difference between soul and spirit?

A body does not develop and grow without the soul, therefore the soul is the medium of the spiritual life. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 592)

...For, verily, the sign of these triune powers which exist in mankind are spirit, mind, and soul. The spirit is the power of life, the mind is the power which apprehendeth the reality of things, and the soul is an intermediary between the Supreme Concourse (or Spiritual World) and the lower concourse (or material world). It, i.e., the soul, hath two phases: The higher aspireth to the Kingdom of El-Baha, and the light of the mind shine forth from that horizon...unto its higher sphere; the other phase inclineth to the lower concourse of the material world and its lowest sphere is enveloped in the darkness of ignorance. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 611)

Man -- the true man -- is soul, not body; though physically man belongs to the animal kingdom, yet his soul lifts him above the rest of creation...By the power of the Holy Spirit, working through his soul, man is able to perceive the Divine reality of things. All great works of art and science are witnesses to this power of the Spirit. The same Spirit gives Eternal Life...The human body is visible, the soul is invisible. It is the soul nevertheless that directs a man's faculties, that governs his humanity. The soul has two main faculties.

(a) As outer circumstances are communicated to the soul by the eyes, ears, and brain of a man, so does the soul communicate its desires and purposes through the brain to the hands and tongue of the physical body, thereby expressing itself. The spirit in the soul is the very essence of life.

(b) The second faculty of the soul expresses itself in the world of vision, where the soul inhabited by the spirit has its being, and functions without the help of the material bodily senses....

It is, therefore, clear that the spirit in the soul of man can function through the physical body by using the organs of the ordinary senses, and that it is able also to live and act without their aid in the world of vision...The spirit does not need a body, but the body needs spirit, or it cannot live. The soul can live without a body, but the body without a soul dies. (The Wisdom of Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 77-8)

You perceive how the soul is the intermediary between

the body and the spirit. In like manner is this tree the intermediary between the seed and the fruit. When the fruit of the tree appears and becomes ripe, then we know that the tree is perfect...When a soul has in it the life of the spirit, then does it bring forth good fruit and become a Divine tree. (The

79. What is the difference between mind and soul?

Now concerning mental faculties, they are in truth of the inherent properties of the soul, even as the radiation of light is the essential property of the sun. The rays of the sun are renewed but the sun itself is ever the same and unchanged. Consider how the human intellect develops and weakens, and may at times come to naught, whereas the soul changeth not. For the mind to manifest itself, the human body must be whole; and a sound mind cannot be but in a sound body, whereas the soul dependeth not upon the body. It is through the power of the soul that the mind comprehendeth, imagineth and exerteth its influence, whilst the soul is a power that is free. The mind comprehendeth the abstract by the aid of the concrete, but the soul hath limitless manifestations of its own. The mind is circumscribed, the soul limitless. It is by the aid of such senses as those of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, that the mind comprehendeth, whereas, the soul is free from all agencies. The soul as thou observest, whether it be in sleep or waking, is in motion and ever active. Possibly it may, whilst in a dream, unravel an intricate problem, incapable of solution in the waking state. The mind, moreover, understandeth not whilst the senses have ceased to function, and in the embryonic stage and in early infancy the reasoning power is totally absent, whereas the soul is ever endowed with full strength. In short, the proofs are many that go to show that despite the loss of reason, the power of the soul would still continue to exist. (The Bahá'í Peace Program, p. 32-33)

80. Where was man before he appeared upon this earth?

O Son of Bounty! Out of the wastes of nothingness, with the clay of My command I made thee to appear, and have ordained for thy training every atom in existence and the essence of all created things. Thus, ere thou didst issue from thy mother's womb, I destined for thee two founts of gleaming milk, eyes to watch over thee, and hearts to love thee. Out of My loving-kindness, 'neath the shade of My mercy I

235

nurtured thee, and guarded thee by the essence of My grace and favor. And My purpose in all this was that thou mightest attain My everlasting dominion and become worthy of My invisible bestowals. And yet heedless thou didst remain, and when fully grown, thou didst neglect all My bounties and occupied thyself with thine idle imaginings, in such wise that thou didst become wholly forgetful, and, turning away from the portals of the Friend didst abide within the courts of My enemy. (Hidden Words, 29 Persian)

81. What is the wisdom of the spirit's appearing in the body?

This world is also in the condition of a fruit tree, and man is like the fruit; without fruit the tree would be useless. Moreover, these members, these elements, this composition, which are found in the organism of man, are an attraction and magnet for the spirit...for the connection which exists between the reality of things, whether they be spiritual or material, requires that when the mirror is clear and faces the sun, the light of the sun must become apparent in it. In the same way...the human spirit will appear and be manifest in them. (Some Answered Questions, p. 234-5)

The human spirit is a Divine Trust, and it must traverse all conditions, for its passage and movement through the conditions of existence will be the means of its acquiring perfections...It is the same when the human spirit passes through the conditions of existence: it will become the possessor of each degree and station. (Some Answered Questions, p. 233)

It is necessary that the signs of the perfection of the spirit should be apparent in this world, so that the world of creation may bring forth endless results, and this body may receive life and manifest the divine bounties...As the spirit of man is the cause of the life of the body, so the world is in the condition of the body, and man is in the condition of the spirit. If there were no man, the perfections of the spirit would not appear, and the light of the mind would not be resplendent in this world. This world would be like a body without a soul. (Some Answered Questions, p. 233-5)

81. Do souls choose to come to this world?

Know that proceeding is of two kinds: the proceeding and appearance through emanation, and the proceeding and appearance through manifestation. The proceeding through

236

emanation is like the coming forth of the action from the actor, of the writing from the writer. Now the writing emanates from the writer, and the discourse emanates from the speaker, and in the same way the human spirit emanates from God...that is to say, the speaker himself does not become the discourse, nor does the writer himself become the writing; no, rather they have the proceeding of emanation...The Real Speaker, the Essence of Unity, has always been in one condition, which neither changes nor alters, has neither transformation nor vicissitude...When it is said in the Bible that God breathed His spirit into man, this spirit is that which, like the discourse, emanates from the Real Speaker, taking effect in the reality of man. (Some Answered Questions, p. 239-40)

To every discerning and illumined heart it is evident that God, the unknowable Essence, the divine Being, is immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress. Far be it from His glory that human tongue should adequately recount His praise, or that human heart comprehend His fathomless mystery. He is and hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and will remain in His Reality everlastingly hidden from the sight of men. "No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision; He is the Subtile, the All-Perceiving." [Qur'án 6:103] No tie of direct intercourse can possibly bind Him to His creatures. He standeth exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness. No sign can indicate His presence or His absence; inasmuch as by a word of His command all that are in heaven and on earth have come to exist, and by His wish, which is the Primal Will itself, all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being, the world of the visible. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 98)

83. Does man in the beginning possess mind and spirit, or are they an outcome of his evolution?

All beings, whether large or small, were created perfect and complete from the first, but their perfections appear in them by degrees. The organization of God is one; the evolution of existence is one....So also the formation of man in the matrix of the world was in the beginning like the embryo; then gradually he made progress in perfectness, and grew and developed until he reached the state of maturity, when the mind and spirit became visible in the greatest power....Only when man attains maturity do the mind and the spirit become

237

evident in utmost perfection....the embryo possesses from the first all perfections, such as the spirit, the mind, the sight, the smell, the taste -- in one word, all the powers -- but they are not visible and become so only by degrees. When you consider this universal system, you see that there is not one of the beings which at its coming into existence has reached the limit of perfection. (Some Answered Questions, p. 230-2)

84. What is the state of man after death?

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. Both before and after putting off this material form, there is progress in perfection but not in state....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. (Some Answered Questions, p. 274)

Thou hast asked concerning the spirits of men: They are not at all annihilated -- they are immortal. The spirits of heavenly souls will find eternal life....but the spirits of the heedless souls, although they are eternal, yet they are in a world of imperfection, concealment and ignorance....For where (a heedless) man is translated from life to death, his comparative station will be that of a mineral existence. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 550)

85. What is the condition of the spirit after its ascension?

Know thou of a truth that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress until it attaineth the presence of God, in a state and condition which neither the revolution of ages and centuries, nor the changes and chances of this world, can alter. It will endure as long as the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His dominion and power will endure....The honor with which the Hand of Mercy will invest the soul is such as no tongue can adequately reveal, nor any other earthly agency describe. Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world. Such a soul liveth and moveth in accordance with the Will of its Creator, and entereth the all-highest Paradise. The Maids of Heaven, inmates of the loftiest mansions, will circle around it, and the Prophets of God and His chosen ones will seek its companionship. With them that soul will freely converse and

238

will recount unto them that which it hath been made to endure in the path of God....

The nature of the soul after death can never be described, nor is it meet and permissible to reveal its whole character to the eyes of men. The Prophets and Messengers of God have been sent down for the sole purpose of guiding mankind to the straight Path of Truth. The purpose underlying Their revelation hath been to educate all men, that they may, at the hour of death, ascend, in the utmost purity and sanctity and with absolute detachment, to the throne of the Most High.

The light which these souls radiate is responsible for the progress of the world and the advancement of its peoples. They are like unto leaven which leaveneth the world of being, and constitute the animating force through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. Through them the clouds rain their bounty upon men, and the earth bringeth forth its fruits. All things must needs have a cause, a motive power, an animating principle. These souls and symbols of detachment have provided, and will continue to provide, the supreme moving impulse in the world of being.

The world beyond is as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while still in the womb of its mother. When the soul

attaineth the Presence of God, it will assume the form that best befitteth its immortality and is worthy of its celestial habitation. Such an existence is a contingent and not an absolute existence, inasmuch as the former is preceded by a cause, whilst the latter is independent thereof. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 155-7)

Know thou, of a truth, that if the soul of man hath walked in the ways of God, it will, assuredly, return and be gathered to the glory of the Beloved. By the righteousness of God! It shall attain a station such as no pen can depict, or tongue describe.

The soul that hath remained faithful to the Cause of God, and stood unwaveringly firm in His Path shall, after his ascension, be possessed of such power that all the worlds which the Almighty hath created can benefit through him. Such a soul provideth, at the bidding of the Ideal King and Divine Educator, the pure leaven that leaveneth the world of being, and furnisheth the power through which the arts and wonders of the world are made manifest. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 161)

239

As to the soul of man after death, it remains in the degree of purity to which it has evolved during life in the physical body, and after it is freed from the body it remains plunged in the ocean of God's Mercy. From the moment the soul leaves the body and arrives in the Heavenly World, its evolution is spiritual, and that evolution is: The approaching unto God....The soul does not evolve from degree to degree as a law -- it only evolves nearer to God, by the Mercy and Bounty of God. (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 59).

The people of Baha, who are the inmates of the Ark of God, are, one and all, well aware of one another's state and condition, and are united in the bonds of intimacy and fellowship. Such a state, however, must depend upon their faith and their conduct. They that are of the same grade and station are fully aware of one another's capacity, character, accomplishments and merits. They that are of a lower grade, however, are incapable of comprehending adequately the station, or of estimating the merits, of those that rank above them. Each shall receive his share from thy Lord....It is clear and evident that all men shall, after their physical death, estimate the worth of their deeds, and realize all that their hands have wrought....They that are the followers of the one true God shall, the moment they depart out of this life, experience such joy and gladness as would be impossible to describe, while they that live in error shall be seized with such fear and trembling, and shall be filled with such consternation, as nothing can exceed.(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 170-1)

Thou hast asked Me whether man, as apart from the Prophets of God and His chosen ones, will retain, after his physical death, the self-same

individuality, personality, consciousness, and understanding that characterize his life in this world. If this should be the case, how is it, thou hast observed, that whereas such slight injuries to his mental faculties as fainting and severe illness deprive him of his understanding and consciousness, his death, which must involve the decomposition of his body and the dissolution of its elements, is powerless to destroy that understanding and extinguish that consciousness? How can any one imagine that man's consciousness and personality will be maintained, when the very instruments necessary to their existence and function will have completely disintegrated?

Know thou that the soul of man is exalted above, and is independent of all infirmities of body or mind. That a sick

240

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 again the sun when it is completely hidden behind the clouds....Not until the clouds have dispersed, can the sun shine again in the plenitude of its glory. Neither the presence of the cloud nor its absence can, in any way, affect the inherent splendor of the sun. The soul of man is the sun by which his body is illumined, and from which it draweth its sustenance, and should be so regarded.

Consider, moreover, how the fruit, ere it is formed, lieth potentially within the tree. Were the tree to be cut into pieces, no sign nor any part of the fruit, however small, could be detected. When it appeareth, however, it manifesteth itself, as thou hast observed, in its wondrous beauty and glorious perfection. Certain fruits, indeed, attain their fullest development only after being severed from the tree. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 153-5)

Those souls who are not vivified and attracted by the Holy Spirit, are accounted among the dead, because their souls are deprived of the breath of the Holy Spirit, and these persons after physical death are in a certain condition, having feeling and discernment in their environment, but in comparison with the pure souls who have been vivified by the Holy Spirit, they are as dead and deprived. For example: The mineral kingdom in comparison with the vegetable kingdom is lifeless; also the existence of the animal kingdom in comparison with that of man is death. The meaning is not that the neglectful souls will be non-existent. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 670)

Concerning thy question whether all the souls enjoy eternal life: Know thou those souls partake of the Eternal Life in whom the Spirit of Life is breathed from the Presence of God and all beside them are dead -- without Life, as Christ hath explained in the texts of the Gospel. Any person whose insight is opened by God seeth the souls in their stations after the disintegration of the bodies. Verily they are living and are subsisting before their Lord and he seeth

also the dead souls submerged in the gulfs of mortality. Then know thou verily all the souls are created according to the nature of God and all are in the state of (unconscious) purity at the time of the births. But afterward they differ from one another insofar as they acquire excellencies or defects. Nevertheless, the creatures have different degrees in existence insofar as the

241

creation goes, for capacities are different, but all of them are good and pure (in their essence), then afterward they are polluted and defiled. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol II, p. 453)

The mysteries of which man is heedless in this earthly world, those he will discover in the heavenly world, and there will he be informed of the secret of truth; how much more will he recognize or discover persons with whom he hath been associated. Undoubtedly, the holy souls who find a pure eye and are favored with insight will, in the kingdom of lights, be acquainted with all mysteries, and will seek the bounty of witnessing the reality of every great soul. Even they will manifestly behold the Beauty of God in that world. Likewise will they find all the friends of God, both those of the former and recent times, present in the heavenly assemblage. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol II, p. 205)

Know that nothing which exists is in a state of repose....Now, as the spirit continues to exist after death, it necessarily progresses or declines; and in the other world to cease to progress is the same as to decline; but it never leaves its own condition, in which it continues to develop. For example, the reality of the spirit of Peter, however far it may progress, will not reach to the condition of the Reality of Christ; it progresses only in its own environment....So the moon which is in the heavens, however far it might evolve, could never become a luminous sun, but in its own condition it has apogee and perigee. (Some Answered Questions, p. 270-1)

86. What becomes of the veiled spirits?

The spirit never entered this body, so in quitting it, it will not be in need of an abiding-place....The rational soul -- that is to say, the human spirit -- has neither entered this body nor existed through it....the rational soul is the substance through which the body exists. The personality of the rational soul is from its beginning; it is not due to the instrumentality of the body, but the state and the personality of the rational soul may be strengthened in this world; it will make progress and will attain to the degrees of perfection, or it will remain in the lowest abyss of ignorance, veiled and deprived from beholding the signs of God. (Some Answered Questions, p. 277-8)

242

87. Through what means will the Spirit of Man receive help in the Divine World?

The progress of man's spirit in the divine world, after the severance of its connection with the body of dust, is through the bounty and grace of the Lord alone, or through the intercession and the sincere prayers of other human souls, or through the charities and important good works which are performed in its name. (Some Answered Questions, p. 278)

As the spirit of man after putting off this material form has an everlasting life, certainly any existing being is capable of making progress; therefore, it is permitted to ask for advancement, forgiveness, mercy, beneficence and blessings for a man after his death because existence is capable of progression. That is why in the prayers of Bahá'u'lláh forgiveness and remission of sins are asked for those who have died....

The wealth of the other world is nearness to God. Consequently, it is certain that those who are near the Divine Court are allowed to intercede, and this intercession is approved by God. But intercession in the other world is not like intercession in this world. It is another thing, another reality, which cannot be expressed in words....

It is even possible that the condition of those who have died in sin and unbelief may become changed -- that is to say, they may become the object of pardon through the bounty of God, not through His justice -- for bounty is giving without desert, and justice is giving what is deserved. As we have power to pray for these souls here, so likewise we shall possess the same power in the other world, which is the Kingdom of God. (Some Answered Questions, p. 268-9)

88. What is the significance of "rewards and punishments?"

Punishments and rewards are said to be of two kinds: first, the rewards and punishments of this life; second, those of the other world. But the paradise and hell of existence are found in all the worlds of God, whether in this world or in the spiritual heavenly worlds. Gaining these rewards is the gaining of eternal life. That is why Christ said, "Act in such a way that you may find eternal life, and that you may be born of water and the spirit, so that you may enter into the Kingdom."

The rewards of this life are the virtues and perfections which adorn the reality of man. For example, he was dark and becomes luminous; he was ignorant and becomes wise,

243

he was neglectful and becomes vigilant; he was asleep and becomes awakened; he was dead and becomes living; he was blind and becomes a seer; he was deaf and becomes a hearer; he was earthly and becomes heavenly; he was material and becomes spiritual. Through these rewards he gains spiritual birth and becomes a new creature. He becomes the manifestation of the verse in the Gospel where it

is said of the disciples that they "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"[1 John 1:13] -- that is to say, they were delivered from the animal characteristics and qualities which are the characteristics of human nature, and they became qualified with the divine characteristics, which are the bounty of God. This is the meaning of the second birth. For such people there is no greater torture than being veiled from God, and no more severe punishment than sensual vices, dark qualities, lowness of nature, engrossment in carnal desires. When they are delivered through the light of faith from the darkness of these vices, and become illuminated with the radiance of the sun of reality, and ennobled with all the virtues, they esteem this the greatest reward, and they know it to be the true paradise. In the same way they consider that the spiritual punishment -- that is to say, the torture and punishment of existence -- is to be subjected to the world of nature; to be veiled from God; to be brutal and ignorant; to fall into carnal lusts; to be absorbed in animal frailties; to be characterized with dark qualities, such as falsehood, tyranny, cruelty, attachment to the affairs of the world, and being immersed in satanic ideas. For them, these are the greatest punishments and tortures.

Likewise, the rewards of the other world are the eternal life which is clearly mentioned in all the Holy Books, the divine perfections, the eternal bounties and everlasting felicity. The rewards of the other world are the perfections and the peace obtained in the spiritual worlds after leaving this world, while the rewards of this life are the real luminous perfections which are realized in this world, and which are the cause of eternal life, for they are the very progress of existence. It is like the man who passes from the embryonic world to the state of maturity and becomes the manifestation of these words: "Blessed, therefore, be God, the most excellent of Makers."

The rewards of the other world are peace, the spiritual graces, the various spiritual gifts in the Kingdom of God, the gaining of the desires of the heart and the soul, and the meeting of God in the world of eternity. In the same way the punishments of the other world -- that is to say, the torments

244

of the other world -- consist in being deprived of the special divine blessings and the absolute bounties, and falling into the lowest degrees of existence. He who is deprived of these divine favors, although he continues after death, is considered as dead by the people of truth. (Some Answered Questions, p. 259-61)

Punishments of this life....When man does not open his mind and heart to the blessing of the spirit, but turns his soul towards the material side, towards the bodily part of his nature, then is he fallen from his high place and he becomes inferior to the inhabitants of the lower animal kingdom....For if the spiritual qualities of the soul....are never used they become atrophied, enfeebled and at least incapable, whilst the soul's material qualities alone being exercised they become terribly powerful and the unhappy misguided man

becomes more savage, more unjust, more vile, more cruel, more malevolent than the lower animals. (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 88).

The fruits of the deeds of man, i. e. the harvest of the reward of man's conduct, is gathered in the heavenly realm. But as to evolution, it is true of both the body and the spirit. Consider how many sciences, arts, discoveries and achievements have come into existence since the days of Moses till the present time through the progress of the human soul in knowledge and perfections. Similarly, how much the soul has evolved from the moral point of view. (Star of the West. Vol. VII, p. 194)

89. What is the meaning of "second birth?"

In this world he must prepare himself for the life beyond. That which he needs in the world of the Kingdom must be obtained here. Just as he prepared himself in the world of the matrix by acquiring forces necessary in this sphere of existence, so, likewise, the indispensable forces of the divine existence must be potentially attained in this world....That world beyond is a world of sanctity and radiance; therefore, it is necessary that in this world he should acquire these divine attributes. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 221)

Know thou, verily, man before reaching (spiritual) maturity passes his days and only apprehends trivial things which are clear on account of their exoteric indications, but when he attains full development, then he grasps the reality of things and their esoteric facts. Every day after maturity

245

is equivalent to one year before it.... (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. I, p. 166)

Man cannot free himself from the rage of the carnal passions except by the help of the Holy Spirit. (Some Answered Questions, p. 105)

...Whenever it is recorded in the Holy Books that such a one was blind and recovered his sight, the meaning is that he was inwardly blind, and that he obtained spiritual vision, or that he was ignorant and became wise, or that he was negligent and became heedful, or that he was worldly and became heavenly. As this inner sight, hearing, life and healing are eternal, they are of importance. (Some Answered Questions, p. 117-8)

Gaining rewards of this life is deliverance from animal characteristics and qualities - the characteristics of human nature - and becoming qualified with the divine characteristics which are the bounty of God. Through these rewards man attains spiritual birth and becomes a new creature. He becomes the manifestation of the verse of the Gospel where it is said of the disciples that they were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of

man, but of God. (Some Answered Questions, p. 259-62)

The honor 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 bring forth...fruit. The height of exaltation and the perfection of the vegetable world is....to progress into the animal and human world and replace that which has been exhausted in the bodies of animals and men....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....Then it is clear that the honour and exaltation of man must be something more than material riches....The root of the exaltation of man is the good is the good attributes and virtues which are the adornment of his reality....These virtues do not appear from the reality from the reality of man except through the power of God and the divine teachings, for they need supernatural power for their manifestation. (Some Answered Questions, p. 89-91)

The change in conditions, alterations and transformations

246

are necessities of the essence of beings, and essential necessities cannot be separated from the reality of things. So it is absolutely impossible to separate heat from fire, humidity from water, or light from the sun, for they are essential necessities....The existence of the world may be compared to that of a man, and the Prophets and Messengers of God to skillful doctors. The human being cannot remain in one condition. (Some Answered Questions, p. 107-8)

There are certain names....by which mankind is regenerated and quickened with a new birth. This is the second birth mentioned in the heavenly Books. Its accomplishment is through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The resuscitation or rebirth of the spirit of man is through the science of the love of God. It is through the efficacy of the water of life....Reflect upon the material springtime....Everything appears endowed with a newness of life; a new animus and spirit is everywhere visible....Even so is the spiritual springtime when it comes. When the holy, divine Manifestations or Prophets appear in the world, a cycle of radiance, an age of mercy dawns. Everything is renewed.... (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 271-2)

To gain control over physical bodies is an extremely easy matter, but to bring spirits within the bonds of serenity is a most arduous undertaking....In this century of the latter times Bahá'u'lláh has appeared and so resuscitated spirits....Through a natural and mere human power this is impossible. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 271)

90. What is understood by "baptism?"

Baptism is a symbol of repentance.... Repentance is the return from disobedience to obedience. Man, after remoteness and deprivation from God, repents and undergoes purification.... In this case water does not signify material water, for elsewhere it is explicitly said baptism is with spirit and with fire....Spirit is the bounty of God; the water is knowledge and life; and the fire is the love of God....Christ desired that this institution of John should be used at that time....He, Himself conformed to it in order to awaken the people and to complete the law of the former religions....In the cycle of Bahá'u'lláh there is no longer need of this symbol (Some Answered Questions, p. 104-6)

247

91. What is the truth of the story of Adam and Eve and of his eating the fruit of the tree?

....The story of Adam and Eve.... and their expulsion from Paradise, must be thought of simply as a symbol. It contains divine mysteries and universal meanings, and it is capable of marvelous explanations. Only those who are initiated into mysteries, and those who are near the Court of the All-Powerful, are aware of these secrets.... The tree of good and evil signifies the human world.... In the human world light and darkness, good and evil, exist as opposite conditions. Adam signifies the spirit of Adam, and Eve his soul; the tree is the human world....When through the serpent (attachment to the human world) the soul (Eve) and spirit (Adam) entered the human world, he came out from the paradise of freedom and fell into the world of bondage. Attachment to this world has become the cause of bondage of spirits....This is one of the meanings....Reflect until you discover the others. (Some Answered Questions, p. 139-44)

92. What are some of the proofs of the immortality of the Spirit?

The logical proof of the immortality of the spirit is this, that no sign can come from a nonexistent thing -- that is to say, it is impossible that from absolute nonexistence signs should appear -- for the signs are the consequence of an existence, and the consequence depends upon the existence of the principle....A non-existing tree yields no fruit....No effect, no trace, no influence remains of any being after its members are dispersed and its elements are decomposed, whether it be a mineral, a vegetable or an animal. There is only the human reality and the spirit of man which, after the disintegration of the members, dispersing of the particles, and the destruction of the composition, persists and continues to act and to have power. (Some Answered Questions, p. 261-2)

Know that the power and comprehension of the human spirit are of two kinds.... One way is through instruments and organs.... the spirit is the seer, through the eyes; the spirit is the hearer, through the ear; the spirit is the speaker, through the tongue. The other manifestation of the powers and actions of the

spirit is without instruments and organs. For example, in the state of sleep without eyes it sees.... In the time of sleep this body is as though dead.... the powers of man have become inactive, but the spirit lives and sub-

248

sists. Nay, its penetration is increased, its flight is higher, and its intelligence is greater.... Our body is like the cage, and the spirit is like the bird. (Some Answered Questions, p. 227)

The body may have all the imperfections. Nevertheless, the spirit in its original state....be eternal and perpetual....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....The spirit of man.... is sanctified from entrance and exit, which are bodily conditions. (Some Answered Questions, p. 265-6)

Life is the expression of composition and death the expression of decomposition.... As the spirit of man is not composed of material elements, it is not subject to decomposition and, therefore, has no death. It is self-evident that the human spirit is simple, single and not composed....and it is a philosophical axiom that the individual, indivisible atom is indestructible. At the most it passes through a process of construction and reconstruction. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 300)

It can manifest itself in all forms at the same time. It is not transferred from one body to another. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 301)

It is manifest that beyond this material body, man is endowed with another reality which is the world of exemplars constituting the heavenly body of man. In speaking, man says, "I saw," "I spoke," "I went." Who is this "I"? It is obvious that this "I" is different from this body. It is clear that when man is thinking, it is as though he were consulting with some other person. With whom is he consulting? It is evident that it is another reality or one aside from this body....and that reality in man communicates its opinion to him concerning the point at issue. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 460)

All phenomena of the material world are subject to mortality....but the immortal spirit does not belong to the phenomenal world....If the spirit of man belonged to the elemental existence, the eye could see it, the ear could hear it, the hand touch....It does not belong to the elemental world and therefore, is beyond death or mortality, which are

249

inseparable from that material realm of existence. If being is not subject to the limitation of material life, it is not subject to mortality. (Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 320)

Wert thou to ponder in thine heart the behavior of the Prophets of God thou wouldst assuredly and readily testify that there must needs be other worlds

besides this world. The majority of the truly wise and learned have, throughout the ages, as it hath been recorded by the Pen of Glory in the Tablet of Wisdom, borne witness to the truth of that which the holy Writ of God hath revealed. Even the materialists have testified in their writings to the wisdom of these divinely-appointed Messengers, and have regarded the references made by the Prophets to Paradise, to hell fire, to future reward and punishment, to have been actuated by a desire to educate and uplift the souls of men... These Gems of Detachment are acclaimed by some as the embodiments of wisdom, while others believe them to be the mouthpiece of God Himself. How could such Souls have consented to surrender themselves unto their enemies if they believed all the worlds of God to have been reduced to this earthly life? Would they have willingly suffered such afflictions and torments as no man hath ever experienced or witnessed? (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 157-8)

One of the created phenomena is the dream. Behold how many secrets are deposited therein, how many wisdoms treasured up, how many worlds are hidden therein! See, how you sleep in a dwelling, the doors of which are barred. Of a sudden, you find yourself in a remote city; you enter without moving the limbs or taxing the body; you see things without painning the eyes, and hear without straining the ears and converse without the use of the tongue. And often it comes to pass that, ten years afterwards, you will experience, in the actual world, the very things that you had visioned in a given night's dream.

Now there are many wisdoms in a dream which none but the people of this Valley can comprehend in their true relationships. First, (let us ask) what is this world in which without the eyes, the ears, the hands and the tongue, the functions of these organs are performed? Second, how is it that in the actual world, you perceive today the effect of the dream which you visioned while asleep some ten years past? Now ponder the difference between the two worlds and the mysteries which they conceal....

250

God the exalted has deposited these signs in men, to the end that philosophers shall not deny the mysteries of the Life beyond or slight that whereunto they have been promised.... O Son, if thou art able not to sleep, then thou art able not to die. And if thou art able not to waken after sleep, then thou shalt be able not to rise after death?" (Seven Valleys and Four Valleys, p. 32-5)

O Son of Man! Thou art My dominion and My dominion perisheth not; wherefore fearest thou thy perishing? Thou art My light and My light shall never be extinguished; why dost thou dread extinction? Thou art My glory and My glory fadeth not; thou art My robe and My robe shall never be outworn. Abide then in thy love for Me, that thou mayest find Me in the realm of glory. (Hidden Words, 14 Arabic)

O Son of My Handmaid! Didst thou behold immortal sovereignty, thou wouldst strive to pass from this fleeting world. But to conceal the one from thee and to reveal the other is a mystery which none but the pure in heart can

comprehend. (Hidden Words, 41 Persian)

Total annihilation is an impossibility. At most, composition is ever subject to decomposition or disintegration....This is the law of creation in its endless forms and infinite variety of expression....As existence can never become non-existence there is no death for man.... The rational proof of this is that the atoms of the material elements are transferable from one form of existence to another, from one degree and kingdom to another, lower or higher. For example, an atom of the soil or dust of earth may traverse the kingdoms from mineral to man by successive incorporations into the bodies of the organisms of those kingdoms....Throughout these degrees.... it retains its atomic existence and is never annihilated nor relegated to nonexistence.... Death, therefore, is applicable to a change or transference from one degree or condition to another.... Through his ignorance man fears death, but the death he shrinks from is imaginary and absolutely unreal.... The bestowal and grace of God have quickened the realm of existence with life and being. For existence there is neither change nor transformation; existence is ever existence; it can never be translated into nonexistence. It is gradation; a degree below a higher degree is considered as nonexistence.... The purpose is this: that the everlasting bestowal of God vouchsafed to man is never subject to

251

corruption. Inasmuch as He has endowed the phenomenal world with being, it is impossible for that world to become nonbeing, for it is the very genesis of God; it is in the realm of origination; it is a creational and not a subjective world, and the bounty descending upon it is continuous and permanent.... If we say that the bestowal of existence ceases or falters, it is equivalent to saying that the sun can exist with cessation of its effulgence. Is this possible?... The conception of annihilation is a factor in human degradation, a cause of human debasement and lowliness, a source of human fear and abjection. It has been conducive to the dispersion and weakening of human thought, whereas the realization of existence and continuity has upraised man to sublimity of ideals, established the foundations of human progress and stimulated the development of heavenly virtues....Spiritual existence is absolute immortality, completeness and unchangeable being....(Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 84-7)

93. What is meant by the "Return" spoken of by the Prophets?

Not the personality, but the reality of the perfections, is meant -- that is to say, the same perfections that were in Elias existed in John the Baptist. (Mark 9 vs. 11-13; Matthew 17 vs 13) Therefore, John the Baptist was the promised Elias. In this case not the essence,[individuality] but the qualities, are regarded. (Some Answered Questions, p. 152)

O brother, behold how the inner mysteries of "rebirth," of "return," and of

"resurrection" have each, through these all-sufficing, these unanswerable, and conclusive utterances, been unveiled and unravelled before thine eyes....Therefore, those who in every subsequent Dispensation preceded the rest of mankind in embracing the Faith of God, who quaffed the clear waters of knowledge at the hand of the divine Beauty, and attained the loftiest summits of faith and certitude, these can be regarded, in name, in reality, in deeds, in words, and in rank, as the "return" of those who in a former Dispensation had achieved similar distinctions. For whatsoever the people of a former Dispensation have manifested, the same hath been shown by the people of this latter generation. Consider the rose: whether it blossometh in the East or in the West, it is none the less a rose. For what mattereth in this respect is not the outward shape and form of the rose, but rather the smell and fragrance which it doth impart. Purge thy sight, therefore, from all earthly limitations, that thou mayest behold them all as the bearers of one Name, the exponents of one

252

Cause, the manifestations of one Self, and the revealers of one Truth, and that thou mayest apprehend the mystic "return" of the Words of God as unfolded by these utterances. (Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 158-9)

The mysteries of man's physical death and of his return have not been divulged, and still remain unread. By the righteousness of God! Were they to be revealed, they would evoke such fear and sorrow that some would perish, while others would be so filled with gladness as to wish for death, and beseech, with unceasing longing, the one true God -- exalted be His glory -- to hasten their end. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 345)

Once in a about a thousand years shall this City be renewed and adorned.... That City is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation. In the days of Moses it was the Pentateuch; in the days of Jesus, the Gospel; in the days of Muhammad, the Messenger of God, the Qur'án; in this day, the Bayan; and in the Dispensation of Him Whom God will make manifest, His own Book -- the Book unto which all the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book that standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 269-70)

94. What is the truth of the theory of reincarnation?

The outward is the expression of the inward; the earth is the mirror of the Kingdom; the material world corresponds to the spiritual world....In the sensible world appearances are not repeated, for no being in any respect is identical with, nor the same as, another being. The sign of singleness is visible and apparent in all things....The return of material beings with regard

to species is evident....by the composition of new elements, the species has returned. It is the same with the human body, which after decomposition becomes disintegrated, and the elements which composed it are dispersed.... They are dissipated in this vast space....It may be that one of the particles of the former individual has entered into the composition of the succeeding individual, but these particles have not been conserved and kept, exactly and completely....so that they may be combined again....If we say that this reincarnation is for acquiring perfections so that matter may become refined and delicate, and that the light of the spirit may be manifest in it with the greatest perfection, this also is mere imagination....Change of nature is impos-

253

sible through renewal and return. (Some Answered Questions, p. 284)

The material worlds are terminated at the end of the arc of descent and.... the condition of man is at the end of the arc of descent, and at the beginning of the arc of ascent, which is opposite to the Supreme Center. Also, from the beginning to the end of the arc of ascent, there are numerous spiritual degrees.... The point of the compass in describing a circle makes no retrograde motion, for this would be contrary to the natural movement and the divine order....Moreover, this material world has not such value....that man....will desire a second time to fall into this snare....the worth and true ability of man becomes apparent and visible by traversing the degrees of existence, and not by returning. When the shell is once opened, it will be apparent and evident whether it contains a pearl or worthless matter. (Some Answered Questions, p. 328-9)

The return of the soul after death is contrary to the natural movement, and opposed to the divine system. (Some Answered Questions, p. 329)

The spirit is an incorporeal being, and does not enter and come forth, but is only connected with the body as the sun is with the mirror. If it were thus, and the spirit by returning to this material world could pass through the degrees and attain to essential perfection, it would be better if God prolonged the life of the spirit in the material world....it then would not be necessary for it to taste of the cup of death, or to acquire a second life....divine worlds are infinite. If the divine worlds culminated in this material world, creation would be futile: nay, existence would be pure child's play....Those who believe in reincarnation think that the spiritual worlds are restricted to the worlds of human imagination. (Some Answered Questions, p. 330-1)

Believing in reincarnation is one of the old tenets held by most nations and

creeds, as well as by the Greek and Roman philosophers and wise men, the old Egyptian and the chief Assyrians. But all these sayings and superstitions are vanity in the sight of God.

The greatest [argument] produced by those who held to reincarnation has been this: "That it is necessary to the justice of God to give every one his due.

Now everybody who

254

is afflicted by any calamity is said to have sinned; but when a little child, which is still in the womb of its mother and hath just been formed, is found to be blind, deaf or imperfect, how could it have committed any sin that we might say this imperfection is given to it as a punishment therefor -- so, though such a child hath no done outwardly any sin in the womb of its mother, yet [they say] it must have sinned when it was in its former body, which hath caused it to suffer this punishment."

Indeed, these people have been negligent of the fact that had the creation been carried out in a uniform fashion, how could the statement be true, that "God doeth whatever He wisheth and God doeth whatever he desireth!" Though the fact of "Return" is mentioned in the Divine Books, by this is intended the return of the qualities, characters, perfections, truths and lights (of the past age), which re-appear in every age, and not (the return) of certain persons and souls. For example: If we say this lamp is the return of that of last night, or that the last year's flower hath returned in the garden (this year), in this sense the return of the individual, or identity, or personality is not meant; nay, rather, it is intended that the same qualities and states existing in that lamp or flower, which are now seen in this lamp or flower, have returned. That is, the same perfections and virtues and properties which existed in the past springtime have returned during this present springtime. For instance: When one says, these fruits are the same as those of last year; in this sense, he hath reference to the freshness and delicacy of the fruit, which hath returned, although there is no doubt that the identical fruit of last year hath not returned.

Have the friends of God found such enjoyments and repose during their existence on this visible earth, that they might wish to have their return renewed and repeated constantly?... No! the friends of the Beauty of El-Baha never seek any recompense or reward except the meeting and the visit (of God) in the Kingdom of El-Baha; and they never walk but in the valley of desire to attain the Supreme Height. They only wish the immortal blessing and the eternal gift, which are sanctified above the worldly understanding.

Because, when thou lookest with the iron sight, thou wilt find that all mankind is suffering in this earthly world; there is no one in such tranquility that this (state) might have been a reward for his good deeds in a former life and there is no soul so happy that this might be the fruit of his past pain!

255

Had the life of a man in his spiritual being been only confined to his life in this world, the creation would have proved useless; the divine qualities would have no result and effect; nay, all things, created beings and the world of creation would have proved abortive....As the usefulness and powers of the life (of a child) were not seen in that dark and narrow world (of the womb).... so likewise, reward and punishment, paradise and hell, and the requital of deeds and actions done by it in the present life become manifest and evident when it is transferred to the world to come....Therefore, know thou that the True One possesseth invisible worlds which human meditation is unable to comprehend and the intellect of man hath no power to imagine. (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá Vol. III, p. 642-5)

95. What are the Five Aspects of Spirit?

Vegetable spirit: This is a power which results from the combination of elements and the mingling of substances by the decree of the Supreme God, and from the influence, the effect and connection of other existences. When these substances and elements are separated from each other, the power of growth also ceases to exist. So, to use another figure, electricity results from the combination of elements, and when these elements are separated, the electric force is dispersed and lost.

Animal spirit; which also results from the mingling and combination of elements. But this combination is more complete, and through the decree of the Almighty Lord a perfect mingling is obtained, and the animal spirit -- in other words, the power of the senses -- is produced....After the dissociation and decomposition of the combined elements this spirit also will naturally disappear.

The human spirit may be likened to the bounty of the sun shining on crystal....It is the most solid construction, the noblest combination, the most perfect existence. It grows and develops through the animal spirit. This perfected body can be compared to a mirror, and the human spirit to the sun....If the crystal breaks the bounty of the sun continues....This spirit has the power of discovery; it encompasses all things....But the spirit of man has two aspects: one divine, one satanic -- that is to say, it is capable of the utmost perfection, or it is capable of the utmost imperfection. If it acquires virtues, it is the most noble of the existing beings; and if it acquires vices, it becomes the most degraded existence.

The heavenly spirit is the spirit of faith and the bounty

256

of God; it comes from the breath of the Holy Spirit, and by the divine power it becomes the cause of eternal life....

The Holy Spirit is the mediator between God and His creatures.... the Holy Spirit is the mediator of the Holy Light from the Sun of Reality, which it gives to the sanctified realities. It is adorned with all the divine perfections. Every time it appears, the world is renewed, and a new cycle is

founded.... (Some Answered Questions, p. 163-6)

The Holy Spirit is the very cause of the life of man; without the Holy Spirit he would have no intellect, he would be unable to acquire his scientific knowledge by which his great influence over the rest of creation is gained....The Holy Spirit it is, which through....the Prophets of God, teaches spiritual values to Man and enables him to attain eternal Life. (The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 52-3).

257

Compilations in Bahá'í Answers taken from the following books:

Writings of Bahá'u'lláh: -

Kitáb-i-Iqán - 1931 Edition

Hidden Words - Arabic and Persian - 1932 Edition

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh

Seven Valleys and Four Valleys

Prayers and Meditations

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

The Bahá'í World Faith

Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: -

Some Answered Questions - 1930 Edition

The Mysterious Forces of Civilization

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. I

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. II

Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. III

The Wisdom of 'Abdu'l-Bahá - 1924 Edition

'Abdu'l-Bahá in London

Promulgation of Universal Peace - 1925 Edition

Bahá'í Peace Program

Writings of Shoghi Effendi: -

Bahá'í Administration - 1923 Edition

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh

The Advent of Divine Justice

The Promised Day is Come

God Passes By

Messages from the Guardian

Bahá'í Publications: -

The Bahá'í World, Vol. II

The Bahá'í World, Vol. III

The Bahá'í World, Vol. V

Star of the West, Vol. VII

Star of the West, Vol. X

Star of the West, Vol. XIII

Star of the West, Vol. XIV

Bahá'í News Letter 98 and 192

Writings about the Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era by J. E. Esslemont

The Dawn Breakers, Nabíl's Narrative.

258

METADATA

Views45226 views since posted 2003-12-03; last edit 2025-01-30 14:22 UTC;

previous at archive.org.../kelsey_bahai_answers;

URLs changed in 2010, see archive.org.../bahai-library.org

Language

English

Permission

public domain

History

Typed 2003-11 by Ehsan Bayat.

Share

Shortlink: bahai-library.com/2347

Citation: ris/2347

select Collection:

Archives

Articles

Articles-unpublished

Audio

Bibliographies

BIC

Biographies

Books

Chronologies
Compilations
Compilations-NSA
Compilations-personal
Documents
East-asia
Encyclopedia
Essays
Etc
Excerpts
Fiction
Glossaries
Guardian
Histories
Introductory
Letters
Maps
Music
Newspapers
NSA-documents
NSA-letters
Personal
Pilgrims
Poetry
Presentations
Resources
Reviews
Scripts
Software
Statistics
Study
Talks
Theses
Transcripts
Translations
UHJ-documents
UHJ-letters
Video
Visual
Writings

home

sitemap

series

chronology

search:

author

title

date

tags

adv. search

languages

inventory

bibliography

abbreviations

links

about

contact

RSS

new

— Baha'i Answers (Used by permission of the curator)