

# Bahá'í Sacred Writings

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Preface

In every age, God has conveyed His guidance to humanity through the sacred Word, as revealed by His Manifestations. And as Bahá’u’lláh explains:

“The purpose underlying the revelation of every heavenly Book, nay, of every divinely revealed verse, is to endue all men with righteousness and understanding, so that peace and tranquillity may be firmly established amongst them.” To attain that end, each Divine Educator has reaffirmed the eternal truths of the oneness of God and the purpose of life for the individual soul and has set down laws and teachings to guide humanity through the successive stages of social evolution. Now, in this, the latest stage in the process of progressive revelation, Bahá’u’lláh, the Manifestation of God for this day, has revealed the teachings and laws necessary to gather together the peoples of the world under the banner of the oneness of humanity and guide them to raise up a global civilization that will ensure the security and welfare of all, ushering in the long-promised era of universal peace.

The Báb, the Herald of Bahá’u’lláh, wrote: “There is no paradise more wondrous for any soul than to be exposed to God’s Manifestation in His Day, to hear His verses and believe in them, to attain His presence, which is naught but the presence of God, to sail upon the sea of the heavenly kingdom of His good-pleasure, and to partake of the choice fruits of the paradise of His divine Oneness.” This vision of paradise is increasingly becoming a reality for millions of souls, in all parts of the world, who join an ever-expanding multitude representing the diversity of the entire human family, walking a path of learning and action in service to the common good and the betterment of the world. In their neighbourhoods and villages, towns and cities, they have encountered the Creative Word in devotional meetings, the courses of the

training institute, and classes for the young, and have experienced its transformative effect upon hearts and lives.

“The Word”, Bahá’u’lláh writes, “is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked.” In another passage He compares the Word of God to a sapling, whose roots have been implanted in human hearts. “It is incumbent upon you to foster its growth through the living waters of wisdom, of sanctified and holy words, so that its root may become firmly fixed and its branches may spread out as high as the heavens and beyond.” The aim of this volume is to extend the initial encounters with the Creative Word in both breadth and depth, vastly expanding access to Bahá’u’lláh’s Words and teachings, that the sapling may grow into a mighty tree.

Bahá’í Sacred Writings contains 257 selections from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, which span a period of almost four decades, concluding with His passing in 1892, and 241 passages from the Writings of His son and successor, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, including a few selections from His utterances, which illuminate important aspects of Bahá’u’lláh’s life and teachings. Within these pages, readers will find many of the passages with which they are already familiar from institute courses, often set within the context of the books and Tablets from which they are taken. Included as well are a number of newly translated excerpts published for the first time in this volume. Although representing but a small portion drawn from the vast ocean of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, the volume provides an overview of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings, along with extensive elucidations by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, on a wide range of themes including the relationship between God and humanity through His Manifestations, the mission of Bahá’u’lláh, the nature of His Covenant, the process of personal spiritual transformation, and teachings for social change and the raising of a just and peaceful global civilization.

May this volume be of assistance and inspiration to all who aspire to be protagonists in the building of communities that serve as a refuge and source of revitalization and hope for every soul.

## I. Selections from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh

1

### God and His Manifestations

#### God’s Unknowable Essence

1.1 Lauded and glorified art Thou, O Lord, my God! How can I make mention of Thee, assured as I am that no tongue, however deep its wisdom, can befittingly magnify Thy name, nor can the bird of the human heart, however great its longing, ever hope to ascend into the heaven of Thy majesty and knowledge.

1.2 If I describe Thee, O my God, as Him Who is the All-Perceiving, I find myself compelled to admit that they Who are the highest Embodiments of perception have been created by virtue of Thy behest. And if I extol Thee as Him Who is the All-Wise, I, likewise, am forced to recognize that the Wellsprings of wisdom have themselves been generated through the operation of Thy Will. And if I proclaim Thee as the Incomparable One, I soon discover that

they Who are the inmost Essence of oneness have been sent down by Thee and are but the evidences of Thine handiwork. And if I acclaim Thee as the Knower of all things, I must confess that they Who are the Quintessence of knowledge are but the creation and instruments of Thy Purpose.

1.3 Exalted, immeasurably exalted, art Thou above the strivings of mortal man to unravel Thy mystery, to describe Thy glory, or to even hint at the nature of Thine Essence. For whatever such strivings may accomplish, they can never hope to transcend the limitations imposed upon Thy creatures, inasmuch as these efforts are actuated by Thy decree, and are begotten of Thine invention. The loftiest sentiments which the holiest of saints can express in praise of Thee, and the deepest wisdom which the most learned of men can utter in their attempts to comprehend Thy nature, all revolve around that Centre Which is wholly subjected to Thy sovereignty, Which adoreth Thy Beauty, and is propelled through the movement of Thy Pen....

1.4 Far, far from Thy glory be what mortal man can affirm of Thee, or attribute unto Thee, or the praise with which he can glorify Thee! Whatever duty Thou hast prescribed unto Thy servants of extolling to the utmost Thy majesty and glory is but a token of Thy grace unto them, that they may be enabled to ascend unto the station conferred upon their own inmost being, the station of the knowledge of their own selves.

1.5 No one else besides Thee hath, at any time, been able to fathom Thy mystery, or to befittingly extol Thy greatness. Unsearchable and high above the praise of men wilt Thou remain forever. There is none other God but Thee, the Inaccessible, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Holy of Holies.

2.1 I testify that Thou art God, and that there is none other God besides Thee. Thou hast from eternity been immeasurably exalted above the praise of any one except Thee, and far above the description of any of Thy creatures. All created things have borne witness to Thy unity, and every dweller in Thy kingdom hath confessed Thy oneness. The essence of the apprehension of the assured among Thy creatures can never attain unto Thee, and the gem-like utterances with which Thy people have praised and glorified Thee can never hope to ascend unto the atmosphere of Thy holiness. For men's apprehension of Thee is but the apprehension of Thine own creation; how can it reach up to Thee? And all human praise and glorification of Thee pertain unto Thy servants; how can they be deemed worthy of the court of Thy oneness?

2.2 I swear by Thy glory! The quintessence of knowledge is powerless to comprehend Thy nature, and the inmost reality of every praise of Thee falleth short of the seat of Thy great glory and of Thine all-compelling power. Every utterance that seeketh to describe Thee, and every knowledge that attempteth to comprehend Thee, is but an expression of Thine own creating, and is begotten by Thy will, and fashioned in conformity with Thy purpose.

3.1 Behold, how many are the mysteries that lie as yet unravelled within the tabernacle of the knowledge of God, and how numerous the gems of His wisdom that are still concealed in His inviolable treasures! Shouldst thou ponder this in thine heart, thou wouldst realize that His handiwork knoweth neither beginning nor end. The domain of His decree is too vast for the tongue of mortals to describe, or for the bird of the human mind to traverse; and the

dispensations of His providence are too mysterious for the mind of man to comprehend.

4.1 Praise be to God, the All-Possessing, the King of incomparable glory, a praise which is immeasurably above the understanding of all created things, and is exalted beyond the grasp of the minds of men. None else besides Him hath ever been able to sing adequately His praise, nor will any man succeed at any time in describing the full measure of His glory. Who is it that can claim to have attained the heights of His exalted Essence, and what mind can measure the depths of His unfathomable mystery? From each and every revelation emanating from the Source of His glory, holy and never-ending evidences of unimaginable splendour have appeared, and out of every manifestation of His invincible power oceans of eternal light have poured. How immensely exalted are the wondrous testimonies of His almighty sovereignty, a glimmer of which, if it but touched them, would utterly consume all that are in the heavens and in the earth! How indescribably lofty are the tokens of His consummate power, a single sign of which, however inconsiderable, must transcend the comprehension of whatsoever hath, from the beginning that hath no beginning, been brought into being, or will be created in the future till the end that hath no end. All the Embodiments of His Names wander in the wilderness of search, athirst and eager to discover His Essence, and all the Manifestations of His Attributes implore Him, from the Sinai of Holiness, to unravel His mystery.

4.2 A drop of the billowing ocean of His endless mercy hath adorned all creation with the ornament of existence, and a breath wafted from His peerless Paradise hath invested all beings with the robe of His sanctity and glory. A sprinkling from the unfathomed deep of His sovereign and all-pervasive Will hath, out of utter nothingness, called into being a creation which is infinite in its range and deathless in its duration. The wonders of His bounty can never cease, and the stream of His merciful grace can never be arrested. The process of His creation hath had no beginning, and can have no end.

The Relationship Between God and His Manifestations

5.1 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 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.

6.1 The Person of the Manifestation hath ever been the representative and mouthpiece of God. He, in truth, is the Dayspring of God's most excellent

Titles, and the Dawning-Place of His exalted Attributes. If any be set up by His side as peers, if they be regarded as identical with His Person, how can it, then, be maintained that the Divine Being is one and incomparable, that His Essence is indivisible and peerless? Meditate on that which We have, through the power of truth, revealed unto thee, and be thou of them that comprehend its meaning.

7.1 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." ...

7.2 The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to His saying, "His grace hath transcended all things; My grace hath encompassed them all", hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence.

7.3 These sanctified Mirrors, these Daysprings of ancient glory, are, one and all, the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of Divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the Light that can never fade.... 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.

7.4 These attributes of God are not, and have never been, vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favoured, His holy and chosen Messengers are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light. Even as He hath revealed: "Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel the others."

7.5 It hath, therefore, become manifest and evident that within the tabernacles of these Prophets and chosen Ones of God the light of His infinite names and exalted attributes hath been reflected, even though the light of some of these attributes may or may not be outwardly revealed from these luminous Temples to the eyes of men. That a certain attribute of God hath not been outwardly manifested by these Essences of Detachment doth in no wise imply that they Who

are the Daysprings of God's attributes and the Treasuries of His holy names did not actually possess it. Therefore, these illuminated Souls, these beautiful 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.

8.1 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 Dayspring 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.

9.1 Regard thou the one true God as One Who is apart from, and immeasurably exalted above, all created things. The whole universe reflecteth His glory, while He is Himself independent of, and transcendeth His creatures. This is the true meaning of Divine unity. He Who is the Eternal Truth is the one Power Who exerciseth undisputed sovereignty over the world of being, Whose image is reflected in the mirror of the entire creation. All existence is dependent upon Him, and from Him is derived the source of the sustenance of all things. This is what is meant by Divine unity; this is its fundamental principle....

9.2 The essence of belief in Divine unity consisteth in regarding Him Who is the Manifestation of God and Him Who is the invisible, the inaccessible, the unknowable Essence as one and the same. By this is meant that whatever pertaineth to the former, all His acts and doings, whatever He ordaineth or forbiddeth, should be considered, in all their aspects, and under all circumstances, and without any reservation, as identical with the Will of God Himself. This is the loftiest station to which a true believer in the unity of God can ever hope to attain. Blessed is the man that reacheth this station, and is of them that are steadfast in their belief.

10.1 These Prophets and chosen Ones of God are the recipients and revealers of all the unchangeable attributes and names of God. They are the mirrors that truly and faithfully reflect the light of God. Whatsoever is applicable to them is in reality applicable to God, Himself, Who is both the Visible and the Invisible. The knowledge of Him, Who is the Origin of all things, and attainment unto Him, are impossible save through knowledge of, and attainment unto, these luminous Beings who proceed from the Sun of Truth. By attaining, therefore, to the presence of these holy Luminaries, the "Presence of God" Himself is attained.

The Oneness of the Manifestations of God

11.1 Know thou assuredly that the essence of all the Prophets of God is one and the same. Their unity is absolute. God, the Creator, saith: There is no distinction whatsoever among the Bearers of My Message. They all have but one purpose; their secret is the same secret. To prefer one in honour to another,

to exalt certain ones above the rest, is in no wise to be permitted. Every true Prophet hath regarded His Message as fundamentally the same as the Revelation of every other Prophet gone before Him. If any man, therefore, should fail to comprehend this truth, and should consequently indulge in vain and unseemly language, no one whose sight is keen and whose understanding is enlightened would ever allow such idle talk to cause him to waver in his belief.

11.2 The measure of the revelation of the Prophets of God in this world, however, must differ. Each and every one of them hath been the Bearer of a distinct Message, and hath been commissioned to reveal Himself through specific acts. It is for this reason that they appear to vary in their greatness. Their Revelation may be likened unto the light of the moon that sheddeth its radiance upon the earth. Though every time it appeareth, it revealeth a fresh measure of its brightness, yet its inherent splendour can never diminish, nor can its light suffer extinction.

11.3 It is clear and evident, therefore, that any apparent variation in the intensity of their light is not inherent in the light itself, but should rather be attributed to the varying receptivity of an ever-changing world. Every Prophet Whom the Almighty and Peerless Creator hath purposed to send to the peoples of the earth hath been entrusted with a Message, and charged to act in a manner, that would best meet the requirements of the age in which He appeared.

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

13.1 Furthermore, it is evident to thee that the Bearers of the trust of God are made manifest unto the peoples of the earth as the Exponents of a new Cause and the Bearers of a new Message. Inasmuch as these Birds of the Celestial Throne are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they therefore are regarded as one soul and the same person. For they all drink from the one Cup of the love of God, and all partake of the fruit of the same Tree of Oneness. These Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity. In this respect, if thou callest them all by one name, and dost ascribe to them the same attribute, thou hast not erred from the truth. Even as He hath revealed: "No distinction do We make between any of His Messengers!" For they one and all summon the people of the earth to acknowledge the Unity of God, and herald unto them the Kawthar of an infinite grace and bounty. They are all invested with the robe of Prophethood, and honoured with the mantle of glory....

13.2 It is clear and evident to thee that all the Prophets are the Temples of the Cause of God, Who have appeared clothed in divers attire. If thou wilt observe with discriminating eyes, thou wilt behold them all abiding in the same tabernacle, soaring in the same heaven, seated upon the same throne, uttering the same speech, and proclaiming the same Faith. Such is the unity of those

Essences of being, those Luminaries of infinite and immeasurable splendour. Wherefore, should one of these Manifestations of Holiness proclaim saying: “I am the return of all the Prophets,” He verily speaketh the truth. In like manner, in every subsequent Revelation, the return of the former Revelation is a fact, the truth of which is firmly established....

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

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

13.5 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.

13.6 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.”

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

13.8 Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare:

“I am God!”

He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto.

For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His name and His attributes, are made manifest in the world.

Thus, He hath revealed:

“Those shafts were God’s, not Thine!”

And also He saith:

“In truth, they who plighted fealty unto thee, really plighted that fealty unto God.”

And were any of them to voice the utterance:

“I am the Messenger of God,”

He also speaketh the truth, the indubitable truth.

Even as He saith:

“Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but He is the Messenger of God.”

Viewed in this light, they are all but Messengers of that ideal King, that unchangeable Essence.

And were they all to proclaim:

“I am the Seal of the Prophets,” they verily utter but the truth, beyond the faintest shadow of doubt.

For they are all but one person, one soul, one spirit, one being, one revelation.

They are all the manifestation of the “Beginning” and the “End”, the “First” and the “Last”, the “Seen” and “Hidden”—all of which pertain to Him Who is the innermost Spirit of Spirits and eternal Essence of Essences.

And were they to say:

“We are the servants of God,” this also is a manifest and indisputable fact.

For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain.

Thus in moments in which these Essences of being were deeply immersed beneath the oceans of ancient and everlasting holiness, or when they soared to the loftiest summits of divine mysteries, they claimed their utterance to be the Voice of divinity, the Call of God Himself.

Were the eye of discernment to be opened, it would recognize that in this very state, they have considered themselves utterly effaced and non-existent in the face of Him Who is the All-Pervading, the Incorruptible.

Methinks they have regarded themselves as utter nothingness, and deemed their mention in that Court an act of blasphemy.

For the slightest whispering of self, within such a Court, is an evidence of self-assertion and independent existence.

In the eyes of them that have attained unto that Court, such a suggestion is itself a grievous transgression.

How much more grievous would it be, were aught else to be mentioned in that Presence, were man's heart, his tongue, his mind, or his soul, to be busied with anyone but the Well-Beloved, were his eyes to behold any countenance other than His beauty, were his ear to be inclined to any melody but His voice, and were his feet to tread any way but His way.

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

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

The Purpose of God's Manifestations

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

14.2 These energies with which the Day-Star of Divine bounty and Source of heavenly guidance hath endowed the reality of man lie, however, latent within him, even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp. The radiance of these energies may be obscured by worldly desires even as the light of the sun can be concealed beneath the dust and dross which cover the mirror. Neither the candle nor the lamp can be lighted through their own unaided efforts, nor can it ever be possible for the

mirror to free itself from its dross. It is clear and evident that until a fire is kindled the lamp will never be ignited, and unless the dross is blotted out from the face of the mirror it can never represent the image of the sun nor reflect its light and glory.

14.3 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....

The second station is the human station, exemplified by the following verses:

“I am but a man like you.”

“Say, praise be to my Lord!

Am I more than a man, an apostle?”

These Essences of Detachment, these resplendent Realities are the channels of God’s all-pervasive grace.

Led by the light of unfailing guidance, and invested with supreme sovereignty, They are commissioned to use the inspiration of Their words, the effusions of Their infallible grace and the sanctifying breeze of Their Revelation for the cleansing of every longing heart and receptive spirit from the dross and dust of earthly cares and limitations.

Then, and only then, will the Trust of God, latent in the reality of man, emerge, as resplendent as the rising Orb of Divine Revelation, from behind the veil of concealment, and implant the ensign of its revealed glory upon the summits of men’s hearts.

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

14.5 Can one of sane mind ever seriously imagine that, in view of certain words the meaning of which he cannot comprehend, the portal of God’s infinite

guidance can ever be closed in the face of men? Can he ever conceive for these Divine Luminaries, these resplendent Lights either a beginning or an end? What outpouring flood can compare with the stream of His all-embracing grace, and what blessing can excel the evidences of so great and pervasive a mercy? There can be no doubt whatever that if for one moment the tide of His mercy and grace were to be withheld from the world, it would completely perish. For this reason, from the beginning that hath no beginning the portals of Divine mercy have been flung open to the face of all created things, and the clouds of Truth will continue to the end that hath no end to rain on the soil of human capacity, reality and personality their favours and bounties. Such hath been God's method continued from everlasting to everlasting.

15.1 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....

15.2 No understanding can grasp the nature of His Revelation, nor can any knowledge comprehend the full measure of His Faith. All sayings are dependent upon His sanction, and all things stand in need of His Cause. All else save Him are created by His command, and move and have their being through His law. He is the Revealer of the divine mysteries, and the Expounder of the hidden and ancient wisdom.

16.1 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.

17.1 God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquillity of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.

17.2 The Prophets of God should be regarded as physicians whose task is to foster the well-being of the world and its peoples, that, through the spirit of oneness, they may heal the sickness of a divided humanity.

To none is given the right to question their words or disparage their conduct, for they are the only ones who can claim to have understood the patient and to have correctly diagnosed its ailments.

No man, however acute his perception, can ever hope to reach the heights which

the wisdom and understanding of the Divine Physician have attained.

Little wonder, then, if the treatment prescribed by the physician in this day should not be found to be identical with that which he prescribed before.

How could it be otherwise when the ills affecting the sufferer necessitate at every stage of his sickness a special remedy?

In like manner, every time the Prophets of God have illumined the world with the resplendent radiance of the Day-Star of Divine knowledge, they have invariably summoned its peoples to embrace the light of God through such means as best befitted the exigencies of the age in which they appeared.

They were thus able to scatter the darkness of ignorance, and to shed upon the world the glory of their own knowledge.

It is towards the inmost essence of these Prophets, therefore, that the eye of every man of discernment must be directed, inasmuch as their one and only purpose hath always been to guide the erring, and give peace to the afflicted....

These are not days of prosperity and triumph.

The whole of mankind is in the grip of manifold ills.

Strive, therefore, to save its life through the wholesome medicine which the almighty hand of the unerring Physician hath prepared.

Why the People Reject God's Manifestation

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

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

18.3 Consider the past. How many, both high and low, have, at all times, yearningly awaited the advent of the Manifestations of God in the sanctified persons of His chosen Ones. How often have they expected His coming, how frequently have they prayed that the breeze of divine mercy might blow, and the promised Beauty step forth from behind the veil of concealment, and be made

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

18.4 Ponder for a moment, and reflect upon that which hath been the cause of such denial on the part of those who have searched with such earnestness and longing. Their attack hath been more fierce than tongue or pen can describe. Not one single Manifestation of Holiness hath appeared but He was afflicted by the denials, the repudiation, and the vehement opposition of the people around Him....

18.5 Shouldst thou acquaint thyself with the indignities heaped upon the Prophets of God, and apprehend the true causes of the objections voiced by their oppressors, thou wilt surely appreciate the significance of their position. Moreover, the more closely thou observest the denials of those who have opposed the Manifestations of the divine attributes, the firmer will be thy faith in the Cause of God....

18.6 Reflect, what could have been the motive for such deeds?

What could have prompted such behaviour towards the Revealers of the beauty of the All-Glorious?

Whatever in days gone by hath been the cause of the denial and opposition of those people hath now led to the perversity of the people of this age.

To maintain that the testimony of Providence was incomplete, that it hath therefore been the cause of the denial of the people, is but open blasphemy.

How far from the grace of the All-Bountiful and from His loving providence and tender mercies it is to single out a soul from amongst all men for the guidance of His creatures, and, on one hand, to withhold from Him the full measure of His divine testimony, and, on the other, inflict severe retribution on His people for having turned away from His chosen One!

Nay, the manifold bounties of the Lord of all beings have, at all times, through the Manifestations of His divine Essence, encompassed the earth and all that dwell therein.

Not for a moment hath His grace been withheld, nor have the showers of His loving-kindness ceased to rain upon mankind.

Consequently, such behaviour can be attributed to naught save the petty-mindedness of such souls as tread the valley of arrogance and pride, are lost in the wilds of remoteness, walk in the ways of their idle fancy, and follow the dictates of the leaders of their faith.

Their chief concern is mere opposition; their sole desire is to ignore the truth.

Unto every discerning observer it is evident and manifest that had these people in the days of each of the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth sanctified their

eyes, their ears, and their hearts from whatever they had seen, heard, and felt, they surely would not have been deprived of beholding the beauty of God, nor strayed far from the habitations of glory.

But having weighed the testimony of God by the standard of their own knowledge, gleaned from the teachings of the leaders of their faith, and found it at variance with their limited understanding, they arose to perpetrate such unseemly acts....

18.7 It is evident that the changes brought about in every Dispensation constitute the dark clouds that intervene between the eye of man's understanding and the divine Luminary which shineth forth from the dayspring of the divine Essence. Consider how men for generations have been blindly imitating their fathers, and have been trained according to such ways and manners as have been laid down by the dictates of their Faith. Were these men, therefore, to discover suddenly that a Man, Who hath been living in their midst, Who, with respect to every human limitation, hath been their equal, had risen to abolish every established principle imposed by their Faith—principles by which for centuries they have been disciplined, and every opposer and denier of which they have come to regard as infidel, profligate and wicked—they would of a certainty be veiled and hindered from acknowledging His truth....

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

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

19.2 Behold how the people, as a result of the verdict pronounced by the divines of His age, have cast Abraham, the Friend of God, into fire; how Moses, He Who held converse with the Almighty, was denounced as liar and slanderer. Reflect how Jesus, the Spirit of God, was, notwithstanding His extreme meekness and perfect tender-heartedness, treated by His enemies. So fierce was the opposition which He, the Essence of Being and Lord of the visible and invisible, had to face, that He had nowhere to lay His head. He wandered continually from place to place, deprived of a permanent abode. Ponder that which befell Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, may the life of all else be a sacrifice unto Him....

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

true God, exalted be His glory.

19.4 Consider this wronged One. Though the clearest proofs attest the truth of His Cause; though the prophecies He, in an unmistakable language, hath made have been fulfilled; though, in spite of His not being accounted among the learned, His being unschooled and inexperienced in the disputations current among the divines, He hath rained upon men the showers of His manifold and Divinely-inspired knowledge; yet, behold how this generation hath rejected His authority, and rebelled against Him! He hath, during the greater part of His life, been sore-trying in the clutches of His enemies. His sufferings have now reached their culmination in this afflictive Prison, into which His oppressors have so unjustly thrown Him. God grant that, with a penetrating vision and radiant heart, thou mayest observe the things that have come to pass and are now happening, and, pondering them in thine heart, mayest recognize that which most men have, in this Day, failed to perceive. Please God, He may enable thee to inhale the sweet fragrance of His Day, to partake of the limitless effusions of His grace, to quaff thy fill, through His gracious favour, from the most great Ocean that surgeth in this Day in the name of the Ancient King, and to remain firm and immovable as the mountain in His Cause.

20.1 He Who is the Dayspring 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.... 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. Thus hath it been ordained by the all-glorious and resplendent Pen....

20.2 That the Manifestations of Divine justice, the Daysprings of heavenly grace, have when they appeared amongst men always been destitute of all earthly dominion and shorn of the means of worldly ascendancy should be attributed to this same principle of separation and distinction which animateth the Divine Purpose. Were the Eternal Essence to manifest all that is latent within Him, were He to shine in the plenitude of His glory, none would be found to question His power or repudiate His truth. Nay, all created things would be so dazzled and thunderstruck by the evidences of His light as to be reduced to utter nothingness. How, then, can the godly be differentiated under such circumstances from the froward?

20.3 This principle hath operated in each of the previous Dispensations and been abundantly demonstrated.... It is for this reason that, in every age, when a new Manifestation hath appeared and a fresh revelation of God's transcendent power was vouchsafed unto men, they that misbelieved in Him, deluded by the appearance of the peerless and everlasting Beauty in the garb of mortal men, have failed to recognize Him. They have erred from His path and eschewed His company—the company of Him Who is the Symbol of nearness to God. They have even arisen to decimate the ranks of the faithful and to exterminate such as believed in Him.

20.4 Behold how in this Dispensation the worthless and foolish have fondly imagined that by such instruments as massacre, plunder and banishment they can

extinguish the Lamp which the Hand of Divine power hath lit, or eclipse the Day-Star of everlasting splendour. How utterly unaware they seem to be of the truth that such adversity is the oil that feedeth the flame of this Lamp! Such is God's transforming power. He changeth whatsoever He willeth; He verily hath power over all things.

#### The Oneness of Religion

21.1 That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of all its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician. This, verily, is the truth, and all else naught but error.

22.1 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.

23.1 O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together, and for the sake of God resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention amongst you. Then will the effulgence of the world's great Luminary envelop the whole earth, and its inhabitants become the citizens of one city, and the occupants of one and the same throne. This wronged One hath, ever since the early days of His life, cherished none other desire but this, and will continue to entertain no wish except this wish. There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God. The difference between the ordinances under which they abide should be attributed to the varying requirements and exigencies of the age in which they were revealed. All of them, except a few which are the outcome of human perversity, were ordained of God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Arise and, armed with the power of faith, shatter to pieces the gods of your vain imaginings, the sowers of dissension amongst you. Cleave unto that which draweth you together and uniteth you. This, verily, is the most exalted Word which the Mother Book hath sent down and revealed unto you. To this beareth witness the Tongue of Grandeur from His habitation of glory.

24.1 The beginning of religion is love for God and for His Chosen Ones, and its end is to manifest that love to His servants.

25.1 Immerse yourselves in the ocean of My words, that ye may unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths. Take heed that ye do not vacillate in your determination to embrace the truth of this Cause—a Cause through which the potentialities of the might of God have been revealed, and His sovereignty established. With faces beaming with joy, hasten ye unto Him. This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath

refused to seek it—verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures.

25.2 Say: This is the infallible Balance which the Hand of God is holding, in which all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth are weighed, and their fate determined, if ye be of them that believe and recognize this truth.

Say: This is the Most Great Testimony, by which the validity of every proof throughout the ages hath been established, would that ye might be assured thereof. Say: Through it the poor have been enriched, the learned enlightened, and the seekers enabled to ascend unto the presence of God. Beware lest ye make it a cause of dissension amongst you. Be ye as firmly settled as the immovable mountain in the Cause of your Lord, the Mighty, the Loving.

The Word of God

26.1 Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instil new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.

All the wondrous works ye behold in this world have been manifested through the operation of His supreme and most exalted Will, His wondrous and inflexible Purpose.

Through the mere revelation of the word “Fashioner”, issuing forth from His lips and proclaiming His attribute to mankind, such power is released as can generate, through successive ages, all the manifold arts which the hands of man can produce.

This, verily, is a certain truth.

No sooner is this resplendent word uttered, than its animating energies, stirring within all created things, give birth to the means and instruments whereby such arts can be produced and perfected.

All the wondrous achievements ye now witness are the direct consequences of the revelation of this Name.

In the days to come, ye will, verily, behold things of which ye have never heard before.

Thus hath it been decreed in the Tablets of God, and none can comprehend it except them whose sight is sharp.

In like manner, the moment the word expressing My attribute “The Omniscient” issueth forth from My mouth, every created thing will, according to its capacity and limitations, be invested with the power to unfold the knowledge of the most marvellous sciences, and will be empowered to manifest them in the course of time at the bidding of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Knowing.

Know thou of a certainty that the revelation of every other Name is accompanied by a similar manifestation of Divine power.

Every single letter proceeding out of the mouth of God is indeed a mother letter, and every word uttered by Him Who is the Wellspring of Divine

Revelation is a mother word, and His Tablet a Mother Tablet.

Well is it with them that apprehend this truth.

27.1 The vitality of men's belief in God 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? Is it within human power, O Hakím, to effect in the constituent elements of any of the minute and indivisible particles of matter so complete a transformation as to transmute it into purest gold? Perplexing and difficult as this may appear, the still greater task of converting satanic strength into heavenly power is one that We have been empowered to accomplish. The Force capable of such a transformation transcendeth the potency of the Elixir itself. The Word of God, alone, can claim the distinction of being endowed with the capacity required for so great and far-reaching a change.

28.1 Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it.

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

29.2 Oh, would that the world could believe Me! Were all the things that lie enshrined within the heart of Bahá, and which the Lord, His God, the Lord of all names, hath taught Him, to be unveiled to mankind, every man on earth would be dumbfounded.

29.3 How great the multitude of truths which the garment of words can never contain! How vast the number of such verities as no expression can adequately describe, whose significance can never be unfolded, and to which not even the remotest allusions can be made! How manifold are the truths which must remain unuttered until the appointed time is come! Even as it hath been said: "Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it."

29.4 Of these truths some can be disclosed only to the extent of the capacity of the repositories of the light of Our knowledge, and the recipients of Our hidden grace. We beseech God to strengthen thee with His power, and enable thee to recognize Him Who is the Source of all knowledge, that thou mayest detach thyself from all human learning, for, "what would it profit any man to strive after learning when he hath already found and recognized Him Who is the Object

of all knowledge?" Cleave to the Root of Knowledge, and to Him Who is the Fountain thereof, that thou mayest find thyself independent of all who claim to be well versed in human learning, and whose claim no clear proof, nor the testimony of any enlightening book, can support.

30.1 It is evident unto thee that the Birds of Heaven and Doves of Eternity speak a twofold language. One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion. Such are the unveiled traditions and the evident verses already mentioned. The other language is veiled and concealed, so that whatever lieth hidden in the heart of the malevolent may be made manifest and their innermost being be disclosed. Thus hath Sádiq, son of Muhammad, spoken: "God verily will test them and sift them." This is the divine standard, this is the Touchstone of God, wherewith He proveth His servants. None apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended. Thus it is recorded: "Every knowledge hath seventy meanings, of which one only is known amongst the people. And when the Qá'im shall arise, He shall reveal unto men all that which remaineth." He also saith: "We speak one word, and by it we intend one and seventy meanings; each one of these meanings we can explain."

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

2

God and Humanity

The Love of God

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

1.2 O Son of Man! I loved thy creation, hence I created thee. Wherefore, do thou love Me, that I may name thy name and fill thy soul with the spirit of life.

1.3 O Son of Being! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.

1.4 O Son of Being! Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home, reunion with Me. Enter therein and tarry not. This is that which hath been destined for thee in Our kingdom above and Our exalted dominion.

1.5 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.

1.6O Son of Spirit! There is no peace for thee save by renouncing thyself and turning unto Me; for it behoveth thee to glory in My name, not in thine own; to put thy trust in Me and not in thyself, since I desire to be loved alone and above all that is.

1.7O Son of Being! My love is My stronghold; he that entereth therein is safe and secure, and he that turneth away shall surely stray and perish....

1.8O Son of Being! Thou art My lamp and My light is in thee. Get thou from it thy radiance and seek none other than Me. For I have created thee rich and have bountifully shed My favour upon thee....

1.9O Son of Spirit! I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I moulded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting....

1.10O Son of Utterance! Turn thy face unto Mine and renounce all save Me; for My sovereignty endureth and My dominion perisheth not. If thou seekest another than Me, yea, if thou searchest the universe for evermore, thy quest will be in vain....

1.11O Son of Man! Rejoice in the gladness of thine heart, that thou mayest be worthy to meet Me and to mirror forth My beauty....

1.12O Son of Man! Wert thou to speed through the immensity of space and traverse the expanse of heaven, yet thou wouldst find no rest save in submission to Our command and humbleness before Our Face....

1.13O Son of Man! Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee. Arise for the triumph of My cause, that while yet on earth thou mayest obtain the victory.

1.14O Son of Being! Make mention of Me on My earth, that in My heaven I may remember thee, thus shall Mine eyes and thine be solaced.

2.1The generations that have gone on before you—whither are they fled? And those round whom in life circled the fairest and the loveliest of the land, where now are they? Profit by their example, O people, and be not of them that are gone astray.

2.2Others ere long will lay hands on what ye possess, and enter into your habitations. Incline your ears to My words, and be not numbered among the foolish.

2.3For every one of you his paramount duty is to choose for himself that on which no other may infringe and none usurp from him. Such a thing—and to this the Almighty is My witness—is the love of God, could ye but perceive it.

2.4Build ye for yourselves such houses as the rain and floods can never destroy, which shall protect you from the changes and chances of this life. This is the instruction of Him Whom the world hath wronged and forsaken.

3.1Ponder then in thine heart: Matters being such as thou dost witness, and as We also witness, where canst thou flee, and with whom shalt thou take refuge? Unto whom wilt thou turn thy gaze? In what land shalt thou dwell and upon what seat shalt thou abide? In what path shalt thou tread and at what hour wilt thou find repose? What shall become of thee in the end? Where shalt thou secure the

cord of thy faith and fasten the tie of thine obedience? By Him Who revealeth Himself in His oneness and Whose own Self beareth witness to His unity! Should there be ignited in thy heart the burning brand of the love of God, thou wouldst seek neither rest nor composure, neither laughter nor repose, but wouldst hasten to scale the highest summits in the realms of divine nearness, sanctity, and beauty.

4.1 Consider a pearl which shineth by virtue of its inherent nature. If it be covered with silk, its lustre and beauty will be concealed. Likewise, man's distinction lieth in the excellence of his conduct and in the pursuit of that which beseemeth his station, not in childish play and pastimes. Know that thy true adornment consisteth in the love of God and in thy detachment from all save Him, and not in the luxuries thou dost possess. Abandon them unto those who seek after them and turn unto God, He Who causeth the rivers to flow.

5.1 If the veil were lifted, and the full glory of the station of those that have turned wholly towards God, and have, in their love for Him, renounced the world, were made manifest, the entire creation would be dumbfounded.

God's Purpose for Humanity

6.1 The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence. To this most excellent aim, this supreme objective, all the heavenly Books and the divinely revealed and weighty Scriptures unequivocally bear witness. Whoso hath recognized the Dayspring of Divine guidance and entered His holy court hath drawn nigh unto God and attained His Presence, a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol.... 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.

7.1 I am the one, O Lord, whose heart and soul, whose limbs, whose inner and outer tongue testify to Thy unity and Thy oneness, and bear witness that Thou art God and that there is no God but Thee. Thou didst bring mankind into being to know Thee and to serve Thy Cause, that their station might thereby be elevated upon Thine earth and their souls be uplifted by virtue of the things Thou hast revealed in Thy Scriptures, Thy Books and Thy Tablets.

8.1 We have counselled all people, in the most clear and eloquent language, to adorn their characters with trustworthiness and godliness, and with such qualities as are conducive to the elevation of man's station in the world of being. This Wronged One testifieth that the purpose for which mortal men have, from utter nothingness, stepped into the realm of being, is that they may work for the betterment of the world and live together in concord and harmony.

Dissension and strife have always been, and shall remain, rejected by God. The Books, the Scriptures and Holy Writings of previous ages have all proclaimed the joyful tidings that the purpose underlying this most mighty Revelation is none other than the rehabilitation of the world and its nations; that perchance the power of utterance may prevail over the power of arms, and the world's affairs be administered through the potency of love. We ask God, the True One, to invest all with the mantle of trustworthiness, for that is the world's

comeliest garment.

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

Human Nature

10.1 Wert thou to attain to but a dewdrop of the crystal waters of divine knowledge, thou wouldst readily realize that true life is not the life of the flesh but the life of the spirit. For the life of the flesh is common to both men and animals, whereas the life of the spirit is possessed only by the pure in heart who have quaffed from the ocean of faith and partaken of the fruit of certitude. This life knoweth no death, and this existence is crowned by immortality. Even as it hath been said: "He who is a true believer liveth both in this world and in the world to come."

11.1 Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is a direct evidence of the revelation within it of the attributes and names of God, inasmuch as within every atom are enshrined the signs that bear eloquent testimony to the revelation of that Most Great Light. Methinks, but for the potency of that revelation, no being could ever exist. How resplendent the luminaries of knowledge that shine in an atom, and how vast the oceans of wisdom that surge within a drop! To a supreme degree is this true of man, who, among all created things, hath been invested with the robe of such gifts, and hath been singled out for the glory of such distinction. For in him are potentially revealed all the attributes and names of God to a degree that no other created being hath excelled or surpassed. All these names and attributes are applicable to him. Even as He hath said: "Man is My mystery, and I am his mystery." Manifold are the verses that have been repeatedly revealed in all the Heavenly Books and the Holy Scriptures, expressive of this most subtle and lofty theme.

12.1 People for the most part delight in superstitions. They regard a single drop of the sea of delusion as preferable to an ocean of certitude. By holding fast unto names they deprive themselves of the inner reality and by clinging to vain imaginings they are kept back from the Dayspring of heavenly signs. God grant thou mayest be graciously aided under all conditions to shatter the idols of superstition and to tear away the veils of the imaginations of men.

13.1 Ever since the seeking of preference and distinction came into play, the world hath been laid waste. It hath become desolate. Those who have quaffed from the ocean of divine utterance and fixed their gaze upon the Realm of Glory should regard themselves as being on the same level as the others and in the

same station. Were this matter to be definitely established and conclusively demonstrated through the power and might of God, the world would become as the Abhá Paradise.

13.2 Indeed, man is noble, inasmuch as each one is a repository of the sign of God. Nevertheless, to regard oneself as superior in knowledge, learning or virtue, or to exalt oneself or seek preference, is a grievous transgression.

Great is the blessedness of those who are adorned with the ornament of this unity and have been graciously confirmed by God.

14.1 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.

14.2 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.

14.3 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.

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

15.1 Men at all times and under all conditions stand in need of one to exhort them, guide them and to instruct and teach them. Therefore He hath sent forth His Messengers, His Prophets and chosen ones that they might acquaint the people with the divine purpose underlying the revelation of Books and the raising up of Messengers, and that everyone may become aware of the trust of God which is latent in the reality of every soul.

15.2 Man is the supreme Talisman.

Lack of a proper education hath, however, deprived him of that which he doth inherently possess.

Through a word proceeding out of the mouth of God he was called into being; by one word more he was guided to recognize the Source of his education; by yet another word his station and destiny were safeguarded.

The Great Being saith:

Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value.

Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.

If any man were to meditate on that which the Scriptures, sent down from the heaven of God's holy Will, have revealed, he would readily recognize that their purpose is that all men shall be regarded as one soul, so that the seal bearing the words "The Kingdom shall be God's" may be stamped on every heart, and the light of Divine bounty, of grace, and mercy may envelop all mankind.

The One true God, exalted be His glory, hath wished nothing for Himself.

The allegiance of mankind profiteth Him not, neither doth its perversity harm Him.

The Bird of the Realm of Utterance voiceth continually this call:

"All things have I willed for thee, and thee, too, for thine own sake."

If the learned and worldly-wise men of this age were to allow mankind to inhale the fragrance of fellowship and love, every understanding heart would apprehend the meaning of true liberty, and discover the secret of undisturbed peace and absolute composure.

Were the earth to attain this station and be illumined with its light it could then be truly said of it:

"Thou shall see in it no hollows or rising hills."

16.1 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.

16.2 The decree that is impending, however, is such that prayer and entreaty can succeed in averting it.

17.1 And now, concerning thy question regarding the creation of man. 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 preordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition. Your own acts testify to this truth. Consider, for instance, that which hath been forbidden, in the Bayán, unto men. God hath in that Book, and by His behest, decreed as lawful whatsoever He hath pleased to decree, and hath, through the power of His sovereign might, forbidden whatsoever He elected to forbid. To this testifieth the text of that Book. Will ye not bear witness? Men, however, have wittingly broken His law. Is such a behaviour to be attributed to God, or

to their proper selves? Be fair in your judgement. Every good thing is of God, and every evil thing is from yourselves.

#### The Twin Duties

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

19.1 The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, Who representeth the Godhead in both the Kingdom of His Cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieveth this duty hath attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof hath gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed. It behoveth everyone who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration.

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

20.2 The virtues and attributes pertaining unto God are all evident and manifest, and have been mentioned and described in all the heavenly Books. Among them are trustworthiness, truthfulness, purity of heart while communing with God, forbearance, resignation to whatever the Almighty hath decreed, contentment with the things His Will hath provided, patience, nay, thankfulness in the midst of tribulation, and complete reliance, in all circumstances, upon Him. These rank, according to the estimate of God, among the highest and most laudable of all acts. All other acts are, and will ever remain, secondary and subordinate unto them....

20.3 The spirit that animateth the human heart is the knowledge of God, and its truest adorning is the recognition of the truth that "He doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordaineth that which He pleaseth." Its raiment is the fear of God, and its perfection steadfastness in His Faith. Thus God instructeth whosoever seeketh Him. He, verily, loveth the one that turneth towards Him. There is none other God but Him, the Forgiving, the Most Bountiful. All praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.

21.1 Seize ye, O loved ones of the All-Merciful, the chalice of eternal life proffered by the hand of the bountiful favours of your Lord, the Possessor of the entire creation, then drink ye deep therefrom. I swear by God, it will so enrapture you that ye shall arise to magnify His Name and proclaim His utterances amidst the peoples of the earth and shall conquer the cities of the hearts of men in the name of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised....

21.2 The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man to know God. In this Day whosoever is guided by the fragrance of the raiment of

His mercy to gain admittance into the pristine Abode, which is the station of recognizing the Source of divine commandments and the Dayspring of His Revelation, hath everlastingly attained unto all good. Having reached this lofty station a twofold obligation resteth upon every soul. One is to be steadfast in the Cause with such steadfastness that were all the peoples of the world to attempt to prevent him from turning to the Source of Revelation, they would be powerless to do so. The other is observance of the divine ordinances which have streamed forth from the wellspring of His heavenly-propelled Pen. For man's knowledge of God cannot develop fully and adequately save by observing whatsoever hath been ordained by Him and is set forth in His heavenly Book.

#### The Bond of Human Beings with the Creator

22.1 He, in truth, hath, throughout eternity, been one in His Essence, one in His attributes, one in His works. Any and every comparison is applicable only to His creatures, and all conceptions of association are conceptions that belong solely to those that serve Him. Immeasurably exalted is His Essence above the descriptions of His creatures. He, alone, occupieth the Seat of transcendent majesty, of supreme and inaccessible glory. The birds of men's hearts, however high they soar, can never hope to attain the heights of His unknowable Essence. It is He Who hath called into being the whole of creation, Who hath caused every created thing to spring forth at His behest. Shall, then, the thing that was born by virtue of the word which His Pen hath revealed, and which the finger of His Will hath directed, be regarded as partner with Him, or an embodiment of His Self? Far be it from His glory that human pen or tongue should hint at His mystery, or that human heart conceive His Essence. All else besides Him stand poor and desolate at His door, all are powerless before the greatness of His might, all are but slaves in His Kingdom. He is rich enough to dispense with all creatures.

22.2 The tie of servitude established between the worshipper and the adored One, between the creature and the Creator, should in itself be regarded as a token of His gracious favour unto men, and not as an indication of any merit they may possess. To this testifieth every true and discerning believer.

23.1 O My brother! A pure heart is as a mirror; cleanse it with the burnish of love and severance from all save God, that the true sun may shine therein and the eternal morning dawn. Then wilt thou clearly see the meaning of "Earth and heaven cannot contain Me; what can alone contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me." And thou wilt take up thy life in thy hand and with infinite longing cast it before thy newly found Beloved.

23.2 Whensoever the light of the revelation of the King of Oneness settleth upon the throne of the heart and soul, His radiance becometh visible in every limb and member. At that time, the mystery of the famed tradition gleameth out of the darkness: "A servant is drawn unto Me in prayer until I answer him, and when I have answered him, I become the ear wherewith he heareth ..." For thus the Master of the house hath appeared within His home, and all the pillars of the dwelling are ashine with His light. And as the action and effect of the light are from the Light-Giver, so it is that all move through Him and arise by His will.

24.1 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 followeth, 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 anyone except himself.

25.1 O My servants! Were ye to discover the hidden, the shoreless oceans of My incorruptible wealth, ye would, of a certainty, esteem as nothing the world, nay, the entire creation. Let the flame of search burn with such fierceness within your hearts as to enable you to attain your supreme and most exalted goal—the station at which ye can draw nigh unto, and be united with, your Best-Beloved....

25.2 O My servants! Let not your vain hopes and idle fancies sap the foundations of your belief in the All-Glorious God, inasmuch as such imaginings have been wholly unprofitable unto men, and failed to direct their steps unto the straight Path....

25.3 O My servants!

Deprive not yourselves of the unfading and resplendent Light that shineth within the Lamp of Divine glory.

Let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within your radiant hearts.

Feed it with the oil of Divine guidance, and protect it within the shelter of your constancy.

Guard it within the globe of trust and detachment from all else but God, so that the evil whisperings of the ungodly may not extinguish its light.

O My servants!

My holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing lustre.

It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his

search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been preordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets.

If no one be willing to direct his steps towards its shores, if every one should fail to arise and find Him, can such a failure be said to have robbed this ocean of its power or to have lessened, to any degree, its treasures?

How vain, how contemptible, are the imaginations which your hearts have devised, and are still devising!

O My servants!

The one true God is My witness!

This most great, this fathomless and surging Ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you.

Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein!

Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favour, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty.

25.40 My servants! Could ye apprehend with what wonders of My munificence and bounty I have willed to entrust your souls, ye would, of a truth, rid yourselves of attachment to all created things, and would gain a true knowledge of your own selves—a knowledge which is the same as the comprehension of Mine own Being. Ye would find yourselves independent of all else but Me, and would perceive, with your inner and outer eye, and as manifest as the revelation of My effulgent Name, the seas of My loving-kindness and bounty moving within you. Suffer not your idle fancies, your evil passions, your insincerity and blindness of heart to dim the lustre, or stain the sanctity, of so lofty a station. Ye are even as the bird which soareth, with the full force of its mighty wings and with complete and joyous confidence, through the immensity of the heavens, until, impelled to satisfy its hunger, it turneth longingly to the water and clay of the earth below it, and, having been entrapped in the mesh of its desire, findeth itself impotent to resume its flight to the realms whence it came. Powerless to shake off the burden weighing on its sullied wings, that bird, hitherto an inmate of the heavens, is now forced to seek a dwelling-place upon the dust. Wherefore, O My servants, defile not your wings with the clay of waywardness and vain desires, and suffer them not to be stained with the dust of envy and hate, that ye may not be hindered from soaring in the heavens of My divine knowledge.

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

yourselves is to be blamed if ye choose to remain unendowed with so great an outpouring of God's transcendent and all-encompassing grace, with so bright a revelation of His resplendent mercy?...

25.6O My servants! There shineth nothing else in Mine heart except the unfading light of the Morn of Divine guidance, and out of My mouth proceedeth naught but the essence of truth, which the Lord your God hath revealed. Follow not, therefore, your earthly desires, and violate not the Covenant of God, nor break your pledge to Him. With firm determination, with the whole affection of your heart, and with the full force of your words, turn ye unto Him, and walk not in the ways of the foolish. The world is but a show, vain and empty, a mere nothing, bearing the semblance of reality. Set not your affections upon it. Break not the bond that uniteth you with your Creator, and be not of those that have erred and strayed from His ways. Verily I say, the world is like the vapour in a desert, which the thirsty dreameth to be water and striveth after it with all his might, until when he cometh unto it, he findeth it to be mere illusion. It may, moreover, be likened unto the lifeless image of the beloved whom the lover hath sought and found, in the end, after long search and to his utmost regret, to be such as cannot "fatten nor appease his hunger".

25.7O My servants! Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. Worlds, holy and spiritually glorious, will be unveiled to your eyes. Ye are destined by Him, in this world and hereafter, to partake of their benefits, to share in their joys, and to obtain a portion of their sustaining grace. To each and every one of them ye will, no doubt, attain.

#### Obstacles to Recognition

26.1As to the words—"Immediately after the oppression of those days"—they refer to the time when men shall become oppressed and afflicted, the time when the lingering traces of the Sun of Truth and the fruit of the Tree of knowledge and wisdom will have vanished from the midst of men, when the reins of mankind will have fallen into the grasp of the foolish and ignorant, when the portals of divine unity and understanding—the essential and highest purpose in creation—will have been closed, when certain knowledge will have given way to idle fancy, and corruption will have usurped the station of righteousness.

Such a condition as this is witnessed in this day when the reins of every community have fallen into the grasp of foolish leaders, who lead after their own whims and desire.

On their tongue the mention of God hath become an empty name; in their midst His holy Word a dead letter.

Such is the sway of their desires, that the lamp of conscience and reason hath been quenched in their hearts, and this although the fingers of divine power have unlocked the portals of the knowledge of God, and the light of divine knowledge and heavenly grace hath illumined and inspired the essence of all created things, in such wise that in each and every thing a door of knowledge

hath been opened, and within every atom traces of the sun have been made manifest.

And yet, in spite of all these manifold revelations of divine knowledge, which have encompassed the world, they still vainly imagine the door of knowledge to be closed, and the showers of mercy to be stilled.

Clinging unto idle fancy, they have strayed far from the 'Urvatu'l-Vuthqá of divine knowledge.

Their hearts seem not to be inclined to knowledge and the door thereof, neither think they of its manifestations, inasmuch as in idle fancy they have found the door that leadeth unto earthly riches, whereas in the manifestation of the Revealer of knowledge they find naught but the call to self-sacrifice.

They therefore naturally hold fast unto the former, and flee from the latter....

Were the eye to be anointed and illumined with the collyrium of the knowledge of God, it would surely discover that a number of voracious beasts have gathered and preyed upon the carrion of the souls of men.

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

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

26.4 Were men to meditate upon the lives of the Prophets of old, so easily would they come to know and understand the ways of these Prophets that they would cease to be veiled by such deeds and words as are contrary to their own worldly

desires, and thus consume every intervening veil with the fire burning in the Bush of divine knowledge, and abide secure upon the throne of peace and certitude.

27.1 O my beloved! Immeasurably exalted is the celestial Melody above the strivings of human ear to hear or mind to grasp its mystery! How can the helpless ant step into the court of the All-Glorious? And yet, feeble souls, through lack of understanding, reject these abstruse utterances, and question the truth of such traditions. Nay, none can comprehend them save those that are possessed of an understanding heart....

27.2... But apart from all these things, had this people attained unto a drop of the crystal streams flowing from the words: "God doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth," they would not have raised any unseemly cavils, such as these, against the focal Centre of His Revelation. The Cause of God, all deeds and words, are held within the grasp of His power. "All things lie imprisoned within the hollow of His mighty Hand; all things are easy and possible unto Him." He accomplisheth whatsoever He willeth, and doeth all that He desireth. "Whoso sayeth 'why' or 'wherefore' hath spoken blasphemy!" Were these people to shake off the slumber of negligence and realize that which their hands have wrought, they would surely perish, and would of their own accord cast themselves into fire—their end and real abode. Have they not heard that which He hath revealed: "He shall not be asked of His doings"? In the light of these utterances, how can man be so bold as to question Him, and busy himself with idle sayings?

27.3 Gracious God! So great is the folly and perversity of the people, that they have turned their face toward their own thoughts and desires, and have turned their back upon the knowledge and will of God—hallowed and glorified be His name!

28.1 Say: If ye be seekers after this life and the vanities thereof, ye should have sought them while ye were still enclosed in your mothers' wombs, for at that time ye were continually approaching them, could ye but perceive it. Ye have, on the other hand, ever since ye were born and attained maturity, been all the while receding from the world and drawing closer to dust. Why, then, exhibit such greed in amassing the treasures of the earth, when your days are numbered and your chance is well-nigh lost? Will ye not, then, O heedless ones, shake off your slumber?

28.2 Incline your ears to the counsels which this Servant giveth you for the sake of God. He, verily, asketh no recompense from you and is resigned to what God hath ordained for Him, and is entirely submissive to God's Will.

28.3 The days of your life are far spent, O people, and your end is fast approaching. Put away, therefore, the things ye have devised and to which ye cleave, and take firm hold on the precepts of God, that haply ye may attain that which He hath purposed for you, and be of them that pursue a right course. Delight not yourselves in the things of the world and its vain ornaments, neither set your hopes on them. Let your reliance be on the remembrance of God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great. He will, ere long, bring to naught all the things ye possess. Let Him be your fear, and forget not His covenant with you, and be not of them that are shut out as by a veil from Him....

28.4 Say: Await ye till God will have changed His favour unto you. Nothing whatsoever escapeth Him. He knoweth the secrets both of the heavens and of the earth. His knowledge embraceth all things. Rejoice not in what ye have done, or will do in the future, nor delight in the tribulation with which ye have afflicted Us, for ye are unable by such means as these to exalt your stations, were ye to examine your works with acute discernment. Neither will ye be capable of detracting from the loftiness of Our state. Nay, God will add unto the recompense with which He shall reward Us, for having sustained with persevering patience the tribulations We have suffered. He, verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience....

28.5 Thus have We recounted unto you the tales of the one true God, and sent down unto you the things He had preordained, that haply ye may ask forgiveness of Him, may return unto Him, may truly repent, may realize your misdeeds, may shake off your slumber, may be roused from your heedlessness, may atone for the things that have escaped you, and be of them that do good. Let him who will, acknowledge the truth of My words; and as to him that willeth not, let him turn aside. My sole duty is to remind you of your failure in duty towards the Cause of God, if perchance ye may be of them that heed My warning. Wherefore, hearken ye unto My speech, and return ye to God and repent, that He, through His grace, may have mercy upon you, may wash away your sins, and forgive your trespasses. The greatness of His mercy surpasseth the fury of His wrath, and His grace encompasseth all who have been called into being and been clothed with the robe of life, be they of the past or of the future.

The True Seeker

29.1 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 anyone, 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.

29.2 That seeker should also regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul.

He should be content with little, and be freed from all inordinate desire.

He should treasure the companionship of those that have renounced the world, and regard avoidance of boastful and worldly people a precious benefit.

At the dawn of every day he should commune with God, and with all his soul persevere in the quest of his Beloved.

He should consume every wayward thought with the flame of His loving mention, and, with the swiftness of lightning, pass by all else save Him.

He should succour the dispossessed, and never withhold his favour from the destitute.

He should show kindness to animals, how much more unto his fellow-man, to him who is endowed with the power of utterance.

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

He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil.

With all his heart should the seeker avoid fellowship with evildoers, 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.

29.3 These are among the attributes of the exalted, and constitute the hallmark of the spiritually minded. They have already been mentioned in connection with

the requirements of the wayfarers that tread the Path of Positive Knowledge. When the detached wayfarer and sincere seeker hath fulfilled these essential conditions, then and only then can he be called a true seeker. Whosoever he hath fulfilled the conditions implied in the verse: “Whoso maketh efforts for Us”, he shall enjoy the blessing conferred by the words: “In Our ways shall We assuredly guide him.”

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

29.5 I swear by God!

Were he that treadeth the path of guidance and seeketh to scale the heights of righteousness to attain unto this glorious and supreme station, he would inhale at a distance of a thousand leagues the fragrance of God, and would perceive the resplendent morn of a divine Guidance rising above the dayspring of all things.

Each and every thing, however small, would be to him a revelation leading him to his Beloved, the Object of his quest.

So great shall be the discernment of this seeker that he will discriminate between truth and falsehood even as he doth distinguish the sun from shadow.

If in the uttermost corners of the East the sweet savours of God be wafted, he will assuredly recognize and inhale their fragrance, even though he be dwelling in the uttermost ends of the West.

He will likewise clearly distinguish all the signs of God—His wondrous utterances, His great works, and mighty deeds—from the doings, words and ways of men, even as the jeweller who knoweth the gem from the stone, or the man who distinguisheth the spring from autumn and heat from cold.

When the channel of the human soul is cleansed of all worldly and impeding attachments, it will unfailingly perceive the breath of the Beloved across immeasurable distances, and will, led by its perfume, attain and enter the City of Certitude.

Therein he will discern the wonders of His ancient wisdom, and will perceive all the hidden teachings from the rustling leaves of the Tree—which flourisheth in that City.

With both his inner and his outer ear he will hear from its dust the hymns of glory and praise ascending unto the Lord of Lords, and with his inner eye will he discover the mysteries of “return” and “revival”.

How unspeakably glorious are the signs, the tokens, the revelations, and splendours which He Who is the King of names and attributes hath destined for that City!

The attainment of this City quencheth thirst without water, and kindleth the love of God without fire.

Within every blade of grass are enshrined the mysteries of an inscrutable wisdom, and upon every rose-bush a myriad nightingales pour out, in blissful rapture, their melody.

Its wondrous tulips unfold the mystery of the undying Fire in the Burning Bush, and its sweet savours of holiness breathe the perfume of the Messianic Spirit.

It bestoweth wealth without gold, and conferreth immortality without death.

In every leaf ineffable delights are treasured, and within every chamber unnumbered mysteries lie hidden.

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

29.7 Wherefore, O my friend, it behoveth us to exert the highest endeavour to attain unto that City, and, by the grace of God and His loving-kindness, rend asunder the “veils of glory”; so that, with inflexible steadfastness, we may sacrifice our drooping souls in the path of the New Beloved. We should with tearful eyes, fervently and repeatedly, implore Him to grant us the favour of that grace. That City is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation. 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 Bayán; and in the dispensation of Him Whom God will make manifest His own Book—the Book unto which all the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book which standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme. In these Cities spiritual sustenance is bountifully provided, and incorruptible delights have been ordained. The food they bestow is the bread of heaven, and the Spirit they impart is God’s imperishable blessing. Upon detached souls they bestow the gift of Unity, enrich the destitute, and offer the cup of knowledge unto them who wander in the wilderness of ignorance. All the guidance, the blessings, the learning, the

understanding, the faith, and certitude, conferred upon all that is in heaven and on earth, are hidden and treasured within these Cities.

The True Believer

30.1 By My Self! Whoso hath in bygone ages asked Us to produce the signs of God, hath, no sooner had We revealed them to him, repudiated God's truth. The people, however, have, for the most part, remained heedless. They whose eyes are illumined with the light of understanding will perceive the sweet savours of the All-Merciful, and will embrace His truth. These are they who are truly sincere.

31.1 It is clear and evident that when the veils that conceal the realities of the manifestations of the Names and Attributes of God, nay of all created things visible or invisible, have been rent asunder, nothing except the Sign of God will remain—a sign which He, Himself, hath placed within these realities. This sign will endure as long as is the wish of the Lord thy God, the Lord of the heavens and of the earth. If such be the blessings conferred on all created things, how superior must be the destiny of the true believer, whose existence and life are to be regarded as the originating purpose of all creation. Just as the conception of faith hath existed from the beginning that hath no beginning, and will endure till the end that hath no end, in like manner will the true believer eternally live and endure. His spirit will everlastingly circle round the Will of God. He will last as long as God, Himself, will last. He is revealed through the Revelation of God, and is hidden at His bidding. It is evident that the loftiest mansions in the Realm of Immortality have been ordained as the habitation of them that have truly believed in God and in His signs. Death can never invade that holy seat. Thus have We entrusted thee with the signs of thy Lord, that thou mayest persevere in thy love for Him, and be of them that comprehend this truth.

32.1 He is indeed a true believer in the unity of God who, in this Day, will regard Him as One immeasurably exalted above all the comparisons and likenesses with which men have compared Him. He hath erred grievously who hath mistaken these comparisons and likenesses for God Himself. Consider the relation between the craftsman and his handiwork, between the painter and his painting. Can it ever be maintained that the work their hands have produced is the same as themselves? By Him Who is the Lord of the Throne above and of earth below! They can be regarded in no other light except as evidences that proclaim the excellence and perfection of their author.

32.2 O Shaykh, O thou who hast surrendered thy will to God! By self-surrender and perpetual union with God is meant that men should merge their will wholly in the Will of God, and regard their desires as utter nothingness beside His Purpose. Whatsoever the Creator commandeth His creatures to observe, the same must they diligently, and with the utmost joy and eagerness, arise and fulfil. They should in no wise allow their fancy to obscure their judgement, neither should they regard their own imaginings as the voice of the Eternal. In the Prayer of Fasting We have revealed: "Should Thy Will decree that out of Thy mouth these words proceed and be addressed unto them, 'Observe, for My Beauty's sake, the fast, O people, and set no limit to its duration,' I swear by the majesty of Thy glory, that every one of them will faithfully

observe it, will abstain from whatsoever will violate Thy law, and will continue to do so until they yield up their souls unto Thee.” In this consisteth the complete surrender of one’s will to the Will of God. Meditate on this, that thou mayest drink in the waters of everlasting life which flow through the words of the Lord of all mankind, and mayest testify that the one true God hath ever been immeasurably exalted above His creatures. He, verily, is the Incomparable, the Ever-Abiding, the Omniscient, the All-Wise. The station of absolute self-surrender transcendeth, and will ever remain exalted above, every other station.

32.3 It behoveth thee to consecrate thyself to the Will of God. Whatsoever hath been revealed in His Tablets is but a reflection of His Will. So complete must be thy consecration, that every trace of worldly desire will be washed from thine heart. This is the meaning of true unity.

32.4 Do thou beseech God to enable thee to remain steadfast in this path, and to aid thee to guide the peoples of the world to Him Who is the manifest and sovereign Ruler, Who hath revealed Himself in a distinct attire, Who giveth utterance to a Divine and specific Message. This is the essence of faith and certitude.

32.5 They that are the worshippers of the idol which their imaginations have carved, and who call it Inner Reality, such men are in truth accounted among the heathen. To this hath the All-Merciful borne witness in His Tablets. He, verily, is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

3

The Coming of Bahá’u’lláh

The Day of God

1.1 Contemplate with thine inward eye the chain of successive Revelations that hath linked the Manifestation of Adam with that of the Báb.

I testify before God that each one of these Manifestations hath been sent down through the operation of the Divine Will and Purpose, that each hath been the bearer of a specific Message, that each hath been entrusted with a divinely revealed Book and been commissioned to unravel the mysteries of a mighty Tablet.

The measure of the Revelation with which every one of them hath been identified had been definitely foreordained.

This, verily, is a token of Our favour unto them, if ye be of those that comprehend this truth.... And when this process of progressive Revelation culminated in the stage at which His peerless, His most sacred, and exalted Countenance was to be unveiled to men’s eyes, He chose to hide His own Self behind a thousand veils, lest profane and mortal eyes discover His glory.

This He did at a time when the signs and tokens of a divinely appointed Revelation were being showered upon Him—signs and tokens which none can reckon except the Lord, your God, the Lord of all worlds.

And when the set time of concealment was fulfilled, We sent forth, whilst still wrapt within a myriad veils, an infinitesimal glimmer of the effulgent Glory

enveloping the Face of the Youth, and lo, the entire company of the dwellers of the Realms above were seized with violent commotion and the favoured of God fell down in adoration before Him.

He hath, verily, manifested a glory such as none in the whole creation hath witnessed, inasmuch as He hath arisen to proclaim in person His Cause unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth.

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

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

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

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

4.1 All glory be to this Day, the Day in which the fragrances of mercy have been wafted over all created things, a Day so blest that past ages and centuries can never hope to rival it, a Day in which the countenance of the Ancient of Days hath turned towards His holy seat. Thereupon the voices of all created things, and beyond them those of the Concourse on high, were heard calling aloud: "Haste thee, O Carmel, for lo, the light of the countenance of God, the Ruler of the Kingdom of Names and Fashioner of the heavens, hath been lifted upon thee." ...

4.2 "Call out to Zion, O Carmel, and announce the joyful tidings: He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendour is revealed. Beware lest thou hesitate or halt. Hasten forth and circumambulate the City of God that hath descended from heaven, the celestial Kaaba round which have circled in adoration the favoured of God, the pure in heart, and the company of the most exalted angels. Oh, how I long to announce unto every spot on the surface of the earth, and to carry to

each one of its cities, the glad-tidings of this Revelation—a Revelation to which the heart of Sinai hath been attracted, and in whose name the Burning Bush is calling: ‘Unto God, the Lord of Lords, belong the kingdoms of earth and heaven.’ Verily this is the Day in which both land and sea rejoice at this announcement, the Day for which have been laid up those things which God, through a bounty beyond the ken of mortal mind or heart, hath destined for revelation. Ere long will God sail His Ark upon thee, and will manifest the people of Bahá who have been mentioned in the Book of Names.”

4.3 Sanctified be the Lord of all mankind, at the mention of Whose name all the atoms of the earth have been made to vibrate, and the Tongue of Grandeur hath been moved to disclose that which had been wrapt in His knowledge and lay concealed within the treasury of His might. He, verily, through the potency of His Name, the Mighty, the All-Powerful, the Most High, is the ruler of all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth.

5.1 This Day a door is open wider than both heaven and earth. The eye of the mercy of Him Who is the Desire of the worlds is turned towards all men. An act, however infinitesimal, is, when viewed in the mirror of the knowledge of God, mightier than a mountain. Every drop proffered in His path is as the sea in that mirror. For this is the Day which the one true God, glorified be He, hath announced in all His Books, unto His Prophets and His Messengers.

6.1 This is the Day in which God’s most excellent favours have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness. It behoveth them to cleave to whatsoever will, in this Day, be conducive to the exaltation of their stations, and to the promotion of their best interests....

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

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

7.2 In the Book of Isaiah it is written: “Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty.” No man that meditateth upon this verse can fail to recognize the greatness of this Cause, or doubt the exalted character of this Day—the Day of God Himself. This same verse is followed by these words: “And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that Day.” This is the Day which the Pen of the Most High hath glorified in all the holy Scriptures. There is no verse in them that doth not

declare the glory of His holy Name, and no Book that doth not testify unto the loftiness of this most exalted theme. Were We to make mention of all that hath been revealed in these heavenly Books and holy Scriptures concerning this Revelation, this Tablet would assume impossible dimensions. It is incumbent, in this Day, upon every man to place his whole trust in the manifold bounties of God, and arise to disseminate, with the utmost wisdom, the verities of His Cause. Then, and only then, will the whole earth be enveloped with the morning light of His Revelation.

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

The Promised One Has Come

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

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

10.1 Release yourselves, O nightingales of God, from the thorns and brambles of wretchedness and misery, and wing your flight to the rose-garden of unfading splendour. O My friends that dwell upon the dust! Haste forth unto your celestial habitation. Announce unto yourselves the joyful tidings: "He Who is the Best-Beloved is come! He hath crowned Himself with the glory of God's Revelation, and hath unlocked to the face of men the doors of His ancient Paradise." Let all eyes rejoice, and let every ear be gladdened, for now is the time to gaze on His beauty, now is the fit time to hearken to His voice. Proclaim unto every longing lover: "Behold, your Well-Beloved hath come among men!" and to the messengers of the Monarch of love impart the tidings: "Lo, the Adored One hath appeared arrayed in the fullness of His glory!" O lovers

of His beauty! Turn the anguish of your separation from Him into the joy of an everlasting reunion, and let the sweetness of His presence dissolve the bitterness of your remoteness from His court.

10.2 Behold how the manifold grace of God, which is being showered from the clouds of Divine glory, hath, in this day, encompassed the world. For whereas in days past every lover besought and searched after his Beloved, it is the Beloved Himself Who now is calling His lovers and is inviting them to attain His presence. Take heed lest ye forfeit so precious a favour; beware lest ye belittle so remarkable a token of His grace. Abandon not the incorruptible benefits, and be not content with that which perisheth. Lift up the veil that obscureth your vision, and dispel the darkness with which it is enveloped, that ye may gaze on the naked beauty of the Beloved's face, may behold that which no eye hath beheld, and hear that which no ear hath heard.

10.3 Hear Me, ye mortal birds! In the Rose-Garden of changeless splendour a Flower hath begun to bloom, compared to which every other flower is but a thorn, and before the brightness of Whose glory the very essence of beauty must pale and wither. Arise, therefore, and, with the whole enthusiasm of your hearts, with all the eagerness of your souls, the full fervour of your will, and the concentrated efforts of your entire being, strive to attain the paradise of His presence, and endeavour to inhale the fragrance of the incorruptible Flower, to breathe the sweet savours of holiness, and to obtain a portion of this perfume of celestial glory. Whoso followeth this counsel will break his chains asunder, will taste the abandonment of enraptured love, will attain unto his heart's desire, and will surrender his soul into the hands of his Beloved. Bursting through his cage, he will, even as the bird of the spirit, wing his flight to his holy and everlasting nest.

10.4 Night hath succeeded day, and day hath succeeded night, and the hours and moments of your lives have come and gone, and yet none of you hath, for one instant, consented to detach himself from that which perisheth. Bestir yourselves, that the brief moments that are still yours may not be dissipated and lost. Even as the swiftness of lightning your days shall pass, and your bodies shall be laid to rest beneath a canopy of dust. What can ye then achieve? How can ye atone for your past failure?

10.5 The everlasting Candle shineth in its naked glory. Behold how it hath consumed every mortal veil. O ye moth-like lovers of His light! Brave every danger, and consecrate your souls to its consuming flame. O ye that thirst after Him! Strip yourselves of every earthly affection, and hasten to embrace your Beloved. With a zest that none can equal make haste to attain unto Him. The Flower, thus far hidden from the sight of men, is unveiled to your eyes. In the open radiance of His glory He standeth before you. His voice summoneth all the holy and sanctified beings to come and be united with Him. Happy is he that turneth thereunto; well is it with him that hath attained, and gazed on the light of so wondrous a countenance.

11.1 The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the

earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish. He Who hath come to build anew the whole world, behold, how they that have joined partners with God have forced Him to dwell within the most desolate of cities!

#### The Divine Physician

12.1 The All-Knowing Physician hath His finger on the pulse of mankind. He perceiveth the disease, and prescribeth, in His unerring wisdom, the remedy. Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require. Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and centre your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements.

12.2 We can well perceive how the whole human race is encompassed with great, with incalculable afflictions. We see it languishing on its bed of sickness, sore-tried and disillusioned. They that are intoxicated by self-conceit have interposed themselves between it and the Divine and infallible Physician. Witness how they have entangled all men, themselves included, in the mesh of their devices. They can neither discover the cause of the disease, nor have they any knowledge of the remedy. They have conceived the straight to be crooked, and have imagined their friend an enemy.

12.3 Incline your ears to the sweet melody of this Prisoner. Arise, and lift up your voices, that haply they that are fast asleep may be awakened.

13.1 We beseech God to aid thee to be just and fair-minded, and to acquaint thee with the things that were hidden from the eyes of men. He, in truth, is the Mighty, the Unconstrained. We ask thee to reflect upon that which hath been revealed, and to be fair and just in thy speech, that perchance the splendours of the day-star of truthfulness and sincerity may shine forth, and may deliver thee from the darkness of ignorance, and illumine the world with the light of knowledge. This Wronged One hath frequented no school, neither hath He attended the controversies of the learned. By My life! Not of Mine own volition have I revealed Myself, but God, of His own choosing, hath manifested Me. In the Tablet, addressed to His Majesty the Sháh—may God, blessed and glorified be He, assist him—these words have streamed from the tongue of this Wronged One:

13.2 “O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow. The learning current amongst men I studied not; their schools I entered not. Ask of the city wherein I dwelt, that thou mayest be well assured that I am not of them who speak falsely. This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list. The evanescent is as nothing before Him Who is the Ever-Abiding. His all-compelling summons hath

reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people. I was indeed as one dead when His behest was uttered. The hand of the will of thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful, transformed Me.”

13.3 Now is the moment in which to cleanse thyself with the waters of detachment that have flowed out from the Supreme Pen, and to ponder, wholly for the sake of God, those things which, time and again, have been sent down or manifested, and then to strive, as much as lieth in thee, to quench, through the power of wisdom and the force of thy utterance, the fire of enmity and hatred which smouldereth in the hearts of the peoples of the world. The Divine Messengers have been sent down, and their Books were revealed, for the purpose of promoting the knowledge of God, and of furthering unity and fellowship amongst men. But now behold, how they have made the Law of God a cause and pretext for perversity and hatred. How pitiful, how regrettable, that most men are cleaving fast to, and have busied themselves with, the things they possess, and are unaware of, and shut out as by a veil from, the things God possesseth!...

13.4 Justice and equity are twin Guardians that watch over men. From them are revealed such blessed and perspicuous words as are the cause of the well-being of the world and the protection of the nations.

14.1 The Supreme Pen hath, in ringing tones, enjoined love and fellowship on the whole world and hath categorically forbidden everyone to engage in that which is the cause of division, discord, estrangement, and the like, so that His grace and bounty, His favour and generosity may be made manifest....

14.2 God grant that thou mayest attain unto His loving providence and mayest turn to and speak of that which refineth the character of His servants. O physician! The people are heedless and in need of a Teacher and Educator. They must, through the care and loving-kindness of the divine Physicians and the learned ones of the age, recognize the cause of their illnesses and seek to find their cure. Strive then, that haply the heedless may perceive the fruit of goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character. Should they attain unto this station, each one would find himself capable of reforming, edifying, and uniting the negligent and the wayward. The Pen of this Wronged One hath at all times directed everyone to show forth love, compassion, and concord, and hath explicitly set forth the meaning of “rendering the Cause victorious”, which hath been mentioned in the holy Tablets. And yet, it is observed that some have considered sedition to be the means of the betterment of the world and of gaining victory. Nay, by the One Who hath created the world through a single word of His mouth! The Cause of God is rendered victorious through wisdom and utterance, which are in turn conditional upon the utmost joy and radiance. We beseech God to confirm all in achieving that which is worthy of this Day.

14.3 Say: O people! Ye have stepped out of nothingness into the realm of being that ye may reconstruct the world. Dissension and strife ill beseem the station of a human being. In this day, should a soul become the cause of sorrow to another soul, no matter from which Faith, this would not be pleasing to this Wronged One. Unto this bear witness both Mine inner and outer tongue, and beyond them every wise and discerning, every learned and attentive soul. The fundamental purpose of religion as brought down from the heaven of divine Revelation is harmony and union among all people. O physician! Now consider how

this pure and gem-like reality hath been clouded by the dust of vain imaginings and how, through the tyranny of the ignorant, things have come to such a pass that religion hath become the cause of hatred amongst God's servants. This is the pure stream of utterance flowing down from the Kingdom of divine knowledge. Blessed is the soul who approacheth it and drinketh therefrom in the name of the one true God. It is hoped that the people of Bahá may attain unto that which God hath purposed and become the dawning-places of harmony and fellowship, that perchance, through the grace of God and the outpourings of His bounty, they may become the cause of the rehabilitation of the world and its reconstruction.

14.4 Convey to the friends in that land the greetings of this Exile and say: God grant that ye may be occupied in making mention of God with the utmost wisdom, so that your words may stir the hearts. We counsel you to observe compassion, mercifulness, forbearance, trustworthiness, and sincerity, that haply this darksome world may be illumined with the light of a praiseworthy character and goodly deeds. This is the true meaning of "rendering the Cause victorious" which hath been revealed in the Book. In this day, should any soul commit an act that is the cause of affliction or harm to another, that deed would in truth revert unto this Wronged One. Beware, O My loved ones, lest ye commit that which human minds abhor. Thus doth My Pen counsel you and My truth-speaking and trustworthy tongue exhort you.

#### The Duty of Human Beings in This Day

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

15.2 They who are the beloved of God, in whatever place they gather and whomsoever they may meet, must evince, in their attitude towards God, and in the manner of their celebration of His praise and glory, such humility and submissiveness that every atom of the dust beneath their feet may attest the depth of their devotion. The conversation carried by these holy souls should be informed with such power that these same atoms of dust will be thrilled by its influence. They should conduct themselves in such manner that the earth upon which they tread may never be allowed to address to them such words as these: "I am to be preferred above you. For witness, how patient I am in bearing the burden which the husbandman layeth upon me. I am the instrument that continually imparteth unto all beings the blessings with which He Who is the Source of all grace hath entrusted me. Notwithstanding the honour conferred upon me, and the unnumbered evidences of my wealth—a wealth that supplieth the needs of all creation—behold the measure of my humility, witness with what absolute submissiveness I allow myself to be trodden beneath the feet of men." ...

15.3 Show forbearance and benevolence and love to one another. Should any one among you be incapable of grasping a certain truth, or be striving to comprehend it, show forth, when conversing with him, a spirit of extreme

kindliness and goodwill. Help him to see and recognize the truth, without esteeming yourself to be, in the least, superior to him, or to be possessed of greater endowments.

15.4The 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.

15.5Every eye, in this Day, should seek what will best promote the Cause of God. He, Who is the Eternal Truth, beareth Me witness! Nothing whatever can, in this Day, inflict a greater harm upon this Cause than dissension and strife, contention, estrangement and apathy, among the loved ones of God. Flee them, through the power of God and His sovereign aid, and strive ye to knit together the hearts of men, in His Name, the Unifier, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

15.6Beseech ye the one true God to grant that ye may taste the savour of such deeds as are performed in His path, and partake of the sweetness of such humility and submissiveness as are shown for His sake. Forget your own selves, and turn your eyes towards your neighbour. Bend your energies to whatever may foster the education of men. Nothing is, or can ever be, hidden from God. If ye follow in His way, His incalculable and imperishable blessings will be showered upon you. This is the luminous Tablet, whose verses have streamed from the moving Pen of Him Who is the Lord of all worlds. Ponder it in your hearts, and be ye of them that observe its precepts.

16.1It beseemeth all men, in this Day, to take firm hold on the Most Great Name, and to establish the unity of all mankind. There is no place to flee to, no refuge that any one can seek, except Him. Should any man be led to utter such words as will turn away the people from the shores of God's limitless ocean, and cause them to fix their hearts on anything except this glorious and manifest Being, that hath assumed a form subject to human limitations—such a man, however lofty the station he may occupy, shall be denounced by the entire creation as one that hath deprived himself of the sweet savours of the All-Merciful.

16.2Say: Observe equity in your judgement, ye men of understanding heart! He that is unjust in his judgement is destitute of the characteristics that distinguish man's station. He Who is the Eternal Truth knoweth well what the breasts of men conceal. His long forbearance hath emboldened His creatures, for not until the appointed time is come will He rend any veil asunder. His surpassing mercy hath restrained the fury of His wrath, and caused most people to imagine that the one true God is unaware of the things they have privily committed. By Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed! The mirror of His knowledge reflecteth, with complete distinctness, precision and fidelity, the doings of all men. Say: Praise be to Thee, O Concealer of the sins of the weak and helpless! Magnified be Thy name, O Thou that forgivest the heedless ones that trespass against Thee!

16.3We have forbidden men to walk after the imaginations of their hearts, that they may be enabled to recognize Him Who is the sovereign Source and Object of all knowledge, and may acknowledge whatsoever He may be pleased to reveal.

Witness how they have entangled themselves with their idle fancies and vain imaginations. By My life! They are themselves the victims of what their own hearts have devised, and yet they perceive it not. Vain and profitless is the talk of their lips, and yet they understand not.

16.4 We beseech God that He may graciously vouchsafe His grace unto all men, and enable them to attain the knowledge of Him and of themselves. By My life! Whoso hath known Him shall soar in the immensity of His love, and shall be detached from the world and all that is therein. Nothing on earth shall deflect him from his course, how much less they who, prompted by their imaginations, speak those things which God hath forbidden.

16.5 Say: This is the Day when every ear must needs be attentive to His voice. Harken ye to the Call of this wronged One, and magnify ye the name of the one true God, and adorn yourselves with the ornament of His remembrance, and illumine your hearts with the light of His love. This is the key that unlocketh the hearts of men, the burnish that shall cleanse the souls of all beings. He that is careless of what hath poured out from the finger of the Will of God liveth in manifest error. Amity and rectitude of conduct, rather than dissension and mischief, are the marks of true faith.

16.6 Proclaim unto men what He, Who speaketh the truth and is the Bearer of the Trust of God, hath bidden thee observe. My glory be with thee, O thou that callest upon My name, whose eyes are directed towards My court, and whose tongue uttereth the praise of thy Lord, the Beneficent.

17.1 In this Most Great Revelation goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character are regarded as the hosts of God, likewise is His blessed and holy Word. These hosts are the lodestone of the hearts of men and the effective means for unlocking doors. Of all the weapons in the world this is the keenest.

17.2 Beseech thou God to graciously assist all men to observe that which His all-glorious Pen hath recorded in the sacred Books and Tablets....

17.3 Man is like unto a tree. If he be adorned with fruit, he hath been and will ever be worthy of praise and commendation. Otherwise a fruitless tree is but fit for fire. The fruits of the human tree are exquisite, highly desired and dearly cherished. Among them are upright character, virtuous deeds and a goodly utterance. The springtime for earthly trees occurreth once every year, while the one for human trees appeareth in the Days of God—exalted be His glory. Were the trees of men's lives to be adorned in this divine Springtime with the fruits that have been mentioned, the effulgence of the light of Justice would, of a certainty, illumine all the dwellers of the earth and everyone would abide in tranquillity and contentment beneath the sheltering shadow of Him Who is the Object of all mankind. The Water for these trees is the living water of the sacred Words uttered by the Beloved of the world. In one instant are such trees planted and in the next their branches shall, through the outpourings of the showers of divine mercy, have reached the skies. A dried-up tree, however, hath never been nor will be worthy of any mention.

17.4 Happy is the faithful one who is attired with the vesture of high endeavour and hath arisen to serve this Cause. Such a soul hath truly attained the desired Goal and hath apprehended the Object for which it hath been created.

18.1 Indeed one's righteous deeds testify to the truth of one's words. We

cherish the hope that men of piety may illumine the world through the radiant light of their conduct, and We entreat the Almighty—glorified and exalted is He—to grant that everyone may in this Day remain steadfast in His love and stand firm in His Cause.

19.1 Know thou that he is truly learned who hath acknowledged My Revelation, and drunk from the Ocean of My knowledge, and soared in the atmosphere of My love, and cast away all else besides Me, and taken firm hold on that which hath been sent down from the Kingdom of My wondrous utterance. He, verily, is even as an eye unto mankind, and as the spirit of life unto the body of all creation.

Glorified be the All-Merciful Who hath enlightened him, and caused him to arise and serve His great and mighty Cause. Verily, such a man is blessed by the Concourse on high, and by them who dwell within the Tabernacle of Grandeur, who have quaffed My sealed Wine in My Name, the Omnipotent, the All-Powerful.

Episodes in the Life of Bahá'u'lláh

20.1 When I was still a child and had not yet attained the age of maturity, My father made arrangements in Tihrán for the marriage of one of My older brothers, and as is customary in that city, the festivities lasted for seven days and seven nights.

On the last day it was announced that the play “Sháh Sultán Salím” would be presented.

A large number of princes, dignitaries, and notables of the capital gathered for the occasion.

I was sitting in one of the upper rooms of the building and observing the scene.

Presently a tent was pitched in the courtyard, and before long some small human-like figures, each appearing to be no more than about a hand's span in height, were seen to emerge from it and raise the call:

“His Majesty is coming!

Arrange the seats at once!”

Other figures then came forth, some of whom were seen to be engaged in sweeping, others in sprinkling water, and thereafter another, who was announced as the chief town crier, raised his call and bade the people assemble for an audience with the king.

Next, several groups of figures made their appearance and took their places, the first attired in hats and sashes after the Persian fashion, the second wielding battleaxes, and the third comprising a number of footmen and executioners carrying bastinados.

Finally there appeared, arrayed in regal majesty and crowned with a royal diadem, a kingly figure, bearing himself with the utmost haughtiness and grandeur, at turns advancing and pausing in his progress, who proceeded with great solemnity, poise and dignity to seat himself upon his throne.

20.2 At that moment a volley of shots was fired, a fanfare of trumpets was

sounded, and king and tent were enveloped in a pall of smoke. When it had cleared, the king, ensconced upon his throne, was seen surrounded by a suite of ministers, princes, and dignitaries of state who, having taken their places, were standing at attention in his presence. A captured thief was then brought before the king, who gave the order that the offender should be beheaded. Without a moment's delay the chief executioner cut off the thief's head, whence a blood-like liquid came forth. After this the king held audience with his court, during which intelligence was received that a rebellion had broken out on a certain frontier. Thereupon the king reviewed his troops and despatched several regiments supported by artillery to quell the uprising. A few moments later cannons were heard booming from behind the tent, and it was announced that a battle had been engaged.

20.3 This Youth regarded the scene with great amazement. When the royal audience was ended, the curtain was drawn, and, after some twenty minutes, a man emerged from behind the tent carrying a box under his arm.

20.4 "What is this box," I asked him, "and what was the nature of this display?"

20.5 "All this lavish display and these elaborate devices," he replied, "the king, the princes, and the ministers, their pomp and glory, their might and power, everything you saw, are now contained within this box."

20.6 I swear by My Lord Who, through a single word of His Mouth, hath brought into being all created things! Ever since that day, all the trappings of the world have seemed in the eyes of this Youth akin to that same spectacle. They have never been, nor will they ever be, of any weight and consequence, be it to the extent of a grain of mustard seed. How greatly I marvelled that men should pride themselves upon such vanities, whilst those possessed of insight, ere they witness any evidence of human glory, perceive with certainty the inevitability of its waning. "Never have I looked upon any thing save that I have seen extinction before it; and God, verily, is a sufficient witness!"

20.7 It behoveth everyone to traverse this brief span of life with sincerity and fairness. Should one fail to attain unto the recognition of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, let him at least conduct himself with reason and justice. Erelong these outward trappings, these visible treasures, these earthly vanities, these arrayed armies, these adorned vestures, these proud and overweening souls, all shall pass into the confines of the grave, as though into that box. In the eyes of those possessed of insight, all this conflict, contention and vainglory hath ever been, and will ever be, like unto the play and pastimes of children. Take heed, and be not of them that see and yet deny.

21.1 During the days I lay in the prison of Tihrán, though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain. Every limb of My body would, as a result, be set afire. At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear.

22.1 While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden—the embodiment of

the remembrance of the name of My Lord—suspended in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the brightness of the All-Merciful. Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both My inward and outer being tidings which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God's honoured servants.

22.2 Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His glory unto all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if ye be of them that perceive.

23.1 My God, My Master, My Desire!... Thou hast created this atom of dust through the consummate power of Thy might, and nurtured Him with Thine hands which none can chain up....

Thou hast destined for Him trials and tribulations which no tongue can describe, nor any of Thy Tablets adequately recount.

The throat Thou didst accustom to the touch of silk Thou hast, in the end, clasped with strong chains, and the body Thou didst ease with brocades and velvets Thou hast at last subjected to the abasement of a dungeon.

Thy decree hath shackled Me with unnumbered fetters, and cast about My neck chains that none can sunder.

A number of years have passed during which afflictions have, like showers of mercy, rained upon Me....

How many the nights during which the weight of chains and fetters allowed Me no rest, and how numerous the days during which peace and tranquillity were denied Me, by reason of that wherewith the hands and tongues of men have afflicted Me!

Both bread and water which Thou hast, through Thy all-embracing mercy, allowed unto the beasts of the field, they have, for a time, forbidden unto this servant, and the things they refused to inflict upon such as have seceded from Thy Cause, the same have they suffered to be inflicted upon Me, until, finally, Thy decree was irrevocably fixed, and Thy behest summoned this servant to depart out of Persia, accompanied by a number of frail-bodied men and children of tender age, at this time when the cold is so intense that one cannot even speak, and ice and snow so abundant that it is impossible to move.

24.1 We betook Ourselves to the wilderness, and there, separated and alone, led for two years a life of complete solitude.

From Our eyes there rained tears of anguish, and in Our bleeding heart there surged an ocean of agonizing pain.

Many a night We had no food for sustenance, and many a day Our body found no rest.

By Him Who hath My being between His hands! notwithstanding these showers of afflictions and unceasing calamities, Our soul was wrapt in blissful joy, and Our whole being evinced an ineffable gladness.

For in Our solitude We were unaware of the harm or benefit, the health or ailment, of any soul.

Alone, We communed with Our spirit, oblivious of the world and all that is therein.

We knew not, however, that the mesh of divine destiny exceedeth the vastest of mortal conceptions, and the dart of His decree transcendeth the boldest of human designs.

None can escape the snares He setteth, and no soul can find release except through submission to His will.

By the righteousness of God!

Our withdrawal contemplated no return, and Our separation hoped for no reunion.

The one object of Our retirement was to avoid becoming a subject of discord among the faithful, a source of disturbance unto Our companions, the means of injury to any soul, or the cause of sorrow to any heart.

Beyond these, We cherished no other intention, and apart from them, We had no end in view.

And yet, each person schemed after his own desire, and pursued his own idle fancy, until the hour when, from the Mystic Source, there came the summons bidding Us return whence We came.

Surrendering Our will to His, We submitted to His injunction.

24.2 What pen can recount the things We beheld upon Our return! Two years have elapsed during which Our enemies have ceaselessly and assiduously contrived to exterminate Us, whereunto all witness. Nevertheless, none amongst the faithful hath risen to render Us any assistance, nor did anyone feel inclined to help in Our deliverance. Nay, instead of assisting Us, what showers of continuous sorrows their words and deeds have caused to rain upon Our soul! Amidst them all, We stand, life in hand, wholly resigned to His will; that perchance, through God's loving-kindness and His grace, this revealed and manifest Letter may lay down His life as a sacrifice in the path of the Primal Point, the most exalted Word. By Him at Whose bidding the Spirit hath spoken, but for this yearning of Our soul, We would not, for one moment, have tarried any longer in this city. "Sufficient Witness is God unto Us." We conclude Our argument with the words: "There is no power nor strength but in God alone." "We are God's, and to Him shall we return."

25.1 The Divine Springtime is come, O Most Exalted Pen, for the Festival of the All-Merciful is fast approaching. Bestir thyself, and magnify, before the entire creation, the name of God, and celebrate His praise, in such wise that all created things may be regenerated and made new. Speak, and hold not thy peace. The day-star of blissfulness shineth above the horizon of Our name, the

Blissful, inasmuch as the kingdom of the names of God hath been adorned with the ornament of the name of thy Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Arise before the nations of the earth, and arm thyself with the power of this Most Great Name, and be not of those who tarry....

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

25.3 This is the Day whereon naught can be seen except the splendours of the Light that shineth from the face of Thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful. Verily, We have caused every soul to expire by virtue of Our irresistible and all-subduing sovereignty. We have, then, called into being a new creation, as a token of Our grace unto men. I am, verily, the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days....

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

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

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

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

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

25.9 Within this Paradise, and from the heights of its loftiest chambers, the Maids of Heaven have cried out and shouted: "Rejoice, ye dwellers of the realms above, for the fingers of Him Who is the Ancient of Days are ringing, in the name of the All-Glorious, the Most Great Bell, in the midmost heart of the heavens. The hands of bounty have borne round the cup of everlasting life.

Approach, and quaff your fill. Drink with healthy relish, O ye that are the very incarnations of longing, ye who are the embodiments of vehement desire!”

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

25.11 Blessed are they that have soared on the wings of detachment and attained the station which, as ordained by God, overshadoweth the entire creation, whom neither the vain imaginations of the learned, nor the multitude of the hosts of the earth have succeeded in deflecting from His Cause. Who is there among you, O people, who will renounce the world, and draw nigh unto God, the Lord of all names? Where is he to be found who, through the power of My name that transcendeth all created things, will cast away the things that men possess, and cling, with all his might, to the things which God, the Knower of the unseen and of the seen, hath bidden him observe? Thus hath His bounty been sent down unto men, His testimony fulfilled, and His proof shone forth above the Horizon of mercy. Rich is the prize that shall be won by him who hath believed and exclaimed: “Lauded art Thou, O Beloved of all worlds! Magnified be Thy name, O Thou the Desire of every understanding heart!”

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

26.1 I have seen, O Sháh, in the path of God what eye hath not seen nor ear heard. Mine acquaintances have repudiated Me, and My pathways have been straitened. The fount of well-being hath run dry, and the bower of ease hath withered. How numerous the tribulations which have rained, and will soon rain, upon Me! I advance with My face set towards Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Bounteous, whilst behind Me glideth the serpent. Mine eyes have rained down tears until My bed is drenched.

26.2 I sorrow not for Myself, however. By God! Mine head yearneth for the spear out of love for its Lord. I never passed a tree, but Mine heart addressed it saying: “O would that thou wert cut down in My name, and My body crucified upon thee, in the path of My Lord!”, for I see the people wandering distraught and unconscious in their drunken stupor. They have raised on high their passions and set down their God. Methinks they have taken His Cause for a mockery and regard it as a play and pastime, believing all the while that they do well, and that they dwell securely in the citadel of safety. Howbeit the matter is not as they fondly imagine: Tomorrow shall they behold that which today they are wont to deny!

26.3 Erelong shall the exponents of wealth and power banish Us from the land of Adrianople to the city of 'Akká. According to what they say, it is the most desolate of the cities of the world, the most unsightly of them in appearance, the most detestable in climate, and the foulest in water. It is as though it were the metropolis of the owl, within whose precincts naught can be heard save the echo of its cry. Therein have they resolved to imprison this Youth, to shut against our faces the doors of ease and comfort, and to deprive us of every worldly benefit throughout the remainder of our days.

26.4 By God! Though weariness lay Me low, and hunger consume Me, and the bare rock be My bed, and My fellows the beasts of the field, I will not complain, but will endure patiently as those endued with constancy and firmness have endured patiently, through the power of God, the Eternal King and Creator of the nations, and will render thanks unto God under all conditions. We pray that, out of His bounty—exalted be He—He may release, through this imprisonment, the necks of men from chains and fetters, and cause them to turn, with sincere faces, towards His face, Who is the Mighty, the Bounteous. Ready is He to answer whosoever calleth upon Him, and nigh is He unto such as commune with Him. We further beseech Him to make of this darksome tribulation a shield for the Temple of His Cause, and to protect it from the assault of sharpened swords and pointed daggers. Adversity hath ever given rise to the exaltation of His Cause and the glorification of His Name. Such hath been God's method carried into effect in centuries and ages past. That which the people now fail to apprehend they shall erelong discover, on that day when their steeds shall stumble and their finery be folded up, their blades blunted and their feet made to falter.

26.5 I know not how long they shall spur on the charger of self and passion and rove in the wilderness of error and negligence! Shall either the pomp of the mighty or the wretchedness of the abased endure? Shall he who reposes upon the loftiest seat of honour, who hath attained the pinnacle of might and glory, abide forever? Nay, by My Lord, the All-Merciful! All on earth shall pass away, and there remaineth alone the face of My Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful.

27.1 Upon Our arrival, We were welcomed with banners of light, whereupon the Voice of the Spirit cried out saying: "Soon will all that dwell on earth be enlisted under these banners."

28.1 Know thou that upon Our arrival at this Spot, We chose to designate it as the "Most Great Prison". Though previously subjected in another land (Tihrán) to chains and fetters, We yet refused to call it by that name. Say: Ponder thereon, O ye endued with understanding!

29.1 Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God! Thou seest me in this day shut up in my prison, and fallen into the hands of Thine adversaries, and beholdest my son (The Purest Branch) lying on the dust before Thy face. He is Thy servant, O my Lord, whom Thou hast caused to be related to Him Who is the Manifestation of Thyself and the Dayspring of Thy Cause.

29.2 At his birth he was afflicted through his separation from Thee, according to what had been ordained for him through Thine irrevocable decree. And when he had quaffed the cup of reunion with Thee, he was cast into prison for having

believed in Thee and in Thy signs. He continued to serve Thy Beauty until he entered into this Most Great Prison. Thereupon I offered him up, O my God, as a sacrifice in Thy path.

29.3 Thou well knowest what they who love Thee have endured through this trial that hath caused the kindreds of the earth to wail, and beyond them the Concourse on high to lament.

29.4 I beseech Thee, O my Lord, by him and by his exile and his imprisonment, to send down upon such as loved him what will quiet their hearts and bless their works. Potent art Thou to do as Thou willest. No God is there but Thee, the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

30.1 Recall thou to mind My sorrows, My cares and anxieties, My woes and trials, the state of My captivity, the tears that I have shed, the bitterness of Mine anguish, and now My imprisonment in this far-off land. God, O Mustafá, beareth Me witness. Couldst thou be told what hath befallen the Ancient Beauty, thou wouldst flee into the wilderness, and weep with a great weeping. In thy grief, thou wouldst smite thyself on the head, and cry out as one stung by the sting of the adder. Be thou grateful to God, that We have refused to divulge unto thee the secrets of those unsearchable decrees that have been sent down unto Us from the heaven of the Will of thy Lord, the Most Powerful, the Almighty.

30.2 By the righteousness of God! 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. With every piece of bread the Ancient Beauty breaketh is coupled the assault of a fresh affliction, and with every drop He drinketh is mixed the bitterness of the most woeful of trials. He is preceded in every step He taketh by an army of unforeseen calamities, while in His rear follow legions of agonizing sorrows.

30.3 Such is My plight, wert thou to ponder it in thine heart. Let not, however, thy soul grieve over that which God hath rained down upon Us. Merge thy will in His pleasure, for We have, at no time, desired anything whatsoever except His Will, and have welcomed each one of His irrevocable decrees. Let thine heart be patient, and be thou not dismayed. Follow not in the way of them that are sorely agitated.

31.1 Ponder awhile on the woes and afflictions which this Prisoner hath sustained. I have, all the days of My life, been at the mercy of Mine enemies, and have suffered each day, in the path of the love of God, a fresh tribulation. I have patiently endured until the fame of the Cause of God was spread abroad on the earth. If any one should now arise and, prompted by the vain imaginations his heart hath devised, endeavour, openly or in secret, to sow the seeds of dissension amongst men—can such a man be said to have acted with equity? No, by Him Whose might extendeth over all things! By My life! Mine heart groaneth and mine eyes weep sore for the Cause of God and for them that understand not what they say and imagine what they cannot comprehend.

4

Spiritual Reality and the Life of the Soul  
God and Creation

1.1As to thy question concerning the origin of creation. Know assuredly that God's creation hath existed from eternity, and will continue to exist forever. Its beginning hath had no beginning, and its end knoweth no end. His name, the Creator, presupposeth a creation, even as His title, the Lord of Men, must involve the existence of a servant.

2.1As regards thine assertions about the beginning of creation, this is a matter on which conceptions vary by reason of the divergences in men's thoughts and opinions. Wert thou to assert that it hath ever existed and shall continue to exist, it would be true; or wert thou to affirm the same concept as is mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, no doubt would there be about it, for it hath been revealed by God, the Lord of the worlds....

2.2That which hath been in existence had existed before, but not in the form thou seest today. The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different. Thus doth the Great Announcement inform thee about this glorious structure. Such as communicate the generating influence and such as receive its impact are indeed created through the irresistible Word of God which is the Cause of the entire creation, while all else besides His Word are but the creatures and the effects thereof. Verily thy Lord is the Expounder, the All-Wise.

2.3Know thou, moreover, that the Word of God—exalted be His glory—is higher and far superior to that which the senses can perceive, for it is sanctified from any property or substance. It transcendeth the limitations of known elements and is exalted above all the essential and recognized substances. It became manifest without any syllable or sound and is none but the Command of God which pervadeth all created things. It hath never been withheld from the world of being. It is God's all-pervasive grace, from which all grace doth emanate. It is an entity far removed above all that hath been and shall be.

2.4We are loath to enlarge on this subject, inasmuch as the unbelievers have inclined their ears towards Us in order to hear that which might enable them to cavil against God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. And since they are unable to attain to mysteries of knowledge and wisdom from what hath been unravelled by the Source of divine splendour, they rise in protest and burst into clamour. But it is true to say that they object to that which they comprehend, not to the expositions given by the Expounder, nor the truths imparted by the One true God, the Knower of things unseen. Their objections, one and all, turn upon themselves, and I swear by thy life that they are devoid of understanding.

2.5Every thing must needs have an origin and every building a builder. Verily, the Word of God is the Cause which hath preceded the contingent world—a world which is adorned with the splendours of the Ancient of Days, yet is being renewed and regenerated at all times. Immeasurably exalted is the God of Wisdom Who hath raised this sublime structure.

2.6Look at the world and ponder a while upon it. It unveileth the book of its own self before thine eyes and revealeth that which the Pen of thy Lord, the Fashioner, the All-Informed, hath inscribed therein. It will acquaint thee with that which is within it and upon it and will give thee such clear explanations

as to make thee independent of every eloquent expounder.

2.7 Say: Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise. Were anyone to affirm that it is the Will of God as manifested in the world of being, no one should question this assertion. It is endowed with a power whose reality men of learning fail to grasp. Indeed a man of insight can perceive naught therein save the effulgent splendour of Our Name, the Creator.

3.1 As to thy question concerning the worlds of God.

Know thou of a truth that the worlds of God are countless in their number, and infinite in their range.

None can reckon or comprehend them except God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Consider thy state when asleep.

Verily, I say, this phenomenon is the most mysterious of the signs of God amongst men, were they to ponder it in their hearts.

Behold how the thing which thou hast seen in thy dream is, after a considerable lapse of time, fully realized.

Had the world in which thou didst find thyself in thy dream been identical with the world in which thou livest, it would have been necessary for the event occurring in that dream to have transpired in this world at the very moment of its occurrence.

Were it so, thou thyself wouldst have borne witness unto it.

This being not the case, however, it must necessarily follow that the world in which thou livest is different and apart from that which thou hast experienced in thy dream.

This latter world hath neither beginning nor end.

It would be true if thou wert to contend that this same world is, as decreed by the All-Glorious and Almighty God, within thy proper self and is wrapped up within thee.

It would equally be true to maintain that thy spirit, having transcended the limitations of sleep and having stripped itself of all earthly attachment, hath, by the act of God, been made to traverse a realm which lieth hidden in the innermost reality of this world.

Verily I say, the creation of God embraceth worlds besides this world, and creatures apart from these creatures.

In each of these worlds He hath ordained things which none can search except Himself, the All-Searching, the All-Wise.

Do thou meditate on that which We have revealed unto thee, that thou mayest

discover the purpose of God, thy Lord, and the Lord of all worlds.

In these words the mysteries of Divine Wisdom have been treasured....

3.2O servant! Warn thou the servants of God not to reject that which they do not comprehend. Say, implore God to open to your hearts the portals of true understanding that ye may be apprised of that of which no one is apprised.

Verily, He is the Giver, the Forgiving, the Compassionate.

4.1Know thou that every created thing is a sign of the revelation of God. Each, according to its capacity, is, and will ever remain, a token of the Almighty.

Inasmuch as He, the sovereign Lord of all, hath willed to reveal His sovereignty in the kingdom of names and attributes, each and every created thing hath, through the act of the Divine Will, been made a sign of His glory.

So pervasive and general is this revelation that nothing whatsoever in the whole universe can be discovered that doth not reflect His splendour. Under such conditions every consideration of proximity and remoteness is obliterated.... Were the Hand of Divine power to divest of this high endowment all created things, the entire universe would become desolate and void....

4.2Consider, for instance, the revelation of the light of the Name of God, the Educator. Behold, how in all things the evidences of such a revelation are manifest, how the betterment of all beings dependeth upon it. This education is of two kinds.

4.3The one is universal. Its influence pervadeth all things and sustaineth them. It is for this reason that God hath assumed the title, "Lord of all worlds". The other is confined to them that have come under the shadow of this Name, and sought the shelter of this most mighty Revelation. They, however, that have failed to seek this shelter, have deprived themselves of this privilege, and are powerless to benefit from the spiritual sustenance that hath been sent down through the heavenly grace of this Most Great Name. How great the gulf fixed between the one and the other! If the veil were lifted, and the full glory of the station of those that have turned wholly towards God, and have, in their love for Him, renounced the world, were made manifest, the entire creation would be dumbfounded. The true believer in the Unity of God will, as it hath already been explained, recognize, in the believer and the unbeliever, the evidences of the revelation of both of these Names. Were this revelation to be withdrawn, all would perish.

4.4Consider, in like manner, the revelation of the light of the Name of God, the Incomparable. Behold, how this light hath enveloped the entire creation, how each and every thing manifesteth the sign of His Unity, testifieth to the reality of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, proclaimeth His sovereignty, His oneness, and His power. This revelation is a token of His mercy that hath encompassed all created things. They that have joined partners with Him, however, are unaware of such a revelation, and are deprived of the Faith through which they can draw near unto, and be united with, Him. Witness how the divers peoples and kindreds of the earth bear witness to His unity, and recognize His oneness. But for the sign of the Unity of God within them, they would have never acknowledged the truth of the words, "There is none other God but God." And yet, consider how grievously they have erred, and strayed

from His path. Inasmuch as they have failed to recognize the Sovereign Revealer, they have ceased to be reckoned among those who may be regarded as true believers in the Unity of God.

4.5 This sign of the revelation of the Divine Being in them that have joined partners with Him may, in a sense, be regarded as a reflection of the glory with which the faithful are illumined. None, however, can comprehend this truth save men endued with understanding. They that have truly recognized the Unity of God should be regarded as the primary manifestations of this Name. It is they who have quaffed the wine of Divine Unity from the cup which the hand of God hath proffered unto them, and who have turned their faces towards Him. How vast the distance that separateth these sanctified beings from those men that are so far away from God!...

4.6 God grant that, with a penetrating vision, thou mayest perceive, in all things, the sign of the revelation of Him Who is the Ancient King, and recognize how exalted and sanctified from the whole creation is that most holy and sacred Being. This, in truth, is the very root and essence of belief in the unity and singleness of God. "God was alone; there was none else besides Him." He, now, is what He hath ever been. There is none other God but Him, the One, the Incomparable, the Almighty, the Most Exalted, the Most Great.

Gifts of God to Humanity

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

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

6.1 Thine eye is My trust, suffer not the dust of vain desires to becloud its lustre. Thine ear is a sign of My bounty, let not the tumult of unseemly motives turn it away from My Word that encompasseth all creation. Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein. Thine hand is a symbol of My loving-kindness, hinder it not from holding fast unto My guarded and hidden Tablets.... Unasked, I have showered upon thee My grace. Unpetitioned, I have fulfilled thy wish. In spite of thy undeserving, I have singled thee out for My richest, My incalculable favours.... O My servants! Be as resigned and submissive as the earth, that from the soil of your being there may blossom the fragrant, the holy and multicoloured hyacinths of My knowledge. Be ablaze as the fire, that ye may burn away the veils of heedlessness and set aglow,

through the quickening energies of the love of God, the chilled and wayward heart. Be light and untrammelled as the breeze, that ye may obtain admittance into the precincts of My court, My inviolable Sanctuary.

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

7.2 Every one of these gifts is an undoubted evidence of the majesty, the power, the ascendancy, the all-embracing knowledge of the one true God—exalted be His glory. Consider the sense of touch. Witness how its power hath spread itself over the entire human body. Whereas the faculties of sight and of hearing are each localized in a particular centre, the sense of touch embraceth the whole human frame. Glorified be His power, magnified be His sovereignty!

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

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

8.1 Consider the rational faculty with which God hath endowed the essence of man. Examine thine own self, and behold how thy motion and stillness, thy will and purpose, thy sight and hearing, thy sense of smell and power of speech, and whatever else is related to, or transcendeth, thy physical senses or spiritual perceptions, all proceed from, and owe their existence to, this same faculty. So closely are they related unto it, that if in less than the twinkling of an eye its relationship to the human body be severed, each and every one of these senses will cease immediately to exercise its function, and will be deprived of the power to manifest the evidences of its activity. It is indubitably clear and evident that each of these aforementioned instruments hath 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.

8.2 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.

8.3 This same relationship bindeth this faculty with whatsoever hath been the recipient of these names and attributes within the human temple. These diverse names and revealed attributes have been generated through the agency of this sign of God. Immeasurably exalted is this sign, in its essence and reality, above all such names and attributes. Nay, all else besides it will, when compared with its glory, fade into utter nothingness and become a thing forgotten.

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

9.1 Say:

Blessed the slumberer who is awakened by My Breeze.

Blessed the lifeless one who is quickened through My reviving breaths.

Blessed the eye that is solaced by gazing at My beauty.

Blessed the wayfarer who directeth his steps towards the Tabernacle of My glory and majesty.

Blessed the distressed one who seeketh refuge beneath the shadow of My canopy.

Blessed the sore athirst who hasteneth to the soft-flowing waters of My loving-kindness.

Blessed the insatiate soul who casteth away his selfish desires for love of Me and taketh his place at the banquet table which I have sent down from the heaven of divine bounty for My chosen ones.

Blessed the abased one who layeth fast hold on the cord of My glory; and the needy one who entereth beneath the shadow of the Tabernacle of My wealth.

Blessed the ignorant one who seeketh the fountain of My knowledge; and the heedless one who cleaveth to the cord of My remembrance.

Blessed the soul that hath been raised to life through My quickening breath and hath gained admittance into My heavenly Kingdom.

Blessed the man whom the sweet savours of reunion with Me have stirred and caused to draw nigh unto the Dayspring of My Revelation.

Blessed the ear that hath heard and the tongue that hath borne witness and the eye that hath seen and recognized the Lord Himself, in His great glory and majesty, invested with grandeur and dominion.

Blessed are they that have attained His presence.

Blessed the man who hath sought enlightenment from the Day-Star of My Word.

Blessed he who hath attired his head with the diadem of My love.

Blessed is he who hath heard of My grief and hath arisen to aid Me among My people.

Blessed is he who hath laid down his life in My path and hath borne manifold hardships for the sake of My name.

Blessed the man who, assured of My Word, hath arisen from among the dead to celebrate My praise.

Blessed is he that hath been enraptured by My wondrous melodies and hath rent the veils asunder through the potency of My might.

Blessed is he who hath remained faithful to My Covenant, and whom the things of the world have not kept back from attaining My Court of holiness.

Blessed is the man who hath detached himself from all else but Me, hath soared in the atmosphere of My love, hath gained admittance into My Kingdom, gazed upon My realms of glory, quaffed the living waters of My bounty, hath drunk his fill from the heavenly river of My loving providence, acquainted himself with My Cause, apprehended that which I concealed within the treasury of My Words, and hath shone forth from the horizon of divine knowledge engaged in My praise and glorification.

Verily, he is of Me.

Upon him rest My mercy, My loving-kindness, My bounty and My glory.

10.1 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.

The Nature of the Soul

11.1 Thou hast asked Me concerning the nature of the soul. Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and

to bow down in adoration before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will, eventually, return unto Him. If it fail, however, in its allegiance to its Creator, it will become a victim to self and passion, and will, in the end, sink in their depths....

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

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

12.1 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?

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

endowed with tremendous power, and shall rejoice with exceeding gladness.

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

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

12.5 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.

13.1 Know that the soul which is common to all men cometh forth following the commingling of things and after their maturation, as thou dost observe in the germ: Once it hath developed to its predestined stage, God manifesteth the soul that was latent within it. Thy Lord, verily, doeth what He willeth and ordaineth what He pleaseth.

13.2 As to the soul which is intended, in truth it hath been called forth by the Word of God and is such that, if it be kindled with the fire of the love of its Lord, neither the waters of opposition nor the oceans of the world can quench its flame. That soul is indeed a fire ablaze in the tree of man which proclaimeth: "No God is there but Him!" Whosoever hearkeneth unto its call is verily of those who have attained unto Him. And when it casteth off its earthly frame, God shall raise it up again in the most excellent of forms and cause it to enter a sublime paradise. Thy Lord, of a certainty, hath power over all things.

13.3 Know, furthermore, that the life of man proceedeth from the spirit, and the spirit turneth to wheresoever the soul directeth it. Ponder upon that which We have revealed unto thee that thou mayest recognize the Soul of God which hath appeared above the Dayspring of bounty invested with manifest sovereignty.

13.4 Know also that the soul is endowed with two wings: Should it soar in the atmosphere of love and contentment, then it will be related to the All-Merciful, and should it fly in the atmosphere of self and desire, then it will pertain to the Evil One; may God shield and protect us and protect you therefrom, O ye who perceive! Should the soul become ignited with the fire of

the love of God, it is called benevolent and pleasing unto God, but should it be consumed with the fire of passion, it is known as the concupiscent soul. Thus have We expounded this subject for thee that thou mayest obtain a clear understanding.

13.50 Pen of the Most High! Recount unto him who hath turned unto Thy Lord, the All-Glorious, that which shall enable him to dispense with the sayings of men. Say: Spirit, mind, soul, and the powers of sight and hearing are but one single reality which hath manifold expressions owing to the diversity of its instruments. As thou dost observe, man's power to comprehend, move, speak, hear, and see all derive from this sign of his Lord within him. It is single in its essence, yet manifold through the diversity of its instruments. This, verily, is a certain truth. For example, if it directeth its attention to the means of hearing, then hearing and its attributes become manifest. Likewise, if it directeth itself to the means of vision, a different effect and attribute appear. Reflect upon this subject that thou mayest comprehend the true meaning of what hath been intended, find thyself independent of the sayings of the people, and be of them that are well assured. In like manner, when this sign of God turneth towards the brain, the head, and such means, the powers of the mind and the soul are manifested. Thy Lord, verily, is potent to do whatsoever He pleaseth.

14.1 We fain would hope that through thine exertions the wings of men may be sanctified from the mire of self and desire, and be made worthy to soar in the atmosphere of God's love. Wings that are besmirched with mire can never soar. Unto this testify they who are the exponents of justice and equity, and yet the people are in evident doubt.

Achieving Spiritual Distinction

15.1 The day is approaching when God will have, by an act of His Will, raised up a race of men the nature of which is inscrutable to all save God, the All-Powerful, the Self-Subsisting. He shall purify them from the defilement of idle fancies and corrupt desires, shall lift them up to the heights of holiness, and shall cause them to manifest the signs of His sovereignty and might upon earth. Thus hath it been ordained by God, the All-Glorious, the All-Loving.

16.1 A race of men, 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.

17.1 Say: He is not to be numbered with the people of Bahá 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.... And if he met the fairest and most comely of women, he would not feel his heart seduced by the least shadow of desire for her beauty. Such a one, indeed, is the creation of spotless chastity. Thus instructeth you the Pen of the Ancient of Days, as bidden by your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.

18.1 He is the true servant of God who, in this day, were he to pass through cities of silver and gold, would not deign to look upon them, and whose heart would remain pure and undefiled from whatever things can be seen in this world, be they its goods or its treasures. I swear by the Sun of Truth! The breath of such a man is endowed with potency, and his words with attraction.

19.1 Detachment is as the sun; in whatsoever heart it doth shine it quencheth the fire of covetousness and self. He whose sight is illumined with the light of understanding will assuredly detach himself from the world and the vanities thereof. . . . Let not the world and its vileness grieve you. Happy is he whom riches fill not with vainglory, nor poverty with sorrow.

20.1 Whoso cleaveth to justice, can, under no circumstances, transgress the limits of moderation. He discerneth the truth in all things, through the guidance of Him Who is the All-Seeing. The civilization, 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. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing. 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 moderation. Meditate on this, O people, and be not of them that wander distraught in the wilderness of error. The day is approaching when its flame will devour the cities, when the Tongue of Grandeur will proclaim: "The Kingdom is God's, the Almighty, the All-Praised!"

20.2 All other things are subject to this same principle of moderation. Render thanks unto thy Lord Who hath remembered thee in this wondrous Tablet. All praise be to God, the Lord of the glorious throne.

20.3 Were any man to ponder in his heart that which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed and to taste of its sweetness, he would, of a certainty, find himself emptied and delivered from his own desires, and utterly subservient to the Will of the Almighty. Happy is the man that hath attained so high a station, and hath not deprived himself of so bountiful a grace.

20.4 In this Day, We can neither approve the conduct of the fearful that seeketh to dissemble his faith, nor sanction the behaviour of the avowed believer that clamorously asserteth his allegiance to this Cause. Both should observe the dictates of wisdom, and strive diligently to serve the best interests of the Faith.

21.1 O people of Bahá!

Ye are the breezes of spring that are wafted over the world.

Through you We have adorned the world of being with the ornament of the knowledge of the Most Merciful.

Through you the countenance of the world hath been wreathed in smiles, and the brightness of His light shone forth.

Cling ye to the Cord of steadfastness, in such wise that all vain imaginings may utterly vanish.

Speed ye forth from the horizon of power, in the name of your Lord, the Unconstrained, and announce unto His servants, with wisdom and eloquence, the

tidings of this Cause, whose splendour hath been shed upon the world of being.

Beware lest anything withhold you from observing the things prescribed unto you by the Pen of Glory, as it moved over His Tablet with sovereign majesty and might.

Great is the blessedness of him that hath hearkened to its shrill voice, as it was raised, through the power of truth, before all who are in heaven and all who are on earth....

O people of Bahá!

The river that is Life indeed hath flowed for your sakes.

Quaff ye in My name, despite them that have disbelieved in God, the Lord of Revelation.

We have made you to be the hands of Our Cause.

Render ye victorious this Wronged One, Who hath been sore-tried in the hands of the workers of iniquity.

He, verily, will aid everyone that aideth Him, and will remember everyone that remembereth Him.

To this beareth witness this Tablet that hath shed the splendour of the loving-kindness of your Lord, the All-Glorious, the All-Compelling.

22.1 Thou hast gained admittance into the Paradise of God's Remembrance, through thy recognition of Him Who is the Embodiment of that Remembrance amongst men.

22.2 Wherefore, be thankful to God, for having strengthened thee to aid His Cause, for having made the flowers of knowledge and understanding to spring forth in the garden of thine heart. Thus hath His grace encompassed thee, and encompassed the whole of creation. Beware, lest thou allow anything whatsoever to grieve thee. Rid thyself of all attachment to the vain allusions of men, and cast behind thy back the idle and subtle disputations of them that are veiled from God. Proclaim, then, that which the Most Great Spirit will inspire thee to utter in the service of the Cause of thy Lord, that thou mayest stir up the souls of all men and incline their hearts unto this most blessed and all-glorious Court....

22.3 Know thou that We have annulled the rule of the sword, as an aid to Our Cause, and substituted for it the power born of the utterance of men. Thus have We irrevocably decreed, by virtue of Our grace. Say: O people! Sow not the seeds of discord among men, and refrain from contending with your neighbour, for your Lord hath committed the world and the cities thereof to the care of the kings of the earth, and made them the emblems of His own power, by virtue of the sovereignty He hath chosen to bestow upon them. He hath refused to reserve for Himself any share whatever of this world's dominion. To this He Who is Himself the Eternal Truth will testify. The things He hath reserved for Himself are the cities of men's hearts, that He may cleanse them from all earthly defilements, and enable them to draw nigh unto the hallowed Spot which

the hands of the infidel can never profane. Open, O people, the city of the human heart with the key of your utterance. Thus have We, according to a preordained measure, prescribed unto you your duty.

22.4 By the righteousness of God! The world and its vanities, and its glory, and whatever delights it can offer, are all, in the sight of God, as worthless as, nay, even more contemptible than, dust and ashes. Would that the hearts of men could comprehend it! Cleanse yourselves thoroughly, O people of Bahá, from the defilement of the world, and of all that pertaineth unto it. God Himself beareth Me witness. The things of the earth ill beseem you. Cast them away unto such as may desire them, and fasten your eyes upon this most holy and effulgent Vision.

22.5 That which beseemeth you is the love of God, and the love of Him Who is the Manifestation of His Essence, and the observance of whatsoever He chooseth to prescribe unto you, did ye but know it.

22.6 Say: Let truthfulness and courtesy be your adorning. Suffer not yourselves to be deprived of the robe of forbearance and justice, that the sweet savours of holiness may be wafted from your hearts upon all created things. Say: Beware, O people of Bahá, 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.

23.1 Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

Persevering in the Path of Virtue and Service

24.1 O Feet of this Temple! We, verily, have wrought you of iron. Stand firm with such constancy in the Cause of your Lord as to cause the feet of every severed soul to be strengthened in the path of God, the Almighty, the All-Wise. Beware lest the storms of enmity and hatred, or the blasts of the workers of iniquity, cause you to stumble. Be immovable in the Faith of God, and waver not. We, verily, have called you forth by virtue of that Name which is the source of all steadfastness, and by the grace of each one of Our most excellent Names as revealed unto all who are in heaven and on earth. Ere long shall We bring into being through you other feet, firm and steadfast, which shall walk unwaveringly in Our path, even should they be assailed by hosts as formidable as the combined forces of the former and latter generations. In truth, We hold all grace in the hollow of Our hand, and bestow it as We please upon Our favoured servants. Time and again have We vouchsafed unto you Our favours, that ye may offer such thanks unto your Lord as to cause the tongues of all created things to speak forth in praise of Me, the All-Merciful, the Most

Compassionate.

25.1 This is the Day when the loved ones of God should keep their eyes directed towards His Manifestation, and fasten them upon whatsoever that Manifestation may be pleased to reveal. Certain traditions of bygone ages rest on no foundations whatever, while the notions entertained by past generations, and which they have recorded in their books, have, for the most part, been influenced by the desires of a corrupt inclination. Thou dost witness how most of the commentaries and interpretations of the words of God, now current amongst men, are devoid of truth. Their falsity hath, in some cases, been exposed when the intervening veils were rent asunder. They themselves have acknowledged their failure in apprehending the meaning of any of the words of God.

25.2 Our purpose is to show that should the loved ones of God sanctify their hearts and their ears from the vain sayings that were uttered aforetime, and turn with their inmost souls to Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation, and to whatsoever things He hath manifested, such behaviour would be regarded as highly meritorious in the sight of God.

26.1 By the righteousness of Mine own Self! Great, immeasurably great is this Cause! Mighty, inconceivably mighty is this Day! Blessed indeed is the man that hath forsaken all things, and fastened his eyes upon Him Whose face hath shed illumination upon all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth.

26.2 Sharp must be thy sight, O Dhabíh, and adamant thy soul, and brass-like thy feet, if thou wishest to be unshaken by the assaults of the selfish desires that whisper in men's breasts. This is the firm injunction which the Pen of the Most Great Name hath, by virtue of the Will of the Ancient King, been moved to reveal. Keep it as the apple of thine eye, and be thou of the thankful. Strive thou day and night to serve the Cause of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, and be thou detached from all else but Him. By Myself! Whatever thou seest in this Day shall perish. Supremely lofty will be thy station, if thou remainest steadfast in the Cause of thy Lord. Towards Him are thy busy movements directed, and in Him is thy final resting-place.

27.1 Say: Beware, O people of Bahá, lest the strong ones of the earth rob you of your strength, or they who rule the world fill you with fear. Put your trust in God, and commit your affairs to His keeping. He, verily, will, through the power of truth, render you victorious, and He, verily, is powerful to do what He willeth, and in His grasp are the reins of omnipotent might.

28.1 The companions of God are, in this day, the lump that must leaven the peoples of the world. They must show forth such trustworthiness, such truthfulness and perseverance, such deeds and character that all mankind may profit by their example.

29.1 I swear by Him Who is the Most Great Ocean! 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.

30.1 Walk thou steadfastly in the love of God, and keep straight on in His Faith, and aid Him through the power of thine utterance. Thus biddeth thee the All-Merciful Who is suffering imprisonment at the hands of His oppressors.

30.2 If tribulation touch thee for My sake, call thou to mind My ills and troubles, and remember My banishment and imprisonment. Thus do We devolve on thee what hath descended upon Us from Him Who is the All-Glorious, the All-Wise.

30.3 By My Self! The day is approaching when We will have rolled up the world and all that is therein, and spread out a new order in its stead. He, verily, is powerful over all things.

30.4 Sanctify thine heart, that thou mayest remember Me; and purge thine ear, that thou mayest hearken unto My words.

31.1 My God, my God! If none be found to stray from Thy path, how, then, can the ensign of Thy mercy be unfurled, or the banner of Thy bountiful favour be hoisted? And if iniquity be not committed, what is it that can proclaim Thee to be the Concealer of men's sins, the Ever-Forgiving, the Omniscient, the All-Wise? May my soul be a sacrifice to the trespasses of them that trespass against Thee, for upon such trespasses are wafted the sweet savours of the tender mercies of Thy Name, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful. May my life be laid down for the transgressions of such as transgress against Thee, for through them the breath of Thy grace and the fragrance of Thy loving-kindness are made known and diffused amongst men. May my inmost being be offered up for the sins of them that have sinned against Thee, for it is as a result of such sins that the Day-Star of Thy manifold favours revealeth itself above the horizon of Thy bounty, and the clouds of Thy never-failing providence rain down their gifts upon the realities of all created things.

32.1 Walk thou high above the world of being through the power of the Most Great Name, that thou mayest become aware of the immemorial mysteries and be acquainted with that wherewith no one is acquainted. Verily, thy Lord is the Helper, the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Be thou as a throbbing artery, pulsating in the body of the entire creation, that through the heat generated by this motion there may appear that which will quicken the hearts of those who hesitate.

#### Life after Death

33.1 Know thou that every hearing ear, if kept pure and undefiled, must, at all times and from every direction, hearken to the voice that uttereth these holy words: "Verily, we are God's, and to Him shall we return." 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.

33.2 Death proffereth unto every confident believer the cup that is life indeed. It bestoweth joy, and is the bearer of gladness. It conferreth the gift of everlasting life.

33.3 As to those that have tasted of the fruit of man's earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as We are unable to describe. The knowledge thereof is with God, alone, the Lord of all worlds.

34.1 One of the distinguishing characteristics of this most great Dispensation

is that the kin of such as have recognized and embraced the truth of this Revelation and have, in the glory of His name, the Sovereign Lord, quaffed the choice, sealed wine from the chalice of the love of the one true God, will, upon their death, if they are outwardly non-believers, be graciously invested with divine forgiveness and partake of the ocean of His Mercy.

34.2 This bounty, however, will be vouchsafed only to such souls as have inflicted no harm upon Him Who is the Sovereign Truth nor upon His loved ones. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the Lord of the Throne on High and the Ruler of this world and of the world to come.

35.1 And now concerning thy question regarding the soul of man and its survival after death.

Know thou of a truth that the soul, after its separation from the body, will continue to progress until it attaineth the presence of God, in a state and condition which neither the revolution of ages and centuries, nor the changes and chances of this world, can alter.

It will endure as long as the Kingdom of God, His sovereignty, His dominion and power will endure.

It will manifest the signs of God and His attributes, and will reveal His loving-kindness and bounty.

The movement of My Pen is stilled when it attempteth to befittingly describe the loftiness and glory of so exalted a station.

The honour with which the Hand of Mercy will invest the soul is such as no tongue can adequately reveal, nor any other earthly agency describe.

Blessed is the soul which, at the hour of its separation from the body, is sanctified from the vain imaginings of the peoples of the world.

Such a soul liveth and moveth in accordance with the Will of its Creator, and entereth the all-highest Paradise.

The Maids of Heaven, inmates of the loftiest mansions, will circle around it, and the Prophets of God and His chosen ones will seek its companionship.

With them that soul will freely converse, and will recount unto them that which it hath been made to endure in the path of God, the Lord of all worlds.

If any man be told that which hath been ordained for such a soul in the worlds of God, the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, his whole being will instantly blaze out in his great longing to attain that most exalted, that sanctified and resplendent station....

The nature of the soul after death can never be described, nor is it meet and permissible to reveal its whole character to the eyes of men....

The world beyond is as different from this world as this world is different from that of the child while still in the womb of its mother.

When the soul attaineth the Presence of God, it will assume the form that best

befitteth its immortality and is worthy of its celestial habitation.

Such an existence is a contingent and not an absolute existence, inasmuch as the former is preceded by a cause, whilst the latter is independent thereof.

Absolute existence is strictly confined to God, exalted be His glory.

Well is it with them that apprehend this truth.

Wert thou to ponder in thine heart the behaviour of the Prophets of God thou wouldst assuredly and readily testify that there must needs be other worlds besides this world.

The majority of the truly wise and learned have, throughout the ages, as it hath been recorded by the Pen of Glory in the Tablet of Wisdom, borne witness to the truth of that which the holy Writ of God hath revealed.

Even the materialists have testified in their writings to the wisdom of these divinely-appointed Messengers, and have regarded the references made by the Prophets to Paradise, to hell fire, to future reward and punishment, to have been actuated by a desire to educate and uplift the souls of men.

Consider, therefore, how the generality of mankind, whatever their beliefs or theories, have recognized the excellence, and admitted the superiority, of these Prophets of God.

These Gems of Detachment are acclaimed by some as the embodiments of wisdom, while others believe them to be the mouthpiece of God Himself.

How could such Souls have consented to surrender themselves unto their enemies if they believed all the worlds of God to have been reduced to this earthly life?

Would they have willingly suffered such afflictions and torments as no man hath ever experienced or witnessed?

36.1 And now concerning thy question whether human souls continue to be conscious one of another after their separation from the body. Know thou that the souls of the people of Bahá, who have entered and been established within the Crimson Ark, shall associate and commune intimately one with another, and shall be so closely associated in their lives, their aspirations, their aims and strivings as to be even as one soul. They are indeed the ones who are well-informed, who are keen-sighted, and who are endued with understanding. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

36.2 The people of Bahá, who are the inmates of the Ark of God, are, one and all, well aware of one another's state and condition, and are united in the bonds of intimacy and fellowship. Such a state, however, must depend upon their faith and their conduct. They that are of the same grade and station are fully aware of one another's capacity, character, accomplishments and merits. They that are of a lower grade, however, are incapable of comprehending adequately the station, or of estimating the merits, of those that rank above them. Each shall receive his share from thy Lord. Blessed is the man that hath turned his face towards God, and walked steadfastly in His love, until his soul hath

winged its flight unto God, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Most Powerful, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Merciful.

36.3 The souls of the infidels, however, shall—and to this I bear witness—when breathing their last be made aware of the good things that have escaped them, and shall bemoan their plight, and shall humble themselves before God. They shall continue doing so after the separation of their souls from their bodies.

36.4 It is clear and evident that all men shall, after their physical death, estimate the worth of their deeds, and realize all that their hands have wrought. I swear by the Day-Star that shineth above the horizon of Divine power! They that are the followers of the one true God shall, the moment they depart out of this life, experience such joy and gladness as would be impossible to describe, while they that live in error shall be seized with such fear and trembling, and shall be filled with such consternation, as nothing can exceed. Well is it with him that hath quaffed the choice and incorruptible wine of faith through the gracious favour and the manifold bounties of Him Who is the Lord of all Faiths.

5

Responding to the Call of Bahá'u'lláh

A New Life Is Stirring

1.1 The Pen of the Most High is unceasingly calling; and yet, how few are those that have inclined their ear to its voice! The dwellers of the kingdom of names have busied themselves with the gay livery of the world, forgetful that every man that hath eyes to perceive and ears to hear cannot but readily recognize how evanescent are its colours.

1.2 A new life is, in this age, stirring within all the peoples of the earth; and yet none hath discovered its cause or perceived its motive. Consider the peoples of the West. Witness how, in their pursuit of that which is vain and trivial, they have sacrificed, and are still sacrificing, countless lives for the sake of its establishment and promotion. The peoples of Persia, on the other hand, though the repository of a perspicuous and luminous Revelation, the glory of whose loftiness and renown hath encompassed the whole earth, are dispirited and sunk in deep lethargy.

1.3 O friends! Be not careless of the virtues with which ye have been endowed, neither be neglectful of your high destiny. Suffer not your labours to be wasted through the vain imaginations which certain hearts have devised. Ye are the stars of the heaven of understanding, the breeze that stirreth at the break of day, the soft-flowing waters upon which must depend the very life of all men, the letters inscribed upon His sacred scroll. With the utmost unity, and in a spirit of perfect fellowship, exert yourselves, that ye may be enabled to achieve that which beseemeth this Day of God. Verily I say, strife and dissension, and whatsoever the mind of man abhorreth, are entirely unworthy of his station. Centre your energies in the propagation of the Faith of God. Whoso is worthy of so high a calling, let him arise and promote it. Whoso is unable, it is his duty to appoint him who will, in his stead, proclaim this Revelation, whose power hath caused the foundations of the mightiest structures to quake, every mountain to be crushed into dust, and every soul to be dumbfounded.

Should the greatness of this Day be revealed in its fullness, every man would forsake a myriad lives in his longing to partake, though it be for one moment, of its great glory—how much more this world and its corruptible treasures!

1.4 Be ye guided by wisdom in all your doings, and cleave ye tenaciously unto it. Please God ye may all be strengthened to carry out that which is the Will of God, and may be graciously assisted to appreciate the rank conferred upon such of His loved ones as have arisen to serve Him and magnify His name. Upon them be the glory of God, the glory of all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, and the glory of the inmates of the most exalted Paradise, the heaven of heavens.

2.1 The Most Great Name beareth Me witness! How sad if any man were, in this Day, to rest his heart on the transitory things of this world! Arise, and cling firmly to the Cause of God. Be most loving one to another. Burn away, wholly for the sake of the Well-Beloved, the veil of self with the flame of the undying Fire, and with faces joyous and beaming with light, associate with your neighbour. Ye have well observed, in all its aspects, the behaviour of Him Who is the Word of Truth amidst you. Ye know full well how hard it is for this Youth to allow, though it be for one night, the heart of any one of the beloved of God to be saddened by Him.

2.2 The Word of God hath set the heart of the world afire; how regrettable if ye fail to be enkindled with its flame! Please God, ye will regard this blessed night as the night of unity, will knit your souls together, and resolve to adorn yourselves with the ornament of a goodly and praiseworthy character. Let your principal concern be to rescue the fallen from the slough of impending extinction, and to help him embrace the ancient Faith of God. Your behaviour towards your neighbour should be such as to manifest clearly the signs of the one true God, for ye are the first among men to be re-created by His Spirit, the first to adore and bow the knee before Him, the first to circle round His throne of glory. I swear by Him Who hath caused Me to reveal whatever hath pleased Him! Ye are better known to the inmates of the Kingdom on high than ye are known to your own selves. Think ye these words to be vain and empty? Would that ye had the power to perceive the things your Lord, the All-Merciful, doth see—things that attest the excellence of your rank, that bear witness to the greatness of your worth, that proclaim the sublimity of your station! God grant that your desires and unmortified passions may not hinder you from that which hath been ordained for you.

3.1 He Who is the Eternal Truth hath, from the Dayspring of Glory, directed His eyes towards the people of Bahá, and is addressing them in these words: “Address yourselves to the promotion of the well-being and tranquillity of the children of men. Bend your minds and wills to the education of the peoples and kindreds of the earth, that haply the dissensions that divide it may, through the power of the Most Great Name, be blotted out from its face, and all mankind become the upholders of one Order, and the inhabitants of one City. Illumine and hallow your hearts; let them not be profaned by the thorns of hate or the thistles of malice. Ye dwell in one world, and have been created through the operation of one Will. Blessed is he who mingleth with all men in a spirit of utmost kindness and love.”

## Arise to Aid His Cause

4.1 Arise to aid thy Lord at all times and in all circumstances, and be thou one of His helpers. Admonish, then, the people to lend a hearing ear to the words which the Spirit of God hath uttered in this irradiant and resplendent Tablet. Say: Sow not, O people, the seeds of dissension amongst men, and contend not with your neighbour. Be patient under all conditions, and place your whole trust and confidence in God. Aid ye your Lord with the sword of wisdom and of utterance. This indeed well becometh the station of man. To depart from it would be unworthy of God, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Glorified. The people, however, have been led astray, and are truly of the heedless.

4.2 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 favour.

4.3 Beautify your tongues, O people, with truthfulness, and adorn your souls with the ornament of honesty. Beware, O people, that ye deal not treacherously with any one. Be ye the trustees of God amongst His creatures, and the emblems of His generosity amidst His people. They that follow their lusts and corrupt inclinations have erred and dissipated their efforts. They, indeed, are of the lost. Strive, O people, that your eyes may be directed towards the mercy of God, that your hearts may be attuned to His wondrous remembrance, that your souls may rest confidently upon His grace and bounty, that your feet may tread the path of His good-pleasure. Such are the counsels which I bequeath unto you. Would that ye might follow My counsels!

5.1 O wayfarer in the path of God! Take thou thy portion of the ocean of His grace, and deprive not thyself of the things that lie hidden in its depths. Be thou of them that have partaken of its treasures. A dewdrop out of this ocean would, if shed upon all that are in the heavens and on the earth, suffice to enrich them with the bounty of God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. With the hands of renunciation draw forth from its life-giving waters, and sprinkle therewith all created things, that they may be cleansed from all man-made limitations and may approach the mighty seat of God, this hallowed and resplendent Spot.

5.2 Be not grieved if thou performest it thyself alone. Let God be all-sufficient for thee. Commune intimately with His Spirit, and be thou of the thankful. Proclaim the Cause of thy Lord unto all who are in the heavens and on the earth. Should any man respond to thy call, lay bare before him the pearls of the wisdom of the Lord, thy God, which His Spirit hath sent down unto thee, and be thou of them that truly believe. And should anyone reject thine offer, turn thou away from him, and put thy trust and confidence in the Lord, thy God, the Lord of all worlds.

5.3 By the righteousness of God! Whoso openeth his lips in this Day and maketh mention of the name of his Lord, the hosts of Divine inspiration shall descend upon him from the heaven of My name, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. On him shall also descend the Concourse on high, each bearing aloft a chalice of pure

light. Thus hath it been foreordained in the realm of God's Revelation, by the behest of Him Who is the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.

5.4 There lay concealed within the Holy Veil, and prepared for the service of God, a company of His chosen ones who shall be manifested unto men, who shall aid His Cause, who shall be afraid of no one, though the entire human race rise up and war against them. These are the ones who, before the gaze of the dwellers on earth and the denizens of heaven, shall arise and, shouting aloud, acclaim the name of the Almighty, and summon the children of men to the path of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised. Walk thou in their way, and let no one dismay thee. Be of them whom the tumult of the world, however much it may agitate them in the path of their Creator, can never sadden, whose purpose the blame of the blamer will never defeat....

5.5 Say: This is the sealed and mystic Scroll, the repository of God's irrevocable Decree, bearing the words which the Finger of Holiness hath traced, that lay wrapt within the veil of impenetrable mystery, and hath now been sent down as a token of the grace of Him Who is the Almighty, the Ancient of Days. In it have We decreed the destinies of all the dwellers of the earth and the denizens of heaven, and written down the knowledge of all things from first to last. Nothing whatsoever can escape or frustrate Him, whether created in the past or to be created in the future, could ye but perceive it....

5.6 Say: He ordaineth as He pleaseth, by virtue of His sovereignty, and doeth whatsoever He willeth at His own behest. He shall not be asked of the things it pleaseth Him to ordain. He, in truth, is the Unrestrained, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise.

5.7 They that have disbelieved in God and rebelled against His sovereignty are the helpless victims of their corrupt inclinations and desires.

6.1 Blessed is he who in the prime of his youth and the heyday of his life will arise to serve the Cause of the Lord of the beginning and of the end, and adorn his heart with His love. The manifestation of such a grace is greater than the creation of the heavens and of the earth. Blessed are the steadfast and well is it with those who are firm.

7.1 To whatever place We may be banished, however great the tribulation We may suffer, they who are the people of God must, with fixed resolve and perfect confidence, keep their eyes directed towards the Dayspring of Glory, and be busied in whatever may be conducive to the betterment of the world and the education of its peoples. All that hath befallen Us in the past hath advanced the interests of Our Revelation and blazoned its fame; and all that may befall Us in the future will have a like result. Cling ye, with your inmost hearts, to the Cause of God, a Cause that hath been sent down by Him Who is the Ordainer, the All-Wise. We have, with the utmost kindness and mercy, summoned and directed all peoples and nations to that which shall truly profit them.

7.2 The Day-Star of Truth that shineth in its meridian splendour beareth Us witness! They who are the people of God have no ambition except to revive the world, to ennoble its life, and regenerate its peoples. Truthfulness and goodwill have, at all times, marked their relations with all men. Their outward conduct is but a reflection of their inward life, and their inward life a mirror of their outward conduct. No veil hideth or obscureth the verities on

which their Faith is established. Before the eyes of all men these verities have been laid bare, and can be unmistakably recognized. Their very acts attest the truth of these words....

7.3O friends! Help ye the one true God, exalted be His glory, by your goodly deeds, by such conduct and character as shall be acceptable in His sight. He that seeketh to be a helper of God in this Day, let him close his eyes to whatever he may possess, and open them to the things of God. Let him cease to occupy himself with that which profiteth him, and concern himself with that which shall exalt the all-compelling name of the Almighty. He should cleanse his heart from all evil passions and corrupt desires, for the fear of God is the weapon that can render him victorious, the primary instrument whereby he can achieve his purpose. The fear of God is the shield that defendeth His Cause, the buckler that enableth His people to attain to victory. It is a standard that no man can abase, a force that no power can rival. By its aid, and by the leave of Him Who is the Lord of Hosts, they that have drawn nigh unto God have been able to subdue and conquer the citadels of the hearts of men.

8.1The Book of God is wide open, and His Word is summoning mankind unto Him. No more than a mere handful, however, hath been found willing to cleave to His Cause, or to become the instruments for its promotion. These few have been endowed with the Divine Elixir that can, alone, transmute into purest gold the dross of the world, and have been empowered to administer the infallible remedy for all the ills that afflict the children of men. No man can obtain everlasting life, unless he embraceth the truth of this inestimable, this wondrous, and sublime Revelation.

8.2Incline your ears, O friends of God, to the voice of Him Whom the world hath wronged, and hold fast unto whatsoever will exalt His Cause. He, verily, guideth whomsoever He pleaseth unto His straight Path. This is a Revelation that infuseth strength into the feeble, and crowneth with wealth the destitute.

8.3With the utmost friendliness and in a spirit of perfect fellowship take ye counsel together, and dedicate the precious days of your lives to the betterment of the world and the promotion of the Cause of Him Who is the Ancient and Sovereign Lord of all. He, verily, enjoineth upon all men what is right, and forbiddeth whatsoever degradeth their station.

9.1When the victory arriveth, every man shall profess himself a believer and shall hasten to the shelter of God's Faith. Happy are they who in the days of world-encompassing trials have stood fast in the Cause and refused to swerve from its truth.

#### Cultivating Spiritual Capacities

10.1From the exalted source, and out of the essence of His favour 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....

10.2 There can be no doubt whatever that, in consequence of the efforts which every man may consciously exert and as a result of the exertion of his own spiritual faculties, this mirror can be so cleansed from the dross of earthly defilements and purged from satanic fancies as to be able to draw nigh unto the meads of eternal holiness and attain the courts of everlasting fellowship.

11.1 Say: Deliver your souls, O people, from the bondage of self, and purify them from all attachment to anything besides Me. Remembrance of Me cleanseth all things from defilement, could ye but perceive it. Say: Were all created things to be entirely divested of the veil of worldly vanity and desire, the Hand of God would in this Day clothe them, one and all, with the robe "He doeth whatsoever He willeth in the kingdom of creation", that thereby the sign of His sovereignty might be manifested in all things. Exalted then be He, the Sovereign Lord of all, the Almighty, the Supreme Protector, the All-Glorious, the Most Powerful.

11.2 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.

12.1 Peruse ye every day the verses revealed by God. Blessed is the man who reciteth them and reflecteth upon them. He truly is of them with whom it shall be well.

13.1 Occupy thyself in remembrance of the Beauty of Him Who is the Unconstrained at early morn, and seek communion with Him at the hour of dawn. O 'Alí! Remembrance of Me is a healing medicine to the souls and a light to the hearts of men.

14.1 O servants! Lifeless is the body that is bereft of a soul, and withered the heart that is devoid of the remembrance of its Lord. Commune with the remembrance of the Friend and shun the enemy. Your enemy is such things as ye have acquired of your own inclination, to which ye have firmly clung, and whereby ye have sullied your souls. The soul hath been created for the remembrance of the Friend; safeguard its purity. The tongue hath been created to bear witness to God; pollute it not with the mention of the wayward.

15.1 Peruse My verses with joy and radiance. Verily they will attract you unto God and will enable you to detach yourselves from aught else save Him. Thus have ye been admonished in God's Holy Writ and in this resplendent Tablet.

16.1 Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God. Fear ye God, O My servants, one and all. Pride not yourselves on much reading of the verses or on a multitude of pious acts by night and day; for were a man to read a single verse with joy

and radiance it would be better for him than to read with lassitude all the Holy Books of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Read ye the sacred verses in such measure that ye be not overcome by languor and despondency. Lay not upon your souls that which will weary them and weigh them down, but rather what will lighten and uplift them, so that they may soar on the wings of the Divine verses towards the Dawning-place of His manifest signs; this will draw you nearer to God, did ye but comprehend.

16.2 Teach your children the verses revealed from the heaven of majesty and power, so that, in most melodious tones, they may recite the Tablets of the All-Merciful in the alcoves within the Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs. Whoever hath been transported by the rapture born of adoration for My Name, the Most Compassionate, will recite the verses of God in such wise as to captivate the hearts of those yet wrapped in slumber. Well is it with him who hath quaffed the Mystic Wine of everlasting life from the utterance of his merciful Lord in My Name—a Name through which every lofty and majestic mountain hath been reduced to dust.

17.1 Meditate upon that which hath streamed forth from the heaven of the Will of thy Lord, He Who is the Source of all grace, that thou mayest grasp the intended meaning which is enshrined in the sacred depths of the Holy Writings.

18.1 It behoveth the friends in whatever land they be, to gather together in meetings, and therein to speak wisely and with eloquence, and to read the verses of God; for it is God's Words that kindle love's fire and set it ablaze.

19.1 O My brother! How great, how very great, can the law of obligatory prayer be, when, through His mercy and loving-kindness, one is enabled to observe it. When a man commenceth the recitation of the Obligatory Prayer, he should see himself severed from all created things and regard himself as utter nothingness before the will and purpose of God, in such wise that he seeth naught but Him in the world of being. This is the station of God's well-favoured ones and those who are wholly devoted to Him. Should one perform the Obligatory Prayer in this manner, he will be accounted by God and the Concourse on high among those who have truly offered the prayer.

20.1 Of the new Obligatory Prayers that were later revealed, the long Obligatory Prayer should be said at those times when one feeleth himself in a prayerful mood. In truth, it hath been revealed in such wise that if it be recited to a rock, that rock would stir and speak forth; and if it be recited to a mountain, that mountain would move and flow. Well is it with the one who reciteth it and fulfilleth God's precepts. Whichever prayer is read will suffice.

21.1 Cling firmly to obligatory prayer and fasting. Verily, the religion of God is like unto heaven; fasting is its sun, and obligatory prayer is its moon. In truth, they are the pillars of religion whereby the righteous are distinguished from those who transgress His commandments. We entreat God, exalted and glorified be He, that He may graciously enable all to observe that which He hath revealed in His Ancient Book.

22.1 We, verily, have set forth all things in Our Book, as a token of grace unto those who have believed in God, the Almighty, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting. And We have ordained obligatory prayer and fasting so that all

may by these means draw nigh unto God, the Most Powerful, the Well-Beloved. We have written down these two laws and expounded every irrevocable decree. We have forbidden men from following whatsoever might cause them to stray from the Truth, and have commanded them to observe that which will draw them nearer unto Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Loving. Say: Observe ye the commandments of God for love of His beauty, and be not of those who follow in the ways of the abject and foolish.

23.1 Verily, I say, fasting is the supreme remedy and the most great healing for the disease of self and passion.

24.1 O Son of Being! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.

25.1 Set before thine eyes God's unerring Balance and, as one standing in His Presence, weigh in that Balance thine actions every day, every moment of thy life. Bring thyself to account ere thou art summoned to a reckoning, on the Day when no man shall have strength to stand for fear of God, the Day when the hearts of the heedless ones shall be made to tremble.

Human Utterance

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

26.2 Say: If it be Our pleasure We shall render the Cause victorious through the power of a single word from Our presence. He is in truth the Omnipotent, the All-Compelling. Should it be God's intention, there would appear out of the forests of celestial might the lion of indomitable strength whose roaring is like unto the peals of thunder reverberating in the mountains. However, since Our loving providence surpasseth all things, We have ordained that complete victory should be achieved through speech and utterance, that Our servants throughout the earth may thereby become the recipients of divine good. This is but a token of God's bounty vouchsafed unto them. Verily thy Lord is the All-Sufficing, the Most Exalted.

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

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

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

26.6 Should anyone perceive the sweetness of the following passage in the Tablet revealed in honour of Nabíl of Qá'in, he would readily comprehend the significance of assistance: Human utterance is an essence which aspireth to exert its influence and needeth moderation. As to its influence, this is conditional upon refinement, which in turn is dependent upon hearts which are detached and pure. As to its moderation, this hath to be combined with tact and wisdom as prescribed in the Holy Scriptures and Tablets.

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

26.8 O My Name! The Day-Star of utterance, shining resplendent from the dayspring of divine Revelation, hath so illumined the Scrolls and Tablets that the kingdom of utterance and the exalted dominion of understanding vibrate with joy and ecstasy and shine forth with the splendour of His light, yet the generality of mankind comprehend not.

26.9 The reason why the subject of aid and assistance hath time and again streamed and will continue to stream from the Pen of Providence is to warn the friends of God lest they engage in activities that would give rise to strife and turmoil. It is incumbent upon them, one and all, to diligently seek ways to help the Cause of God in such manner as We have explained. This is but a token of His grace especially conferred upon His loved ones that every one of them may attain the station characterized by the words: "Whoso quickeneth a soul hath verily quickened all mankind."

26.10 Temporal ascendancy hath been and will continue to be under the shadow of this station. Its appointed hour is preordained in the Book of God. He is truly cognizant thereof and it will be manifested through the potency of His might. Verily He is the Powerful, the All-Subduing, the Omnipotent, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

27.1 Warn, O Salmán, the beloved of the one true God, not to view with too critical an eye the sayings and writings of men.

Let them rather approach such sayings and writings in a spirit of open-mindedness and loving sympathy.

Those men, however, who, in this Day, have been led to assail, in their inflammatory writings, the tenets of the Cause of God, are to be treated differently.

It is incumbent upon all men, each according to his ability, to refute the

arguments of those that have attacked the Faith of God.

Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Powerful, the Almighty.

He that wisheth to promote the Cause of the one true God, let him promote it through his pen and tongue, rather than have recourse to sword or violence.

We have, on a previous occasion, revealed this injunction, and We now confirm it, if ye be of them that comprehend.

By the righteousness of Him Who, in this Day, crieth within the inmost heart of all created things:

“God, there is none other God besides Me!”

If any man were to arise to defend, in his writings, the Cause of God against its assailants, such a man, however inconsiderable his share, shall be so honoured in the world to come that the Concourse on high would envy his glory.

No pen can depict the loftiness of his station, neither can any tongue describe its splendour.

For whosoever standeth firm and steadfast in this holy, this glorious, and exalted Revelation, such power shall be given him as to enable him to face and withstand all that is in heaven and on earth.

Of this God is Himself a witness.

27.20 ye beloved of God! Repose not yourselves on your couches, nay bestir yourselves as soon as ye recognize your Lord, the Creator, and hear of the things which have befallen Him, and hasten to His assistance. Unloose your tongues, and proclaim unceasingly His Cause. This shall be better for you than all the treasures of the past and of the future, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.

28.1 Thou hast written that one of the friends hath composed a treatise. This was mentioned in the Holy Presence, and this is what was revealed in response: Great care should be exercised that whatever is written in these days doth not cause dissension, and invite the objection of the people. Whatever the friends of the one true God say in these days is listened to by the people of the world. It hath been revealed in the Lawh-i-Hikmat: “The unbelievers have inclined their ears towards Us in order to hear that which might enable them to cavil against God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting.” Whatever is written should not transgress the bounds of tact and wisdom, and in the words used there should lie hid the property of milk, so that the children of the world may be nurtured therewith, and attain maturity. We have said in the past that one word hath the influence of spring and causeth hearts to become fresh and verdant, while another is like unto blight which causeth the blossoms and flowers to wither. God grant that authors among the friends will write in such a way as would be acceptable to fair-minded souls, and not lead to cavilling by the people.

29.1 Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmutes conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and

guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.

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

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

Teaching the Cause

32.1 The Pen of the Most High hath decreed and imposed upon every one the obligation to teach this Cause.... God will, no doubt, inspire whosoever detacheth himself from all else but Him, and will cause the pure waters of wisdom and utterance to gush out and flow copiously from his heart. Verily, thy Lord, the All-Merciful, is powerful to do as He willeth, and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth.

32.2 Wert thou to consider this world, and realize how fleeting are the things that pertain unto it, thou wouldst choose to tread no path except the path of service to the Cause of thy Lord. None would have the power to deter thee from celebrating His praise, though all men should arise to oppose thee.

32.3 Go thou straight on and persevere in His service. Say: O people! The Day, promised unto you in all the Scriptures, is now come. Fear ye God, and withhold not yourselves from recognizing the One Who is the Object of your creation. Hasten ye unto Him. Better is this for you than the world and all that is therein. Would that ye could perceive it!

33.1 This is the day in which to speak. It is incumbent upon the people of Bahá to strive, with the utmost patience and forbearance, to guide the peoples of the world to the Most Great Horizon. Every body calleth aloud for a soul. Heavenly souls must needs quicken, with the breath of the Word of God, the dead bodies with a fresh spirit. Within every word a new spirit is hidden. Happy is the man that attaineth thereunto, and hath arisen to teach the Cause of Him Who is the King of Eternity.

34.1 Arise thou to serve the Cause of thy Lord; then give the people the joyful tidings concerning this resplendent Light whose revelation hath been announced by God through His Prophets and Messengers. Admonish everyone moreover to observe prudence as ordained by Him, and in the Name of God advise them, saying: It behoveth every one in this Day of God to dedicate himself to the teaching of the Cause with utmost prudence and steadfastness. Should he discover a pure soil, let him sow the seed of the Word of God, otherwise it would be preferable to observe silence.

34.2 Not long ago this most sublime Word was revealed in the Crimson Book by the All-Glorious Pen: "The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with two luminaries: consultation and compassion." Please God, everyone may be enabled to observe this weighty and blessed word.

35.1 By God besides Whom is none other God! Should any one arise for the triumph

of our Cause, him will God render victorious though tens of thousands of enemies be leagued against him. And if his love for Me wax stronger, God will establish his ascendancy over all the powers of earth and heaven. Thus have We breathed the spirit of power into all regions.

36.1 Indeed thou didst grasp the significance of rendering assistance unto God and didst arise to achieve this through the power of wisdom and utterance. Say: To assist Me is to teach My Cause. This is a theme with which whole Tablets are laden. This is the changeless commandment of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Comprehend this, O ye men of insight. They that have passed beyond the bounds of wisdom fail to understand the meaning of assisting God as set forth in the Book. Say: Fear ye God and sow not the seeds of dissension amongst men. Observe ye that which hath been enjoined upon you by your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Knowing. He knoweth the reality of victory and hath taught it to you with an utterance that the vain imaginings of them that rove distraught in the wilderness of doubt can never corrupt.

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

38.1 It behoveth the people of God to be forbearing. They should impart the Word of God according to the hearer's particular measure of understanding and capacity, that perchance the children of men may be roused from heedlessness and set their faces towards this Horizon which is immeasurably exalted above every horizon.

39.1 Say: Teach ye the Cause of God, O people of Bahá, for God hath prescribed unto every one the duty of proclaiming His Message, and regardeth it as the most meritorious of all deeds. Such a deed is acceptable only when he that teacheth the Cause is already a firm believer in God, the Supreme Protector, the Gracious, the Almighty. He hath, moreover, ordained that His Cause be taught through the power of men's utterance, and not through resort to violence. Thus hath His ordinance been sent down from the Kingdom of Him Who is the Most Exalted, the All-Wise. Beware lest ye contend with any one, nay, strive to make him aware of the truth with kindly manner and most convincing exhortation. If your hearer respond, he will have responded to his own behoof, and if not, turn ye away from him, and set your faces towards God's sacred Court, the seat of resplendent holiness.

39.2 Dispute not with any one concerning the things of this world and its affairs, for God hath abandoned them to such as have set their affection upon them. Out of the whole world He hath chosen for Himself the hearts of men—hearts which the hosts of revelation and of utterance can subdue. Thus

hath it been ordained by the Fingers of Bahá, upon the Tablet of God's irrevocable decree, by the behest of Him Who is the Supreme Ordainer, the All-Knowing.

40.1 The children of men are all brothers, and the prerequisites of brotherhood are manifold. Among them is that one should wish for one's brother that which one wisheth for oneself. Therefore, it behoveth him who is the recipient of an inward or outward gift or who partaketh of the bread of heaven to inform and invite his friends with the utmost love and kindness. If they respond favourably, his object is attained; otherwise he should leave them to themselves without contending with them or uttering a word that would cause the least sadness. This is the undoubted truth, and aught else is unworthy and unbecoming....

40.2 In brief, what is right and true in this day and acceptable before His Throne is that which was mentioned at the outset. All men have been called into being for the betterment of the world. It behoveth every soul to arise and serve his brethren for the sake of God. Should a brother of his embrace the truth, he should rejoice that the latter hath attained unto everlasting favour. Otherwise he should implore God to guide him without manifesting the least trace of animosity or ill-feeling towards him. The reins of command are in the grasp of God. He doeth what He willeth and ordaineth as He pleaseth. He, verily, is the Almighty, the All-Praised.

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

41.2 Whoso ariseth to teach Our Cause must needs detach himself from all earthly things, and regard, at all times, the triumph of Our Faith as his supreme objective. This hath, verily, been decreed in the Guarded Tablet. And when he determineth to leave his home, for the sake of the Cause of his Lord, let him put his whole trust in God, as the best provision for his journey, and array himself with the robe of virtue. Thus hath it been decreed by God, the Almighty, the All-Praised.

41.3 If he be kindled with the fire of His love, if he forgoeth all created things, the words he uttereth shall set on fire them that hear him. Verily, thy Lord is the Omniscient, the All-Informed. Happy is the man that hath heard Our voice, and answered Our call. He, in truth, is of them that shall be brought nigh unto Us.

42.1 Gird up the loins of thine endeavour, that haply thou mayest guide thy neighbour to the law of God, the Most Merciful. Such an act, verily, excelleth all other acts in the sight of God, the All-Possessing, the Most High. Such must be thy steadfastness in the Cause of God, that no earthly thing whatsoever will have the power to deter thee from thy duty. Though the powers of earth be

leagued against thee, though all men dispute with thee, thou must remain unshaken.

42.2 Be unrestrained as the wind, while carrying the Message of Him Who hath caused the Dawn of Divine Guidance to break. Consider, how the wind, faithful to that which God hath ordained, bloweth upon all the regions of the earth, be they inhabited or desolate. Neither the sight of desolation, nor the evidences of prosperity, can either pain or please it. It bloweth in every direction, as bidden by its Creator. So should be every one that claimeth to be a lover of the one true God. It behoveth him to fix his gaze upon the fundamentals of His Faith, and to labour diligently for its propagation. Wholly for the sake of God he should proclaim His Message, and with that same spirit accept whatever response his words may evoke in his hearer. He who shall accept and believe, shall receive his reward; and he who shall turn away, shall receive none other than his own punishment.

#### Raising Divine Institutions

43.1 The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.

44.1 Light and glory, greeting and praise be upon the Hands of His Cause, through whom the light of fortitude hath shone forth and the truth hath been established that the authority to choose rests with God, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Unconstrained, through whom the ocean of bounty hath surged and the fragrance of the gracious favours of God, the Lord of mankind, hath been diffused. We beseech Him—exalted is He—to shield them through the power of His hosts, to protect them through the potency of His dominion and to aid them through His indomitable strength which prevaieth over all created things. Sovereignty is God's, the Creator of the heavens and the Lord of the Kingdom of Names.

45.1 Addressing the nations, the Ancient Beauty ordaineth that in every city in the world a house be raised in the name of justice wherein shall gather pure and steadfast souls to the number of the Most Great Name. These souls, as they come together, should regard themselves as entering into the presence of God, inasmuch as this binding command hath flowed from the Pen of Him Who is the Ancient of Days, and the glances of God are directed towards that assembly.

45.2 Once in session, it behoveth them to converse, on behalf of God's servants, upon the affairs and interests of all. They should, for instance, accord precedence to the teaching of the Cause, inasmuch as it is a matter of supreme importance, so that all people, even as a single soul, may enter within the Tabernacle of divine Unity, and all humanity may become even as a single body. In like manner, they should consider such matters as the refinement of manners, the preservation of human dignity, the development of cities, and the polity which God hath made a bulwark for His lands and a fortress for His people.

45.3 The teaching of the Cause of God should be considered with a view to what, in the particular conditions of each time and age, is most conducive to its advancement and, similarly, other matters; whatever is then decided upon should

be carried into effect. Care, however, should be taken lest aught be implemented contrary to that which hath been sent down in the divine verses in this Revelation of imperishable glory. For whatsoever the one true God—exalted be His glory!—hath prescribed unto His servants, the same is to their best advantage. He, verily, is kinder to you than ye are to yourselves; He, verily, is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

45.4 Should these souls comply with the prescribed conditions, they shall assuredly be aided through His invisible bestowals. This, truly, is an undertaking whose benefit embraceth all. Many matters, if not attended to, will result in waste and dissipation. How many orphans there are in the world who will be left to lead fruitless lives if attention is not paid to their education and training; and a soul that yieldeth no fruit were better dead than living. Consideration likewise should be given to rich and noble people who through infirmity, age, or some other cause, have become afflicted by poverty and abasement. Upon all these and other matters connected to the world's affairs, these souls must, wholly for the sake of God, ponder and deliberate, and take whatever action is correct.

45.5 Were men to gaze with the eye of the heart, they would know for a surety that whatsoever hath descended from the Source of Command containeth naught but pure benefit for all the peoples of the world. All must become as wings to bear one another onward. Man's true honour lieth in wisdom, understanding and an upright character, not in amassing earthly ornaments, in vainglory and conceit. All were created out of dust, and unto dust shall they return. O people of Bahá! Man's true adornment consisteth not in the trappings of this world, but rather in recognition of the one true God—magnified be His might!—and in sciences, crafts and upright conduct.

45.6 Ye are the pearls of the Sea of Oneness! Consider ye the pearl: Its purity and fineness are qualities inherent in itself. Were one to wrap it in the finest silks, they would but hide from view its delicacy and lustre. Its beauty is within itself. Strive, then, to acquire this beauty, and grieve not at lacking this world's material benefits.

45.7 O ye trees of the celestial paradise! Deprive not yourselves of the vernal breezes of God's loving-kindness, nor withhold from yourselves the sweet savours of His holy words of wisdom. Such is the measure of His gracious providence that, notwithstanding the heedlessness of all and this most great affliction in the Prison of 'Akká, He hath yet caused to flow from the Pen of the All-Glorious that which profiteth His creatures. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

46.1 O people of the world! Build ye houses of worship throughout the lands in the name of Him Who is the Lord of all religions. Make them as perfect as is possible in the world of being, and adorn them with that which befitteth them, not with images and effigies. Then, with radiance and joy, celebrate therein the praise of your Lord, the Most Compassionate. Verily, by His remembrance the eye is cheered and the heart is filled with light....

46.2 Blessed is he who, at the hour of dawn, centring his thoughts on God, occupied with His remembrance, and supplicating His forgiveness, directeth his steps to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and, entering therein, seateth himself in

silence to listen to the verses of God, the Sovereign, the Mighty, the All-Praised. Say: The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is each and every building which hath been erected in cities and villages for the celebration of My praise. Such is the name by which it hath been designated before the throne of glory, were ye of those who understand.

Treading the Path of Righteousness

47.1 My captivity cannot harm Me. That which can harm Me is the conduct of those who love Me, who claim to be related to Me, and yet perpetrate what causeth My heart and My pen to groan.

48.1 We have admonished all the loved ones of God to take heed lest the hem of Our sacred vesture be smirched with the mire of unlawful deeds, or be stained with the dust of reprehensible conduct. We have, moreover, exhorted them to fix their gaze upon whatsoever hath been revealed in Our Tablets. Had their inner ears been attentive to the Divine counsels which have shone forth from the Dayspring of the Pen of the All-Merciful, and hearkened unto His Voice, most of the peoples of the earth would have by now been adorned with the ornament of His guidance. What had been preordained, however, hath come to pass.

48.2 Once again doth the Tongue of the Ancient of Days reveal, while in this Most Great Prison, these words which are recorded in this snow-white Scroll: O ye the beloved of the one true God! Pass beyond the narrow retreats of your evil and corrupt desires, and advance into the vast immensity of the realm of God, and abide ye in the meads of sanctity and of detachment, that the fragrance of your deeds may lead the whole of mankind to the ocean of God's unfading glory. Forbear ye from concerning yourselves with the affairs of this world and all that pertaineth unto it, or from meddling with the activities of those who are its outward leaders.

48.3 The one true God, exalted be His glory, hath bestowed the government of the earth upon the kings. To none is given the right to act in any manner that would run counter to the considered views of them who are in authority. That which He hath reserved for Himself are the cities of men's hearts; and of these the loved ones of Him Who is the Sovereign Truth are, in this Day, as the keys. Please God they may, one and all, be enabled to unlock, through the power of the Most Great Name, the gates of these cities. This is what is meant by aiding the one true God—a theme to which the Pen of Him Who causeth the dawn to break hath referred in all His Books and Tablets.

48.4 It behoveth, likewise, the loved ones of God to be forbearing towards their fellow-men, and to be so sanctified and detached from all things, and to evince such sincerity and fairness, that all the peoples of the earth may recognize them as the trustees of God amongst men. Consider to what lofty heights the injunctions of the Almighty have soared, and how abject is the habitation wherein these feeble souls are now abiding. Blessed are they who, on the wings of certitude, have flown in the heavens which the Pen of thy Lord, the All-Merciful, hath spread.

49.1 Regard thou faith as a tree. Its fruits, leaves, boughs and branches are, and have ever been, trustworthiness, truthfulness, uprightness and forbearance.

50.1 O ye friends of God in His cities and His loved ones in His lands! This Wronged One enjoineeth on you honesty and piety. Blessed the city that shineth

by their light. Through them man is exalted, and the door of security is unlocked before the face of all creation. Happy the man that cleaveth fast unto them, and recognizeth their virtue, and woe betide him that denieth their station.

51.1 We ask God graciously to grant that all may evince such fairness of character, such goodliness of deed and kindness of word as will meet with His good pleasure. It hath been decreed that the citadels of men's hearts should be subdued through the hosts of a noble character and praiseworthy deeds. Contention, discord, strife and sedition have all been forbidden in the Book of God. Beseech the Lord that He deprive not His dominions of the effulgent light of the sun of trustworthiness, nor deny them the radiance of the Day-Star of truthfulness or the splendour of the orb of justice and equity. Trustworthiness and piety are even as two luminaries shining resplendent above the horizon of the heaven of the Tablet in which are inscribed the ordinances of God. Well is it with them that have discerned them, and woe betide the heedless!

52.1 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. We have formerly referred to this subject in passages revealed in the Arabic tongue, in a language of exquisite beauty. God is Our witness! Whoever hath tasted the sweetness of those words will never consent to transgress the bounds which God hath fixed, neither will he turn his gaze towards anyone except his Well-Beloved. Such a man will, with his inner eye, readily recognize how altogether vain and fleeting are the things of this world, and will set his affections on things above.

52.2 Say: Be ashamed, O ye that call yourselves the lovers of the Ancient Beauty! Be ye admonished by the tribulation He hath suffered, by the burden of anguish He hath carried for the sake of God. Let your eyes be opened. To what purpose hath He laboured, if the manifold trials He hath endured are, in the end, to result in such contemptible professions, and such wretched conduct? Every robber, every worker of iniquity, hath, in the days prior to My Revelation, uttered these same words, and performed these same deeds.

53.1 O ye My loved ones! Suffer not the hem of My sacred vesture to be smirched and mired with the things of this world, and follow not the promptings of your evil and corrupt desires. The Day-Star of Divine Revelation, that shineth in the plenitude of its glory in the heaven of this Prison, beareth Me witness. They whose hearts are turned towards Him Who is the Object of the adoration of the entire creation must needs, in this Day, pass beyond and be sanctified from all created things, visible and invisible. If they arise to teach My Cause, they must let the breath of Him Who is the Unconstrained stir them, and must spread it abroad on the earth with high resolve, with minds that are wholly centred in Him, and with hearts that are completely detached from and independent of all things, and with souls that are sanctified from the world and its vanities. It behoveth them to choose as the best provision for their journey reliance upon God, and to clothe themselves with the love of their Lord, the Most Exalted, the All-Glorious. If they do so, their words shall influence their hearers.

54.1 God hath prescribed unto everyone the duty of teaching His Cause. Whoever ariseth to discharge this duty, must needs, ere he proclaimeth His Message, adorn himself with the ornament of an upright and praiseworthy character, so that his words may attract the hearts of such as are receptive to his call. Without it, he can never hope to influence his hearers. Thus doth God instruct you. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.

54.2 They who exhort others unto justice, while themselves committing iniquity, stand accused of falsehood by the inmates of the Kingdom and by those who circle round the throne of their Lord, the Almighty, the Beneficent, for that which their tongues have uttered. Commit not, O people, that which dishonoureth your name and the fair name of the Cause of God amongst men. Beware lest ye approach that which your minds abhor. Fear God and follow not in the footsteps of them that are gone astray. Deal not treacherously with the substance of your neighbour. Be ye trustworthy on earth, and withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. He, verily, will bestow upon you the double of what ye possess. He, in truth, is the All-Bounteous, the Most Generous.

54.3 Say: We have ordained that our Cause be taught through the power of utterance. Beware lest ye dispute idly with anyone. Whoso ariseth wholly for the sake of his Lord to teach His Cause, the Holy Spirit shall strengthen him and inspire him with that which will illumine the heart of the world, how much more the hearts of those who seek Him. O people of Bahá! Subdue the citadels of men's hearts with the swords of wisdom and of utterance. They that dispute, as prompted by their desires, are indeed wrapped in a palpable veil. Say: The sword of wisdom is hotter than summer heat, and sharper than blades of steel, if ye do but understand. Draw it forth in My name and through the power of My might, and conquer then with it the cities of the hearts of them that have secluded themselves in the stronghold of their corrupt desires. Thus biddeth you the Pen of the All-Glorious, whilst seated beneath the swords of the wayward.

54.4 If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin. He, verily, is the Concealer, the Lord of grace abounding. O ye rich ones on earth! If ye encounter one who is poor, treat him not disdainfully. Reflect upon that whereof ye were created. Every one of you was created of a sorry germ. It behoveth you to observe truthfulness, whereby your temples shall be adorned, your names uplifted, your stations exalted amidst men, and a mighty recompense assured for you before God.

6

## Developing Spiritual Qualities

### The Purpose of Divine Laws and Exhortations

1.1 They whom God hath endued with insight will readily recognize that the precepts laid down by God constitute the highest means for the maintenance of order in the world and the security of its peoples. He that turneth away from them is accounted among the abject and foolish. We, verily, have commanded you to refuse the dictates of your evil passions and corrupt desires, and not to transgress the bounds which the Pen of the Most High hath fixed, for these are the breath of life unto all created things. The seas of Divine wisdom and

Divine utterance have risen under the breath of the breeze of the All-Merciful. Hasten to drink your fill, O men of understanding! They that have violated the Covenant of God by breaking His commandments, and have turned back on their heels, these have erred grievously in the sight of God, the All-Possessing, the Most High.

1.2 O ye peoples of the world! Know assuredly that My commandments are the lamps of My loving providence among My servants, and the keys of My mercy for My creatures. Thus hath it been sent down from the heaven of the Will of your Lord, the Lord of Revelation. Were any man to taste the sweetness of the words which the lips of the All-Merciful have willed to utter, he would, though the treasures of the earth be in his possession, renounce them one and all, that he might vindicate the truth of even one of His commandments, shining above the Dayspring of His bountiful care and loving-kindness.

1.3 Say: From My laws the sweet-smelling savour of My garment can be smelled, and by their aid the standards of Victory will be planted upon the highest peaks. The Tongue of My power hath, from the heaven of My omnipotent glory, addressed to My creation these words: "Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty." Happy is the lover that hath inhaled the divine fragrance of his Best-Beloved from these words, laden with the perfume of a grace which no tongue can describe. By My life! He who hath drunk the choice wine of fairness from the hands of My bountiful favour will circle around My commandments that shine above the Dayspring of My creation.

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

1.5... Whenever My laws appear like the sun in the heaven of Mine utterance, they must be faithfully obeyed by all, though My decree be such as to cause the heaven of every religion to be cleft asunder. He doeth what He pleaseth. He chooseth, and none may question His choice. Whatsoever He, the Well-Beloved, ordaineth, the same is, verily, beloved. To this He Who is the Lord of all creation beareth Me witness. Whoso hath inhaled the sweet fragrance of the All-Merciful, and recognized the Source of this utterance, will welcome with his own eyes the shafts of the enemy, that he may establish the truth of the laws of God amongst men. Well is it with him that hath turned thereunto, and apprehended the meaning of His decisive decree.

2.1 Well is it with them that have fulfilled that which is prescribed in the Book of God. It is incumbent upon everyone to observe that which God hath purposed, for whatsoever hath been set forth in the Book by the Pen of Glory is an effective means for the purging, the purification and sanctification of the souls of men and a source of prosperity and blessing. Happy are they that have observed His commandments.

3.1 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 provoketh 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. Were men to discover the motivating purpose of God's Revelation, they would assuredly cast away their fears, and, with hearts filled with gratitude, rejoice with exceeding gladness.

4.1 Indeed, the laws of God are like unto the ocean and the children of men as fish, did they but know it. However, in observing them one must exercise tact and wisdom.... Since most people are feeble and far-removed from the purpose of God, therefore one must observe tact and prudence under all conditions, so that nothing might happen that could cause disturbance and dissension or raise clamour among the heedless. Verily, His bounty hath surpassed the whole universe and His bestowals encompassed all that dwell on earth. One must guide mankind to the ocean of true understanding in a spirit of love and tolerance. The Kitáb-i-Aqdas itself beareth eloquent testimony to the loving providence of God.

5.1 In all these journeys the wayfarer must stray not a hair's breadth from the Law, for this is indeed the secret of the Path and the fruit of the Tree of Truth. And in all these stages he must cling to the robe of obedience to all that hath been enjoined, and hold fast to the cord of shunning all that is forbidden, that he may partake of the cup of the Law and be informed of the mysteries of Truth.

Excerpts from the Kitáb-i-Aqdas

6.1 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....

6.2 It hath been ordained that obligatory prayer is to be performed by each of you individually. Save in the Prayer for the Dead, the practice of congregational prayer hath been annulled. He, of a truth, is the Ordainer, the All-Wise....

6.3 O Pen of the Most High! Say: O people of the world! We have enjoined upon you fasting during a brief period, and at its close have designated for you Naw-Rúz as a feast. Thus hath the Day-Star of Utterance shone forth above the horizon of the Book as decreed by Him Who is the Lord of the beginning and the end. Let the days in excess of the months be placed before the month of fasting. We have ordained that these, amid all nights and days, shall be the manifestations of the letter Há, and thus they have not been bounded by the limits of the year and its months. It behoveth the people of Bahá, throughout these days, to provide good cheer for themselves, their kindred and, beyond them, the poor and needy, and with joy and exultation to hail and glorify their Lord, to sing His praise and magnify His Name; and when they end—these days of giving that precede the season of restraint—let them enter upon the Fast. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the Lord of all mankind. The traveller, the ailing, those who are with child or giving suck, are not bound by the Fast; they have been exempted by God as a token of His grace. He, verily, is the Almighty, the Most Generous.

6.4 These are the ordinances of God that have been set down in the Books and Tablets by His Most Exalted Pen. Hold ye fast unto His statutes and commandments, and be not of those who, following their idle fancies and vain imaginings, have clung to the standards fixed by their own selves, and cast behind their backs the standards laid down by God. Abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sundown, and beware lest desire deprive you of this grace that is appointed in the Book.

6.5 It hath been ordained that every believer in God, the Lord of Judgement, shall, each day, having washed his hands and then his face, seat himself and, turning unto God, repeat “Alláh-u-Abhá” ninety-five times. Such was the decree of the Maker of the Heavens when, with majesty and power, He established Himself upon the thrones of His Names. Perform ye, likewise, ablutions for the Obligatory Prayer; this is the command of God, the Incomparable, the Unrestrained.

6.6 Ye have been forbidden to commit murder or adultery, or to engage in backbiting or calumny; shun ye, then, what hath been prohibited in the holy Books and Tablets....

6.7 The Lord hath ordained that in every city a House of Justice be established wherein shall gather counsellors to the number of Bahá, and should it exceed this number it doth not matter. They should consider themselves as entering the Court of the presence of God, the Exalted, the Most High, and as beholding Him Who is the Unseen. 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. Thus hath the Lord your God commanded you. Beware lest ye put away that which is clearly revealed in His Tablet. Fear God, O ye that perceive....

6.8 The kissing of hands hath been forbidden in the Book. This practice is prohibited by God, the Lord of glory and command. To none is it permitted to seek absolution from another soul; let repentance be between yourselves and God. He, verily, is the Pardoner, the Bounteous, the Gracious, the One Who absolveth the repentant....

6.9 Endowments dedicated to charity revert to God, the Revealer of Signs. None hath the right to dispose of them without leave from Him Who is the Dawning-place of Revelation. After Him, this authority shall pass to the Aghsán, and after them to the House of Justice—should it be established in the world by then—that they may use these endowments for the benefit of the Places which have been exalted in this Cause, and for whatsoever hath been enjoined upon them by Him Who is the God of might and power. Otherwise, the endowments shall revert to the people of Bahá who speak not except by His leave and judge not save in accordance with what God hath decreed in this Tablet—lo, they are the champions of victory betwixt heaven and earth—that they may use them in the manner that hath been laid down in the Book by God, the Mighty, the Bountiful.

6.10 Lament not in your hours of trial, neither rejoice therein; seek ye the Middle Way which is the remembrance of Me in your afflictions and reflection

over that which may befall you in future. Thus informeth you He Who is the Omniscient, He Who is aware....

6.11 Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet. He that putteth away that which is commanded unto him, the Trustees are then to take from him that which is required for their instruction if he be wealthy and, if not, the matter devolveth upon the House of Justice. Verily have We made it a shelter for the poor and needy. He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My glory, My loving-kindness, My mercy, that have compassed the world....

6.12 We have made it lawful for you to listen to music and singing. Take heed, however, lest listening thereto should cause you to overstep the bounds of propriety and dignity. Let your joy be the joy born of My Most Great Name, a Name that bringeth rapture to the heart, and filleth with ecstasy the minds of all who have drawn nigh unto God. We, verily, have made music as a ladder for your souls, a means whereby they may be lifted up unto the realm on high; make it not, therefore, as wings to self and passion. Truly, We are loath to see you numbered with the foolish....

6.13 Verily, it is enjoined upon you to offer a feast, once in every month, though only water be served; for God hath purposed to bind hearts together, albeit through both earthly and heavenly means....

6.14 God hath prescribed matrimony unto you.... Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves.

6.15 O people of the world! Follow not the promptings of the self, for it summoneth insistently to wickedness and lust; follow, rather, Him Who is the Possessor of all created things, Who biddeth you to show forth piety, and manifest the fear of God. He, verily, is independent of all His creatures. Take heed not to stir up mischief in the land after it hath been set in order. Whoso acteth in this way is not of Us, and We are quit of him. Such is the command which hath, through the power of truth, been made manifest from the heaven of Revelation.

6.16 It hath been laid down in the Bayán that marriage is dependent upon the consent of both parties. Desiring to establish love, unity and harmony amidst Our servants, We have conditioned it, once the couple's wish is known, upon the permission of their parents, lest enmity and rancour should arise amongst them. And in this We have yet other purposes. Thus hath Our commandment been ordained....

6.17 Should resentment or antipathy arise between husband and wife, he is not to divorce her but to bide in patience throughout the course of one whole year, that perchance the fragrance of affection may be renewed between them. If, upon the completion of this period, their love hath not returned, it is permissible for divorce to take place. God's wisdom, verily, hath encompassed all things....

6.18 It is forbidden you to trade in slaves, be they men or women. It is not for him who is himself a servant to buy another of God's servants, and this hath

been prohibited in His Holy Tablet. Thus, by His mercy, hath the commandment been recorded by the Pen of justice. Let no man exalt himself above another; all are but bondslaves before the Lord, and all exemplify the truth that there is none other God but Him. He, verily, is the All-Wise, Whose wisdom encompasseth all things....

6.19 God hath, likewise, as a bounty from His presence, abolished the concept of “uncleanness”, whereby divers things and peoples have been held to be impure. He, of a certainty, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous. Verily, all created things were immersed in the sea of purification when, on that first day of Ridván, We shed upon the whole of creation the splendours of Our most excellent Names and Our most exalted Attributes. This, verily, is a token of My loving providence, which hath encompassed all the worlds. Consort ye then with the followers of all religions, and proclaim ye the Cause of your Lord, the Most Compassionate; this is the very crown of deeds, if ye be of them who understand.

6.20 God hath enjoined upon you to observe the utmost cleanliness, to the extent of washing what is soiled with dust, let alone with hardened dirt and similar defilement. Fear Him, and be of those who are pure. Should the garb of anyone be visibly sullied, his prayers shall not ascend to God, and the celestial Concourse will turn away from him. Make use of rose-water, and of pure perfume; this, indeed, is that which God hath loved from the beginning that hath no beginning, in order that there may be diffused from you what your Lord, the Incomparable, the All-Wise, desireth....

6.21 Should anyone acquire one hundred mithqáls of gold, nineteen mithqáls thereof are God’s and to be rendered unto Him, the Fashioner of earth and heaven. Take heed, O people, lest ye deprive yourselves of so great a bounty. This We have commanded you, though We are well able to dispense with you and with all who are in the heavens and on earth; in it there are benefits and wisdoms beyond the ken of anyone but God, the Omniscient, the All-Informed. Say: By this means He hath desired to purify what ye possess and to enable you to draw nigh unto such stations as none can comprehend save those whom God hath willed. He, in truth, is the Beneficent, the Gracious, the Bountiful. O people! Deal not faithlessly with the Right of God, nor, without His leave, make free with its disposal. Thus hath His commandment been established in the holy Tablets, and in this exalted Book. He who dealeth faithlessly with God shall in justice meet with faithlessness himself; he, however, who acteth in accordance with God’s bidding shall receive a blessing from the heaven of the bounty of his Lord, the Gracious, the Bestower, the Generous, the Ancient of Days. He, verily, hath willed for you that which is yet beyond your knowledge, but which shall be known to you when, after this fleeting life, your souls soar heavenwards and the trappings of your earthly joys are folded up. Thus admonisheth you He in Whose possession is the Guarded Tablet....

6.22 Unto everyone hath been enjoined the writing of a will. The testator should head this document with the adornment of the Most Great Name, bear witness therein unto the oneness of God in the Dayspring of His Revelation, and make mention, as he may wish, of that which is praiseworthy, so that it may be a testimony for him in the kingdoms of Revelation and Creation and a treasure

with his Lord, the Supreme Protector, the Faithful.

6.23 All Feasts have attained their consummation in the two Most Great Festivals, and in the two other Festivals that fall on the twin days—the first of the Most Great Festivals being those days whereon the All-Merciful shed upon the whole of creation the effulgent glory of His most excellent Names and His most exalted Attributes, and the second being that day on which We raised up the One Who announced unto mankind the glad tidings of this Name, through which the dead have been resurrected and all who are in the heavens and on earth have been gathered together. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Ordainer, the Omniscient.

6.24 Happy the one who entereth upon the first day of the month of Bahá, the day which God hath consecrated to this Great Name. And blessed be he who evidenceth on this day the bounties that God hath bestowed upon him; he, verily, is of those who show forth thanks to God through actions betokening the Lord's munificence which hath encompassed all the worlds. Say: This day, verily, is the crown of all the months and the source thereof, the day on which the breath of life is wafted over all created things. Great is the blessedness of him who greeteth it with radiance and joy. We testify that he is, in truth, among those who are blissful.

6.25 Say: The Most Great Festival is, indeed, the King of Festivals. Call ye to mind, O people, the bounty which God hath conferred upon you. Ye were sunk in slumber, and lo! He aroused you by the reviving breezes of His Revelation, and made known unto you His manifest and undeviating Path.

6.26 Resort ye, in times of sickness, to competent physicians; We have not set aside the use of material means, rather have We confirmed it through this Pen, which God hath made to be the Dawning-place of His shining and glorious Cause....

6.27 It is inadmissible that man, who hath been endowed with reason, should consume that which stealeth it away. Nay, rather it behoveth him to comport himself in a manner worthy of the human station, and not in accordance with the misdeeds of every heedless and wavering soul....

6.28 The Lord hath decreed that the dead should be interred in coffins made of crystal, of hard, resistant stone, or of wood that is both fine and durable, and that graven rings should be placed upon their fingers. He, verily, is the Supreme Ordainer, the One apprised of all....

6.29 The Lord hath decreed, moreover, that the deceased should be enfolded in five sheets of silk or cotton. For those whose means are limited a single sheet of either fabric will suffice. Thus hath it been ordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. It is forbidden you to transport the body of the deceased a greater distance than one hour's journey from the city; rather should it be interred, with radiance and serenity, in a nearby place....

6.30 Consort with all religions with amity and concord, that they may inhale from you the sweet fragrance of God. Beware lest amidst men the flame of foolish ignorance overpower you. All things proceed from God and unto Him they return. He is the source of all things and in Him all things are ended.

6.31 Take heed that ye enter no house in the absence of its owner, except with his permission. Comport yourselves with propriety under all conditions, and be

not numbered with the wayward....

6.32It is unlawful to beg, and it is forbidden to give to him who beggeth. All have been enjoined to earn a living, and as for those who are incapable of doing so, it is incumbent on the Deputies of God and on the wealthy to make adequate provision for them. Keep ye the statutes and commandments of God; nay, guard them as ye would your very eyes, and be not of those who suffer grievous loss....

6.33Gambling and the use of opium have been forbidden unto you. Eschew them both, O people, and be not of those who transgress. Beware of using any substance that induceth sluggishness and torpor in the human temple and inflicteth harm upon the body. We, verily, desire for you naught save what shall profit you, and to this bear witness all created things, had ye but ears to hear....

6.34It hath been forbidden you to carry arms unless essential, and permitted you to attire yourselves in silk. The Lord hath relieved you, as a bounty on His part, of the restrictions that formerly applied to clothing and to the trim of the beard. He, verily, is the Ordainer, the Omniscient. Let there be naught in your demeanour of which sound and upright minds would disapprove, and make not yourselves the playthings of the ignorant. Well is it with him who hath adorned himself with the vesture of seemly conduct and a praiseworthy character. He is assuredly reckoned with those who aid their Lord through distinctive and outstanding deeds.

6.35Promote ye the development of the cities of God and His countries, and glorify Him therein in the joyous accents of His well-favoured ones. In truth, the hearts of men are edified through the power of the tongue, even as houses and cities are built up by the hand and other means. We have assigned to every end a means for its accomplishment; avail yourselves thereof, and place your trust and confidence in God, the Omniscient, the All-Wise.

6.36Blessed is the man that hath acknowledged his belief in God and in His signs, and recognized that "He shall not be asked of His doings". Such a recognition hath been made by God the ornament of every belief and its very foundation. Upon it must depend the acceptance of every goodly deed. Fasten your eyes upon it, that haply the whisperings of the rebellious may not cause you to slip.

6.37Were He to decree as lawful the thing which from time immemorial had been forbidden, and forbid that which had, at all times, been regarded as lawful, to none is given the right to question His authority. Whoso will hesitate, though it be for less than a moment, should be regarded as a transgressor.

6.38Whoso hath not recognized this sublime and fundamental verity, and hath failed to attain this most exalted station, the winds of doubt will agitate him, and the sayings of the infidels will distract his soul. He that hath acknowledged this principle will be endowed with the most perfect constancy. All honour to this all-glorious station, the remembrance of which adorneth every exalted Tablet. Such is the teaching which God bestoweth on you, a teaching that will deliver you from all manner of doubt and perplexity, and enable you to attain unto salvation in both this world and the next. He, verily, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Bountiful. He it is Who hath sent forth

the Messengers, and sent down the Books to proclaim “There is none other God but Me, the Almighty, the All-Wise.” ...

6.39 This is not a Cause which may be made a plaything for your idle fancies, nor is it a field for the foolish and faint of heart. By God, this is the arena of insight and detachment, of vision and upliftment, where none may spur on their chargers save the valiant horsemen of the Merciful, who have severed all attachment to the world of being. These, truly, are they that render God victorious on earth, and are the dawning-places of His sovereign might amidst mankind.

Excerpt from Tarázát

7.1 O thou who hast quaffed the wine of Mine utterance from the chalice of My knowledge! These sublime words were heard today from the rustling of the divine Lote-Tree which the Lord of Names hath, with the hand of celestial power, planted in the All-Highest Paradise:

7.2 The first Taráz and the first effulgence which hath dawned from the horizon of the Mother Book is that man should know his own self and recognize that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement, wealth or poverty. Having attained the stage of fulfilment and reached his maturity, man standeth in need of wealth, and such wealth as he acquireth through crafts or professions is commendable and praiseworthy in the estimation of men of wisdom, and especially in the eyes of servants who dedicate themselves to the education of the world and to the edification of its peoples. They are, in truth, cup-bearers of the life-giving water of knowledge and guides unto the ideal way. They direct the peoples of the world to the straight path and acquaint them with that which is conducive to human upliftment and exaltation. The straight path is the one which guideth man to the dayspring of perception and to the dawning-place of true understanding and leadeth him to that which will redound to glory, honour and greatness.

7.3 We cherish the hope that through the loving-kindness of the All-Wise, the All-Knowing, obscuring dust may be dispelled and the power of perception enhanced, that the people may discover the purpose for which they have been called into being. In this Day whatsoever serveth to reduce blindness and to increase vision is worthy of consideration. This vision acteth as the agent and guide for true knowledge. Indeed in the estimation of men of wisdom keenness of understanding is due to keenness of vision. The people of Bahá must under all circumstances observe that which is meet and seemly and exhort the people accordingly.

7.4 The second Taráz is to consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship, to proclaim that which the Speaker on Sinai hath set forth and to observe fairness in all matters.

7.5 They that are endued with sincerity and faithfulness should associate with all the peoples and kindreds of the earth with joy and radiance, inasmuch as consorting with people hath promoted and will continue to promote unity and concord, which in turn are conducive to the maintenance of order in the world and to the regeneration of nations. Blessed are such as hold fast to the cord of kindness and tender mercy and are free from animosity and hatred.

7.6 This Wronged One exhorteth the peoples of the world to observe tolerance and

righteousness, which are two lights amidst the darkness of the world and two educators for the edification of mankind. Happy are they who have attained thereto and woe betide the heedless.

7.7The third Taráz concerneth good character. A good character is, verily, the best mantle for men from God. With it He adorneth the temples of His loved ones. By My life! The light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun and the radiance thereof. Whoso attaineth unto it is accounted as a jewel among men. The glory and the upliftment of the world must needs depend upon it. A goodly character is a means whereby men are guided to the Straight Path and are led to the Great Announcement. Well is it with him who is adorned with the saintly attributes and character of the Concourse on high.

7.8It beseemeth you to fix your gaze under all conditions upon justice and fairness. In the Hidden Words this exalted utterance hath been revealed from Our Most August Pen:

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

7.10They that are just and fair-minded in their judgement occupy a sublime station and hold an exalted rank. The light of piety and uprightness shineth resplendent from these souls. We earnestly hope that the peoples and countries of the world may not be deprived of the splendours of these two luminaries.

7.11The fourth Taráz concerneth trustworthiness. Verily it is the door of security for all that dwell on earth and a token of glory on the part of the All-Merciful. He who partaketh thereof hath indeed partaken of the treasures of wealth and prosperity. Trustworthiness is the greatest portal leading unto the tranquillity and security of the people. In truth the stability of every affair hath depended and doth depend upon it. All the domains of power, of grandeur and of wealth are illumined by its light.

7.12Not long ago these sublime words were revealed from the Pen of the Most High:

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

am the most great ornament of the people of Bahá, and the vesture of glory unto all who are in the kingdom of creation. I am the supreme instrument for the prosperity of the world, and the horizon of assurance unto all beings.’ Thus have We sent down for thee that which will draw men nigh unto the Lord of creation.”

7.14O people of Bahá! Trustworthiness is in truth the best of vestures for your temples and the most glorious crown for your heads. Take ye fast hold of it at the behest of Him Who is the Ordainer, the All-Informed.

7.15The fifth Taráz concerneth the protection and preservation of the stations of God’s servants. One should not ignore the truth of any matter, rather should one give expression to that which is right and true. The people of Bahá should not deny any soul the reward due to him, should treat craftsmen with deference, and, unlike the people aforesaid, should not defile their tongues with abuse.

7.16In this Day the sun of craftsmanship shineth above the horizon of the occident and the river of arts is flowing out of the sea of that region. One must speak with fairness and appreciate such bounty. By the life of God! The word “Equity” shineth bright and resplendent even as the sun. We pray God to graciously shed its radiance upon everyone. He is in truth powerful over all things, He Who is wont to answer the prayers of all men.

7.17In these days truthfulness and sincerity are sorely afflicted in the clutches of falsehood, and justice is tormented by the scourge of injustice. The smoke of corruption hath enveloped the whole world in such wise that naught can be seen in any direction save regiments of soldiers and nothing is heard from any land but the clashing of swords. We beseech God, the True One, to strengthen the wielders of His power in that which will rehabilitate the world and bring tranquillity to the nations.

7.18The sixth Taráz: Knowledge is one of the wondrous gifts of God. It is incumbent upon everyone to acquire it. Such arts and material means as are now manifest have been achieved by virtue of His knowledge and wisdom which have been revealed in Epistles and Tablets through His Most Exalted Pen—a Pen out of whose treasury pearls of wisdom and utterance and the arts and crafts of the world are brought to light.

7.19In this Day the secrets of the earth are laid bare before the eyes of men. The pages of swiftly-appearing newspapers are indeed the mirror of the world. They reflect the deeds and the pursuits of divers peoples and kindreds. They both reflect them and make them known. They are a mirror endowed with hearing, sight and speech. This is an amazing and potent phenomenon. However, it behoveth the writers thereof to be purged from the promptings of evil passions and desires and to be attired with the raiment of justice and equity. They should enquire into situations as much as possible and ascertain the facts, then set them down in writing.

7.20Concerning this Wronged One, most of the things reported in the newspapers are devoid of truth. Fair speech and truthfulness, by reason of their lofty rank and position, are regarded as a sun shining above the horizon of knowledge. The waves rising from this Ocean are apparent before the eyes of the peoples of the world and the effusions of the Pen of wisdom and utterance are

manifest everywhere.

7.21 It is reported in the press that this Servant hath fled from the land of Tá (Tihrán) and gone to 'Iráq. Gracious God! Not even for a single moment hath this Wronged One ever concealed Himself. Rather hath He at all times remained steadfast and conspicuous before the eyes of all men. Never have We retreated, nor shall We ever seek flight. In truth it is the foolish people who flee from Our presence. We left Our home country accompanied by two mounted escorts, representing the two honoured governments of Persia and Russia until We arrived in 'Iráq in the plenitude of glory and power. Praise be to God! The Cause whereof this Wronged One is the Bearer standeth as high as heaven and shineth resplendent as the sun. Concealment hath no access unto this station, nor is there any occasion for fear or silence.

Words of Wisdom

8.1 In the Name of God, the Exalted, the Most High!

8.2 The source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment with His holy will and pleasure.

8.3 The essence of wisdom is the fear of God, the dread of His scourge and punishment, and the apprehension of His justice and decree.

8.4 The essence of religion is to testify unto that which the Lord hath revealed, and follow that which He hath ordained in His mighty Book.

8.5 The source of all glory is acceptance of whatsoever the Lord hath bestowed, and contentment with that which God hath ordained.

8.6 The essence of love is for man to turn his heart to the Beloved One, and sever himself from all else but Him, and desire naught save that which is the desire of his Lord.

8.7 True remembrance is to make mention of the Lord, the All-Praised, and forget aught else beside Him.

8.8 True reliance is for the servant to pursue his profession and calling in this world, to hold fast unto the Lord, to seek naught but His grace, inasmuch as in His Hands is the destiny of all His servants.

8.9 The essence of detachment is for man to turn his face towards the courts of the Lord, to enter His Presence, behold His Countenance, and stand as witness before Him.

8.10 The essence of understanding is to testify to one's poverty, and submit to the Will of the Lord, the Sovereign, the Gracious, the All-Powerful.

8.11 The source of courage and power is the promotion of the Word of God, and steadfastness in His Love.

8.12 The essence of charity is for the servant to recount the blessings of his Lord, and to render thanks unto Him at all times and under all conditions.

8.13 The essence of faith is fewness of words and abundance of deeds; he whose words exceed his deeds, know verily his death is better than his life.

8.14 The essence of true safety is to observe silence, to look at the end of things and to renounce the world.

8.15 The beginning of magnanimity is when man expendeth his wealth on himself, on his family and on the poor among his brethren in his Faith.

8.16 The essence of wealth is love for Me; whoso loveth Me is the possessor of all things, and he that loveth Me not is indeed of the poor and needy. This is

that which the Finger of Glory and Splendour hath revealed.

8.17The source of all evil is for man to turn away from his Lord and set his heart on things ungodly.

8.18The most burning fire is to question the signs of God, to dispute idly that which He hath revealed, to deny Him and carry one's self proudly before Him.

8.19The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His glory, and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His Divine Manifestation.

8.20The essence of abasement is to pass out from under the shadow of the Merciful and seek the shelter of the Evil One.

8.21The source of error is to disbelieve in the One true God, rely upon aught else but Him, and flee from His Decree.

8.22True loss is for him whose days have been spent in utter ignorance of his self.

8.23The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.

8.24Thus have We instructed thee, manifested unto thee Words of Wisdom, that thou mayest be thankful unto the Lord, thy God, and glory therein amidst all peoples.

Excerpts from the Hidden Words

9.1This is that which hath descended from the realm of glory, uttered by the tongue of power and might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old. We have taken the inner essence thereof and clothed it in the garment of brevity, as a token of grace unto the righteous, that they may stand faithful unto the Covenant of God, may fulfil in their lives His trust, and in the realm of spirit obtain the gem of Divine virtue.

9.2O Son of Spirit! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.

9.3O Son of Spirit! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbour. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behoveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes....

9.4O Son of Being! With the hands of power I made thee and with the fingers of strength I created thee; and within thee have I placed the essence of My light. Be thou content with it and seek naught else, for My work is perfect and My command is binding. Question it not, nor have a doubt thereof....

9.5O 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....

9.6O Son of Light! Forget all save Me and commune with My spirit. This is of

the essence of My command, therefore turn unto it.

9.7O Son of Man! Be thou content with Me and seek no other helper. For none but Me can ever suffice thee.

9.8O Son of Spirit! Ask not of Me that which We desire not for thee, then be content with what We have ordained for thy sake, for this is that which profiteth thee, if therewith thou dost content thyself.

9.9O 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?

9.10O Son of Spirit! My claim on thee is great, it cannot be forgotten. My grace to thee is plenteous, it cannot be veiled. My love hath made in thee its home, it cannot be concealed. My light is manifest to thee, it cannot be obscured.

9.11O Son of Man! Upon the tree of effulgent glory I have hung for thee the choicest fruits, wherefore hast thou turned away and contented thyself with that which is less good? Return then unto that which is better for thee in the realm on high.

9.12O Son of Spirit! Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.

9.13O Son of the Supreme! To the eternal I call thee, yet thou dost seek that which perisheth. What hath made thee turn away from Our desire and seek thine own?...

9.14O 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.

9.15O 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.

9.16O Son of Spirit! Know thou of a truth: He that biddeth men be just and himself committeth iniquity is not of Me, even though he bear My name.

9.17O Son of Being! Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not. This is My command unto thee, do thou observe it....

9.18O Son of the Supreme! I have made death a messenger of joy to thee. Wherefore dost thou grieve? I made the light to shed on thee its splendour. Why dost thou veil thyself therefrom?...

9.19O Son of Being! Walk in My statutes for love of Me and deny thyself that which thou desirest if thou seekest My pleasure.

9.20O Son of Man! Neglect not My commandments if thou lovest My beauty, and forget not My counsels if thou wouldst attain My good pleasure....

9.21O Son of Man! Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! This is My knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine?...

9.22O 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....

9.23O Son of Man! Write all that We have revealed unto thee with the ink of light upon the tablet of thy spirit. Should this not be in thy power, then make thine ink of the essence of thy heart. If this thou canst not do, then write with that crimson ink that hath been shed in My path. Sweeter indeed is this to Me than all else, that its light may endure forever....

9.24O Friend! In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the rose of love, and from the nightingale of affection and desire loosen not thy hold. Treasure the companionship of the righteous and eschew all fellowship with the ungodly.

9.25O Son of Justice! Whither can a lover go but to the land of his beloved? and what seeker findeth rest away from his heart's desire? To the true lover reunion is life, and separation is death. His breast is void of patience and his heart hath no peace. A myriad lives he would forsake to hasten to the abode of his beloved.

9.26O Son of Dust! Verily I say unto thee: Of all men the most negligent is he that disputeth idly and seeketh to advance himself over his brother. Say: O brethren! Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.

9.27O Son of Earth! Know, verily, the heart wherein the least remnant of envy yet lingereth, shall never attain My everlasting dominion, nor inhale the sweet savours of holiness breathing from My kingdom of sanctity....

9.28O Fleeting Shadow! Pass beyond the baser stages of doubt and rise to the exalted heights of certainty. Open the eye of truth, that thou mayest behold the veiless Beauty and exclaim: Hallowed be the Lord, the most excellent of all creators!...

9.29O Son of Dust! Blind thine eyes, that thou mayest behold My beauty; stop thine ears, that thou mayest hearken unto the sweet melody of My voice; empty thyself of all learning, that thou mayest partake of My knowledge; and sanctify thyself from riches, that thou mayest obtain a lasting share from the ocean of My eternal wealth. Blind thine eyes, that is, to all save My beauty; stop thine ears to all save My word; empty thyself of all learning save the knowledge of Me; that with a clear vision, a pure heart and an attentive ear thou mayest enter the court of My holiness.

9.30O Man of Two Visions! Close one eye and open the other. Close one to the world and all that is therein, and open the other to the hallowed beauty of the Beloved....

9.31O Friends! Abandon not the everlasting beauty for a beauty that must die, and set not your affections on this mortal world of dust....

9.32O Son of Earth! Wouldst thou have Me, seek none other than Me; and wouldst thou gaze upon My beauty, close thine eyes to the world and all that is therein; for My will and the will of another than Me, even as fire and water, cannot dwell together in one heart.

9.33O Befriended Stranger! The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. The healer

of all thine ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not. Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life.

9.34O My Brother! Hearken to the delightful words of My honeyed tongue, and quaff the stream of mystic holiness from My sugar-shedding lips. Sow the seeds of My divine wisdom in the pure soil of thy heart, and water them with the water of certitude, that the hyacinths of My knowledge and wisdom may spring up fresh and green in the sacred city of thy heart....

9.35O 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....

9.36O Companion of My Throne! Hear no evil, and see no evil, abase not thyself, neither sigh and weep. Speak no evil, that thou mayest not hear it spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great; and wish not the abasement of anyone, that thine own abasement be not exposed. Live then the days of thy life, that are less than a fleeting moment, with thy mind stainless, thy heart unsullied, thy thoughts pure, and thy nature sanctified, so that, free and content, thou mayest put away this mortal frame, and repair unto the mystic paradise and abide in the eternal kingdom for evermore.

9.37Alas! Alas! O Lovers of Worldly Desire! Even as the swiftness of lightning ye have passed by the Beloved One, and have set your hearts on satanic fancies. Ye bow the knee before your vain imagining, and call it truth. Ye turn your eyes towards the thorn, and name it a flower. Not a pure breath have ye breathed, nor hath the breeze of detachment been wafted from the meadows of your hearts. Ye have cast to the winds the loving counsels of the Beloved and have effaced them utterly from the tablet of your hearts, and even as the beasts of the field, ye move and have your being within the pastures of desire and passion....

9.38O Children of Desire! Put away the garment of vainglory, and divest yourselves of the attire of haughtiness....

9.39O Brethren! Be forbearing one with another and set not your affections on things below. Pride not yourselves in your glory, and be not ashamed of abasement. By My beauty! I have created all things from dust, and to dust will I return them again.

9.40O 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.

9.41O Quintessence of Passion! Put away all covetousness and seek contentment; for the covetous hath ever been deprived, and the contented hath ever been loved and praised.

9.42O Son of My Handmaid! Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty. Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof, for in the end it will make thee rich in God, and thus thou shalt know the meaning of the utterance, "In truth ye are the poor", and the holy words, "God is the all-possessing", shall even as the true morn break forth gloriously

resplendent upon the horizon of the lover's heart, and abide secure on the throne of wealth.

9.430 Children of Negligence and Passion! Ye have suffered My enemy to enter My house and have cast out My friend, for ye have enshrined the love of another than Me in your hearts. Give ear to the sayings of the Friend and turn towards His paradise. Worldly friends, seeking their own good, appear to love one the other, whereas the true Friend hath loved and doth love you for your own sakes; indeed He hath suffered for your guidance countless afflictions. Be not disloyal to such a Friend, nay rather hasten unto Him. Such is the day-star of the word of truth and faithfulness, that hath dawned above the horizon of the pen of the Lord of all names. Open your ears that ye may hearken unto the word of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Existent.

9.440 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 splendour of such a wealthy man shall illuminate the dwellers of heaven even as the sun enlighteneth the people of the earth!

9.450 Ye Rich Ones on Earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease....

9.460 Friends! Verily I say, whatsoever ye have concealed within your hearts is to Us open and manifest as the day; but that it is hidden is of Our grace and favour, and not of your deserving....

9.470 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 of glory....

9.480 Emigrants! The tongue I have designed for the mention of Me, defile it not with detraction. If the fire of self overcome you, remember your own faults and not the faults of My creatures, inasmuch as every one of you knoweth his own self better than he knoweth others....

9.490 Children of Adam! Holy words and pure and goodly deeds ascend unto the heaven of celestial glory. Strive that your deeds may be cleansed from the dust of self and hypocrisy and find favour at the court of glory; for ere long the assayers of mankind shall, in the holy presence of the Adored One, accept naught but absolute virtue and deeds of stainless purity. This is the day-star of wisdom and of divine mystery that hath shone above the horizon of the divine will. Blessed are they that turn thereunto....

9.500 My Servant! Thou art even as a finely tempered sword concealed in the darkness of its sheath and its value hidden from the artificer's knowledge. Wherefore come forth from the sheath of self and desire that thy worth may be made resplendent and manifest unto all the world....

9.510 Son of My Handmaid! Guidance hath ever been given by words, and now it is given by deeds. Everyone must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to

Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds. In this wise We counsel you in this holy and resplendent tablet....

9.52 The mystic and wondrous Bride, hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God and His divine favour, been made manifest even as the resplendent light shed by the beauty of the Beloved. I bear witness, O friends! that the favour is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established. Let it now be seen what your endeavours in the path of detachment will reveal. In this wise hath the divine favour been fully vouchsafed unto you and unto them that are in heaven and on earth. All praise to God, the Lord of all Worlds.

#### Additional Exhortations

10.1 Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbour, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgement, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

11.1 Turn unto Him, and fear not because of thy deeds. He, in truth, forgiveth whomsoever He desireth as a bounty on His part; no God is there but Him, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Bounteous. We admonish thee solely for the sake of God. Shouldst thou accept this counsel, thou wilt have acted to thine own behoof; and shouldst thou reject it, thy Lord, verily, can well dispense with thee, and with all those who, in manifest delusion, have followed thee. Behold! God hath laid hold on him who led thee astray. Return unto God, humble, submissive and lowly; verily, He will put away from thee thy sins, for thy Lord, of a certainty, is the Forgiving, the Mighty, the All-Merciful.

12.1 O banished and faithful friend! Quench the thirst of heedlessness with the sanctified waters of My grace, and chase the gloom of remoteness through the morning-light of My Divine presence. Suffer not the habitation wherein dwelleth My undying love for thee to be destroyed through the tyranny of covetous desires, and overcloud not the beauty of the heavenly Youth with the dust of self and passion. Clothe thyself with the essence of righteousness, and let thine heart be afraid of none except God. Obstruct not the luminous spring of thy soul with the thorns and brambles of vain and inordinate affections, and impede not the flow of the living waters that stream from the fountain of thine heart. Set all thy hope in God, and cleave tenaciously to His unfailing mercy. Who else but Him can enrich the destitute, and deliver the fallen from his

abasement?

13.1 We ask God, exalted be His glory, to confirm each one of the friends in that land in the acquisition of such praiseworthy characteristics as shall conduce to the spread of justice and equity among the peoples of the world. The first, the fundamental purpose underlying creation hath ever been, and will continue to be, none other than the appearance of trustworthiness and godliness, of sincerity and goodwill amongst mankind, for these qualities are the cause of peace, security and tranquillity. Blessed are those who possess such virtues.

14.1 Lay not on any soul a load which ye would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things ye would not desire for yourselves. This is My best counsel unto you, did ye but observe it.

15.1 In connection with the demands for payment of which thou hast written in thy letter, it is manifestly clear that anyone who hath the ability to settle his debts, and yet neglecteth to do so, hath not acted in accordance with the good pleasure of the one true God. Those who incur debts should strive to settle them with all diligence and application. God's binding commandments with respect to trustworthiness, uprightness and the honouring of rights have been recorded in clear and perspicuous language in all the sacred Books, Tablets, Scriptures and holy Writings. Well is it with him whom the fleeting vanities of the world have not deprived of a lasting adornment, and whom avarice and negligence have not shut out from the illumination of the sun of trustworthiness. These matters, however, depend on the existence of ability, for the making of a demand is contingent upon ability to meet it. By the Lord of the Book, the former is not permissible in the absence of the latter.

16.1 We send Our greetings to the faithful followers of the one true God, who have tasted of the sweet waters of loving-kindness and directed their gaze toward the Realm of Glory. We enjoin upon them all to conduct themselves with trustworthiness and rectitude and to lead chaste and virtuous lives.

16.2 O beloved friends! Whoever adorneth his character with such virtues will be reckoned among the true servants of God, and his name will be commemorated by the Concourse on high; but he who depriveth himself thereof shall not be accounted of their number. Strive diligently to acquire such goodly qualities and traits of character as will be the cause of everlasting salvation. Make not the fruits of the tree of trustworthiness targets for the stones of treachery, nor rend its boughs asunder with the instruments of tyranny and oppression. Truthfulness and sincerity have always been the ornament of a man's character, and so they shall ever be.

16.3 O friends! Let not the deceptive glamour of this fleeting world—to whose impermanence all things attest—cut you off from God's enduring bestowals, nor deprive you from partaking of the spiritual sustenance that He hath sent down from the heaven of His bounty. Keep your gaze centred on Him Who is the Sovereign Word of Truth: Place your whole reliance upon Him, and beg of Him to destine for you what is meet and fitting. Resign your affairs into the hands of God, the Lord of creation. Call ye to mind the people of former ages: Whither are they sped, the prideful and vainglorious, the workers of iniquity and unrighteousness? Where are their hoards of treasure, their palaces, citadels

and thrones? Reflect upon those bygone days, and the vicissitudes of which they tell, and be ye admonished thereby. The prayer of this Wronged One is that God may assist all to do what shall meet with His favour and acceptance.

17.1 We exhort mankind in these days when the countenance of Justice is soiled with dust, when the flames of unbelief are burning high and the robe of wisdom rent asunder, when tranquillity and faithfulness have ebbed away and trials and tribulations have waxed severe, when covenants are broken and ties are severed, when no man knoweth how to discern light and darkness or to distinguish guidance from error.

17.2 O peoples of the world! Forsake all evil, hold fast that which is good. Strive to be shining examples unto all mankind, and true reminders of the virtues of God amidst men. He that riseth to serve My Cause should manifest My wisdom, and bend every effort to banish ignorance from the earth. Be united in counsel, be one in thought. Let each morn be better than its eve and each morrow richer than its yesterday. Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. Take heed that your words be purged from idle fancies and worldly desires and your deeds be cleansed from craftiness and suspicion. Dissipate not the wealth of your precious lives in the pursuit of evil and corrupt affection, nor let your endeavours be spent in promoting your personal interest. Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. Adversity is followed by success and rejoicings follow woe. Guard against idleness and sloth, and cling unto that which profiteth mankind, whether young or old, whether high or low. Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts.

17.3 O ye beloved of the Lord! Commit not that which defileth the limpid stream of love or destroyeth the sweet fragrance of friendship. By the righteousness of the Lord! Ye were created to show love one to another and not perversity and rancour. Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for your fellow-creatures. Glory not in love for your country, but in love for all mankind. Let your eye be chaste, your hand faithful, your tongue truthful and your heart enlightened. Abase not the station of the learned in Bahá and belittle not the rank of such rulers as administer justice amidst you. Set your reliance on the army of justice, put on the armour of wisdom, let your adorning be forgiveness and mercy and that which cheereth the hearts of the well-favoured of God.

18.1 It behoveth ye all so to adorn your inner and outer beings that, robed in trustworthiness, girt with righteousness and arrayed in truthfulness and rectitude, ye may become a means for the exaltation of the Cause and the education of the human race.

7

Attaining Social Progress and Well-Being

The Purpose of Religion Is Unity

1.1 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.... 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.

1.2 Gird up the loins of your endeavour, O people of Bahá, that haply the tumult of religious dissension and strife that agitateth the peoples of the earth may be stilled, that every trace of it may be completely obliterated. For the love of God, and them that serve Him, arise to aid this most sublime and momentous Revelation. Religious fanaticism and hatred are a world-devouring fire, whose violence none can quench. The Hand of Divine power can, alone, deliver mankind from this desolating affliction....

1.3 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.

1.4 Exert yourselves that ye may attain this transcendent and most sublime station, the station that can ensure the protection and security of all mankind. This goal excelleth every other goal, and this aspiration is the monarch of all aspirations. So long, however, as the thick clouds of oppression, which obscure the day-star of justice, remain undispeled, it would be difficult for the glory of this station to be unveiled to men's eyes....

1.5 Consort with all men, O people of Bahá, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindness and goodwill. If it be accepted, if it fulfil its purpose, your object is attained. If any one should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding.

2.10 O ye discerning ones! 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.

3.1 It is Our wish and desire that every one of you may become a source of all goodness unto men, and an example of uprightness to mankind. Beware lest ye prefer yourselves above your neighbours. Fix your gaze upon Him Who is the Temple of God amongst men. He, in truth, hath offered up His life as a ransom for the redemption of the world. He, verily, is the All-Bountiful, the Gracious, the Most High. If any differences arise amongst you, behold Me standing before your face, and overlook the faults of one another for My name's sake and as a token of your love for My manifest and resplendent Cause. We love to see you at all times consorting in amity and concord within the paradise of My good-pleasure, and to inhale from your acts the fragrance of friendliness and unity, of loving-kindness and fellowship. Thus counselleth you the All-Knowing, the Faithful. We shall always be with you; if We inhale the

perfume of your fellowship, Our heart will assuredly rejoice, for naught else can satisfy Us. To this beareth witness every man of true understanding.

4.1 He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body. Haste ye to win your share of God's good grace and mercy in this Day that eclipseth all other created Days. How great the felicity that awaiteth the man that forsaketh all he hath in a desire to obtain the things of God! Such a man, We testify, is among God's blessed ones.

Education and the Acquisition of Knowledge

5.1 Arts, crafts and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words. Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world. Unto this beareth witness the Mother Book in this conspicuous station.

5.2 In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him. Happy the man that cleaveth unto it, and woe betide the heedless.

5.3 It is incumbent upon thee to summon the people, under all conditions, to whatever will cause them to show forth spiritual characteristics and goodly deeds, so that all may become aware of that which is the cause of human upliftment, and may, with the utmost endeavour, direct themselves towards the most sublime Station and the Pinnacle of Glory. The fear of God hath ever been the prime factor in the education of His creatures. Well is it with them that have attained thereunto!

6.1 The purpose of learning should be the promotion of the welfare of the people.... True learning is that which is conducive to the well-being of the world, not to pride and self-conceit, or to tyranny, violence and pillage.

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

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

8.1 Man is even as steel, the essence of which is hidden: Through admonition and explanation, good counsel and education, that essence will be brought to light. If, however, he be allowed to remain in his original condition, the corrosion of lusts and appetites will effectively destroy him.

9.1 A true philosopher would never deny God nor His evidences, rather would he acknowledge His glory and overpowering majesty which overshadow all created things. Verily We love those men of knowledge who have brought to light such things as promote the best interests of humanity, and We aided them through the potency of Our behest, for well are We able to achieve Our purpose.

9.2 Beware, O My loved ones, lest ye despise the merits of My learned servants whom God hath graciously chosen to be the exponents of His Name "the

Fashioner” amidst mankind. Exert your utmost endeavour that ye may develop such crafts and undertakings that everyone, whether young or old, may benefit therefrom. We are quit of those ignorant ones who fondly imagine that Wisdom is to give vent to one’s idle imaginings and to repudiate God, the Lord of all men; even as We hear some of the heedless voicing such assertions today.

9.3 Say: The beginning of Wisdom and the origin thereof is to acknowledge whatsoever God hath clearly set forth, for through its potency the foundation of statesmanship, which is a shield for the preservation of the body of mankind, hath been firmly established. Ponder a while that ye may perceive what My most exalted Pen hath proclaimed in this wondrous Tablet. Say, every matter related to state affairs which ye raise for discussion falls under the shadow of one of the words sent down from the heaven of His glorious and exalted utterance. Thus have We recounted unto thee that which will exhilarate thy heart, will bring solace to thine eyes and will enable thee to arise for the promotion of His Cause amidst all peoples.

#### The Equality of Women and Men

10.1 Exalted, immensely exalted is He Who hath removed differences and established harmony. Glorified, infinitely glorified is He Who hath caused discord to cease, and decreed solidarity and unity. Praised be God, the Pen of the Most High hath lifted distinctions from between His servants and handmaidens, and, through His consummate favours and all-encompassing mercy, hath conferred upon all a station and rank of the same plane. He hath broken the back of vain imaginings with the sword of utterance and hath obliterated the perils of idle fancies through the pervasive power of His might.

11.1 If thou truly givest ear to that which hath been revealed for thee from My Supreme Pen at this moment, thou shalt soar with the wings of eagerness in the heaven of love for the Lord of the Day of the Covenant, and wilt say during all the days of thy life: Thanks be unto Thee, O Thou the Desire of the world, and praise be unto Thee, O Thou the Beloved of the people of understanding. May all existence be a sacrifice for Thy favour, and all that hath been and will ever be, a ransom for Thy Word, O Thou the Wronged One amongst the people of enmity, O Thou in Whose grasp are the reins of all who are in heaven and on earth....

11.2 In this Day the Hand of divine grace hath removed all distinctions. The servants of God and His handmaidens are regarded on the same plane. Blessed is the servant who hath attained unto that which God hath decreed, and likewise the leaf moving in accordance with the breezes of His will. This favour is great and this station lofty. His bounties and bestowals are ever present and manifest. Who is able to offer befitting gratitude for His successive bestowals and continuous favours?

12.1 All should know, and in this regard attain the splendours of the sun of certitude, and be illumined thereby: Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God. The Dawning-Place of the Light of God sheddeth its radiance upon all with the same effulgence. Verily God created women for men, and men for women. The most beloved of people before God are the most steadfast and those who have surpassed others in their love for God, exalted be His glory....

12.2 The friends of God must be adorned with the ornament of justice, equity,

kindness and love. As they do not allow themselves to be the object of cruelty and transgression, in like manner they should not allow such tyranny to visit the handmaidens of God. He, verily, speaketh the truth and commandeth that which benefiteth His servants and handmaidens. He is the Protector of all in this world and the next.

13.1 O My handmaiden, O My leaf! Render thou thanks unto the Best-Beloved of the world for having attained this boundless grace at a time when the world's learned and most distinguished men have remained deprived thereof. We have designated thee "a leaf" that thou mayest, like unto leaves, be stirred by the gentle wind of the Will of God—exalted be His glory—even as the leaves of the trees are stirred by onrushing winds. Yield thou thanks unto thy Lord by virtue of this brilliant utterance. Wert thou to perceive the sweetness of the title "O My handmaiden" thou wouldst find thyself detached from all mankind, devoutly engaged day and night in communion with Him Who is the sole Desire of the world.

13.2 In words of incomparable beauty We have made fitting mention of such leaves and handmaidens as have quaffed from the living waters of heavenly grace and have kept their eyes directed towards God. Happy and blessed are they indeed. Ere long shall God reveal their station whose loftiness no word can befittingly express nor any description adequately describe.

13.3 We admonish thee to do that which will serve to promote the interests of the Cause of God amongst men and women. He doth hear the call of the friends and beholdeth their actions. Verily, He is the Hearing and the Seeing.

13.4 Upon thee and upon them be the glory of God, the Powerful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

#### Marriage and Family Life

14.1 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 enjoined 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: "Enter into wedlock, O people, that ye may bring forth one who will make mention of Me amid My servants. This is My bidding unto you; hold fast to it as an assistance to yourselves."

15.1 Blessed is the house that hath attained unto My tender mercy, wherein My remembrance is celebrated, and which is ennobled by the presence of My loved ones, who have proclaimed My praise, cleaved fast to the cord of My grace and been honoured by chanting My verses.

16.1 It is the bounden duty of parents to rear their children to be staunch in faith, the reason being that a child who removeth himself from the religion of God will not act in such a way as to win the good pleasure of his parents and his Lord. For every praiseworthy deed is born out of the light of religion, and lacking this supreme bestowal the child will not turn away from any evil, nor will he draw nigh unto any good.

17.1 As to the children: We have directed that in the beginning they should be trained in the observances and laws of religion and, thereafter, in such branches of knowledge as are of benefit, and in commercial pursuits that are

distinguished for integrity, and in deeds that will further the victory of God's Cause or will attract some outcome which will draw the believer closer to his Lord. We beg of God to assist the children of His loved ones and adorn them with wisdom, good conduct, integrity, and righteousness. He, verily, is the Forgiving, the Clement.

18.1 Say, O My people! Show honour to your parents and pay homage to them. This will cause blessings to descend upon you from the clouds of the bounty of your Lord, the Exalted, the Great.

19.1 The fruits that best befit the tree of human life are trustworthiness and godliness, truthfulness and sincerity; but greater than all, after recognition of the unity of God, praised and glorified be He, is regard for the rights that are due to one's parents. This teaching hath been mentioned in all the Books of God, and reaffirmed by the Most Exalted Pen.

#### Work and Craftsmanship

20.1 O My Servants! Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. Thus it is incumbent on every one to engage in crafts and professions, for therein lieth the secret of wealth, O men of understanding! For results depend upon means, and the grace of God shall be all-sufficient unto you. Trees that yield no fruit have been and will ever be for the fire.

20.2 O My Servant! The basest of men are they that yield no fruit on earth. Such men are verily counted as among the dead, nay better are the dead in the sight of God than those idle and worthless souls.

20.3 O My Servant! The best of men are they that earn a livelihood by their calling and spend upon themselves and upon their kindred for the love of God, the Lord of all worlds.

21.1 O people of Bahá! It is incumbent upon each one of you to engage in some occupation—such as a craft, a trade or the like. We have exalted your engagement in such work to the rank of worship of the one true God. Reflect, O people, on the grace and blessings of your Lord, and yield Him thanks at eventide and dawn. Waste not your hours in idleness and sloth, but occupy yourselves with what will profit you and others. Thus hath it been decreed in this Tablet from whose horizon hath shone the day-star of wisdom and utterance. The most despised of men in the sight of God are they who sit and beg. Hold ye fast unto the cord of means and place your trust in God, the Provider of all means.

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

#### Attitude Towards Material Possessions

23.1 How great, how very great, the gulf that separateth Us from them who, in this Day, are occupied with their evil passions, and have set their hopes on the things of the earth and its fleeting glory! Many a time hath the court of the All-Merciful been to outward seeming so denuded of the riches of this world

that they who lived in close association with Him suffered from dire want. Despite their sufferings, the Pen of the Most High hath, at no time, been willing to refer, nor even to make the slightest allusion, to the things that pertain to this world and its treasures. And if, at any time, any gift were presented to Him, that gift was accepted as a token of His grace unto him that offered it. Should it ever please Us to appropriate to Our own use all the treasures of the earth, to none is given the right to question Our authority, or to challenge Our right. It would be impossible to conceive any act more contemptible than soliciting, in the name of the one true God, the riches which men possess.

23.2 It is incumbent upon thee, and upon the followers of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, to summon all men to whatsoever shall sanctify them from all attachment to the things of the earth and purge them from its defilements, that the sweet smell of the raiment of the All-Glorious may be smelled from all them that love Him.

23.3 They who are possessed of riches, however, must have the utmost regard for the poor, for great is the honour destined by God for those poor who are steadfast in patience. By My life! There is no honour, except what God may please to bestow, that can compare to this honour. Great is the blessedness awaiting the poor that endure patiently and conceal their sufferings, and well is it with the rich who bestow their riches on the needy and prefer them before themselves.

23.4 Please God, the poor may exert themselves and strive to earn the means of livelihood. This is a duty which, in this most great Revelation, hath been prescribed unto every one, and is accounted in the sight of God as a goodly deed. Whoso observeth this duty, the help of the invisible One shall most certainly aid him. He can enrich, through His grace, whomsoever He pleaseth. He, verily, hath power over all things.

24.1 In this day it is incumbent upon everyone to serve the Cause of God, while He Who is the Eternal Truth—exalted be His glory—hath made the fulfilment of every undertaking on earth dependent on material means.

25.1 Cleanse from your hearts the love of worldly things, from your tongues every remembrance except His remembrance, from your entire being whatsoever may deter you from beholding His face, or may tempt you to follow the promptings of your evil and corrupt inclinations. Let God be your fear, O people, and be ye of them that tread the path of righteousness.

25.2 Say: Should your conduct, O people, contradict your professions, how think ye, then, to be able to distinguish yourselves from them who, though professing their faith in the Lord their God, have, as soon as He came unto them in the cloud of holiness, refused to acknowledge Him, and repudiated His truth? Disencumber yourselves of all attachment to this world and the vanities thereof. Beware that ye approach them not, inasmuch as they prompt you to walk after your own lusts and covetous desires, and hinder you from entering the straight and glorious Path.

25.3 Know ye that by “the world” is meant your unawareness of Him Who is your Maker, and your absorption in aught else but Him. The “life to come”, on the other hand, signifieth the things that give you a safe approach to God,

the All-Glorious, the Incomparable. Whatsoever deterreth you, in this Day, from loving God is nothing but the world. Flee it, that ye may be numbered with the blest. Should a man wish to adorn himself with the ornaments of the earth, to wear its apparels, or partake of the benefits it can bestow, no harm can befall him, if he alloweth nothing whatever to intervene between him and God, for God hath ordained every good thing, whether created in the heavens or in the earth, for such of His servants as truly believe in Him. Eat ye, O people, of the good things which God hath allowed you, and deprive not yourselves from His wondrous bounties. Render thanks and praise unto Him, and be of them that are truly thankful.

26.1 Say: Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. Thus warneth you He Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. Say: Can ye claim that what ye own is lasting or secure? Nay! By Myself, the All-Merciful, ye cannot, if ye be of them who judge fairly. The days of your life flee away as a breath of wind, and all your pomp and glory shall be folded up as were the pomp and glory of those gone before you. Reflect, O people! What hath become of your bygone days, your lost centuries? Happy the days that have been consecrated to the remembrance of God, and blessed the hours which have been spent in praise of Him Who is the All-Wise. By My life! Neither the pomp of the mighty, nor the wealth of the rich, nor even the ascendancy of the ungodly will endure. All will perish, at a word from Him. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the All-Compelling, the Almighty. What advantage is there in the earthly things which men possess? That which shall profit them, they have utterly neglected. Ere long, they will awake from their slumber, and find themselves unable to obtain that which hath escaped them in the days of their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised. Did they but know it, they would renounce their all, that their names may be mentioned before His throne. They, verily, are accounted among the dead.

Excerpt from Glad-Tidings

27.1 O people of the earth! The first Glad-Tidings which the Mother Book hath, in this Most Great Revelation, imparted unto all the peoples of the world is that the law of holy war hath been blotted out from the Book. Glorified be the All-Merciful, the Lord of grace abounding, through Whom the door of heavenly bounty hath been flung open in the face of all that are in heaven and on earth.

27.2 The second Glad-Tidings: It is permitted that the peoples and kindreds of the world associate with one another with joy and radiance. O people! Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. Thus hath the day-star of His sanction and authority shone forth above the horizon of the decree of God, the Lord of the worlds.

27.3 The third Glad-Tidings concerneth the study of divers languages. This decree hath formerly streamed forth from the Pen of the Most High: It behoveth the sovereigns of the world—may God assist them—or the ministers of the earth to take counsel together and to adopt one of the existing languages or a new one to be taught to children in schools throughout the world, and likewise one script. Thus the whole earth will come to be regarded as one country. Well is it with him who hearkeneth unto His Call and observeth that whereunto he is bidden by God, the Lord of the Mighty Throne.

27.4The fourth Glad-Tidings: Should any of the kings—may God aid them—arise to protect and help this oppressed people, all must vie with one another in loving and in serving him. This matter is incumbent upon everyone. Well is it with them that act accordingly.

27.5The fifth Glad-Tidings: In every country where any of this people reside, they must behave towards the government of that country with loyalty, honesty and truthfulness. This is that which hath been revealed at the behest of Him Who is the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days.

27.6It is binding and incumbent upon the peoples of the world, one and all, to extend aid unto this momentous Cause which is come from the heaven of the Will of the ever-abiding God, that perchance the fire of animosity which blazeth in the hearts of some of the peoples of the earth may, through the living waters of divine wisdom and by virtue of heavenly counsels and exhortations, be quenched, and the light of unity and concord may shine forth and shed its radiance upon the world.

27.7We cherish the hope that through the earnest endeavours of such as are the exponents of the power of God—exalted be His glory—the weapons of war throughout the world may be converted into instruments of reconstruction and that strife and conflict may be removed from the midst of men.

27.8The sixth Glad-Tidings is the establishment of the Lesser Peace, details of which have formerly been revealed from Our Most Exalted Pen. Great is the blessedness of him who upholdeth it and observeth whatsoever hath been ordained by God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

27.9The seventh Glad-Tidings: The choice of clothing and the cut of the beard and its dressing are left to the discretion of men. But beware, O people, lest ye make yourselves the playthings of the ignorant.

27.10The eighth Glad-Tidings: The pious deeds of the monks and priests among the followers of the Spirit—upon Him be the peace of God—are remembered in His presence. In this Day, however, let them give up the life of seclusion and direct their steps towards the open world and busy themselves with that which will profit themselves and others. We have granted them leave to enter into wedlock that they may bring forth one who will make mention of God, the Lord of the seen and the unseen, the Lord of the Exalted Throne.

27.11The ninth Glad-Tidings: When the sinner findeth himself wholly detached and freed from all save God, he should beg forgiveness and pardon from Him. Confession of sins and transgressions before human beings is not permissible, as it hath never been nor will ever be conducive to divine forgiveness.

Moreover such confession before people results in one's humiliation and abasement, and God—exalted be His glory—wisheth not the humiliation of His servants. Verily He is the Compassionate, the Merciful. The sinner should, between himself and God, implore mercy from the Ocean of mercy, beg forgiveness from the Heaven of generosity and say:

27.12O God, my God! I implore Thee by the blood of Thy true lovers who were so enraptured by Thy sweet utterance that they hastened unto the Pinnacle of Glory, the site of the most glorious martyrdom, and I beseech Thee by the mysteries which lie enshrined in Thy knowledge and by the pearls that are treasured in the ocean of Thy bounty to grant forgiveness unto me and unto my

father and my mother. Of those who show forth mercy, Thou art in truth the Most Merciful. No God is there but Thee, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Bountiful.

27.13 O Lord! Thou seest this essence of sinfulness turning unto the ocean of Thy favour and this feeble one seeking the kingdom of Thy divine power and this poor creature inclining himself towards the day-star of Thy wealth. By Thy mercy and Thy grace, disappoint him not, O Lord, nor debar him from the revelations of Thy bounty in Thy days, nor cast him away from Thy door which Thou hast opened wide to all that dwell in Thy heaven and on Thine earth.

27.14 Alas! Alas! My sins have prevented me from approaching the Court of Thy holiness and my trespasses have caused me to stray far from the Tabernacle of Thy majesty. I have committed that which Thou didst forbid me to do and have put away what Thou didst order me to observe.

27.15 I pray Thee by Him Who is the sovereign Lord of Names to write down for me with the Pen of Thy bounty that which will enable me to draw nigh unto Thee and will purge me from my trespasses which have intervened between me and Thy forgiveness and Thy pardon.

27.16 Verily, Thou art the Potent, the Bountiful. No God is there but Thee, the Mighty, the Gracious.

27.17 The tenth Glad-Tidings: As a token of grace from God, the Revealer of this Most Great Announcement, We have removed from the Holy Scriptures and Tablets the law prescribing the destruction of books.

27.18 The eleventh Glad-Tidings: It is permissible to study sciences and arts, but such sciences as are useful and would redound to the progress and advancement of the people. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Ordainer, the All-Wise.

27.19 The twelfth Glad-Tidings: 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.

27.20 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. When anyone occupieth himself in a craft or trade, such occupation itself is regarded in the estimation of God as an act of worship; and this is naught but a token of His infinite and all-pervasive bounty.

27.21 The thirteenth Glad-Tidings: The men of God's House of Justice have been charged with the affairs of the people. They, in truth, are the Trustees of God among His servants and the daysprings of authority in His countries.

27.22 O people of God! That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world. Inasmuch as for each day there is a new problem and for every problem an expedient solution, such affairs should be referred to the Ministers of the House of Justice that they may act according to the needs and

requirements of the time. They that, for the sake of God, arise to serve His Cause, are the recipients of divine inspiration from the unseen Kingdom. It is incumbent upon all to be obedient unto them. All matters of State should be referred to the House of Justice, but acts of worship must be observed according to that which God hath revealed in His Book.

27.23 O people of Bahá! Ye are the dawning-places of the love of God and the daysprings of His loving-kindness. Defile not your tongues with the cursing and reviling of any soul, and guard your eyes against that which is not seemly. Set forth that which ye possess. If it be favourably received, your end is attained; if not, to protest is vain. Leave that soul to himself and turn unto the Lord, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting. Be not the cause of grief, much less of discord and strife. The hope is cherished that ye may obtain true education in the shelter of the tree of His tender mercies and act in accordance with that which God desireth. Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the drops of one ocean.

27.24 The fourteenth Glad-Tidings: It is not necessary to undertake special journeys to visit the resting-places of the dead. If people of substance and affluence offer the cost of such journeys to the House of Justice, it will be pleasing and acceptable in the presence of God. Happy are they that observe His precepts.

27.25 The fifteenth Glad-Tidings: Although a republican form of government profiteth all the peoples of the world, yet the majesty of kingship is one of the signs of God. We do not wish that the countries of the world should remain deprived thereof. If the sagacious combine the two forms into one, great will be their reward in the presence of God.

27.26 In former religions such ordinances as holy war, destruction of books, the ban on association and companionship with other peoples or on reading certain books had been laid down and affirmed according to the exigencies of the time; however, in this mighty Revelation, in this momentous Announcement, the manifold bestowals and favours of God have overshadowed all men, and from the horizon of the Will of the Ever-Abiding Lord, His infallible decree hath prescribed that which We have set forth above.

27.27 We yield praise unto God—hallowed and glorified be He—for whatsoever He hath graciously revealed in this blessed, this glorious and incomparable Day. Indeed if everyone on earth were endowed with a myriad tongues and were to continually praise God and magnify His Name to the end that knoweth no end, their thanksgiving would not prove adequate for even one of the gracious favours We have mentioned in this Tablet. Unto this beareth witness every man of wisdom and discernment, of understanding and knowledge.

27.28 We earnestly beseech God—exalted be His glory—to aid the rulers and sovereigns, who are the exponents of power and the daysprings of glory, to enforce His laws and ordinances. He is in truth the Omnipotent, the All-Powerful, He Who is wont to answer the call of men.

Excerpt from *Isbráqát*

28.1 In the abundance of Our grace and loving-kindness We have revealed specially for the rulers and ministers of the world that which is conducive to safety and protection, tranquillity and peace; haply the children of men may

rest secure from the evils of oppression. He, verily, is the Protector, the Helper, the Giver of victory. It is incumbent upon the men of God's House of Justice to fix their gaze by day and by night upon that which hath shone forth from the Pen of Glory for the training of peoples, the upbuilding of nations, the protection of man and the safeguarding of his honour.

28.2The first Ishráq: When the Day-Star of Wisdom rose above the horizon of God's Holy Dispensation it voiced this all-glorious utterance: They that are possessed of wealth and invested with authority and power must show the profoundest regard for religion. In truth, religion is a radiant light and an impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world, for the fear of God impelleth man to hold fast to that which is good, and shun all evil. Should the lamp of religion be obscured, chaos and confusion will ensue, and the lights of fairness and justice, of tranquillity and peace cease to shine. Unto this will bear witness every man of true understanding.

28.3The second Ishráq: We have enjoined upon all mankind to establish the Most Great Peace—the surest of all means for the protection of humanity. The sovereigns of the world should, with one accord, hold fast thereunto, for this is the supreme instrument that can ensure the security and welfare of all peoples and nations. They, verily, are the manifestations of the power of God and the daysprings of His authority. We beseech the Almighty that He may graciously assist them in that which is conducive to the well-being of their subjects. A full explanation regarding this matter hath been previously set forth by the Pen of Glory; well is it with them that act accordingly.

28.4The third Ishráq: It is incumbent upon everyone to observe God's holy commandments, inasmuch as they are the wellspring of life unto the world. The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion, and the canopy of world order is upraised upon the two pillars of reward and punishment.

28.5The fourth Ishráq: In this Revelation the hosts that can render it victorious are the hosts of praiseworthy deeds and upright character. The leader and commander of these hosts hath ever been the fear of God, a fear that encompasseth all things and reigneth over all things.

28.6The fifth Ishráq: Governments should fully acquaint themselves with the conditions of those they govern, and confer upon them positions according to desert and merit. It is enjoined upon every ruler and sovereign to consider this matter with the utmost care that the traitor may not usurp the position of the faithful, nor the despoiler rule in the place of the trustworthy. Among the officials who in the past have governed in this Most Great Prison some, praise be to God, were adorned with justice, but as to others, We take refuge with God. We beseech the One true God to guide them one and all, that haply they may not be deprived of the fruit of faith and trustworthiness, nor be withheld from the light of equity and justice.

28.7The sixth Ishráq is union and concord amongst the children of men. From the beginning of time the light of unity hath shed its divine radiance upon the world, and the greatest means for the promotion of that unity is for the peoples of the world to understand one another's writing and speech. In former Epistles We have enjoined upon the Trustees of the House of Justice

either to choose one language from among those now existing or to adopt a new one, and in like manner to select a common script, both of which should be taught in all the schools of the world. Thus will the earth be regarded as one country and one home. The most glorious fruit of the tree of knowledge is this exalted word: Of one tree are all ye the fruit, and of one bough the leaves.

Let not man glory in this that he loveth his country, let him rather glory in this that he loveth his kind. Concerning this We have previously revealed that which is the means of the reconstruction of the world and the unity of nations. Blessed are they that attain thereunto. Blessed are they that act accordingly.

28.8 The seventh Ishráq: The Pen of Glory counselleth everyone regarding the instruction and education of children. Behold that which the Will of God hath revealed upon Our arrival in the Prison City and recorded in the Most Holy Book. Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet. He that putteth away that which is commanded unto him, the Trustees are then to take from him that which is required for their instruction if he be wealthy and, if not, the matter devolveth upon the House of Justice. Verily have We made it a shelter for the poor and needy. He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My glory, My loving-kindness, My mercy, that have compassed the world....

28.9 Many ecclesiastics in Persia have, through innumerable designs and devices, been feeding on illicit gains obtained by usury. They have contrived ways to give its outward form a fair semblance of lawfulness. They make a plaything of the laws and ordinances of God, but they understand not.

28.10 However, this is a matter that should be practised with moderation and fairness. Our Pen of Glory hath, as a token of wisdom and for the convenience of the people, desisted from laying down its limit. Nevertheless We exhort the loved ones of God to observe justice and fairness, and to do that which would prompt the friends of God to evince tender mercy and compassion towards each other. He is in truth the Counsellor, the Compassionate, the All-Bountiful. God grant that all men may be graciously aided to observe that which the Tongue of the One true God hath uttered. And if they put into practice what We have set forth, God—exalted be His glory—will assuredly double their portion through the heaven of His bounty. Verily He is the Generous, the Forgiving, the Compassionate. Praise be unto God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great.

28.11 Nevertheless the conduct of these affairs hath been entrusted to the men of the House of Justice that they may enforce them according to the exigencies of the time and the dictates of wisdom.

Excerpts from Words of Paradise

29.1 O ye the embodiments of justice and equity and the manifestations of uprightness and of heavenly bounties! In tears and lamenting, this Wronged One calleth aloud and saith: O God, my God! Adorn the heads of Thy loved ones with the crown of detachment and attire their temples with the raiment of righteousness.

29.2 It behoveth the people of Bahá to render the Lord victorious through the power of their utterance and to admonish the people by their goodly deeds and

character, inasmuch as deeds exert greater influence than words.

29.3O Haydar- 'Alí! Upon thee be the praise of God and His glory. Say: Honesty, virtue, wisdom and a saintly character redound to the exaltation of man, while dishonesty, imposture, ignorance and hypocrisy lead to his abasement. By My life! Man's distinction lieth not in ornaments or wealth, but rather in virtuous behaviour and true understanding....

29.4In these days it is incumbent upon everyone to adhere tenaciously unto unity and concord and to labour diligently in promoting the Cause of God, that perchance the wayward souls may attain that which will lead unto abiding prosperity....

29.5The word of God which the Abhá Pen hath revealed and inscribed on the first leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is this: Verily I say: The fear of God hath ever been a sure defence and a safe stronghold for all the peoples of the world. It is the chief cause of the protection of mankind, and the supreme instrument for its preservation. Indeed, there existeth in man a faculty which deterreth him from, and guardeth him against, whatever is unworthy and unseemly, and which is known as his sense of shame. This, however, is confined to but a few; all have not possessed and do not possess it.

29.6The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the second leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is the following: The Pen of the Most High exhorteth, at this moment, the manifestations of authority and the sources of power, namely the kings, the sovereigns, the presidents, the rulers, the divines and the wise, and enjoineth them to uphold the cause of religion, and to cleave unto it. Religion is verily the chief instrument for the establishment of order in the world and of tranquillity amongst its peoples. The weakening of the pillars of religion hath strengthened the foolish and emboldened them and made them more arrogant. Verily I say: The greater the decline of religion, the more grievous the waywardness of the ungodly. This cannot but lead in the end to chaos and confusion. Hear Me, O men of insight, and be warned, ye who are endued with discernment!

29.7The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the third leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is this: O son of man! If thine eyes be turned towards mercy, forsake the things that profit thee and cleave unto that which will profit mankind. And if thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbour that which thou chooseth for thyself. Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power, whilst pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation.

29.8O people of God! Great is the Day and mighty the Call! In one of Our Tablets We have revealed these exalted words: "Were the world of the spirit to be wholly converted into the sense of hearing, it could then claim to be worthy to hearken unto the Voice that calleth from the Supreme Horizon; for otherwise, these ears that are defiled with lying tales have never been, nor are they now, fit to hear it." Well is it with them that hearken; and woe betide the wayward.

29.9The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the fourth leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is the following: O people of God! Beseech ye the True One—glorified be His Name—that He may graciously shield the

manifestations of dominion and power from the suggestions of self and desire and shed the radiance of justice and guidance upon them....

29.10 The faults of kings, like their favours, can be great. A king who is not deterred by the vainglory of power and authority from observing justice, nor is deprived of the splendours of the day-star of equity by luxury, riches, glory or the marshalling of hosts and legions shall occupy a high rank and a sublime station amongst the Concourse on high. It is incumbent upon everyone to extend aid and to manifest kindness to so noble a soul. Well is it with the king who keepeth a tight hold on the reins of his passion, restraineth his anger and preferreth justice and fairness to injustice and tyranny.

29.11 The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the fifth leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is this: Above all else, the greatest gift and the most wondrous blessing hath ever been and will continue to be Wisdom. It is man's unfailing Protector. It aideth him and strengtheneth him. Wisdom is God's Emissary and the Revealer of His Name the Omniscient. Through it the loftiness of man's station is made manifest and evident. It is all-knowing and the foremost Teacher in the school of existence. It is the Guide and is invested with high distinction. Thanks to its educating influence earthly beings have become imbued with a gem-like spirit which outshineth the heavens. In the city of justice it is the unrivalled Speaker Who, in the year nine, illumined the world with the joyful tidings of this Revelation. And it was this peerless Source of wisdom that at the beginning of the foundation of the world ascended the stair of inner meaning and when enthroned upon the pulpit of utterance, through the operation of the divine Will, proclaimed two words. The first heralded the promise of reward, while the second voiced the ominous warning of punishment. The promise gave rise to hope and the warning begat fear. Thus the basis of world order hath been firmly established upon these twin principles. Exalted is the Lord of Wisdom, the Possessor of Great Bounty.

29.12 The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the sixth leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is the following: The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significance. Were mankind to be adorned with this raiment, they would behold the day-star of the utterance, "On that day God will satisfy everyone out of His abundance", shining resplendent above the horizon of the world. Appreciate ye the value of this utterance; it is a noble fruit that the Tree of the Pen of Glory hath yielded. Happy is the man that giveth ear unto it and observeth its precepts. Verily I say, whatever is sent down from the heaven of the Will of God is the means for the establishment of order in the world and the instrument for promoting unity and fellowship among its peoples. Thus hath the Tongue of this Wronged One spoken from His Most Great Prison.

29.13 The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the seventh leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is this: O ye men of wisdom among nations! Shut your eyes to estrangement, then fix your gaze upon unity. Cleave tenaciously unto that which will lead to the well-being and tranquillity of all mankind. This span of earth is but one homeland and one habitation. It behoveth you to

abandon vainglory which causeth alienation and to set your hearts on whatever will ensure harmony. In the estimation of the people of Bahá man's glory lieth in his knowledge, his upright conduct, his praiseworthy character, his wisdom, and not in his nationality or rank. O people of the earth! Appreciate the value of this heavenly word. Indeed it may be likened unto a ship for the ocean of knowledge and a shining luminary for the realm of perception.

29.14 The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the eighth leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is the following: Schools must first train the children in the principles of religion, so that the Promise and the Threat recorded in the Books of God may prevent them from the things forbidden and adorn them with the mantle of the commandments; but this in such a measure that it may not injure the children by resulting in ignorant fanaticism and bigotry....

29.15 We have formerly ordained that people should converse in two languages, yet efforts must be made to reduce them to one, likewise the scripts of the world, that men's lives may not be dissipated and wasted in learning divers languages. Thus the whole earth would come to be regarded as one city and one land.

29.16 The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the ninth leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is this: In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil. Consider the civilization of the West, how it hath agitated and alarmed the peoples of the world. An infernal engine hath been devised, and hath proved so cruel a weapon of destruction that its like none hath ever witnessed or heard. The purging of such deeply-rooted and overwhelming corruptions cannot be effected unless the peoples of the world unite in pursuit of one common aim and embrace one universal faith. Incline your ears unto the Call of this Wronged One and adhere firmly to the Lesser Peace.

29.17 Strange and astonishing things exist in the earth but they are hidden from the minds and the understanding of men. These things are capable of changing the whole atmosphere of the earth and their contamination would prove lethal. Great God! We have observed an amazing thing. Lightning or a force similar to it is controlled by an operator and moveth at his command. Immeasurably exalted is the Lord of Power Who hath laid bare that which He purposed through the potency of His weighty and invincible command.

29.18 O people of Bahá! Each one of the ordinances We have revealed is a mighty stronghold for the preservation of the world of being. Verily, this Wronged One desireth naught but your security and elevation....

29.19 O Haydar-'Alí! Upon thee be My glory and My praise. My counsels and admonitions have compassed the world. Yet, instead of imparting joy and gladness they have caused grief, because some of those who claim to love Me have waxed haughty and have inflicted upon Me such tribulations as neither the followers of former religions nor the divines of Persia did ever inflict.

29.20 We have said: "My imprisonment doeth Me no harm, nor do the things that have befallen Me at the hands of My enemies. That which harmeth Me is the conduct of My loved ones who, though they bear My name, yet commit that which maketh My heart and My pen to lament." Such utterances as these have again

and again been revealed, yet the heedless have failed to profit thereby, since they are captive to their own evil passions and corrupt desires. Beseech thou the One true God that He may enable everyone to repent and return unto Him. So long as one's nature yieldeth unto evil passions, crime and transgression will prevail. We cherish the hope that the hand of divine power and the outpouring of heavenly blessings may sustain all men, may attire them with the vesture of forgiveness and bounty and guard them against that which would harm His Cause among His servants. He is, in truth, the Potent, the All-Powerful, and He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Merciful.

29.21 The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the tenth leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is the following: O people of the earth! Living in seclusion or practising asceticism is not acceptable in the presence of God. It behoveth them that are endued with insight and understanding to observe that which will cause joy and radiance. Such practices as are sprung from the loins of idle fancy or are begotten of the womb of superstition ill beseem men of knowledge. In former times and more recently some people have been taking up their abodes in the caves of the mountains while others have repaired to graveyards at night. Say, give ear unto the counsels of this Wronged One. Abandon the things current amongst you and adopt that which the faithful Counsellor biddeth you. Deprive not yourselves of the bounties which have been created for your sake.

29.22 Charity is pleasing and praiseworthy in the sight of God and is regarded as a prince among goodly deeds. Consider ye and call to mind that which the All-Merciful hath revealed in the Qur'án: "They prefer them before themselves, though poverty be their own lot. And with such as are preserved from their own covetousness shall it be well." Viewed in this light, the blessed utterance above is, in truth, the day-star of utterances. Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself. Verily, such a man is reckoned, by virtue of the Will of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, with the people of Bahá who dwell in the Crimson Ark.

29.23 The word of God which the Supreme Pen hath recorded on the eleventh leaf of the Most Exalted Paradise is this: We enjoin upon them that are the emblems of His names and attributes to firmly adhere henceforth unto that which hath been set forth in this Most Great Revelation, not to allow themselves to become the cause of strife, and, until the end that knoweth no end, to keep their eyes directed towards the dayspring of these resplendent words which have been recorded in this Tablet. Strife leadeth to bloodshed and provoketh commotion amongst people. Harken ye unto the Voice of this Wronged One and deviate not therefrom.

29.24 Were anyone to ponder in his heart that which hath, in this Revelation, streamed forth from the Pen of Glory, he would be assured that whatever this Wronged One hath affirmed He hath had no intention of establishing any position or distinction for Himself. The purpose hath rather been to attract the souls, through the sublimity of His words, unto the summit of transcendent glory and to endow them with the capacity of perceiving that which will purge and purify the peoples of the world from the strife and dissension which religious differences provoke. Unto this bear witness My heart, My Pen, My inner and My

outer Being. God grant that all men may turn unto the treasuries latent within their own beings.

29.25 O people of Bahá! The source of crafts, sciences and arts is the power of reflection. Make ye every effort that out of this ideal mine there may gleam forth such pearls of wisdom and utterance as will promote the well-being and harmony of all the kindreds of the earth.

29.26 Under all conditions, whether in adversity or at ease, whether honoured or afflicted, this Wronged One hath directed all men to show forth love, affection, compassion and harmony. And yet whenever there was any slight evidence of progress and advancement, those concealed behind the veils would sally forth and utter calumnies more wounding than the sword. They cling unto misleading and reprehensible words and suffer themselves to be deprived of the ocean of verses revealed by God.

29.27 If these obstructing veils had not intervened Persia would, in some two years, have been subdued through the power of utterance, the position of both the government and the people would have been raised and the Supreme Goal, unveiled and unconcealed, would have appeared in the plenitude of glory. In short, sometimes in explicit language, at other times by allusion, We said whatever had to be said. Thus, once Persia had been rehabilitated, the sweet savours of the Word of God would have wafted over all countries, inasmuch as that which hath streamed forth from the Most Exalted Pen is conducive to the glory, the advancement and education of all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Indeed it is the sovereign remedy for every disease, could they but comprehend and perceive it.

8

Securing World Peace and Prosperity

An Ever-Advancing Civilization

1.1 The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God's holy Will is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife. The religion of God and His divine law are the most potent instruments and the surest of all means for the dawning of the light of unity amongst men. The progress of the world, the development of nations, the tranquillity of peoples, and the peace of all who dwell on earth are among the principles and ordinances of God. Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts, offereth the cup of prosperity, imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind. It behoveth the chiefs and rulers of the world, and in particular the Trustees of God's House of Justice, to endeavour to the utmost of their power to safeguard its position, promote its interests and exalt its station in the eyes of the world. In like manner it is incumbent upon them to enquire into the conditions of their subjects and to acquaint themselves with the affairs and activities of the divers communities in their dominions. We call upon the manifestations of the power of God—the sovereigns and rulers on earth—to bestir themselves and do all in their power that haply they may banish discord from this world and illumine it with the light of concord.

1.2 It is incumbent upon everyone to firmly adhere to and observe that which hath streamed forth from Our Most Exalted Pen. God, the True One, beareth Me

witness, and every atom in existence is moved to testify that such means as lead to the elevation, the advancement, the education, the protection and the regeneration of the peoples of the earth have been clearly set forth by Us and are revealed in the Holy Books and Tablets by the Pen of Glory.

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

3.1 The Pen of the Ancient King hath never ceased to remember the loved ones of God. At one time, rivers of mercy have streamed from His Pen, at another, through its movement, God's perspicuous Book hath been revealed. He is the One to Whom none can compare, Whose utterance mortal man can never rival. He it is Who from everlasting hath been stablished upon the seat of ascendancy and might, He from Whose lips have gone out counsels that can satisfy the needs of the whole of mankind, and admonitions that can profit them.

3.2 The One true God beareth Me witness, and His creatures will testify, that not for a moment did I allow Myself to be hidden from the eyes of men, nor did I consent to shield My person from their injury. Before the face of all men I have arisen, and bidden them fulfil My pleasure. My object is none other than the betterment of the world and the tranquillity of its peoples. The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established. This unity can never be achieved so long as the counsels which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed are suffered to pass unheeded.

3.3 Through the power of the words He hath uttered the whole of the human race can be illumined with the light of unity, and the remembrance of His Name is able to set on fire the hearts of all men, and burn away the veils that intervene between them and His glory. One righteous act is endowed with a potency that can so elevate the dust as to cause it to pass beyond the heaven of heavens. It can tear every bond asunder, and hath the power to restore the force that hath spent itself and vanished....

3.4 Be pure, O people of God, be pure; be righteous, be righteous.... Say: O people of God! That which can ensure the victory of Him Who is the Eternal Truth, His hosts and helpers on earth, have been set down in the sacred Books and Scriptures, and are as clear and manifest as the sun. These hosts are such righteous deeds, such conduct and character, as are acceptable in His sight. Whoso ariseth, in this Day, to aid Our Cause, and summoneth to his assistance the hosts of a praiseworthy character and upright conduct, the influence flowing from such an action will, most certainly, be diffused throughout the whole world.

Excerpts from the Tablet of the World

4.1 How vast is the tabernacle of the Cause of God! It hath overshadowed all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and will, ere long, gather together the

whole of mankind beneath its shelter. Thy day of service is now come. Countless Tablets bear the testimony of the bounties vouchsafed unto thee. Arise for the triumph of My Cause, and, through the power of thine utterance, subdue the hearts of men. Thou must show forth that which will ensure the peace and the well-being of the miserable and the downtrodden. Gird up the loins of thine endeavour, that perchance thou mayest release the captive from his chains, and enable him to attain unto true liberty.

4.2 Justice is, in this day, bewailing its plight, and Equity groaneth beneath the yoke of oppression. The thick clouds of tyranny have darkened the face of the earth, and enveloped its peoples. Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this worldwide regeneration. This is the most great, the most joyful tidings imparted by the Pen of this Wronged One to mankind. Wherefore fear ye, O My well-beloved ones? Who is it that can dismay you? A touch of moisture sufficeth to dissolve the hardened clay out of which this perverse generation is moulded. The mere act of your gathering together is enough to scatter the forces of these vain and worthless people.

4.3 Strife and conflict befit the beasts of the wild. It was through the grace of God and with the aid of seemly words and praiseworthy deeds that the unsheathed swords of the Bábí community were returned to their scabbards. Indeed through the power of good words, the righteous have always succeeded in winning command over the meads of the hearts of men. Say, O ye loved ones! Do not forsake prudence. Incline your hearts to the counsels given by the Most Exalted Pen and beware lest your hands or tongues cause harm unto anyone among mankind....

4.4... O people! In this blessed, this glorious Day, deprive not yourselves of the liberal effusions of bounty which the Lord of abounding grace hath vouchsafed unto you. In this Day showers of wisdom and utterance are pouring down from the clouds of divine mercy. Well is it with them who judge His Cause with fairness, and woe betide the unjust.

4.5 Every man of insight will, in this day, readily admit that the counsels which the Pen of this Wronged One hath revealed constitute the supreme animating power for the advancement of the world and the exaltation of its peoples. Arise, O people, and, by the power of God's might, resolve to gain the victory over your own selves, that haply the whole earth may be freed and sanctified from its servitude to the gods of its idle fancies—gods that have inflicted such loss upon, and are responsible for the misery of their wretched worshippers. These idols form the obstacle that impedeth man in his efforts to advance in the path of perfection. We cherish the hope that the Hand of divine power may lend its assistance to mankind and deliver it from its state of grievous abasement.

4.6 In one of the Tablets these words have been revealed: O people of God! Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men. This can best be achieved through pure and holy deeds, through a virtuous life and a goodly behaviour. Valiant acts will ensure the triumph of

this Cause, and a saintly character will reinforce its power. Cleave unto righteousness, O people of Bahá! This, verily, is the commandment which this Wronged One hath given unto you, and the first choice of His unrestrained Will for every one of you.

4.7 O friends! It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favours which in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime are being showered upon you. The Day-Star of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty, nor failed to recognize the beauty of his Best-Beloved in this, His new attire. Watch over yourselves, for the Evil One is lying in wait, ready to entrap you. Gird yourselves against his wicked devices, and, led by the light of the name of the All-Seeing God, make your escape from the darkness that surroundeth you. Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self. The Evil One is he that hindereth the rise and obstructeth the spiritual progress of the children of men.

4.8 It is incumbent upon every man, in this Day, to hold fast unto whatsoever will promote the interests, and exalt the station, of all nations and just governments.

Through each and every one of the verses which the Pen of the Most High hath revealed, the doors of love and unity have been unlocked and flung open to the face of men.

We have erewhile declared—and Our Word is the truth:

“Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship.”

Whatsoever hath led the children of men to shun one another, and hath caused dissensions and divisions amongst them, hath, through the revelation of these words, been nullified and abolished.

From the heaven of God’s Will, and for the purpose of ennobling the world of being and of elevating the minds and souls of men, hath been sent down that which is the most effective instrument for the education of the whole human race.

The highest essence and most perfect expression of whatsoever the peoples of old have either said or written hath, through this most potent Revelation, been sent down from the heaven of the Will of the All-Possessing, the Ever-Abiding God.

Of old it hath been revealed:

“Love of one’s country is an element of the Faith of God.”

The Tongue of Grandeur hath, however, in the day of His manifestation proclaimed:

“It is not his to boast who loveth his country, but it is his who loveth the world.”

Through the power released by these exalted words He hath lent a fresh impulse and set a new direction to the birds of men's hearts, and hath obliterated every trace of restriction and limitation from God's holy Book.

4.9 This Wronged One hath forbidden the people of God to engage in contention or conflict and hath exhorted them to righteous deeds and praiseworthy character.

In this day the hosts that can ensure the victory of the Cause are those of goodly conduct and saintly character. Blessed are they who firmly adhere unto them and woe betide such as turn away therefrom.

4.10 O people of God! I admonish you to observe courtesy, for above all else it is the prince of virtues. Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of courtesy and is attired with the vesture of uprightness. Whoso is endued with courtesy hath indeed attained a sublime station. It is hoped that this Wronged One and everyone else may be enabled to acquire it, hold fast unto it, observe it, and fix our gaze upon it. This is a binding command which hath streamed forth from the Pen of the Most Great Name.

4.11 This is the day when the gems of constancy that lie hid in the mine of men's inner selves should be made manifest. O people of Justice! Be as brilliant as the light and as splendid as the fire that blazed in the Burning Bush. The brightness of the fire of your love will no doubt fuse and unify the contending peoples and kindreds of the earth, whilst the fierceness of the flame of enmity and hatred cannot but result in strife and ruin. We beseech God that He may shield His creatures from the evil designs of His enemies. He verily hath power over all things.

4.12 All praise be to the one true God—exalted be His glory—inasmuch as He hath, through the Pen of the Most High, unlocked the doors of men's hearts. Every verse which this Pen hath revealed is a bright and shining portal that discloseth the glories of a saintly and pious life, of pure and stainless deeds. The summons and the message which We gave were never intended to reach or to benefit one land or one people only. Mankind in its entirety must firmly adhere to whatsoever hath been revealed and vouchsafed unto it. Then and only then will it attain unto true liberty. The whole earth is illuminated with the resplendent glory of God's Revelation. In the year sixty He Who heralded the light of Divine Guidance—may all creation be a sacrifice unto Him—arose to announce a fresh revelation of the Divine Spirit, and was followed, twenty years later, by Him through Whose coming the world was made the recipient of this promised glory, this wondrous favour. Behold how the generality of mankind hath been endued with the capacity to hearken unto God's most exalted Word—the Word upon which must depend the gathering together and spiritual resurrection of all men.

4.13 Whilst in the Prison of 'Akká, We revealed in the Crimson Book that which is conducive to the advancement of mankind and to the reconstruction of the world. The utterances set forth therein by the Pen of the Lord of creation include the following which constitute the fundamental principles for the administration of the affairs of men:

4.14 First: It is incumbent upon the ministers of the House of Justice to promote the Lesser Peace so that the people of the earth may be relieved from the burden of exorbitant expenditures. This matter is imperative and absolutely

essential, inasmuch as hostilities and conflict lie at the root of affliction and calamity.

4.15 Second: Languages must be reduced to one common language to be taught in all the schools of the world.

4.16 Third: It behoveth man to adhere tenaciously unto that which will promote fellowship, kindness and unity.

4.17 Fourth: Everyone, whether man or woman, should hand over to a trusted person a portion of what he or she earneth through trade, agriculture or other occupation, for the training and education of children, to be spent for this purpose with the knowledge of the Trustees of the House of Justice.

4.18 Fifth: Special regard must be paid to agriculture. Although it hath been mentioned in the fifth place, unquestionably it precedeth the others.

Agriculture is highly developed in foreign lands, however in Persia it hath so far been grievously neglected. It is hoped that His Majesty the Sháh—may God assist him by His grace—will turn his attention to this vital and important matter....

4.19 O people of God! Give ear unto that which, if heeded, will ensure the freedom, well-being, tranquillity, exaltation and advancement of all men.

Certain laws and principles are necessary and indispensable for Persia.

However, it is fitting that these measures should be adopted in conformity with the considered views of His Majesty—may God aid him through His grace—and of the learned divines and of the high-ranking rulers. Subject to their approval a place should be fixed where they would meet. There they should hold fast to the cord of consultation and adopt and enforce that which is conducive to the security, prosperity, wealth and tranquillity of the people. For were any measure other than this to be adopted, it could not but result in chaos and commotion.

4.20 According to the fundamental laws which We have formerly revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and other Tablets, all affairs are committed to the care of just kings and presidents and of the Trustees of the House of Justice. Having pondered on that which We have enunciated, every man of equity and discernment will readily perceive, with his inner and outer eyes, the splendours of the day-star of justice which radiate therefrom.

4.21 The system of government which the British people have adopted in London appeareth to be good, for it is adorned with the light of both kingship and of the consultation of the people.

4.22 In formulating the principles and laws a part hath been devoted to penalties which form an effective instrument for the security and protection of men. However, dread of the penalties maketh people desist only outwardly from committing vile and contemptible deeds, while that which guardeth and restraineth man both outwardly and inwardly hath been and still is the fear of God. It is man's true protector and his spiritual guardian. It behoveth him to cleave tenaciously unto that which will lead to the appearance of this supreme bounty. Well is it with him who giveth ear unto whatsoever My Pen of Glory hath proclaimed and observeth that whereunto he is bidden by the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days.

4.23 Incline your hearts, O people of God, unto the counsels of your true, your

incomparable Friend. The Word of God may be likened unto a sapling, whose roots have been implanted in the hearts of men. It is incumbent upon you to foster its growth through the living waters of wisdom, of sanctified and holy words, so that its root may become firmly fixed and its branches may spread out as high as the heavens and beyond.

4.24 O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the pre-eminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men, and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes.

4.25 Time and again have We admonished Our beloved ones to avoid, nay to flee from, anything whatsoever from which the odour of mischief can be detected. The world 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. He, verily, is the All-Possessing, the Most High.

4.26 We have ere this uttered these sublime words: Let them that bear allegiance to this Wronged One be even as a raining cloud in moments of charity and benevolence and as a blazing fire in restraining their base and appetitive natures....

4.27 O people of God! In this day everyone should fix his eyes upon the horizon of these blessed words: "Alone and unaided He doeth whatsoever He pleaseth." Whoso attaineth this station hath verily attained the light of the essential unity of God and is enlightened thereby, while all others are reckoned in the Book of God among the followers of idle fancy and vain imagination. Incline your ears to the Voice of this Wronged One and safeguard the integrity of your stations. It is highly necessary and imperative that everyone should observe this matter.

4.28 Unveiled and unconcealed, this Wronged One hath, at all times, proclaimed before the face of all the peoples of the world that which will serve as the key for unlocking the doors of sciences, of arts, of knowledge, of well-being, of prosperity and wealth. Neither have the wrongs inflicted by the oppressors succeeded in silencing the shrill voice of the Most Exalted Pen, nor have the doubts of the perverse or of the seditious been able to hinder Him from revealing the Most Sublime Word. I earnestly beseech God that He may protect and purge the people of Bahá from the idle fancies and corrupt imaginings of the followers of the former Faith.

4.29 O people of God! Righteous men of learning who dedicate themselves to the guidance of others and are freed and well guarded from the promptings of a base and covetous nature are, in the sight of Him Who is the Desire of the world, stars of the heaven of true knowledge. It is essential to treat them with deference. They are indeed fountains of soft-flowing water, stars that shine resplendent, fruits of the blessed Tree, exponents of celestial power, and oceans of heavenly wisdom. Happy is he that followeth them. Verily such a soul

is numbered in the Book of God, the Lord of the mighty Throne, among those with whom it shall be well.

The Peace and Tranquillity of the World

5.1 Behold the disturbances which, for many a long year, have afflicted the earth, and the perturbation that hath seized its peoples.

It hath either been ravaged by war, or tormented by sudden and unforeseen calamities.

Though the world is encompassed with misery and distress, yet no man hath paused to reflect what the cause or source of that may be.

Whenever the True Counsellor uttered a word in admonishment, lo, they all denounced Him as a mover of mischief and rejected His claim.

How bewildering, how confusing is such behaviour!

No two men can be found who may be said to be outwardly and inwardly united.

The evidences of discord and malice are apparent everywhere, though all were made for harmony and union.

The Great Being saith:

O well-beloved ones!

The tabernacle of unity hath been raised; regard ye not one another as strangers.

Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch.

We cherish the hope that the light of justice may shine upon the world and sanctify it from tyranny.

If the rulers and kings of the earth, the symbols of the power of God, exalted be His glory, arise and resolve to dedicate themselves to whatever will promote the highest interests of the whole of humanity, the reign of justice will assuredly be established amongst the children of men, and the effulgence of its light will envelop the whole earth.

The Great Being saith:

The structure of world stability and order hath been reared upon, and will continue to be sustained by, the twin pillars of reward and punishment.

And in another connection He hath uttered the following in the eloquent tongue:

Justice hath a mighty force at its command.

It is none other than reward and punishment for the deeds of men.

By the power of this force the tabernacle of order is established throughout the world, causing the wicked to restrain their natures for fear of punishment.

5.2 In another passage He hath written: Take heed, O concourse of the rulers of the world! There is no force on earth that can equal in its conquering power the force of justice and wisdom. I, verily, affirm that there is not, and hath

never been, a host more mighty than that of justice and wisdom. Blessed is the king who marcheth with the ensign of wisdom unfurled before him, and the battalions of justice massed in his rear. He verily is the ornament that adorneth the brow of peace and the countenance of security. There can be no doubt whatever that if the day-star of justice, which the clouds of tyranny have obscured, were to shed its light upon men, the face of the earth would be completely transformed.

5.3The Great Being, wishing to reveal the prerequisites of the peace and tranquillity of the world and the advancement of its peoples, hath written: The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men. Such a peace demandeth that the Great Powers should resolve, for the sake of the tranquillity of the peoples of the earth, to be fully reconciled among themselves. Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him. If this be done, the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal order within their territories. This will ensure the peace and composure of every people, government and nation. We fain would hope that the kings and rulers of the earth, the mirrors of the gracious and almighty name of God, may attain unto this station, and shield mankind from the onslaught of tyranny.

5.4Likewise He saith: Among the things which are conducive to unity and concord and will cause the whole earth to be regarded as one country is that the divers languages be reduced to one language and in like manner the scripts used in the world be confined to a single script. It is incumbent upon all nations to appoint some men of understanding and erudition to convene a gathering and through joint consultation choose one language from among the varied existing languages, or create a new one, to be taught to the children in all the schools of the world.

5.5The day is approaching when all the peoples of the world will have adopted one universal language and one common script. When this is achieved, to whatsoever city a man may journey, it shall be as if he were entering his own home. These things are obligatory and absolutely essential. It is incumbent upon every man of insight and understanding to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action.

5.6In these days the tabernacle of justice hath fallen into the clutches of tyranny and oppression. Beseech ye the One true God—exalted be His glory—not to deprive mankind of the ocean of true understanding, for were men but to take heed they would readily appreciate that whatever hath streamed from and is set down by the Pen of Glory is even as the sun for the whole world and that therein lie the welfare, security and true interests of all men; otherwise the earth will be tormented by a fresh calamity every day and unprecedented commotions will break out. God grant that the people of the world may be graciously aided to preserve the light of His loving counsels within the globe of wisdom. We cherish the hope that everyone may be adorned with the vesture of

true wisdom, the basis of the government of the world.

5.7The Great Being saith: The heaven of statesmanship is made luminous and resplendent by the brightness of the light of these blessed words which hath dawned from the dayspring of the Will of God: It behoveth every ruler to weigh his own being every day in the balance of equity and justice and then to judge between men and counsel them to do that which would direct their steps unto the path of wisdom and understanding. This is the cornerstone of statesmanship and the essence thereof. From these words every enlightened man of wisdom will readily perceive that which will foster such aims as the welfare, security and protection of mankind and the safety of human lives. Were men of insight to quaff their fill from the ocean of inner meanings which lie enshrined in these words and become acquainted therewith, they would bear witness to the sublimity and the excellence of this utterance. If this lowly one were to set forth that which he perceiveth, all would testify unto God's consummate wisdom. The secrets of statesmanship and that of which the people are in need lie enfolded within these words. This lowly servant earnestly entreateth the One true God—exalted be His glory—to illumine the eyes of the people of the world with the splendour of the light of wisdom that they, one and all, may recognize that which is indispensable in this day.

5.8That one indeed is a man who, today, dedicateth himself to the service of the entire human race. The Great Being saith: Blessed and happy is he that ariseth to promote the best interests of the peoples and kindreds of the earth. In another passage He hath proclaimed: It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.

5.9Such exhortations to union and concord as are inscribed in the Books of the Prophets by the Pen of the Most High bear reference unto specific matters; not a union that would lead to disunity or a concord which would create discord. This is the station where measures are set unto everything, a station where every deserving soul shall be given his due. Well is it with them that appreciate the meaning and grasp the intent of these words, and woe betide the heedless. Unto this all the evidences of nature, in their very essences, bear ample testimony. Every discerning man of wisdom is well acquainted with that which We have mentioned, but not those who have strayed far from the living fountain of fairmindedness and are roving distraught in the wilderness of ignorance and blind fanaticism.

5.10The Great Being saith: O ye children of men! The fundamental purpose animating the Faith of God and His Religion is to safeguard the interests and promote the unity of the human race, and to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men. Suffer it not to become a source of dissension and discord, of hate and enmity. This is the straight Path, the fixed and immovable foundation. Whatsoever is raised on this foundation, the changes and chances of the world can never impair its strength, nor will the revolution of countless centuries undermine its structure. Our hope is that the world's religious leaders and the rulers thereof will unitedly arise for the reformation of this age and the rehabilitation of its fortunes. Let them, after meditating on its needs, take counsel together and, through anxious and full deliberation,

administer to a diseased and sorely-afflicted world the remedy it requireth.

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

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

5.13 The Great Being saith: The learned of the day must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom. Such academic pursuits as begin and end in words alone have never been and will never be of any worth. The majority of Persia's learned doctors devote all their lives to the study of a philosophy the ultimate yield of which is nothing but words.

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

5.15 If this point were to be expounded an elaborate explanation would be required which, it is feared, might become tedious. It is the ardent hope of this lowly one that God—exalted be His glory—may grant all men that which is good. For he who is endowed therewith is the possessor of all things. The Great Being saith: The Tongue of Wisdom proclaimeth: He that hath Me not is bereft of all things. Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. I am the Sun of Wisdom and the Ocean of Knowledge. I cheer the faint and revive the dead. I am the guiding Light that illumineth the way. I am the royal Falcon on the arm of the Almighty. I unfold the drooping wings of every broken bird and start it on its flight.

5.16 And likewise He saith: The heaven of true understanding shineth resplendent with the light of two luminaries: tolerance and righteousness.

5.17 O my friend! Vast oceans lie enshrined within this brief saying. Blessed are they who appreciate its value, drink deep therefrom and grasp its meaning, and woe betide the heedless. This lowly one entreateth the people of the world to observe fairness, that their tender, their delicate and precious hearing which hath been created to hearken unto the words of wisdom may be freed from impediments and from such allusions, idle fancies or vain imaginings as “cannot fatten nor appease the hunger”, so that the true Counsellor may be graciously inclined to set forth that which is the source of blessing for mankind and of the highest good for all nations.

5.18 At present the light of reconciliation is dimmed in most countries and its radiance extinguished while the fire of strife and disorder hath been kindled

and is blazing fiercely. Two great powers who regard themselves as the founders and leaders of civilization and the framers of constitutions have risen up against the followers of the Faith associated with Him Who conversed with God. Be ye warned, O men of understanding. It ill beseemeth the station of man to commit tyranny; rather it behoveth him to observe equity and be attired with the raiment of justice under all conditions. Beseech ye the One true God that He may, through the power of the hand of loving-kindness and spiritual education, purge and purify certain souls from the defilement of evil passions and corrupt desires, that they may arise and unloose their tongues for the sake of God, that perchance the evidences of injustice may be blotted out and the splendour of the light of justice may shed its radiance upon the whole world. The people are ignorant, and they stand in need of those who will expound the truth.

5.19The Great Being saith: The man of consummate learning and the sage endowed with penetrating wisdom are the two eyes to the body of mankind. God willing, the earth shall never be deprived of these two greatest gifts. That which hath been set forth and will be revealed in the future is but a token of this Servant's ardent desire to dedicate Himself to the service of all the kindreds of the earth.

5.20O my friend! In all circumstances one should seize upon every means which will promote security and tranquillity among the peoples of the world. The Great Being saith: In this glorious Day whatever will purge you from corruption and will lead you towards peace and composure, is indeed the Straight Path.

5.21Please God, the peoples of the world may be led, as the result of the high endeavours exerted by their rulers and the wise and learned amongst men, to recognize their best interests. How long will humanity persist in its waywardness? How long will injustice continue? How long is chaos and confusion to reign amongst men? How long will discord agitate the face of society?

5.22This humble servant is filled with wonder, inasmuch as all men are endowed with the capacity to see and hear, yet we find them deprived of the privilege of using these faculties. This servant hath been prompted to pen these lines by virtue of the tender love he cherisheth for thee. The winds of despair are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appeareth to be lamentably defective. I beseech God, exalted be His glory, that He may graciously awaken the peoples of the earth, may grant that the end of their conduct may be profitable unto them, and aid them to accomplish that which beseemeth their station.

5.23Were man to appreciate the greatness of his station and the loftiness of his destiny he would manifest naught save goodly character, pure deeds, and a seemly and praiseworthy conduct. If the learned and wise men of goodwill were to impart guidance unto the people, the whole earth would be regarded as one country. Verily this is the undoubted truth. This servant appealeth to every diligent and enterprising soul to exert his utmost endeavour and arise to rehabilitate the conditions in all regions and to quicken the dead with the living waters of wisdom and utterance, by virtue of the love he cherisheth for

God, the One, the Peerless, the Almighty, the Beneficent.

5.24 No man of wisdom can demonstrate his knowledge save by means of words. This showeth the significance of the Word as is affirmed in all the Scriptures, whether of former times or more recently. For it is through its potency and animating spirit that the people of the world have attained so eminent a position. Moreover words and utterances should be both impressive and penetrating. However, no word will be infused with these two qualities unless it be uttered wholly for the sake of God and with due regard unto the exigencies of the occasion and the people.

5.25 The Great Being saith: Human utterance is an essence which aspireth to exert its influence and needeth moderation. As to its influence, this is conditional upon refinement which in turn is dependent upon hearts which are detached and pure. As to its moderation, this hath to be combined with tact and wisdom as prescribed in the Holy Scriptures and Tablets.

5.26 Every word is endowed with a spirit, therefore the speaker or expounder should carefully deliver his words at the appropriate time and place, for the impression which each word maketh is clearly evident and perceptible. The Great Being saith: One word may be likened unto fire, another unto light, and the influence which both exert is manifest in the world. Therefore an enlightened man of wisdom should primarily speak with words as mild as milk, that the children of men may be nurtured and edified thereby and may attain the ultimate goal of human existence which is the station of true understanding and nobility. And likewise He saith: One word is like unto springtime causing the tender saplings of the rose-garden of knowledge to become verdant and flourishing, while another word is even as a deadly poison. It behoveth a prudent man of wisdom to speak with utmost leniency and forbearance so that the sweetness of his words may induce everyone to attain that which becometh man's station.

5.27 O friend of mine! The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the realm of being. The Great Being saith: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked. No sooner had but a glimmer of its effulgent splendour shone forth upon the mirror of love than the blessed word "I am the Best-Beloved" was reflected therein. It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things. Every thing which can be perceived is but an emanation therefrom. High, immeasurably high is this sublime station, in whose shadow moveth the essence of loftiness and splendour, wrapt in praise and adoration.

5.28 Methinks people's sense of taste hath, alas, been sorely affected by the fever of negligence and folly, for they are found to be wholly unconscious and deprived of the sweetness of His utterance. How regrettable indeed that man should debar himself from the fruits of the tree of wisdom while his days and hours pass swiftly away. Please God, the hand of divine power may safeguard all mankind and direct their steps towards the horizon of true understanding....

5.29 Great is the station of man. Great must also be his endeavours for the rehabilitation of the world and the well-being of nations. I beseech the One

true God to graciously confirm thee in that which beseemeth man's station.

5.30 Be thou guided by wisdom under all conditions, inasmuch as persons who harbour evil motives have been and are still diligently engaged in intriguing. Gracious God! Unto that immeasurably exalted Being Who seeketh naught but to foster the spirit of love and fellowship amongst men, and to revive the world and ennoble its life, they have imputed such charges as the tongue and the pen are ashamed to recount....

5.31 Far be it from us to despair at any time of the incalculable favours of God, for if it were His wish He could cause a mere atom to be transformed into a sun and a single drop into an ocean. He unlocketh thousands of doors, while man is incapable of conceiving even a single one....

5.32... Indeed the actions of man himself breed a profusion of satanic power. For were men to abide by and observe the divine teachings, every trace of evil would be banished from the face of the earth. However, the widespread differences that exist among mankind and the prevalence of sedition, contention, conflict and the like are the primary factors which provoke the appearance of the satanic spirit. Yet the Holy Spirit hath ever shunned such matters. A world in which naught can be perceived save strife, quarrels and corruption is bound to become the seat of the throne, the very metropolis, of Satan.

To the Kings and Rulers

6.1 We pray God—exalted be His glory—and cherish the hope that He may graciously assist the manifestations of affluence and power and the daysprings of sovereignty and glory, the kings of the earth—may God aid them through His strengthening grace—to establish the Lesser Peace.

This, indeed, is the greatest means for ensuring the tranquillity of the nations.

It is incumbent upon the Sovereigns of the world—may God assist them—unitedly to hold fast unto this Peace, which is the chief instrument for the protection of all mankind.

It is Our hope that they will arise to achieve what will be conducive to the well-being of men.

It is their duty to convene an all-inclusive assembly, which either they themselves or their ministers will attend, and to enforce whatever measures are required to establish unity and concord amongst men.

They must put away the weapons of war, and turn to the instruments of universal reconstruction.

Should one king rise up against another, all the other kings must arise to deter him.

Arms and armaments will, then, be no more needed beyond that which is necessary to ensure the internal security of their respective countries.

If they attain unto this all-surpassing blessing, the people of each nation will pursue, with tranquillity and contentment, their own occupations, and the

groanings and lamentations of most men would be silenced.

We beseech God to aid them to do His will and pleasure.

He, verily, is the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, and the Lord of this world and of the world to come.

It would be preferable and more fitting that the highly-honoured kings themselves should attend such an assembly, and proclaim their edicts.

Any king who will arise and carry out this task, he verily will, in the sight of God, become the cynosure of all kings.

Happy is he, and great is his blessedness!

7.1 Lay not aside the fear of God, O kings of the earth, and beware that ye transgress not the bounds which the Almighty hath fixed. Observe the injunctions laid upon you in His Book, and take good heed not to overstep their limits. Be vigilant, that ye may not do injustice to anyone, be it to the extent of a grain of mustard seed. Tread ye the path of justice, for this, verily, is the straight path.

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

8.1 O Queen in London! Incline thine ear unto the voice of thy Lord, the Lord of all mankind, calling from the Divine Lote-Tree: Verily, no God is there but Me, the Almighty, the All-Wise! Cast away all that is on earth, and attire the head of thy kingdom with the crown of the remembrance of thy Lord, the All-Glorious. He, in truth, hath come unto the world in His most great glory, and all that hath been mentioned in the Gospel hath been fulfilled....

8.2 Lay aside thy desire, and set then thine heart towards thy Lord, the Ancient of Days. We make mention of thee for the sake of God, and desire that thy name may be exalted through thy remembrance of God, the Creator of earth and heaven. He, verily, is witness unto that which I say. We have been informed that thou hast forbidden the trading in slaves, both men and women. This, verily, is what God hath enjoined in this wondrous Revelation. God hath, truly, destined a reward for thee, because of this. He, verily, will pay the doer of good his due recompense, wert thou to follow what hath been sent unto thee by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. As to him who turneth aside, and swelleth with pride, after the clear tokens have come unto him from the Revealer of signs, his work shall God bring to naught. He, in truth, hath power over all things. Man's actions are acceptable after his having recognized (the Manifestation). He that turneth aside from the True One is indeed the most veiled amongst His creatures. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Almighty, the Most Powerful.

8.3 We have also heard that thou hast entrusted the reins of counsel into the hands of the representatives of the people. Thou, indeed, hast done well, for

thereby the foundations of the edifice of thine affairs will be strengthened, and the hearts of all that are beneath thy shadow, whether high or low, will be tranquillized. It behoveth them, however, to be trustworthy among His servants, and to regard themselves as the representatives of all that dwell on earth.

This is what counselleth them, in this Tablet, He Who is the Ruler, the All-Wise. And if any one of them directeth himself towards the Assembly, let him turn his eyes unto the Supreme Horizon, and say: "O my God! I ask Thee, by Thy most glorious Name, to aid me in that which will cause the affairs of Thy servants to prosper, and Thy cities to flourish. Thou, indeed, hast power over all things!" Blessed is he that entereth the Assembly for the sake of God, and judgeth between men with pure justice. He, indeed, is of the blissful.

8.4O ye the elected representatives of the people in every land! Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind and bettereth the condition thereof, if ye be of them that scan heedfully.

Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay its sickness waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their personal desires and have erred grievously. And if, at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before. Thus informeth you the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

8.5We behold it, in this day, at the mercy of rulers so drunk with pride that they cannot discern clearly their own best advantage, much less recognize a Revelation so bewildering and challenging as this. And whenever any one of them hath striven to improve its condition, his motive hath been his own gain, whether confessedly so or not; and the unworthiness of this motive hath limited his power to heal or cure....

8.6O kings of the earth! We see you increasing every year your expenditures, and laying the burden thereof on your subjects. This, verily, is wholly and grossly unjust. Fear the sighs and tears of this Wronged One, and lay not excessive burdens on your peoples. Do not rob them to rear palaces for yourselves; nay rather choose for them that which ye choose for yourselves. Thus We unfold to your eyes that which profiteth you, if ye but perceive. Your people are your treasures. Beware lest your rule violate the commandments of God, and ye deliver your wards to the hands of the robber. By them ye rule, by their means ye subsist, by their aid ye conquer. Yet, how disdainfully ye look upon them! How strange, how very strange!

9.1Ye are but vassals, O kings of the earth! He Who is the King of Kings hath appeared, arrayed in His most wondrous glory, and is summoning you unto Himself, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. Take heed lest pride deter you from recognizing the Source of Revelation, lest the things of this world shut you out as by a veil from Him Who is the Creator of heaven. Arise, and serve Him Who is the Desire of all nations, Who hath created you through a word from Him, and ordained you to be, for all time, the emblems of His sovereignty.

9.2By the righteousness of God! It is not Our wish to lay hands on your kingdoms. Our mission is to seize and possess the hearts of men. Upon them the eyes of Bahá are fastened. To this testifieth the Kingdom of Names, could ye

but comprehend it. Whoso followeth his Lord will renounce the world and all that is therein; how much greater, then, must be the detachment of Him Who holdeth so august a station! Forsake your palaces, and haste ye to gain admittance into His Kingdom. This, indeed, will profit you both in this world and in the next. To this testifieth the Lord of the realm on high, did ye but know it.

9.3 How great the blessedness that awaiteth the king who will arise to aid My Cause in My kingdom, who will detach himself from all else but Me! Such a king is numbered with the companions of the Crimson Ark—the Ark which God hath prepared for the people of Bahá. All must glorify his name, must reverence his station, and aid him to unlock the cities with the keys of My Name, the omnipotent Protector of all that inhabit the visible and invisible kingdoms. Such a king is the very eye of mankind, the luminous ornament on the brow of creation, the fountainhead of blessings unto the whole world. Offer up, O people of Bahá, your substance, nay your very lives, for his assistance.

10.1 Beware, O King, that thou gather not around thee such ministers as follow the desires of a corrupt inclination, as have cast behind their backs that which hath been committed into their hands and manifestly betrayed their trust. Be bounteous to others as God hath been bounteous to thee, and abandon not the interests of thy people to the mercy of such ministers as these. Lay not aside the fear of God, and be thou of them that act uprightly. Gather around thee those ministers from whom thou canst perceive the fragrance of faith and of justice, and take thou counsel with them, and choose whatever is best in thy sight, and be of them that act generously.

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

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

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

11.1 Harken ye, O Rulers of America and the Presidents of the Republics therein, unto that which the Dove is warbling on the Branch of Eternity: "There is none other God but Me, the Ever-Abiding, the Forgiving, the All-Bountiful." Adorn ye 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 your Lord, the Creator of the heavens. Thus counselleth you He Who is the Dayspring of Names, as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. The Promised One hath appeared in this glorified Station, whereat all beings, both seen and unseen, have rejoiced. Take ye advantage of the Day of God. Verily, to meet Him is better for you than all that whereon the sun shineth, could ye but know it. O concourse of rulers! Give ear unto that which hath been raised from the Dayspring of Grandeur: "Verily, there is none other God but Me, the Lord of Utterance, the All-Knowing." Bind ye the broken with the hands of justice, and crush the oppressor who flourisheth with the rod of the commandments of your Lord, the Ordainer, the All-Wise.

To the Leaders of Religion

12.1 Leaders of religion, in every age, have hindered their people from attaining the shores of eternal salvation, inasmuch as they held the reins of authority in their mighty grasp.

Some for the lust of leadership, others through want of knowledge and understanding, have been the cause of the deprivation of the people.

By their sanction and authority, every Prophet of God hath drunk from the chalice of sacrifice, and winged His flight unto the heights of glory.

What unspeakable cruelties they that have occupied the seats of authority and learning have inflicted upon the true Monarchs of the world, those Gems of divine virtue!

Content with a transitory dominion, they have deprived themselves of an everlasting sovereignty.

Thus, their eyes beheld not the light of the countenance of the Well-Beloved, nor did their ears hearken unto the sweet melodies of the Bird of Desire.

For this reason, in all sacred books mention hath been made of the divines of every age.

Thus He saith:

"O people of the Book!

Why disbelieve the signs of God to which ye yourselves have been witnesses?"

And also He saith:

"O people of the Book!

Why clothe ye the truth with falsehood?

Why wittingly hide the truth?"

Again, He saith:

"Say, O people of the Book!

Why repel believers from the way of God?"

It is evident that by the “people of the Book”, who have repelled their fellow-men from the straight path of God, is meant none other than the divines of that age, whose names and character have been revealed in the sacred books, and alluded to in the verses and traditions recorded therein, were ye to observe with the eye of God.

12.2 With fixed and steady gaze, born of the unerring eye of God, scan for a while the horizon of divine knowledge, and contemplate those words of perfection which the Eternal hath revealed, that haply the mysteries of divine wisdom, hidden ere now beneath the veil of glory and treasured within the tabernacle of His grace, may be made manifest unto you. The denials and protestations of these leaders of religion have, in the main, been due to their lack of knowledge and understanding. Those words uttered by the Revealers of the beauty of the one true God, setting forth the signs that should herald the advent of the Manifestation to come, they never understood nor fathomed. Hence they raised the standard of revolt, and stirred up mischief and sedition.

13.1 O ye the dawning-places of knowledge! Beware that ye suffer not yourselves to become changed, for as ye change, most men will, likewise, change. This, verily, is an injustice unto yourselves and unto others.... Ye are even as a spring. If it be changed, so will the streams that branch out from it be changed. Fear God, and be numbered with the godly. In like manner, if the heart of man be corrupted, his limbs will also be corrupted. And similarly, if the root of a tree be corrupted, its branches, and its offshoots, and its leaves, and its fruits, will be corrupted.

14.1 O concourse of divines! Be fair, I adjure you by God, and nullify not the Truth with the things ye possess. Peruse that which We have sent down with truth. It will, verily, aid you, and will draw you nigh unto God, the Mighty, the Great.... He hath come for your salvation, and hath borne tribulations that ye may ascend, by the ladder of utterance, unto the summit of understanding.... Peruse, with fairness and justice, that which hath been sent down. It will, verily, exalt you through the truth, and will cause you to behold the things from which ye have been withheld, and will enable you to quaff His sparkling Wine.

15.1 Say: O concourse of monks! Seclude not yourselves in your churches and cloisters. Come ye out of them by My leave, and busy, then, yourselves with what will profit you and others. Thus commandeth you He Who is the Lord of the Day of Reckoning. Seclude yourselves in the stronghold of My love. This, truly, is the seclusion that befitteth you, could ye but know it. He that secludeth himself in his house is indeed as one dead. It behoveth man to show forth that which will benefit mankind. He that bringeth forth no fruit is fit for the fire. Thus admonisheth you your Lord; He, verily, is the Mighty, the Bountiful. Enter ye into wedlock, that after you another may arise in your stead.

16.1 O concourse of monks! The fragrances of the All-Merciful have wafted over all creation. Happy the man that hath forsaken his desires, and taken fast hold of guidance. He, indeed, is of those who have attained unto the presence of God in this Day, a Day whereon commotions have seized the dwellers of the earth and filled with dismay all save those who have been exempted by God, He Who layeth low the necks of men.

16.2 Adorn ye your bodies whilst the raiment of God is stained with the blood of hatred at the hands of the people of denial? Issue forth from your habitations and bid the people enter the Kingdom of God, the Lord of the Day of Judgement. The Word which the Son concealed is made manifest. It hath been sent down in the form of the human temple in this day. Blessed be the Lord Who is the Father! He, verily, is come unto the nations in His most great majesty. Turn your faces towards Him, O concourse of the righteous!

16.3 O followers of all religions! We behold you wandering distraught in the wilderness of error. Ye are the fish of this Ocean; wherefore do ye withhold yourselves from that which sustaineth you? Lo, it surgeth before your faces. Hasten unto it from every clime. This is the day whereon the Rock crieth out and shouteth, and celebrateth the praise of its Lord, the All-Possessing, the Most High, saying: "Lo! The Father is come, and that which ye were promised in the Kingdom is fulfilled!" This is the Word which was preserved behind the veils of grandeur, and which, when the Promise came to pass, shed its radiance from the horizon of the Divine Will with clear tokens.

16.4 My body hath borne imprisonment that your souls may be released from bondage, and We have consented to be abased that ye may be exalted. Follow the Lord of glory and dominion, and not every ungodly oppressor. My body longeth for the cross, and Mine head awaiteth the thrust of the spear, in the path of the All-Merciful, that the world may be purged from its transgressions. Thus hath the Day-Star of divine authority shone forth from the horizon of the Revelation of Him Who is the Possessor of all names and attributes....

16.5 O Supreme Pontiff! Incline thine ear unto that which the Fashioner of mouldering bones counselleth thee, as voiced by Him Who is His Most Great Name. Sell all the embellished ornaments thou dost possess, and expend them in the path of God, Who causeth the night to return upon the day, and the day to return upon the night. Abandon thy kingdom unto the kings, and emerge from thy habitation, with thy face set towards the Kingdom, and, detached from the world, then speak forth the praises of thy Lord betwixt earth and heaven. Thus hath bidden thee He Who is the Possessor of Names, on the part of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Knowing. Exhort thou the kings and say: "Deal equitably with men. Beware lest ye transgress the bounds fixed in the Book." This indeed becometh thee. Beware lest thou appropriate unto thyself the things of the world and the riches thereof. Leave them unto such as desire them, and cleave unto that which hath been enjoined upon thee by Him Who is the Lord of creation. Should anyone offer thee all the treasures of the earth, refuse to even glance upon them. Be as thy Lord hath been. Thus hath the Tongue of Revelation spoken that which God hath made the ornament of the book of creation.

9

The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh

Counsels Concerning the Passing of Bahá'u'lláh

1.1 Say: Let not your hearts be perturbed, O people, when the glory of My Presence is withdrawn, and the ocean of My utterance is stilled. In My presence amongst you there is a wisdom, and in My absence there is yet another, inscrutable to all but God, the Incomparable, the All-Knowing. Verily, We

behold you from Our realm of glory, and shall aid whosoever will arise for the triumph of Our Cause with the hosts of the Concourse on high and a company of Our favoured angels.

1.2 O peoples of the earth! God, the Eternal Truth, is My witness that streams of fresh and soft-flowing waters have gushed from the rocks through the sweetness of the words uttered by your Lord, the Unconstrained; and still ye slumber. Cast away that which ye possess, and, on the wings of detachment, soar beyond all created things. Thus biddeth you the Lord of creation, the movement of Whose Pen hath revolutionized the soul of mankind.

1.3 Know ye from what heights your Lord, the All-Glorious, is calling? Think ye that ye have recognized the Pen wherewith your Lord, the Lord of all names, commandeth you? Nay, by My life! Did ye but know it, ye would renounce the world, and would hasten with your whole hearts to the presence of the Well-Beloved. Your spirits would be so transported by His Word as to throw into commotion the Greater World—how much more this small and petty one! Thus have the showers of My bounty been poured down from the heaven of My loving-kindness, as a token of My grace, that ye may be of the thankful....

1.4 Beware lest the desires of the flesh and of a corrupt inclination provoke divisions among you. Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. Thus counselleth you the Pen of Revelation, if ye be of them that believe.

1.5 Consider the mercy of God and His gifts. He enjoineth upon you that which shall profit you, though He Himself can well dispense with all creatures. Your evil doings can never harm Us, neither can your good works profit Us. We summon you wholly for the sake of God. To this every man of understanding and insight will testify.

2.1 Be not dismayed, O peoples of the world, when the day-star of My beauty is set, and the heaven of My tabernacle is concealed from your eyes. Arise to further My Cause, and to exalt My Word amongst men. We are with you at all times, and shall strengthen you through the power of truth. We are truly almighty. Whoso hath recognized Me will arise and serve Me with such determination that the powers of earth and heaven shall be unable to defeat his purpose.

2.2 The peoples of the world are fast asleep. Were they to wake from their slumber, they would hasten with eagerness unto God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. They would cast away everything they possess, be it all the treasures of the earth, that their Lord may remember them to the extent of addressing to them but one word. Such is the instruction given you by Him Who holdeth the knowledge of things hidden, in a Tablet which the eye of creation hath not seen, and which is revealed to none except His own Self, the omnipotent Protector of all worlds. So bewildered are they in the drunkenness of their evil desires, that they are powerless to recognize the Lord of all being, Whose voice calleth aloud from every direction: "There is none other God but Me, the Mighty, the All-Wise."

3.1 Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying impostor. We pray God that He may graciously assist him to retract and repudiate such claim. Should he repent, God will, no doubt, forgive him. If, however, he persisteth in his

error, God will, assuredly, send down one who will deal mercilessly with him. Terrible, indeed, is God in punishing! Whosoever interpreteth this verse otherwise than its obvious meaning is deprived of the Spirit of God and of His mercy which encompasseth all created things. Fear God, and follow not your idle fancies. Nay, rather, follow the bidding of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Wise.

Turn to 'Abdu'l-Bahá

4.1 When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root....

4.2 O people of the world! When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.

Tablet of the Branch

5.1 The Cause of God hath come down upon the clouds of utterance, while they that have joined partners with Him are afflicted with a sore torment. The hosts of Divine Revelation, bearing the banners of celestial inspiration, have descended from the heaven of His Tablet in the name of God, the Almighty, the Most Powerful, and the faithful rejoice in His victory and dominion, while the deniers are filled with dismay.

5.2 O people! Do ye flee from the mercy of God after it hath pervaded all that is in the heavens and on the earth? Barter not away that mercy wherewith God hath favoured you, nor withhold yourselves therefrom, for they that turn away are indeed in grievous loss. The mercy of God is like unto the verses that are sent down from one same heaven: The true believers quaff therefrom the wine of everlasting life, while the ungodly drink a scalding draught. And whensoever the verses of God are rehearsed unto them, the fire of hatred is kindled in their breasts. Thus do they barter away the bounty that God hath bestowed upon them and are reckoned among the heedless.

5.3 Strive, O people, to enter beneath the sheltering shadow of the Word of God. Quaff, then, from it the choice wine of inner meaning and explanation, for it is the repository of the living waters of the All-Glorious and hath appeared from the horizon of the Will of the All-Merciful with matchless splendour. Say: Out of this Most Great Ocean there hath branched the Pre-existent Sea; blessed the one that hath attained and found repose upon its shores.

5.4 There hath branched from the Sadratu'l-Muntahá this sacred and glorious Being, this Branch of Holiness; well is it with him that hath sought His shelter and abideth beneath His shadow. Verily the Limb of the Law of God hath sprung forth from this Root which God hath firmly implanted in the Ground of His Will, and Whose Branch hath been so uplifted as to encompass the whole of creation. Magnified be He, therefore, for this sublime, this blessed, this mighty, this exalted Handiwork! Draw nigh unto Him, O people, and taste the fruits of wisdom and knowledge that have proceeded from Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Knowing. Whoso hath failed to taste thereof is deprived of God's bounty, though he partake of all that the earth can produce, could ye but perceive it!

5.5A 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, that all may glorify thereby their Lord, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Wise, and extol the praise of their Creator and the sanctity of the Soul of God that holdeth sway over all created things. This, verily, is none other than a Word sent down by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the Ancient of Days.

5.6Render thanks unto God, O people, for His appearance; for verily He is the most great Favour unto you, the most perfect bounty upon you; and through Him every mouldering bone is quickened. Whoso turneth towards Him hath turned towards God, and whoso turneth away from Him hath turned away from My Beauty, hath repudiated My Proof, and transgressed against Me. He is the Trust of God amongst you, His charge within you, His manifestation unto you and His appearance among His favoured servants.

5.7Thus was I bidden to deliver unto you the message of God, your Creator, and I have fulfilled that whereunto I was bidden. Unto this bear witness God, and His angels, and His Messengers, and His sanctified servants. Inhale, then, the sweet savours of Paradise from its roses and be not of them that are deprived. Hasten to win your share of the grace which God hath bestowed upon you and suffer not yourselves to be veiled therefrom.

5.8We 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.

5.9O people! Hasten to enter beneath the shadow of God, that it may shield you from the blazing heat of this Day wherein none shall find shelter or refuge save under the shadow of His Name, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate. Attire yourselves, O people, with the raiment of certitude, that it may protect you from the darts of idle fancy and vain imaginings and that ye may be numbered with the faithful in these days—days wherein none may attain certitude nor achieve constancy in the Cause of God save by renouncing that which is current amongst men and by turning towards this hallowed and refulgent Beauty.

5.10O people! Will ye take a false deity for your helper rather than God? Will ye follow the Most Great Idol before your Lord, the Almighty, the Most Powerful? Forsake their mention, O people, and seize the cup of life in the name of your Lord, the All-Merciful. By the righteousness of God! A single drop from this cup quickeneth all humankind, could ye but know it.

5.11Say: None shall be immune in this Day from God's decree; none shall find refuge save in Him. This, verily, is the truth, and aught else is but manifest error. God hath made it incumbent upon all to teach His Cause to the extent of their ability. Such is the decree that the Finger of might and power hath recorded in the Tablets of supernal glory. Whoso quickeneth but a single soul in this Revelation, it is as though he had quickened all humanity: Him will God, on the Day of Resurrection, raise again to life in the paradise of His

oneness, adorned with the raiment of His own Self, the Sovereign Protector, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful. Such is the nature of the assistance ye can render to your Lord, and naught else is worthy of mention in this Day in the presence of God, your Lord and the Lord of your sires of old.

5.12As for thee, O servant, give ear unto that which We have admonished thee in this Tablet, and seek at all times the grace of thy Lord. Disseminate this Tablet amongst them that have believed in God and in His signs, that they may observe its injunctions and be numbered with the righteous.

5.13Say: O people! Spread not disorder on the earth nor dispute with your fellow men, for this would ill beseem them that occupy, beneath the shadow of their Lord, the station of such as are faithful to the one true God. Whensoever ye encounter a thirsty soul, give him to drink from the cup of everlasting life; and whensoever ye find a hearing ear, recite unto him the verses of God, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Compassionate. Unloose your tongues with kindly words and, should ye find the people inclined towards the Sanctuary of God, summon them to the truth; otherwise leave them to their own selves and to that condition which is the reality of the nethermost fire. Beware lest ye cast the pearls of inner meaning before the blind and the barren in heart, inasmuch as they are deprived of beholding the light and are unable to distinguish the worthless pebble from the precious and gleaming pearl. Wert thou for a thousand years to recite unto a stone the verses of wondrous glory, would it ever be affected by them or comprehend their significance? Nay, by thy Lord, the All-Merciful, the Most Compassionate! Wert thou to recite unto the deaf all the verses of God, would they hear a single letter thereof? Nay, by His ancient and glorious Beauty!

5.14Thus have We imparted unto thee the gems of divine wisdom and utterance, that thou mayest fix thy gaze upon thy Lord and rid thyself of all attachment to the world. May His spirit rest upon thee and upon them that abide within the habitation of holiness and that are endued with true constancy in the Cause of their Lord.

Book of the Covenant

6.1Although the Realm of Glory hath none of the vanities of the world, yet within the treasury of trust and resignation We have bequeathed to Our heirs an excellent and priceless Heritage. Earthly treasures We have not bequeathed, nor have We added such cares as they entail. By God! In earthly riches fear is hidden and peril is concealed. Consider ye and call to mind that which the All-Merciful hath revealed in the Qur'án: "Woe betide every slanderer and defamer, him that layeth up riches and counteth them." Fleeting are the riches of the world; all that perisheth and changeth is not, and hath never been, worthy of attention, except to a recognized measure.

6.2The aim of this Wronged One in sustaining woes and tribulations, in revealing the Holy Verses and in demonstrating proofs hath been naught but to quench the flame of hate and enmity, that the horizon of the hearts of men may be illumined with the light of concord and attain real peace and tranquillity. From the dawning-place of the divine Tablet the day-star of this utterance shineth resplendent, and it behoveth everyone to fix his gaze upon it: We exhort you, O peoples of the world, to observe that which will elevate your

station. Hold fast to the fear of God and firmly adhere to what is right. Verily I say, the tongue is for mentioning what is good; defile it not with unseemly talk. God hath forgiven what is past. Henceforward everyone should utter that which is meet and seemly, and should refrain from slander, abuse and whatever causeth sadness in men. Lofty is the station of man! Not long ago this exalted Word streamed forth from the treasury of Our Pen of Glory: Great and blessed is this Day—the Day in which all that lay latent in man hath been and will be made manifest. Lofty is the station of man, were he to hold fast to righteousness and truth and to remain firm and steadfast in the Cause. In the eyes of the All-Merciful a true man appeareth even as a firmament; its sun and moon are his sight and hearing, and his shining and resplendent character its stars. His is the loftiest station, and his influence educateth the world of being.

6.3 Every receptive soul who hath in this Day inhaled the fragrance of His garment and hath, with a pure heart, set his face towards the all-glorious Horizon is reckoned among the people of Bahá in the Crimson Book. Grasp ye, in My Name, the chalice of My loving-kindness; drink then your fill in My glorious and wondrous remembrance.

6.4 O ye that dwell on earth! The religion of God is for love and unity; make it not the cause of enmity or dissension. In the eyes of men of insight and the beholders of the Most Sublime Vision, whatsoever are the effective means for safeguarding and promoting the happiness and welfare of the children of men have already been revealed by the Pen of Glory. But the foolish ones of the earth, being nurtured in evil passions and desires, have remained heedless of the consummate wisdom of Him Who is, in truth, the All-Wise, while their words and deeds are prompted by idle fancies and vain imaginings.

6.5 O ye the loved ones and the trustees of God! Kings are the manifestations of the power, and the daysprings of the might and riches, of God. Pray ye on their behalf. He hath invested them with the rulership of the earth and hath singled out the hearts of men as His Own domain.

6.6 Conflict and contention are categorically forbidden in His Book. This is a decree of God in this Most Great Revelation. It is divinely preserved from annulment and is invested by Him with the splendour of His confirmation. Verily He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

6.7 It is incumbent upon everyone to aid those daysprings of authority and sources of command who are adorned with the ornament of equity and justice. Blessed are the rulers and the learned among the people of Bahá. They are My trustees among My servants and the manifestations of My commandments amidst My people. Upon them rest My glory, My blessings and My grace which have pervaded the world of being. In this connection the utterances revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas are such that from the horizon of their words the light of divine grace shineth luminous and resplendent.

6.8 O ye My Branches! A mighty force, a consummate power lieth concealed in the world of being. Fix your gaze upon it and upon its unifying influence, and not upon the differences which appear from it.

6.9 The Will of the divine Testator is this: It is incumbent upon the Aghsán, the Afnán and My kindred to turn, one and all, their faces towards the Most

Mighty Branch. Consider that which We have revealed in Our Most Holy Book: “When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.” The object of this sacred verse is none except the Most Mighty Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. Thus have We graciously revealed unto you Our potent Will, and I am verily the Gracious, the All-Bountiful. Verily God hath ordained the station of the Greater Branch [Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí] to be beneath that of the Most Great Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. He is in truth the Ordainer, the All-Wise. We have chosen “the Greater” after “the Most Great”, as decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

6.10 It is enjoined upon everyone to manifest love towards the Aghsán, but God hath not granted them any right to the property of others.

6.11 O ye My Aghsán, My Afnán and My kindred! We exhort you to fear God, to perform praiseworthy deeds and to do that which is meet and seemly and serveth to exalt your station. Verily I say, fear of God is the greatest commander that can render the Cause of God victorious, and the hosts which best befit this commander have ever been and are an upright character and pure and goodly deeds.

6.12 Say: O servants! Let not the means of order be made the cause of confusion and the instrument of union an occasion for discord. We fain would hope that the people of Bahá may be guided by the blessed words: “Say: All things are of God.” This exalted utterance is like unto water for quenching the fire of hate and enmity which smouldereth within the hearts and breasts of men. By this single utterance contending peoples and kindreds will attain the light of true unity. Verily He speaketh the truth and leadeth the way. He is the All-Powerful, the Exalted, the Gracious.

6.13 It is incumbent upon everyone to show courtesy to, and have regard for, the Aghsán, that thereby the Cause of God may be glorified and His Word exalted. This injunction hath time and again been mentioned and recorded in the Holy Writ. Well is it with him who is enabled to achieve that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days, hath prescribed for him. Ye are bidden moreover to respect the members of the Holy Household, the Afnán and the kindred. We further admonish you to serve all nations and to strive for the betterment of the world.

6.14 That which is conducive to the regeneration of the world and the salvation of the peoples and kindreds of the earth hath been sent down from the heaven of the utterance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. Give ye a hearing ear to the counsels of the Pen of Glory. Better is this for you than all that is on the earth. Unto this beareth witness My glorious and wondrous Book.

The Universal House of Justice

7.1 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....

7.2 We exhort the men of the House of Justice and command them to ensure the

protection and safeguarding of men, women and children. It is incumbent upon them to have the utmost regard for the interests of the people at all times and under all conditions. Blessed is the ruler who succoureth the captive, and the rich one who careth for the poor, and the just one who secureth from the wrong doer the rights of the downtrodden, and happy the trustee who observeth that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days hath prescribed unto him.

8.1 This passage, now written by the Pen of Glory, is accounted as part of the Most Holy Book: The men of God's House of Justice have been charged with the affairs of the people. They, in truth, are the Trustees of God among His servants and the daysprings of authority in His countries.

8.2 O people of God! That which traineth the world is Justice, for it is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment. These two pillars are the sources of life to the world. Inasmuch as for each day there is a new problem and for every problem an expedient solution, such affairs should be referred to the House of Justice that the members thereof may act according to the needs and requirements of the time. They that, for the sake of God, arise to serve His Cause, are the recipients of divine inspiration from the unseen Kingdom. It is incumbent upon all to be obedient unto them. All matters of State should be referred to the House of Justice, but acts of worship must be observed according to that which God hath revealed in His Book.

8.3 O people of Bahá! Ye are the dawning-places of the love of God and the daysprings of His loving-kindness. Defile not your tongues with the cursing and reviling of any soul, and guard your eyes against that which is not seemly. Set forth that which ye possess. If it be favourably received, your end is attained; if not, to protest is vain. Leave that soul to himself and turn unto the Lord, the Protector, the Self-Subsisting. Be not the cause of grief, much less of discord and strife. The hope is cherished that ye may obtain true education in the shelter of the tree of His tender mercies and act in accordance with that which God desireth. Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the drops of one ocean.

9.1 It behoveth the loved ones of God to occupy themselves under all circumstances with that which is conducive to the edification of human souls, the advancement of the world of being, and the exaltation of the Word of God, the realization of which dependeth upon the deliberations of the trustees of the House of Justice. Well is it with them that strive to render service to the world of humanity. The influence of these souls will lead the world from hardship to comfort, from poverty to wealth, and from abasement to glory. We beseech God to graciously aid them to observe piety and righteousness, and to open before their faces the portals of grace and mercy, of blessings and wealth. Potent is He to do what He pleaseth, and in His grasp are held the reins of all created things. He doeth and He ordaineth. He is the Supreme Ruler, the Ancient of Days, the Ordainer, the Omniscient.

10.1 Glory be to the Lord of the world, and thanks be to the Hands of His Cause, and praise be to the Trustees of His House of Justice, who, in their endeavours to raise aloft His Word and exalt His utterance, have renounced themselves and all created things, and are regardful of and tenaciously adhering to whatsoever will promote the Cause of God. We fain would hope that there may appear from

these chosen ones of God, who are related to the Most Great Name, that which in the realm of action shall be the king of deeds, and in the realm of speech the prince of utterances. Through the benevolent exertions of these souls, the world is radiant and luminous with the light of justice and equity. Glorified be the majesty of God, our Lord and the Lord of the Mighty Throne.

## II. Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

10

### The Manifestations of God

#### Attaining Knowledge of God

1.1 Know that the reality of the Divinity and the nature of the divine Essence is ineffable sanctity and absolute holiness; that is, it is exalted above and sanctified beyond every praise. All the attributes ascribed to the highest degrees of existence are, with regard to this station, mere imagination. The Invisible and Inaccessible can never be known; the absolute Essence can never be described. For the divine Essence is an all-encompassing reality, and all created things are encompassed. The all-encompassing must assuredly be greater than that which is encompassed, and thus the latter can in no wise discover the former or comprehend its reality. No matter how far human minds may advance, even attaining the highest degree of human comprehension, the uttermost limit of this comprehension is to behold the signs and attributes of God in the world of creation and not in the realm of Divinity. For the essence and the attributes of the all-glorious Lord are enshrined in the inaccessible heights of sanctity, and human minds and understandings will never find a path to that station. “The way is barred, and all seeking rejected.”

1.2 It is evident that whatsoever man understands is a consequence of his existence, and that man is a sign of the All-Merciful: How then can the consequence of the sign encompass the Creator of the sign? That is, how can human understanding, which is a consequence of man’s existence, comprehend God? Thus the reality of the Divinity lies hidden from all understanding and is concealed from the minds of all men, and to ascend to that station is in no wise possible.

2.1 Yet we ascribe certain names and attributes to the reality of the Divinity and praise Him for His sight, His hearing, His power, His life and knowledge. We affirm these names and attributes not to affirm the perfections of God, but to deny that He has any imperfections.

2.2 When we observe the contingent world, we see that ignorance is imperfection and knowledge is perfection, and thus we say that the sanctified Essence of the Divinity is all-knowing. Weakness is imperfection and power is perfection, and thus we say that that sanctified and divine Essence is all-powerful. It is not that we can understand His knowledge, His sight, His hearing, His power, or His life as they are in themselves: This is assuredly beyond our comprehension, for the essential names and attributes of God are identical with His Essence, and His Essence is sanctified above all understanding. If the essential attributes were not identical with the Essence, then there would be a multiplicity of pre-existences and the distinction between the Essence and the attributes would therefore also be firmly established and pre-existent. But this would imply an infinite chain of pre-existences, which is an evident error.

2.3 It follows that all these names, attributes, laudations, and praises apply to the Manifestations of God Themselves, and that all that we may construe or conceive besides them is sheer delusion, for we can never find a path to the Invisible and Inaccessible. Thus it is said: “All that ye vainly believe to have discerned and expressed in your subtlest terms is but a creature like unto you and returneth unto your own selves.”

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

2.5 Consider then how the peoples of the world are circling round their own vain imaginings and worshipping the idols of their own thoughts and fancies, without the least awareness of doing so. They regard these vain imaginings as that Reality which is sanctified above all understanding and exalted beyond every allusion. They consider themselves to be the proponents of the Divine Unity and all others as worshippers of idols, even though idols at least enjoy a mineral existence, whereas the idols of human thoughts and imaginations are sheer illusion and have not even the existence of stones.

3.1 Knowing God, therefore, means the comprehension and knowledge of His attributes and not of His Reality. And even this knowledge of His attributes extends only so far as human power and capacity permit, and remains wholly inadequate. Philosophy consists in comprehending, so far as human power permits, the realities of things as they are in themselves. The originated reality has no recourse but to comprehend the pre-existent attributes within the intrinsic limits of human capacity. The invisible realm of the Divinity is sanctified and exalted above the comprehension of all beings, and all that can be imagined is mere human understanding. The power of human understanding does not encompass the reality of the divine Essence: All that man can hope to achieve is to comprehend the attributes of the Divinity, the light of which is manifest and resplendent in the world and within the souls of men.

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

4.2 When, however, thou dost contemplate the innermost essence of all things, and the individuality of each, thou wilt behold the signs of thy Lord’s mercy in every created thing, and see the spreading rays of His Names and Attributes throughout all the realm of being, with evidences which none will deny save the froward and the unaware. Then wilt thou observe that the universe is a scroll that discloseth His hidden secrets, which are preserved in the well-guarded

Tablet. And not an atom of all the atoms in existence, not a creature from amongst the creatures but speaketh His praise and telleth of His attributes and names, revealeth the glory of His might and guideth to His oneness and His mercy: and none will gainsay this who hath ears to hear, eyes to see, and a mind that is sound.

4.3 And whensoever thou dost gaze upon creation all entire, and dost observe the very atoms thereof, thou wilt note that the rays of the Sun of Truth are shed upon all things and shining within them, and telling of that Day-Star's splendours, Its mysteries, and the spreading of Its lights. Look thou upon the trees, upon the blossoms and fruits, even upon the stones. Here too wilt thou behold the Sun's rays shed upon them, clearly visible within them, and manifested by them.

4.4 Shouldst thou, however, turn thy gaze unto a Mirror, brilliant, stainless, and pure, wherein the divine Beauty is reflected, therein wilt thou find the Sun shining with Its rays, Its heat, Its disc, Its fair form all entire. For each separate entity possesseth its allotted portion of the solar light and telleth of the Sun, but that Universal Reality in all Its splendour, that stainless Mirror Whose qualities are appropriate to the qualities of the Sun revealed within It—expresseth in their entirety the attributes of the Source of Glory. And that Universal Reality is Man, the divine Being, the Essence that abideth forever. "Say, Call upon God, or call upon the All-Merciful; whichsoever ye call upon, most beauteous are His Names."

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

#### True Religion

6.1 It is certain that man's highest distinction is to be lowly before and obedient to his God; that his greatest glory, his most exalted rank and honour, depend on his close observance of the divine commands and prohibitions. Religion is the light of the world, and the progress, achievement, and happiness of man result from obedience to the laws set down in the holy Books. Briefly, it is demonstrable that in this life, both outwardly and inwardly the mightiest of structures, the most solidly established, the most enduring, standing guard over the world, assuring both the spiritual and the material perfections of mankind, and protecting the happiness and the civilization of society—is religion.

6.2 It is true that there are foolish individuals who have never properly examined the fundamentals of the divine religions, who have taken as their criterion the behaviour of a few religious hypocrites and measured all religious persons by that yardstick, and have on this account concluded that religions are an obstacle to progress, a divisive factor and a cause of malevolence and enmity among peoples. They have not even observed this much,

that the principles of the divine religions can hardly be evaluated by the acts of those who only claim to follow them. For every excellent thing, peerless though it may be, can still be diverted to the wrong ends. A lighted lamp in the hands of an ignorant child or of the blind will not dispel the surrounding darkness nor light up the house—it will set both the bearer and the house on fire. Can we, in such an instance, blame the lamp? No, by the Lord God! To the seeing, a lamp is a guide and will show him his path; but it is a disaster to the blind....

6.3 It is certain that the greatest of instrumentalities for achieving the advancement and the glory of man, the supreme agency for the enlightenment and the redemption of the world, is love and fellowship and unity among all the members of the human race. Nothing can be effected in the world, not even conceivably, without unity and agreement, and the perfect means for engendering fellowship and union is true religion....

6.4 With the advent of the Prophets of God, their power of creating a real union, one which is both external and of the heart, draws together malevolent peoples who have been thirsting for one another's blood, into the one shelter of the Word of God. Then a hundred thousand souls become as one soul, and unnumbered individuals emerge as one body....

6.5 Our purpose is to show how true religion promotes the civilization and honour, the prosperity and prestige, the learning and advancement of a people once abject, enslaved and ignorant, and how, when it falls into the hands of religious leaders who are foolish and fanatical, it is diverted to the wrong ends, until this greatest of splendours turns into blackest night.

7.1 The divine religions must be the cause of oneness among men, and the means of unity and love; they must promulgate universal peace, free man from every prejudice, bestow joy and gladness, exercise kindness to all men and do away with every difference and distinction. Just as Bahá'u'lláh addressing the world of humanity saith: "O people! Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch." At most it is this, that some souls are ignorant, they must be educated; some are sick, they must be healed; some are still of tender age, they must be helped to attain maturity, and the utmost kindness must be shown to them. This is the conduct of the people of Bahá.

8.1 The religion of God consists of two parts: One is the very foundation and belongs to the spiritual realm; that is, it pertains to spiritual virtues and divine qualities. This part suffers neither change nor alteration: It is the Holy of Holies, which constitutes the essence of the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, and which will endure throughout all the prophetic Dispensations. It will never be abrogated, for it consists in spiritual rather than material truth. It is faith, knowledge, certitude, justice, piety, high-mindedness, trustworthiness, love of God, and charity. It is mercy to the poor, assistance to the oppressed, generosity to the needy, and upliftment of the fallen. It is purity, detachment, humility, forbearance, patience, and constancy. These are divine qualities. These commandments will never be abrogated, but will remain in force and effect for all eternity. These human virtues are renewed in every Dispensation; for at the close of each Dispensation the spiritual law of God,

which consists in the human virtues, vanishes in substance and persists only in form....

8.2 Those foundations of the religion of God, however, which are spiritual and consist in human virtues, are never subject to abrogation but are eternal and everlasting, and are renewed in every prophetic Dispensation.

8.3 The second part of the religion of God, which pertains to the material world and which concerns such things as fasting; prayer; worship; marriage; divorce; manumission; legal rulings; transactions; and penalties and punishments for murder, assault, theft, and injury, is changed and altered in every prophetic Dispensation and may be abrogated—for policies, transactions, punishments, and other laws are bound to change according to the exigencies of the time.

9.1 To the wise ones of the world who are lovers of the truth it is clear and evident that the purpose of the appearance of the holy and divine Manifestations, the revelation of Books, and the establishment of the religion of God is to foster fellowship and love amongst the members of the human race. Religion is the foundation of spiritual unity, the unity of thought, the unity of perception, the unity of custom. It is the spiritual tie that bindeth all people together so that minds and souls, through divine education, may grow and develop, seek out the truth, and attain unto the highest degrees of human perfection, and that divine civilization may thereby be established. For in the world of being there are two kinds of civilization. One is material civilization, which serveth the world of bodies, and the other is divine civilization, which serveth the world of morality. The founders of material civilization are the wise ones of the world, while the founders of divine civilization are the holy Manifestations of God. Religion is the foundation of divine civilization. Material civilization is like the body, and divine civilization is like the spirit. The body, without spirit, is dead, even should it possess the utmost grace and beauty.

9.2 In short, by religion is meant the necessary relationships for the oneness of the world of humanity. This is the foundation of the religion of God! This is eternal grace! This is the teachings and laws of God! This is the light of everlasting life! Alas, a thousand times alas, that this firm foundation hath been abandoned and obscured by the followers of all religions, while they have fabricated imitations that bear no relationship to the foundation of the Faith of God. And as these imitations all differ from one another, the differences lead to dissension, and dissension endeth in war. The blood of the hapless ones is spilled upon the ground, their possessions are looted and pillaged, and their children are orphaned and made captive.

9.3 Thus, religion, which should be the source of harmony, bringeth about estrangement. Religion, which should be as pure honey, hath become a deadly poison. Religion, which should be the source of the illumination of the human world, hath become the cause of its darkness. Religion, which is the source of eternal life, hath become the instrument of death. Thus, as long as these imitations persist and these snares of hypocrisy remain, religion will bring naught to humanity save detriment and loss. Therefore must one entirely discard these outworn and mouldering imitations that are practised by the religions and seek out the fundamentals of the religion of God. Because the foundation of all

the divine religions is one and is the truth—and truth doth not admit multiplicity and division—therefore will absolute unity and fellowship amongst all religions be attained, and the religion of God will be unveiled in all its beauty and perfection before the assemblage of the world.

10.1 The body of the world can be compared to that of a man, and the Prophets and Messengers of God to able physicians. A human being does not remain always in the same condition: Different ailments occur and each calls for a specific remedy. Thus an able physician does not treat all ailments in the same manner but varies the treatments and remedies in accordance with the requirements of these various ailments and conditions. One person may suffer severely from an ailment caused by an excess of heat: The able physician performe administers cooling medicines. When, at another time, this person's constitution changes and the heat is supplanted by an excess of cold, the physician, of necessity, sets aside the cooling medicines and prescribes heating ones. This change and alteration is required by the condition of the patient and is an evident proof of the skill of the physician....

10.2 In brief, our meaning is that the change and transformation in the conditions and exigencies of the times is the cause of the abrogation of religious laws, for the time comes when those earlier commandments no longer suit the prevailing conditions. Consider how greatly the exigencies of the modern age differ from those of ancient and of medieval times! Is it possible that the commandments of former centuries could be enforced in these latter times? It is clear and evident that this would be entirely impossible.

Likewise, after the lapse of many centuries, that which is called for at the present time will no longer be suited to the needs of that future age, and change and transformation will be inevitable.

11.1 Briefly, the universal Manifestations of God are aware of the truths underlying the mysteries of all created things, and thus They found a religion that is based upon, and consonant with, the prevailing condition of humanity. For religion consists in the necessary relationships deriving from the realities of things. If the Manifestation of God—the divine Lawgiver—were not informed of the realities of things, if He did not understand the necessary relationships deriving from these realities, He would assuredly be incapable of establishing a religion consonant with the needs and conditions of the time. The Prophets of God, the universal Manifestations, are even as skilled physicians; the world of being is as the body of man; and the divine religions are as the treatment and remedy. The physician must be fully aware and informed of all the parts and organs, the constitution and condition of the patient, in order to prescribe an effective remedy. Indeed, it is from the disease itself that the physician deduces the remedy, for he first diagnoses the ailment and then treats its underlying cause. Until the ailment is properly diagnosed, how can any treatment or remedy be prescribed? The physician must therefore have a thorough knowledge of the constitution, the parts, organs, and condition of the patient, and be likewise well acquainted with every disease and every remedy, in order to prescribe the appropriate cure.

11.2 Religion, then, consists in the necessary relationships deriving from the reality of things. The universal Manifestations of God, being aware of the

mysteries of creation, are fully informed of these necessary relationships and establish them as the religion of God.

#### The Need for a Divine Educator

12.1 All humankind are as children in a school, and the Dawning-Points of Light, the Sources of divine revelation, are the teachers, wondrous and without peer. In the school of realities they educate these sons and daughters, according to teachings from God, and foster them in the bosom of grace, so that they may develop along every line, show forth the excellent gifts and blessings of the Lord, and combine human perfections; that they may advance in all aspects of human endeavour, whether outward or inward, hidden or visible, material or spiritual, until they make of this mortal world a widespread mirror, to reflect that other world which dieth not.

13.1 Now observe that it is education that brings East and West under man's dominion, produces all these marvellous crafts, promotes these mighty arts and sciences, and gives rise to these new discoveries and undertakings. Were it not for an educator, the means of comfort, civilization, and human virtues could in no wise have been acquired. If a man is left alone in a wilderness where he sees none of his own kind, he will undoubtedly become a mere animal. It is therefore clear that an educator is needed.

13.2 But education is of three kinds: material, human, and spiritual. Material education aims at the growth and development of the body, and consists in securing its sustenance and obtaining the means of its ease and comfort. This education is common to both man and animal.

13.3 Human education, however, consists in civilization and progress, that is, sound governance, social order, human welfare, commerce and industry, arts and sciences, momentous discoveries, and great undertakings, which are the central features distinguishing man from the animal.

13.4 As to divine education, it is the education of the Kingdom and consists in acquiring divine perfections. This is indeed true education, for by its virtue man becomes the focal centre of divine blessings and the embodiment of the verse "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." This is the ultimate goal of the world of humanity.

13.5 Now, we need an educator who can be at the same time a material, a human, and a spiritual educator, that his authority may have effect at every degree of existence. And should anyone say, "I am endowed with perfect reason and comprehension, and have no need for such an educator", he would be denying the obvious. It is as though a child were to say, "I have no need of education, but will act and seek the perfections of existence according to my own thinking and intelligence", or as though a blind man were to claim, "I have no need of sight, for there are many blind people who get by."

13.6 It is therefore clear and evident that man stands in need of an educator. This educator must undeniably be perfect in every way and distinguished above all men. For if he were like others he could never be their educator, particularly since he must at once be their material, human, and spiritual educator. That is, he must organize and administer their material affairs and establish a social order, that they may aid and assist each other in securing the means of livelihood and that their material affairs may be ordered and

arranged in every respect.

13.7 He must likewise lay the foundations of human education—that is, he must so educate human minds and thoughts that they may become capable of substantive progress; that science and knowledge may expand; that the realities of things, the mysteries of the universe, and the properties of all that exists may be revealed; that learning, discoveries, and major undertakings may day by day increase; and that matters of the intellect may be deduced from and conveyed through the sensible.

13.8 He must also impart spiritual education, so that minds may apprehend the metaphysical world, breathe the sanctified breaths of the Holy Spirit, and enter into relationship with the Concourse on high, and that human realities may become the manifestations of divine blessings, that perchance all the names and attributes of God may be reflected in the mirror of the human reality and the meaning of the blessed verse “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness” may be realized.

13.9 It is clear, however, that mere human power is incapable of fulfilling this great office, and that the results of human thought alone cannot secure such bounties. How can a single person, with no aid or assistance, lay the foundations of such a lofty edifice? A divine and spiritual power is therefore needed to enable him to carry out this mission. Behold! One sanctified Soul revives the world of humanity, transforms the face of the globe, develops the minds, quickens the souls, inaugurates a new life, establishes new foundations, orders the world, gathers the nations and religions under the shadow of one banner, delivers man from the realm of baseness and deficiency, and exhorts and encourages him to develop his innate and acquired perfections. Certainly nothing short of a divine power could accomplish this feat! One must examine this matter fairly, as this indeed is an occasion for fairness.

13.10 A Cause which all the governments and peoples of the earth, notwithstanding all their powers and their armies, are unable to promote and promulgate, one holy Soul promulgates without aid or assistance! Can this be accomplished through the agency of mere human power? No, by God!...

13.11 It has thus been established by rational arguments that the world of existence stands in utmost need of an educator, and that its education must be achieved through a celestial power. There is no doubt that this celestial power is divine revelation, and that the world must be educated through this power which transcends human power.

14.1 It is clear and evident that the innate nature and reality of all things is capable of manifesting two kinds of perfections. One is innate perfections, which require no intermediary and are purely the creation of God. The other is acquired perfections, which are attained through the training of a true educator.

14.2 Consider the outward realities: The trees, flowers, and fruits manifest, on the one hand, an innate grace and vitality which is purely a divine bestowal, and, on the other, an ineffable sweetness and beauty which proceedeth from the tender care of the gardener. For left to themselves they would become an untamed thicket; fail to bear their abundance of blossoms, flowers, and fruits; and be fit only for the fire. Once they are brought under the tender care and

attention of the cultivator, however, they are transformed into gardens, bowers, and orchards; bring forth flowers and fruits; and adorn the face of the earth with blossoms and sweet herbs.

14.3 The same holdeth true of human society: Were people to be left to their own devices they would become even as the creeping things of the earth and be numbered with the beasts of the field. They would learn the ways of ferocity, cruelty, and bloodthirstiness, and be consumed with the fire of remoteness and rebellion.

14.4 All humanity are pupils in the school of the world and are afflicted and enfeebled by chronic ills. Those sanctified Beings, the Messengers and Chosen Ones of God, are the Instructors of the assemblage of the All-Merciful and the Physicians of the dispensary of the All-Glorious. They are the Heralds of His providence and the Luminaries of the firmament of His guidance. They appear so that the flame of inward and outward perfections that lieth dormant within the lamp of the human reality may be ignited through that fire which the hand of God hath kindled, and that the chronic ills that afflict humankind may be eradicated through the bounty of the divine grace and the bestowals of a Christ-like Spirit.

14.5 It followeth from this clear argument that human society requireth the care and training of a true Educator and that human souls stand in need of a power that can regulate, bind, restrain, deter, encourage, impel, and attract them. For unless the garden of creation be tended by a loving gardener, sustained by the manifold grace of the one true God, and administered by the just policies of the government, it will never acquire vitality and grace, nor will it prosper and flourish.

14.6 This power to deter and restrain, to govern and regulate, to lead and impel is of two kinds. The first agency of protection and deterrence is political power, which pertaineth to the physical world. It ensureth the material well-being of humanity; preserveth the life, property, and honour of all; and is the source of the greatness and virtue of this noble race. The centre of the operation of this political power and the pivot of the circle of this divine bounty are the just sovereigns, faithful trustees, wise ministers, and courageous commanders.

14.7 The other educator and regulator of the world of humanity is the sanctified power of the spirit, the divinely revealed Scriptures, the Prophets of God, the heavenly souls, and the divinely learned. For these repositories of God's revelation and daysprings of His inspiration educate the hearts and souls of humanity, rectify their characters, refine their conduct, and inspire the righteous among them. That is, these sanctified beings, even as a force born of the spirit, deliver the souls of men from the evils of a corrupt character, the darkness of reprehensible attributes, and the defilement of the realm of existence, and thus illumine them with the light of human virtues, divine attributes, and heavenly characteristics and qualities, so that the shining truth of the words "Hallowed be the Lord, the most excellent of all creators" and the full glory of the utterance "We created man in the most excellent of forms" may be realized within the sacred reality of man. It is through the liberal effusions of the grace of these daysprings of the signs and

verses of God that pure and subtle human realities become the focal centre of the blessings of the All-Merciful.

15.1 Prophets are in general of two kinds. Some are independent Prophets Who are followed, while others are not independent and are themselves followers.

15.2 The independent Prophets are each the Author of a divine religion and the Founder of a new Dispensation. At Their advent the world is clothed in a new attire, a new religion is established, and a new Book revealed. These Prophets acquire the outpouring grace of the divine Reality without an intermediary. Their radiance is an essential radiance like that of the sun, which is luminous in and of itself and whose luminosity is an essential requirement rather than being acquired from another star: They are like the sun and not the moon. These Daysprings of the morn of Divine Unity are the fountainheads of divine grace and the mirrors of the Essence of Reality.

15.3 The other kind of Prophets are followers and promulgators, for their station is contingent rather than independent. They acquire divine grace from the independent Prophets and seek the light of guidance from the reality of universal prophethood. They are like the moon, which is not luminous and radiant in and of itself but which receives its light from the sun.

15.4 The universal Prophets Who have appeared independently include Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh.... For the independent Prophets are founders; that is, They establish a new religion, recreate the souls, regenerate the morals of society, and promulgate a new way of life and a new standard of conduct. Through Them a new Dispensation appears and a new religion is inaugurated. Their advent is even as the springtime, when all earthly things don a new garment and find a new life.

The Power and Perfections of the Divine Manifestations

16.1 Know that, while the Manifestations of God possess infinite virtues and perfections, They occupy only three stations: The first is the material station; the second is the human station, which is that of the rational soul; and the third is that of divine manifestation and heavenly splendour.

16.2 As for the material station, it has an origin in time, for it is composed of the elements, and every composition must ultimately be decomposed. It is indeed impossible for composition not to be followed by disintegration.

16.3 The second station is that of the rational soul, which is the human reality. This also has a beginning, and the Manifestations of God share it in common with all humanity.

16.4 The third station is that of divine manifestation and heavenly splendour, which is the Word of God, the everlasting Grace, and the Holy Spirit. This station has neither beginning nor end; for firstness and lastness pertain to the contingent world and not to the world of God. For God the beginning and the end are one and the same. Similarly, the reckoning of days, weeks, months, and years—of yesterday and today—is made with respect to the earth; but in the sun such things are unknown: There is neither yesterday, nor today, nor tomorrow, neither months nor years—all are equal. Likewise, the Word of God is sanctified above all these conditions and exalted beyond every law, constraint, or limitation that may exist in the contingent world.

16.5 Know that, although human souls have existed upon the earth for a myriad

ages and cycles, the human soul is nonetheless originated. And since it is a sign of God, once it has come into being it is everlasting. The human spirit has a beginning but no end: It endures forever. Likewise, the various species found upon the earth have an origin in time; for it is acknowledged by all that there was a time when these species existed nowhere on the face of the earth, and indeed a time when the earth itself did not exist. But the world of existence has always been, for it is not confined to this terrestrial globe.

16.6 Our meaning is that, although human souls are originated, they are nevertheless immortal, enduring, and everlasting. For the world of things is a world of imperfection in relation to that of man, and the world of man is a world of perfection in relation to that of things. When imperfect things reach the stage of perfection, they become everlasting. This is meant as an example: Seek to grasp the true intent.

16.7 Now, the reality of prophethood, which is the Word of God and the state of perfect divine manifestation, has neither beginning nor end, but its radiance varies like that of the sun. For example, it dawned above the sign of Christ with the utmost splendour and radiance, and this is eternal and everlasting. See how many world-conquering kings, how many wise ministers and rulers have come and gone, each and all fading into oblivion—whereas even now the breezes of Christ still waft, His light still shines, His call is still upraised, His banner is still unfurled, His armies still do battle, His voice still rings sweetly, His clouds still rain down life-giving showers, His lightning still streaks forth, His glory is still clear and indisputable, His splendour is still radiant and luminous; and the same holds true of every soul that abides beneath His shade and partakes of His light.

16.8 It is therefore evident that the Manifestations of God have three stations: the physical station, the station of the rational soul, and the station of divine manifestation and heavenly splendour. The corporeal station will inevitably perish. As to the station of the rational soul, despite having a beginning, it has no end and is endowed with everlasting life. But as to that holy Reality of which Christ says “the Father is in the Son”, it has neither beginning nor end: Its “beginning” refers merely to His revelation of His own station. Thus, by way of analogy, He likens His silence to sleep: A man who is silent is like one who is asleep, and when he speaks, it is as though he has awakened. And yet the sleeping and the wakeful man are one and the same person: No change has taken place in his station, his loftiness, sublimity, inner reality, or innate nature.

17.1 Consider the world of existence, that is, the material creation. The solar system is wrapped in darkness. Within its circumference, the sun is the centre of all light, and all the associated planets revolve around it and are illumined by the outpourings of its bounty. The sun is the source of life and light, and is the cause of the growth and development of all things within the solar system. Were the bounty of the sun to cease, no living thing could continue to exist therein: All things would grow dark and be reduced to naught. It is therefore clear and evident that the sun is the centre of all light and the source of the life of all things in the solar system.

17.2 In like manner, the holy Manifestations of God are the focal Centres of the

light of truth, the Wellsprings of the hidden mysteries, and the Source of the effusions of divine love. They cast Their effulgence upon the realm of hearts and minds and bestow grace everlasting upon the world of the spirits. They confer spiritual life and shine with the splendour of inner truths and meanings. The enlightenment of the realm of thought proceeds from those Centres of light and Exponents of mysteries. Were it not for the grace of the revelation and instruction of those sanctified Beings, the world of souls and the realm of thought would become darkness upon darkness. Were it not for the sound and true teachings of those Exponents of mysteries, the human world would become the arena of animal characteristics and qualities, all existence would become a vanishing illusion, and true life would be lost. That is why it is said in the Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word”; that is, it was the source of all life.

17.3 Now consider the pervasive influence of the sun upon all earthly beings, and behold what visible effects and outcomes result from its proximity or remoteness, its rising or setting. At one time it is autumn, at another it is spring. At one time it is summer, at another it is winter. When the sun crosses the equinox, the life-giving spring appears in all its splendour, and when it reaches the summer solstice, the fruits attain their full maturity, grains and plants yield their produce, and earthly things attain the plenitude of their growth and development.

17.4 In like manner, when the holy Manifestation of God, Who is the Sun of the world of creation, casts His splendour upon the world of hearts, minds, and spirits, a spiritual springtime is ushered in and a new life is unveiled. The power of the matchless springtide appears and its marvellous gifts are beheld. Thus you observe that, with the advent of each of the Manifestations of God, astonishing progress was attained in the realm of human minds, thoughts, and spirits. Consider, for example, the progress that has been achieved in this divine age in the world of minds and thoughts—and this is only the beginning of the dawn! Erelong you will witness how these renewed bounties and heavenly teachings have flooded this darksome world with their light and transformed this sorrow-laden realm into the all-highest Paradise.

18.1 Briefly, Bahá'u'lláh says that “He Who is the Dawning-place of God’s Cause” is the manifestation of “He doeth whatsoever He willeth”, that this station is reserved to that sanctified Being, and that others receive no share of this essential perfection. That is, since the essential infallibility of the universal Manifestations of God has been established, whatsoever proceeds from Them is identical with the truth and conformable to reality. They are not under the shadow of the former religion. Whatsoever They say is the utterance of God, and whatsoever They do is a righteous deed, and to no believer is given the right to object; rather must he show forth absolute submission in this regard, for the Manifestation of God acts with consummate wisdom, and human minds may be incapable of grasping the hidden wisdom of certain matters. Therefore, whatsoever the universal Manifestation of God says and does is the very essence of wisdom and conformable to reality.

18.2 Now, if certain souls fail to grasp the mysteries concealed within a given commandment or action of the True One, they should raise no objection, for the

universal Manifestation of God “doeth whatsoever He willeth”. How often has it happened that a wise, accomplished, and sagacious person took a course of action, and those who were incapable of grasping its wisdom objected and questioned why he said or did thus. This objection is prompted by ignorance, and the wisdom of that wise man is free and sanctified from error.

18.3 In like manner, a skilled physician “doeth whatsoever he willeth” in treating the patient, and the latter has no right to object. Whatsoever the physician may say or do, the same is sound and true, and he must be regarded by all as the embodiment of “He doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth.” The physician will doubtless prescribe remedies that are at variance with popular notions, but is it permissible for those who have no knowledge of science and medicine to object? No, by God! On the contrary, they must all acquiesce and follow whatsoever the skilled physician prescribes. Thus, the skilled physician “doeth whatsoever he willeth”, and the patients have no share in this station. First, the skill of the physician must be ascertained, and once this has been done, he “doeth whatsoever he willeth”.

18.4 Likewise, a general who is unrivalled in the art of war “doeth whatsoever he willeth” in all that he says or commands, and the same holds true of the ship’s captain who masters the art of seafaring, and of the True Educator Who possesses all human perfections: They do whatsoever they will in all that they say and command.

18.5 In sum, the meaning of “He doeth whatsoever He willeth” is that if the Manifestation of God issues a command, enforces a law, or performs an action whose wisdom His followers cannot grasp, they should not think for a moment of questioning His words or actions. All souls are under the shadow of the universal Manifestation, must submit to the authority of the religion of God, and are not to deviate so much as a hairsbreadth. Rather, they must conform their every act and deed to the religion of God, and should they deviate from it they will be reprovved and held accountable before God. It is certain that they have no share of the station “He doeth whatsoever He willeth”, for it is confined to the universal Manifestation of God.

11

The Báb and Bahá’u’lláh

The Ministry of the Báb

1.1 Mullá Husayn and some of his disciples departed from Iraq, made for Persia, and were taken up with the search till they entered the city of Shíráz. As Mullá Husayn had met the Báb before in Karbilá and knew Him, he became His guest. On the night of the fifth of Jamádíyu’l-Avval, Mullá Husayn was seated in the presence of the Báb, who was preparing the tea. As the Báb was serving the tea, He recited certain verses. Mullá Husayn was amazed and astonished to hear a young man, with no religious education or training in the Arabic tongue, recite verses of the utmost eloquence and power, a feat which he could have never thought possible. This led to his awakening and allegiance. The following day he told his disciples and others that he had found the Object of their search and proceeded to describe and portray Him, but he concealed His identity and did not divulge His name. However, he so extolled His attributes that his disciples and the others were enthralled with this news

and with unrelenting thirst continued to search for the life-giving waters. Finally, after a few days, he specified His blessed Name. A great commotion ensued. Seventeen people bore allegiance to Him, and the letter of Táhirih, which was with a certain Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí, was presented to the Báb. For Táhirih had given him this letter and asked him to present it to the Promised One when once they had found Him....

1.2 Thus Táhirih became the eighteenth believer.

2.1 As for the Báb—may my soul be His sacrifice!—it was at a young age, that is, in the twenty-fifth year of His blessed life, that He arose to proclaim His Cause.... Alone, He undertook a task that can scarcely be conceived, for the Persians are known throughout the world for their religious fanaticism. This illustrious Being arose with such power as to shake the foundations of the religious laws, customs, manners, morals, and habits of Persia, and instituted a new law, faith, and religion. Though the eminent men of the State, the majority of the people, and the leaders of religion arose one and all to destroy and annihilate Him, He single-handedly withstood them and set all of Persia in motion. How numerous the divines, the leaders, and the inhabitants of that land who with perfect joy and gladness offered up their lives in His path and hastened to the field of martyrdom!

2.2 The government, the nation, the clergy, and prominent leaders sought to extinguish His light, but to no avail. At last His moon rose, His star shone forth, His foundation was secured, and His horizon was flooded with light. He trained a large multitude through divine education and exerted a marvellous influence upon the thoughts, customs, morals, and manners of the Persians. He proclaimed the glad-tidings of the manifestation of the Sun of Bahá to all His followers and readied them for faith and certitude.

2.3 The manifestation of such marvellous signs and mighty undertakings, the influence exerted upon the thoughts and minds of the people, the laying of the foundations of progress, and the establishment of the prerequisites of success and prosperity by a young merchant constitute the greatest proof that He was a universal Educator—a fact that no fair-minded person would ever hesitate to acknowledge.

3.1 This is 23 May, the anniversary of the message and Declaration of the Báb. It is a blessed day and the dawn of manifestation, for the appearance of the Báb was the early light of the true morn, whereas the manifestation of the Blessed Beauty, Bahá’u’lláh, was the shining forth of the sun. Therefore, it is a blessed day, the inception of the heavenly bounty, the beginning of the divine effulgence. On this day in 1844 the Báb was sent forth heralding and proclaiming the Kingdom of God, announcing the glad tidings of the coming of Bahá’u’lláh and withstanding the opposition of the whole Persian nation. Some of the Persians followed Him. For this they suffered the most grievous difficulties and severe ordeals. They withstood the tests with wonderful power and sublime heroism. Thousands were cast into prison, punished, persecuted and martyred. Their homes were pillaged and destroyed, their possessions confiscated. They sacrificed their lives most willingly and remained unshaken in their faith to the very end. Those wonderful souls are the lamps of God, the stars of sanctity shining gloriously from the eternal horizon of the will of

God.

3.2 The Báb was subjected to bitter persecution in Shíráz, where He first proclaimed His mission and message. A period of famine afflicted that region, and the Báb journeyed to Isfahán. There the learned men rose against Him in great hostility. He was arrested and sent to Tabríz. From thence He was transferred to Mákú and finally imprisoned in the strong castle of Chihríq. Afterward He was martyred in Tabríz.

3.3 This is merely an outline of the history of the Báb. He withstood all persecutions and bore every suffering and ordeal with unflinching strength. The more His enemies endeavoured to extinguish that flame, the brighter it became. Day by day His Cause spread and strengthened. During the time when He was among the people He was constantly heralding the coming of Bahá'u'lláh. In all His Books and Tablets He mentioned Bahá'u'lláh and announced the glad tidings of His manifestation, prophesying that He would reveal Himself in the ninth year. He said that in the ninth year "you will attain to all happiness"; in the ninth year "you will be blessed with the meeting of the Promised One of Whom I have spoken". He mentioned the Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh, by the title "Him Whom God shall make manifest". In brief, that blessed Soul offered His very life in the pathway of Bahá'u'lláh, even as it is recorded in historical writings and records. In His first Book, the Best of Stories, He says, "O Remnant of God! I am wholly sacrificed to Thee; I am content with curses in Thy path; I crave nought but to be slain in Thy love; and God, the Supreme, sufficeth as an eternal protection."

3.4 Consider how the Báb endured difficulties and tribulations; how He gave His life in the Cause of God; how He was attracted to the love of the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh; and how He announced the glad tidings of His manifestation. We must follow His heavenly example; we must be self-sacrificing and aglow with the fire of the love of God. We must partake of the bounty and grace of the Lord, for the Báb has admonished us to arise in service to the Cause of God, to be absolutely severed from all else save God during the day of the Blessed Perfection, Bahá'u'lláh, to be completely attracted by the love of Bahá'u'lláh, to love all humanity for His sake, to be lenient and merciful to all for Him and to upbuild the oneness of the world of humanity. Therefore, this day, 23 May, is the anniversary of a blessed event.

4.1 Our meaning is that all have been promised the advent of two successive Manifestations. It has been prophesied that, through these twin Manifestations, the earth will become another earth; all existence will be renewed; the contingent world will be clothed with the robe of a new life; justice and righteousness will encompass the globe; hatred and enmity will disappear; whatever is the cause of division among peoples, races, and nations will be obliterated; and that which ensures unity, harmony, and concord will be promoted. The heedless will arise from their slumber; the blind will see; the deaf will hear; the dumb will speak; the sick will be healed; the dead will be quickened; and war will give way to peace. Enmity will be transmuted into love; the root causes of contention and strife will be eliminated; mankind will attain true felicity; this world will mirror forth the heavenly Kingdom; and

the earth below will become the throne of the realm above. All nations will become one nation; all religions will become one religion; all mankind will become one family and one kindred; all the regions of the earth will become as one; racial, national, personal, linguistic, and political prejudices will be effaced and extinguished; and all will attain everlasting life under the shadow of the Lord of Hosts.

#### The Life of Bahá'u'lláh

5.1 Bahá'u'lláh appeared at a time when Persia was plunged in the darkest ignorance and consumed by the blindest fanaticism. You have no doubt read at length the accounts that European histories provide of the morals, manners, and thoughts of the Persians during the last few centuries, and these require no repetition. Suffice it to say that Persia had sunk to such abysmal depths that foreign travellers would all deplore that a country which had in former times occupied the pinnacle of greatness and civilization had by then fallen into such abasement, desolation, and ruin, and that its people had been reduced to utter wretchedness.

5.2 It was at such a time that Bahá'u'lláh appeared. His father was a court minister, not a divine, and it is well known throughout Persia that He never studied in a school or associated with the learned and the divines. He passed the early part of His life in the utmost comfort and happiness, and His companions and associates were Persians of rank rather than learned men.

5.3 As soon as the Báb revealed His Cause, Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed: "This great Man is the Lord of the righteous, and it is incumbent upon all to bear allegiance unto Him." He arose to promote the Cause of the Báb, adducing decisive proofs and conclusive arguments of His truth. Although the divines of the nation had obliged the Persian government to exert the most vehement opposition; although they had all issued decrees ordering the massacre, pillage, persecution, and annihilation of the Báb's followers; and although throughout the land the people had undertaken to kill, burn, and plunder them, and even harass their women and children—despite all this, Bahá'u'lláh was engaged, with the utmost constancy and composure, in exalting the word of the Báb. Nor did He seek for a moment to conceal Himself, but associated openly and visibly with His enemies, occupied Himself with adducing proofs and arguments, and became renowned for exalting the Word of God. Time and again He suffered intense adversities, and at every moment His life was in grave danger.

5.4 He was put in chains and thrown into a subterranean dungeon. His extensive hereditary possessions were entirely plundered, He was four times exiled from land to land, and in the end He came to abide in the Most Great Prison.

5.5 Notwithstanding all this, the call of God was ceaselessly raised and the fame of His Cause was noised abroad. Such were the knowledge, learning, and perfections He evinced that everyone in Persia was astonished. All the learned people—friend and foe alike—who attained His presence in Tihrán, Baghdád, Constantinople, Adrianople, and 'Akká received a complete and convincing answer to their every question. All readily acknowledged that in every perfection He was peerless and unique throughout the world.

5.6 It often happened in Baghdád that Muslim, Jewish, and Christian divines and

European men of learning would be gathered in His blessed presence. They would each ask a different question and, despite their varying beliefs, would each receive so complete and convincing a reply as to be fully satisfied. Even the Persian divines residing in Karbilá and Najaf chose a learned man by the name of Mullá Hasan ‘Amú and dispatched him as their representative. He came into His blessed presence and asked a number of questions on their behalf, to which Bahá’u’lláh responded. He then said, “The divines fully recognize the extent of your knowledge and attainments, and it is acknowledged by all that you are without peer or equal in every field of learning. It is moreover evident that you have never studied or acquired this learning. But the divines say that they are not satisfied with this and cannot acknowledge the truth of your claim on the basis of your knowledge and attainments alone. They therefore ask you to produce a miracle in order to satisfy and assure their hearts.”

5.7 Bahá’u’lláh replied, “Although they have no right to ask this, since it is for God to test His creatures and not for them to test God, yet their request is in this case accepted and allowed. But the Cause of God is not a theatrical stage where every hour a new performance may be offered and every day a new demand presented. For otherwise the Cause of God would become the plaything of children.

5.8 “Let the divines, therefore, assemble and choose unanimously one miracle, and let them stipulate in writing that once it has been performed they will no longer entertain any doubt, but will all acknowledge and confess the truth of this Cause. Let them seal that paper and bring it to Me. They must fix this as the criterion of truth: If it be performed, they should have no remaining doubt; and if not, We shall stand convicted of imposture.”

5.9 That learned man arose and replied, “There is no more to be said.” He kissed Bahá’u’lláh’s knee, even though he was not a believer, and departed. Then he gathered the divines and conveyed Bahá’u’lláh’s message. They consulted together and said, “This man is a magician; perchance he will perform some enchantment, and then we will have no recourse”, and so they dared not respond.

5.10 Mullá Hasan ‘Amú, however, reported this fact in many gatherings. He left Karbilá for Kirmánsháh and Tihrán, where he provided all with a detailed account of this episode and spoke of the fear and inaction of the divines.

5.11 Our point is that all the adversaries of Bahá’u’lláh in the East acknowledged His greatness, distinction, knowledge, and learning, and that in spite of their enmity they referred to Him as “the renowned Bahá’u’lláh”.

5.12 In brief, this most great Luminary appeared suddenly above the horizon of Persia, and all the people of that land, whether ministers, divines, or the general populace, rose against Him with the fiercest animosity, claiming that He was bent upon annihilating and extinguishing their religion, laws, nation, and empire, even as had been said of Christ. Yet Bahá’u’lláh, alone and single-handed, withstood them all without faltering in the slightest.

5.13 At last they said, “So long as this man is in Persia there will be no peace or tranquillity.

He should be banished, that Persia might again find rest.”

They subjected Bahá'u'lláh, therefore, to severe hardships so that He would be forced to seek permission to leave Persia, and they imagined that the lamp of the Cause would be thereby extinguished.

But this persecution produced the contrary effect:

The Cause grew in stature and its flame waxed brighter.

It had until then spread only within Persia; this caused it to spread to other regions.

Later they said, “Iraq is too close to Persia; we must dispatch Him to distant lands.”

Thus the Persian government persisted until Bahá'u'lláh was exiled from Iraq to Constantinople.

But again they saw that He did not falter in the least.

They said, “Constantinople is a crossroads for divers peoples and nations, and there are many Persians there.”

Hence they took further steps and had Him exiled to Adrianople.

But that flame gathered still more intensity and the Cause grew even greater in stature.

Finally the Persians said, “None of these locations was a place of humiliation:

He must be sent to a place where He will be disgraced and subjected to trials and persecutions, and where His kindred and followers will suffer the direst afflictions.”

Thus they chose the prison city of ‘Akká, which was reserved for rebels, murderers, thieves, and highway robbers, and in this wise they made Him associate with such people.

But the power of God was made manifest, for this prison became the means of the promotion of His Faith and the glorification of His Word.

The greatness of Bahá'u'lláh became apparent in that He succeeded, from within such a prison and under such humiliating circumstances, in wholly transforming the condition of Persia, in overcoming His enemies, and in proving to all the resistless power of His Cause.

His sacred teachings spread to all regions and His Cause was firmly established.

5.14 In every province of Persia His enemies arose with the utmost hatred, seizing and killing, beating and burning, uprooting a thousand households, and resorting to every violent means to extinguish His Cause. Notwithstanding all this, He promoted His Cause and promulgated His teachings from within this prison of murderers, thieves, and highwaymen, awakening many of His most

virulent enemies and making them firm believers. Such was the influence of His actions that the Persian government itself arose from its slumber and regretted what had been wrought at the hands of the wicked divines.

5.15 When Bahá'u'lláh arrived at this prison in the Holy Land, discerning souls were awakened to the fact that the prophecies which God had voiced through the tongue of His Prophets two or three thousand years before had been realized and that His promises had been fulfilled, for He had revealed unto certain Prophets and announced unto the Holy Land that the Lord of Hosts would be manifested therein. All these promises were fulfilled, and, but for the opposition of His enemies and His banishment and exile, it can scarcely be imagined how Bahá'u'lláh could have left Persia and pitched His tent in this sacred land. His enemies intended that this imprisonment should completely destroy and annihilate His Cause, but His incarceration became instead the greatest confirmation and the means of its promotion. The call of God reached the East and the West, and the rays of the Sun of Truth illumined every land. Praise be to God! Though He was a prisoner, His tent was raised on Mount Carmel, and He moved about with the utmost majesty. And whoever entered His presence, be it friend or stranger, would exclaim, "This is not a captive but a king!"

5.16 Immediately upon His arrival in prison, He addressed an epistle to Napoleon which He sent through the French ambassador, the substance of which was: "Ask what crime We have committed to be confined in this prison." Napoleon made no reply. Then a second epistle was issued, which is contained in the *Súriy-i-Haykal*, and which in substance says: "O Napoleon! Since thou hast failed to heed and answer My call, thou shalt lose Thy dominion and be reduced to naught." This epistle was dispatched to Napoleon by post, through the care of César Catafago and, with the full knowledge of His companions in exile, the text of this address quickly reached all of Persia, for the *Kitáb-i-Haykal* was sent at that time to every corner of that land and this address was included therein. This took place in the year 1869, and as this *Súriy-i-Haykal* had been circulated throughout Persia and India, all the believers had it in their hands and were awaiting the outcome of this address. Not long after, in 1870, the fire of war was ignited between Germany and France, and although no one at the time anticipated the triumph of Germany, Napoleon was resoundingly defeated, surrendered to his enemies, and saw his glory changed into deepest abasement.

5.17 Tablets were likewise dispatched to other kings, among them an epistle to His Majesty Násiri'd-Dín Sháh. In that epistle Bahá'u'lláh said: "Summon Me to thy presence and gather all the divines, and ask for proof and testimony, that truth might be distinguished from error." His Majesty sent Bahá'u'lláh's epistle to the divines and assigned them this task, but they dared not undertake it. He then asked seven of the most renowned divines to respond to this epistle. After a while they returned it, saying, "This man is an opponent of the Faith and an enemy of the King." His Majesty the Sháh of Persia was sorely vexed and said, "This is a matter of proof and testimony, of truth and error. What has it to do with enmity towards the government? How pitiful that we have shown forth such respect to these divines, and yet they cannot even reply to this address."

5.18 Briefly, all that was recorded in the Tablets to the kings has come to pass. One need only compare their contents with the events that have transpired since the year 1870 to see that every prediction has been fulfilled, save for a few that remain to be manifested in the future.

5.19 Moreover, foreign peoples and non-believers attributed wondrous works to Bahá'u'lláh. Some believed He was a saint, and some even wrote accounts to this effect, such as Siyyid Dávudí, a Sunní divine of Baghdád, who composed a short treatise in which he related in some connection certain extraordinary feats of Bahá'u'lláh. To this day there are people throughout the East who do not believe in Bahá'u'lláh as a Manifestation of God, but who regard Him as a saint and attribute miracles to Him.

5.20 To summarize, not a single soul, whether friend or foe, who attained Bahá'u'lláh's presence failed to acknowledge and attest to His greatness. Although he might not become a believer, he would invariably bear witness to His greatness. No sooner would someone appear before Him than the encounter would produce such an impression as to prevent him, in most cases, from uttering a word. How often would a bitter enemy resolve in his heart to say such-and-such or to argue so-and-so when he had attained His presence, only to find himself amazed, bewildered, and reduced to utter silence!

5.21 Bahá'u'lláh never studied Arabic, had a teacher or tutor, or entered a school. Nevertheless His eloquence and fluency in spoken Arabic, as well as in His Arabic Tablets, would astonish the most articulate and accomplished among the Arab men of letters, and all acknowledged that in this His attainments were without peer or equal.

5.22 If we carefully examine the text of the Torah, we see that none of the Manifestations of God ever said to those who denied Them, "Whatever miracle you desire, I am ready to perform, and I will submit to whatever test you propose." Yet in His epistle to the Sháh Bahá'u'lláh clearly stated:

"Gather together the divines and summon Me to thy presence, that the proof and testimony might be established."

5.23 For fifty years Bahá'u'lláh withstood His enemies like a mountain: They all sought to annihilate Him; they all assailed Him; they plotted a thousand times to crucify and destroy Him; and throughout those fifty years He was in the greatest peril.

5.24 As to Persia, which to this day remains in such an abject and ruinous state, every man of wisdom, whether from within or without her borders, who knows her true state of affairs recognizes that her progress, her prosperity, and her civilization depend entirely upon the promulgation of the teachings and the dissemination of the principles of this glorious Being.

5.25 In His blessed lifetime Christ educated, in reality, only eleven souls, the greatest of whom, Peter, nonetheless denied Him thrice when put to the test. Notwithstanding this, behold how the Cause of Christ subsequently pervaded the whole earth! In this day Bahá'u'lláh has educated thousands of souls who, under the threat of the sword, have raised to the highest heaven the cry of "O Thou the Glory of Glories!" and whose faces have shone as brightly as gold in the crucible of trials. Infer then from this what shall transpire in the future!

5.26 Now, we must be fair and acknowledge what an Educator of mankind this illustrious Being was, what marvellous signs He has manifested, and what power and might have been realized in the world of existence through Him.

The Mission of Bahá'u'lláh

6.1 O ye respected souls! From the continual imitation of ancient and worn-out ways, the world had grown dark as darksome night. The fundamentals of the divine Teachings had passed from memory; their pith and heart had been totally forgotten, and the people were holding on to husks. The nations had, like tattered garments long outworn, fallen into a pitiful condition.

6.2 Out of this pitch blackness there dawned the morning splendour of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. He hath dressed the world with a garment new and fair, and that new garment is the principles which have come down from God.

6.3 Now the new age is here and creation is reborn. Humanity hath taken on new life. The autumn hath gone by, and the reviving spring is here. All things are now made new. Arts and industries have been reborn, there are new discoveries in science, and there are new inventions; even the details of human affairs, such as dress and personal effects—even weapons—all these have likewise been renewed. The laws and procedures of every government have been revised. Renewal is the order of the day.

6.4 And all this newness hath its source in the fresh outpourings of wondrous grace and favour from the Lord of the Kingdom, which have renewed the world. The people, therefore, must be set completely free from their old patterns of thought, that all their attention may be focused upon these new principles, for these are the light of this time and the very spirit of this age.

6.5 Unless these Teachings are effectively spread among the people, until the old ways, the old concepts, are gone and forgotten, this world of being will find no peace, nor will it reflect the perfections of the Heavenly Kingdom.

7.1 Some fifty to sixty years ago, when the fire of war was raging amongst governments and nations and bloodshed was considered the greatest of human attainments, the blood of thousands of human souls coloured the earth each day. Children were left without fathers, fathers without their sons, and mothers moaned and wailed, with tearful eyes and burning hearts, at the loss of their children. The darkness of hatred and animosity had enveloped humanity, the heavenly light had completely disappeared, and the breathings of the Holy Spirit were withheld.

7.2 At that time, Bahá'u'lláh, like a brilliant star shining with the light of the oneness of humanity, appeared above the horizon of Persia and bestowed spiritual grace upon all. He cast the rays of the light of guidance upon the whole earth, kindled the candle of love, and caused the beauty of truth to be made manifest. He broke the chains of religious prejudice, racial bigotry, patriotic fanaticism, and political animosity, and compared the world of humanity to a tree and all peoples to its branches, leaves, blossoms, and fruits. He destroyed the foundation of ignorant prejudice and raised up the edifice of universal love. He established the oneness of humankind and promoted equality amongst all people. He proclaimed that the mercy of God encompasseth all and divine blessings pour down upon everyone. The gates of the Kingdom were opened wide, and the lights of the Realm on high became manifest. Throughout

His entire life, Bahá'u'lláh was in a state of extreme hardship and torment. In Persia, He was imprisoned and bound in chains, was under constant threat of the sword, and was made to suffer grievous blows. He was then banished from Persia to Baghdad and lived as an exile in that land. He later became captive in the Prison of 'Akká and, while confined and in chains, promulgated His Cause and raised the banner of the oneness of humankind.

7.3 Now, praised be God, the light of love hath spread in both East and West, and the tabernacle of fellowship amongst hearts and souls is raised in the midmost heart of the world. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh have been spread in the East and the West, the fame of the Kingdom hath encompassed the earth, and the tidings of the world's Great Peace have created tumult in the realm of the hearts. It is hoped that through the endeavours of pure souls, the darkness of enmity and dissension may entirely vanish and the light of love and harmony may shine; that the world may become another world and this nether realm may mirror forth the Kingdom of God; that the people of the world may embrace one another, the terrestrial globe may become one homeland, and the different races may be considered as one race; that this conflict and contention may end and the heart-ravishing love of God may become manifest in the assemblage of the world.

8.1 O peoples of the world! The Sun of Truth hath risen to illumine the whole earth, and to spiritualize the community of man. Laudable are the results and the fruits thereof, abundant the holy evidences deriving from this grace. This is mercy unalloyed and purest bounty; it is light for the world and all its peoples; it is harmony and fellowship, and love and solidarity; indeed it is compassion and unity, and the end of foreignness; it is the being at one, in complete dignity and freedom, with all on earth.

8.2 The Blessed Beauty saith: "Ye are all the fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch." Thus hath He likened this world of being to a single tree, and all its peoples to the leaves thereof, and the blossoms and fruits. It is needful for the bough to blossom, and leaf and fruit to flourish, and upon the interconnection of all parts of the world-tree, dependeth the flourishing of leaf and blossom, and the sweetness of the fruit.

8.3 For this reason must all human beings powerfully sustain one another and seek for everlasting life; and for this reason must the lovers of God in this contingent world become the mercies and the blessings sent forth by that clement King of the seen and unseen realms. Let them purify their sight and behold all humankind as leaves and blossoms and fruits of the tree of being. Let them at all times concern themselves with doing a kindly thing for one of their fellows, offering to someone love, consideration, thoughtful help. Let them see no one as their enemy, or as wishing them ill, but think of all humankind as their friends; regarding the alien as an intimate, the stranger as a companion, staying free of prejudice, drawing no lines.

8.4 In this day, the one favoured at the Threshold of the Lord is he who handeth round the cup of faithfulness; who bestoweth, even upon his enemies, the jewel of bounty, and lendeth, even to his fallen oppressor, a helping hand; it is he who will, even to the fiercest of his foes, be a loving friend. These are the Teachings of the Blessed Beauty, these the counsels of the Most Great Name.

8.50 ye dear friends! The world is at war and the human race is in travail and mortal combat. The dark night of hate hath taken over, and the light of good faith is blotted out. The peoples and kindreds of the earth have sharpened their claws, and are hurling themselves one against the other. It is the very foundation of the human race that is being destroyed. It is thousands of households that are vagrant and dispossessed, and every year seeth thousands upon thousands of human beings weltering in their lifeblood on dusty battlefields. The tents of life and joy are down. The generals practise their generalship, boasting of the blood they shed, competing one with the next in inciting to violence. "With this sword," saith one of them, "I beheaded a people!" And another: "I toppled a nation to the ground!" And yet another: "I brought a government down!" On such things do men pride themselves, in such do they glory! Love, righteousness—these are everywhere censured, while despised are harmony, and devotion to the truth.

9.1 Behold the power and greatness of Bahá'u'lláh! Within a short span of time, He hath stirred up the East and the West, and raised aloft, in the midmost heart of the world, the banner of love and harmony, of unity and peace, of fellowship and conciliation, of truthfulness and rectitude. He hath freed from enmity and strife a great multitude of souls belonging to divers and opposing nations, to disparate and contending religions, and hath brought them under the sheltering canopy of fellowship, love, and unity.

The Suffering of Bahá'u'lláh

10.1 The Abhá Beauty Himself—may the spirit of all existence be offered up for His loved ones—bore all manner of ordeals, and willingly accepted for Himself intense afflictions.

No torment was there left that His sacred form was not subjected to, no suffering that did not descend upon Him.

How many a night, when He was chained, did He go sleepless because of the weight of His iron collar; how many a day the burning pain of the stocks and fetters gave Him no moment's peace.

From Níyávarán to Tihrán they made Him run—He, that embodied spirit, He Who had been accustomed to repose against cushions of ornamented silk—chained, shoeless, His head bared; and down under the earth, in the thick darkness of that narrow dungeon, they shut Him up with murderers, rebels and thieves.

Ever and again they assailed Him with a new torment, and all were certain that from one moment to the next He would suffer a martyr's death.

After some time they banished Him from His native land, and sent Him to countries alien and far away.

During many a year in 'Iráq, no moment passed but the arrow of a new anguish struck His holy heart; with every breath a sword came down upon that sacred body, and He could hope for no moment of security and rest.

From every side His enemies mounted their attack with unrelenting hate; and

singly and alone He withstood them all.

After all these tribulations, these body blows, they flung Him out of 'Iráq in the continent of Asia, to the continent of Europe, and in that place of bitter exile, of wretched hardships, to the wrongs that were heaped upon Him by the people of the Qur'án were now added the virulent persecutions, the powerful attacks, the plottings, the slanders, the continual hostilities, the hate and malice, of the people of the Bayán.

My pen is powerless to tell it all; but ye have surely been informed of it.

Then, after twenty-four years in this, the Most Great Prison, in agony and sore affliction, His days drew to a close.

10.2 To sum it up, the Ancient Beauty was ever, during His sojourn in this transitory world, either a captive bound with chains, or living under a sword, or subjected to extreme suffering and torment, or held in the Most Great Prison. Because of His physical weakness, brought on by His afflictions, His blessed body was worn away to a breath; it was light as a cobweb from long grieving. And His reason for shouldering this heavy load and enduring all this anguish, which was even as an ocean that hurleth its waves to high heaven—His reason for putting on the heavy iron chains and for becoming the very embodiment of utter resignation and meekness, was to lead every soul on earth to concord, to fellow feeling, to oneness; to make known amongst all peoples the sign of the singleness of God, so that at last the primal oneness deposited at the heart of all created things would bear its destined fruit, and the splendour of “No difference canst thou see in the creation of the God of Mercy” would cast abroad its rays.

11.1 The Ancient Beauty, the Most Great Name—may my life, my soul, and mine inmost being be offered up for His sacred dust—was burdened with anguish at every breath.

At one time, He was a captive to unyielding cruelty, and at another, a target to the darts of woe.

At one time, He was a wanderer on the plain of Badasht, and at another He suffered the tribulations of Níyálá.

At one point, He was bound with chains and shackles, and afflicted by grievous torment in Ámul; at another He had for associates His most despicable and cruel enemies.

By day He was assailed by sorrow and grief in Karbilá; by night He lay within the embrace of afflictions in the camp of adversity.

One day, He was conducted in chains, with bared head and bare feet, all the way from Shimírán to Tihrán.

There He remained in confinement for four months, weighed down with fetters and irons and threatened at every breath by blades and arrows.

At another time, He was exiled to Iraq, and at yet another He roamed the wilderness of Kurdistan, where the birds of the air and the beasts of the field

were His only companions.

For many a long year, He was beset from all sides by the onslaught of His foes in Baghdad, and was encompassed by the fiercest woes and troubles.

Every day brought a fresh adversity, and every night season an arduous calamity.

Not for a moment did He rest; not for a second did He find repose.

He was then exiled to the Great City and was pierced by the arrows of gross calumny.

Men of high rank and stature arose, one and all, to denigrate Him, whilst the leaders of nations were intent upon His demise.

Thereupon they banished Him to the Land of Mystery, where they submerged Him in dire adversities and woeful tribulations.

11.2 At this time, the one whom He had, with loving-kindness, nurtured in His own bosom ever since his earliest years, the one upon whom He had showered at every moment His tender care, rose up against Him with passionate hatred and assailed Him like a horde of calamities. Mírzá Yahyá even attempted to shed the sacred blood of the Ancient Beauty, and like a venomous viper he pierced the blessed body of Bahá'u'lláh. Mírzá Yahyá then began to moan and lament, and raised the cry of the oppressed, claiming to be an innocent victim and alleging that he had been most grievously wronged. He wailed and groaned, sighed and moaned. And like the envious brothers, he cast the Joseph of the Egypt of Existence into the depths of a darksome pit. He then raised a plaintive cry, sobbed and wept, and made manifest the verse "And they came at nightfall to their father weeping." And then he began to keep company with the estranged, and became a confidant of the enemies. He accused the Peerless Beauty of having committed mischief and sedition, and he circulated leaflets of falsified Text amongst the malicious. All this, in order to extinguish the candle of the Company on high, consign the celestial Teachings to oblivion, turn the Morn of divine Oneness into night, and cause the Day-Star of Truth to set, the verses of guidance to be annulled, and the banquet table of the Eternal Covenant to be brought to naught.

11.3 Thus, confinement in the Most Great Prison came to pass, and inexorable adversity ensued. The Wronged One of the worlds fell prey to the people of iniquity, and suffered fresh trials and new afflictions at every hour. Every door was shut and every way was barred. The darts of tyranny descended upon Him in ceaseless showers from every land, and the swords of iniquity were drawn against His luminous and ethereal Being by the hosts of the earth. In brief, at each breath He was beset by the cruelty of a capricious foe, and at every moment He was afflicted and oppressed by a fresh sorrow, until at last His Countenance was veiled from the horizon of the world and shone forth from the firmament of the Placeless.

12.10 O ye loved ones of God! In this, the Bahá'í dispensation, God's Cause is spirit unalloyed. His Cause belongeth not to the material world. It cometh neither for strife nor war, nor for acts of mischief or of shame; it is neither

for quarrelling with other Faiths, nor for conflicts with the nations. Its only army is the love of God, its only joy the clear wine of His knowledge, its only battle the expounding of the Truth; its one crusade is against the insistent self, the evil promptings of the human heart. Its victory is to submit and yield, and to be selfless is its everlasting glory. In brief, it is spirit upon spirit....

12.2 Let all your striving be for this, to become the source of life and immortality, and peace and comfort and joy, to every human soul, whether one known to you or a stranger, one opposed to you or on your side. Look ye not upon the purity or impurity of his nature: Look ye upon the all-embracing mercy of the Lord, the light of Whose grace hath embosomed the whole earth and all who dwell thereon, and in the plenitude of Whose bounty are immersed both the wise and the ignorant. Stranger and friend alike are seated at the table of His favour. Even as the believer, the denier who turneth away from God doth at the same time cup his hands and drink from the sea of His bestowals.

12.3 It behoveth the loved ones of the Lord to be the signs and tokens of His universal mercy and the embodiments of His own excelling grace. Like the sun, let them cast their rays upon garden and rubbish heap alike, and even as clouds in spring, let them shed down their rain upon flower and thorn. Let them seek but love and faithfulness, let them not follow the ways of unkindness, let their talk be confined to the secrets of friendship and of peace. Such are the attributes of the righteous, such is the distinguishing mark of those who serve His Threshold.

12.4 The Abhá Beauty endured the most afflictive of calamities. He bore countless agonies and ills. He enjoyed not a moment's peace, drew not an easeful breath. He wandered, homeless, over desert sands and mountain slopes; He was shut in a fortress, and a prison cell. But to Him, His pauper's mat of straw was an eternal throne of glory, and His heavy chains a sovereign's carcanet. By day, by night, He lived under a whirring sword, and He was ready from moment to moment for death on the cross. He bore all this that He might purify the world, and deck it out with the tender mercies of the Lord God; that He might set it at rest; that conflict and aggression might be put to flight, the lance and the keen blade be exchanged for loving fellowship, malevolence and war turn into safety and gentleness and love; that battlefields of hate and wrath should become gardens of delight, and places where once the blood-drenched armies clashed be fragrant pleasure grounds; that warfare should be seen as shame, and the resort to arms, even as a loathsome sickness, be shunned by every people; that universal peace raise its pavilions on the loftiest mounts, and war be made to perish forever from the earth.

12.5 Wherefore must the loved ones of God, laboriously, with the waters of their striving, tend and nourish and foster this tree of hope. In whatsoever land they dwell, let them with a whole heart befriend and be companions to those who are either close to them, or far removed. Let them, with qualities like unto those of heaven, promote the institutions and the religion of God. Let them never lose heart, never be despondent, never feel afflicted. The more antagonism they meet, the more let them show their own good faith; the more torments and calamities they have to face, the more generously let them pass

round the bounteous cup. Such is the spirit which will become the life of the world, such is the spreading light at its heart: and he who may be and do other than this is not worthy to serve at the Holy Threshold of the Lord.

12.6O ye loved ones of God! The Sun of Truth is shining down from invisible skies; know ye the value of these days.

The Proofs of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission

13.1O thou seeker after Truth! Thy letter was received and thy purpose became known. Thou hast asked: If this divine Revelation is that same heavenly Kingdom which Christ said was nigh, then by what proof and testimony can this be demonstrated, and by what tidings can it be announced? There is no time for a detailed reply, so a brief account is provided.

13.2Know thou that the proofs of the truth of this new Kingdom are the same as those of the Kingdom of Christ. The proof of the subsequent Kingdom is the same as that of the previous one—nay, it is the mightiest proof!

13.3Proofs are of two kinds: those for the common people and those for the learned. The latter will not be convinced by the proofs for the former, who, likewise, will not be assured by the proofs for the latter. The common people seek miracles and marvels, while the learned regard these not as proof; these neither satisfy their search nor quench their thirst. Rather, they seek conclusive rational proofs. Thus, as thou art endowed with a keen vision and a sound mind, we will set forth conclusive and rational proofs that leave none the possibility for denial.

13.4We say that the purpose underlying the advent of the Kingdom is the edification of the souls of men, the progress of the world of humanity, the manifestation of the love of God, the establishment of fellowship and unity amongst all peoples, the appearance of divine perfections, and the realization of the glory of the human race. This is the purpose of the advent of the Kingdom, and this is its result. Observe, then, how the edifying power of Bahá'u'lláh hath enlightened the darksome East, transformed voracious beasts into heavenly angels, endowed the ignorant with knowledge, and caused ravening wolves to become as gazelles in the meads of oneness. Those who, because of custom or belief, rose in enmity against all peoples now associate with all in a spirit of perfect unity. Those who used to burn the Holy Bible out of exceeding ignorance now set forth the truths and mysteries of the Old and New Testaments. In a brief span of time, He so educated His followers that, even in chains and stocks, and under the threat of swords and blades, they would raise the cry of “Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá!” and would offer sugar candy to their executioners that they might strike the final blow with sweetened mouths. Thou dost surely recall the story of Peter the disciple, and the crowing of the cock!

13.5Another proof is that all the Persian divines and prominent leaders in Tihrán know, beyond any doubt, that Bahá'u'lláh never attended any school, nor received any formal education, and from early childhood conducted Himself differently. Nevertheless, the divines and the learned of the East have testified to His extraordinary knowledge, wisdom, understanding, and perfections. Despite their denial and bitter enmity, they still acknowledge that Bahá'u'lláh was a unique and peerless Figure of the age, although

they do not recognize His sublime station as do the chosen ones and the sincere.

13.6A further proof lieth in the very teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, which banish every trace of dissension and discord from the world of humanity, and establish everlasting unity and harmony. Refer to the Tablets of Tajallíyát (Effulgences), Ishráqát (Splendours), Kalimát (Words of Paradise), Bishárát (Glad-Tidings) and Tarázát (Ornaments), and thou wilt clearly see what teachings have been vouchsafed by this new Kingdom—teachings that bestow upon the feeble body of the world a swift remedy and a practicable, lasting cure. The like of such teachings hath never before been witnessed.

13.7Yet another proof is that it was from within this afflictive prison that Bahá'u'lláh revealed and advanced such a sublime Revelation—a Revelation whose renown hath spread throughout the world, which hath been firmly established in the East, and the light of whose radiant morn is diffused even as the rays of the sun. And all this despite the fact that the governments and peoples of the East arose in resistance and opposition, launching their attacks with every power at their disposal. Reflect: Hath such might and power ever been manifested before? What greater proof is there than this, that from within the prison walls He directed His mighty proclamations to the kings and rulers of the earth and foreshadowed, in unmistakable terms, what the future would hold. He warned the great Emperor, then at the height of his power, of a sudden revolution, and predicted the downfall of his throne and the defeat and extinction of his empire. And all this did indeed come to pass, as did the events foretold in Tablets and addresses directed to other rulers of the earth from within the prison confines. Behold with what power and majesty He manifested Himself from within a prison for robbers and murderers! What proof is there greater than this? To conclude, the proofs and evidences are many, but I have no time to write further.

13.8And now, concerning the proofs sought by the uninformed masses: These consist of miracles and marvels. To state the matter briefly, there are many accounts of such marvellous feats associated with Bahá'u'lláh that are current amongst the people and could fill numerous volumes, were one to compile them. But since these do not constitute a conclusive proof for the contending denier, we will not relate miracles associated with Bahá'u'lláh. For the contenders may also relate such accounts from the idols of their fancy and base them on their own books and chronicles. We therefore present rational proofs, so that there shall remain no room for denial for any soul. The Glory of Glories rest upon thee.

14.1Among His signs is His withstanding powerful nations and all-conquering states, and a host of enemies thirsting for His blood, intent at every moment upon His ruin, wheresoever He might be. Verily this is a matter deserving the scrutiny of those who ponder the signs and tokens of God.

14.2Another of His signs is the marvel of His discourse, the eloquence of His utterance, the rapidity with which His Writings were revealed, His words of wisdom, His verses, His epistles, His communions.... By thy very life! This thing is plain as day to whoever will regard it with the eye of justice.

14.3Again among His signs is the dawning sun of His knowledge, and the rising

moon of His arts and skills, and His demonstrating perfection in all His ways, as testified by the learned and accomplished of many nations.

14.4 And again among His signs is the fact that His beauty stayed inviolate, and His human temple was protected as He revealed His splendours, despite the massed attacks of all His foes, who came against Him in their thousands with their darting arrows, spears and swords. Herein is verily a wonder and a warning to any fair judge.

14.5 And among His signs is His long-suffering, His tribulations and His woes, His agony in His chains and fetters, and His calling out at every moment: “Come unto Me, come unto Me, ye righteous! Come unto Me, come unto Me, ye lovers of the good! Come unto Me, come unto Me, ye dawning points of light!”

...

14.6 Yet another of His signs is the promulgation of His Book, His decisive Holy Text wherein He reproved the kings, and His dire warning to that one whose mighty rule was felt around the world—and whose great throne then toppled down in a matter of brief days—this being a fact clearly established and widely known.

14.7 And among His signs is the sublimity of His grandeur, His exalted state, His towering glory, and the shining out of His beauty above the horizon of the Prison: so that heads were bowed before Him and voices lowered, and humble were the faces that turned His way. This is a proof never witnessed in the ages gone before.

12

The Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh

Teachings for the Maturity of the Human Race

1.1 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....

1.2 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.

2.1 There is not one soul whose conscience does not testify that in this day there is no more important matter in the world than that of universal peace. Every just one bears witness to this and adores that esteemed Assembly because its aim is that this darkness may be changed into light, this bloodthirstiness into kindness, this torment into bliss, this hardship into ease and this enmity

and hatred into fellowship and love. Therefore, the effort of those esteemed souls is worthy of praise and commendation.

2.2 But the wise souls who are aware of the essential relationships emanating from the realities of things consider that one single matter cannot, by itself, influence the human reality as it ought and should, for until the minds of men become united, no important matter can be accomplished. At present universal peace is a matter of great importance, but unity of conscience is essential, so that the foundation of this matter may become secure, its establishment firm and its edifice strong.

2.3 Therefore Bahá'u'lláh, fifty years ago, expounded this question of universal peace at a time when He was confined in the fortress of 'Akká and was wronged and imprisoned. He wrote about this important matter of universal peace to all the great sovereigns of the world, and established it among His friends in the Orient. The horizon of the East was in utter darkness, nations displayed the utmost hatred and enmity towards each other, religions thirsted for each other's blood, and it was darkness upon darkness. At such a time Bahá'u'lláh shone forth like the sun from the horizon of the East and illumined Persia with the lights of these teachings.

2.4 Among His teachings was the declaration of universal peace. People of different nations, religions and sects who followed Him came together to such an extent that remarkable gatherings were instituted consisting of the various nations and religions of the East. Every soul who entered these gatherings saw but one nation, one teaching, one pathway, one order, for the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh were not limited to the establishment of universal peace.

They embraced many teachings which supplemented and supported that of universal peace.

2.5 Among these teachings was the independent investigation of reality so that the world of humanity may be saved from the darkness of imitation and attain to the truth; may tear off and cast away this ragged and outgrown garment of a thousand years ago and may put on the robe woven in the utmost purity and holiness in the loom of reality. As reality is one and cannot admit of multiplicity, therefore different opinions must ultimately become fused into one.

2.6 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity, that all human beings are the sheep of God and He is the kind Shepherd. This Shepherd is kind to all the sheep, because He created them all, trained them, provided for them and protected them. There is no doubt that the Shepherd is kind to all the sheep and should there be among these sheep ignorant ones, they must be educated; if there be children, they must be trained until they reach maturity; if there be sick ones, they must be cured. There must be no hatred and enmity, for as by a kind physician these ignorant, sick ones should be treated.

2.7 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that religion must be the cause of fellowship and love. If it becomes the cause of estrangement then it is not needed, for religion is like a remedy; if it aggravates the disease then it becomes unnecessary.

2.8 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that religion must be in

conformity with science and reason, so that it may influence the hearts of men. The foundation must be solid and must not consist of imitations.

2.9 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that religious, racial, political, economic and patriotic prejudices destroy the edifice of humanity. As long as these prejudices prevail, the world of humanity will not have rest. For a period of 6,000 years history informs us about the world of humanity. During these 6,000 years the world of humanity has not been free from war, strife, murder and bloodthirstiness. In every period war has been waged in one country or another and that war was due to either religious prejudice, racial prejudice, political prejudice or patriotic prejudice. It has therefore been ascertained and proved that all prejudices are destructive of the human edifice. As long as these prejudices persist, the struggle for existence must remain dominant, and bloodthirstiness and rapacity continue. Therefore, even as was the case in the past, the world of humanity cannot be saved from the darkness of nature and cannot attain illumination except through the abandonment of prejudices and the acquisition of the morals of the Kingdom.

2.10 If this prejudice and enmity are on account of religion consider that religion should be the cause of fellowship, otherwise it is fruitless. And if this prejudice be the prejudice of nationality consider that all mankind are of one nation; all have sprung from the tree of Adam, and Adam is the root of the tree. That tree is one and all these nations are like branches, while the individuals of humanity are like leaves, blossoms and fruits thereof. Then the establishment of various nations and the consequent shedding of blood and destruction of the edifice of humanity result from human ignorance and selfish motives.

2.11 As to the patriotic prejudice, this is also due to absolute ignorance, for the surface of the earth is one native land.

Every one can live in any spot on the terrestrial globe.

Therefore all the world is man's birthplace.

These boundaries and outlets have been devised by man.

In the creation, such boundaries and outlets were not assigned.

Europe is one continent, Asia is one continent, Africa is one continent, Australia is one continent, but some of the souls, from personal motives and selfish interests, have divided each one of these continents and considered a certain part as their own country.

God has set up no frontier between France and Germany; they are continuous.

Yet, in the first centuries, selfish souls, for the promotion of their own interests, have assigned boundaries and outlets and have, day by day, attached more importance to these, until this led to intense enmity, bloodshed and rapacity in subsequent centuries.

In the same way this will continue indefinitely, and if this conception of patriotism remains limited within a certain circle, it will be the primary cause of the world's destruction.

No wise and just person will acknowledge these imaginary distinctions.

Every limited area which we call our native country we regard as our motherland, whereas the terrestrial globe is the motherland of all, and not any restricted area.

In short, for a few days we live on this earth and eventually we are buried in it, it is our eternal tomb.

Is it worthwhile that we should engage in bloodshed and tear one another to pieces for this eternal tomb?

Nay, far from it, neither is God pleased with such conduct nor would any sane man approve of it.

2.12 Consider! The blessed animals engage in no patriotic quarrels. They are in the utmost fellowship with one another and live together in harmony. For example, if a dove from the east and a dove from the west, a dove from the north and a dove from the south chance to arrive, at the same time, in one spot, they immediately associate in harmony. So is it with all the blessed animals and birds. But the ferocious animals, as soon as they meet, attack and fight with each other, tear each other to pieces and it is impossible for them to live peaceably together in one spot. They are all unsociable and fierce, savage and combative fighters.

2.13 Regarding the economic prejudice, it is apparent that whenever the ties between nations become strengthened and the exchange of commodities accelerated, and any economic principle is established in one country, it will ultimately affect the other countries and universal benefits will result. Then why this prejudice?

2.14 As to the political prejudice, the policy of God must be followed and it is indisputable that the policy of God is greater than human policy. We must follow the Divine policy and that applies alike to all individuals. He treats all individuals alike: No distinction is made, and that is the foundation of the Divine Religions.

2.15 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the origination of one language that may be spread universally among the people. This teaching was revealed from the pen of Bahá'u'lláh in order that this universal language may eliminate misunderstandings from among mankind.

2.16 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the equality of women and men. The world of humanity has two wings—one is women and the other men. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible. Not until the world of women becomes equal to the world of men in the acquisition of virtues and perfections, can success and prosperity be attained as they ought to be.

2.17 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is voluntary sharing of one's property with others among mankind. This voluntary sharing is greater than equality, and consists in this, that man should not prefer himself to others, but rather should sacrifice his life and property for others. But this should not be introduced by coercion so that it becomes a law and man is compelled to follow it. Nay, rather, man should voluntarily and of his own

choice sacrifice his property and life for others, and spend willingly for the poor, just as is done in Persia among the Bahá'ís.

2.18 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is man's freedom, that through the ideal Power he should be free and emancipated from the captivity of the world of nature; for as long as man is captive to nature he is a ferocious animal, as the struggle for existence is one of the exigencies of the world of nature. This matter of the struggle for existence is the fountainhead of all calamities and is the supreme affliction.

2.19 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that religion is a mighty bulwark. If the edifice of religion shakes and totters, commotion and chaos will ensue and the order of things will be utterly upset, for in the world of mankind there are two safeguards that protect man from wrongdoing. One is the law which punishes the criminal; but the law prevents only the manifest crime and not the concealed sin; whereas the ideal safeguard, namely, the religion of God, prevents both the manifest and the concealed crime, trains man, educates morals, compels the adoption of virtues and is the all-inclusive power which guarantees the felicity of the world of mankind. But by religion is meant that which is ascertained by investigation and not that which is based on mere imitation, the foundations of Divine Religions and not human imitations.

2.20 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that although material civilization is one of the means for the progress of the world of mankind, yet until it becomes combined with Divine civilization, the desired result, which is the felicity of mankind, will not be attained.

Consider!

These battleships that reduce a city to ruins within the space of an hour are the result of material civilization; likewise the Krupp guns, the Mauser rifles, dynamite, submarines, torpedo boats, armed aircraft and bombers—all these weapons of war are the malignant fruits of material civilization.

Had material civilization been combined with Divine civilization, these fiery weapons would never have been invented.

Nay, rather, human energy would have been wholly devoted to useful inventions and would have been concentrated on praiseworthy discoveries.

Material civilization is like a lamp-glass.

Divine civilization is the lamp itself and the glass without the light is dark.

Material civilization is like the body.

No matter how infinitely graceful, elegant and beautiful it may be, it is dead.

Divine civilization is like the spirit, and the body gets its life from the spirit, otherwise it becomes a corpse.

It has thus been made evident that the world of mankind is in need of the breaths of the Holy Spirit.

Without the spirit the world of mankind is lifeless, and without this light the

world of mankind is in utter darkness.

For the world of nature is an animal world.

Until man is born again from the world of nature, that is to say, becomes detached from the world of nature, he is essentially an animal, and it is the teachings of God which convert this animal into a human soul.

2.21 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the promotion of education. Every child must be instructed in sciences as much as is necessary. If the parents are able to provide the expenses of this education, it is well, otherwise the community must provide the means for the teaching of that child.

2.22 And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are justice and right. Until these are realized on the plane of existence, all things shall be in disorder and remain imperfect. The world of mankind is a world of oppression and cruelty, and a realm of aggression and error.

2.23 In fine, such teachings are numerous. These manifold principles, which constitute the greatest basis for the felicity of mankind and are of the bounties of the Merciful, must be added to the matter of universal peace and combined with it, so that results may accrue. Otherwise the realization of universal peace by itself in the world of mankind is difficult. As the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are combined with universal peace, they are like a table provided with every kind of fresh and delicious food. Every soul can find, at that table of infinite bounty, that which he desires. If the question is restricted to universal peace alone, the remarkable results which are expected and desired will not be attained. The scope of universal peace must be such that all the communities and religions may find their highest wish realized in it. The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are such that all the communities of the world, whether religious, political or ethical, ancient or modern, find in them the expression of their highest wish.

2.24 For example, the people of religions find, in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the establishment of Universal Religion—a religion that perfectly conforms with present conditions, which in reality effects the immediate cure of the incurable disease, which relieves every pain, and bestows the infallible antidote for every deadly poison. For if we wish to arrange and organize the world of mankind in accordance with the present religious imitations and thereby to establish the felicity of the world of mankind, it is impossible and impracticable—for example, the enforcement of the laws of the Torah and also of the other religions in accordance with present imitations. But the essential basis of all the Divine Religions which pertains to the virtues of the world of mankind and is the foundation of the welfare of the world of man, is found in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in the most perfect presentation.

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

2.26 So with regard to political parties: That which is the greatest policy directing the world of mankind, nay, rather, the Divine policy, is found in the

teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

2.27 Likewise with regard to the party of “equality” which seeks the solution of the economic problems: Until now all proposed solutions have proved impracticable except the economic proposals in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh which are practicable and cause no distress to society.

2.28 So with the other parties: When ye look deeply into this matter, ye will discover that the highest aims of those parties are found in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. These teachings constitute the all-inclusive power among all men and are practicable. But there are some teachings of the past, such as those of the Torah, which cannot be carried out at the present day. It is the same with the other religions and the tenets of the various sects and the different parties.

2.29 For example, the question of universal peace, about which Bahá'u'lláh says that the Supreme Tribunal must be established:

Although the League of Nations has been brought into existence, yet it is incapable of establishing universal peace.

But the Supreme Tribunal which Bahá'u'lláh has described will fulfil this sacred task with the utmost might and power.

And His plan is this: that the national assemblies of each country and nation—that is to say parliaments—should elect two or three persons who are the choicest of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity in this day.

The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country.

The election of these souls who are chosen by the national assembly, that is, the parliament, must be confirmed by the upper house, the congress and the cabinet and also by the president or monarch so these persons may be the elected ones of all the nation and the government.

The Supreme Tribunal will be composed of these people, and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these delegates is fully representative of his nation.

When the Supreme Tribunal gives a ruling on any international question, either unanimously or by majority rule, there will no longer be any pretext for the plaintiff or ground of objection for the defendant.

In case any of the governments or nations, in the execution of the irrefutable decision of the Supreme Tribunal, be negligent or dilatory, the rest of the nations will rise up against it, because all the governments and nations of the world are the supporters of this Supreme Tribunal.

Consider what a firm foundation this is!

But by a limited and restricted League the purpose will not be realized as it ought and should.

This is the truth about the situation, which has been stated.

2.30 Consider how powerful are the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. At a time when He was in the prison of 'Akká and was under the restrictions and threats of two bloodthirsty kings, His teachings, notwithstanding this fact, spread with all power in Persia and other countries. Should any teaching, or any principle, or any community fall under the threat of a powerful and bloodthirsty monarch, it would be annihilated within a short space of time. At present and for fifty years the Bahá'ís in Persia and most regions have been under severe restrictions and the threat of sword and spear. Thousands of souls have given their lives in the arena of sacrifice and have fallen as victims under the swords of oppression and cruelty. Thousands of esteemed families have been uprooted and destroyed. Thousands of children have been made fatherless. Thousands of fathers have been bereft of their sons. Thousands of mothers have wept and lamented for their boys who have been beheaded. All this oppression and cruelty, rapacity and bloodthirstiness did not hinder or prevent the spread of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. They spread more and more every day, and their power and might became more evident....

2.31 In brief, when you traverse the regions of the world, you shall conclude that all progress is the result of association and cooperation, while ruin is the outcome of animosity and hatred. Notwithstanding this, the world of humanity does not take warning, nor does it awake from the slumber of heedlessness. Man is still causing differences, quarrels and strife in order to marshal the cohorts of war and, with his legions, rush into the field of bloodshed and slaughter.

2.32 Then again, consider the phenomenon of composition and decomposition, of existence and non-existence. Every created thing in the contingent world is made up of many and varied atoms, and its existence is dependent on the composition of these. In other words, a conjunction of simple elements takes place so that from this composition a distinct organism is produced. The existence of all things is based upon this principle. But when the order is deranged, decomposition is produced and disintegration sets in, then that thing ceases to exist. That is, the annihilation of all things is caused by decomposition and disintegration. Therefore attraction and composition between the various elements is the means of life, and discord and division produce death. Thus the cohesive and attractive forces in all things lead to the appearance of fruitful results and effects, while estrangement and alienation of things lead to disturbance and annihilation. Through affinity and attraction all living things like plants, animals and men come into existence, while division and discord bring about decomposition and destruction.

2.33 Consequently, that which is conducive to association and attraction and unity among the sons of men is the means of the life of the world of humanity, and whatever causes division, repulsion and remoteness leads to the death of humankind.

2.34 And if, as you pass by fields and plantations, where the plants, flowers and sweet-smelling herbs are growing luxuriantly together, forming a pattern of unity, this is an evidence of the fact that that plantation and garden is flourishing under the care of a skilful gardener. But when you see it in a

state of disorder and irregularity you infer that it has lacked the training of an efficient farmer and thus has produced weeds and tares.

#### Promulgating Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings

3.1 O ye illumined loved ones and ye handmaids of the Merciful! At a time when the sombre night of ignorance, of neglect of the divine world, of being veiled from God, had overspread the earth, a bright morning dawned and a rising light lit up the eastern sky. Then rose the Sun of Truth and the splendours of the Kingdom were shed over east and west. Those who had eyes to see rejoiced at the glad tidings and cried out: "O blessed, blessed are we!", and they witnessed the inner reality of all things, and uncovered the mysteries of the Kingdom. Delivered then from their fancies and their doubts, they beheld the light of truth, and so exhilarated did they become from draining the chalice of God's love, that they utterly forgot the world and their own selves. Dancing for joy they hastened to the place of their own martyrdom and there, where men die for love, they flung away their heads and hearts.

3.2 But those with unseeing eyes were astonished at this tumult, and they cried, "Where is the light?" and again, "We see no light! We see no rising sun! Here is no truth. This is but fantasy and nothing more." Bat-like they fled into the underground dark, and there, to their way of thinking, they found a measure of security and peace.

3.3 This, however, is but the beginning of the dawn, and the heat of the rising Orb of Truth is not yet at the fullness of its power. Once the sun hath mounted to high noon, its fires will burn so hot as to stir even the creeping things beneath the earth; and although it is not for them to behold the light, yet will they all be set in frenzied motion by the impact of the heat.

3.4 Wherefore, O ye beloved of God, offer up thanks that ye have, in the day of the dawning, turned your faces unto the Light of the World and beheld its splendours. Ye have received a share of the light of truth, ye have enjoyed a portion of those blessings that endure forever; and therefore, as a returning of thanks for this bounty, rest ye not for a moment, sit ye not silent, carry to men's ears the glad tidings of the Kingdom, spread far and wide the Word of God.

3.5 Act in accordance with the counsels of the Lord: That is, rise up in such wise, and with such qualities, as to endow the body of this world with a living soul, and to bring this young child, humanity, to the stage of adulthood. So far as ye are able, ignite a candle of love in every meeting, and with tenderness rejoice and cheer ye every heart. Care for the stranger as for one of your own; show to alien souls the same loving-kindness ye bestow upon your faithful friends. Should any come to blows with you, seek to be friends with him; should any stab you to the heart, be ye a healing salve unto his sores; should any taunt and mock at you, meet him with love. Should any heap his blame upon you, praise ye him; should he offer you a deadly poison, give him the choicest honey in exchange; and should he threaten your life, grant him a remedy that will heal him evermore. Should he be pain itself, be ye his medicine; should he be thorns, be ye his roses and sweet herbs. Perchance such ways and words from you will make this darksome world turn bright at last; will make this dusty earth turn heavenly, this devilish prison place become a royal

palace of the Lord—so that war and strife will pass and be no more, and love and trust will pitch their tents on the summits of the world. Such is the essence of God's admonitions; such in sum are the teachings for the Dispensation of Bahá.

4.10 thou beloved maidservant of God! Thy letter was received and its contents revealed the fact that the friends, in perfect energy and vitality, are engaged in the propagation of the heavenly teachings. This news hath caused intense joy and gladness. For every era hath a spirit; the spirit of this illumined era lieth in the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. For these lay the foundation of the oneness of the world of humanity and promulgate universal brotherhood. They are founded upon the unity of science and religion and upon investigation of truth. They uphold the principle that religion must be the cause of amity, union and harmony among men. They establish the equality of both sexes and propound economic principles which are for the happiness of individuals. They diffuse universal education, that every soul may as much as possible have a share of knowledge. They abrogate and nullify religious, racial, political, patriotic and economic prejudices and the like. Those teachings that are scattered throughout the Epistles and Tablets are the cause of the illumination and the life of the world of humanity. Whoever promulgeth them will verily be assisted by the Kingdom of God.

#### Religion Is One

5.1 From the days of Adam until today, the religions of God have been made manifest, one following the other, and each one of them fulfilled its due function, revived mankind, and provided education and enlightenment. They freed the people from the darkness of the world of nature and ushered them into the brightness of the Kingdom. As each succeeding Faith and Law became revealed it remained for some centuries a richly fruitful tree and to it was committed the happiness of humankind. However, as the centuries rolled by, it aged, it flourished no more and put forth no fruit, wherefore was it then made young again.

5.2 The religion of God is one religion, but it must ever be renewed. Moses, for example, was sent forth to man and He established a Law, and the Children of Israel, through that Mosaic Law, were delivered out of their ignorance and came into the light; they were lifted up from their abjectness and attained to a glory that fadeth not. Still, as the long years wore on, that radiance passed by, that splendour set, that bright day turned to night; and once that night grew triply dark, the star of the Messiah dawned, so that again a glory lit the world.

5.3 Our meaning is this: The religion of God is one, and it is the educator of humankind, but still, it needs must be made new. When thou dost plant a tree, its height increaseth day by day. It putteth forth blossoms and leaves and luscious fruits. But after a long time, it doth grow old, yielding no fruitage any more. Then doth the Husbandman of Truth take up the seed from that same tree, and plant it in a pure soil; and lo, there standeth the first tree, even as it was before.

5.4 Note thou carefully that in this world of being, all things must ever be made new. Look at the material world about thee, see how it hath now been

renewed. The thoughts have changed, the ways of life have been revised, the sciences and arts show a new vigour, discoveries and inventions are new, perceptions are new. How then could such a vital power as religion—the guarantor of mankind’s great advances, the very means of attaining everlasting life, the fosterer of infinite excellence, the light of both worlds—not be made new? This would be incompatible with the grace and loving-kindness of the Lord.

5.5 Religion, moreover, is not a series of beliefs, a set of customs; religion is the teachings of the Lord God, teachings which constitute the very life of humankind, which urge high thoughts upon the mind, refine the character, and lay the groundwork for man’s everlasting honour.

5.6 Note thou: Could these fevers in the world of the mind, these fires of war and hate, of resentment and malice among the nations, this aggression of peoples against peoples, which have destroyed the tranquillity of the whole world ever be made to abate, except through the living waters of the teachings of God? No, never!

5.7 And this is clear: A power above and beyond the powers of nature must needs be brought to bear, to change this black darkness into light, and these hatreds and resentments, grudges and spites, these endless wrangles and wars, into fellowship and love amongst all the peoples of the earth. This power is none other than the breathings of the Holy Spirit and the mighty inflow of the Word of God.

6.1 O thou seeker after truth! The world of the Kingdom is one world. The only difference is that spring returneth over and over again, and setteth up a great new commotion throughout all created things. Then plain and hillside come alive, and trees turn delicately green, and leaves, blossoms and fruits come forth in beauty, infinite and tender. Wherefore the dispensations of past ages are intimately connected with those that follow them: Indeed, they are one and the same, but as the world groweth, so doth the light, so doth the downpour of heavenly grace, and then the Day-Star shineth out in noonday splendour.

6.2 O thou seeker after the Kingdom! Every divine Manifestation is the very life of the world, and the skilled physician of each ailing soul. The world of man is sick, and that competent Physician knoweth the cure, arising as He doth with teachings, counsels and admonishments that are the remedy for every pain, the healing balm to every wound. It is certain that the wise physician can diagnose his patient’s needs at any season, and apply the cure. Wherefore, relate thou the Teachings of the Abhá Beauty to the urgent needs of this present day, and thou wilt see that they provide an instant remedy for the ailing body of the world. Indeed, they are the elixir that bringeth eternal health.

6.3 The treatment ordered by wise physicians of the past, and by those that follow after, is not one and the same, rather doth it depend on what aileth the patient; and although the remedy may change, the aim is always to bring the patient back to health. In the dispensations gone before, the feeble body of the world could not withstand a rigorous or powerful cure. For this reason did Christ say: “I have yet many things to say unto you, matters needing to be told, but ye cannot bear to hear them now. Howbeit when that Comforting Spirit, Whom the Father will send, shall come, He will make plain unto you the

truth.”

6.4 Therefore, in this age of splendours, teachings once limited to the few are made available to all, that the mercy of the Lord may embrace both east and west, that the oneness of the world of humanity may appear in its full beauty, and that the dazzling rays of reality may flood the realm of the mind with light.

#### Humanity Is One

7.1 The teachings specialized in Bahá'u'lláh are addressed to humanity. He says, “Ye are all the leaves of one tree.” He does not say, “Ye are the leaves of two trees: one divine, the other satanic.” He has declared that each individual member of the human family is a leaf or branch upon the Adamic tree; that all are sheltered beneath the protecting mercy and providence of God; that all are the children of God, fruit upon the one tree of His love. God is equally compassionate and kind to all the leaves, branches and fruit of this tree. Therefore, there is no satanic tree whatever—Satan being a product of human minds and of instinctive human tendencies toward error. God alone is Creator, and all are creatures of His might. Therefore, we must love mankind as His creatures, realizing that all are growing upon the tree of His mercy, servants of His omnipotent will and manifestations of His good pleasure.

7.2 Even though we find a defective branch or leaf upon this tree of humanity or an imperfect blossom, it, nevertheless, belongs to this tree and not to another. Therefore, it is our duty to protect and cultivate this tree until it reaches perfection. If we examine its fruit and find it imperfect, we must strive to make it perfect. There are souls in the human world who are ignorant; we must make them knowing. Some growing upon the tree are weak and ailing; we must assist them toward health and recovery. If they are as infants in development, we must minister to them until they attain maturity. We should never detest and shun them as objectionable and unworthy. We must treat them with honour, respect and kindness; for God has created them and not Satan. They are not manifestations of the wrath of God but evidences of His divine favour. God, the Creator, has endowed them with physical, mental and spiritual qualities that they may seek to know and do His will; therefore, they are not objects of His wrath and condemnation. In brief, all humanity must be looked upon with love, kindness and respect; for what we behold in them are none other than the signs and traces of God Himself. All are evidences of God; therefore, how shall we be justified in debasing and belittling them, uttering anathema and preventing them from drawing near unto His mercy? This is ignorance and injustice, displeasing to God; for in His sight all are His servants.

8.1 Moreover, in this wondrous Dispensation the earth will become another earth and the world of humanity will be arrayed with perfect composure and adornment.

Strife, contention, and bloodshed will give way to peace, sincerity, and harmony.

Among the nations, peoples, kindreds, and governments, love and amity will prevail and cooperation and close connection will be firmly established.

Ultimately, war will be entirely banned, and when the laws of the Most Holy

Book are enacted, arguments and disputes will, with perfect justice, be settled before a universal tribunal of governments and peoples, and any difficulties which may arise will be resolved.

The five continents of the world will become as one, its divers nations will become one nation, the earth will become one homeland, and the human race will become one people.

Countries will be so intimately connected, and peoples and nations so commingled and united, that the human race will become as one family and one kindred.

The light of heavenly love will shine and the gloomy darkness of hatred and enmity will be dispelled as far as possible.

Universal peace will raise its pavilion in the midmost heart of creation and the blessed Tree of Life will so grow and flourish as to stretch its sheltering shade over the East and the West.

Strong and weak, rich and poor, contending kindreds and hostile nations—which are like the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and kid, the lion and the calf—will treat one another with the utmost love, unity, justice, and equity.

The earth will be filled with knowledge and learning, with the realities and mysteries of creation, and with the knowledge of God....

8.2 One of the great events which is to occur in the Day of the manifestation of that Incomparable Branch 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 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 established among all nations.

9.1 Thank divine Providence that thou hast been assisted in service and hast been the cause of the promulgation of the oneness of the world of humanity, so that the darkness of differences among men may be dissipated, and the pavilion of the unity of nations may cast its shadow over all regions. Without such unity, rest and comfort, peace and universal reconciliation are unachievable. This illumined century needeth and calleth for its fulfilment. In every century a particular and central theme is, in accordance with the requirements of that century, confirmed by God. In this illumined age that which is confirmed is the oneness of the world of humanity. Every soul who serveth this oneness will undoubtedly be assisted and confirmed.

Women and Men Are Equal

10.1 In this divine age the bounties of God have encompassed the world of women. Equality of men and women, except in some negligible instances, has been fully and categorically announced. Distinctions have been utterly removed.

11.1 From the beginning of existence until the Promised Day men retained

superiority over women in every respect. It is revealed in the Qur'án: "Men have superiority over women." But in this wondrous Dispensation, the supreme outpouring of the Glorious Lord became the cause of manifest achievements by women. Some handmaidens arose who excelled men in the arena of knowledge. They arose with such love and spirituality that they became the cause of the outpouring of the bounty of the Sovereign Lord upon mankind, and with their sanctity, purity and attributes of the spirit led a great many to the shore of unity. They became a guiding torch to the wanderers in the wastes of bewilderment, and enkindled the despondent in the nether world with the flame of the love of the Lord.

#### The Elimination of Prejudices

12.1 Ye observe how the world is divided against itself, how many a land is red with blood and its very dust is caked with human gore. The fires of conflict have blazed so high that never in early times, not in the Middle Ages, not in recent centuries hath there ever been such a hideous war, a war that is even as millstones, taking for grain the skulls of men. Nay, even worse, for flourishing countries have been reduced to rubble, cities have been levelled with the ground, and many a once prosperous village hath been turned into ruin. Fathers have lost their sons, and sons their fathers. Mothers have wept away their hearts over dead children. Children have been orphaned, women left to wander, vagrants without a home. From every aspect, humankind hath sunken low. Loud are the piercing cries of fatherless children; loud the mothers' anguished voices, reaching to the skies.

12.2 And the breeding ground of all these tragedies is prejudice: prejudice of race and nation, of religion, of political opinion; and the root cause of prejudice is blind imitation of the past—imitation in religion, in racial attitudes, in national bias, in politics. So long as this aping of the past persisteth, just so long will the foundations of the social order be blown to the four winds, just so long will humanity be continually exposed to direst peril.

12.3 Now, in such an illumined age as ours, when realities previously unknown to man have been laid bare, and the secrets of created things have been disclosed, and the Morn of Truth hath broken and lit up the world—is it admissible that men should be waging a frightful war that is bringing humanity down to ruin? No, by the Lord God!...

12.4 Strive ye, therefore, with the help of God, with illumined minds and hearts and a strength born of heaven, to become a bestowal from God to man and to call into being, for all humankind, comfort and peace.

13.1 O ye friends of God! These religious, political, patriotic, and racial prejudices are destructive of the world of humanity. Justice is desirable and praiseworthy whether it emanateth from compatriots or from strangers. A well-wishing stranger is better than a heedless friend. The world of humanity must be entirely freed from the idle fancy of prejudices. The whole earth is one homeland, all humanity is one people, and all are descendants of Adam. Religion is independent of politics. Religion promoteth praiseworthy qualities. The people of religion must strive for it to become a cause of fellowship amongst races; otherwise no benefit will result from it. Divine religions are

the cause of fellowship, so that national prejudices may be abolished, and all peoples may become kind to one another and entirely severed from racial prejudice. Justice is praiseworthy though it come from a stranger, and tyranny is blameworthy though it be from one's own brother. This is the truth, and all besides it is vain imaginings. A just stranger is a brother, and a tyrannical brother is a stranger.

13.2I beseech God that ye may be promoters of the oneness of the world of humanity and well-wishers of all peoples, that ye may strive so that the pavilion of universal peace may be pitched in the midmost heart of the world and the standard of the oneness of humankind may be unfurled in the East and the West. This is the cause of the good-pleasure of God. This is the basis of religion. This is the policy of the Holy Books. This is the cause of the felicity of the world of humanity.

13.3The time hath passed when humankind could achieve happiness through conflict amongst races and nations. This is now the century of light and the era of the Divine Spirit. The inner realities stand revealed, and it is clear and evident that superstitious prejudices have ever been the cause of desolation upon the earth. Happiness is unattainable except through fellowship, unity, and the oneness of the world of humanity.

The Independent Investigation of Truth

14.1The first principle of the Teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is: The Search after Truth.

14.2If a man would succeed in his search after truth, he must, in the first place, shut his eyes to all the traditional superstitions of the past.

14.3The Jews have traditional superstitions, the Buddhists and the Zoroastrians are not free from them, neither are the Christians! All religions have gradually become bound by tradition and dogma.

14.4All consider themselves, respectively, the only guardians of the truth, and that every other religion is composed of errors. They themselves are right, all others are wrong!...

14.5We should, therefore, detach ourselves from the external forms and practices of religion. We must realize that these forms and practices, however beautiful, are but garments clothing the warm heart and the living limbs of Divine truth. We must abandon the prejudices of tradition if we would succeed in finding the truth at the core of all religions. If a Zoroastrian believes that the Sun is God, how can he be united to other religions? While idolaters believe in their various idols, how can they understand the oneness of God?

14.6It is, therefore, clear that in order to make any progress in the search after truth we must relinquish superstition. If all seekers would follow this principle they would obtain a clear vision of the truth.

14.7If five people meet together to seek for truth, they must begin by cutting themselves free from all their own special conditions and renouncing all preconceived ideas. In order to find truth we must give up our prejudices, our own small trivial notions; an open receptive mind is essential. If our chalice is full of self, there is no room in it for the water of life. The fact that we imagine ourselves to be right and everybody else wrong is the greatest of all obstacles in the path towards unity, and unity is necessary if we would reach

truth, for truth is one.

14.8 Therefore it is imperative that we should renounce our own particular prejudices and superstitions if we earnestly desire to seek the truth. Unless we make a distinction in our minds between dogma, superstition and prejudice on the one hand, and truth on the other, we cannot succeed. When we are in earnest in our search for anything, we look for it everywhere. This principle we must carry out in our search for truth.

14.9 Science must be accepted. No one truth can contradict another truth. Light is good in whatsoever lamp it is burning! A rose is beautiful in whatsoever garden it may bloom! A star has the same radiance if it shines from the East or from the West. Be free from prejudice, so will you love the Sun of Truth from whatsoever point in the horizon it may arise! You will realize that if the Divine light of truth shone in Jesus Christ it also shone in Moses and in Buddha. The earnest seeker will arrive at this truth. This is what is meant by the "Search after Truth".

14.10 It means, also, that we must be willing to clear away all that we have previously learned, all that would clog our steps on the way to truth; we must not shrink, if necessary, from beginning our education all over again. We must not allow our love for any one religion or any one personality to so blind our eyes that we become fettered by superstition! When we are freed from all these bonds, seeking with liberated minds, then shall we be able to arrive at our goal.

14.11 "Seek the truth, the truth shall make you free." So shall we see the truth in all religions, for truth is in all and truth is one!

15.1 The investigation of truth will assuredly remove all imitations. When blind imitations are eliminated, the oneness of humankind will be revealed, and it will become evident that true religion is the cause of fellowship and unity amongst the people, not the cause of estrangement and rapacity. Through the power of true religion, ignorant prejudices—such as blind religious prejudice, national prejudice, territorial prejudice, and political prejudice—will be dispelled. These idle fancies will disappear and the light of truth will be revealed. Science and religion will hold each other in close embrace.

#### The Harmony of Science and Religion

16.1 All people are captives of blind imitation and follow the dogmas of their forefathers. But Bahá'u'lláh hath said that imitation is not allowed; one must investigate the truth. Bahá'u'lláh hath moreover said that science and religion are conjoined and cannot be separated. A religion that doth not acknowledge reason, the sciences, and the arts is merely the blind imitation of one's forebears and is naught but idle fancy. For science consisteth of the truth, and religion must therefore conform to science. If it doth not conform thereto, then it is idle fancy and is false.

17.1 Among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that religion and faith must be in conformity with science and precious reason, for if religion be contrary to science it is blind imitation, and a wise and intelligent person will not acknowledge it or submit to it.

18.1 In Europe it has come to be held that religion is the enemy of science and

that science is the destroyer of the foundations of religion. Whereas the religion of God is the promoter of truth, the establisher of science and learning, the supporter of knowledge, the civilizer of the human race, the discoverer of the secrets of existence, and the enlightener of the horizons of the world. How then could it oppose knowledge? God forbid! On the contrary, in the sight of God knowledge is the greatest human virtue and the noblest human perfection. To oppose knowledge is pure ignorance, and one who abhors the arts and sciences is not a human being but is even as a mindless animal. For knowledge is light, life, felicity, perfection, and beauty, and causes the soul to draw nigh to the divine threshold. It is the honour and glory of the human realm and the greatest of God's bounties. Knowledge is identical to guidance, and ignorance is the essence of error.

18.2 Happy are those who spend their days in the pursuit of knowledge, in the discovery of the secrets of the universe, and in the meticulous investigation of truth! And woe to those who content themselves with ignorance, who delight in thoughtless imitation, who have fallen into the abyss of ignorance and unawareness, and who have thus wasted their lives!

19.1 O thou true friend! Read, in the school of God, the lessons of the spirit, and learn from love's Teacher the innermost truths. Seek out the secrets of Heaven, and tell of the overflowing grace and favour of God.

19.2 Although to acquire the sciences and arts is the greatest glory of mankind, this is so only on condition that man's river flow into the mighty sea, and draw from God's ancient source His inspiration. When this cometh to pass, then every teacher is as a shoreless ocean, every pupil a prodigal fountain of knowledge. If, then, the pursuit of knowledge lead to the beauty of Him Who is the Object of all Knowledge, how excellent that goal; but if not, a mere drop will perhaps shut a man off from flooding grace, for with learning cometh arrogance and pride, and it bringeth on error and indifference to God.

19.3 The sciences of today are bridges to reality; if then they lead not to reality, naught remaineth but fruitless illusion. By the one true God! If learning be not a means of access to Him, the Most Manifest, it is nothing but evident loss.

19.4 It is incumbent upon thee to acquire the various branches of knowledge, and to turn thy face toward the beauty of the Manifest Beauty, that thou mayest be a sign of saving guidance amongst the peoples of the world, and a focal centre of understanding in this sphere from which the wise and their wisdom are shut out, except for those who set foot in the Kingdom of lights and become informed of the veiled and hidden mystery, the well-guarded secret.

13

The Material World

Nature

1.1 Nature is that condition or reality which outwardly is the source of the life and death, or, in other words, of the composition and decomposition, of all things.

1.2 This nature is subject to a sound organization, to inviolable laws, to a perfect order, and to a consummate design, from which it never departs. To such an extent is this true that were you to gaze with the eye of insight and

discernment, you would observe that all things—from the smallest invisible atom to the largest globes in the world of existence, such as the sun or the other great stars and luminous bodies—are most perfectly organized, be it with regard to their order, their composition, their outward form, or their motion, and that all are subject to one universal law from which they never depart.

1.3 When you consider nature itself, however, you see that it has neither awareness nor will. For instance, the nature of fire is to burn; it burns without consciousness or will. The nature of water is to flow; it flows without consciousness or will. The nature of the sun is to shed light; it shines without consciousness or will. The nature of vapour is to rise; it rises without consciousness or will. It is therefore evident that the natural movements of all created things are compelled, and that nothing moves of its own will save animals and, in particular, man.

1.4 Man is able to resist and oppose nature inasmuch as he discovers the natures of things and, by virtue of this discovery, has mastery over nature itself. Indeed, all the crafts that man has devised proceed from this discovery. For example, he has invented the telegraph, which connects the East and the West. It is therefore evident that man rules over nature.

1.5 Now, can such organization, order, and laws as you observe in existence be attributed merely to the effect of nature, notwithstanding that nature itself has neither consciousness nor understanding? It is therefore evident that this nature, which has neither consciousness nor understanding, is in the grasp of the omnipotent Lord, Who is the Ruler of the world of nature and Who causes it to manifest whatsoever He desires.

1.6 Some say that human existence is among those things that have appeared in the world of being and that are due to the exigencies of nature. Were this true, man would be the branch and nature the root. But is it possible that there could exist a will, a consciousness, and certain perfections in the branch which are absent in the root?

1.7 Hence it is clear that nature, in its very essence, is in the grasp of God's might, and that it is that Eternal and Almighty One Who subjects nature to ideal laws and organizing principles, and Who rules over it.

#### Creation and the Appearance of Humanity

2.1 When a cycle comes to a close, a new one is inaugurated, and the previous cycle, on account of the momentous events which transpire, vanishes so entirely from memory as to leave behind no record or trace. Thus, as you are aware, we have no record of twenty thousand years ago, even though we established before through rational arguments that life on this earth is very ancient—not one or two hundred thousand, or even one or two million years old: It is ancient indeed, and the records and traces of ancient times have been entirely obliterated.

3.1 The beginning of the formation of man on the terrestrial globe is like the formation of the human embryo in the womb of the mother. The embryo gradually grows and develops until it is born, and thereafter it continues to grow and develop until it reaches the stage of maturity. Although in infancy the signs of the mind and the spirit are already present in man, they do not appear in a

state of perfection, and remain incomplete. But when man attains maturity, the mind and the spirit manifest themselves in the utmost perfection.

3.2 Likewise, at the beginning of his formation in the matrix of the world, man was like an embryo. He then gradually progressed by degrees, and grew and developed until he reached the stage of maturity, when the mind and the spirit manifested themselves in the utmost perfection. From the beginning of his formation, the mind and the spirit existed, but they were hidden and appeared only later. In the world of the womb, too, the mind and the spirit exist in the embryo but are concealed and appear only afterwards. It is even as the seed: The tree exists within it but is hidden and concealed; when the seed grows and develops, the tree appears in its fullness. In like manner, the growth and development of all beings proceeds by gradual degrees. This is the universal and divinely ordained law and the natural order. The seed does not suddenly become the tree; the embryo does not at once become the man; the mineral substance does not in a moment become the stone: No, all these grow and develop gradually until they attain the limit of perfection.

3.3 All beings, whether universal or particular, were created perfect and complete from the beginning. The most one can say is that their perfections only become apparent gradually. The law of God is one; the evolution of existence is one; the divine order is one. All beings great and small are subject to one law and one order. Every seed has, from the beginning, all the perfections of the plant. For example, all the vegetable perfections existed in this seed at the outset but were invisible and appeared only gradually. So it is the shoot which first appears from the seed, then the branches, leaves, and blossoms, and finally the fruit. But from the beginning of its formation, all of these existed potentially, albeit invisibly, in the seed. Likewise, from the beginning the embryo possesses all perfections, such as the spirit, the mind, sight, smell, and taste—in a word, all the powers—but they are invisible and become apparent only gradually.

3.4 Similarly, the terrestrial globe was created, from the beginning, with all its elements, substances, minerals, parts, and components, but these appeared only gradually: first the minerals, then the plants, then the animals, and finally man. But from the beginning, these kinds and species were latent in the earthly realm and appeared gradually thereafter. For the supreme law of God and the universal natural order encompasses all things and subjects them to its rule. When you consider this universal order, you see that not a single thing reaches the limit of perfection immediately upon coming into existence, but grows and develops gradually until it reaches that stage.

#### The Nature of the Human Being

4.1 When we examine all things with the eye of discernment, we observe that they are generally confined to three categories: mineral, vegetable, and animal. Thus there are three classes of beings and each class has its associated species. Man is the most distinguished species in that he combines the perfections of all three classes—that is, he possesses a material body, the power of growth, and the power of sensation. Beyond the mineral, vegetable, and animal perfections, however, he also possesses a special perfection of which other created things are bereft, namely, the perfections of the mind. Thus man

is the noblest of all existing things.

4.2 Man is in the ultimate degree of materiality and the beginning of spirituality; that is, he is at the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection. He is at the furthest degree of darkness and the beginning of the light. That is why the station of man is said to be the end of night and the beginning of day, meaning that he encompasses all the degrees of imperfection and that he potentially possesses all the degrees of perfection. He has both an animal side and an angelic side, and the role of the educator is to so train human souls that the angelic side may overcome the animal. Thus, should the divine powers, which are identical with perfection, overcome in man the satanic powers, which are absolute imperfection, he becomes the noblest of all creatures, but should the converse take place, he becomes the vilest of all beings. That is why he is the end of imperfection and the beginning of perfection.

4.3 In no other species in the world of existence can such difference, distinction, contrast, and contradiction be seen as in man. For instance, it is upon man that the effulgent light of the Divinity has been shed, as it was with Christ—see how glorious and noble man is! At the same time, he worships stones, trees, and lumps of clay—see how wretched he is, that the object of his worship should be the basest degrees of existence, that is, lifeless stones and clods of earth, mountains, woods, and trees! What greater wretchedness can there be for man than to worship the lowliest of all things?

4.4 Moreover, knowledge is a human attribute but so is ignorance; truthfulness is a human attribute but so is falsehood; and the same holds true of trustworthiness and treachery, justice and tyranny, and so forth. In brief, every perfection and virtue, as well as every vice, is an attribute of man.... That is why man is said to be the greatest sign of God—that is, he is the Book of Creation—for all the mysteries of the universe are found in him. Should he come under the shadow of the true Educator and be rightly trained, he becomes the gem of gems, the light of lights, and the spirit of spirits; he becomes the focal centre of divine blessings, the wellspring of spiritual attributes, the dawning-place of heavenly lights, and the recipient of divine inspirations. Should he, however, be deprived of this education, he becomes the embodiment of satanic attributes, the epitome of animal vices, and the source of all that is oppressive and dark.

4.5 This is the wisdom of the appearance of the Prophets: to educate humanity, that this lump of coal may become a diamond and this barren tree may be grafted and yield fruit of the utmost sweetness and delicacy. And after the noblest stations in the world of humanity have been attained, further progress can be made only in the degrees of perfection, not in station, for the degrees are finite but the divine perfections are infinite.

4.6 Both before and after casting off this elemental frame, the human soul progresses in perfections but not in station. The progression of all created things culminates in perfect man, and no greater being than him exists: Man, having reached the human station, can progress only in perfections and not in station, for there is no higher station to which he can find passage than that of a perfect man. He can progress solely within the human station, as human

perfections are infinite. Thus, however learned a man may be, it is always possible to imagine one even more learned.

4.7 And as the perfections of man are infinite, he can also advance in these perfections after his ascension from this world.

5.1 In man there are two natures: his spiritual or higher nature and his material or lower nature. In one he approaches God, in the other he lives for the world alone. Signs of both these natures are to be found in men. In his material aspect he expresses untruth, cruelty and injustice; all these are the outcome of his lower nature. The attributes of his Divine nature are shown forth in love, mercy, kindness, truth and justice, one and all being expressions of his higher nature. Every good habit, every noble quality belongs to man's spiritual nature, whereas all his imperfections and sinful actions are born of his material nature. If a man's Divine nature dominates his human nature, we have a saint.

5.2 Man has the power both to do good and to do evil; if his power for good predominates and his inclinations to do wrong are conquered, then man in truth may be called a saint. But if, on the contrary, he rejects the things of God and allows his evil passions to conquer him, then he is no better than a mere animal.

6.1 Man, however, hath a twofold station: one luminous, the other dark; one pertaining to the realm of the Divine, the other to the world of nature; one inclined towards heavenly virtues, the other towards satanic qualities. For man standeth on the demarcation line between light and darkness. In the circle of existence, he is situated at the lowest point, which marketh at once the end of the arc of descent and the beginning of the arc of ascent. For this reason, he is free to move in either direction: towards light or darkness, towards ignorance or guidance—depending on the one that prevaieth. Should the rational faculty prevail, man would shine radiantly and occupy a lofty station in the realms on high. And should the self and the lower nature prevail, the result would be darkness and he would fall into the nethermost fire. For in man the powers of the heavenly Kingdom and the forces of his animal nature are at war until one or the other doth triumph.

#### Human Knowledge

7.1 There is a point that is pivotal to grasping the essence of the other questions that we have discussed or will be discussing, namely, that human knowledge is of two kinds.

7.2 One is the knowledge acquired through the senses. That which the eye, the ear, or the senses of smell, taste, or touch can perceive is called "sensible". For example, the sun is sensible, as it can be seen. Likewise, sounds are sensible, as the ear can hear them; odours, as they can be inhaled and perceived by the sense of smell; foods, as the palate can perceive their sweetness, sourness, bitterness, or saltiness; heat and cold, as the sense of touch can perceive them. These are called sensible realities.

7.3 The other kind of human knowledge is that of intelligible things; that is, it consists of intelligible realities which have no outward form or place and which are not sensible. For example, the power of the mind is not sensible, nor are any of the human attributes: These are intelligible realities. Love,

likewise, is an intelligible and not a sensible reality. For the ear does not hear these realities, the eye does not see them, the smell does not sense them, the taste does not detect them, the touch does not perceive them. Even the ether, the forces of which are said in natural philosophy to be heat, light, electricity, and magnetism, is an intelligible and not a sensible reality. Likewise, nature itself is an intelligible and not a sensible reality; the human spirit is an intelligible and not a sensible reality.

7.4 But when you undertake to express these intelligible realities, you have no recourse but to cast them in the mould of the sensible, for outwardly there is nothing beyond the sensible. Thus, when you wish to express the reality of the spirit and its conditions and degrees, you are obliged to describe them in terms of sensible things, since outwardly there exists nothing but the sensible. For example, grief and happiness are intelligible things, but when you wish to express these spiritual conditions you say, "My heart became heavy", or "My heart was uplifted", although one's heart is not literally made heavy or lifted up. Rather, it is a spiritual or intelligible condition, the expression of which requires the use of sensible terms. Another example is when you say, "So-and-so has greatly advanced", although he has remained in the same place, or "So-and-so has a high position", whereas, like everyone else, he continues to walk upon the earth. This elevation and advancement are spiritual conditions and intelligible realities, but to express them you must use sensible terms, since outwardly there is nothing beyond the sensible.

7.5 To cite another example, knowledge is figuratively described as light, and ignorance as darkness. But reflect: Is knowledge sensible light or ignorance sensible darkness? Certainly not. These are only intelligible conditions, but when you wish to express them outwardly you call knowledge light and ignorance darkness and say, "My heart was dark and it became illumined." Now, the light of knowledge and the darkness of ignorance are intelligible realities, not sensible ones, but when we seek to express them outwardly, we are obliged to give them a sensible form.

8.1 Every subject presented to a thoughtful audience must be supported by rational proofs and logical arguments. Proofs are of four kinds: first, through sense perception; second, through the reasoning faculty; third, from traditional or scriptural authority; fourth, through the medium of inspiration. That is to say, there are four criteria or standards of judgement by which the human mind reaches its conclusions. We will first consider the criterion of the senses. This is a standard still held to by the materialistic philosophers of the world. They believe that whatever is perceptible to the senses is a verity, a certainty and without doubt existent. For example, they say, "Here is a lamp which you see, and because it is perceptible to the sense of sight, you cannot doubt its existence. There is a tree; your sense of vision assures you of its reality, which is beyond question. This is a man; you see that he is a man; therefore, he exists." In a word, everything confirmed by the senses is assumed to be as undoubted and unquestioned as the product of five multiplied by five; it cannot be twenty-six nor less than twenty-five. Consequently, the materialistic philosophers consider the criterion of the senses to be first and

foremost.

8.2 But in the estimation of the divine philosophers this proof and assurance is not reliable; nay, rather, they deem the standard of the senses to be false because it is imperfect. Sight, for instance, is one of the most important of the senses, yet it is subject to many aberrations and inaccuracies.... There are numberless instances of this kind which show the error and inaccuracy of the senses. Therefore, the divine philosophers have considered this standard of judgement to be defective and unreliable.

8.3 The second criterion is that of the intellect. The ancient philosophers in particular considered the intellect to be the most important agency of judgement. Among the wise men of Greece, Rome, Persia and Egypt the criterion of true proof was reason. They held that every matter submitted to the reasoning faculty could be proved true or false and must be accepted or rejected accordingly. But in the estimation of the people of insight this criterion is likewise defective and unreliable, for these same philosophers who held to reason or intellect as the standard of human judgement have differed widely among themselves upon every subject of investigation. The statements of the Greek philosophers are contradictory to the conclusions of the Persian sages. Even among the Greek philosophers themselves there is continual variance and lack of agreement upon any given subject. Great difference of thought also prevailed between the wise men of Greece and Rome. Therefore, if the criterion of reason or intellect constituted a correct and infallible standard of judgement, those who tested and applied it should have arrived at the same conclusions. As they differ and are contradictory in conclusions, it is an evidence that the method and standard of test must have been faulty and insufficient.

8.4 The third criterion or standard of proof is traditional or scriptural—namely, that every statement or conclusion should be supported by traditions recorded in certain religious books. When we come to consider even the Holy Books—the Books of God—we are led to ask, “Who understands these books? By what authority of explanation may these Books be understood?” It must be the authority of human reason, and if reason or intellect finds itself incapable of explaining certain questions, or if the possessors of intellect contradict each other in the interpretation of traditions, how can such a criterion be relied upon for accurate conclusions?

8.5 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? How are we to tell whether a given statement is an inspiration and prompting of the heart through the merciful assistance or through the satanic agency?

8.6 Consequently, it has become evident that the four criteria or standards of judgement by which the human mind reaches its conclusions are faulty and inaccurate. All of them are liable to mistake and error in conclusions. But a

statement presented to the mind accompanied by proofs which the senses can perceive to be correct, which the faculty of reason can accept, which is in accord with traditional authority and sanctioned by the promptings of the heart, can be adjudged and relied upon as perfectly correct, for it has been proved and tested by all the standards of judgement and found to be complete. When we apply but one test, there are possibilities of mistake. This is self-evident and manifest.

9.1 There are only four accepted criteria of comprehension, that is, four criteria whereby the realities of things are understood.

9.2 The first criterion is that of the senses; that is, all that the eye, the ear, the taste, the smell, and the touch perceive is called "sensible". At present all the European philosophers hold this to be the most perfect criterion. They claim that the greatest of all criteria is that of the senses, and they regard it as sacrosanct. And yet the criterion of the senses is defective, as it can err. For example, the greatest of the senses is the power of vision. The vision, however, sees a mirage as water and reckons images reflected in mirrors as real and existing; it sees large bodies as small, perceives a whirling point as a circle, imagines the earth to be stationary and the sun to be in motion, and is subject to many other errors of a similar nature. One cannot therefore rely implicitly upon it.

9.3 The second criterion is that of the intellect, which was the principal criterion of comprehension for those pillars of wisdom, the ancient philosophers. They deduced things through the power of the mind and relied on rational arguments: All their arguments are based upon reason. But despite this, they diverged greatly in their opinions. They would even change their own views: For twenty years they would deduce the existence of something through rational arguments, and then afterwards they would disprove the same, again through rational arguments....

9.4 It is therefore evident that the criterion of reason is imperfect, as proven by the disagreements existing between the ancient philosophers as well as by their want of consistency and their propensity to change their own views. For if the criterion of intellect were perfect, all should have been united in their thoughts and agreed in their opinions.

9.5 The third criterion is that of tradition, that is, the text of the Sacred Scriptures, when it is said, "God said thus in the Torah", or "God said thus in the Gospel." This criterion is not perfect either, because the traditions must be understood by the mind. As the mind itself is liable to error, how can it be said that it will attain to perfect truth and not err in comprehending and inferring the meaning of the traditions? For it is subject to error and cannot lead to certitude. This is the criterion of the leaders of religion. What they comprehend from the text of the Book, however, is that which their minds can understand and not necessarily the truth of the matter; for the mind is like a balance, and the meanings contained in the texts are like the objects to be weighed. If the balance is untrue, how can the weight be ascertained?

9.6 Know, therefore, that what the people possess and believe to be true is liable to error. For if in proving or disproving a thing a proof drawn from the

evidence of the senses is advanced, this criterion is clearly imperfect; if a rational proof is adduced, the same holds true; and likewise if a traditional proof is given. Thus it is clear that man does not possess any criterion of knowledge that can be relied upon.

9.7 But the grace of the Holy Spirit is the true criterion regarding which there is no doubt or uncertainty. That grace consists in the confirmations of the Holy Spirit which are vouchsafed to man and through which certitude is attained.

#### Progress in the Material World

10.1 What result is forthcoming from material rest, tranquillity, luxury and attachment to this corporeal world? It is evident that the man who pursues these things will in the end become afflicted with regret and loss.

10.2 Consequently, one must close his eyes wholly to these thoughts, long for eternal life, the sublimity of the world of humanity, the celestial developments, the Holy Spirit, the promotion of the Word of God, the guidance of the inhabitants of the globe, the promulgation of universal peace and the proclamation of the oneness of the world of humanity! This is the work! Otherwise like unto other animals and birds one must occupy himself with the requirements of this physical life, the satisfaction of which is the highest aspiration of the animal kingdom, and one must stalk across the earth like unto the quadrupeds.

10.3 Consider ye! No matter how much man gains wealth, riches and opulence in this world, he will not become as independent as a cow. For these fattened cows roam freely over the vast tableland. All the prairies and meadows are theirs for grazing, and all the springs and rivers are theirs for drinking! No matter how much they graze, the fields will not be exhausted! It is evident that they have earned these material bounties with the utmost facility.

10.4 Still more ideal than this life is the life of the bird. A bird, on the summit of a mountain, on the high, waving branches, has built for itself a nest more beautiful than the palaces of the kings! The air is in the utmost purity, the water cool and clear as crystal, the panorama charming and enchanting. In such glorious surroundings, he expends his numbered days. All the harvests of the plain are his possessions, having earned all this wealth without the least labour. Hence, no matter how much man may advance in this world, he shall not attain to the station of this bird! Thus it becomes evident that in the matters of this world, however much man may strive and work to the point of death, he will be unable to earn the abundance, the freedom and the independent life of a small bird. This proves and establishes the fact that man is not created for the life of this ephemeral world—nay, rather, is he created for the acquirement of infinite perfections, for the attainment to the sublimity of the world of humanity, to be drawn nigh unto the divine threshold, and to sit on the throne of everlasting sovereignty!

11.1 Thou hast asked about material means and prayer. Prayer is like the spirit and material means are like the human hand. The spirit operateth through the instrumentality of the hand. Although the one true God is the All-Provider, it is the earth which is the means to supply sustenance.... When man refuseth to use material means, he is like a thirsty one who seeketh to quench his thirst

through means other than water or other liquids. The Almighty Lord is the provider of water, and its maker, and hath decreed that it be used to quench man's thirst, but its use is dependent upon His Will. If it should not be in conformity with His Will, man is afflicted with a thirst which the oceans cannot quench.

12.1 Absolute repose does not exist in nature. All things either make progress or lose ground. Everything moves forward or backward, nothing is without motion. From his birth, a man progresses physically until he reaches maturity, then, having arrived at the prime of his life, he begins to decline, the strength and powers of his body decrease, and he gradually arrives at the hour of death. Likewise a plant progresses from the seed to maturity, then its life begins to lessen until it fades and dies. A bird soars to a certain height and having reached the highest possible point in its flight, begins its descent to earth.

12.2 Thus it is evident that movement is essential to all existence. All material things progress to a certain point, then begin to decline. This is the law which governs the whole physical creation.

12.3 Now let us consider the soul. We have seen that movement is essential to existence; nothing that has life is without motion. All creation, whether of the mineral, vegetable or animal kingdom, is compelled to obey the law of motion; it must either ascend or descend. But with the human soul, there is no decline. Its only movement is towards perfection; growth and progress alone constitute the motion of the soul.

12.4 Divine perfection is infinite, therefore the progress of the soul is also infinite. From the very birth of a human being the soul progresses, the intellect grows and knowledge increases. When the body dies the soul lives on. All the differing degrees of created physical beings are limited, but the soul is limitless!...

12.5 In the world of spirit there is no retrogression. The world of mortality is a world of contradictions, of opposites; motion being compulsory, everything must either go forward or retreat. In the realm of spirit there is no retreat possible, all movement is bound to be towards a perfect state. "Progress" is the expression of spirit in the world of matter. The intelligence of man, his reasoning powers, his knowledge, his scientific achievements, all these being manifestations of the spirit, partake of the inevitable law of spiritual progress and are, therefore, of necessity, immortal.

12.6 My hope for you is that you will progress in the world of spirit, as well as in the world of matter; that your intelligence will develop, your knowledge will augment, and your understanding be widened.

12.7 You must ever press forward, never standing still; avoid stagnation, the first step to a backward movement, to decay.

#### Tests and Afflictions

13.1 O thou handmaid aflame with the fire of God's love! Grieve thou not over the troubles and hardships of this nether world, nor be thou glad in times of ease and comfort, for both shall pass away. This present life is even as a swelling wave, or a mirage, or drifting shadows. Could ever a distorted image on the desert serve as refreshing waters? No, by the Lord of Lords! Never can

reality and the mere semblance of reality be one, and wide is the difference between fancy and fact, between truth and the phantom thereof.

13.2 Know thou that the Kingdom is the real world, and this nether place is only its shadow stretching out. A shadow hath no life of its own; its existence is only a fantasy, and nothing more; it is but images reflected in water, and seeming as pictures to the eye.

13.3 Rely upon God. Trust in Him. Praise Him, and call Him continually to mind. He verily turneth trouble into ease, and sorrow into solace, and toil into utter peace. He verily hath dominion over all things.

13.4 If thou wouldst hearken to my words, release thyself from the fetters of whatsoever cometh to pass. Nay rather, under all conditions thank thou thy loving Lord, and yield up thine affairs unto His Will that worketh as He pleaseth. This verily is better for thee than all else, in either world.

14.1 Thou didst write of afflictive tests that have assailed thee. To the loyal soul, a test is but God's grace and favour; for the valiant doth joyously press forward to furious battle on the field of anguish, when the coward, whimpering with fright, will tremble and shake. So too, the proficient student, who hath with great competence mastered his subjects and committed them to memory, will happily exhibit his skills before his examiners on the day of his tests. So too will solid gold wondrously gleam and shine out in the assayer's fire.

14.2 It is clear, then, that tests and trials are, for sanctified souls, but God's bounty and grace, while to the weak, they are a calamity, unexpected and sudden.

14.3 These tests, even as thou didst write, do but cleanse the spotting of self from off the mirror of the heart, till the Sun of Truth can cast its rays thereon; for there is no veil more obstructive than the self, and however tenuous that veil may be, at the last it will completely shut a person out, and deprive him of his portion of eternal grace....

14.4 O thou enraptured handmaid of God! Nearness is verily of the soul, not of the body; and the help that is sought, and the help that cometh, is not material but of the spirit; nevertheless it is my hope that thou wilt attain to nearness in every sense. The bounties of God will verily encompass a sanctified soul even as the sun's light doth the moon and stars: Be thou assured of this.

15.1 O ye homeless ones of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! Ye are homeless and afflicted; ye are displaced and dispossessed of all, for your homes have been pillaged and your dwelling-places plundered. Ye have endured grievous trials, suffered dire iniquities, and been subjected, in truth, to the relentless cruelty of the rebellious.

15.2 'Abdu'l-Bahá is also a captive in this Most Great Prison. But I have found this prison to be a palace, and regard this bondage as true freedom. This cage is to me a heavenly rose garden, and this captivity an everlasting throne, for it hath befallen me in the path of God and for the sake of the love of the Abhá Beauty—may my life be offered up for His loved ones. How delightful and pleasing it is! How sweet and precious! The trials and afflictions suffered by those friends have indeed been most grievous; yet, in truth, they are a

flood of grace and a morn of hope to the hearts of those that are nigh to the Threshold of Singleness.

15.3 Consider what a blessing are calamities when endured in the path of God. The Prince of Martyrs—may my life be offered up for Him—was plunged into the very depths of the ocean of tribulations, while the hostile Yazid and the wicked Valid seemingly prospered in the material world and relished its pleasures. Later it became clear to all that those tribulations had been true blessings, while that prosperity was only divine chastisement and that pleasure naught but God's wrath and fury. The same holdeth true now. Although to outward seeming the divines and the unjust and foolish rulers are raising an uproar and flaunting themselves, ere long ye shall witness how, like the owls of the night, these people will creep into a desolate ruin, hasten to the tomb of eternal loss, and fall into the abyss of everlasting perdition. Even now, they wander distracted in the wilderness of disappointment, while the friends of God gleam brightly from the horizon of everlasting glory.

15.4 Were ye to consider carefully, ye would surely perceive that adversity in the path of the one true God is a bounty, inasmuch as the Most Great Name, the Ancient Beauty—may my life be a sacrifice for His loved ones—did Himself endure a myriad afflictions. Now He hath granted that we, His lowly servants, may become His partners and associates in these trials and tribulations, each according to our capacity. Were one to judge with fairness, this suffering is worthy of gratitude, and these afflictions are naught but manifold bestowals. Upon you be greetings and praise.

Evil

16.1 As to the differences of character arising from education, they are great indeed, for education exerts an enormous influence. Through education the ignorant become learned, the cowardly become courageous, the crooked branch becomes straight, the acrid and bitter fruit of the mountains and woods becomes sweet and succulent, and the five-petalled flower puts forth a hundred petals. Through education barbarous nations become civilized and even animals take on human-like manners. Education must be accorded the greatest importance; for just as diseases are highly communicable in the world of bodies, so is character highly communicable in the realm of hearts and spirits. The differences caused by education are enormous and exert a major influence.

16.2 Now, someone might say that, since the capacity and aptitude of souls differ, how can one reproach the wicked for it is their capacities themselves that are different. Such difference in capacity must inevitably lead to a difference in character. But this is not so, for capacity is of two kinds: innate and acquired. The innate capacity, which is the creation of God, is wholly and entirely good—in the innate nature there is no evil. The acquired capacity, however, can become the cause of evil. For example, God has created all men in such a fashion, and has given them such a capacity and disposition, that they are benefited by sugar and honey and are harmed or killed by poison. This is an innate capacity and disposition that God has bestowed equally upon all men. But man may begin little by little to take poison by ingesting a small quantity every day and gradually increasing it until he reaches the point where he would perish if he were not to consume several grams of opium every day, and

where his innate capacities are completely subverted. Consider how the innate capacity and disposition can be so completely changed, through variation of habit and training, as to be entirely perverted. It is not on account of their innate capacity and disposition that one reproaches the wicked, but rather on account of that which they themselves have acquired.

16.3 In the innate nature of things there is no evil—all is good. This applies even to certain apparently blameworthy attributes and dispositions which seem inherent in some people, but which are not in reality reprehensible. For example, you can see in a nursing child, from the beginning of its life, the signs of greed, of anger, and of ill temper; and so it might be argued that good and evil are innate in the reality of man, and that this is contrary to the pure goodness of the innate nature and of creation. The answer is that greed, which is to demand ever more, is a praiseworthy quality provided that it is displayed under the right circumstances. Thus, should a person show greed in acquiring science and knowledge, or in the exercise of compassion, high-mindedness, and justice, this would be most praiseworthy. And should he direct his anger and wrath against the bloodthirsty tyrants who are like ferocious beasts, this too would be most praiseworthy. But should he display these qualities under other conditions, this would be deserving of blame.

16.4 It follows therefore that in existence and creation there is no evil at all, but that when man's innate qualities are used in an unlawful way, they become blameworthy. Thus if a wealthy and generous person gives alms to a poor man to spend on his necessities, and if the latter spends that sum in an improper way, that is blameworthy. The same holds true of all the innate qualities of man which constitute the capital of human life: If they are displayed and employed in an improper way, they become blameworthy. It is clear then that the innate nature is purely good.

16.5 Consider that the worst of all qualities and the most odious of all attributes, and the very foundation of all evil, is lying, and that no more evil or reprehensible quality can be imagined in all existence. It brings all human perfections to naught and gives rise to countless vices. There is no worse attribute than this, and it is the foundation of all wickedness. Now, all this notwithstanding, should a physician console a patient and say, "Thank God, you are doing better and there is hope for your recovery", although these words may be contrary to the truth, yet sometimes they will ease the patient's mind and become the means of curing the illness. And this is not blameworthy.

#### Cooperation and Reciprocity

17.1 O ye friends of the East and the West! Among the foundations of the religion of God, the inner significances of the Word of God, and the duties of the friends of God, the greatest is cooperation and mutual aid, for the realm of humanity—nay, all the innumerable beings found in the world of existence—depend upon it. Should cooperation and mutual aid cease to exist among created things, the world of being would disintegrate utterly....

17.2 The foundation of life and existence is cooperation and mutual aid, whereas the cause of annihilation and deterioration is the cessation of aid and assistance. The higher the realm of existence, the stronger and more vital this

weighty matter of cooperation and assistance doth become. In the realm of humanity, therefore, cooperation and mutual aid are in a greater degree of completeness and perfection than that which prevaileth in the other realms of existence—so much so, that the life of humanity dependeth entirely upon this principle. Among the friends of God, in particular, this strong foundation must be fortified in such wise that each soul may help the other in all matters, whether pertaining to spiritual realities and inner truths or to the material and physical aspects of life. Such is especially the case with regard to the founding of public institutions that benefit all people, and, in particular, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, which constituteth the greatest of divine foundations.

18.1As preordained by the Fountainhead of Creation, the temple of the world hath been fashioned after the image and likeness of the human body. In fact each mirroreth forth the image of the other, wert thou but to observe with discerning eyes. By this is meant that even as the human body in this world, which is outwardly composed of different limbs and organs, is in reality a closely integrated, coherent entity, similarly the structure of the physical world is like unto a single being whose limbs and members are inseparably linked together.

18.2Were one to observe with an eye that discovereth the realities of all things, it would become clear that the greatest relationship that bindeth the world of being together lieth in the range of created things themselves, and that cooperation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly.

18.3Consider for instance how one group of created things constituteth the vegetable kingdom, and another the animal kingdom. Each of these two maketh use of certain elements in the air on which its own life dependeth, while each increaseth the quantity of such elements as are essential for the life of the other. In other words, the growth and development of the vegetable world is impossible without the existence of the animal kingdom, and the maintenance of animal life is inconceivable without the cooperation of the vegetable kingdom. Of like kind are the relationships that exist among all created things. Hence it was stated that cooperation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness.

18.4In surveying the vast range of creation thou shalt perceive that the higher a kingdom of created things is on the arc of ascent, the more conspicuous are the signs and evidences of the truth that cooperation and reciprocity at the level of a higher order are greater than those that exist at the level of a lower order. For example, the evident signs of this fundamental reality are more discernible in the vegetable kingdom than in the mineral, and still more manifest in the animal world than in the vegetable.

18.5And thus when contemplating the human world thou beholdest this wondrous phenomenon shining resplendent from all sides with the utmost perfection, inasmuch as in this station acts of cooperation, mutual assistance and

reciprocity are not confined to the body and to things that pertain to the material world, but for all conditions, whether physical or spiritual, such as those related to minds, thoughts, opinions, manners, customs, attitudes, understandings, feelings or other human susceptibilities. In all these thou shouldst find these binding relationships securely established. The more this interrelationship is strengthened and expanded, the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity. Indeed without these vital ties it would be wholly impossible for the world of humanity to attain true felicity and success.

18.6 Now consider, if among the people who are merely the manifestations of the world of being this significant matter is of such importance, how much greater must be the spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance among those who are the essences of the world of creation, who have sought the sheltering shadow of the heavenly Tree, and are favoured by the manifestations of divine grace; and how the evidences of this spirit should, through their earnest endeavour, their fellowship and concord, become manifest in every sphere of their inner and outer lives, in the realm of the spirit and divine mysteries and in all things related to this world and the next. Thus there can be no doubt that they must be willing even to offer up their lives for each other.

14

The Life of the Spirit

The Difference Between Human and Animal

1.1 Know that the people of the world are of two kinds; that is, they belong to two groups. One group denies the human spirit and says that man is a kind of animal. Why? Because we see that man and animal share in common the same powers and senses. The simple and individual elements that fill the space around us are brought together in countless combinations, each of which gives rise to a different being. Among these are sentient beings possessed of certain powers and senses. The more complete the combination, the nobler the being. The combination of the elements in the body of man is more complete than in any other being, and its elements have been combined in perfect equilibrium, and thus it is more noble and more perfect. It is not, they say, that man has a special power and spirit of which the other animals are deprived: Animals too have sensory perceptions, but man's powers are simply more acute in certain respects (although with respect to the outer senses, such as hearing, sight, taste, smell, and touch, and even with regard to inner powers such as memory, the animal is more richly endowed than man). The animal, they say, possesses the powers of intelligence and understanding. All they will concede is that man's intelligence is greater.

1.2 Such are the claims of the present-day philosophers. Such are their words, such are their claims, and such are the dictates of their imaginations. And so, after extensive research and armed with powerful arguments, they place man in the lineage of the animal, saying that at one time man was an animal, and that the species gradually changed and evolved until it reached the human degree.

1.3 But the divine philosophers say:

No, this is not so.

Although man shares the same outward powers and senses in common with the animal, there exists in him an extraordinary power of which the animal is deprived.

All sciences, arts, inventions, crafts, and discoveries of realities proceed from this singular power.

This is a power that encompasses all created things, comprehends their realities, unravels their hidden mysteries, and brings them under its control.

It even understands things that have no outward existence, that is, intelligible, imperceptible, and unseen realities such as the mind, the spirit, human attributes and qualities, love and sorrow—all of which are intelligible realities.

Moreover, all the existing sciences and crafts, all the great undertakings and myriad discoveries of man were at one time hidden and concealed mysteries, and it is that all-encompassing human power that has discovered them and brought them forth from the invisible into the visible realm.

So the telegraph, the photograph, the phonograph—all such great inventions and crafts were once hidden mysteries which that human reality discovered and brought forth from the invisible to the visible realm.

There was even a time when this piece of iron before you, and indeed every mineral, was a hidden mystery.

The human reality discovered this mineral and wrought its metal into this finished form.

The same holds true for all the other discoveries and inventions of man, which are innumerable.

This matter is irrefutable and there is no point in denying it.

1.4 If we were to claim that all these effects proceed from the powers of the animal nature and the physical senses, then we see plainly and clearly that, with regard to these powers, the animals are superior to man. For example, the sight of animals is much keener than that of man, their hearing is more acute, and likewise with their powers of smell and taste. Briefly, in the powers which man and animal share in common, the animal often has the advantage. Take the power of memory: If you carry a pigeon from here to a faraway country, and there set it free, it will remember the way and return home. Take a dog from here to the heart of Asia, set it free, and it will return home without ever losing its way. And so is it with the other powers, such as hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch. It is clear then that if man did not possess a power beyond the animal powers, the animal would perforce surpass man in significant discoveries and in the comprehension of realities. It follows from this argument that man is endowed with a gift, and possesses a perfection, which is not present in the animal.

1.5 Moreover, the animal perceives sensible things but cannot perceive conceptual realities. For example, the animal sees that which is within the

range of its vision but cannot comprehend or conceive that which lies beyond it. Thus it is not possible for the animal to comprehend that the earth has a spherical shape. But man can deduce the unknown from the known and discover hidden realities....

1.6... It is likewise impossible for the animal to comprehend that the sun is the centre and that the earth revolves around it. The animal is a prisoner of the senses and is circumscribed by them: It cannot comprehend anything that lies beyond the reach or control of the senses, even though it excels man in the outward powers and senses. It is therefore clearly established that man is endowed with a power of discovery that distinguishes him from the animal, and this power is none but the human spirit....

1.7 One more point remains. Modern philosophers say: "Nowhere do we see a spirit in man, and, although we have investigated the inmost recesses of the human body, nowhere do we perceive a spiritual power. How then are we to imagine a power which is not sensible?" The divine philosophers reply: "The spirit of the animal is not sensible either and cannot be perceived through our material powers: How do you infer its existence? There is no doubt that it is from its effects that you infer in the animal the existence of a power which is lacking in the plant, and that is the power of the senses—sight, hearing, and the other powers. It is from these that you infer that there is an animal spirit. Infer, likewise, from the aforementioned signs and arguments the existence of a human spirit. Thus, since there are signs in the animal that cannot be found in the plant, you say that this sensory power is one of the hallmarks of the animal spirit. You see likewise in man signs, powers, and perfections that do not exist in the animal: Infer then that there is a power in him of which the animal is bereft."

2.1 The animal is the captive of nature and cannot transgress the rules and laws thereof. In man, however, there is a discovering power that transcendeth the world of nature and controlleth and interfereth with the laws thereof. For instance, all minerals, plants and animals are captives of nature. The sun itself with all its majesty is so subservient to nature that it hath no will of its own and cannot deviate a hair's-breadth from the laws thereof. In like manner all other beings, whether of the mineral, the vegetable or the animal world, cannot deviate from the laws of nature, nay, all are the slaves thereof. Man, however, though in body the captive of nature is yet free in his mind and soul, and hath the mastery over nature.

#### Five Kinds of Spirit

3.1 Know that in general there are five kinds of spirit. First is the vegetable spirit, which is the power that results from the composition and combination of the elements according to the wisdom and decree of the Most High, and from their mutual arrangement as well as their influence upon, and their interconnection with, other created things. When these parts and elements are separated, the associated power of growth likewise ceases to exist. So, to give an analogy, electricity results from the composition of certain constituent parts, and as soon as these parts are separated, the electrical force is immediately dissipated and lost. Such is the vegetable spirit.

3.2 After this is the animal spirit, which also results from the combination of

elements that are brought together in a single composition. But this composition is more complete, and when by the decree of the almighty Lord it reaches a fuller degree of combination, the animal spirit, which consists in the power of the senses, comes to exist. This power perceives sensible realities—that which can be seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or touched. After the separation and dissolution of these composed elements, this spirit will also naturally cease to exist. It is like this lamp before you: When oil, wick, and flame are brought together, light is produced; but when the oil is exhausted, the wick consumed, and the constituent parts separated, the light will also be extinguished and lost.

3.3As to the human spirit, its likeness is that of a glass and the bounty of the sun. That is, the body of man, which is composed of the elements, is the most perfect form of composition and combination, the soundest arrangement, the noblest composition, and the most perfect of all existing things. It grows and develops through the animal spirit. This perfect body can be compared to a mirror, and the human spirit to the sun: If the glass is shattered or the mirror destroyed, no harm befalls the outpouring grace of the sun, which continues unabated.

3.4This spirit is the discovering power that encompasses all things. All the wondrous signs, all the crafts and discoveries, all the mighty undertakings and momentous historical events of which you are aware, have been discovered by this spirit and brought forth from the invisible realm into the visible plane through its spiritual power. Thus it abides upon the earth and yet makes discoveries in the heavens, and deduces that which is unknown from known and visible realities. For example, man is in this hemisphere, but through the power of reason he discovers, as Columbus did, another one—the Americas—which until then was unknown. His body is heavy, but he flies through the air by means of vehicles of his own devising. His movement is slow, but he journeys rapidly through East and West by the aid of the devices which he has fashioned. In short, this power encompasses all things.

3.5But this human spirit has two aspects: one divine and one satanic—that is, it is capable of both the greatest perfection and the greatest deficiency. Should it acquire virtues, it is the noblest of all things; and should it acquire vices, it becomes the most vile.

3.6As to the fourth degree of spirit, it is the heavenly spirit, which is the spirit of faith and the outpouring grace of the All-Merciful. This spirit proceeds from the breath of the Holy Spirit, and through a power born of God it becomes the cause of everlasting life. It is that power which makes the earthly soul heavenly and the imperfect man perfect. It cleanses the impure, unlooses the tongue of the silent, sanctifies the bondslaves of passion and desire, and confers knowledge upon the ignorant.

3.7The fifth degree of spirit is the Holy Spirit, which is the mediator between God and His creation. It is like a mirror facing the sun: Just as a spotless mirror receives the rays of the sun and reflects its bounty to others, so too is the Holy Spirit the mediator of the light of holiness, which it conveys from the Sun of Truth to sanctified souls. This Spirit is adorned with all the divine perfections. Whensoever it appears, the world is revived, a new cycle is

ushered in, and the body of humanity is clothed in a fresh attire. It is like the spring: When it arrives, it transports the world from one condition to another. For at the advent of springtide the black earth, the fields, and the meadows become green and verdant; flowers and sweet-scented herbs of every kind spring forth; trees are endowed with a new life; wondrous fruits are produced; and a new cycle is inaugurated.

3.8 It is the same with the manifestation of the Holy Spirit: Whensoever it appears, it invests the world of humanity with a new life and endows human realities with a new spirit. It clothes all existence with a glorious attire, disperses the darkness of ignorance, and causes the light of human perfections to shine resplendent. It is with such a power that Christ renewed this cycle—whereupon the divine springtide pitched its tent, with utmost vitality and grace, in the realm of humanity and perfumed the senses of the enlightened souls with its life-giving breezes.

3.9 In the same way, the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh was a new springtide which appeared with the sweet savours of holiness, with the hosts of everlasting life, and with a power born of the celestial kingdom. He established the throne of God's sovereignty in the midmost heart of the world and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, revived the souls and ushered in a new cycle.

#### Mind, Spirit, and Soul

4.1 Know thou that every soul is fashioned after the nature of God, each being pure and holy at his birth. Afterwards, however, the individuals will vary according to what they acquire of virtues or vices in this world. Although all existent beings are in their very nature created in ranks or degrees, for capacities are various, nevertheless every individual is born holy and pure, and only thereafter may he become defiled.

5.1 Question: What is the difference between mind, spirit, and soul?

5.2 Answer: It was already explained that, in general, spirit is divided into five categories: the vegetable spirit, the animal spirit, the human spirit, the spirit of faith, and the Holy Spirit.

5.3 The vegetable spirit is that power of growth which is brought about in the seed through the influence of other created things.

5.4 The animal spirit is that all-embracing sensory power which is realized through the composition and combination of the elements. When this composition disintegrates, that spirit likewise perishes and becomes non-existent. It may be likened to this lamp: When oil, wick, and flame are brought together and combined, it is lit; and when this combination disintegrates—that is, when the constituent parts are separated from one another—the lamp also is extinguished.

5.5 The human spirit, which distinguishes man from the animal, is the rational soul, and these two terms—the human spirit and the rational soul—designate one and the same thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is called the rational soul, encompasses all things and as far as human capacity permits, discovers their realities and becomes aware of the properties and effects, the characteristics and conditions of earthly things. But the human spirit, unless it be assisted by the spirit of faith, cannot

become acquainted with the divine mysteries and the heavenly realities. It is like a mirror which, although clear, bright, and polished, is still in need of light. Not until a sunbeam falls upon it can it discover the divine mysteries.

5.6 As for the mind, it is the power of the human spirit. The spirit is as the lamp, and the mind as the light that shines from it. The spirit is as the tree, and the mind as the fruit. The mind is the perfection of the spirit and a necessary attribute thereof, even as the rays of the sun are an essential requirement of the sun itself.

#### Spiritual Enkindlement

6.1 O thou who art as a lamp set aflame with the fire of the love of God! I read thy recent letter, which told of thy fervent love and of thine enkindlement with the fire of the love of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Praised, and indicated the pervading influence of the Spirit of Truth within thy limbs and nerves, thy veins and arteries, thy bones and blood and flesh, in such wise that it hath taken the reins of power from thy hands, moving thee as it willeth, causing thee to speak as it willeth, and attracting thee as it willeth. This indeed well becometh every heart that is filled with the spirit of the love of God. Soon shalt thou behold wondrous results and discover the signs of thy Mighty Lord.

7.1 The handmaids of God must rise to such a station that they will, by themselves and unaided, comprehend these inner meanings, and be able to expound at full length every single word; a station where, out of the truth of their inmost hearts, a spring of wisdom will well up, and jet forth even as a fountain that leapeth from its own original source.

8.1 However, I hope that this meeting was like unto the lamp's wick that met the fire and was ignited upon contact. I am expectantly awaiting the results of this meeting, that I may find thee ablaze like a candle and consumed like a moth by the fire of the love of God. May thou, moved by the intensity of love and rapture, weep like the cloud, laugh like the fresh meadow, and tremble with joy like the incomparable sapling stirred by the breezes of the Abhá Paradise.

9.1 O thou seeker after the Kingdom of God! If thou wishest thy speech and utterance to penetrate hearts that are hardened, rid thyself of all attachment to the world and turn thy face unto the Kingdom of God. Kindle the fire of His love within thy heart in such wise that thou mayest become a burning flame and a luminous candle of guidance. Then will thy speech, through the confirmation of the Holy Spirit, stir every heart.

10.1 I beseech God to cast upon your heads the pearls of His bounty; to ignite in your hearts the fire of His love; to unloose your tongues to utter the most eloquent words and the most wondrous mysteries in the assemblage of the righteous; to make you flowers of the Abhá Paradise and angels of heaven, united in your views and with your thoughts harmonized; and to manifest in your faces the holy signs of His Kingdom amidst all people.

11.1 O my friend! Render thou thanks unto God for having illumined thy sight with the effulgent rays shed from the Sun of Truth, and for having quickened thee and baptized thee with the water of life and the fire of the love of God.

12.1 The love of God is spoken of as fire, for it burneth away the veils, and as water, for it is the source of life. In short, the love of God is the inmost

reality of the virtues of the world of humanity. Through it, human nature is purified. Through the love of God, one is delivered from the defects of the human world. Through the love of God, one maketh progress in the realm of virtues. The love of God is the cause of the illumination of the world.

Love

13.1 Know thou of a certainty that Love is the secret of God's holy Dispensation, the manifestation of the All-Merciful, the fountain of spiritual outpourings. Love is heaven's kindly light, the Holy Spirit's eternal breath that vivifieth the human soul. Love is the cause of God's revelation unto man, the vital bond inherent, in accordance with the divine creation, in the realities of things. Love is the one means that ensureth true felicity both in this world and the next. Love is the light that guideth in darkness, the living link that uniteth God with man, that assureth the progress of every illumined soul. Love is the most great law that ruleth this mighty and heavenly cycle, the unique power that bindeth together the divers elements of this material world, the supreme magnetic force that directeth the movements of the spheres in the celestial realms. Love revealeth with unfailing and limitless power the mysteries latent in the universe. Love is the spirit of life unto the adorned body of mankind, the establisher of true civilization in this mortal world, and the shedder of imperishable glory upon every high-aiming race and nation....

13.2 O ye beloved of the Lord! Strive to become the manifestations of the love of God, the lamps of divine guidance shining amongst the kindreds of the earth with the light of love and concord.

14.1 O living flame of heavenly love! Thine heart hath been so fired with the love of God that from ten thousand leagues afar its warmth and radiance may be felt and seen. The fire lit by mortal hand imparteth light and warmth to but a little space, whereas that sacred flame which the Hand of God hath kindled, though burning in the east, will set aflame the west and give warmth to both the north and the south; nay, it shall rise from this world to glow with the hottest flame in the realms on high, flooding with light the Kingdom of eternal glory.

14.2 Happy art thou to have obtained so heavenly a gift. Blessed art thou to be favoured with His divine bestowals.

14.3 The glory of God rest upon thee and upon them that hold fast unto the sure handle of His Will and holy Covenant.

15.1 O thou son of the Kingdom! All things are beneficial if joined with the love of God; and without His love all things are harmful, and act as a veil between man and the Lord of the Kingdom. When His love is there, every bitterness turneth sweet, and every bounty rendereth a wholesome pleasure. For example, a melody, sweet to the ear, bringeth the very spirit of life to a heart in love with God, yet staineth with lust a soul engrossed in sensual desires. And every branch of learning, conjoined with the love of God, is approved and worthy of praise; but bereft of His love, learning is barren—indeed, it bringeth on madness. Every kind of knowledge, every science, is as a tree: If the fruit of it be the love of God, then is it a blessed tree, but if not, that tree is but dried-up wood, and shall only feed

the fire.

16.1 O thou dear handmaid of God! Thy letter hath been received and its contents noted. Thou didst ask for a rule whereby to guide thy life.

16.2 Believe thou in God, and keep thine eyes fixed upon the exalted Kingdom; be thou enamoured of the Abhá Beauty; stand thou firm in the Covenant; yearn thou to ascend into the Heaven of the Universal Light. Be thou severed from this world, and reborn through the sweet scents of holiness that blow from the realm of the All-Highest. Be thou a summoner to love, and be thou kind to all the human race. Love thou the children of men and share in their sorrows. Be thou of those who foster peace. Offer thy friendship, be worthy of trust. Be thou a balm to every sore, be thou a medicine for every ill. Bind thou the souls together. Recite thou the verses of guidance. Be engaged in the worship of thy Lord, and rise up to lead the people aright. Loose thy tongue and teach, and let thy face be bright with the fire of God's love. Rest thou not for a moment, seek thou to draw no easeful breath. Thus mayest thou become a sign and symbol of God's love, and a banner of His grace.

Free Will

17.1 Question: Is man free and unconstrained in all his actions, or is he compelled and constrained?

17.2 Answer: This is one of the most important questions of divinity, and it is most abstruse. God willing, another day we will explain this matter at length from the beginning of our lunch. For now, we will briefly say a few words, as follows.

17.3 Certain matters are subject to the free will of man, such as acting with justice and fairness, or injustice and iniquity—in other words, the choice of good or evil actions. It is clear and evident that the will of man figures greatly in these actions. But there are certain matters where man is forced and compelled, such as sleep, death, sickness, failing powers, misfortune, and material loss: These are not subject to the will of man and he is not accountable for them, for he is compelled to endure them. But he is free in the choice of good and evil actions, and it is of his own accord that he performs them.

17.4 For example, should he so wish, he can pass his days in praise of God, and should he so desire, he can occupy himself with that which is other than Him. He can light the candle of his heart with the flame of the love of God and become a well-wisher of the world, or he can become an enemy of all mankind or set his affections on worldly things; he can choose to be just or iniquitous. All these deeds and actions are under his own control, and he is therefore accountable for them.

17.5 But another question arises: Man's condition is one of utter helplessness and absolute poverty. All might and power belong to God alone, and man's exaltation and abasement depend on the will and purpose of the Most High. Thus it is said in the Gospel that God is like a potter who makes "one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour". Now, the dishonoured vessel has no right to reproach the potter, saying, "Why did you not make me a precious cup that would be passed from hand to hand?" The meaning of these words is that souls occupy different stations. That which occupies the lowest station of existence,

like the mineral, has no right to object, saying, "O God, why have you denied me the perfections of the plant?" Likewise, the plant has no right to protest that it has been deprived of the perfections of the animal realm. And, similarly, it is not befitting for the animal to complain of the want of human perfections. No, all these things are perfect in their own degree and must pursue the perfections of that degree. As we have said previously, that which is inferior in rank has no right or qualification to aspire to the station and perfections of that which is superior, but must progress within its own degree.

17.6 Moreover, man's stillness or motion itself is conditioned upon the aid of God. Should this assistance fail to reach him, he can do neither good nor evil. But when the assistance of the all-bounteous Lord confers existence upon man, he is capable of both good and evil. And should that assistance be cut off, he would become absolutely powerless. That is why the aid and assistance of God are mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures. This condition can be likened to that of a ship that moves by the power of wind or steam. Should this power be cut off, the ship would become entirely unable to move. Nevertheless, in whatever direction the rudder is turned, the power of the steam propels the ship in that direction. If the rudder is turned to the east, the ship moves eastward, and if it is directed to the west, the ship moves west. This motion does not arise from the ship itself, but from the wind or steam.

17.7 In like manner, all the doings of man are sustained by the power of divine assistance, but the choice of good or evil belongs to him alone. It is like when the king appoints an individual as governor of a city, grants him full authority, and shows him that which is just and unjust according to the law. Now, should the governor commit injustice, even though he acts by the power and authority of the king, yet the king would not condone his injustice. And should the governor act with justice, this too would be through the royal authority, and the king would be well pleased and satisfied with his justice.

17.8 Our meaning is that the choice of good and evil belongs to man, but that under all circumstances he is dependent upon the life-sustaining assistance of Divine Providence. The sovereignty of God is great indeed, and all are held captive in the grasp of His power. The servant can do nothing of his own will alone: God is almighty and all-powerful and bestows His assistance upon all creation.

18.1 Fate is of two kinds: One is irrevocable and the other is conditional, or, as it is said, impending. Irrevocable fate is that which cannot be changed or altered, while conditional fate is that which may or may not occur. Thus, the irrevocable fate for this lamp is that its oil will be burnt and consumed. Its eventual extinction is therefore certain, and it is impossible to change or alter this outcome, for such is its irrevocable fate. Likewise, a power has been created in the body of man whose depletion and exhaustion leads inevitably to the disintegration of the body. It is even as the oil in this lamp: After it has been burnt and consumed, the lamp will assuredly be extinguished.

18.2 But conditional fate may be likened to this: While some oil yet remains, a strong wind blows and extinguishes the lamp. This fate is conditional. It is expedient to avoid this fate, to guard oneself against it, and to be cautious and prudent. But the irrevocable fate, which is like the depletion of the oil

of the lamp, cannot be changed, altered, or delayed. It is bound to occur, and the lamp will undoubtedly be extinguished.

#### Faith and Deeds

19.1 Pleasing and acceptable as is a person of righteous actions before God's Holy Threshold, yet deeds should proceed from knowledge. However matchless and exquisite may be a blind man's handiwork, yet he himself is deprived of seeing it. How sorely do certain animals labour on man's behalf, what loads they bear for him, how greatly they contribute to his ease and comfort; and yet, because they are unaware, they enjoy no recompense for all their pains. The clouds rain down their bounty, nurturing the plants and flowers, and imparting verdure and enchantment to the plain and prairie, the forest and the garden; but yet, unconscious as they are of the results and fruit of their outpourings, they win no praise or honour, nor earn the gratitude and approbation of any man. The lamp imparteth light, but as it hath no consciousness of doing so, no one is indebted to it. This apart, a man of righteous deeds and goodly conduct will assuredly turn towards the Light, in whichever quarter he beholdeth it. The point is this, that faith compriseth both knowledge and the performance of good works.

20.1 Question: Those who do good works, who are well-wishers of all mankind, who have a praiseworthy character, who show forth love and kindness to all people, who care for the poor, and who work for universal peace—what need do they have of the divine teachings, with which they believe they can well afford to dispense? What is the condition of such people?

20.2 Answer: Know that such ways, words, and deeds are to be lauded and approved, and they redound to the glory of the human world. But these actions alone are not sufficient: They are a body of the greatest beauty, but without a spirit. No, that which leads to everlasting life, eternal honour, universal enlightenment, and true success and salvation is, first and foremost, the knowledge of God. It is clear that this knowledge takes precedence over every other knowledge and constitutes the greatest virtue of the human world. For the understanding of the reality of things confers a material advantage in the realm of being and brings about the progress of outward civilization, but the knowledge of God is the cause of spiritual progress and attraction, true vision and insight, the exaltation of humanity, the appearance of divine civilization, the rectification of morals, and the illumination of the conscience.

20.3 Second comes the love of God. The light of this love is kindled, through the knowledge of God, in the lamp of the heart, and its spreading rays illumine the world and bestow upon man the life of the Kingdom. And in truth the fruit of human existence is the love of God, which is the spirit of life and grace everlasting. Were it not for the love of God, the contingent world would be plunged in darkness. Were it not for the love of God, the hearts of men would be bereft of life and deprived of the stirrings of conscience. Were it not for the love of God, the perfections of the human world would entirely vanish. Were it not for the love of God, no real connection could exist between human hearts. Were it not for the love of God, spiritual union would be lost. Were it not for the love of God, the light of the oneness of mankind would be extinguished. Were it not for the love of God, the East and the West would not

embrace as two lovers. Were it not for the love of God, discord and division would not be transmuted into fellowship. Were it not for the love of God, estrangement would not give way to unity. Were it not for the love of God, the stranger would not become the friend. Indeed, love in the human world is a ray of the love of God and a reflection of the grace of His bounty.

20.4 It is clear that human realities differ one from another, that opinions and perceptions vary, and that this divergence of thoughts, opinions, understandings, and sentiments among individuals is an essential requirement. For differences of degree in creation are among the essential requirements of existence, which is resolved into countless forms. We stand therefore in need of a universal power which can prevail over the thoughts, opinions, and sentiments of all, which can annul these divisions and bring all souls under the sway of the principle of the oneness of humanity. And it is clear and evident that the greatest power in the human world is the love of God. It gathers diverse peoples under the shade of the tabernacle of oneness and fosters the greatest love and fellowship among hostile and contending peoples and nations.

20.5 Observe how numerous were the diverse nations, races, clans, and tribes who, after the advent of Christ, gathered through the power of the love of God under the shadow of His Word. Consider how the differences and divisions of a thousand years were entirely abolished, how the delusion of the superiority of race and nation was dispelled, how the unity of souls and sentiments was attained, and how all became Christians in truth and in spirit.

20.6 The third virtue of humanity is goodly intention, which is the foundation of all good deeds. Some seekers after truth have held intention to be superior to action, for a goodly intention is absolute light and is entirely sanctified from the least trace of malice, scheming, or deception. Now, one can perform an action which appears to be righteous but which is in reality prompted by self-interest. For example, a butcher raises a sheep and guards its safety, but this good deed of the butcher is motivated by the hope of profit, and the end result of all this care will be the slaughter of the poor sheep. How many are the goodly and righteous deeds that are in reality prompted by self-interest! But the pure intention is sanctified above such faults.

20.7 Briefly, good deeds become perfect and complete only after the knowledge of God has been acquired, the love of God has been manifested, and spiritual attractions and goodly motives have been attained. Otherwise, though good deeds be praiseworthy, if they do not spring from the knowledge of God, from the love of God, and from a sincere intention, they will be imperfect. For example, human existence must encompass all perfections in order to be complete. The power of sight is highly prized and precious, but it must be aided by that of hearing; the hearing is highly prized, but it must be aided by the power of speech; the power of speech is highly prized, but it must be aided by that of reason; and so on with the other powers, organs, and members of man. When all these powers, senses, parts, and organs are combined together, perfection is attained.

20.8 In the world today we meet with souls who sincerely desire the good of all people, who do all that lies in their power to assist the poor and succour the

oppressed, and who are devoted to universal peace and well-being. Yet, however perfect they may be from this perspective, they remain deprived of the knowledge and the love of God and, as such, are imperfect.

#### Striving for Spiritual Perfections

21.1 The friends and handmaids of the Merciful must render service to the oneness of the human world and show love and fellowship towards all people. They must deal with all kindreds, religions, and creeds with the utmost sincerity, goodwill, love, and kindness. They must consider how the tree of their existence may bring forth good fruit, and no fruit is greater than love and fellowship with all humanity. Bahá'u'lláh, addressing the world of humanity, saith: "Ye are all the leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch." Such being the case, the existence of bonds of kinship, brotherhood, sonhood, and fatherhood amongst all human beings is proven and established. Strive ye, then, with heart and soul to conduct yourselves in accordance with these teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Be a shelter and refuge to every oppressed one, and a helper and supporter to every vanquished one. Be a skilled physician to every sick one, and a healing balm to every wounded one. Offer a safe haven to every fearful one, and bring comfort and solace to every dismayed one. Gladden the heart of every sorrowful one, and bring joy to every tearful one. Be as refreshing water to every thirsty one, and as heavenly food to every hungry one. Become the cause of glory to every abased one, and the source of blessings to every poor one.

21.2 Beware, beware, lest ye offend any heart. Beware, beware, lest ye hurt any soul. Beware, beware, lest ye deal unkindly towards any person. Beware, beware, lest ye bring despair to any human being. Should a soul become the cause of grief to any heart or despondency to any soul, it would be better for him to abide in the depths of the earth than to move and walk upon its surface. Should a person consent to the abasement of his own kind, it is indeed better that he should perish, for his non-existence is preferable to his existence and his death better than his life.

21.3 Therefore, I counsel you to strive, as much as ye can, for the welfare of all people, and to show, with the utmost sincerity, love and fellowship to all the members of the human race. Remove from your midst all racial, patriotic, religious, sectarian, political, commercial, industrial, and agricultural prejudices, so that ye may be freed from all things and may lay the foundations of the oneness of the world of humanity. All countries are but one country, and all nations are the children of one father, Adam. The struggle for existence amongst the ferocious wolves is the cause of all this strife, whereas the expanse of the earth is spacious and the banquet tablet of the Lord is outspread in all regions.

22.1 Therefore, O ye servants of God and handmaids of the Merciful, rest ye not for a moment, seek no repose, and ask not for ease and comfort! Day and night, strive ye with heart and soul to spread the sweet savours of Paradise, to raise the melody of the Abhá Kingdom, to join together in intimate communion, to be graciously aided with the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, to clothe the temple of existence with a new attire, to bestow eternal life upon the reality of souls, to be the cause of the progress of the human world, to become the

source of awareness and good character for bloodthirsty creatures, to bring peace and tranquillity to the world, and to adorn humanity with the bounties of the All-Merciful. Perchance ignorance, enmity, and estrangement may be removed entirely from amongst the people and the banner of tranquillity, freedom, wisdom, and unity be unfurled, for the chain of existence hath countless links that are connected with each other. This connection is the cause of the appearance of spiritual powers in the visible world.

22.2 O ye true friends! Make ye a mighty effort, that this world may become another world, and this darksome earth may become shining and resplendent through the rays of the Sun of Truth. I beseech God that this bounty may be realized and this eternal grace revealed, and that the friends of God may attain unto every blessing.

23.1 The first attribute of perfection is learning and the cultural attainments of the mind, and this eminent station is achieved when the individual combines in himself a thorough knowledge of those complex and transcendental realities pertaining to God ... and of those regulations and procedures which would contribute to the progress and civilization of this distinguished country. He should in addition be informed as to the laws and principles, the customs, conditions and manners, and the material and moral virtues characterizing the statecraft of other nations, and should be well versed in all the useful branches of learning of the day, and study the historical records of bygone governments and peoples. For if a learned individual has no knowledge of the sacred Scriptures and the entire field of divine and natural science, of religious jurisprudence and the arts of government and the varied learning of the time and the great events of history, he might prove unequal to an emergency, and this is inconsistent with the necessary qualification of comprehensive knowledge....

23.2 The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality. This means to have no regard for one's own personal benefits and selfish advantages, and to carry out the laws of God without the slightest concern for anything else. It means to see one's self as only one of the servants of God, the All-Possessing, and except for aspiring to spiritual distinction, never attempting to be singled out from the others. It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any member of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.

23.3 The third requirement of perfection is to arise with complete sincerity and purity of purpose to educate the masses: to exert the utmost effort to instruct them in the various branches of learning and useful sciences, to encourage the development of modern progress, to widen the scope of commerce, industry and the arts, to further such measures as will increase the people's wealth. For the mass of the population is uninformed as to these vital agencies which would constitute an immediate remedy for society's chronic ills.

23.4 It is essential that scholars and the spiritually learned should undertake in all sincerity and purity of intent, and for the sake of God alone, to counsel and exhort the masses and clarify their vision with that collyrium

which is knowledge. For today the people out of the depths of their superstition, imagine that any individual who believes in God and His signs, and in the Prophets and divine Revelations and laws, and is a devout and God-fearing person, must of necessity remain idle and spend his days in sloth, so as to be considered in the sight of God as one who has forsaken the world and its vanities, set his heart on the life to come, and isolated himself from human beings in order to draw nearer to God. Since this theme will be developed elsewhere in the present text, We shall leave it for the moment.

23.5 Other attributes of perfection are to fear God, to love God by loving His servants, to exercise mildness and forbearance and calm; to be sincere, amenable, clement and compassionate; to have resolution and courage, trustworthiness and energy; to strive and struggle, to be generous, loyal, without malice; to have zeal and a sense of honour, to be high-minded and magnanimous, and to have regard for the rights of others. Whoever is lacking in these excellent human qualities is defective.

24.1 Man should so surrender his will to God, and become so oblivious of his own pursuits, that he may attain unto the station of living sacrifice: Thus, if he sleepeth, it should not be for the sake of bodily repose, but solely to recuperate his strength in order that his discourse may be clearer, his utterance more pleasing, and that he may serve God's creatures and expound His proofs; and if he waketh, he should remain alert, engage in service to the Cause of God, and utterly submerge his own desires and inclinations in the will of God. When he attaineth unto this station, the confirmations of the Holy Spirit shall surround him, and, armed with such a power, he shall be capable of withstanding all the peoples of the earth.

The Progress of the Soul after Death

25.1 The inability of the materialistic mind to grasp the idea of the Life Eternal is no proof of the non-existence of that life.

25.2 The comprehension of that other life depends on our spiritual birth!

25.3 My prayer for you is that your spiritual faculties and aspirations may daily increase, and that you will never allow the material senses to veil from your eyes the glories of the Heavenly Illumination.

26.1 As the spirit of man lives forever after casting off this elemental frame, it is, like all existing things, undoubtedly capable of progress, and thus one may pray for a departed soul to advance, to be forgiven, or to be made the recipient of divine favours, bounties, and grace. That is why, in the prayers of Bahá'u'lláh, the forgiveness and pardon of God are implored for those who have ascended to the next world. Moreover, just as people are in need of God in this world, so too are they in need of Him in the next. The creatures are ever in need, and God is ever completely independent of them, whether in this world or in the world to come.

26.2 The wealth of the next world consists in nearness to God. It is certain therefore that those who enjoy near access to the divine threshold are permitted to intercede, and that this intercession is approved in the sight of God. But intercession in the next world bears no resemblance to intercession in this world. It is an altogether different condition and reality, which cannot be expressed in words.

26.3 Should a wealthy man choose to bequeath, upon his death, a portion of his wealth to the poor and needy, perchance this action will bring about divine pardon and forgiveness and result in his progress in the Kingdom of the All-Merciful.

26.4 Likewise, parents endure the greatest toil and trouble for their children, and often, by the time the latter have reached the age of maturity, the former have hastened to the world beyond. Rarely do the mother and father enjoy in this world the rewards of all the pain and trouble they have endured for their children. The children must therefore, in return for this pain and trouble, make charitable contributions and perform good works in their name, and implore pardon and forgiveness for their souls. You should therefore, in return for the love and kindness of your father, give to the poor in his name and, with the utmost lowliness and fervour, pray for God's pardon and forgiveness and seek His infinite mercy.

26.5 It is even possible for those who have died in sin and unbelief to be transformed, that is, to become the object of divine forgiveness. This is through the grace of God and not through His justice, for grace is to bestow without desert, and justice is to give that which is deserved. As we have the power to pray for those souls here, so too will we have the same power in the next world, the world of the Kingdom. Are not all the creatures in that world the creation of God? They must therefore be able to progress in that world as well. And just as they can seek illumination here through supplication, so too can they plead there for forgiveness and seek illumination through prayer and supplication. Thus, as souls can progress in this world through their entreaties and supplications, or through the prayers of holy souls, so too after death can they progress through their own prayers and supplications, particularly if they become the object of the intercession of the holy Manifestations.

27.1 You have asked concerning eternal life and entrance into the Kingdom. The Kingdom is outwardly referred to as "heaven", but this is an expression and likeness and not a factual statement or reality. For the Kingdom is not a material location but is sanctified above time and place. It is a spiritual realm, a divine world, and it is the seat of the sovereignty of the almighty Lord. It is exalted above bodies and all that is corporeal, and it is freed and sanctified from the idle conjectures of men. For to be confined to place is a characteristic of bodies and not of spirits: Time and place encompass the body, not the mind and the soul.

27.2 Observe that the body of man abides in a limited space and occupies no more than two spans of earth. But the spirit and mind of man traverses all countries and regions and even the limitless expanse of the heavens; it encompasses all existence and makes discoveries in the spheres above and in the infinite reaches of the universe. This is because the spirit has no place: It is a placeless reality, and for the spirit earth and heaven are the same, since it makes discoveries in both. But the body is confined in space and is unaware of that which lies beyond.

27.3 Now, life is of two kinds: that of the body and that of the spirit. The life of the body consists in material life, but the life of the spirit is a

heavenly existence which consists in receiving the grace of the Divine Spirit and being quickened through the breath of the Holy Spirit. Although material life has existence, yet in the eyes of holy and spiritually minded souls it is utter non-existence and death. Thus man exists and so does this stone, but what a difference between the existence of man and that of the stone! Although the stone exists, in relation to the existence of man it is non-existent.

27.4 What is meant by “eternal life” is receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit, even as a flower partakes of the gifts and breezes of spring. Observe that in the beginning this flower had a purely mineral life, yet through the advent of springtime, the outpouring of its vernal showers, and the heat of its shining sun, it found another life and appeared with the utmost vitality, delicacy, and fragrance. Compared to its latter life, the former life of the flower was even as death.

27.5 Our meaning is that the life of the Kingdom is the life of the spirit, and that it is eternal and sanctified above time and place, even as the human spirit, which is placeless. For were you to search throughout the human body, you would be unable to find a specific place or location for the spirit. The spirit is absolutely placeless and immaterial, but it has a connection with the body, even as the sun has a connection with this mirror: The sun occupies no place within the mirror, but it has a connection with it. In the same way, the world of the Kingdom is sanctified above all that can be seen by the eye or perceived by the other senses, such as hearing, smell, taste, or touch.

27.6 Where then can one find in man this mind that resides in him and whose existence is beyond doubt? Were you to examine the human body with the eye, the ear, or the other senses, you would fail to find it, even though it clearly exists. The mind, therefore, has no place, although it is connected with the brain. So it is with the Kingdom. Likewise, love has no place, but it is connected with the heart. And in the same way, the Kingdom has no place, but it is connected with the human reality.

27.7 Entrance into the Kingdom is through the love of God, through detachment, through sanctity and holiness, through truthfulness and purity, through steadfastness and faithfulness, and through self-sacrifice.

27.8 It follows clearly from these explanations that man is immortal and everlasting. Those who believe in God, who cherish His love, and who have attained certitude, enjoy that blessed life which we call life eternal; but those who are veiled from God, though they be endowed with life, yet they live in darkness and their life, in comparison with that of the believers, is non-existence.

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## The Bahá'í Life

### The Nature and Disposition of the People of Bahá

1.10 Ye true friends of the Most Great Name and spiritual companions of the Ancient Beauty! Praise be to God that ye came into the world in this century of light and age of mysteries. Ye entered beneath His sheltering shadow, apprehended the secret of existence, and were guided by His glorious light. How beloved were ye, for ye attained unto knowledge and discernment. How many erudite scholars were deprived, while ye were made the intimates of His

mysteries; and how many who claimed true understanding were lost and wandered astray in the desert of remoteness, while ye found your way to the sanctuary of the Day-Star of the world. What bestowal is this, what favour and guidance!

1.2 Render thanks for these bounties, and arise to fulfil the counsels and admonitions of the Incomparable Lord of the world. Observe that which hath been set forth in the Books and Tablets, and show forth the nature and disposition of the people of Bahá. Be wholly free from every joy but the glad-tidings of God, and stay clear of all ease and comfort save that which is found beneath the shelter of the Lord. Be even as fruitful trees and as stars of the most luminous horizon. Become the servants of the one true God and His selfless lovers in both the East and the West. Be Bahá'ís in character and disposition, and be heavenly in heart and soul. Look upon enemies as friends, and see ill-wishers as well-wishers. Account the faithless as loyal friends, consider the ignorant as the wise, and deem savage foes as intimate companions. That is to say, treat the sinner, the ill-wisher, and the bloodthirsty enemy as ye would the loyal friend and close confidant.

1.3 My meaning is this: Be the source of pure goodness and utter bounty; look not upon the worthiness or merit of the people. In every age and cycle, love and forbearance have been enjoined, but a pretext was always advanced, and that was the question of worthiness or unworthiness, that this person was malicious and scheming or that one bloodthirsty and hateful. And even if forgiveness was shown, reproach and censure went hand in hand with pardon and forgiveness. In this Dispensation, however, all such matters are abrogated, and heartfelt love and kindness towards all peoples have been expressly set forth in the Book.

2.1 The radiance of the Ever-Loving Lord was shed upon the East and the West from Persia. The world of dust was freed from all that is oppressive and dark and became luminous and bright. The light of truth shone upon the realm of illusion, making the contingent world the mirror of the Placeless and adorning the nether plane with the images of the Concourse on high. Strive, as far as ye are able, to purify your hearts, purge your breasts, sanctify your eyes, and attune your ears, so that this light may shine in the utmost radiance upon the tablets of hearts and souls. The treasures of heaven have been laid bare through the aid and bounty of the Abhá Beauty, and limitless effusions of grace have been vouchsafed. Great and glorious bestowals have encompassed the world, and the bounty and favour of the Ancient of Days has been perfected. The more we supplicate and pray, the greater will be the flow of His grace, and the more effort we make, the more will the hearts be opened and the greater will be the confirmations of the Abhá Kingdom.

2.2 I swear by the Most Great Name, may my soul be offered up for His loved ones, that such great bounty hath been made manifest in the assemblage of the world that its beauty and charm have filled the whole earth with splendour. This soul-stirring bounty belongeth to the one who in this day striveth with heart and soul to teach the Cause, who hath no wish by day or night but to diffuse the Divine fragrances, and who cherisheth no hope save to exalt the Word of God. All things confirm and assist such a soul, and the world and all that is therein render service unto him. Consider former times when every soul who arose to teach the Cause of God perfumed the world with the breaths of

holiness in the kingdoms of earth and heaven, in such wise that the sweet scent of those breaths can still be inhaled by the pure in heart. Those souls who did not arise to perform this praiseworthy deed passed by without sowing any seed and in the end surrendered their lives while still longing for that bounty.

2.30 loved ones of God! The candle must glow bright, and the rose must diffuse sweet fragrances. This indeed is the truth! It is my hope that, by the grace of the Ancient Beauty, the beloved of God may consort with all people with heavenly attributes, and that the lights of purity and sanctity, of lowliness and humility, of detachment and rapture may shine forth from their faces. May they associate with the people with the utmost courtesy, dignity, tranquillity, and composure, with love for the righteous and service to the faithful. May they evince such perfections and qualities as would cause all people to marvel. Such souls are worthy of being related to the Abhá Beauty. To be a Bahá'í is to be the embodiment of all human virtues.

Living a Bahá'í Life

3.1 The beloved of the Lord must stand fixed as the mountains, firm as impregnable walls. Unmoved must they remain by even the direst adversities, unrieved by the worst of disasters. Let them cling to the hem of Almighty God, and put their faith in the Beauty of the Most High; let them lean on the unfailing help that cometh from the Ancient Kingdom, and depend on the care and protection of the generous Lord. Let them at all times refresh and restore themselves with the dews of heavenly grace, and with the breaths of the Holy Spirit revive and renew themselves from moment to moment. Let them rise up to serve their Lord, and do all in their power to scatter His breathings of holiness far and wide. Let them be a mighty fortress to defend His Faith, an impregnable citadel for the hosts of the Ancient Beauty....

3.2 The most vital duty, in this day, is to purify your characters, to correct your manners, and improve your conduct. The beloved of the Merciful must show forth such character and conduct among His creatures, that the fragrance of their holiness may be shed upon the whole world, and may quicken the dead, inasmuch as the purpose of the Manifestation of God and the dawning of the limitless lights of the Invisible is to educate the souls of men, and refine the character of every living man—so that blessed individuals, who have freed themselves from the murk of the animal world, shall rise up with those qualities which are the adornings of the reality of man. The purpose is that earthlings should turn into the people of Heaven, and those who walk in darkness should come into the light, and those who are excluded should join the inner circle of the Kingdom, and those who are as nothing should become intimates of the everlasting Glory. It is that the portionless should gain their share of the boundless sea, and the ignorant drink their fill from the living fount of knowledge; that those who thirst for blood should forsake their savagery, and those who are barbed of claw should turn gentle and forbearing, and those who love war should seek instead for true conciliation; it is that the brutal, their talons razor-sharp, should enjoy the benefits of lasting peace; that the foul should learn that there is a realm of purity, and the tainted find their way to the rivers of holiness.

3.3 Unless these divine bestowals be revealed from the inner self of humankind,

the bounty of the Manifestation will prove barren, and the dazzling rays of the Sun of Truth will have no effect whatever.

3.4 Wherefore, O beloved of the Lord, strive ye with heart and soul to receive a share of His holy attributes and take your portion of the bounties of His sanctity—that ye may become the tokens of unity, the standards of singleness, and seek out the meaning of oneness; that ye may, in this garden of God, lift up your voices and sing the blissful anthems of the spirit. Become ye as the birds who offer Him their thanks, and in the blossoming bowers of life chant ye such melodies as will dazzle the minds of those who know. Raise ye a banner on the highest peaks of the world, a flag of God's favour to ripple and wave in the winds of His grace; plant ye a tree in the field of life, amid the roses of this visible world, that will yield a fruitage fresh and sweet.

3.5 I swear by the true Teacher that if ye will act in accord with the admonitions of God, as revealed in His luminous Tablets, this darksome dust will mirror forth the Kingdom of heaven, and this nether world the realm of the All-Glorious.

4.1 You belong to the world of purity, and are not content to live the life of the animal, spending your days in eating, drinking, and sleeping. You are indeed men! Your thoughts and ambitions are set to acquire human perfection. You live to do good and to bring happiness to others. Your greatest longing is to comfort those who mourn, to strengthen the weak, and to be the cause of hope to the despairing soul. Day and night your thoughts are turned to the Kingdom, and your hearts are full of the Love of God....

4.2 The Heavenly Father gave the priceless gift of intelligence to man so that he might become a spiritual light, piercing the darkness of materiality and bringing goodness and truth into the world. If ye will follow earnestly the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, ye shall indeed become the light of the world, the soul for the body of the world, the comfort and help for humanity, and the source of salvation for the whole universe. Strive therefore, with heart and soul, to follow the precepts of the Blessed Perfection, and rest assured that if ye succeed in living the life he marks out for you, Eternal Life and everlasting joy in the Heavenly Kingdom will be yours, and celestial sustenance will be sent to strengthen you all your days.

4.3 It is my heartfelt prayer that each one of you may attain to this perfect joy!

5.1 The cornerstone of the Religion of God is the acquisition of the Divine perfections and the sharing in His manifold bestowals. The essential purpose of faith and belief is to ennoble the inner being of man with the outpourings of grace from on high. If this be not attained, it is indeed deprivation itself. It is the torment of infernal fire.

5.2 Wherefore it is incumbent upon all Bahá'ís to ponder this very delicate and vital matter in their hearts.... they should exemplify in every aspect of their lives those attributes and virtues that are born of God and should arise to distinguish themselves by their goodly behaviour. They should justify their claim to be Bahá'ís by deeds and not by name.

5.3 He is a true Bahá'í who striveth by day and by night to progress and advance along the path of human endeavour, whose most cherished desire is so to

live and act as to enrich and illuminate the world, whose source of inspiration is the essence of Divine virtue, whose conduct and behaviour is the cause of infinite progress. He should, to the best of his ability, become a source of mercy to all people and of bounty to the whole world. Only when he attaineth unto such perfect gifts can it be said of him that he is a true Bahá'í. For in this holy Dispensation, the crowning glory of bygone ages and cycles, true faith is no mere acknowledgement of the Unity of God, but rather the living of a life that will manifest all the perfections and virtues implied in such belief.

6.1 All over the world one hears beautiful sayings extolled and noble precepts admired. All men say they love what is good, and hate everything that is evil! Sincerity is to be admired, whilst lying is despicable. Faith is a virtue, and treachery is a disgrace to humanity. It is a blessed thing to gladden the hearts of men, and wrong to be the cause of pain. To be kind and merciful is right, while to hate is sinful. Justice is a noble quality and injustice an iniquity. That it is one's duty to be pitiful and harm no one, and to avoid jealousy and malice at all costs. Wisdom is the glory of man, not ignorance; light, not darkness! It is a good thing to turn one's face toward God, and foolishness to ignore Him. That it is our duty to guide man upward, and not to mislead him and be the cause of his downfall. There are many more examples like unto these.

6.2 But all these sayings are but words, and we see very few of them carried into the world of action. On the contrary, we perceive that men are carried away by passion and selfishness, each man thinking only of what will benefit himself even if it means the ruin of his brother. They are all anxious to make their fortune and care little or nothing for the welfare of others. They are concerned about their own peace and comfort, while the condition of their fellows troubles them not at all.

6.3 Unhappily this is the road most men tread.

6.4 But Bahá'ís must not be thus; they must rise above this condition.

Actions must be more to them than words. By their actions they must be merciful and not merely by their words. They must on all occasions confirm by their actions what they proclaim in words. Their deeds must prove their fidelity, and their actions must show forth Divine light.

6.5 Let your actions cry aloud to the world that you are indeed Bahá'ís, for it is actions that speak to the world and are the cause of the progress of humanity.

6.6 If we are true Bahá'ís speech is not needed. Our actions will help on the world, will spread civilization, will help the progress of science, and cause the arts to develop. Without action nothing in the material world can be accomplished, neither can words unaided advance a man in the spiritual Kingdom. It is not through lip-service only that the elect of God have attained to holiness, but by patient lives of active service they have brought light into the world.

6.7 Therefore strive that your actions day by day may be beautiful prayers. Turn towards God, and seek always to do that which is right and noble. Enrich the poor, raise the fallen, comfort the sorrowful, bring healing to the sick,

reassure the fearful, rescue the oppressed, bring hope to the hopeless, shelter the destitute!

6.8 This is the work of a true Bahá'í, and this is what is expected of him.

If we strive to do all this, then are we true Bahá'ís, but if we neglect it, we are not followers of the Light, and we have no right to the name.

6.9 God, who sees all hearts, knows how far our lives are the fulfilment of our words.

#### Holy Souls Will Arise

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

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

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

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

8.10 ye roses in the garden of God's love! O ye bright lamps in the assemblage of His knowledge! May the soft breathings of God pass over you, may

the Glory of God illumine the horizon of your hearts. Ye are the waves of the deep sea of knowledge, ye are the massed armies on the plains of certitude, ye are the stars in the skies of God's compassion, ye are the stones that put the people of perdition to flight, ye are clouds of divine pity over the gardens of life, ye are the abundant grace of God's oneness that is shed upon the essences of all created things.

8.2 On the outspread tablet of this world, ye are the verses of His singleness; and atop lofty palace towers, ye are the banners of the Lord. In His bowers are ye the blossoms and sweet-smelling herbs, in the rose garden of the spirit the nightingales that utter plaintive cries. Ye are the birds that soar upward into the firmament of knowledge, the royal falcons on the wrist of God.

8.3 Why then are ye quenched, why silent, why leaden and dull? Ye must shine forth like the lightning, and raise up a clamouring like unto the great sea. Like a candle must ye shed your light, and even as the soft breezes of God must ye blow across the world. Even as sweet breaths from heavenly bowers, as musk-laden winds from the gardens of the Lord, must ye perfume the air for the people of knowledge, and even as the splendours shed by the true Sun, must ye illumine the hearts of humankind. For ye are the life-laden winds, ye are the jessamine-scents from the gardens of the saved. Bring then life to the dead, and awaken those who slumber. In the darkness of the world be ye radiant flames; in the sands of perdition, be ye wellsprings of the water of life, be ye guidance from the Lord God. Now is the time to serve, now is the time to be on fire. Know ye the value of this chance, this favourable juncture that is limitless grace, ere it slip from your hands.

8.4 Soon will our handful of days, our vanishing life, be gone, and we shall pass, empty-handed, into the hollow that is dug for those who speak no more; wherefore must we bind our hearts to the manifest Beauty, and cling to the lifeline that faileth never. We must gird ourselves for service, kindle love's flame, and burn away in its heat. We must loose our tongues till we set the wide world's heart afire, and with bright rays of guidance blot out the armies of the night, and then, for His sake, on the field of sacrifice, fling down our lives.

8.5 Thus let us scatter over every people the treasured gems of the recognition of God, and with the decisive blade of the tongue, and the sure arrows of knowledge, let us defeat the hosts of self and passion, and hasten onward to the site of martyrdom, to the place where we die for the Lord. And then, with flying flags, and to the beat of drums, let us pass into the realm of the All-Glorious, and join the Company on high.

8.6 Well is it with the doers of great deeds.

#### Relationship with God

9.1 Never lose thy trust in God. Be thou ever hopeful, for the bounties of God never cease to flow upon man. If viewed from one perspective they seem to decrease, but from another they are full and complete. Man is under all conditions immersed in a sea of God's blessings. Therefore, be thou not hopeless under any circumstances, but rather be firm in thy hope.

10.1 Mortal charm shall fade away, roses shall give way to thorns, and beauty and youth shall live their day and be no more. But that which eternally

endureth is the Beauty of the True One, for its splendour perisheth not and its glory lasteth forever; its charm is all-powerful and its attraction infinite. Well is it then with that countenance that reflecteth the splendour of the Light of the Beloved One! The Lord be praised, thou hast been illumined with this Light, hast acquired the pearl of true knowledge, and hast spoken the Word of Truth.

11.1 That Assembly resteth in the sheltering shade of the Lord of all bounties, and it is my hope that, as beseemeth that body, it will be favoured and invigorated by the breathings of the Holy Spirit, and that day by day ye will love God in ever greater measure, and become more tightly bound to the Beauty that abideth forever, to Him Who is the Light of the world. For love of God and spiritual attraction do cleanse and purify the human heart and dress and adorn it with the spotless garment of holiness; and once the heart is entirely attached to the Lord, and bound over to the Blessed Perfection, then will the grace of God be revealed.

11.2 This love is not of the body but completely of the soul. And those souls whose inner being is lit by the love of God are even as spreading rays of light, and they shine out like stars of holiness in a pure and crystalline sky. For true love, real love, is the love for God, and this is sanctified beyond the notions and imaginings of men.

11.3 Let God's beloved, each and every one, be the essence of purity, the very life of holiness, so that in every country they may become famed for their sanctity, independence of spirit, and meekness. Let them be cheered by draughts from the eternal cup of love for God, and make merry as they drink from the wine-vaults of Heaven. Let them behold the Blessed Beauty, and feel the flame and rapture of that meeting, and be struck dumb with awe and wonder. This is the station of the sincere; this is the way of the loyal; this is the brightness that shineth on the faces of those nigh unto God.

12.1 Servitude to God lieth in servitude to the friends. One must be the essence of humility and the embodiment of meekness. One must become evanescence itself and be healed of every disease of the self, in order to become worthy of thralldom to the Threshold of the Almighty.

#### Prayer and Devotions

13.1 Encourage the friends and bring exhilaration and joy to the Bahá'ís. Hold gatherings and recite and chant the heavenly Teachings, that perchance that country may be illumined with the light of truth and that land may, through the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, become even as a delectable paradise, for this age is the century of the All-Glorious Lord, and the melody of the oneness of the world of humanity is reaching the ears throughout the East and the West.

14.1 Praise be to God, thy heart is engaged in the commemoration of God, thy soul is gladdened by the glad tidings of God and thou art absorbed in prayer. The state of prayer is the best of conditions, for man is then associating with God. Prayer verily bestoweth life, particularly when offered in private and at times, such as midnight, when freed from daily cares.

15.1 O handmaid of God! Prayers are granted through the universal Manifestations of God. Nevertheless, where the wish is to obtain material things, even where

the heedless are concerned, if they supplicate, humbly imploring God's help—even their prayer hath an effect.

15.2O handmaid of God! Although the reality of Divinity is sanctified and boundless, the aims and needs of the creatures are restricted. God's grace is like the rain that cometh down from heaven: The water is not bounded by the limitations of form, yet on whatever place it poureth down, it taketh on limitations—dimensions, appearance, shape—according to the characteristics of that place. In a square pool, the water, previously unconfined, becometh a square; in a six-sided pool it becometh a hexagon, in an eight-sided pool an octagon, and so forth. The rain itself hath no geometry, no limits, no form, but it taketh on one form or another, according to the restrictions of its vessel. In the same way, the Holy Essence of the Lord God is boundless, immeasurable, but His graces and splendours become finite in the creatures, because of their limitations, wherefore the prayers of given persons will receive favourable answers in certain cases....

15.3O handmaid of God! The prayers which were revealed to ask for healing apply both to physical and spiritual healing. Recite them, then, to heal both the soul and the body. If healing is right for the patient, it will certainly be granted; but for some ailing persons, healing would only be the cause of other ills, and therefore wisdom doth not permit an affirmative answer to the prayer.

15.4O handmaid of God! The power of the Holy Spirit healeth both physical and spiritual ailments.

Acquiring Divine Virtues

16.1In the beginning of his life man was in the world of the womb, wherein he developed the capacity and worthiness to advance to this world. The powers necessary for this world he acquired in that world. He needed eyes in this world; he obtained them in the world of the womb. He needed ears in this world; he obtained them there. All the powers that were needed in this world he acquired in the world of the womb. In that world he became prepared for this world, and when he entered this world he saw that he possessed all the requisite powers and had acquired all the limbs and organs necessary for this life, in that world. It followeth that in this world too he must prepare for the world beyond. That which he needeth in the world of the Kingdom he must obtain and prepare here. Just as he acquired the powers necessary for this world in the world of the womb, so, likewise, he must obtain that which he will need in the world of the Kingdom—that is to say, all the heavenly powers—in this world.

16.2Once he hath passed from this world to the next, what will he need in the heavenly Kingdom and what powers will he require? Since the world beyond is the world of purity and radiance, we must therefore acquire purity and radiance in this world. It is here that we must obtain that radiance. In that world, spirituality is needed; we must acquire spirituality in this world. In that world, faith, certitude, and the knowledge and love of God are needed; they must all be acquired in this world, so that after ascending from this world to the next, we may find that we have obtained all that is needful for eternal life. That world is manifestly a world of lights; therefore, illumination is required. That world is a world of divine love; therefore, the love of God is

needed. That world is a world of perfections; therefore, one must acquire those perfections in this world. That world is a world vivified by the breaths of the Holy Spirit; one must perceive them in this world. That world is the realm of everlasting life; one must attain unto that life in this world.

16.3 Man must strive to the utmost to receive these bountiful gifts and must acquire these heavenly powers to the highest degree. These are the following: first, the knowledge of God; second, the love of God; third, faith; fourth, charitable deeds; fifth, self-sacrifice; sixth, detachment; seventh, purity and sanctity. Unless he acquireth these powers and attaineth unto these requirements, he will be deprived of the life that is eternal. But if he obtaineth the knowledge of God, is aflame with the fire of the love of God, witnesseth His mighty signs, becometh the cause of love amongst all people, and liveth in a state of utmost sanctity and purity, he will assuredly attain to the station of rebirth, be baptized by the Holy Spirit, and behold life everlasting.

17.1 Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also be acquired.

18.1 O ye beloved of the Lord! The Kingdom of God is founded upon equity and justice, and also upon mercy, compassion, and kindness to every living soul. Strive ye then with all your heart to treat compassionately all humankind—except for those who have some selfish, private motive, or some disease of the soul. Kindness cannot be shown the tyrant, the deceiver, or the thief, because, far from awakening them to the error of their ways, it maketh them to continue in their perversity as before. No matter how much kindness ye may expend upon the liar, he will but lie the more, for he believeth you to be deceived, while ye understand him but too well, and only remain silent out of your extreme compassion.

18.2 Briefly, it is not only their fellow human beings that the beloved of God must treat with mercy and compassion, rather must they show forth the utmost loving-kindness to every living creature. For in all physical respects, and where the animal spirit is concerned, the selfsame feelings are shared by animal and man. Man hath not grasped this truth, however, and he believeth that physical sensations are confined to human beings, wherefore is he unjust to the animals, and cruel....

18.3 Train your children from their earliest days to be infinitely tender and loving to animals. If an animal be sick, let the children try to heal it, if it be hungry, let them feed it, if thirsty, let them quench its thirst, if weary, let them see that it rests.

19.1 Those persons who are selected to serve the public, or are appointed to administrative positions, should perform their duties in a spirit of true servitude and ready compliance. That is to say, they should be distinguished by their goodly disposition and virtuous character, content themselves with their allotted remuneration, and act with trustworthiness in all their doings. They should keep themselves aloof from unworthy motives, and be far removed above covetous designs; for rectitude, probity and righteousness are among the most

potent means for attracting the grace of God and securing both the prosperity of the country and the welfare of the people. Glory and honour for man are not to be found in fortunes and riches, least of all in those which have been unlawfully amassed through extortion, embezzlement and corruption practised at the expense of an exploited populace. Supreme honour, nobility and greatness in the human world, and true felicity in this life and the life to come—all consist in equity and uprightness, sanctity and detachment. If a man would seek distinction, he should suffice himself with a frugal provision, seek to better the lot of the poor of the realm, choose the way of justice and fair-mindedness, and tread the path of high-spirited service. Such a one, needy though he be, shall win imperishable riches and attain unto everlasting honour.

20.1 If a man were to perform every good work, yet fail in the least scruple to be entirely trustworthy and honest, his good works would become as dry tinder and his failure as a soul-consuming fire. If, on the other hand, he should fall short in all his affairs, yet act with trustworthiness and honesty, all his defects would ultimately be righted, all injuries remedied, and all infirmities healed. Our meaning is that, in the sight of God, trustworthiness is the bedrock of His Faith and the foundation of all virtues and perfections. A man deprived of this quality is destitute of everything. What shall faith and piety avail if trustworthiness be lacking? Of what consequence can they be? What benefit or advantage can they confer? Wherefore ‘Abdu’l-Bahá counselleth the friends—nay, rather, fervently imploreth them—so vigilantly to guard the sanctity of the Cause of God and preserve their own dignity as individuals that all nations shall come to know and honour them for their trustworthiness and integrity. They can render no greater service than this today. To act otherwise would be to take an axe to the root of the Cause of God—we take refuge with God from this heinous transgression and pray that He will protect His loved ones from committing so flagrant a wrong.

21.1 Then it is clear that the honour and exaltation of man cannot reside solely in material delights and earthly benefits. This material felicity is wholly secondary, while the exaltation of man resides primarily in such virtues and attainments as are the adornments of the human reality. These consist in divine blessings, heavenly bounties, heartfelt emotions, the love and knowledge of God, the education of the people, the perceptions of the mind, and the discoveries of science. They consist in justice and equity, truthfulness and benevolence, inner courage and innate humanity, safeguarding the rights of others and preserving the sanctity of covenants and agreements. They consist in rectitude of conduct under all circumstances, love of truth under all conditions, self-abnegation for the good of all people, kindness and compassion for all nations, obedience to the teachings of God, service to the heavenly Kingdom, guidance for all mankind, and education for all races and nations. This is the felicity of the human world! This is the exaltation of man in the contingent realm! This is eternal life and heavenly honour!

The Law of God

22.1 O beloved friends of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! No sooner had the Hand of divine power raised the tabernacle of everlasting glory—the tabernacle of the oneness of humanity—in the midmost heart of the world, than He opened wide

the portals of supreme mercy before us all, addressed us in hallowed accents in the Hidden Words, honoured us with the title of “O My servants”, associated us with His own Self, and freed us from distress and fear. He spread wide the banquet table of bounty and issued a universal invitation. He prepared for us all manner of heavenly food and bestowed upon us divine favours and heavenly gifts. He delivered us from every heavy load and relieved us from every grievous burden. He enjoined upon us only laws, ordinances, and teachings that bestow life to the soul and cause it to draw nigh unto the Best-Beloved.

22.2 His laws all grant liberation rather than restriction; they confer freedom rather than limitation; they impart joy and radiance rather than constraint. The laws and ordinances of all former religions included the waging of holy war, resorting to bows and arrows, swords and spears, chains and shackles, and the threatening and beheading of every hostile oppressor. But in this wondrous Dispensation, the Blessed Beauty hath delivered the friends from this heavy burden. He abrogated contention and conflict, and even rejected undue insistence. He exhorted us instead to “consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship”. He ordained that we be loving friends and well-wishers of all peoples and religions, and enjoined upon us to demonstrate the highest virtues in our dealings with the kindreds of the earth. He even regarded enemies as friends, and considered strangers as comrades and intimate companions. What a heavy burden was all that enmity and rancour, all that recourse to sword and spear! Conversely, what joy, what gladness is imparted by loving-kindness!

22.3 Now, in gratitude for these infinite bestowals, it behoveth us to arise to carry out the counsels and admonitions of the Blessed Beauty, and to act in accordance with His teachings and ordinances. We must strive with heart and soul to drink a brimful cup of this heavenly wine, that our words, our deeds, and our conduct may be those of the righteous. We must show forth love and kindness, and demonstrate, through our faith and sincerity, that we are all servants of His Threshold, and true and steadfast keepers at His door. We must prove ourselves Bahá'ís in reality, and not merely in words.

23.1 There are three types of freedom. The first is divine freedom, which is one of the inherent attributes of the Creator for He is unconstrained in His will, and no one can force Him to change His decree in any matter whatsoever....

23.2 The second is the political freedom of Europeans, which leaves the individual free to do whatsoever he desires as long as his action does not harm his neighbour. This is natural freedom, and its greatest expression is seen in the animal world. Observe these birds and notice with what freedom they live. However much man may try, he can never be as free as an animal, because the existence of order acts as an impediment to freedom.

23.3 The third freedom is that which is born of obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Almighty. This is the freedom of the human world, where man severs his affections from all things. When he does so, he becomes immune to all hardship and sorrow. Wealth or material power will not deflect him from moderation and fairness, neither will poverty or need inhibit him from showing forth happiness and tranquillity. The more the conscience of man develops, the more will his heart be free and his soul attain unto happiness. In the religion

of God, there is freedom of thought because God, alone, controls the human conscience, but this freedom should not go beyond courtesy. In the religion of God, there is no freedom of action outside the law of God. Man may not transgress this law, even though no harm is inflicted on one's neighbour. This is because the purpose of Divine law is the education of all—others as well as oneself—and, in the sight of God, the harm done to one individual or to his neighbour is the same and is reprehensible in both cases. Hearts must possess the fear of God. Man should endeavour to avoid that which is abhorrent unto God.

24.1 Consider whether there exists anywhere in creation a principle mightier in every sense than religion, or whether any conceivable power is more pervasive than the various divine Faiths, or whether any agency can bring about real love and fellowship and union among all peoples as can belief in an almighty and all-knowing God, or whether except for the laws of God there has been any evidence of an instrumentality for educating all mankind in every phase of righteousness.

#### Detachment and Sacrifice

25.1 How good it is if the friends be as close as sheaves of light, if they stand together side by side in a firm unbroken line. For now have the rays of reality from the Sun of the world of existence united in adoration all the worshippers of this light; and these rays have, through infinite grace, gathered all peoples together within this wide-spreading shelter; therefore must all souls become as one soul, and all hearts as one heart. Let all be set free from the multiple identities that were born of passion and desire, and in the oneness of their love for God find a new way of life.

25.2 O ye two handmaids of God! Now is the time for you to become as bounteous cups that are filled to overflowing, and even as the reviving gusts that blow from the Abhá Paradise, to scatter the fragrance of musk across that land. Release yourselves from this world's life, and at every stage long ye for non-existence; for when the ray returneth to the sun, it is wiped out, and when the drop cometh to the sea, it vanisheth, and when the true lover findeth his Beloved, he yieldeth up his soul.

25.3 Until a being setteth his foot in the plane of sacrifice, he is bereft of every favour and grace; and this plane of sacrifice is the realm of dying to the self, that the radiance of the living God may then shine forth. The martyr's field is the place of detachment from self, that the anthems of eternity may be upraised. Do all ye can to become wholly weary of self, and bind yourselves to that Countenance of Splendours; and once ye have reached such heights of servitude, ye will find, gathered within your shadow, all created things. This is boundless grace; this is the highest sovereignty; this is the life that dieth not. All else save this is at the last but manifest perdition and great loss.

26.1 The mystery of sacrifice is for man to yield up all that pertaineth unto him for those things that pertain unto God. And that which pertaineth unto God is compassion and mercy, pardon and forgiveness, sacrifice and generosity, quickening the souls and igniting the fire of love in the hearts and veins.

27.1 Regarding the statement in the Hidden Words, that man must renounce his own

self, the meaning is that he must renounce his inordinate desires, his selfish purposes and the promptings of his human self, and seek out the holy breathings of the spirit, and follow the yearnings of his higher self, and immerse himself in the sea of sacrifice, with his heart fixed upon the beauty of the All-Glorious.

#### Striving for Spiritual Union

28.1 It is appropriate and befitting that in this illumined age—the age of the progress of the world of humanity—we should be self-sacrificing and should serve the human race. Every universal cause is divine and every particular one is temporal. The principles of the divine Manifestations of God were, therefore, all-universal and all-inclusive.

28.2 Every imperfect soul is self-centred and thinketh only of his own good. But as his thoughts expand a little he will begin to think of the welfare and comfort of his family. If his ideas still more widen, his concern will be the felicity of his fellow citizens; and if still they widen, he will be thinking of the glory of his land and of his race. But when ideas and views reach the utmost degree of expansion and attain the stage of perfection, then will he be interested in the exaltation of humankind. He will then be the well-wisher of all men and the seeker of the weal and prosperity of all lands. This is indicative of perfection.

29.1 Follow thou the way of thy Lord, and say not that which the ears cannot bear to hear, for such speech is like luscious food given to small children. However palatable, rare and rich the food may be, it cannot be assimilated by the digestive organs of a suckling child. Therefore unto every one who hath a right, let his settled measure be given.

29.2 “Not everything that a man knoweth can be disclosed, nor can everything that he can disclose be regarded as timely, nor can every timely utterance be considered as suited to the capacity of those who hear it.” Such is the consummate wisdom to be observed in thy pursuits. Be not oblivious thereof, if thou wishest to be a man of action under all conditions. First diagnose the disease and identify the malady, then prescribe the remedy, for such is the perfect method of the skilful physician.

30.1 Be in perfect unity. Never become angry with one another. Let your eyes be directed toward the kingdom of truth and not toward the world of creation. Love the creatures for the sake of God and not for themselves. You will never become angry or impatient if you love them for the sake of God. Humanity is not perfect. There are imperfections in every human being, and you will always become unhappy if you look toward the people themselves. But if you look toward God, you will love them and be kind to them, for the world of God is the world of perfection and complete mercy. Therefore, do not look at the shortcomings of anybody; see with the sight of forgiveness. The imperfect eye beholds imperfections. The eye that covers faults looks toward the Creator of souls. He created them, trains and provides for them, endows them with capacity and life, sight and hearing; therefore, they are the signs of His grandeur. You must love and be kind to everybody, care for the poor, protect the weak, heal the sick, teach and educate the ignorant.

31.1 Wherefore must the friends of God, with utter sanctity, with one accord,

rise up in the spirit, in unity with one another, to such a degree that they will become even as one being and one soul. On such a plane as this, physical bodies play no part, rather doth the spirit take over and rule; and when its power encompasseth all, then is spiritual union achieved. Strive ye by day and night to cultivate your unity to the fullest degree. Let your thoughts dwell on your own spiritual development, and close your eyes to the deficiencies of other souls. Act ye in such wise, showing forth pure and goodly deeds, and modesty and humility, that ye will cause others to be awakened.

#### Creating Unity Among Humanity

32.1 O ye friends of God! True friends are even as skilled physicians, and the Teachings of God are as healing balm, a medicine for the conscience of man. They clear the head, so that a man can breathe them in and delight in their sweet fragrance. They waken those who sleep. They bring awareness to the unheeding, and a portion to the outcast, and to the hopeless, hope.

32.2 If in this day a soul shall act according to the precepts and the counsels of God, he will serve as a divine physician to mankind, and like the trump of Isráfíl, he will call the dead of this contingent world to life; for the confirmations of the Abhá Realm are never interrupted, and such a virtuous soul hath, to befriend him, the unfailing help of the Company on high. Thus shall a sorry gnat become an eagle in the fulness of his strength, and a feeble sparrow change to a royal falcon in the heights of ancient glory.

32.3 Wherefore, look not on the degree of your capacity, ask not if you are worthy of the task: rest ye your hopes on the help and loving-kindness, the favours and bestowals of Bahá'u'lláh—may my soul be offered up for His friends! Urge on the steed of high endeavour over the field of sacrifice, and carry away from this wide arena the prize of divine grace....

32.4 O ye lovers of this wronged one! Cleanse ye your eyes, so that ye behold no man as different from yourselves. See ye no strangers; rather see all men as friends, for love and unity come hard when ye fix your gaze on otherness. And in this new and wondrous age, the Holy Writings say that we must be at one with every people; that we must see neither harshness nor injustice, neither malevolence, nor hostility, nor hate, but rather turn our eyes toward the heaven of ancient glory. For each of the creatures is a sign of God, and it was by the grace of the Lord and His power that each did step into the world; therefore they are not strangers, but in the family; not aliens, but friends, and to be treated as such.

32.5 Wherefore must the loved ones of God associate in affectionate fellowship with stranger and friend alike, showing forth to all the utmost loving-kindness, disregarding the degree of their capacity, never asking whether they deserve to be loved. In every instance let the friends be considerate and infinitely kind. Let them never be defeated by the malice of the people, by their aggression and their hate, no matter how intense. If others hurl their darts against you, offer them milk and honey in return; if they poison your lives, sweeten their souls; if they injure you, teach them how to be comforted; if they inflict a wound upon you, be a balm to their sores; if they sting you, hold to their lips a refreshing cup.

33.1 O handmaid of God, peace must first be established among individuals, until

it leadeth in the end to peace among nations. Wherefore, O ye Bahá'ís, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals. This is your task.

34.1 Note ye how easily, where unity existeth in a given family, the affairs of that family are conducted; what progress the members of that family make, how they prosper in the world. Their concerns are in order, they enjoy comfort and tranquillity, they are secure, their position is assured, they come to be envied by all. Such a family but addeth to its stature and its lasting honour, as day succeedeth day. And if we widen out the sphere of unity a little to include the inhabitants of a village who seek to be loving and united, who associate with and are kind to one another, what great advances they will be seen to make, how secure and protected they will be. Then let us widen out the sphere a little more, let us take the inhabitants of a city, all of them together: if they establish the strongest bonds of unity among themselves, how far they will progress, even in a brief period, and what power they will exert. And if the sphere of unity be still further widened out, that is, if the inhabitants of a whole country develop peaceable hearts, and if with all their hearts and souls they yearn to cooperate with one another and to live in unity, and if they become kind and loving to one another, that country will achieve undying joy and lasting glory. Peace will it have, and plenty, and vast wealth.

34.2 Note then: If every clan, tribe, community, every nation, country, territory on earth should come together under the single-hued pavilion of the oneness of mankind, and by the dazzling rays of the Sun of Truth should proclaim the universality of man; if they should cause all nations and all creeds to open wide their arms to one another, establish a World Council, and proceed to bind the members of society one to another by strong mutual ties, what would happen then? There is no doubt whatsoever that the divine Beloved, in all His endearing beauty, and with Him a massive host of heavenly confirmations and human blessings and bestowals, would appear in His full glory before the assemblage of the world.

34.3 Wherefore, O ye beloved of the Lord, bestir yourselves, do all in your power to be as one, to live in peace, each with the others: for ye are all the drops from but one ocean, the foliage of one tree, the pearls from a single shell, the flowers and sweet herbs from the same one garden. And achieving that, strive ye to unite the hearts of those who follow other faiths.

34.4 For one another must ye give up even life itself. To every human being must ye be infinitely kind. Call none a stranger; think none to be your foe. Be ye as if all men were your close kin and honoured friends. Walk ye in such wise that this fleeting world will change into a splendour and this dismal heap of dust become a palace of delights.

Work, Crafts, and Music

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

36.1 I hope that thou mayest be protected and assisted under the providence of the True One, be occupied always in mentioning the Lord and display effort to complete thy profession. Thou must endeavour greatly so that thou mayest become

unique in thy profession and famous in those parts, because attaining perfection in one's profession in this merciful period is considered to be worship of God. And whilst thou art occupied with thy profession, thou canst remember the True One.

37.1 O thou servant of the One true God! In this universal dispensation man's wondrous craftsmanship is reckoned as worship of the Resplendent Beauty. Consider what a bounty and blessing it is that craftsmanship is regarded as worship. In former times, it was believed that such skills were tantamount to ignorance, if not a misfortune, hindering man from drawing nigh unto God. Now consider how His infinite bestowals and abundant favours have changed hellfire into blissful paradise, and a heap of dark dust into a luminous garden.

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

38.1 Among certain nations ... music was considered reprehensible, but in this new age the Manifest Light hath, in His holy Tablets, specifically proclaimed that music, sung or played, is spiritual food for soul and heart.

38.2 The musician's art is among those arts worthy of the highest praise, and it moveth the hearts of all who grieve. Wherefore, O thou Shahnáz, play and sing out the holy words of God with wondrous tones in the gatherings of the friends, that the listener may be freed from chains of care and sorrow, and his soul may leap for joy and humble itself in prayer to the realm of Glory.

Follow the Example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

39.1 Guide ye the people and educate them in the ways of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Deliver to mankind this joyous message from the Abhá Realm. Rest not, by day or night; seek ye no moment's peace. Strive ye with all your might to bring to men's ears these happy tidings. In your love for God and your attachment to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, accept ye every tribulation, every sorrow. Endure the aggressor's taunts, put up with the enemy's reproaches. Follow in the footsteps of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and in the pathway of the Abhá Beauty, long at every moment to give up your lives. Shine out like the day-star, be unresting as the sea; even as the clouds of heaven, shed ye life upon field and hill, and like unto April winds, blow freshness through those human trees, and bring them to their blossoming.

40.1 O ye my spiritual friends! For some time now the pressures have been severe, the restrictions as shackles of iron. This hapless wronged one was left single and alone, for all the ways were barred. Friends were forbidden access to me, the trusted were shut away, the foe compassed me about, the evil watchers were fierce and bold. At every instant, fresh affliction. At every breath, new anguish. Both kin and stranger on the attack; indeed, onetime lovers, faithless and unpitying, were worse than foes as they rose up to harass me. None was there to defend 'Abdu'l-Bahá, no helper, no protector, no ally, no champion. I was drowning in a shoreless sea, and ever beating upon my ears were the raven-croaking voices of the disloyal.

40.2 At every daybreak, triple darkness. At eventide, stone-hearted tyranny. And

never a moment's peace, and never any balm for the spear's red wounds. From moment to moment, word would come of my exile to the Fezzan sands; from hour to hour, I was to be cast into the endless sea. Now they would say that these homeless wanderers were ruined at last; again that the cross would soon be put to use. This wasted frame of mine was to be made the target for bullet or arrow; or again, this failing body was to be cut to ribbons by the sword.

40.3 Our alien acquaintances could not contain themselves for joy, and our treacherous friends exulted. "Praise be to God," one would exclaim, "Here is our dream come true." And another, "God be thanked, our spearhead found the heart."

40.4 Affliction beat upon this captive like the heavy rains of spring, and the victories of the malevolent swept down in a relentless flood, and still 'Abdu'l-Bahá remained happy and serene, and relied on the grace of the All-Merciful. That pain, that anguish, was a paradise of all delights; those chains were the necklace of a king on a throne in heaven. Content with God's will, utterly resigned, my heart surrendered to whatever fate had in store, I was happy. For a boon companion, I had great joy.

40.5 Finally a time came when the friends turned inconsolable, and abandoned all hope. It was then the morning dawned, and flooded all with unending light. The towering clouds were scattered, the dismal shadows fled. In that instant the fetters fell away, the chains were lifted off the neck of this homeless one and hung round the neck of the foe. Those dire straits were changed to ease, and on the horizon of God's bounties the sun of hope rose up. All this was out of God's grace and His bestowals.

40.6 And yet, from one point of view, this wanderer was saddened and despondent. For what pain, in the time to come, could I seek comfort? At the news of what granted wish could I rejoice? There was no more tyranny, no more affliction, no tragical events, no tribulations. My only joy in this swiftly-passing world was to tread the stony path of God and to endure hard tests and all material griefs. For otherwise, this earthly life would prove barren and vain, and better would be death. The tree of being would produce no fruit; the sown field of this existence would yield no harvest. Thus it is my hope that once again some circumstance will make my cup of anguish to brim over, and that beautiful Love, that Slayer of souls, will dazzle the beholders again. Then will this heart be blissful, this soul be blessed.

40.7 O Divine Providence! Lift to Thy lovers' lips a cup brimful of anguish. To the yearners on Thy pathway, make sweetness but a sting, and poison honey-sweet. Set Thou our heads for ornaments on the points of spears. Make Thou our hearts the targets for pitiless arrows and darts. Raise Thou this withered soul to life on the martyr's field, make Thou his faded heart to drink the draught of tyranny, and thus grow fresh and fair once more. Make him to be drunk with the wine of Thine Eternal Covenant, make him a reveller holding high his cup. Help him to fling away his life; grant that for Thy sake, he be offered up.

40.8 Thou art the Mighty, the Powerful. Thou art the Knower, the Seer, the Hearer.

41.1 Wherefore, O ye faithful friends, it behoveth you all to join

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in self-sacrifice and in service to the Cause of God and thralldom to His divine Threshold. If ye be aided to attain unto such a supreme bounty, the whole world shall ere long be made the recipient of the effulgent splendours of God, and the longed-for oneness of humanity shall be revealed in the utmost beauty and charm in the midmost heart of the world. This is the dearest wish of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! This is the greatest yearning of them that are faithful! The Glory of Glories rest upon you.

16

The Bahá’í Community

The Mission of the Bahá’í Community

1.1 The aim of the Bahá’ís is to raise aloft the banner of the world’s Great Peace, to eradicate the foundations of war and conflict throughout all regions, to gather together all the diverse nations and peoples beneath the single-hued Tabernacle of God, and to eliminate prejudice—whether racial, national, religious, sectarian, or political—from the face of the earth, so that all countries may become as one country, all races as one race, and all nations as one nation. Thus may the world of creation attain unto peace and tranquillity.

2.1 Today, all the peoples of the world are indulging in self-interest and exert the utmost effort and endeavour to promote their own material interests. They are worshipping themselves and not the divine reality, nor the world of mankind. They seek diligently their own benefit and not the common weal. This is because they are captives of the world of nature and unaware of the divine teachings, of the bounty of the Kingdom and of the Sun of Truth. But ye, praise be to God, are at present especially favoured with this bounty, have become of the chosen, have been informed of the heavenly instructions, have gained admittance into the Kingdom of God, have become the recipients of unbounded blessings and have been baptized with the Water of Life, with the fire of the love of God and with the Holy Spirit.

2.2 Strive, therefore, with heart and soul that ye become ignited candles in the assemblage of the world, glittering stars on the horizon of Truth and may become the cause of the propagation of the light of the Kingdom; in order that the world of humanity may be converted into a divine realm, the nether world may become the world on high, the love of God and the mercy of the Lord may raise their canopy upon the apex of the world, human souls may become the waves of the ocean of truth, the world of humanity may grow into one blessed tree, the verses of oneness may be chanted and the melodies of sanctity may reach the Supreme Concourse.

2.3 Day and night I entreat and supplicate to the Kingdom of God and beg for you infinite assistance and confirmation. Do not take into consideration your own aptitudes and capacities, but fix your gaze on the consummate bounty, the divine bestowal and the power of the Holy Spirit—the power that converteth the drop into a sea and the star into a sun.

3.1 The Faith of the Blessed Beauty is summoning mankind to safety and love, to amity and peace; it hath raised up its tabernacle on the heights of the earth, and directeth its call to all nations. Wherefore, O ye who are God’s lovers, know ye the value of this precious Faith, obey its teachings, walk in this road

that is drawn straight, and show ye this way to the people. Lift up your voices and sing out the song of the Kingdom. Spread far and wide the precepts and counsels of the loving Lord, so that this world will change into another world, and this darksome earth will be flooded with light, and the dead body of mankind will arise and live; so that every soul will ask for immortality, through the holy breaths of God.

3.2 Soon will your swiftly-passing days be over, and the fame and riches, the comforts, the joys provided by this rubbish-heap, the world, will be gone without a trace. Summon ye, then, the people to God, and invite humanity to follow the example of the Company on high. Be ye loving fathers to the orphan, and a refuge to the helpless, and a treasury for the poor, and a cure for the ailing. Be ye the helpers of every victim of oppression, the patrons of the disadvantaged. Think ye at all times of rendering some service to every member of the human race. Pay ye no heed to aversion and rejection, to disdain, hostility, injustice: Act ye in the opposite way. Be ye sincerely kind, not in appearance only. Let each one of God's loved ones centre his attention on this: to be the Lord's mercy to man; to be the Lord's grace. Let him do some good to every person whose path he crosseth, and be of some benefit to him. Let him improve the character of each and all, and reorient the minds of men. In this way, the light of divine guidance will shine forth, and the blessings of God will cradle all mankind: for love is light, no matter in what abode it dwelleth; and hate is darkness, no matter where it may make its nest. O friends of God! That the hidden Mystery may stand revealed, and the secret essence of all things may be disclosed, strive ye to banish that darkness for ever and ever.

#### Unity Among the Believers

4.1 And now, added to all these tribulations, these miseries, these enemy attacks, there hath arisen a dust cloud of ill will amongst the believers themselves. This in spite of the fact that the Cause of the Ancient Beauty is the very essence of love, the very channel of oneness, existing only that all may become the waves of one sea, and bright stars of the same endless sky, and pearls within the shell of singleness, and gleaming jewels quarried from the mines of unity; that they may become servants one to another, adore one another, bless one another, praise one another; that each one may loose his tongue and extol the rest without exception, each one voice his gratitude to all the rest; that all should lift up their eyes to the horizon of glory, and remember that they are linked to the Holy Threshold; that they should see nothing but good in one another, hear nothing but praise of one another, and speak no word of one another save only to praise.

4.2 There are indeed certain ones who tread this way of righteousness, and God be thanked, these are strengthened and supported by heavenly power in every land. But others have not arisen as they ought to this gloried and exalted station, and this doth lay upon the heart of 'Abdu'l-Bahá a heavy burden of grief, of inconceivable grief. For no tempest more perilous than this could ever assail the Cause of God, nor could anything else so diminish the influence of His Word.

4.3 It behoveth all the beloved of God to become as one, to gather together

under the protection of a single flag, to stand for a uniform body of opinion, to follow one and the same pathway, to hold fast to a single resolve. Let them forget their divergent theories and put aside their conflicting views since, God be praised, our purpose is one, our goal is one. We are the servants of one Threshold, we all draw our nourishment from the same one Source, we all are gathered in the shade of the same high Tabernacle, we all are sheltered under the one celestial Tree.

4.4O beloved of the Lord! If any soul speak ill of an absent one, the only result will clearly be this: he will dampen the zeal of the friends and tend to make them indifferent. For backbiting is divisive, it is the leading cause among the friends of a disposition to withdraw. If any individual should speak ill of one who is absent, it is incumbent on his hearers, in a spiritual and friendly manner, to stop him, and say in effect: Would this detraction serve any useful purpose? Would it please the Blessed Beauty, contribute to the lasting honour of the friends, promote the holy Faith, support the Covenant, or be of any possible benefit to any soul? No, never! On the contrary, it would make the dust to settle so thickly on the heart that the ears would hear no more, and the eyes would no longer behold the light of truth.

4.5If, however, a person setteth about speaking well of another, opening his lips to praise another, he will touch an answering chord in his hearers and they will be stirred up by the breathings of God. Their hearts and souls will rejoice to know that, God be thanked, here is a soul in the Faith who is a focus of human perfections, a very embodiment of the bounties of the Lord, one whose tongue is eloquent, and whose face shineth, in whatever gathering he may be, one who hath victory upon his brow, and who is a being sustained by the sweet savours of God.

4.6Now which is the better way? I swear this by the beauty of the Lord: Whensoever I hear good of the friends, my heart filleth up with joy; but whensoever I find even a hint that they are on bad terms one with another, I am overwhelmed by grief. Such is the condition of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Then judge from this where your duty lieth.

5.1To sum it up, it is the desire of the Lord God that the loved ones of God and the handmaids of the Merciful in the West should come closer together in harmony and unity as day followeth day, and until this is accomplished, the work will never go forward. The Spiritual Assemblies are collectively the most effective of all instruments for establishing unity and harmony. This matter is of the utmost importance; this is the magnet that draweth down the confirmations of God. If once the beauty of the unity of the friends—this Divine Beloved—be decked in the adornments of the Abhá Kingdom, it is certain that within a very short time those countries will become the Paradise of the All-Glorious, and that out of the west the splendours of unity will cast their bright rays over all the earth.

5.2We are striving with heart and soul, resting neither day nor night, seeking not a moment’s ease, to make this world of man the mirror of the unity of God. Then how much more must the beloved of the Lord reflect that unity? And this cherished hope, this yearning wish of ours will be visibly fulfilled only on the day when the true friends of God arise to carry out the Teachings of the

Abhá Beauty—may my life be a ransom for His lovers! One amongst His Teachings is this, that love and good faith must so dominate the human heart that men will regard the stranger as a familiar friend, the malefactor as one of their own, the alien even as a loved one, the enemy as a companion dear and close. Who killeth them, him will they call a bestower of life; who turneth away from them, him will they regard as turning towards them; who denieth their message, him will they consider as one acknowledging its truth. The meaning is that they must treat all humankind even as they treat their sympathizers, their fellow-believers, their loved ones and familiar friends.

5.3 Should such a torch light up the world community, ye will find that the whole earth is sending forth a fragrance, that it hath become a delightful paradise, and the face of it the image of high heaven. Then will the whole world be one native land, its diverse peoples one single kind, the nations of both east and west one household.

Characteristics That Should Distinguish the People of Bahá

6.1 O Friends of the Pure and Omnipotent God! To be pure and holy in all things is an attribute of the consecrated soul and a necessary characteristic of the unenslaved mind. The best of perfections is immaculacy and the freeing of oneself from every defect. Once the individual is, in every respect, cleansed and purified, then will he become a focal centre reflecting the Manifest Light.

6.2 First in a human being's way of life must be purity, then freshness, cleanliness, and independence of spirit. First must the stream bed be cleansed, then may the sweet river waters be led into it. Chaste eyes enjoy the beatific vision of the Lord and know what this encounter meaneth; a pure sense inhaleteth the fragrances that blow from the rose gardens of His grace; a burnished heart will mirror forth the comely face of truth.

6.3 This is why, in Holy Scriptures, the counsels of heaven are likened to water, even as the Qur'án saith: "And pure water send We down from Heaven," and the Gospel: "Except a man be baptized of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Thus is it clear that the Teachings which come from God are heavenly outpourings of grace; they are rain-showers of divine mercy, and they cleanse the human heart.

6.4 My meaning is this, that in every aspect of life, purity and holiness, cleanliness and refinement, exalt the human condition and further the development of man's inner reality. Even in the physical realm, cleanliness will conduce to spirituality, as the Holy Writings clearly state. And although bodily cleanliness is a physical thing, it hath, nevertheless, a powerful influence on the life of the spirit. It is even as a voice wondrously sweet, or a melody played: Although sounds are but vibrations in the air which affect the ear's auditory nerve, and these vibrations are but chance phenomena carried along through the air, even so, see how they move the heart. A wondrous melody is wings for the spirit, and maketh the soul to tremble for joy. The purport is that physical cleanliness doth also exert its effect upon the human soul.

6.5 Observe how pleasing is cleanliness in the sight of God, and how specifically it is emphasized in the Holy Books of the Prophets; for the Scriptures forbid the eating or the use of any unclean thing. Some of these prohibitions were absolute, and binding upon all, and whoso transgressed the

given law was abhorred of God and anathematized by the believers. Such, for example, were things categorically forbidden, the perpetration of which was accounted a most grievous sin, among them actions so loathsome that it is shameful even to speak their name.

6.6 But there are other forbidden things which do not cause immediate harm, and the injurious effects of which are only gradually produced: Such acts are also repugnant to the Lord, and blameworthy in His sight, and repellent. The absolute unlawfulness of these, however, hath not been expressly set forth in the Text, but their avoidance is necessary to purity, cleanliness, the preservation of health, and freedom from addiction....

6.7 O Divine Providence! Bestow Thou in all things purity and cleanliness upon the people of Bahá. Grant that they be freed from all defilement, and released from all addictions. Save them from committing any repugnant act, unbind them from the chains of every evil habit, that they may live pure and free, wholesome and cleanly, worthy to serve at Thy Sacred Threshold and fit to be related to their Lord. Deliver them from intoxicating drinks and tobacco, save them, rescue them, from this opium that bringeth on madness, suffer them to enjoy the sweet savours of holiness, that they may drink deep of the mystic cup of heavenly love and know the rapture of being drawn ever closer unto the Realm of the All-Glorious....

6.8 Make ye then a mighty effort, that the purity and sanctity which, above all else, are cherished by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, shall distinguish the people of Bahá; that in every kind of excellence the people of God shall surpass all other human beings; that both outwardly and inwardly they shall prove superior to the rest; that for purity, immaculacy, refinement, and the preservation of health, they shall be leaders in the vanguard of those who know. And that by their freedom from enslavement, their knowledge, their self-control, they shall be first among the pure, the free and the wise.

7.1 O army of God! Today, in this world, every people is wandering astray in its own desert, moving here and there according to the dictates of its fancies and whims, pursuing its own particular caprice. Amongst all the teeming masses of the earth, only this community of the Most Great Name is free and clear of human schemes and hath no selfish purpose to promote. Alone amongst them all, this people hath arisen with aims purified of self, following the Teachings of God, most eagerly toiling and striving toward a single goal: to turn this nether dust into high heaven, to make of this world a mirror for the Kingdom, to change this world into a different world, and cause all humankind to adopt the ways of righteousness and a new manner of life.

7.2 O army of God! Through the protection and help vouchsafed by the Blessed Beauty—may my life be a sacrifice to His loved ones—ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a centre of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people of that city may cry out and say: “This man is unquestionably a Bahá’í, for his manners, his behaviour, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the

attributes of the Bahá'ís." Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God. For He hath, through irrefutable Texts, entered into a binding Covenant with us all, requiring us to act in accordance with His sacred instructions and counsels.

7.30 army of God! The time hath come for the effects and perfections of the Most Great Name to be made manifest in this excellent age, so as to establish, beyond any doubt, that this era is the era of Bahá'u'lláh, and this age is distinguished above all other ages.

7.40 army of God! Whensoever ye behold a person whose entire attention is directed toward the Cause of God; whose only aim is this, to make the Word of God to take effect; who, day and night, with pure intent, is rendering service to the Cause; from whose behaviour not the slightest trace of egotism or private motives is discerned—who, rather, wandereth distracted in the wilderness of the love of God, and drinketh only from the cup of the knowledge of God, and is utterly engrossed in spreading the sweet savours of God, and is enamoured of the holy verses of the Kingdom of God—know ye for a certainty that this individual will be supported and reinforced by heaven; that like unto the morning star, he will forever gleam brightly out of the skies of eternal grace. But if he show the slightest taint of selfish desires and self love, his efforts will lead to nothing and he will be destroyed and left hopeless at the last.

7.50 army of God! Praise be to God, Bahá'u'lláh hath lifted the chains from off the necks of humankind, and hath set man free from all that trammelled him, and told him: Ye are the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch; be ye compassionate and kind to all the human race. Deal ye with strangers the same as with friends, cherish ye others just as ye would your own. See foes as friends; see demons as angels; give to the tyrant the same great love ye show the loyal and true, and even as gazelles from the scented cities of Khatá and Khutan offer up sweet musk to the ravening wolf. Be ye a refuge to the fearful; bring ye rest and peace to the disturbed; make ye a provision for the destitute; be a treasury of riches for the poor; be a healing medicine for those who suffer pain; be ye doctor and nurse to the ailing; promote ye friendship, and honour, and conciliation, and devotion to God, in this world of non-existence.

7.60 army of God! Make ye a mighty effort: Perchance ye can flood this earth with light, that this mud hut, the world, may become the Abhá Paradise. The dark hath taken over, and the brute traits prevail. This world of man is now an arena for wild beasts, a field where the ignorant, the heedless, seize their chance. The souls of men are ravening wolves and animals with blinded eyes, they are either deadly poison or useless weeds—all except for a very few who indeed do nurture altruistic aims and plans for the well-being of their fellow men: But ye must in this matter—that is, the serving of humankind—lay down your very lives, and as ye yield yourselves, rejoice.

7.70 army of God! The Exalted One, the Báb, gave up His life. The Blessed Perfection gave up a hundred lives at every breath. He bore calamities. He suffered anguish. He was imprisoned. He was chained. He was made homeless and was banished to distant lands. Finally, then, He lived out His days in the Most

Great Prison. Likewise, a great multitude of the lovers of God who followed this path have tasted the honey of martyrdom and they gave up everything—life, possessions, kindred—all they had. How many homes were reduced to rubble; how many dwellings were broken into and pillaged; how many a noble building went to the ground; how many a palace was battered into a tomb. And all this came about that humankind might be illumined, that ignorance might yield to knowledge, that men of earth might become men of heaven, that discord and dissension might be torn out by the roots, and the Kingdom of Peace become established over all the world. Strive ye now that this bounty become manifest, and this best-beloved of all hopes be realized in splendour throughout the community of man.

7.8O army of God! Beware lest ye harm any soul, or make any heart to sorrow; lest ye wound any man with your words, be he known to you or a stranger, be he friend or foe. Pray ye for all; ask ye that all be blessed, all be forgiven. Beware, beware, lest any of you seek vengeance, even against one who is thirsting for your blood. Beware, beware, lest ye offend the feelings of another, even though he be an evildoer, and he wish you ill. Look ye not upon the creatures, turn ye to their Creator. See ye not the never-yielding people, see but the Lord of Hosts. Gaze ye not down upon the dust, gaze upward at the shining sun, which hath caused every patch of darksome earth to glow with light.

Effort Is Needed

8.1O ye who have turned your faces toward the Exalted Beauty! By night, by day, at morningtide and sunset, when darkness draweth on, and at early light I remember, and ever have remembered, in the realms of my mind and heart, the loved ones of the Lord. I beg of Him to bestow His confirmations upon those loved ones, dwellers in that pure and holy land, and to grant them successful outcomes in all things: that in their character, their behaviour, their words, their way of life, in all they are and do, He will make them to achieve distinction among men; that He will gather them into the world community, their hearts filled with ecstasy and fervour and yearning love, with knowledge and certitude, with steadfastness and unity, their faces beauteous and bright.

8.2O ye beloved of the Lord! This day is the day of union, the day of the ingathering of all mankind. “Verily God loveth those who, as though they were a solid wall, do battle for His Cause in serried lines!” Note that He saith “in serried lines”—meaning crowded and pressed together, one locked to the next, each supporting his fellows. To do battle, as stated in the sacred verse, doth not, in this greatest of all dispensations, mean to go forth with sword and spear, with lance and piercing arrow—but rather weaponed with pure intent, with righteous motives, with counsels helpful and effective, with godly attributes, with deeds pleasing to the Almighty, with the qualities of heaven. It signifieth education for all mankind, guidance for all men, the spreading far and wide of the sweet savours of the spirit, the promulgation of God’s proofs, the setting forth of arguments conclusive and divine, the doing of charitable deeds.

8.3Whensoever holy souls, drawing on the powers of heaven, shall arise with such qualities of the spirit, and march in unison, rank on rank, every one of

those souls will be even as one thousand, and the surging waves of that mighty ocean will be even as the battalions of the Concourse on high. What a blessing that will be—when all shall come together, even as once separate torrents, rivers and streams, running brooks and single drops, when collected together in one place will form a mighty sea. And to such a degree will the inherent unity of all prevail, that the traditions, rules, customs and distinctions in the fanciful life of these populations will be effaced and vanish away like isolated drops, once the great sea of oneness doth leap and surge and roll.

8.4I swear by the Ancient Beauty, that at such a time overwhelming grace will so encircle all, and the sea of grandeur will so overflow its shores, that the narrowest strip of water will grow wide as an endless sea, and every merest drop will be even as the shoreless deep.

8.5O ye loved ones of God! Struggle and strive to reach that high station, and to make a splendour so to shine across these realms of earth that the rays of it will be reflected back from a dawning-point on the horizon of eternity. This is the very foundation of the Cause of God. This is the very pith of the Law of God. This is the mighty structure raised up by the Manifestations of God. This is why the orb of God's world dawneth. This is why the Lord establisheth Himself on the throne of His human body....

8.6Now is the time, O ye beloved of the Lord, for ardent endeavour. Struggle ye, and strive. And since the Ancient Beauty was exposed by day and night on the field of martyrdom, let us in our turn labour hard, and hear and ponder the counsels of God; let us fling away our lives, and renounce our brief and numbered days. Let us turn our eyes away from empty fantasies of this world's divergent forms, and serve instead this pre-eminent purpose, this grand design. Let us not, because of our own imaginings, cut down this tree that the hand of heavenly grace hath planted; let us not, with the dark clouds of our illusions, our selfish interests, blot out the glory that streameth from the Abhá Realm. Let us not be as barriers that wall out the rolling ocean of Almighty God. Let us not prevent the pure, sweet scents from the garden of the All-Glorious Beauty from blowing far and wide. Let us not, on this day of reunion, shut out the vernal downpour of blessings from on high. Let us not consent that the splendours of the Sun of Truth should ever fade and disappear. These are the admonitions of God, as set forth in His Holy Books, His Scriptures, His Tablets that tell out His counsellings to the sincere.

8.7The glory rest upon you, and God's mercy, and God's blessings.

9.1Wherefore, O ye friends of God, redouble your efforts, strain every nerve, till ye triumph in your servitude to the Ancient Beauty, the Manifest Light, and become the cause of spreading far and wide the rays of the Day-Star of Truth. Breathe ye into the world's worn and wasted body the fresh breath of life, and in the furrows of every region sow ye holy seed. Rise up to champion this Cause; open your lips and teach. In the meeting place of life be ye a guiding candle; in the skies of this world be dazzling stars; in the gardens of unity be birds of the spirit, singing of inner truths and mysteries.

9.2Expend your every breath of life in this great Cause and dedicate all your days to the service of Bahá, so that in the end, safe from loss and deprivation, ye will inherit the heaped-up treasures of the realms above. For

the days of a man are full of peril and he cannot rely on so much as a moment more of life; and still the people, who are even as a wavering mirage of illusions, tell themselves that in the end they shall reach the heights. Alas for them! The men of bygone times hugged these same fancies to their breasts, until a wave flicked over them and they returned to dust, and they found themselves excluded and bereft—all save those souls who had freed themselves from self and had flung away their lives in the pathway of God. Their bright star shone out in the skies of ancient glory, and the handed-down memories of all the ages are the proof of what I say.

9.3 Wherefore, rest ye neither day nor night and seek no ease. Tell ye the secrets of servitude, follow the pathway of service, till ye attain the promised succour that cometh from the realms of God.

10.1 Look ye not upon fewness of numbers, rather, seek ye out hearts that are pure. One consecrated soul is preferable to a thousand other souls. If a small number of people gather lovingly together, with absolute purity and sanctity, with their hearts free of the world, experiencing the emotions of the Kingdom and the powerful magnetic forces of the Divine, and being at one in their happy fellowship, that gathering will exert its influence over all the earth. The nature of that band of people, the words they speak, the deeds they do, will unleash the bestowals of Heaven, and provide a foretaste of eternal bliss. The hosts of the Company on high will defend them, and the angels of the Abhá Paradise, in continuous succession, will come down to their aid.

Acquiring Spiritual and Material Knowledge

11.1 There are certain pillars which have been established as the unshakeable supports of the Faith of God. The mightiest of these is learning and the use of the mind, the expansion of consciousness, and insight into the realities of the universe and the hidden mysteries of Almighty God.

11.2 To promote knowledge is thus an inescapable duty imposed on every one of the friends of God.

12.1 O Company of God! To each created thing, the Ancient Sovereignty hath portioned out its own perfection, its particular virtue and special excellence, so that each in its degree may become a symbol denoting the sublimity of the true Educator of humankind, and that each, even as a crystalline mirror, may tell of the grace and splendour of the Sun of Truth.

12.2 And from amongst all creatures He hath singled out man, to grant him His most wondrous gift, and hath made him to attain the bounties of the Company on high. That most precious of gifts is attainment unto His unfailing guidance, that the inner reality of humankind should become as a niche to hold this lamp; and when the scattering splendours of this light do beat against the bright glass of the heart, the heart's purity maketh the beams to blaze out even stronger than before, and to shine in glory on the minds and souls of men.

12.3 The attainment of the most great guidance is dependent upon knowledge and wisdom, and on being informed as to the mysteries of the Holy Words. Wherefore must the loved ones of God, be they young or old, be they men or women, each one according to his capabilities, strive to acquire the various branches of knowledge, and to increase his understanding of the mysteries of the Holy Books, and his skill in marshalling the divine proofs and evidences.

12.4 The eminent Sadru's-Sudúr, who hath verily attained a most exalted station in the Retreats of Bliss, inaugurated the teaching meeting. He was the first blessed soul to lay the foundation of this momentous institution. God be praised, during the course of his life he educated persons who today are strong and eloquent advocates of the Lord God, disciples who are indeed pure and spiritual descendants of him who was so close to the Holy Threshold. After his passing, certain blessed individuals took steps to perpetuate his teaching work, and when he learned of it, this captive's heart rejoiced.

12.5 At this time, likewise, I most urgently request the friends of God to make every effort, as much as lieth within their competence, along these lines. The harder they strive to widen the scope of their knowledge, the better and more gratifying will be the result. Let the loved ones of God, whether young or old, whether male or female, each according to his capabilities, bestir themselves and spare no efforts to acquire the various current branches of knowledge, both spiritual and secular, and of the arts. Whensoever they gather in their meetings let their conversation be confined to learned subjects and to information on the knowledge of the day.

12.6 If they do thus, they will flood the world with the Manifest Light, and change this dusty earth into gardens of the Realm of Glory.

13.1 Thou didst ask as to acquiring knowledge: Read thou the Books and Tablets of God, and the articles written to demonstrate the truth of this Faith.... In the days to come a great number of holy Tablets and other sacred writings will be translated, and thou shouldst read these as well. Likewise, ask thou of God that the magnet of His love should draw unto thee the knowledge of Him. Once a soul becometh holy in all things, purified, sanctified, the gates of the knowledge of God will open wide before his eyes.

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

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

15.2 Included must be promotion of the arts, the discovery of new wonders, the expansion of trade, and the development of industry. The methods of

civilization and the beautification of the country must also be encouraged; and also to be inculcated is absolute obedience to the government and total avoidance of any trace of sedition.

#### Family Life

16.1 Marriage, among the mass of the people, is a physical bond, and this union can only be temporary, since it is foredoomed to a physical separation at the close.

16.2 Among the people of Bahá, however, marriage must be a union of the body and of the spirit as well, for here both husband and wife are aglow with the same wine, both are enamoured of the same matchless Face, both live and move through the same spirit, both are illumined by the same glory. This connection between them is a spiritual one, hence it is a bond that will abide forever.

Likewise do they enjoy strong and lasting ties in the physical world as well, for if the marriage is based both on the spirit and the body, that union is a true one, hence it will endure. If, however, the bond is physical and nothing more, it is sure to be only temporary, and must inexorably end in separation.

16.3 When, therefore, the people of Bahá undertake to marry, the union must be a true relationship, a spiritual coming together as well as a physical one, so that throughout every phase of life, and in all the worlds of God, their union will endure; for this real oneness is a gleaming out of the love of God.

17.1 Bahá'í marriage is the commitment of the two parties one to the other, and their mutual attachment of mind and heart. Each must, however, exercise the utmost care to become thoroughly acquainted with the character of the other, that the binding covenant between them may be a tie that will endure forever. Their purpose must be this: to become loving companions and comrades and at one with each other for time and eternity....

17.2 The true marriage of Bahá'ís is this, that husband and wife should be united both physically and spiritually, that they may ever improve the spiritual life of each other, and may enjoy everlasting unity throughout all the worlds of God. This is Bahá'í marriage.

18.1 I beseech God to graciously make of thy home a centre for the diffusion of the light of divine guidance, for the dissemination of the Words of God and for enkindling at all times the fire of love in the hearts of His faithful servants and maidservants. Know thou of a certainty that every house wherein the anthem of praise is raised to the Realm of Glory in celebration of the Name of God is indeed a heavenly home, and one of the gardens of delight in the Paradise of God.

19.1 According to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh the family, being a human unit, must be educated according to the rules of sanctity. All the virtues must be taught the family. The integrity of the family bond must be constantly considered, and the rights of the individual members must not be transgressed. The rights of the son, the father, the mother—none of them must be transgressed, none of them must be arbitrary. Just as the son has certain obligations to his father, the father, likewise, has certain obligations to his son. The mother, the sister and other members of the household have their certain prerogatives. All these rights and prerogatives must be conserved, yet the unity of the family must be sustained. The injury of one shall be

considered the injury of all; the comfort of each, the comfort of all; the honour of one, the honour of all.

20.1 O handmaids of the Lord! The spiritual assemblage that ye established in that illumined city is most propitious. Ye have made great strides; ye have surpassed the others, have arisen to serve the Holy Threshold, and have won heavenly bestowals. Now with all spiritual zeal must ye gather in that enlightened assemblage and recite the Holy Writings and engage in remembering the Lord. Set ye forth His arguments and proofs. Work ye for the guidance of the women in that land, teach the young girls and the children, so that the mothers may educate their little ones from their earliest days, thoroughly train them, rear them to have a goodly character and good morals, guide them to all the virtues of humankind, prevent the development of any behaviour that would be worthy of blame, and foster them in the embrace of Bahá'í education. Thus shall these tender infants be nurtured at the breast of the knowledge of God and His love. Thus shall they grow and flourish, and be taught righteousness and the dignity of humankind, resolution and the will to strive and to endure. Thus shall they learn perseverance in all things, the will to advance, high-mindedness and high resolve, chastity and purity of life. Thus shall they be enabled to carry to a successful conclusion whatsoever they undertake.

20.2 Let the mothers consider that whatever concerneth the education of children is of the first importance. Let them put forth every effort in this regard, for when the bough is green and tender it will grow in whatever way ye train it. Therefore is it incumbent upon the mothers to rear their little ones even as a gardener tendeth his young plants. Let them strive by day and by night to establish within their children faith and certitude, the fear of God, the love of the Beloved of the worlds, and all good qualities and traits. Whensoever a mother seeth that her child hath done well, let her praise and applaud him and cheer his heart; and if the slightest undesirable trait should manifest itself, let her counsel the child and punish him, and use means based on reason, even a slight verbal chastisement should this be necessary. It is not, however, permissible to strike a child, or vilify him, for the child's character will be totally perverted if he be subjected to blows or verbal abuse.

#### The Education of Children

21.1 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.

22.1 Therefore, the beloved of the Lord and the handmaidens of the Merciful should, with all their heart and soul, educate children and instruct them in the school of virtue and perfection. Nor should they tolerate in this regard the least neglect or shortcoming. Surely it would be better if a child were deprived of life than to allow him to live in a state of ignorance, for that innocent child would otherwise fall prey to innumerable defects, be called to account and held responsible before God, and be despised and rejected by the people. What a grievous sin! What a dire error!

22.2 The first duty of the loved ones of God and the handmaidens of the Merciful is to strive by every possible means to educate all children, girls and boys alike. For the latter are even as the former; there is no difference whatsoever between them. The ignorance of either is blameworthy; the unawareness of either is reprehensible. “Are they equal, those who know and those who do not know?”

23.1 Training in morals and good conduct is far more important than book learning. A child that is cleanly, agreeable, of good character, well-behaved—even though he be ignorant—is preferable to a child that is rude, unwashed, ill-natured, and yet becoming deeply versed in all the sciences and arts. The reason for this is that the child who conducts himself well, even though he be ignorant, is of benefit to others, while an ill-natured, ill-behaved child is corrupted and harmful to others, even though he be learned. If, however, the child be trained to be both learned and good, the result is light upon light.

23.2 Children are even as a branch that is fresh and green; they will grow up in whatever way ye train them. Take the utmost care to give them high ideals and goals, so that once they come of age, they will cast their beams like brilliant candles on the world, and will not be defiled by lusts and passions in the way of animals, heedless and unaware, but instead will set their hearts on achieving everlasting honour and acquiring all the excellences of humankind.

24.1 The root cause of wrongdoing is ignorance, and we must therefore hold fast to the tools of perception and knowledge. Good character must be taught. Light must be spread afar, so that, in the school of humanity, all may acquire the heavenly characteristics of the spirit, and see for themselves beyond any doubt that there is no fiercer hell, no more fiery abyss, than to possess a character that is evil and unsound; no more darksome pit nor loathsome torment than to show forth qualities which deserve to be condemned.

24.2 The individual must be educated to such a high degree that he would rather have his throat cut than tell a lie, and would think it easier to be slashed with a sword or pierced with a spear than to utter calumny or be carried away by wrath.

24.3 Thus will be kindled the sense of human dignity and pride, to burn away the reapings of lustful appetites. Then will each one of God’s beloved shine out as a bright moon with qualities of the spirit, and the relationship of each to the Sacred Threshold of his Lord will be not illusory but sound and real, will be as the very foundation of the building, not some embellishment on its façade.

24.4 It followeth that the children’s school must be a place of utmost discipline and order, that instruction must be thorough, and provision must be made for the rectification and refinement of character; so that, in his earliest years, within the very essence of the child, the divine foundation will be laid and the structure of holiness raised up.

24.5 Know that this matter of instruction, of character rectification and refinement, of heartening and encouraging the child, is of the utmost importance, for such are basic principles of God.

24.6 Thus, if God will, out of these spiritual schools illumined children will

arise, adorned with all the fairest virtues of humankind, and will shed their light not only across Persia, but around the world.

24.7 It is extremely difficult to teach the individual and refine his character once puberty is passed. By then, as experience hath shown, even if every effort be exerted to modify some tendency of his, it all availeth nothing. He may, perhaps, improve somewhat today; but let a few days pass and he forgetteth, and turneth backward to his habitual condition and accustomed ways. Therefore it is in early childhood that a firm foundation must be laid. While the branch is green and tender it can easily be made straight.

24.8 Our meaning is that qualities of the spirit are the basic and divine foundation, and adorn the true essence of man; and knowledge is the cause of human progress. The beloved of God must attach great importance to this matter, and carry it forward with enthusiasm and zeal.

25.1 Make ye every effort to improve the Tarbíyat School and to develop order and discipline in this institution. Utilize every means to make this School a garden of the All-Merciful, from which the lights of learning will cast their beams, and wherein the children, whether Bahá'í or other, will be educated to such a degree as to become God's gifts to man, and the pride of the human race. Let them make the greatest progress in the shortest span of time, let them open wide their eyes and uncover the inner realities of all things, become proficient in every art and skill, and learn to comprehend the secrets of all things even as they are—this faculty being one of the clearly evident effects of servitude to the Holy Threshold.

25.2 It is certain that ye will make every effort to bring this about, will also draw up plans for the opening of a number of schools. These schools for academic studies must at the same time be training centres in behaviour and conduct, and they must favour character and conduct above the sciences and arts. Good behaviour and high moral character must come first, for unless the character be trained, acquiring knowledge will only prove injurious. Knowledge is praiseworthy when it is coupled with ethical conduct and virtuous character; otherwise it is a deadly poison, a frightful danger. A physician of evil character, and who betrayeth his trust, can bring on death, and become the source of numerous infirmities and diseases.

25.3 Devote ye the utmost attention to this matter, for the basic, the foundation-principle of a school is first and foremost moral training, character and the rectification of conduct.

26.1 The education and training of children is among the most meritorious acts of humankind and draweth down the grace and favour of the All-Merciful, for education is the indispensable foundation of all human excellence and alloweth man to work his way to the heights of abiding glory. If a child be trained from his infancy, he will, through the loving care of the Holy Gardener, drink in the crystal waters of the spirit and of knowledge, like a young tree amid the rilling brooks. And certainly he will gather to himself the bright rays of the Sun of Truth, and through its light and heat will grow ever fresh and fair in the garden of life.

26.2 Therefore must the mentor be a doctor as well: That is, he must, in instructing the child, remedy its faults; must give him learning, and at the

same time rear him to have a spiritual nature. Let the teacher be a doctor to the character of the child, thus will he heal the spiritual ailments of the children of men....

26.3 Every child is potentially the light of the world—and at the same time its darkness; wherefore must the question of education be accounted as of primary importance. From his infancy, the child must be nursed at the breast of God's love, and nurtured in the embrace of His knowledge, that he may radiate light, grow in spirituality, be filled with wisdom and learning, and take on the characteristics of the angelic host.

26.4 Since ye have been assigned to this holy task, ye must therefore exert every effort to make that school famed in all respects throughout the world; to make it the cause of exalting the Word of the Lord.

27.1 It is clear that learning is the greatest bestowal of God; that knowledge and the acquirement thereof is a blessing from Heaven. Thus is it incumbent upon the friends of God to exert such an effort and strive with such eagerness to promote divine knowledge, culture and the sciences, that ere long those who are schoolchildren today will become the most erudite of all the fraternity of the wise. This is a service rendered unto God Himself, and it is one of His inescapable commandments.

#### Feasts and Holy Days

28.1 O thou steadfast in the Covenant! Thou hast written ... concerning the Feast. This festivity, which is held on a day of the nineteen-day month, was established by His Holiness the Báb, and the Blessed Beauty directed, confirmed, and warmly encouraged the holding of it. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance. You should unquestionably see to it with the greatest care and make its value known, so that it may become solidly established on a permanent basis. Let the beloved of God gather together and associate most lovingly and spiritually and happily with one another, conducting themselves with the greatest courtesy and self-restraint. Let them read the holy verses, as well as essays which are of benefit, and the letters of 'Abdu'l-Bahá; encourage and inspire one another to love each and all; chant the prayers with serenity and joy; give eloquent talks; and praise the matchless Lord.

28.2 The host, with complete self-effacement, showing kindness to all, must be a comfort to each one and serve the friends with his own hands.

28.3 If the Feast is befittingly held, in the manner described, then this supper will verily be the Lord's Supper, for its fruits will be the very fruits of that Supper, and its influence the same.

29.1 On the days pertaining to the Abhá Beauty and the Primal Point—that is to say, these nine days—occupation with trade, commerce, industry, and agriculture is not permitted and, likewise, the performance of functions and duties in service to the government.

30.1 In brief, every nation has a day to mark as a holiday which they celebrate with joy.

In the sacred laws of God in every cycle and dispensation, there are blessed feasts, holidays and workless days.

On such days no kind of occupation, commerce, industry, agriculture, or the

like, is allowed.

All work is unlawful.

All must enjoy themselves, gather together, hold general meetings, become as one assembly, so that the oneness, unity and harmony of the people may be demonstrated in the eyes of all.

As it is a blessed day it should not be neglected or left without results by making it a day limited to the fruits of mere pleasure.

During such blessed days institutions should be founded that may be of permanent benefit and value to the people so that in their conversations and in history it may become widely known that such a good work was inaugurated on such a feast day.

Therefore, the intelligent must look searchingly into conditions to find out what important affair, what philanthropic institutions are most needed, and what foundations should be laid for the community on that particular day, so that they may be established.

For example, if they find that the community needs morality, then they may lay down the foundation of good morals on that day.

If the community be in need of spreading sciences and widening the circle of knowledge, on that day they should proceed in that direction, that is to say, direct the thoughts of all the people to that philanthropic cause.

If, however, the community is in need of widening the circle of commerce or industry or agriculture, they should inaugurate the means of attaining the desired aim.

If the community needs protection, proper support and care of orphans, they should act upon the welfare of the orphans, and so forth.

Such undertakings as are beneficial to the poor, the weak and the helpless should be pursued in order that, on that day, through the unity of all and through great meetings, results may be obtained, the glory and blessings of that day may be declared and manifest.

30.2 Likewise in this wonderful Dispensation this day [Naw-Rúz] is a blessed day. The friends of God should be confirmed in service and servitude. With one another they must be in the utmost harmony, love and oneness, clasping hands, engaged in the commemoration of the Blessed Beauty and thinking of the great results that may be obtained on such a blessed day.

30.3 Today, there is no result or fruit greater than guiding the people.... Undoubtedly, the friends of God, upon such a day, must leave tangible philanthropic or ideal traces that should reach all mankind and not only pertain to the Bahá'ís.

30.4 In all the prophetic Dispensations, philanthropic affairs were confined to their respective peoples only—with the exception of small matters, such as charity, which it was permissible to extend to others. But in this wonderful Dispensation, philanthropic undertakings are for all humanity, without any

exception, because this is the manifestation of the mercifulness of God. Therefore, every universal matter—that is, one that belongs to all the world of humanity—is divine; and every matter that is sectarian and private is not universal in character—that is, it is limited. Therefore, my hope is that the friends of God, every one of them, may become as the mercy of God to all mankind.

#### Spiritual Assemblies

31.1 As to you, O ye other handmaids who are enamoured of the heavenly fragrances, arrange ye holy gatherings, and found ye Spiritual Assemblies, for these are the basis for spreading the sweet savours of God, exalting His Word, uplifting the lamp of His grace, promulgating His religion and promoting His Teachings, and what bounty is there greater than this? These Spiritual Assemblies 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 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 all times and under all conditions. What bounty is there greater than this?

32.1 O ye dear friends of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! A blessed letter hath been received from you, telling of the election of a Spiritual Assembly. It hath rejoiced my heart to know that, God be praised, the friends in that area, with absolute unity, fellowship and love, have held this new election and were successful in voting for souls who are sanctified, are favoured at the Holy Threshold and are well known amongst the friends to be staunch and firm in the Covenant.

32.2 Now must those elected representatives arise to serve with spirituality and joy, with purity of intent, with strong attraction to the fragrances of the Almighty, and well supported by the Holy Spirit. Let them raise up the banner of guidance, and as soldiers of the Company on high, let them exalt God’s Word, spread abroad His sweet savours, educate the souls of men, and promote the Most Great Peace.

32.3 Truly, blessed souls have been elected. The moment I read their names, I felt a thrill of spiritual joy to know that, praised be God, persons have been raised up in that country who are servants of the Kingdom, and ready to lay down their lives for Him Who hath neither likeness nor peer.

32.4 O ye dear friends of mine! Light up this Assembly with the splendour of God’s love. Make it ring out with the joyous music of the hallowed spheres, make it thrive on those foods that are served at the Lord’s Supper, at the heavenly banquet table of God. Come ye together in gladness unalloyed, and at the beginning of the meeting, recite ye this prayer:

32.5 O Thou Lord of the Kingdom! Though our bodies be gathered here together, yet our spellbound hearts are carried away by Thy love, and yet are we transported by the rays of Thy resplendent face. Weak though we be, we await the revelations of Thy might and power. Poor though we be, with neither goods nor means, still take we riches from the treasures of Thy Kingdom. Drops though we be, still do we draw from out Thy ocean deeps. Motes though we be, still do

we gleam in the glory of Thy splendid Sun.

32.6O Thou our Provider! Send down Thine aid, that each one gathered here may become a lighted candle, each one a centre of attraction, each one a summoner to Thy heavenly realms, till at last we make this nether world the mirror image of Thy Paradise.

33.1 Verily the Abhá Beauty made a promise to the beloved who are steadfast in the Covenant, that He would reinforce their strivings with the strongest of supports, and succour them with His triumphant might. Erelong shall ye see that your illumined assemblage hath left conspicuous signs and tokens in the hearts and souls of men. Hold ye fast to the hem of God's garment, and direct all your efforts toward furthering His Covenant, and burning ever more brightly with the fire of His love, that your hearts may leap for joy in the breathings of servitude which well out from the breast of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Rally your hearts, make firm your steps, trust in the everlasting bounties that will be shed upon you, one following another from the Kingdom of Abhá. Whenssoever ye gather in that radiant assemblage, know ye that the splendours of Bahá are shining over you. It behoveth you to seek agreement and to be united; it behoveth you to be in close communion one with the other, at one both in body and soul, till ye match the Pleiades or a string of lustrous pearls. Thus will ye be solidly established; thus will your words prevail, your star shine out, and your hearts be comforted....

33.2 Whenever ye enter the council-chamber, recite this prayer with a heart throbbing with the love of God and a tongue purified from all but His remembrance, that the All-Powerful may graciously aid you to achieve supreme victory:

33.3O God, my God! We are servants of Thine that have turned with devotion to Thy Holy Face, that have detached ourselves from all besides Thee in this glorious Day. We have gathered in this Spiritual Assembly, united in our views and thoughts, with our purposes harmonized to exalt Thy Word amidst mankind. O Lord, our God! Make us the signs of Thy Divine Guidance, the Standards of Thine exalted Faith amongst men, servants to Thy mighty Covenant, O Thou our Lord Most High, manifestations of Thy Divine Unity in Thine Abhá Kingdom, and resplendent stars shining upon all regions. Lord! Aid us to become seas surging with the billows of Thy wondrous Grace, streams flowing from Thine all-glorious Heights, goodly fruits upon the Tree of Thy heavenly Cause, trees waving through the breezes of Thy Bounty in Thy celestial Vineyard. O God! Make our souls dependent upon the Verses of Thy Divine Unity, our hearts cheered with the outpourings of Thy Grace, that we may unite even as the waves of one sea and become merged together as the rays of Thine effulgent Light; that our thoughts, our views, our feelings may become as one reality, manifesting the spirit of union throughout the world. Thou art the Gracious, the Bountiful, the Bestower, the Almighty, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

#### Consultation

34.1 Man must consult on all matters, whether major or minor, so that he may become cognizant of what is good. Consultation giveth him insight into things and enableth him to delve into questions which are unknown. The light of truth shineth from the faces of those who engage in consultation. Such consultation

causeth the living waters to flow in the meadows of man's reality, the rays of ancient glory to shine upon him, and the tree of his being to be adorned with wondrous fruit. The members who are consulting, however, should behave in the utmost love, harmony and sincerity towards each other. The principle of consultation is one of the most fundamental elements of the divine edifice. Even in their ordinary affairs the individual members of society should consult.

35.1 The purpose of consultation is to show that the views of several individuals are assuredly preferable to one man, even as the power of a number of men is of course greater than the power of one man. Thus consultation is acceptable in the presence of the Almighty, and hath been enjoined upon the believers, so that they may confer upon ordinary and personal matters, as well as on affairs which are general in nature and universal.

35.2 For instance, when a man hath a project to accomplish, should he consult with some of his brethren, that which is agreeable will of course be investigated and unveiled to his eyes, and the truth will be disclosed. Likewise on a higher level, should the people of a village consult one another about their affairs, the right solution will certainly be revealed. In like manner, the members of each profession, such as in industry, should consult, and those in commerce should similarly consult on business affairs. In short, consultation is desirable and acceptable in all things and on all issues.... Spiritual Assemblies have been set up in various regions, that they may hold consultation on divers affairs of the Cause, such as child education, care and protection of orphans and the disabled, and to diffuse the sweet savours of God.

36.1 The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá shall be vouchsafed to them.

37.1 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 anyone oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions. If after discussion, a decision be carried unanimously, well and good; but if, the Lord forbid, differences of opinion should arise, a majority of voices must prevail.

38.1 The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the assembly.

They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers

of one garden.

Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be non-existent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that assembly be brought to naught.

The second condition: ... They must, when coming together, turn their faces to the Kingdom on high and ask aid from the Realm of Glory.

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

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

The honoured 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 honoured 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....

Should they endeavour to fulfil these conditions the Grace of the Holy Spirit shall be vouchsafed unto them, and that assembly shall become the centre of the Divine blessings, the hosts of Divine confirmation shall come to their aid, and they shall day by day receive a new effusion of Spirit.

The Mashriqu'l-Adhkár

39.1 It befitteth the friends to hold a gathering, a meeting, where they shall glorify God and fix their hearts upon Him, and read and recite the Holy Writings of the Blessed Beauty—may my soul be the ransom of His lovers! The lights of the All-Glorious Realm, the rays of the Supreme Horizon, will be cast upon such bright assemblages, for these are none other than the Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs, the Dawning-Points of God's Remembrance, which must, at the direction of the Most Exalted Pen, be established in every hamlet and city.... These spiritual gatherings must be held with the utmost purity and consecration, so that from the site itself, and its earth and the air about it, one will inhale the fragrant breathings of the Holy Spirit.

40.1 Thou hast asked about places of worship and the underlying reason therefor. The wisdom in raising up such buildings is that at a given hour, the people should know it is time to meet, and all should gather together, and,

harmoniously attuned one to another, engage in prayer; with the result that out of this coming together, unity and affection shall grow and flourish in the human heart.

41.1O ye who are firm in the Covenant and Testament of God! The notebook containing your plans for the establishment of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár and its dependencies—consisting of a hospital, schools, a hostel, and homes for the infirm and the poor—and furthermore, the names of those who have contributed funds for this endeavour, was received and read. Praise be to God that He hath assisted blessed souls to arise and accomplish such a momentous task and to lay the foundation of an edifice that shall endure for all eternity, whose pinnacles shall soar to the apex of heaven.

41.2Although this Mashriqu'l-Adhkár is being built upon earth, in reality it is an institution of the Concourse on high, and therefore it can be said to reach the highest heavens. Render ye thanks unto God that ye have arisen to offer such a momentous service, inasmuch as in this age and century the establishment of Mashriqu'l-Adhkárs is of the utmost importance. These edifices will bestow firmness and constancy upon the friends. They are places of supplication and invocation to the Threshold of His grandeur and are the greatest means of diffusing the sweet savours of the Lord. In these days, laying but one brick for the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár or one of its dependencies is like unto building a lofty edifice. I am, therefore, well pleased with the beloved of the Lord for having succeeded in rendering so vital and important a service. It is my hope that this structure will be established in the utmost beauty and strength and that its dependencies will gradually be completed.

17

### Teaching the Faith

#### Excerpts from the Tablets of the Divine Plan

1.1But when the heavenly outpourings descend and the radiant effulgences appear, the hearts are resuscitated, are liberated from the darkness of nature and the flowers of divine mysteries grow and become luxuriant.

Consequently man must become the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity and propagate the holy teachings revealed in the sacred books through the divine inspiration.

It is stated in the blessed Gospel:

Travel ye toward the East and toward the West and enlighten the people with the light of the Most Great Guidance, so that they may take a portion and share of eternal life.

Praise be to God, that the Northeastern States are in the utmost capacity.

Because the ground is rich, the rain of the divine outpouring is descending.

Now you must become heavenly farmers and scatter pure seeds in the prepared soil.

The harvest of every other seed is limited, but the bounty and the blessing of the seed of the divine teachings is unlimited.

Throughout the coming centuries and cycles many harvests will be gathered.

Consider the work of former generations.

During the lifetime of Jesus Christ the believing, firm souls were few and numbered, but the heavenly blessings descended so plentifully that in a number of years countless souls entered beneath the shadow of the Gospel.

God has said in the Qur'án:

“One grain will bring forth seven sheaves, and every sheaf shall contain one hundred grains.”

In other words, one grain will become seven hundred; and if God so wills He will double these also.

It has often happened that one blessed soul has become the cause of the guidance of a nation.

Now we must not consider our ability and capacity, nay, rather, we must fix our gaze upon the favours and bounties of God, in these days, Who has made of the drop a sea, and of the atom a sun.

2.1 Praise be to His Highness the Desired One that ye have become confirmed in the promotion of divine teachings in that vast Continent, raised the call of the Kingdom of God in that region and announced the glad tidings of the manifestation of the Lord of Hosts and His Highness the Promised One. Thanks be unto the Lord that ye have become assisted and confirmed in this aim. This is purely through the confirmations of the Lord of Hosts and the breaths of the Holy Spirit. The full measure of your success is as yet unrevealed, its significance still unapprehended. Ere long ye will, with your own eyes, witness how brilliantly every one of you, even as a shining star, will radiate in the firmament of your country the light of divine Guidance, and will bestow upon its people the glory of an everlasting life.

2.2 Consider! The station and the confirmation of the apostles in the time of Christ was not known, and no one looked on them with the feeling of importance—nay, rather, they persecuted and ridiculed them. Later on it became evident what crowns studded with the brilliant jewels of guidance were placed on the heads of the apostles, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of John.

2.3 The range of your future achievements still remains undisclosed. I fervently hope that in the near future the whole earth may be stirred and shaken by the results of your achievements. The hope, therefore, which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá cherishes for you is that the same success which has attended your efforts in America may crown your endeavours in other parts of the world, that through you the fame of the Cause of God may be diffused throughout the East and the West and the advent of the Kingdom of the Lord of Hosts be proclaimed in all the five continents of the globe.

2.4 The moment this divine Message is carried forward by the American believers from the shores of America and is propagated through the continents of 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 all the peoples of the world witness that this community is spiritually illumined and divinely guided. Then will the whole earth resound with the praises of its majesty and greatness....

2.5O that I could travel, even though on foot and in the utmost poverty, to these regions, and, raising the call of “Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá” in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans, promote the divine teachings! This, alas, I cannot do. How intensely I deplore it! Please God, ye may achieve it....

2.6In all these countries, like unto the morning stars shine ye forth from the horizon of guidance. Thus far ye have been untiring in your labours. Let your exertions henceforth increase a thousandfold. Summon the people in these countries, capitals, islands, assemblies and churches to enter the Abhá Kingdom. The scope of your exertions must needs be extended. The wider its range, the more striking will be the evidence of divine assistance.

2.7You have observed that while ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in the utmost bodily weakness and feebleness, while he was indisposed, and had not the power to move—notwithstanding this physical state he travelled through many countries, in Europe and America, and in churches, meetings and conventions was occupied with the promotion of the divine principles and summoned the people to the manifestation of the Kingdom of Abhá. You have also observed how the confirmations of the Blessed Perfection encompassed all.

3.1The blessed Person of the Promised One is interpreted in the Holy Book as the Lord of Hosts—the heavenly armies. By heavenly armies those souls are intended who are entirely freed from the human world, transformed into celestial spirits and have become divine angels. Such souls are the rays of the Sun of Reality who will illumine all the continents. Each one is holding in his hand a trumpet, blowing the breath of life over all the regions. They are delivered from human qualities and the defects of the world of nature, are characterized with the characteristics of God, and are attracted with the fragrances of the Merciful. Like unto the apostles of Christ, who were filled with Him, these souls also have become filled with His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh; that is, the love of Bahá’u’lláh has so mastered every organ, part and limb of their bodies, as to leave no effect from the promptings of the human world.

3.2These souls are the armies of God and the conquerors of the East and the West. Should one of them turn his face toward some direction and summon the people to the Kingdom of God, all the ideal forces and lordly confirmations will rush to his support and reinforcement. He will behold all the doors open and all the strong fortifications and impregnable castles razed to the ground. Singly and alone he will attack the armies of the world, defeat the right and left wings of the hosts of all the countries, break through the lines of the legions of all the nations and carry his attack to the very centre of the powers of the earth. This is the meaning of the Hosts of God.

3.3Any soul from among the believers of Bahá’u’lláh who attains to this station will become known as the Apostle of Bahá’u’lláh. Therefore strive ye with heart and soul so that ye may reach this lofty and exalted position, be

established on the throne of everlasting glory, and crown your heads with the shining diadem of the Kingdom, whose brilliant jewels may irradiate upon centuries and cycles.

3.4 O ye kind friends! Uplift your magnanimity and soar high toward the apex of heaven so that your blessed hearts may become illumined more and more, day by day, through the rays of the Sun of Reality, that is, His Holiness

Bahá'u'lláh; at every moment the spirits may obtain a new life, and the darkness of the world of nature may be entirely dispelled; thus you may become incarnate light and personified spirit, become entirely unaware of the sordid matters of this world and in touch with the affairs of the divine world.

3.5 Behold the portals which Bahá'u'lláh hath opened before you! Consider how exalted and lofty is the station you are destined to attain; how unique the favours with which you have been endowed. Should we become intoxicated with this cup, the sovereignty of this globe of earth will become lower in our estimation than children's play. Should they place in the arena the crown of the government of the whole world, and invite each one of us to accept it, undoubtedly we shall not condescend, and shall refuse to accept it.

3.6 To attain to this supreme station is, however, dependent on the realization of certain conditions:

3.7 The first condition is firmness in the Covenant of God.

For the power of the Covenant will protect the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh from the doubts of the people of error.

It is the fortified fortress of the Cause of God and the firm pillar of the religion of God.

Today no power can conserve the oneness of the Bahá'í world save the Covenant of God; otherwise differences like unto a most great tempest will encompass the Bahá'í world.

It is evident that the axis of the oneness of the world of humanity is the power of the Covenant and nothing else.

Had the Covenant not come to pass, had it not been revealed from the Supreme Pen and had not the Book of the Covenant, like unto the ray of the Sun of Reality, illuminated the world, the forces of the Cause of God would have been utterly scattered and certain souls who were the prisoners of their own passions and lusts would have taken into their hands an axe, cutting the root of this Blessed Tree.

Every person would have pushed forward his own desire and every individual aired his own opinion!

Notwithstanding this great Covenant, a few negligent souls galloped with their chargers into the battlefield, thinking perchance they might be able to weaken the foundation of the Cause of God: but praise be to God all of them were afflicted with regret and loss, and ere long they shall see themselves in poignant despair.

Therefore, in the beginning the believers must make their steps firm in the

Covenant so that the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh may encircle them from all sides, the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse may become their supporters and helpers, and the exhortations and advices of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, like unto the pictures engraved on stone, may remain permanent and ineffaceable in the tablets of all hearts.

3.8 The second condition: fellowship and love amongst the believers. The divine friends must be attracted to and enamoured of each other and ever be ready and willing to sacrifice their own lives for each other. Should one soul from amongst the believers meet another, it must be as though a thirsty one with parched lips has reached to the fountain of the water of life, or a lover has met his true beloved. For one of the greatest divine wisdoms regarding the appearance of the holy Manifestations is this: The souls may come to know each other and become intimate with each other; the power of the love of God may make all of them the waves of one sea, the flowers of one rose garden, and the stars of one heaven. This is the wisdom for the appearance of the holy Manifestations! When the most great bestowal reveals itself in the hearts of the believers, the world of nature will be transformed, the darkness of the contingent being will vanish, and heavenly illumination will be obtained. Then the whole world will become the Paradise of Abhá, every one of the believers of God will become a blessed tree, producing wonderful fruits.

3.9 O ye friends! Fellowship, fellowship! Love, love! Unity, unity!—so that the power of the Bahá'í Cause may appear and become manifest in the world of existence. My thoughts are turned towards you, and my heart leaps within me at your mention. Could ye know how my soul glows with your love, so great a happiness would flood your hearts as to cause you to become enamoured with each other.

3.10 The third condition: Teachers must continually travel to all parts of the continent, nay, rather, to all parts of the world, but they must travel like 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who journeyed throughout the cities of America. He was sanctified and free from every attachment and in the utmost severance. Just as His Holiness Christ says: Shake off the very dust from your feet.

3.11 You have observed that while in America many souls in the utmost of supplication and entreaty desired to offer some gifts, but this servant, in accord with the exhortations and behests of the Blessed Perfection, never accepted a thing, although on certain occasions we were in most straitened circumstances. But on the other hand, if a soul for the sake of God, voluntarily and out of his pure desire, wishes to offer a contribution (toward the expenses of a teacher) in order to make the contributor happy, the teacher may accept a small sum, but must live with the utmost contentment.

3.12 The aim is this: The intention of the teacher must be pure, his heart independent, his spirit attracted, his thought at peace, his resolution firm, his magnanimity exalted and in the love of God a shining torch. Should he become as such, his sanctified breath will even affect the rock; otherwise there will be no result whatsoever. As long as a soul is not perfected, how can he efface the defects of others? Unless he is detached from aught else save God, how can he teach severance to others?

3.13 In short, O ye believers of God! Endeavour ye, so that ye may take hold of

every means in the promulgation of the religion of God and the diffusion of the fragrances of God.

3.14 Amongst other things is the holding of the meetings for teaching so that blessed souls and the old ones from amongst the believers may gather together the youths of the love of God in schools of instruction and teach them all the divine proofs and irrefragable arguments, explain and elucidate the history of the Cause, and interpret also the prophecies and proofs which are recorded and are extant in the divine books and epistles regarding the manifestation of the Promised One, so that the young ones may go in perfect knowledge in all these degrees.

3.15 Likewise, whenever it is possible a committee must be organized for the translation of the Tablets. Wise souls who have mastered and studied perfectly the Persian, Arabic, and other foreign languages, or know one of the foreign languages, must commence translating Tablets and books containing the proofs of this Revelation, and publishing those books, circulate them throughout the five continents of the globe.

3.16 Similarly, the magazine, the Star of the West, must be edited with the utmost regularity, but its contents must be the promulgation of the Cause of God that both East and West may become informed of the most important events.

3.17 In short, in all the meetings, whether public or private, nothing should be discussed save that which is under consideration, and all the articles be centred around the Cause of God. Promiscuous talk must not be dragged in and contention is absolutely forbidden.

3.18 The teachers travelling in different directions must know the language of the country in which they will enter. For example, a person being proficient in the Japanese language may travel to Japan, or a person knowing the Chinese language may hasten to China, and so forth.

3.19 In short, after this universal war, the people have obtained extraordinary capacity to hearken to the divine teachings, for the wisdom of this war is this: That it may become proven to all that the fire of war is world-consuming, whereas the rays of peace are world-enlightening. One is death, the other is life; this is extinction, that is immortality; one is the most great calamity, the other is the most great bounty; this is darkness, that is light; this is eternal humiliation and that is everlasting glory; one is the destroyer of the foundation of man, the other is the founder of the prosperity of the human race.

3.20 Consequently, a number of souls may arise and act in accordance with the aforesaid conditions, and hasten to all parts of the world, especially from America to Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia, and travel through Japan and China. Likewise, from Germany teachers and believers may travel to the continents of America, Africa, Japan and China; in brief, they may travel through all the continents and islands of the globe. Thus in a short space of time, most wonderful results will be produced, the banner of universal peace will be waving on the apex of the world and the lights of the oneness of the world of humanity may illumine the universe.

3.21 In brief, O ye believers of God! The text of the divine Book is this: If two souls quarrel and contend about a question of the divine questions,

differing and disputing, both are wrong. The wisdom of this incontrovertible law of God is this: that between two souls from amongst the believers of God, no contention and dispute may arise; that they may speak with each other with infinite amity and love. Should there appear the least trace of controversy, they must remain silent, and both parties must continue their discussions no longer, but ask the reality of the question from the Interpreter. This is the irrefutable command!

4.1 The philosophers of the ancients, the thinkers of the Middle Ages and the scientists of this and the former centuries have all agreed upon the fact that the best and the most ideal region for the habitation of man is the temperate zone, for in this belt the intellects and thoughts rise to the highest stage of maturity, and the capability and ability of civilization manifest themselves in full efflorescence. When you read history critically and with a penetrating eye, it becomes evident that the majority of the famous men have been born, reared and have done their work in the temperate zone, while very, very few have appeared from the torrid and frigid zones.

4.2 Now these sixteen Southern States of the United States are situated in the temperate zone, and in these regions the perfections of the world of nature have been fully revealed. For the moderation of the weather, the beauty of the scenery and the geographical configuration of the country display a great effect in the world of minds and thoughts. This fact is well demonstrated through observation and experience.

4.3 Even the holy, divine Manifestations have had a nature in the utmost equilibrium, the health and wholesomeness of their bodies most perfect, their constitutions endowed with physical vigour, their powers functioning in perfect order, and the outward sensations linked with the inward perceptions, working together with extraordinary momentum and coordination.

4.4 Therefore in these sixteen states, because they are contiguous to other states and their climate being in the utmost of moderation, unquestionably the divine teachings must reveal themselves with a brighter effulgence, the breaths of the Holy Spirit must display a penetrating intensity, the ocean of the love of God must be stirred with higher waves, the breezes of the rose garden of the divine love be wafted with higher velocity, and the fragrances of holiness be diffused with swiftness and rapidity.

4.5 Praise be to God that the divine outpourings are infinite, the melody of the lordly principles is in the utmost efficacy, the most great Orb shining with perfect splendour, the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse are attacking with invincible power, the tongues are sharper than the swords, the hearts are more brilliant than the light of electricity, the magnanimity of the friends precedes all the magnanimities of the former and subsequent generations, the souls are divinely attracted, and the fire of the love of God is enkindled.

4.6 At this time and at this period we must avail ourselves of this most great opportunity. We must not sit inactive for one moment; we must sever ourselves from composure, rest, tranquillity, goods, property, life and attachment to material things. We must sacrifice everything to His Highness, the Possessor of existence, so that the powers of the Kingdom may show greater penetration and the brilliant effulgence in this New Cycle may illumine the worlds of minds and

ideals.

4.7 It is about twenty-three years that the fragrances of God have been diffused in America, but no adequate and befitting motion has been realized, and no great acclamation and acceleration has been witnessed. Now it is my hope that through the heavenly power, the fragrances of the Merciful, the attraction of consciousness, the celestial outpourings, the heavenly cohorts and the gushing forth of the fountain of divine love, the believers of God may arise and in a short time the greatest good may unveil her countenance, the Sun of Reality may shine forth with such intensity that the darkness of the world of nature may become entirely dispelled and driven away; from every corner a most wonderful melody may be raised, the morning birds may break into such a song that the world of humanity may be quickened and moved, the solid bodies may become liquefied, and the souls who are like unto adamantine rocks may open their wings and through the heat of the love of God fly heavenward.

4.8 Nearly two thousand years ago, Armenia was enveloped with impenetrable darkness. One blessed soul from among the disciples of Christ hastened to that part, and through his effort, ere long that province became illumined. Thus it has become evident how the power of the Kingdom works!

4.9 Therefore, rest ye assured in the confirmations of the Merciful and the assistance of the Most High; become ye sanctified above and purified from this world and the inhabitants thereof; suffer your intentions to work for the good of all; cut your attachment to the earth and like unto the essence of the spirit become ye light and delicate. Then with a firm resolution, a pure heart, a rejoiced spirit, and an eloquent tongue, engage your time in the promulgation of the divine principles so that the oneness of the world of humanity may pitch her canopy in the apex of America and all the nations of the world may follow the divine policy. This is certain, that the divine policy is justice and kindness toward all mankind. For all the nations of the world are the sheep of God, and God is the kind shepherd. He has created these sheep. He has protected them, sustained and trained them. What greater kindness than this? And every moment we must render a hundred thousand thanksgivings that, praise be to God, we are freed from all the ignorant prejudices, are kind to all the sheep of God, and our utmost hope is to serve each and all, and like unto a benevolent father educate every one.

5.1 O ye friends of God! Exert ye with heart and soul, so that association, love, unity and agreement be obtained between the hearts, all the aims may be merged into one aim, all the songs become one song and the power of the Holy Spirit may become so overwhelmingly victorious as to overcome all the forces of the world of nature. Exert yourselves; your mission is unspeakably glorious. Should success crown your enterprise, America will assuredly evolve into a centre 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.

5.2 This phenomenal world will not remain in an unchanging condition even for a short while. Second after second it undergoes change and transformation. Every foundation will finally become collapsed; every glory and splendour will at last vanish and disappear, but the Kingdom of God is eternal and the heavenly

sovereignty and majesty will stand firm, everlasting. Hence in the estimation of a wise man the mat in the Kingdom of God is preferable to the throne of the government of the world.

5.3Continually my ear and eye are turned toward the Central States; perchance a melody from some blessed souls may reach my ears—souls who are the dawning-places of the love of God, the stars of the horizon of sanctification and holiness—souls who will illumine this dark universe and quicken to life this dead world. The joy of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá depends upon this! I hope that you may become confirmed therein.

5.4Consequently, those souls who are in a condition of the utmost severance, purified from the defects of the world of nature, sanctified from attachment to this earth, vivified with the breaths of eternal life—with luminous hearts, with heavenly spirit, with attraction of consciousness, with celestial magnanimity, with eloquent tongues and with clear explanations—such souls must hasten and travel through all parts of the Central States. In every city and village they must occupy themselves with the diffusion of the divine exhortations and advices, guide the souls and promote the oneness of the world of humanity. They must play the melody of international conciliation with such power that every deaf one may attain hearing, every extinct person may be set aglow, every dead one may obtain new life and every indifferent soul may find ecstasy. It is certain that such will be the consummation.

6.1When a farmer comes into the possession of a virgin soil, in a short time he will bring under cultivation a large field. Therefore I hope that in the future Montreal may become so stirred, that the melody of the Kingdom may travel to all parts of the world from that Dominion and the breaths of the Holy Spirit may spread from that centre to the East and the West of America.

6.2O ye believers of God! Be not concerned with the smallness of your numbers, neither be oppressed by the multitude of an unbelieving world. Five grains of wheat will be endued with heavenly blessing, whereas a thousand tons of tares will yield no results or effect. One fruitful tree will be conducive to the life of society, whereas a thousand forests of wild trees offer no fruits. The plain is covered with pebbles, but precious stones are rare. One pearl is better than a thousand wildernesses of sand, especially this pearl of great price, which is endowed with divine blessing. Ere long thousands of other pearls will be born from it. When that pearl associates and becomes the intimate of the pebbles, they also all change into pearls.

6.3Again I repeat that the future of Canada, whether from a material or a spiritual standpoint, is very great. Day by day civilization and freedom shall increase. The clouds of the Kingdom will water the seeds of guidance which have been sown there. Consequently, rest ye not, seek ye no composure, attach not yourselves to the luxuries of this ephemeral world, free yourselves from every attachment, and strive with heart and soul to become fully established in the Kingdom of God. Gain ye the heavenly treasures. Day by day become ye more illumined. Draw ye nearer and nearer unto the threshold of oneness. Become ye the manifestors of spiritual favours and the dawning-places of infinite lights! If it is possible, send ye teachers to other portions of Canada; likewise, dispatch ye teachers to Greenland and the home of the Eskimos.

6.4As regards the teachers, they must completely divest themselves from the old garments and be invested with a new garment. According to the statement of Christ, they must attain to the station of rebirth—that is, whereas in the first instance they were born from the womb of the mother, this time they must be born from the womb of the world of nature. Just as they are now totally unaware of the experiences of the fetal world, they must also forget entirely the defects of the world of nature. They must be baptized with the water of life, the fire of the love of God and the breaths of the Holy Spirit; be satisfied with little food, but take a large portion from the heavenly table. They must disengage themselves from temptation and covetousness, and be filled with the spirit. Through the effect of their pure breath, they must change the stone into the brilliant ruby and the shell into pearl. Like unto the cloud of vernal shower, they must transform the black soil into the rose garden and orchard. They must make the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the extinguished one enkindled and set aglow, and the dead quickened.

7.1In the contingent world there are many collective centres which are conducive to association and unity between the children of men.

For example, patriotism is a collective centre; nationalism is a collective centre; identity of interests is a collective centre; political alliance is a collective centre; the union of ideals is a collective centre, and the prosperity of the world of humanity is dependent upon the organization and promotion of the collective centres.

Nevertheless, all the above institutions are, in reality, the matter and not the substance, accidental and not eternal—temporary and not everlasting.

With the appearance of great revolutions and upheavals, all these collective centres are swept away.

But the Collective Centre of the Kingdom, embodying the institutions and divine teachings, is the eternal Collective Centre.

It establishes relationship between the East and the West, organizes the oneness of the world of humanity, and destroys the foundation of differences.

It overcomes and includes all the other collective centres.

Like unto the ray of the sun, it dispels entirely the darkness encompassing all the regions, bestows ideal life, and causes the effulgence of divine illumination.

Through the breaths of the Holy Spirit it performs miracles; the Orient and the Occident embrace each other, the North and South become intimates and associates, conflicting and contending opinions disappear, antagonistic aims are brushed aside, the law of the struggle for existence is abrogated, and the canopy of the oneness of the world of humanity is raised on the apex of the globe, casting its shade over all the races of men.

Consequently, the real Collective Centre is the body of the divine teachings, which include all the degrees and embrace all the universal relations and

necessary laws of humanity.

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

7.3 Consider the flowers of a garden. Though differing in kind, colour, form, and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and colour! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men.

7.4 Therefore, the believers of God throughout all the republics of America, through the divine power, must become the cause of the promotion of heavenly teachings and the establishment of the oneness of humanity. Every one of the important souls must arise, blowing over all parts of America the breath of life, conferring upon the people a new spirit, baptizing them with the fire of the love of God, the water of life, and the breaths of the Holy Spirit so that the second birth may become realized. For it is written in the Gospel: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." ...

7.5 Hence the intention must be purified, the effort ennobled and exalted, so that you may establish affinity between the hearts of the world of humanity. This glorious aim will not become realized save through the promotion of divine teachings which are the foundations of the holy religions.

7.6 Consider how the religions of God served the world of humanity! How the religion of Torah became conducive to the glory and honour and progress of the Israelitish nation! How the breaths of the Holy Spirit of His Holiness Christ created affinity and unity between divergent communities and quarrelling families! How the sacred power of His Holiness Muhammad became the means of uniting and harmonizing the contentious tribes and the different clans of Peninsular Arabia—to such an extent that one thousand tribes were welded into one tribe; strife and discord were done away with; all of them unitedly and with one accord strove in advancing the cause of culture and civilization, and thus were freed from the lowest degree of degradation, soaring toward the

height of everlasting glory! Is it possible to find a greater Collective Centre in the phenomenal world than this? In comparison to this divine Collective Centre, the national collective centre, the patriotic collective centre, the political collective centre and the cultural and intellectual collective centre are like child's play!

7.7 Now strive ye that the Collective Centre of the sacred religions—for the inculcation of which all the Prophets were manifested and which is no other than the spirit of the divine teachings—be spread in all parts of America, so that each one of you may shine forth from the horizon of reality like unto the morning star, divine illumination may overcome the darkness of nature, and the world of humanity may become enlightened. This is the most great work! Should you become confirmed therein, this world will become another world, the surface of the earth will become the delectable paradise, and eternal Institutions be founded.

Arise to Teach

8.1 Verily I say unto thee that if thou be steadfast in this Cause, and arise with all thy power to promote the Word of God in those regions, and exert thine utmost effort to breathe the spirit of life into the hearts of the righteous, thou wilt find thyself assisted by the angels of heaven and the hosts of the Concourse on high. Thou wilt raise the banner of peace and sound the clarion of love and unity throughout those lands, guide the souls unto the wellspring of life, lead them unto the arena of true understanding, grant them to drink from the cup of certitude, quicken them with the breaths of the All-Merciful, attire them with the robe of bounty, and give them to quaff of the wine of faithfulness through the love of Bahá. Thus will they be awakened from the slumber of selfish desire and behold the mighty signs of their Lord in this exalted creation. Better is this for thee than all the glory and dominion of the world.

9.1 O ye servants of the Sacred Threshold! The triumphant hosts of the Celestial Concourse, arrayed and marshalled in the Realms above, stand ready and expectant to assist and assure victory to that valiant horseman who with confidence spurreth on his charger into the arena of service. Well is it with that fearless warrior who, armed with the power of true Knowledge, hasteneth unto the field, disperseth the armies of ignorance, and scattereth the hosts of error, who holdeth aloft the Standard of Divine Guidance, and soundeth the Clarion of Victory. By the righteousness of the Lord! He hath achieved a glorious triumph and obtained the true victory.

10.1 I hope that, through the bounties of Him Who quickeneth the spirits, thou mayest not for a moment remain still, nor be deterred from pulsating like unto an artery in the body of the world, that thou mayest ever breathe the spirit of life into the hearts and enable the souls to soar in the realms above.

11.1 As to the fundamentals of teaching the Faith: Know thou that delivering the Message can be accomplished only through goodly deeds and spiritual attributes, an utterance that is crystal clear and the happiness reflected from the face of that one who is expounding the Teachings. It is essential that the deeds of the teacher should attest the truth of his words. Such is the state of whoso doth spread abroad the sweet savours of God and the quality of him who is sincere in

his faith.

11.2 Once the Lord hath enabled thee to attain this condition, be thou assured that He will inspire thee with words of truth, and will cause thee to speak through the breathings of the Holy Spirit.

12.1 The teaching work should under all conditions be actively pursued by the believers because divine confirmations are dependent upon it. Should a Bahá'í refrain from being fully, vigorously and wholeheartedly involved in the teaching work he will undoubtedly be deprived of the blessings of the Abhá Kingdom. Even so, this activity should be tempered with wisdom—not that wisdom which requireth one to be silent and forgetful of such an obligation, but rather that which requireth one to display divine tolerance, love, kindness, patience, a goodly character, and holy deeds. In brief, encourage the friends individually to teach the Cause of God and draw their attention to this meaning of wisdom mentioned in the Writings, which is itself the essence of teaching the Faith—but all this to be done with the greatest tolerance, so that heavenly assistance and divine confirmation may aid the friends.

13.1 It is at such times that the friends of God avail themselves of the occasion, seize the opportunity, rush forth and win the prize. If their task is to be confined to good conduct and advice, nothing will be accomplished. They must speak out, expound the proofs, set forth clear arguments, draw irrefutable conclusions establishing the truth of the manifestation of the Sun of Reality.

14.1 The friends of God should weave bonds of fellowship with others and show absolute love and affection towards them. These links have a deep influence on people and they will listen. When the friends sense receptivity to the Word of God, they should deliver the Message with wisdom. They must first try and remove any apprehensions in the people they teach. In fact, every one of the believers should choose one person every year and try to establish ties of friendship with him, so that all his fear would disappear. Only then, and gradually, must he teach that person. This is the best method.

15.1 The teacher, when teaching, must be himself fully enkindled, so that his utterance, like unto a flame of fire, may exert influence and consume the veil of self and passion. He must also be utterly humble and lowly so that others may be edified, and be totally self-effaced and evanescent so that he may teach with the melody of the Concourse on high—otherwise his teaching will have no effect.

16.1 Walk, therefore, with a sure step and engage with the utmost assurance and confidence in the promulgation of the divine fragrances, the glorification of the Word of God and firmness in the Covenant. Rest ye assured that if a soul ariseth in the utmost perseverance and raiseth the Call of the Kingdom and resolutely promulgateth the Covenant, be he an insignificant ant he shall be enabled to drive away the formidable elephant from the arena, and if he be a feeble moth he shall cut to pieces the plumage of the rapacious vulture.

16.2 Endeavour, therefore, that ye may scatter and disperse the army of doubt and of error with the power of the holy utterances. This is my exhortation and this is my counsel. Do not quarrel with anybody, and shun every form of dispute. Utter the Word of God. If he accepteth it, the desired purpose is attained, and if he turneth away, leave him to himself and trust to God.

16.3 Such is the attribute of those who are firm in the Covenant.

17.1 Every assembly held for the purpose of bringing about unity and concord will be conducive to turning strangers into friends and aliens into companions. 'Abdu'l-Bahá will be present in heart and soul at that gathering.

18.1 We hear that thou hast in mind to embellish thy house from time to time with a meeting of Bahá'ís, where some among them will engage in glorifying the All-Glorious Lord. . . . Know that shouldst thou bring this about, that house of earth will become a house of heaven, and that fabric of stone a congress of the spirit.

19.1 Verily, 'Abdu'l-Bahá inhalet the fragrance of the love of God from every meeting place where the Word of God is uttered and proofs and arguments set forth that shed their rays across the world, and where they recount the tribulations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at the evil hands of those who have violated the Covenant of God.

20.1 Speak, therefore; speak out with great courage at every meeting. When thou art about to begin thine address, turn first to Bahá'u'lláh, and ask for the confirmations of the Holy Spirit, then open thy lips and say whatever is suggested to thy heart; this, however, with the utmost courage, dignity and conviction.

21.1 Ye have written as to the meetings of the friends, and how filled they are with peace and joy. Of course this is so; for wherever the spiritually minded are gathered together, there in His beauty reigneth Bahá'u'lláh. Thus it is certain that such reunions will yield boundless happiness and peace.

21.2 Today it behoveth one and all to forgo the mention of all else, and to disregard all things. Let their speaking, let their inner state be summed up thus: "Keep all my words of prayer and praise confined to one refrain; make all my life but servitude to Thee." That is, let them concentrate all their thoughts, all their words, on teaching the Cause of God and spreading the Faith of God, and inspiring all to characterize themselves with the characteristics of God; on loving mankind; on being pure and holy in all things, and spotless in their public and private life; on being upright and detached, and fervent, and afire. All is to be yielded up, save only the remembrance of God; all is to be dispraised, except His praise. Today, to this melody of the Company on high, the world will leap and dance: "Glory be to my Lord, the All-Glorious!" But know ye this: Save for this song of God, no song will stir the world, and save for this nightingale-cry of truth from the Garden of God, no melody will lure away the heart. "Whence cometh this Singer Who speaketh the Beloved's name?"

18

The Advancement of Civilization

Working for the Betterment of the World

1.1 Praise thou God that at last, through the divine teachings, thou hast obtained both sight and insight to the highest degree, and hast become firmly rooted in certitude and faith. It is my hope that others as well will achieve illumined eyes and hearing ears, and attain to everlasting life: that these many rivers, each flowing along in diverse and separated beds, will find their way back to the circumambient sea, and merge together and rise up in a single

wave of surging oneness; that the unity of truth, through the power of God, will make these illusory differences to vanish away. This is the one essential: for if unity be gained, all other problems will disappear of themselves.

1.2O honoured lady! In accordance with the divine teachings in this glorious dispensation we should not belittle anyone and call him ignorant, saying:

“You know not, but I know”. Rather, we should look upon others with respect, and when attempting to explain and demonstrate, we should speak as if we are investigating the truth, saying: “Here these things are before us. Let us investigate to determine where and in what form the truth can be found.”

The teacher should not consider himself as learned and others ignorant. Such a thought breedeth pride, and pride is not conducive to influence. The teacher should not see in himself any superiority; he should speak with the utmost kindness, lowliness and humility, for such speech exerteth influence and educateth the souls.

1.3O honoured lady! For a single purpose were the Prophets, each and all, sent down to earth; for this was Christ made manifest, for this did

Bahá'u'lláh raise up the call of the Lord: that the world of man should become the world of God, this nether realm the Kingdom, this darkness light, this satanic wickedness all the virtues of heaven—and unity, fellowship and love be won for the whole human race, that the organic unity should reappear and the bases of discord be destroyed and life everlasting and grace everlasting become the harvest of mankind.

1.4O honoured lady! Look about thee at the world: Here unity, mutual attraction, gathering together, engender life, but disunity and inharmony spell death. When thou dost consider all phenomena, thou wilt see that every created thing hath come into being through the mingling of many elements, and once this collectivity of elements is dissolved, and this harmony of components is dissevered, the life form is wiped out.

1.5O honoured lady!

In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved.

Continents remained widely divided, nay even among the peoples of one and the same continent association and interchange of thought were well-nigh impossible.

Consequently intercourse, understanding and unity amongst all the peoples and kindreds of the earth were unattainable.

In this day, however, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one.

And for everyone it is now easy to travel to any land, to associate and exchange views with its peoples, and to become familiar, through publications, with the conditions, the religious beliefs and the thoughts of all men.

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.

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

2.1 The third element of the utterance under discussion is “opposes his passions”. How wonderful are the implications of this deceptively easy, all-inclusive phrase. This is the very foundation of every laudable human quality; indeed, these few words embody the light of the world, the impregnable basis of all the spiritual attributes of human beings. This is the balance wheel of all behaviour, the means of keeping all man's good qualities in equilibrium.

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

insight, the most excellent and praiseworthy of all things, but always on condition that its centre of emanation should be reason and knowledge and its base should be true moderation. Were the implications of this subject to be developed as they deserve the work would grow too long and our main theme would be lost to view.

2.3 All the peoples of Europe, notwithstanding their vaunted civilization, sink and drown in this terrifying sea of passion and desire, and this is why all the phenomena of their culture come to nothing. Let no one wonder at this statement or deplore it. The primary purpose, the basic objective, in laying down powerful laws and setting up great principles and institutions dealing with every aspect of civilization, is human happiness; and human happiness consists only in drawing closer to the Threshold of Almighty God, and in securing the peace and well-being of every individual member, high and low alike, of the human race; and the supreme agencies for accomplishing these two objectives are the excellent qualities with which humanity has been endowed.

2.4 A superficial culture, unsupported by a cultivated morality, is as “a confused medley of dreams”, and external lustre without inner perfection is “like a vapour in the desert which the thirsty dreameth to be water”. For results which would win the good pleasure of God and secure the peace and well-being of man, could never be fully achieved in a merely external civilization.

2.5 The peoples of Europe have not advanced to the higher planes of moral civilization, as their opinions and behaviour clearly demonstrate. Notice, for example, how the supreme desire of European governments and peoples today is to conquer and crush one another, and how, while harbouring the greatest secret repulsion, they spend their time exchanging expressions of neighbourly affection, friendship and harmony.

2.6 There is the well-known case of the ruler who is fostering peace and tranquillity and at the same time devoting more energy than the warmongers to the accumulation of weapons and the building up of a larger army, on the grounds that peace and harmony can only be brought about by force. Peace is the pretext, and night and day they are all straining every nerve to pile up more weapons of war, and to pay for this their wretched people must sacrifice most of whatever they are able to earn by their sweat and toil. How many thousands have given up their work in useful industries and are labouring day and night to produce new and deadlier weapons which would spill out the blood of the race more copiously than before.

2.7 Each day they invent a new bomb or explosive and then the governments must abandon their obsolete arms and begin producing the new, since the old weapons cannot hold their own against the new.... The staggering cost of it all must be borne by the hapless masses.

2.8 Be just: Can this nominal civilization, unsupported by a genuine civilization of character, bring about the peace and well-being of the people or win the good pleasure of God? Does it not, rather, connote the destruction of man's estate and pull down the pillars of happiness and peace?...

2.9... Yet the pursuit of passion and desire will wrap the eyes in a thousand veils that rise out of the heart to blind the sight and the insight as well.

3.1 The highest station, the supreme sphere, the noblest, most sublime position in creation, whether visible or invisible, whether alpha or omega, is that of the Prophets of God, notwithstanding the fact that for the most part they have to outward seeming been possessed of nothing but their own poverty. In the same way, ineffable glory is set apart for the Holy Ones and those who are nearest to the Threshold of God, although such as these have never for a moment concerned themselves with material gain. Then comes the station of those just kings whose fame as protectors of the people and dispensers of divine justice has filled the world, whose name as powerful champions of the people's rights has echoed through creation. These give no thought to amassing enormous fortunes for themselves; they believe, rather, that their own wealth lies in enriching their subjects. To them, if every individual citizen has affluence and ease, the royal coffers are full. They take no pride in gold and silver, but rather in their enlightenment and their determination to achieve the universal good.

3.2 Next in rank are those eminent and honourable ministers of state and representatives, who place the will of God above their own, and whose administrative skill and wisdom in the conduct of their office raises the science of government to new heights of perfection. They shine in the learned world like lamps of knowledge; their thinking, their attitudes and their acts demonstrate their patriotism and their concern for the country's advancement. Content with a modest stipend, they consecrate their days and nights to the execution of important duties and the devising of methods to insure the progress of the people. Through the effectiveness of their wise counsel, the soundness of their judgement, they have ever caused their government to become an example to be followed by all the governments of the world. They have made their capital city a focal centre of great world undertakings, they have won distinction, attaining a supreme degree of personal eminence, and reaching the loftiest heights of repute and character.

3.3 Again, there are those famed and accomplished men of learning, possessed of praiseworthy qualities and vast erudition, who lay hold on the strong handle of the fear of God and keep to the ways of salvation. In the mirror of their minds the forms of transcendent realities are reflected, and the lamp of their inner vision derives its light from the sun of universal knowledge. They are busy by night and by day with meticulous research into such sciences as are profitable to mankind, and they devote themselves to the training of students of capacity. It is certain that to their discerning taste, the proffered treasures of kings would not compare with a single drop of the waters of knowledge, and mountains of gold and silver could not outweigh the successful solution of a difficult problem. To them, the delights that lie outside their work are only toys for children, and the cumbersome load of unnecessary possessions is only good for the ignorant and base. Content, like the birds, they give thanks for a handful of seeds, and the song of their wisdom dazzles the minds of the world's most wise.

3.4 Again, there are sagacious leaders among the people and influential personalities throughout the country, who constitute the pillars of state. Their rank and station and success depend on their being the well-wishers of

the people and in their seeking out such means as will improve the nation and will increase the wealth and comfort of the citizens....

3.5 It is unquestionable that the object in establishing parliaments is to bring about justice and righteousness, but everything hinges on the efforts of the elected representatives. If their intention is sincere, desirable results and unforeseen improvements will be forthcoming; if not, it is certain that the whole thing will be meaningless, the country will come to a standstill and public affairs will continuously deteriorate. "I see a thousand builders unequal to one subverter; what then of the one builder who is followed by a thousand subverters?"

3.6 The purpose of the foregoing statements is to demonstrate at least this, that the happiness and greatness, the rank and station, the pleasure and peace, of an individual have never consisted in his personal wealth, but rather in his excellent character, his high resolve, the breadth of his learning, and his ability to solve difficult problems.

#### Material and Spiritual Civilization

4.1 As to the difference between that material civilization now prevailing, and the divine civilization which will be one of the benefits to derive from the House of Justice, it is this: Material civilization, through the power of punitive and retaliatory laws, restraineth the people from criminal acts; and notwithstanding this, while laws to retaliate against and punish a man are continually proliferating, as ye can see, no laws exist to reward him. In all the cities of Europe and America, vast buildings have been erected to serve as jails for the criminals.

4.2 Divine civilization, however, so traineth every member of society that no one, with the exception of a negligible few, will undertake to commit a crime. There is thus a great difference between the prevention of crime through measures that are violent and retaliatory, and so training the people, and enlightening them, and spiritualizing them, that without any fear of punishment or vengeance to come, they will shun all criminal acts. They will, indeed, look upon the very commission of a crime as a great disgrace and in itself the harshest of punishments. They will become enamoured of human perfections, and will consecrate their lives to whatever will bring light to the world and will further those qualities which are acceptable at the Holy Threshold of God.

4.3 See then how wide is the difference between material civilization and divine. With force and punishments, material civilization seeketh to restrain the people from mischief, from inflicting harm on society and committing crimes. But in a divine civilization, the individual is so conditioned that with no fear of punishment, he shunneth the perpetration of crimes, seeth the crime itself as the severest of torments, and with alacrity and joy, setteth himself to acquiring the virtues of humankind, to furthering human progress, and to spreading light across the world.

5.1 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.

5.2 Observe that if such a happy situation be forthcoming, no government would need continually to pile up the weapons of war, nor feel itself obliged to produce ever new military weapons with which to conquer the human race. A small force for the purposes of internal security, the correction of criminal and disorderly elements and the prevention of local disturbances, would be required—no more. In this way the entire population would, first of all, be relieved of the crushing burden of expenditure currently imposed for military purposes, and secondly, great numbers of people would cease to devote their time to the continual devising of new weapons of destruction—those testimonials of greed and bloodthirstiness, so inconsistent with the gift of life—and would instead bend their efforts to the production of whatever will foster human existence and peace and well-being, and would become the cause of universal development and prosperity. Then every nation on earth will reign in honour, and every people will be cradled in tranquillity and content.

5.3 A few, unaware of the power latent in human endeavour, 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 favoured ones, the unrivalled endeavours of wise and capable souls, and the thoughts and ideas of the peerless leaders of this age, nothing whatsoever can be regarded as unattainable. Endeavour, ceaseless endeavour, 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 day-star 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.

5.4 The apparatus of conflict will, as preparations go on at their present rate, reach the point where war will become something intolerable to mankind.

Two Calls to Success and Prosperity

6.1 O ye concourse of the Kingdom of Abhá! Two calls to success and prosperity are being raised from the heights of the happiness of mankind, awakening the slumbering, granting sight to the blind, causing the heedless to become mindful, bestowing hearing upon the deaf, unloosing the tongue of the mute and resuscitating the dead.

6.2 The one is the call of civilization, of the progress of the material world. This pertaineth to the world of phenomena, promoteth the principles of material achievement, and is the trainer for the physical accomplishments of mankind. It compriseth the laws, regulations, arts and sciences through which the world of humanity hath developed; laws and regulations which are the outcome of lofty ideals and the result of sound minds, and which have stepped forth into the arena of existence through the efforts of the wise and cultured in past and subsequent ages. The propagator and executive power of this call is just government.

6.3 The other is the soul-stirring call of God, Whose spiritual teachings are safeguards of the everlasting glory, the eternal happiness and illumination of the world of humanity, and cause attributes of mercy to be revealed in the human world and the life beyond.

6.4 This second call is founded upon the instructions and exhortations of the Lord and the admonitions and altruistic emotions belonging to the realm of morality which, like unto a brilliant light, brighten and illumine the lamp of the realities of mankind. Its penetrative power is the Word of God.

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

6.6 Consequently, when thou lookest at the orderly pattern of kingdoms, cities and villages, with the attractiveness of their adornments, the freshness of

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

6.7 Consider now, that the most advanced and civilized countries of the world have been turned into arsenals of explosives, that the continents of the globe have been transformed into huge camps and battlefields, that the peoples of the world have formed themselves into armed nations, and that the governments of the world are vying with each other as to who will first step into the field of carnage and bloodshed, thus subjecting mankind to the utmost degree of affliction.

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

6.9 Praise be to God, throughout succeeding centuries and ages the call of civilization hath been raised, the world of humanity hath been advancing and progressing day by day, various countries have been developing by leaps and bounds, and material improvements have increased, until the world of existence obtained universal capacity to receive the spiritual teachings and to hearken to the Divine Call.

The suckling babe passeth through various physical stages, growing and developing at every stage, until its body reacheth the age of maturity.

Having arrived at this stage it acquireth the capacity to manifest spiritual and intellectual perfections.

The lights of comprehension, intelligence and knowledge become perceptible in it and the powers of its soul unfold.

Similarly, in the contingent world, the human species hath undergone progressive physical changes and, by a slow process, hath scaled the ladder of civilization, realizing in itself the wonders, excellencies and gifts of humanity in their most glorious form, until it gained the capacity to express the splendours of spiritual perfections and divine ideals and became capable of hearkening to the call of God.

Then at last the call of the Kingdom was raised, the spiritual virtues and perfections were revealed, the Sun of Reality dawned, and the teachings of the Most Great Peace, of the oneness of the world of humanity and of the universality of men, were promoted.

We hope that the effulgence of these rays shall become more and more intense, and the ideal virtues more resplendent, so that the goal of this universal human process will be attained and the love of God will appear in the utmost grace and beauty and bedazzle all hearts.

6.10O ye beloved of God! Know ye, verily, that the happiness of mankind lieth in the unity and the harmony of the human race, and that spiritual and material developments are conditioned upon love and amity among all men....

6.11Similarly, consider how the cause of the welfare, happiness, joy and comfort of humankind are amity and union, whereas dissension and discord are most conducive to hardship, humiliation, agitation and failure.

6.12But a thousand times alas, that man is negligent and unaware of these facts, and daily doth he strut abroad with the characteristics of a wild beast.

Lo! At one moment he turneth into a ferocious tiger; at the next he becometh a creeping, venomous viper! But the sublime achievements of man reside in those qualities and attributes that exclusively pertain to the angels of the Supreme Concourse. Therefore, when praiseworthy qualities and high morals emanate from man, he becometh a heavenly being, an angel of the Kingdom, a divine reality and a celestial effulgence. On the other hand, when he engageth in warfare, quarrelling and bloodshed, he becometh viler than the most fierce of savage creatures, for if a bloodthirsty wolf devoureth a lamb in a single night, man slaughtereth a hundred thousand in the field of battle, strewing the ground with their corpses and kneading the earth with their blood.

6.13In short, man is endowed with two natures: One tendeth towards moral sublimity and intellectual perfection, while the other turneth to bestial degradation and carnal imperfections. If ye travel the countries of the globe ye shall observe on one side the remains of ruin and destruction, while on the other ye shall see the signs of civilization and development. Such desolation and ruin are the result of war, strife and quarrelling, while all development and progress are fruits of the lights of virtue, cooperation and concord....

6.14It therefore becometh manifest that amity and cohesion are indicative of the training of the Real Educator, and dispersion and separation a proof of savagery and deprivation of divine education.

6.15A critic may object, saying that peoples, races, tribes and communities of the world are of different and varied customs, habits, tastes, character, inclinations and ideas, that opinions and thoughts are contrary to one another, and how, therefore, is it possible for real unity to be revealed and perfect accord among human souls to exist?

6.16In answer we say that differences are of two kinds. One is the cause of annihilation and is like the antipathy existing among warring nations and conflicting tribes who seek each other's destruction, uprooting one another's families, depriving one another of rest and comfort and unleashing carnage. The other kind which is a token of diversity is the essence of

perfection and the cause of the appearance of the bestowals of the Most Glorious Lord.

6.17 Consider the flowers of a garden: Though differing in kind, colour, form and shape, yet, inasmuch as they are refreshed by the waters of one spring, revived by the breath of one wind, invigorated by the rays of one sun, this diversity increaseth their charm, and addeth unto their beauty. Thus when that unifying force, the penetrating influence of the Word of God, taketh effect, the difference of customs, manners, habits, ideas, opinions and dispositions embellisheth the world of humanity. This diversity, this difference is like the naturally created dissimilarity and variety of the limbs and organs of the human body, for each one contributeth to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole. When these different limbs and organs come under the influence of man's sovereign soul, and the soul's power pervadeth the limbs and members, veins and arteries of the body, then difference reinforceth harmony, diversity strengtheneth love, and multiplicity is the greatest factor for coordination.

6.18 How unpleasing to the eye if all the flowers and plants, the leaves and blossoms, the fruits, the branches and the trees of that garden were all of the same shape and colour! Diversity of hues, form and shape, enricheth and adorneth the garden, and heighteneth the effect thereof. In like manner, when divers shades of thought, temperament and character, are brought together under the power and influence of one central agency, the beauty and glory of human perfection will be revealed and made manifest. Naught but the celestial potency of the Word of God, which ruleth and transcendeth the realities of all things, is capable of harmonizing the divergent thoughts, sentiments, ideas, and convictions of the children of men. Verily, it is the penetrating power in all things, the mover of souls and the binder and regulator in the world of humanity.

6.19 Praise be to God, today the splendour of the Word of God hath illumined every horizon, and from all sects, races, tribes, nations, and communities souls have come together in the light of the Word, assembled, united and agreed in perfect harmony. Oh! What a great number of meetings are held adorned with souls from various races and diverse sects! Anyone attending these will be struck with amazement, and might suppose that these souls are all of one land, one nationality, one community, one thought, one belief and one opinion; whereas, in fact, one is an American, the other an African, one cometh from Asia and another from Europe, one is a native of India, another is from Turkestan, one is an Arab, another a Tajik, another a Persian and yet another a Greek. Notwithstanding such diversity they associate in perfect harmony and unity, love and freedom; they have one voice, one thought and one purpose. Verily, this is from the penetrative power of the Word of God! If all the forces of the universe were to combine they would not be able thus to gather a single assemblage so imbued with the sentiments of love, affection, attraction and enkindlement as to unite the members of different races and to raise up from the heart of the world a voice that shall dispel war and strife, uproot dissension and disputation, usher in the era of universal peace and establish unity and concord amongst men.

6.20 Can any power withstand the penetrative influence of the Word of God? Nay,

by God! The proof is clear and the evidence is complete! If anyone looketh with the eyes of justice he shall be struck with wonder and amazement and will testify that all the peoples, sects and races of the world should be glad, content and grateful for the teachings and admonitions of Bahá'u'lláh. For these divine injunctions tame every ferocious beast, transform the creeping insect into a soaring bird, cause human souls to become angels of the Kingdom, and make the human world a focus for the qualities of mercy.

#### Material Prosperity

7.1 Can we maintain that it is contrary to the fundamentals of the Faith to encourage the acquisition of useful arts and of general knowledge, to inform oneself as to the truths of such physical sciences as are beneficial to man, and to widen the scope of industry and increase the products of commerce and multiply the nation's avenues of wealth? Would it conflict with the worship of God to establish law and order in the cities and organize the rural districts, to repair the roads and build railroads and facilitate transportation and travel and thus increase the people's well-being? Would it be inconsistent with the divine commands and prohibitions if we were to work the abandoned mines which are the greatest source of the nation's wealth, and to build factories, from which come the entire people's comfort, security and affluence? Or to stimulate the creation of new industries and to promote improvements in our domestic products?...

7.2 Again, is there any deed in the world that would be nobler than service to the common good? Is there any greater blessing conceivable for a man, than that he should become the cause of the education, the development, the prosperity and honour of his fellow-creatures? No, by the Lord God! The highest righteousness of all is for blessed souls to take hold of the hands of the helpless and deliver them out of their ignorance and abasement and poverty, and with pure motives, and only for the sake of God, to arise and energetically devote themselves to the service of the masses, forgetting their own worldly advantage and working only to serve the general good. "They prefer them before themselves, though poverty be their own lot." "The best of men are those who serve the people; the worst of men are those who harm the people."

7.3 Glory be to God! What an extraordinary situation now obtains, when no one, hearing a claim advanced, asks himself what the speaker's real motive might be, and what selfish purpose he might not have hidden behind the mask of words. You find, for example, that an individual seeking to further his own petty and personal concerns, will block the advancement of an entire people. To turn his own water mill, he will let the farms and fields of all the others parch and wither. To maintain his own leadership, he will everlastingly direct the masses toward that prejudice and fanaticism which subvert the very base of civilization.

8.1 The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education. It is inconceivable that any nation should achieve prosperity and success unless this paramount, this fundamental concern is carried forward. The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time.

8.2 It is therefore urgent that beneficial articles and books be written, clearly and definitely establishing what the present-day requirements of the people are, and what will conduce to the happiness and advancement of society. These should be published and spread throughout the nation, so that at least the leaders among the people should become, to some degree, awakened, and arise to exert themselves along those lines which will lead to their abiding honour. The publication of high thoughts is the dynamic power in the arteries of life; it is the very soul of the world. Thoughts are a boundless sea, and the effects and varying conditions of existence are as the separate forms and individual limits of the waves; not until the sea boils up will the waves rise and scatter their pearls of knowledge on the shore of life....

8.3 Public opinion must be directed toward whatever is worthy of this day, and this is impossible except through the use of adequate arguments and the adducing of clear, comprehensive and conclusive proofs. For the helpless masses know nothing of the world, and while there is no doubt that they seek and long for their own happiness, yet ignorance like a heavy veil shuts them away from it.

8.4 Observe to what a degree the lack of education will weaken and degrade a people.

9.1 Wealth is praiseworthy in the highest degree, if it is acquired by an individual's own efforts and the grace of God, in commerce, agriculture, art and industry, and if it be expended for philanthropic purposes. Above all, if a judicious and resourceful individual should initiate measures which would universally enrich the masses of the people, there could be no undertaking greater than this, and it would rank in the sight of God as the supreme achievement, for such a benefactor would supply the needs and insure the comfort and well-being of a great multitude. Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy. If, however, a few have inordinate riches while the rest are impoverished, and no fruit or benefit accrues from that wealth, then it is only a liability to its possessor. If, on the other hand, it is expended for the promotion of knowledge, the founding of elementary and other schools, the encouragement of art and industry, the training of orphans and the poor—in brief, if it is dedicated to the welfare of society—its possessor will stand out before God and man as the most excellent of all who live on earth and will be accounted as one of the people of paradise.

#### Eliminating Extremes of Wealth and Poverty

10.1 Now, the root cause of these difficulties lies in the law of nature that governs present-day civilization, for it results in a handful of people accumulating vast fortunes that far exceed their needs, while the greater number remain naked, destitute, and helpless. This is at once contrary to justice, to humanity, and to fairness; it is the very height of inequity and runs counter to the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful.

10.2 This disparity is confined to the human race: Among other creatures, that is, among the animals, a certain kind of justice and equality prevails. Thus there is equality within a shepherd's flock, or within a herd of deer in the wilderness, or among the songbirds that dwell in the mountains, plains, and

orchards. The animals of every species enjoy a measure of equality and do not differ greatly from one another in their means of existence, and thus they live in perfect peace and joy.

10.3 It is quite otherwise with the human race, where the greatest oppression and injustice are to be found. Thus you can observe, on the one hand, a single person who has amassed a fortune, made an entire country his personal colony, acquired immense wealth, and secured an unceasing flow of gains and profits, and, on the other, a hundred thousand helpless souls—weak, powerless, and wanting even a mouthful of bread. There is neither equality here nor benevolence. Observe how, as a result, general peace and happiness have become so wanting, and the welfare of humanity so undermined, that the lives of a vast multitude have been rendered fruitless! For all the wealth, power, commerce, and industry are concentrated in the hands of a few individuals, while all others toil under the burden of endless hardships and difficulties, are bereft of advantages and benefits, and remain deprived of comfort and peace. One must therefore enact such laws and regulations as will moderate the excessive fortunes of the few and meet the basic needs of the myriad millions of the poor, that a degree of moderation may be achieved.

10.4 However, absolute equality is just as untenable, for complete equality in wealth, power, commerce, agriculture, and industry would result in chaos and disorder, disrupt livelihoods, provoke universal discontent, and undermine the orderly conduct of the affairs of the community.

For unjustified equality is also fraught with peril.

It is preferable, then, that some measure of moderation be achieved, and by moderation is meant the enactment of such laws and regulations as would prevent the unwarranted concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and satisfy the essential needs of the many.

For instance, the factory owners reap a fortune every day, but the wage the poor workers are paid cannot even meet their daily needs:

This is most unfair, and assuredly no just man can accept it.

Therefore, laws and regulations should be enacted which would grant the workers both a daily wage and a share in a fourth or fifth of the profits of the factory in accordance with its means, or which would have the workers equitably share in some other way in the profits with the owners.

For the capital and the management come from the latter and the toil and labour from the former.

The workers could either be granted a wage that adequately meets their daily needs, as well as a right to a share in the revenues of the factory when they are injured, incapacitated, or unable to work, or else a wage could be set that allows the workers to both satisfy their daily needs and save a little for times of weakness and incapacity.

10.5 If matters were so arranged, neither would the factory owners amass each day a fortune which is absolutely of no use to them—for should one's

fortune increase beyond measure, one would come under a most heavy burden, become subject to exceeding hardships and troubles, and find the administration of such an excessive fortune to be most difficult and to exhaust one's natural powers—nor would the workers endure such toil and hardship as to become incapacitated and to fall victim, at the end of their lives, to the direst need.

10.6 It is therefore clearly established that the appropriation of excessive wealth by a few individuals, notwithstanding the needs of the masses, is unfair and unjust, and that, conversely, absolute equality would also disrupt the existence, welfare, comfort, peace, and orderly life of the human race. Such being the case, the best course is therefore to seek moderation, which is for the wealthy to recognize the advantages of moderation in the acquisition of profits and to show regard for the welfare of the poor and the needy, that is, to fix a daily wage for the workers and also to allot them a share of the total profits of the factory.

10.7 In brief, insofar as the mutual rights of the factory owners and the workers are concerned, laws must be enacted that would enable the former to make reasonable profits and the latter to be provided with their present necessities and their future needs, so that if they become incapacitated, grow old, or die and leave behind small children, they or their children will not be overcome by dire poverty but will receive a modest pension from the revenues of the factory itself.

10.8 For their part, the workers should not make excessive demands, be recalcitrant, ask for more than they deserve, or go on strike. They should obey and comply and make no demands for exorbitant wages. Rather, the mutual and equitable rights of both parties should be officially fixed and established according to the laws of justice and compassion, and any party that violates them should be condemned after a fair hearing and be subject to a definitive verdict enforced by the executive branch, so that all affairs may be appropriately ordered and all problems adequately resolved....

10.9 Gracious God! How can one see one's fellow men hungry, destitute, and deprived, and yet live in peace and comfort in one's splendid mansion? How can one see others in the greatest need and yet take delight in one's fortune? That is why it has been decreed in the divine religions that the wealthy should offer up each year a portion of their wealth for the sustenance of the poor and the assistance of the needy. This is one of the foundations of the religion of God and is an injunction binding upon all. And since in this regard one is not outwardly compelled or obliged by the government, but rather aids the poor at the prompting of one's own heart and in a spirit of joy and radiance, such a deed is most commendable, approved, and pleasing.

10.10 This is the meaning of the righteous deeds mentioned in the heavenly Books and Scriptures.

#### Contributing to Social Progress

11.1 Praise and thanksgiving be unto Providence that out of all the realities in existence He has chosen the reality of man and has honoured it with intellect and wisdom, the two most luminous lights in either world. Through the agency of this great endowment, He has in every epoch cast on the mirror of creation new

and wonderful configurations. If we look objectively upon the world of being, it will become apparent that from age to age, the temple of existence has continually been embellished with a fresh grace, and distinguished with an ever-varying splendour, deriving from wisdom and the power of thought.

11.2 This supreme emblem of God stands first in the order of creation and first in rank, taking precedence over all created things. Witness to it is the Holy Tradition, "Before all else, God created the mind." From the dawn of creation, it was made to be revealed in the temple of man....

11.3 O ye that have minds to know! Raise up your suppliant hands to the heaven of the one God, and humble yourselves and be lowly before Him, and thank Him for this supreme endowment, and implore Him to succour us until, in this present age, godlike impulses may radiate from the conscience of mankind, and this divinely kindled fire which has been entrusted to the human heart may never die away.

11.4 Consider carefully: All these highly varied phenomena, these concepts, this knowledge, these technical procedures and philosophical systems, these sciences, arts, industries and inventions—all are emanations of the human mind. Whatever people has ventured deeper into this shoreless sea, has come to excel the rest. The happiness and pride of a nation consist in this, that it should shine out like the sun in the high heaven of knowledge. "Shall they who have knowledge and they who have it not, be treated alike?" And the honour and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight.

11.5 How long shall we drift on the wings of passion and vain desire; how long shall we spend our days like barbarians in the depths of ignorance and abomination? God has given us eyes, that we may look about us at the world, and lay hold of whatsoever will further civilization and the arts of living. He has given us ears, that we may hear and profit by the wisdom of scholars and philosophers and arise to promote and practise it. Senses and faculties have been bestowed upon us, to be devoted to the service of the general good; so that we, distinguished above all other forms of life for perceptiveness and reason, should labour at all times and along all lines, whether the occasion be great or small, ordinary or extraordinary, until all mankind are safely gathered into the impregnable stronghold of knowledge. We should continually be establishing new bases for human happiness and creating and promoting new instrumentalities toward this end. How excellent, how honourable is man if he arises to fulfil his responsibilities; how wretched and contemptible, if he shuts his eyes to the welfare of society and wastes his precious life in pursuing his own selfish interests and personal advantages. Supreme happiness is man's, and he beholds the signs of God in the world and in the human soul, if he urges on the steed of high endeavour in the arena of civilization and justice. "We will surely show them Our signs in the world and within themselves."

11.6 And this is man's uttermost wretchedness: that he should live inert, apathetic, dull, involved only with his own base appetites. When he is thus, he has his being in the deepest ignorance and savagery, sinking lower than the brute beasts. "They are like the brutes: Yea, they go more astray.... For the vilest beasts in God's sight, are the deaf, the dumb, who understand not."

11.7 We must now highly resolve to arise and lay hold of all those instrumentalities that promote the peace and well-being and happiness, the knowledge, culture and industry, the dignity, value and station, of the entire human race. Thus, through the restoring waters of pure intention and unselfish effort, the earth of human potentialities will blossom with its own latent excellence and flower into praiseworthy qualities....

12.1 Make ye a mighty effort till you yourselves betoken this advancement and all these confirmations, and become focal centres of God's blessings, daysprings of the light of His unity, promoters of the gifts and graces of civilized life. Be ye in that land vanguards of the perfections of humankind; carry forward the various branches of knowledge, be active and progressive in the field of inventions and the arts. Endeavour to rectify the conduct of men, and seek to excel the whole world in moral character. While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly grace, foster them in the cradle of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship. Teach them to dedicate their lives to matters of great import, and inspire them to undertake studies that will benefit mankind.

13.1 It is obvious that not until the people are educated, not until public opinion is rightly focused, not until government officials, even minor ones, are free from even the least remnant of corruption, can the country be properly administered. Not until discipline, order and good government reach the degree where an individual, even if he should put forth his utmost efforts to do so, would still find himself unable to deviate by so much as a hair's breadth from righteousness, can the desired reforms be regarded as fully established.

13.2 Furthermore, any agency whatever, though it be the instrument of mankind's greatest good, is capable of misuse. Its proper use or abuse depends on the varying degrees of enlightenment, capacity, faith, honesty, devotion and high-mindedness of the leaders of public opinion....

13.3 Otherwise it is clear that the results will prove unacceptable. For it has been directly witnessed in certain foreign countries that following on the establishment of parliaments those bodies actually distressed and confused the people and their well-meant reforms produced maleficent results. While the setting up of parliaments, the organizing of assemblies of consultation, constitutes the very foundation and bedrock of government, there are several essential requirements which these institutions must fulfil. First, the elected members must be righteous, God-fearing, high-minded, incorruptible. Second, they must be fully cognizant, in every particular, of the laws of God, informed as to the highest principles of law, versed in the rules which govern the management of internal affairs and the conduct of foreign relations, skilled in the useful arts of civilization, and content with their lawful emoluments.

13.4 Let it not be imagined that members of this type would be impossible to find. Through the grace of God and His chosen ones, and the high endeavours of the devoted and the consecrated, every difficulty can be easily resolved, every problem however complex will prove simpler than blinking an eye.

13.5 If, however, the members of these consultative assemblies are inferior, ignorant, uninformed of the laws of government and administration, unwise, of low aim, indifferent, idle, self-seeking, no benefit will accrue from the organizing of such bodies. Where, in the past, if a poor man wanted his rights he had only to offer a gift to one individual, now he would either have to renounce all hope of justice or else satisfy the entire membership.

13.6 Close investigation will show that the primary cause of oppression and injustice, of unrighteousness, irregularity and disorder, is the people's lack of religious faith and the fact that they are uneducated. When, for example, the people are genuinely religious and are literate and well-schooled, and a difficulty presents itself, they can apply to the local authorities; if they do not meet with justice and secure their rights and if they see that the conduct of the local government is incompatible with the divine good pleasure and the king's justice, they can then take their case to higher courts and describe the deviation of the local administration from the spiritual law. Those courts can then send for the local records of the case and in this way justice will be done. At present, however, because of their inadequate schooling, most of the population lack even the vocabulary to explain what they want.

13.7 As to those persons who, here and there, are considered leaders of the people: Because this is only the beginning of the new administrative process, they are not yet sufficiently advanced in their education to have experienced the delights of dispensing justice or to have tasted the exhilaration of promoting righteousness or to have drunk from the springs of a clear conscience and a sincere intent. They have not properly understood that man's supreme honour and real happiness lie in self-respect, in high resolves and noble purposes, in integrity and moral quality, in immaculacy of mind. They have, rather, imagined that their greatness consists in the accumulation, by whatever means may offer, of worldly goods.

13.8 A man should pause and reflect and be just: His Lord, out of measureless grace, has made him a human being and honoured him with the words: "Verily, We created man in the goodliest of forms"—and caused His mercy which rises out of the dawn of oneness to shine down upon him, until he became the wellspring of the words of God and the place where the mysteries of heaven alighted, and on the morning of creation he was covered with the rays of the qualities of perfection and the graces of holiness. How can he stain this immaculate garment with the filth of selfish desires, or exchange this everlasting honour for infamy? "Dost thou think thyself only a puny form, when the universe is folded up within thee?"

Attitude Towards Government and Politics

14.1 By its nature, human society standeth in need of essential relations and rules, for otherwise it would not enjoy peace and protection, nor experience happiness and security. Without them, the sacred glory of humankind would

remain unmanifested and the desire of all hearts would remain unrealized. Countries would not prosper, nor would cities and villages find order and adornment. The affairs of the world would fail to be regulated and the development of the human race would be rendered impossible. There would be no tranquillity or peace of mind. The virtues of the human world would remain unmanifested and the candle of the bestowals of the All-Merciful would remain unlit. Human reality would fail to discover the secrets of the world of being or to apprehend the all-embracing wisdom of the Almighty. Marvellous arts and sciences would not be diffused, great discoveries would not be made, and the earth would not become the observatory of endless stars. Human invention and industry would not astonish every mind; the East and the West would not freely communicate; and the power of steam would not join together the distant regions of the earth.

14.2... Religion may be regarded as the spirit of life and the government as the agent of deliverance. Religion is even as the resplendent sun and the government as the vernal clouds. These two effulgent luminaries, even as twin shining stars, cast from the horizon of this world their radiance upon humanity. One illumineth the realm of the spirit and the other adorneth the domain of earthly existence. One causeth human conscience to reveal its hidden gems and the other turneth this nether world into the garden of paradise. Through their influence this world of dust becometh the envy of the realm of heaven and this abode of darkness the object of longing of the kingdom of light... Our meaning is that these two mighty agents, even as milk and honey, or as twin lodestars, confirm and assist each other. Thus to affront one is to betray the other, and to disobey one is to sin grievously against the other.

15.1 Speak thou no word of politics; thy task concerneth the life of the soul, for this verily leadeth to man's joy in the world of God. Except to speak well of them, make thou no mention of the earth's kings, and the worldly governments thereof. Rather, confine thine utterance to spreading the blissful tidings of the Kingdom of God, and demonstrating the influence of the Word of God, and the holiness of the Cause of God. Tell thou of abiding joy and spiritual delights, and godlike qualities, and of how the Sun of Truth hath risen above the earth's horizons: Tell of the blowing of the spirit of life into the body of the world.

16.1 Furthermore each and every one is required to show obedience, submission and loyalty towards his own government....

16.2 Such obedience and submission is made incumbent and obligatory upon all by the clear Text of the Abhá Beauty. Therefore the believers, in obedience to the command of the True One, show the utmost sincerity and goodwill towards all nations; and should any soul act contrary to the laws of the government he would consider himself responsible before God, deserving divine wrath and chastisement for his sin and wrongdoing.

17.1 O thou servant of Bahá! Thou hast asked regarding involvement in government affairs. In America it is required that the people shall take part in elections. This is a necessary matter and it is not possible to be excused from it. My meaning regarding not meddling in the affairs of government is that the friends of God should not engage in any mischief or move or act in a manner

that runneth counter to the considered views of the government. It is, however, necessary to follow the laws and regulations of the nation. Now, as the government of America is republican in form, all the inhabitants, through the election of officials, must needs take part in the affairs of the republic.

18.1 If any of the friends should enter into the service of the government, they should make their occupation a means of drawing nearer to the divine Threshold: They should act with probity and uprightness, rigorously shun all forms of venality and corruption, and content themselves with the salaries they are receiving, taking pride, rather, in the degree of sagacity, competence and judgement that they can bring to their work. If a person content himself with a single loaf of bread, and perform his duties with as much justice and fair-mindedness as lieth within his power, he will be the prince of mortals, and the most praiseworthy of men. Noble and distinguished will he be, despite his empty purse! Pre-eminent will he rank among the free, although his garb be old and worn! For man, praise and glory reside in virtuous and noble qualities; honour and distinction in nearness to the divine Threshold. The world's wealth is, by contrast, the stuff of illusion. Those who lust after it are the followers of evil and, ere long, they shall be plunged into confusion and despair. Which is better—that a man should be thus, or that he should comport himself with consecration and sanctity of purpose and stand out conspicuously for his integrity, uprightness and honesty?

19.1 O ye my loved ones! The world is wrapped in the thick darkness of open revolt and swept by a whirlwind of hate. It is the fires of malevolence that have cast up their flames to the clouds of heaven, it is a blood-drenched flood that rolleth across the plains and down the hills, and no one on the face of the earth can find any peace. Therefore must the friends of God engender that tenderness which cometh from Heaven, and bestow love in the spirit upon all humankind. With every soul must they deal according to the Divine counsellings and admonitions; to all must they show forth kindness and good faith; to all must they wish well. They must sacrifice themselves for their friends, and wish good fortune to their foes. They must comfort the ill-natured, and treat their oppressors with loving-kindness. They must be as refreshing water to the thirsty, and to the sick a swift remedy, a healing balm to those in pain and a solace to every burdened heart. They must be a guiding light to those who have gone astray, a sure leader for the lost. They must be seeing eyes to the blind, hearing ears to the deaf, and to the dead eternal life, and to the despondent joy forever.

19.2 Let them willingly subject themselves to every just king, and to every generous ruler be good citizens. Let them obey the government and not meddle in political affairs, but devote themselves to the betterment of character and behaviour, and fix their gaze upon the Light of the world.

19

The Covenant and Administration

The Covenant

1.1 Today the pulsating power in the arteries of the body of the world is the spirit of the Covenant—the spirit which is the cause of life. Whosoever is vivified with this spirit the freshness and beauty of life become manifest in

him, he is baptized with the Holy Spirit, he is born again, is freed from oppression and tyranny, from heedlessness and harshness which deaden the spirit, and attains to everlasting life.

1.2 Praise thou God that thou art firm in the Covenant and the Testament and art turning thy face to the Luminary of the world, His Highness Bahá'u'lláh.

2.1 It is indubitably clear that the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant. . . . The power of the Covenant is as the heat of the sun which quickeneth and promoteth the development of all created things on earth. The light of the Covenant, in like manner, is the educator of the minds, the spirits, the hearts and souls of men.

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

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

5.1 Were not the mighty stronghold of the Cause of God to remain protected by the power of the Covenant, there would arise in a single day a thousand different sects among the Bahá'ís, even as was the case in former Dispensations. But in this holy Dispensation, to ensure the preservation of the Cause of God and to avoid dissension amongst His people, the Blessed Beauty—may my soul be a sacrifice unto Him—hath, through the agency of His supreme pen, established a Covenant and Testament and appointed a Centre, who is the expounder of the Book and the dispeller of discord. Whatsoever this Centre doth write or say is conformable to the truth and free from error under the protection of the Blessed Beauty.

6.1 O thou maidservant of God! Thy letter was received, and its contents testified to thy firmness in the Covenant. Therefore, it is my hope that thou mayest be assisted under all conditions. In this day the most important of all things is to be firm and steadfast in the Covenant and the Testament, for Bahá'í unity can in no wise be preserved except through the Covenant. If it could be preserved by any other means, the Blessed Beauty would undoubtedly have decreed it.

6.2 In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, unto which everyone must turn, and in the Kitáb-i-'Ahd, which is the last Tablet revealed by the Blessed Beauty and recorded by the Supreme Pen, He addresseth everyone in clear and explicit terms, bidding first the Aghsán, then the Afnán and His kindred, and finally all other believers, to turn unto the Centre of the Covenant. There is a verse revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas exhorting all to turn, after His Ascension, to "Him Who hath branched from this Ancient Root". In the Kitáb-i-'Ahd, He testifieth in unmistakable terms that the object of this verse is none other than the Centre of the Covenant. And in a specific Tablet, the authenticity of which is admitted by everyone, He, in unequivocal language, identifieth the Centre of Sedition by name, declaring that should he pass out

from under the shadow of the Cause in the slightest degree, he would be cut off from the Holy Tree. How could anything be more explicit than this? Now one must either say that the Blessed Beauty erred and led the people astray, for He directed them to obey someone who ought not to have been obeyed, or else say that the least deviation from the Covenant and the Testament entaileth deprivation from the bounties of Him Who is the Luminary of the world. Of these two alternatives, one must be true; there is no third.

6.3 In sum, Bahá'í unity cannot be preserved save through the Covenant of God. In this day, the dynamic power in the body of the world is the Covenant; if the Covenant be neglected, what other power can move it?

7.1 I affirm that the true meaning, the real significance, the innermost secret of these verses, of these very words, is my own servitude to the sacred Threshold of the Abhá Beauty, my complete self-effacement, my utter nothingness before Him. This is my resplendent crown, my most precious adorning. On this I pride myself in the kingdom of earth and heaven. Therein I glory among the company of the well-favoured!

8.1 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.

Firmness in the Covenant

9.1 O ye who are holding fast unto the Covenant and Testament! This day, from the realms of the All-Glorious, from the Kingdom of Holiness where hosannas of glorification and praise rise up, the Company on high direct their gaze upon you. Whensoever their gaze lighteth upon gatherings of those who are steadfast in the Covenant and Testament, then do they utter their cry, "Glad tidings! Glad tidings!" Then, exulting, do they lift up their voices, and shout, "O ye spiritual communion! O ye gathering of God! Blessed are ye! Glad tidings be unto you! Bright be your faces, and be ye of good cheer, for ye cling to the Covenant of the Beloved of all the worlds, ye are on fire with the wine of His Testament. Ye have plighted your troth to the Ancient of Days, ye have drunk deep from the chalice of loyalty. Ye have guarded and defended the Cause of God; ye have not been a cause of dividing up His Word; ye have not brought His Faith low, but have striven to glorify His Holy Name; ye have not allowed the Blessed Cause to be exposed to the derision of the people. Ye have not permitted the Designated Station to be humbled, nor been willing to see the Centre of Authority discredited or exposed to mockery and persecution. Ye have striven to keep the Word whole and one. Ye have passed through the portals of mercy. Ye have not let the Blessed Beauty slip from your minds, to fade unremembered."

10.1 Gracious God! A hundred times it hath been foretold that the violators are lying in ambush and by every means desire to cause dissension among the friends so that this dissension may end in violation of the Covenant. How is it that, notwithstanding this warning, the friends have neglected this explicit

statement?

10.2 The point at issue is clear, direct and of utmost brevity. Either Bahá'u'lláh was wise, omniscient and aware of what would ensue, or was ignorant and in error. He entered, by His supreme pen, into such a firm Covenant and Testament with all the Bahá'ís, first with the Aghsán, the Afnán and His kindred, and commanded them to obey and turn toward Him. By His supreme pen He hath explicitly declared that the object of the following verse of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas is the Most Great Branch:

10.3 “When the ocean of My presence hath ebbed and the Book of My Revelation is ended, turn your faces towards Him Whom God hath purposed, Who hath branched from this Ancient Root.” Its meaning briefly is this: that after My ascension it is incumbent upon the Aghsán, the Afnán and the kindred, and all the friends of God, to turn their faces to Him Who hath branched from the Ancient Root.

10.4 He also plainly saith in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas: “O ye people of the world! When the Mystic Dove will have winged its flight from its Sanctuary of Praise and sought its far-off goal, its hidden habitation, refer ye whatsoever ye understand not in the Book to Him Who hath branched from this mighty Stock.” Addressing all the people of the world He saith: When the Mystic Dove flieth away from the orchard of praise to the Most Supreme and Invisible Station—that is, when the Blessed Beauty turneth away from the contingent world towards the invisible realm—refer whatever ye do not understand in the Book to Him Who hath branched from the Ancient Root. That is, whatever He saith is the very truth.

10.5 And in the Book of the Covenant He explicitly saith that the object of this verse “Who hath branched from this Ancient Root” is the Most Mighty Branch. And He commandeth all the Aghsán, the Afnán, the kindred and the Bahá'ís to turn toward Him. Now, either one must say that the Blessed Beauty hath made a mistake, or He must be obeyed. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá hath no command for the people to obey save the diffusion of the fragrances of God, the exaltation of His Word, the promulgation of the oneness of the world of humanity, the establishment of universal peace, and other of the commands of God. These are divine commands and have nothing to do with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Whoever wisheth may accept them, and anyone who rejecteth them may do as he pleaseth.

10.6 Now some of the mischief-makers, with many stratagems, are seeking leadership, and in order to reach this position they instil doubts among the friends that they may cause differences, and that these differences may result in their drawing a party to themselves. But the friends of God must be awake and must know that the scattering of these doubts hath as its motive personal desires and the achievement of leadership.

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

11.1 Thou hadst enquired, however, regarding the remedy for the current situation. So long as these friends still harbour the hope that, through such machinations and such absurdities, the living waters of the Covenant might be diverted from their natural course and its shining star shifted into another

orbit, these seditions will in no wise cease, nor will these darksome clouds be dispelled from the horizon of the Cause of God.

11.2 Were the friends, however, to arise as they should to defend the Covenant and Testament, and to show forth steadfastness and constancy, then these souls would despair of altering and subverting the Centre of the Covenant and abandon their schemes and provocations. The resplendent horizon of the Cause of God would little by little be freed and sanctified from this darksome cloud; true and sincere friends, such as thy kind self, would find joy and peace; the enemies of God would wander in the wilderness of dismay and despondency; and all members of the community would be shielded and sheltered from every calamity under the shade of the Divine Lote-Tree.

12.1 O friends, make ye a mighty effort! O loved ones, arise and bestir yourselves! Occupy yourselves not with the tales and accounts of those who waver in the Covenant, for these are but confused dreams and idle and childish talk. Speak of them that are steadfast, and tread the path of them that stand unwaveringly firm!

Excerpts from the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá

13.1 All praise to Him Who, by the Shield of His Covenant, hath guarded the Temple of His Cause from the darts of doubtfulness; Who by the Hosts of His Testament hath preserved the Sanctuary of His Most Beneficent Law and protected His Straight and Luminous Path, staying thereby the onslaught of the company of Covenant-breakers, that have threatened to subvert His Divine Edifice; Who hath watched over His Mighty Stronghold and All-Glorious Faith, through the aid of men whom the slander of the slanderer affecteth not, whom no earthly calling, glory and power can turn aside from the Covenant of God and His Testament, established firmly by His clear and manifest words, writ and revealed by His All-Glorious Pen and recorded in the Preserved Tablet.

13.2 Salutation and praise, blessing and glory rest upon that primal branch of the Divine and Sacred Lote-Tree, grown out, blest, tender, verdant and flourishing from the Twin Holy Trees; the most wondrous, unique and priceless pearl that doth gleam from out the Twin surging seas; upon the offshoots of the Tree of Holiness, the twigs of the Celestial Tree, they that in the Day of the Great Dividing have stood fast and firm in the Covenant; upon the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God that have diffused widely the Divine Fragrances, declared His Proofs, proclaimed His Faith, published abroad His Law, detached themselves from all things but Him, stood for righteousness in the world, and kindled the fire of the love of God in the very hearts and souls of His servants; upon them that have believed, rested assured, stood steadfast in His Covenant and followed the Light that after my passing shineth from the Dayspring of Divine Guidance—for behold! he is the blest and sacred bough that hath branched out from the Twin Holy Trees. Well is it with him that seeketh the shelter of his shade that shadoweth all mankind.

13.3 O ye beloved of the Lord!

The greatest of all things is the protection of the True Faith of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Cause and service unto His Word.

Ten thousand souls have shed streams of their sacred blood in this path, their precious lives they offered in sacrifice unto Him, hastened wrapt in holy ecstasy unto the glorious field of martyrdom, upraised the Standard of God's Faith and writ with their life-blood upon the Tablet of the world the verses of His Divine Unity.

The sacred breast of His Holiness the Exalted One (may my life be a sacrifice unto Him) was made a target to many a dart of woe, and in Mázindarán, the blessed feet of the Abhá Beauty (may my life be offered up for His loved ones) were so grievously scourged as to bleed and be sore wounded.

His neck also was put into captive chains and His feet made fast in the stocks.

In every hour, for a period of fifty years, a new trial and calamity befell Him and fresh afflictions and cares beset Him.

One of them:

After having suffered intense vicissitudes, He was made homeless and a wanderer and fell a victim to still new vexations and troubles.

In 'Iráq, the Day-Star of the world was so exposed to the wiles of the people of malice as to be eclipsed in splendour.

Later on He was sent an exile to the Great City (Constantinople) and thence to the Land of Mystery (Adrianople), whence, grievously wronged, He was eventually transferred to the Most Great Prison ('Akká).

He Whom the world hath wronged (may my life be offered up for His loved ones) was four times banished from city to city, till at last, condemned to perpetual confinement, He was incarcerated in this prison, the prison of highway robbers, of brigands and of manslayers.

All this is but one of the trials that have afflicted the Blessed Beauty, the rest being even as grievous as this.

13.4 And still another of His trials was the hostility, the flagrant injustice, the iniquity and rebellion of Mírzá Yahyá. Although that Wronged One, that Prisoner, had through His loving-kindness nurtured him in His own bosom ever since his early years, had showered at every moment His tender care upon him, exalted his name, shielded him from every misfortune, endeared him to them of this world and the next, and despite the firm exhortations and counsels of His Holiness the Exalted One (the Báb) and His clear and conclusive warning: "Beware, beware, lest the Nineteen Letters of the Living and that which hath been revealed in the Bayán veil thee!"—yet notwithstanding this, Mírzá Yahyá denied Him, dealt falsely with Him, believed Him not, sowed the seeds of doubt, closed his eyes to His manifest verses and turned aside therefrom. Would that he had been content therewith! Nay, he even attempted to shed the sacred blood (of Bahá'u'lláh) and then raised a great clamour and tumult around him, attributing unto Bahá'u'lláh malevolence and cruelty towards himself. What sedition he stirred up and what a storm of mischief he raised whilst in the Land of Mystery (Adrianople)! At last, he wrought that which

caused the Day-Star of the world to be sent an exile to this, the Most Great Prison, and sorely wronged, and in the West of this Great Prison He did set.  
13.50 ye that stand fast and firm in the Covenant!

The Centre of Sedition, the Prime Mover of mischief, Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí, hath passed out from under the shadow of the Cause, hath broken the Covenant, hath falsified the Holy Text, hath inflicted a grievous loss upon the true Faith of God, hath scattered His people, hath with bitter rancour endeavoured to hurt ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and hath assailed with the utmost enmity this servant of the Sacred Threshold.

Every dart he seized and hurled to pierce the breast of this wronged servant, no wound did he neglect to grievously inflict upon me, no venom did he spare but he poisoned therewith the life of this hapless one.

I swear by the most holy Abhá Beauty and by the Light shining from His Holiness the Exalted One (may my soul be a sacrifice for Their lowly servants), that because of this iniquity the dwellers in the Pavilion of the Abhá Kingdom have bewailed, the Celestial Concourse is lamenting, the Immortal Maids of Heaven in the All-Highest Paradise have raised their plaintive cries and the angelic company sighed and uttered their moanings.

So grievous the deeds of this iniquitous person became that he struck with his axe at the root of the Blessed Tree, dealt a heavy blow at the Temple of the Cause of God, deluged with tears of blood the eyes of the loved ones of the Blessed Beauty, cheered and encouraged the enemies of the One True God, by his repudiation of the Covenant turned many a seeker after Truth aside from the Cause of God, revived the blighted hopes of Yahyá’s following, made himself detested, caused the enemies of the Greatest Name to become audacious and arrogant, put aside the firm and conclusive verses and sowed the seeds of doubt.

Had not the promised aid of the Ancient Beauty been graciously vouchsafed at every moment to this one, unworthy though he be, he surely would have destroyed, nay exterminated the Cause of God and utterly subverted the Divine Edifice.

But, praised be the Lord, the triumphant assistance of the Abhá Kingdom was received, the hosts of the Realm above hastened to bestow victory.

The Cause of God was promoted far and wide, the call of the True One was noised abroad, ears in all regions were inclined to the Word of God, His standard was unfurled, the ensigns of Holiness gloriously waved aloft and the verses celebrating His Divine Unity were chanted.

Now, that the true Faith of God may be shielded and protected, His Law guarded and preserved and His Cause remain safe and secure, it is incumbent upon everyone to hold fast unto the Text of the clear and firmly established blessed verse revealed about him.

None other transgression greater than his can be ever imagined.

He (Bahá'u'lláh) sayeth, glorious and holy is His Word:

“My foolish loved ones have regarded him even as my partner, have kindled sedition in the land and they verily are of the mischief-makers.”

Consider, how foolish are the people!

They that have been in His (Bahá'u'lláh's) Presence and beheld His Countenance, have nevertheless noised abroad such idle talk, until, exalted by His explicit words, He said:

“Should he for a moment pass out from under the shadow of the Cause, he surely shall be brought to naught.”

Reflect!

What stress He layeth upon one moment's deviation:

That is, were he to incline a hair's breadth to the right or to the left, his deviation would be clearly established and his utter nothingness made manifest.

And now ye are witnessing how the wrath of God hath from all sides afflicted him and how day by day he is speeding towards destruction.

Ere long will ye behold him and his associates, outwardly and inwardly, condemned to utter ruin.

13.6 What deviation can be greater than breaking the Covenant of God!

What deviation can be greater than interpolating and falsifying the words and verses of the Sacred Text, even as testified and declared by Mírzá Badí'u'lláh!

What deviation can be greater than calumniating the Centre of the Covenant himself!

What deviation can be more glaring than spreading broadcast false and foolish reports touching the Temple of God's Testament!

What deviation can be more grievous than decreeing the death of the Centre of the Covenant, supported by the holy verse “He that layeth a claim ere the passing of a thousand years ...”, whilst he (Muhammad-'Alí) without shame in the days of the Blessed Beauty had advanced such a claim as this and been confuted by Him in the aforementioned manner, the text of his claim being still extant in his own handwriting and bearing his own seal.

What deviation can be more complete than falsely accusing the loved ones of God!

What deviation can be more evil than causing their imprisonment and incarceration!

What deviation can be more severe than delivering into the hands of the government the Holy Writings and Epistles, that haply they (the government) might arise intent upon the death of this wronged one!

What deviation can be more violent than threatening the ruin of the Cause of God, forging and slanderously falsifying letters and documents so that this might perturb and alarm the government and lead to the shedding of the blood of this wronged one, such letters and documents being now in the possession of the government!

What deviation can be more odious than his iniquity and rebellion!

What deviation can be more shameful than dispersing the gathering of the people of salvation!

What deviation can be more infamous than the vain and feeble interpretations of the people of doubt!

What deviation can be more wicked than joining hands with strangers and with the enemies of God!...

13.7O God, my God! Shield Thy trusted servants from the evils of self and passion, protect them with the watchful eye of Thy loving-kindness from all rancour, hate and envy, shelter them in the impregnable stronghold of Thy care and, safe from the darts of doubtfulness, make them the manifestations of Thy glorious Signs, illumine their faces with the effulgent rays shed from the Dayspring of Thy Divine Unity, gladden their hearts with the verses revealed from Thy Holy Kingdom, strengthen their loins by Thy all-swaying power that cometh from Thy Realm of Glory. Thou art the All-Bountiful, the Protector, the Almighty, the Gracious!

13.8O ye that stand fast in the Covenant!

When the hour cometh that this wronged and broken-winged bird will have taken its flight unto the Celestial Concourse, when it will have hastened to the Realm of the Unseen and its mortal frame will have been either lost or hidden neath the dust, it is incumbent upon the Afnán, that are steadfast in the Covenant of God and have branched from the Tree of Holiness; the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God, the glory of the Lord rest upon them; and all the friends and loved ones, one and all to bestir themselves and arise with heart and soul and in one accord, to diffuse the sweet savours of God, to teach His Cause and to promote His Faith.

It behoveth them not to rest for a moment, neither to seek repose.

They must disperse themselves in every land, pass by every clime and travel throughout all regions.

Bestirred, without rest and steadfast to the end, they must raise in every land the triumphal cry "O Thou the Glory of Glories!" (Yá Bahá'u'l-Abhá), must achieve renown in the world wherever they go, must burn brightly even as a candle in every meeting and must kindle the flame of Divine love in every assembly; that the light of truth may rise resplendent in the midmost heart of the world, that throughout the East and throughout the West a vast concourse may gather under the shadow of the Word of God, that the sweet savours of holiness may be diffused, that faces may shine radiantly, hearts be filled with the Divine spirit and souls be made heavenly.

13.9 In these days, the most important of all things is the guidance of the nations and peoples of the world. Teaching the Cause is of utmost importance for it is the head cornerstone of the foundation itself. This wronged servant hath spent his days and nights in promoting the Cause and urging the peoples to service. He rested not a moment, till the fame of the Cause of God was noised abroad in the world and the celestial strains from the Abhá Kingdom roused the East and the West. The beloved of God must also follow the same example. This is the secret of faithfulness, this is the requirement of servitude to the Threshold of Bahá!

13.10 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!

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

13.12 The sacred and youthful branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice, to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abhá 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

Aghsán, the Afnán, 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 Centre of Sedition.

Beware, beware, lest the days after the ascension (of Bahá'u'lláh) be repeated when the Centre of Sedition waxed haughty and rebellious and with Divine Unity for his excuse deprived himself and perturbed and poisoned others.

No doubt every vainglorious one that purposeth dissension and discord will not openly declare his evil purposes, nay rather, even as impure gold, will he seize upon divers measures and various pretexts that he may separate the gathering of the people of Bahá.

My object is to show that the Hands of the Cause of God must be ever watchful and so soon as they find anyone beginning to oppose and protest against the Guardian of the Cause of God, cast him out from the congregation of the people of Bahá and in no wise accept any excuse from him.

How often hath grievous error been disguised in the garb of truth, that it might sow the seeds of doubt in the hearts of men!

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

13.14 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 (i.e., secret ballot).

13.15 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.

13.16 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.

13.17 This body of the Hands of the Cause of God is under the direction of the Guardian of the Cause of God. He must continually urge them to strive and endeavour to the utmost of their ability to diffuse the sweet savours of God, and to guide all the peoples of the world, for it is the light of Divine Guidance that causeth all the universe to be illumined. To disregard, though it be for a moment, this absolute command which is binding upon everyone, is in no wise permitted, that the existent world may become even as the Abhá Paradise, that the surface of the earth may become heavenly, that contention and conflict amidst peoples, kindreds, nations and governments may disappear, that all the dwellers on earth may become one people and one race, that the world may become even as one home....

13.18 O ye beloved of the Lord! In this sacred Dispensation, conflict and contention are in no wise permitted. Every aggressor depriveth himself of God's grace. It is incumbent upon everyone to show the utmost love, rectitude of conduct, straightforwardness and sincere kindness unto all the peoples and kindreds of the world, be they friends or strangers. So intense must be the spirit of love and loving-kindness, that the stranger may find himself a friend, the enemy a true brother, no difference whatsoever existing between them. For universality is of God and all limitations earthly. Thus man must strive that his reality may manifest virtues and perfections, the light whereof may shine upon everyone. The light of the sun shineth upon all the world and the merciful showers of Divine Providence fall upon all peoples. The vivifying breeze reviveth every living creature and all beings endued with life obtain their share and portion at His heavenly board. In like manner, the affections and loving-kindness of the servants of the One True God must be bountifully and universally extended to all mankind. Regarding this, restrictions and limitations are in no wise permitted.

13.19 Wherefore, O my loving friends! Consort with all the peoples, kindreds and religions of the world with the utmost truthfulness, uprightness, faithfulness, kindness, goodwill and friendliness, that all the world of being may be filled with the holy ecstasy of the grace of Bahá, that ignorance, enmity, hate and rancour may vanish from the world and the darkness of estrangement amidst the peoples and kindreds of the world may give way to the Light of Unity. Should other peoples and nations be unfaithful to you, show your fidelity unto them; should they be unjust toward you, show justice towards them; should they keep aloof from you, attract them to yourselves; should they show their enmity, be friendly towards them; should they poison your lives, sweeten their souls; should they inflict a wound upon you, be a salve to their sores. Such are the attributes of the sincere! Such are the attributes of the truthful!

13.20 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 itself.

14.10 dearly beloved friends!

I am now in very great danger and the hope of even an hour's life is lost to me.

I am thus constrained to write these lines for the protection of the Cause of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Word and the safety of His Teachings.

By the Ancient Beauty!

This wronged one hath in no wise borne nor doth he bear a grudge against anyone; towards none doth he entertain any ill-feeling and uttereth no word save for the good of the world.

My supreme obligation, however, of necessity prompteth me to guard and preserve the Cause of God.

Thus, with the greatest regret, I counsel you saying:

Guard ye the Cause of God, protect His Law and have the utmost fear of discord.

This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá (may my life be offered up for them):

“His Holiness the Exalted One (the Báb) is the Manifestation of the Unity and Oneness of God and the Forerunner of the Ancient Beauty.

His Holiness the Abhá Beauty (may my life be a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the Supreme Manifestation of God and the Dayspring of His Most Divine Essence.

All others are servants unto Him and do His bidding.”

Unto the Most Holy Book everyone must turn and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice.

That which this body, whether unanimously or by a majority doth carry, that is verily the Truth and the Purpose of God Himself.

Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant.

By this House is meant that Universal House of Justice which is to be elected from all countries, that is, from those parts in the East and West where the loved ones are to be found, after the manner of the customary elections in Western countries such as those of England.

14.2 It is incumbent upon these members (of the Universal House of Justice) to gather in a certain place and deliberate upon all problems which have caused difference, questions that are obscure and matters that are not expressly recorded in the Book. Whatsoever they decide hath the same effect as the Text itself. And inasmuch as this House of Justice hath power to enact laws that are not expressly recorded in the Book and bear 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.

14.3 And now, one of the greatest and most fundamental principles of the Cause of God is to shun and avoid entirely the Covenant-breakers, for they will utterly destroy the Cause of God, exterminate His Law and render of no account all efforts exerted in the past. O friends! It behoveth you to call to mind with tenderness the trials of His Holiness the Exalted One, and show your fidelity to the Ever-Blest Beauty. The utmost endeavour must be exerted lest all these woes, trials and afflictions, all this pure and sacred blood that hath been shed so profusely in the Path of God, may prove to be in vain....

14.4 My purpose is, however, to show that it is incumbent upon the friends that are fast and firm in the Covenant and Testament to be ever wakeful lest after this wronged one is gone this alert and active worker of mischief may cause disruption, privily sow the seeds of doubt and sedition and utterly root out the Cause of God. A thousand times shun his company. Take heed and be on your guard. Watch and examine; should anyone, openly or privily, have the least connection with him, cast him out from your midst, for he will surely cause

disruption and mischief.

14.5 O ye beloved of the Lord! Strive with all your heart to shield the Cause of God from the onslaught of the insincere, for souls such as these cause the straight to become crooked and all benevolent efforts to produce contrary results.

15.1 Whosoever and whatsoever meeting becometh a hindrance to the diffusion of the Light of Faith, let the loved ones give them counsel and say: “Of all the gifts of God the greatest is the gift of Teaching. It draweth unto us the Grace of God and is our first obligation. Of such a gift how can we deprive ourselves? Nay, our lives, our goods, our comforts, our rest, we offer them all as a sacrifice for the Abhá Beauty and teach the Cause of God.” Caution and prudence, however, must be observed even as recorded in the Book. The veil must in no wise be suddenly rent asunder. The Glory of Glories rest upon you.

15.2 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.

15.3 For he is, after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Guardian of the Cause of God; the Afnán, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God 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 conviction. All must seek guidance and turn unto the Centre of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error.

15.4 The Glory of Glories rest upon you!

Turn to the Universal House of Justice

16.1 Praise be to God that Bahá’u’lláh—may my life be a sacrifice for His loved ones—hath expounded and fully explained all matters in His perspicuous Book, hath left no soul any room for perplexity, hath appointed the Interpreter of His Word, so that he may explain and expound the Holy Text, and hath entrusted the Universal House of Justice with those ordinances that are not expressly recorded in the Book, so that, whenever it is established, it may engage in this service, that is, decide upon ordinances that are not expressly recorded in the Book.

17.1 The Supreme House of Justice should be elected according to the system followed in the election of the parliaments of Europe. And when the countries would be guided, the Houses of Justice of the various countries would elect the Supreme House of Justice.

17.2 At whatever time all the beloved of God in each country appoint their delegates, and these in turn elect their representatives, and these

representatives elect a body, that body shall be regarded as the Supreme House of Justice.

17.3 The establishment of that House is not dependent upon the conversion of all the nations of the world. For example, if conditions were favourable and no disturbances would be caused, the friends in Persia would elect their representatives, and likewise the friends in America, in India, and other areas would also elect their representatives, and these would elect a House of Justice. That House of Justice would be the Supreme House of Justice. That is all.

18.1 Such laws as are not mentioned in the Book must all be referred to the House of Justice and not to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, inasmuch as he is the interpreter of the laws that are mentioned in the Book and not the author of those that are not. However, the divinely ordained Universal House of Justice—which will, after the proclamation of the Cause of God, be universally elected by all Bahá'ís—that universal Body is empowered to enact laws that are not expressly recorded in the Book. It is binding, obligatory, and incumbent upon everyone to render obedience unto it. And whenever the House of Justice, whether unanimously or by majority vote, layeth down laws that are not expressly recorded in the Book, whoso saith why or wherefore hath indeed opposed God in the exercise of His sovereignty, disputed His proof, gainsaid His signs, and repudiated His commandments.

19.1 In this most great Dispensation, the House of Justice is the body unto which all must turn: Whatsoever the House of Justice should ordain, the same is incumbent upon the people.

20.1 All other ordinances are subservient to faith, certitude, confidence, and understanding. This blessed cycle being however the greatest of all divine cycles, it embraceth all spiritual and temporal matters, and is endowed with the utmost power and sovereignty.

20.2 Therefore those matters of major importance which constitute the foundation of the Law of God are explicitly recorded in the Text, but subsidiary laws are left to the House of Justice. The wisdom of this is that the times never remain the same, for change is a necessary quality and an essential attribute of this world, and of time and place. Therefore the House of Justice will take action accordingly.

20.3 Let it not be imagined that the House of Justice will take any decision according to its own concepts and opinions. God forbid! The Supreme House of Justice will take decisions and establish laws through the inspiration and confirmation of the Holy Spirit, because it is in the safekeeping and under the shelter and protection of the Ancient Beauty, and obedience to its decisions is a bounden and essential duty and an absolute obligation, and there is no escape for anyone.

20.4 Say, O people: Verily, the Supreme House of Justice is under the wings of your Lord, the Compassionate, the All-Merciful, that is, under His protection, His care, and His shelter; for He has commanded the firm believers to obey that blessed, sanctified and all-subduing body, whose sovereignty is divinely ordained and of the Kingdom of Heaven and whose laws are inspired and spiritual.

20.5 Briefly, this is the wisdom of referring the laws of society to the House of Justice. In the religion of Islám, similarly, not every ordinance was explicitly revealed; nay, not a tenth part of a tenth part was included in the Text; although all matters of major importance were specifically referred to, there were undoubtedly thousands of laws which were unspecified. These were devised by the divines of a later age according to the laws of Islamic jurisprudence and individual divines made conflicting deductions from the original revealed ordinances. All these were enforced. Today this process of deduction is the right of the body of the House of Justice, and the deductions and conclusions of individual learned men have no authority, unless they are endorsed by the House of Justice. The difference is precisely this, that from the conclusions and endorsements of the body of the House of Justice whose members are elected by and known to the worldwide Bahá'í community, no differences will arise; whereas the conclusions of individual divines and scholars would definitely lead to differences, and result in schism, division, and dispersion. The oneness of the Word would be destroyed, the unity of the Faith would disappear, and the edifice of the Faith of God would be shaken.

The Sure Handle

21.1 The Báb, the Exalted One, is the Morn of Truth, the splendour of Whose light shineth through all regions. He is also the Harbinger of the Most Great Light, the Abhá Luminary. The Blessed Beauty is the One promised by the sacred books of the past, the revelation of the Source of light that shone upon Mount Sinai, Whose fire glowed in the midst of the Burning Bush. We are one and all, servants of Their threshold, and stand each as a lowly keeper at Their door.

21.2 My purpose is this, that ere the expiration of a thousand years, no one hath the right to utter a single word, even to claim the station of Guardianship. The Most Holy Book is the Book to which all peoples shall refer, and in it the Laws of God have been revealed. Laws not mentioned in the Book should be referred to the decision of the Universal House of Justice. There will be no grounds for difference... Beware, beware lest anyone create a rift or stir up sedition. Should there be differences of opinion, the Supreme House of Justice would immediately resolve the problems. Whatever will be its decision, by majority vote, shall be the real truth, inasmuch as that House is under the protection, unerring guidance, and care of the one true Lord. He shall guard it from error and will protect it under the wing of His sanctity and infallibility. He who opposeth it is cast out and will eventually be of the defeated.

22.1 The substance is, that prior to the completion of a thousand years, no individual may presume to breathe a word. All must consider themselves to be of the order of subjects, submissive and obedient to the commandments of God and the laws of the House of Justice. Should any deviate by so much as a needle's point from the decrees of the Universal House of Justice, or falter in his compliance therewith, then is he of the outcast and rejected.

23.1 O ye beloved of the Lord! Be united, stand ye together, and cleave tenaciously to the Sure Handle of the Covenant. Bend your energies towards exalting the Word of God, so that the light of Truth may envelop the whole of creation and the darkness of hatred and error may be utterly dispelled.

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