

Crisis and Victory..txt

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CRISIS AND VICTORY

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[131]

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

'Abdu'l-Baha, quoted in "The Advent of Divine Justice",

p. 6

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II. "The resistless march of the Faith of Baha'u'llah"

Shoghi Effendi, "Messages to America: Selected

Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to

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III. "The security of our precious Faith..."

Shoghi Effendi, "Messages to the Baha'i World 1950,,1957",

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

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

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH:

258 [132] In the beginning of every Revelation adversities have prevailed, which later on have been turned into great prosperity.

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The Advent of Divine Justice"

(Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1984), p. 82)

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

...

Thou hast known how grievously the Prophets of God, His Messengers and Chosen Ones, have been afflicted. Meditate a while on the motive and reason which have been responsible for such a persecution. At no time, in no Dispensation, have the Prophets of God escaped the blasphemy of their enemies, the cruelty of their oppressors, the denunciation of the learned of their age, who appeared in

the guise of uprightness and piety. Day and night they passed through such agonies as none can ever measure, except the knowledge of the one true God, exalted be His glory.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, rev. ed.

(Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983), sec. 23, pp. 56-58)

260 Know ye that trials and tribulations have, from time immemorial, been the lot of the chosen Ones of God and His beloved, and such of His servants as are detached from all else but Him, they whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of the Almighty, they that speak not till He hath spoken, and act according to His commandment. Such is God's method carried into effect of old, and such will it remain in the future....

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

261 [133] By My life! Mine heart groaneth and mine eyes weep sore for the Cause of God and for them that understand not what they say and imagine what they cannot comprehend.

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

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

...

O My friend! Many a hound pursueth this gazelle of the desert of oneness; many a talon claweth at this thrush of the eternal garden. Pitiless ravens do lie in wait for this bird of the heavens of God, and the huntsman of envy stalketh this deer of the meadow of love.

("The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys" (

Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1986), p. 20; p. 41)

*This refers to Baha'u'llah's own Manifestation.

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

...

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

sacrifice their lives in His path....

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

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

264 [134] The prestige of the Faith of God has immensely increased. Its greatness is now manifest. The day is approaching when it will have cast a tremendous tumult in men's hearts. Rejoice, therefore, O denizens of America, rejoice with exceeding gladness!

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

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

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

266 O thou exalted bough of the divine Lote-Tree! ...When thou art disdained and rejected by the wicked doers be not cast down; and at the power and stiff-neckedness of the presumptuous be neither vexed nor sick at heart; for such is the way of heedless souls, from time out of mind. "O the misery of men! No Messenger cometh unto them but they laugh Him to scorn!"*

Indeed, the attacks and the obstructiveness of the ignorant but cause the Word of God to be exalted, and spread His signs and tokens far and wide. Were it not for this opposition by the disdainful, this obduracy of the slanderers, this shouting from the pulpits, this crying and wailing of great and small alike, these accusations of unbelief levelled by the ignorant, this uproar from the foolish, how could news of the advent of the Primal Point and the bright dawning of the Day-star of Baha ever have reached to east and west? How else could the planet have been rocked from pole to pole? How else could Persia have become the focal [135] point of scattering splendours, and Asia Minor the radiating heart of the beauty of the Lord? However else could the flame of the Manifestation have spread into the south? By what means could the cries of God have been heard in the far north? How else could His summons have been heard in the continents of America and of Africa the dark? How else could the cockcrow of Heaven have penetrated those ears? How else could the sweet parrots of India have come upon this sugar, or nightingales have lifted up their warblings out of the land of 'Iraq? What else could set the east and west to dancing, how else could this Consecrated Spot become the throne of the Beauty of God? How else could Sinai behold this burning brightness, how could the Advent's flame adorn that mount? How else could the Holy Land be made the footstool of God's

beauty, and the holy vale of Towa** become the site of excellence and grace, the sacred spot where Moses put off His shoes? How could the breaths of heaven be carried across the Vale of Holiness, how could the sweet,,scented, airy streams that blow out of the Abha gardens ever be perceived by those that dwell on the Verdant Isle? How else could the pledges of the Prophets, the joyous tidings of the holy Seers of old, the stirring promises given unto this Sacred Place by the Manifestations of God, ever have been fulfilled? All these blessings and bestowals, the very means of proclaiming the Faith, have come about through the scorn of the ignorant, the opposition of the foolish, the stubbornness of the dull-witted, the violence of the aggressor. Had it not been for these things, the news of the Bab's advent would not, to this day, have reached even into lands hard by. Wherefore we should never grieve over the blindness of the unwitting, the attacks of the foolish, the hostility of the low and base, the heedlessness of the divines, the charges of infidelity brought against us by the empty of mind. Such too was their way in ages past, nor would it be thus if they were of those who know; but they ar benighted, and they come not close to understanding what is told them.***

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha"
sec. 195, pp. 234-36)

*Qur'an 36:29

**Qur'an 20:12. Also referred to as the "Sacred Vale".

***cf. Qur'an 4:80

267 ...the friends in the West will unquestionably have their share of the calamities befalling the friends in the East. It is inevitable that, walking [136] the pathway of Baha'u'llah, they too will become targets for persecution by the oppressors.

Now ye, as well, must certainly become my partners to some slight degree, and accept your share of tests and sorrows. But these episodes shall pass away, while that abiding glory and eternal life shall remain unchanged forever. Moreover, these afflictions shall be the cause of great advancement.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha"
sec. 196, pp. 238-39)

268 This day the powers of all the leaders of religion are directed towards the dispersion of the congregation of the All-Merciful, and the shattering of the Divine Edifice. The hosts of the world, whether material, cultural or political are from every side launching their assault, for the Cause is great, very great. Its greatness is, in this day, clear and manifest to men's eyes. It is therefore incumbent upon all who have come within the shade of the protecting wing of God's gracious providence to evince, by His divine and merciful assistance, such conspicuous steadfastness and firmness as will arrest the gaze and astound the minds of all.

At the time of the ascension of the Spirit (Jesus Christ), the company of those who accepted the new Revelation numbered no more than a few souls. So intense was the alarm and perturbation to which that event gave rise that, for a time,

these souls were quite overcome by their agitation and confusion. Then, a few days later, a woman by the name of Mary Magdalene arose, and, by her own example, instilled into them a constancy and firmness which enabled them to arise for the propagation of the Word of God. Although to outward seeming they were no more than fishermen and dyers, yet, through the holy confirmations of the Cause of God, they carried the divine fragrances far and wide, sweetening the breaths of all who inhaled their fragrance and bringing new life to every understanding heart.

Take courage, then, O ye trusted friends of God, from the appearance of this mighty and all-swaying power, which was like unto a spirit that permeated the body of the world, making it vibrant with its pulse, and causing the pillars of idolatry to shake and tremble.

(The first three sentences are from Shoghi Effendi's translation cited in "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 6.

The remainder of the extract is newly translated.)

269 [137] ...a large multitude of people will arise against you, showing oppression, expressing contumely and derision, shunning your society, and heaping upon you ridicule. However, the Heavenly Father will illumine you to such an extent that, like unto the rays of the sun, you shall scatter the dark clouds of superstition, shine gloriously in the midst of Heaven and illumine the face of the earth. You must make firm the feet at the time when these trials transpire, and demonstrate forbearance and patience. You must withstand them with the utmost love and kindness; consider their oppression and persecution as the caprice of children, and do not give any importance to whatever they do. For at the end the illumination of the Kingdom will overwhelm the darkness of the world and the exaltation and grandeur of your station will become apparent and manifest... Rest ye assured.

(Cited in "Baha'i News" ["Star of the West"], vol. 1, no. 10 (8 September 1910), pp. 1-2)

270 Ere long the wicked-doers in that land will arise to heap denunciations upon the true believers, and vent their spite upon the company of the faithful. Each day they will inflict a galling wound, each hour a stunning blow. Rebuking the friends for the love they bear Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, they will consider justified their denunciations, their scorn and malice, and spare no effort to do the friends whatever injury it lieth within their power to inflict. Such conduct is at one with the modes and practices of the people aforetime: in bygone centuries, in the days of the appearance of the holy Manifestations, the people acted in just this manner; and now, in these days, it is inevitable that they will repeat such actions, nay, act with greater perversity than before... Hence it is certain that thou wilt be afflicted with adversities, tests and injuries for the sake of the Blessed Beauty; yet these afflictions shall be the purest bounties and bestowals, and a token of thy acceptance at the Divine Threshold.

(From a Tablet, translated from the Persian)

271 But after I leave, some people may arise in opposition, heaping

persecutions upon you in their bitterness, and in the newspapers there may be articles published against the Cause. Rest ye in the assurance of firmness. Be well poised and serene, remembering that this is only as the harmless twittering of sparrows and that it will soon pass away....

[138] Therefore, my purpose is to warn and strengthen you against accusations, criticisms, revilings and derision in newspaper articles or other publications. Be not disturbed by them. They are the very confirmation of the Cause, the very source of upbuilding to the Movement. May God confirm the day when a score of ministers of the churches may arise and with bared heads cry at the top of their voices that the Baha'is are misguided. I would like to see that day, for that is the time when the Cause of God will spread. Baha'u'llah has pronounced such as these the couriers of the Cause. They will proclaim from pulpits that the Baha'is are fools, that they are a wicked and unrighteous people, but be ye steadfast and unwavering in the Cause of God. They will spread the message of Baha'u'llah.

("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912, 2nd ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 428-430)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

272 I am however assured and sustained by the conviction, never dimmed in my mind, that whatsoever comes to pass in the Cause of God, however disquieting, in its immediate effects, is fraught with infinite Wisdom and tends ultimately to promote its interests in the world. Indeed, our experiences of the distant past, as well as of recent events, are too numerous and varied to permit of any misgiving or doubt as to the truth of this basic principle,-a principle which throughout the vicissitudes of our sacred mission in this world we must never disregard or forget.

...

True, the Cause as every other movement has its own obstacles, complications and unforeseen difficulties, but unlike any other human organization it inspires a spirit of Faith and Devotion which can never fail to induce us to make sincere and renewed efforts to face these difficulties and smooth any differences that may and must arise.

(From a letter dated 23 December 1922 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" [rev.ed.], (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), pp. 27-28)

273 [139] On one hand the remarkable revelations of the Beloved's Will and Testament, so amazing in all its aspects, so emphatic in its injunctions, have challenged and perplexed the keenest minds, whilst the ever-increasing confusion of the world, threatened as never before with disruptive forces, fierce rivalries, fresh commotions and grave disorder, have wellnigh overwhelmed the heart and damped the zeal of even the most enthusiastic

believer in the destiny of mankind.

And yet, how often we seem to forget the clear and repeated warnings of Our beloved Master, Who, in particular during the concluding years of His mission on earth, laid stress on the "severe mental tests" that would inevitably sweep over His loved ones of the West, tests that would purge, purify and prepare them for their noble mission in life.

(From a letter dated 14 November 1923 to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932" p. 50)

274 That the Cause of God should in the days to come witness many a challenging hour and pass through critical stages in preparation for the glories of its promised ascendancy in the New World has been time and again undeniably affirmed by our departed Master, and is abundantly proved to us all by its heroic past and turbulent history....

(From a letter dated 23 February 1924 to the Baha'is of America, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", pp. 60-61)

275 We cannot believe that as the Movement grows in strength, in authority and in influence, the perplexities and the sufferings it has had to contend with in the past will correspondingly decrease and vanish. Nay, as it grows from strength to strength, the fanatical defendants of the strongholds of Orthodoxy, whatever be their denomination, realizing the penetrating influence of this growing Faith, will arise and strain every nerve to extinguish its light and discredit its name....

(From a letter dated 12 February 1927 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 123)

276 For let every earnest upholder of the Cause of Baha'u'llah realize that the storms which this struggling Faith of God must needs encounter, as the process of the disintegration of society advances, shall be fiercer than [140] any which it has already experienced. Let him be aware that so soon as the full measure of the stupendous claim of the Faith of Baha'u'llah becomes to be recognized by those time-honoured and powerful strongholds of orthodoxy, whose deliberate aim is to maintain their stranglehold over the thoughts and consciences of men, that this infant Faith will have to contend with enemies more powerful and more insidious than the cruellest torture-mongers and the most fanatical clerics who have afflicted it in the past. What foes may not in the course of the convulsions that shall seize a dying civilization be brought into existence, who will reinforce the indignities which have already been heaped upon it!

We have only to refer to the warnings uttered by 'Abdu'l-Baha in order to realize the extent and character of the forces that are destined to contest with God's holy Faith. In the darkest moments of His life, under 'Abdu'l Hamid's regime, when He stood ready to be deported to the most inhospitable

regions of Northern Africa, and at a time when the auspicious light of the Baha'i Revelation had only begun to break upon the West, He in His parting message to the cousin of the Bab, uttered these prophetic and ominous words:

"HOW GREAT, HOW VERY GREAT IS THE CAUSE! HOW VERY FIERCE THE ONSLAUGHT OF ALL THE PEOPLES AND KINDREDS OF THE EARTH! ERE LONG SHALL THE CLAMOUR OF THE MULTITUDE THROUGHOUT AFRICA, THROUGHOUT AMERICA, THE CRY OF THE EUROPEAN AND THE TURK, THE GROANING OF INDIA AND CHINA, BE HEARD FROM FAR AND NEAR. ONE AND ALL THEY SHALL ARISE WITH ALL THEIR POWER TO RESIST HIS CAUSE. THEN SHALL THE KNIGHTS OF THE LORD, ASSISTED BY HIS GRACE FROM ON HIGH, STRENGTHENED BY FAITH, AIDED BY THE POWER OF UNDERSTANDING, AND REINFORCED BY THE LEGIONS OF THE COVENANT, ARISE AND MAKE MANIFEST THE TRUTH OF THE VERSE: 'BEHOLD THE CONFUSION THAT HATH BEFALLEN THE TRIBES OF THE DEFEATED!'"

Stupendous as is the struggle which His words foreshadow, they also testify to the complete victory which the upholders of the Greatest Name are destined eventually to achieve. Peoples, nations, adherents of divers faiths, will jointly and successively arise to shatter its unity, to sap its force, and to degrade its holy name. They will assail not only the spirit which it [141] inculcates, but the administration which is the channel, the instrument, the embodiment of that spirit. For as the authority with which Baha'u'llah has invested the future Baha'i Commonwealth becomes more and more apparent, the fiercer shall be the challenge which from every quarter will be thrown at the verities it enshrines.

(From a letter dated 21 March 1930 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters, pp. 17-18)

277 The separation that has set in between the institutions of the Baha'i Faith and the Islamic ecclesiastical organizations that oppose it,,a movement that has originated in Egypt and is now spreading steadily throughout the Middle East, and will in time communicate its influence to the West,,imposes upon every loyal upholder of the Cause the obligation of refraining from any word or action that might prejudice the position which our enemies have, in recent years and of their own accord, proclaimed and established. This historic development, the beginnings of which could neither be recognized nor even anticipated in the years immediately preceding 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing, may be said to have signalized the Formative Period of our Faith and to have paved the way for the consolidation of its Administrative Order. As this movement gains momentum, as it receives added impetus from the attitude and future action of the civil authorities in Persia, it will inevitably manifest its repercussions in the West and will rouse the leaders of the Church and finally the civil authorities to challenge the claims and eventually to recognize the independent status of the Religion of Baha'u'llah.... Our adversaries in the East have initiated the struggle. Our future opponents in the West will, in their turn, arise and carry it a stage further. Ours is the duty, in anticipation of this inevitable contest, to uphold unequivocally and with undivided loyalty the integrity of our Faith and demonstrate the distinguishing features of its divinely appointed institutions.

(From a letter dated 15 June 1935 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America, 1932-1946" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1947), pp. 4-5)

278 [142] That the forces of irreligion, of a purely materialistic philosophy, of unconcealed paganism have been unloosed, are now spreading, and, by consolidating themselves, are beginning to invade some of the most powerful Christian institutions of the western world, no unbiased observer can fail to admit. That these institutions are becoming increasingly restive, that a few among them are already dimly aware of the pervasive influence of the Cause of Baha'u'llah, that they will, as their inherent strength deteriorates and their discipline relaxes, regard with deepening dismay the rise of His New World Order, and will gradually determine to assail it, that such an opposition will in turn accelerate their decline, few, if any, among those who are attentively watching the progress of His Faith would be inclined to question.

This menace of secularism that has attacked Islam and is undermining its remaining institutions, that has invaded Persia, has penetrated into India, and raised its triumphant head in Turkey, has already manifested itself in both Europe and America, and is, in varying degrees, and under various forms and designations, challenging the basis of every established religion...

(From a letter dated 11 March 1936 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", pp. 180-81)

279 Pregnant indeed are the years looming ahead of us all. The twin processes of internal disintegration and external chaos are being accelerated every day and are inexorably moving towards a climax.... The Community of the Most Great Name, the leaven that must leaven the lump, the chosen remnant that must survive the rolling up of the old, discredited, tottering Order and assist in the unfoldment of a new one in its stead, is standing ready, alert, clear, visioned, and resolute.... Fierce and manifold will be the assaults with which governments, races, classes and religions, jealous of its rising prestige and fearful of its consolidating strength, will seek to silence its voice and sap its foundations. Unmoved by the relative obscurity that surrounds it at the present time, and undaunted by the forces that will be arrayed against it in the future, this community, I cannot but feel confident, will, no matter how afflictive the agonies of a travailing age, pursue its destiny, undeflected in its course, [143] undimmed in its serenity, unyielding in its resolve, unshaken in its convictions.

(From a letter dated 5 July 1938 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America, 1932-1946"), pp. 13-14)

280 How can the beginnings of a world upheaval, unleashing forces that are so gravely deranging the social, the religious, the political, and the economic equilibrium of organized society, throwing into chaos and confusion political systems, racial doctrines, social conceptions, cultural standards, religious associations, and trade relationships,,how can such agitations, on a scale so vast, so unprecedented, fail to produce any repercussions on the institutions of a Faith of such tender age whose teachings have a direct and vital bearing on each of these spheres of human life and conduct? Little wonder, therefore, if they who are holding aloft the banner of so pervasive a Faith, so challenging a Cause, find themselves affected by the impact of these world-shaking forces. Little wonder if they find that in the midst of this whirlpool of contending passions their freedom has been curtailed, their tenets contemned, their institutions assaulted, their motives maligned, their authority jeopardized, their claim rejected.

...

Nor should any of the manifold opportunities, of a totally different order, be allowed to pass unnoticed which the evolution of the Faith itself, whether at its world center, or in the North American continent, or even in the most outlying regions of the earth, must create, calling once again upon the American believers to play a part, no less conspicuous than the share they have previously had in their collective contributions to the propagation of the Cause of Baha'u'llah. I can only for the moment cite at random certain of these opportunities which stand out preeminently, in any attempt to survey the possibilities of the future: ... the deliverance of Baha'i communities from the fetters of religious orthodoxy in such Islamic countries as Persia, 'Iraq, and Egypt, and the consequent recognition, by the civil authorities in those states, of the independent status and religious character of Baha'i National and Local Assemblies; the precautionary and defensive measures to be devised, coordinated, [144] and carried out to counteract the full force of the inescapable attacks which organized efforts of ecclesiastical organizations of various denominations will progressively launch and relentlessly pursue; and, last but not least, the multitudinous issues that must be faced, the obstacles that must be overcome, and the responsibilities that must be assumed, to enable a sore-tried Faith to pass through the successive stages of unmitigated obscurity, of active repression, and of complete emancipation, leading in turn to its being acknowledged as an independent Faith, enjoying the status of full equality with its sister religions, to be followed by its establishment and recognition as a State religion, which in turn must give way to its assumption of the rights and prerogatives associated with the Baha'i state, functioning in the plenitude of its powers, a stage which must ultimately culminate in the emergence of the worldwide Baha'i Commonwealth, animated wholly by the spirit, and operating solely in direct conformity with the laws and principles of Baha'u'llah.

In the conduct of this twofold crusade the valiant warriors struggling in the name and for the Cause of Baha'u'llah must, of necessity, encounter stiff

resistance, and suffer many a setback. Their own instincts, no less than the fury of conservative forces, the opposition of vested interests, and the objections of a corrupt and pleasure-seeking generation, must be reckoned with, resolutely resisted, and completely overcome. As their defensive measures for the impending struggle are organized and extended, storms of abuse and ridicule, and campaigns of condemnation and misrepresentation, may be unloosed against them. Their Faith, they may soon find, has been assaulted, their motives misconstrued, their aims defamed, their aspirations derided, their institutions scorned, their influence belittled, their authority undermined, and their Cause, at times, deserted by a few who will either be incapable of appreciating the nature of their ideals, or unwilling to bear the brunt of the mounting criticisms which such a contest is sure to involve. "Because of 'Abdu'l-Baha," the beloved Master has prophesied, many a test will be visited upon you. Troubles will befall you, and suffering afflict you."

Let not, however, the invincible army of Baha'u'llah, who in the West, and at one of its potential storm-centers is to fight, in His name and for [145] His sake, one of its fiercest and most glorious battles, be afraid of any criticism that might be directed against it. Let it not be deterred by any condemnation with which the tongue of the slanderer may seek to debase its motives. Let it not recoil before the threatening advance of the forces of fanaticism, of orthodoxy, of corruption, and of prejudice that may be leagued against it. The voice of criticism is a voice that indirectly reinforces the proclamation of its Cause. Unpopularity but serves to throw into greater relief the contrast between it and its adversaries, while ostracism is itself the magnetic power that must eventually win over to its camp the most vociferous and inveterate amongst its foes....

(From a letter dated 25 December 1938 to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "The Advent of Divine Justice, pp. 2-3; pp. 14-15; pp. 41-42)

281 Nor should a survey of the outstanding features of so blessed and fruitful a ministry omit mention of the prophecies which the unerring pen of the appointed Center of Baha'u'llah's Covenant has recorded! These foreshadow the fierceness of the onslaught that the resistless march of the Faith must provoke in the West, in India and in the Far East when it meets the time-honored sacerdotal orders of the Christian, the Buddhist and Hindu religions. They foreshadow the turmoil which its emancipation from the fetters of religious orthodoxy will cast in the American, the European, the Asiatic and African continents....

("God Passes By", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987) p. 315)

282 No matter how long the period that separates them from ultimate victory; however arduous the task; however formidable the exertions demanded of them; however dark the days which mankind, perplexed and sorely-trying, must, in its hour of travail, traverse; however severe the tests with which they who are to redeem its fortunes will be confronted; however afflictive the darts which

their present enemies, as well as those whom Providence, will, through His mysterious dispensations raise up from within or from without, may rain upon them, however grievous the ordeal of temporary separation from the heart and nerve-center of their Faith which future unforeseeable disturbances may impose upon them, I adjure them, by the precious blood that flowed in such great profusion, by the lives of the unnumbered saints and heroes who were immolated, [146] by the supreme, the glorious sacrifice of the Prophet-Herald of our Faith, by the tribulations which its Founder, Himself, willingly underwent, so that His Cause might live, His Order might redeem a shattered world and its glory might suffuse the entire planet,,I adjure them, as this solemn hour draws nigh, to resolve never to flinch, never to hesitate, never to relax, until each and every objective in the Plans to be proclaimed, at a later date, has been fully consummated.

(From a letter dated 30 June 1952 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, published in "Messages to the Baha'i World, 1950-1957" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 38-39)

283 ...undeterred by the clamor which the exponents of religious orthodoxy are sure to raise, or by the restrictive measures which political leaders may impose; undismayed by the smallness of their numbers and the multitude of their potential adversaries; armed with the efficacious weapons their own hands have slowly and laboriously forged in anticipation of this glorious and inevitable encounter with the organized forces of superstition, of corruption and of unbelief; placing their whole trust in the matchless potency of Baha'u'llah's teachings, in the all-conquering power of His might and the infallibility of His glorious and oft.,repeated promises, let them press forward...

(From a letter dated 25 June 1953 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, published in "Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947-1957" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1980), p. 120)

284 The administrative problems which face you are divers and complex. The opposition which a nascent Faith must needs meet, particularly from the leaders of religious orthodoxy in the Islamic countries of the North, will, as the institutions of that Faith multiply, become more apparent and grow in severity....

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 2 July 1956 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of North West Africa)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

285 For the history of the Cause, particularly in Persia, is a clear illustration of the truth that such persecutions invariably serve to [147] strengthen the believers in their faith, by stimulating the spiritual powers latent in their hearts, and by awakening in them a new and deeper consciousness of their duties and responsibilities towards the Faith. Indeed, the mere progress of the Cause, by provoking the hatreds and jealousies of peoples and

nations, creates for itself such difficulties and obstacles as only its divine spirit can overcome. 'Abdu'l-Baha has emphatically stated that the enmity and opposition of the world will increase in direct proportion to the extension and progress of the Faith. The greater the zeal of the believers and the more striking the effect of their achievements, the fiercer will be the opposition of the enemy.

(20 January 1935 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma)

286 He is, indeed, fully alive to the difficulties which the friends, not only in your centre but all around the world, are daily encountering in their attempt to establish and perfect the administrative machinery of the Faith. These difficulties and obstacles, however, he considers to be inevitable, inherent as they are in the very process through which the Cause of Baha'u'llah is destined to develop and to eventually establish its ascendancy in the world. Not only are such difficulties inevitable, but they should be viewed, indeed, as constituting a God-given test whereby the friends can, and will assuredly, enrich and perfect the spiritual and moral energies latent in them, and in this way help in establishing that Divine civilization promised to them by God.

Trials and sufferings, Baha'u'llah has repeatedly warned us in His Tablets, are even as the oil that feeds the lamp. The Cause cannot reveal its full splendour unless and until it encounters and successfully overcomes the very obstacles that every now and then stand in its way, and for some time appear to threaten its very foundations. Such obstacles, tests and trials are indeed blessings in disguise, and as such are bound to help in promoting the Faith.

(31 July 1935 to an individual believer)

287 ...though he has been made truly grieved to learn of the continued and malignant opposition which the enemies of the Cause in ..., and particularly the clerical element, are directing against the believers in that centre. He wishes you, however, to urge the friends not to feel in the least disheartened or discouraged, but to pursue with renewed determination, [148] unity and vigour their sacred task of spreading and establishing the Faith, confident in the glorious future awaiting them. The greater the number of persecutions, and the more intense they become in character, the deeper their faith should be in the unique mission entrusted to them by Baha'u'llah, and the greater their zeal to help in hastening its complete fulfilment.

This Cause, as every Divine Cause, cannot be effectively established unless it encounters and valiantly triumphs over the forces of opposition with which it is assailed. The history of the Faith is in itself a sufficient proof of that.

Trials and persecutions have always been, and will continue to be, the lot of the chosen ones of God. But these they should consider as blessings in disguise, as through them their faith will be quickened, purified and strengthened. Baha'u'llah compares such afflictive trials to the oil which feeds the lamp of the Cause of God.

The friends should, therefore, not assume an attitude of mere resignation in

the face of persecutions. They should rather welcome them, and utilize them as [a] means for their own spiritual uplift and also for the promotion of the Cause. As the Faith grows stronger and attracts the serious attention and consideration of the world outside, the friends must expect a similar, if not a greater, increase in the forces of opposition which from every direction, both secular and religious, will be massed to undermine the very basis of its existence. The final outcome of such a struggle, which will be surely gigantic, is clear to us believers. A Faith born of God and guided by His Divine and all-pervasive spirit cannot but finally triumph and firmly establish itself, no matter how persistent and insidious the forces with which it has to contend. The friends should be confident, and act with the utmost wisdom and moderation, and should particularly abstain from any provocative act. The future is surely theirs.

(24 June 1936 to an individual believer)

288 His fears are rather for those friends who, due to their insufficient realization of the divine power that mysteriously operates in the Faith, are prone to look at such developments as constituting the death-knell of the Cause. In his communications to the ... friends during the last few weeks he has always stressed the fact, and he wishes you to do the same in all your conversations and correspondence with them, that the Cause is bound sooner or later to suffer from all kinds of attacks and persecutions, [149] that these in fact constitute the life-blood of its institutions, and as such constitute an inseparable and intrinsic part of its development and growth. Trials and tribulations, as Baha'u'llah says, are the oil that feed the lamp of the Cause, and are indeed blessings in disguise. The friends should therefore be confident that all these attacks to which the Cause is now subjected in ... are a necessary part of the development of the Cause, and that their outcome would be beneficial to its best interests.

(31 August 1937 to an individual believer)

289 Later on, when the very progress of the Cause on the one hand, and the corresponding decline in ecclesiastical organizations on the other will inevitably incite Christian ecclesiastical leaders to vehemently oppose and undermine the Faith, the believers will then have a real chance to defend and vindicate the Cause....

(25 May 1938 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada)

290 It seems both strange and pitiful that the Church and clergy should always, in every age, be the most bitter opponents of the very Truth they are continually admonishing their followers to be prepared to receive! They have become so violently attached to the form that the substance itself eludes them!

However, such denunciations as those your minister made publicly against you and the Baha'i Faith can do no harm to the Cause at all; on the contrary they only serve to spread its name abroad and mark it as an independent religion.

(7 February 1945 to an individual believer)

291 It is too bad that some of the Friends have left the Faith due to the pressure of the Church leaders. Of course, it was inevitable that Church leaders would oppose us. The Master has predicted that this would occur; and likewise the very nature of events whereby the Faith grows and develops taking members away from the Church will cause a reaction of the Church against us. We must bear in mind that every attack from the religious leaders in the past has been a means for the development of the [150] Faith itself because those who listen to the attacks can't help but be affected by the purity and sincerity of the Faith.

(19 June 1957 to an individual believer)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

292 The marvellous victories won in the name of Baha'u'llah, ... and the triumphs increasingly being achieved by His dedicated and ardent lovers in every land, will no doubt serve to rouse the internal and external enemies of the Faith to fresh attempts to attack the Faith and dampen the enthusiasm of its supporters...

...the progressive unfoldment and onward march of the Faith of God are bound to raise up adversaries, indubitably foreshadowing the world-wide opposition which is to come, and unequivocally giving the assurance of ultimate victory.

We feel strongly that ... the time has come for them [the friends] to clearly grasp the inevitability of the critical contests which lie ahead, give you their full support in repelling with confidence and determination "the darts" which will be levelled against them by "their present enemies, as well as those whom Providence will, through His mysterious dispensations raise up from within or from without," and aid and enable the Faith of God to scale loftier heights, win more signal triumphs, and traverse more vital stages in its predestined course to complete victory and world-wide ascendancy.

(26 November 1974 to all National Spiritual Assemblies)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

293 ...the Universal House of Justice instructs us to say that it is to be expected that books will be written against the Faith attempting to distort its teachings, to denigrate its accomplishments, to vilify its Founders and leaders and to destroy its very foundations. The friends should not be unduly exercised when these books appear and certainly no issue should be made of them.

(30 March 1976 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Hong Kong)

294 [151] As your teaching and proclamation work progresses there is bound to be more and more confrontation with the older religious institutions in ..., and it is the kind of staunchness evinced by ... which will bring respect to the Cause and attract the confirmations of Baha'u'llah.

(7 June 1981 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Ireland)

295 ...In these days Baha'is can expect the flame of fanaticism to be kindled among the enemies of the Faith in Muslim countries. In meeting attacks the friends should learn to combine the spirit of steadfastness and courage with love and wisdom. They should avoid argument and conflict and conduct themselves

in such manner that they do not provoke retaliation. This includes the use of discretion in their teaching activities.

(22 August 1983 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Bangladesh)

296 Given the rise in most parts of the world of religious bigotry and fundamentalism, it may be timely for your National Assembly to try to arm the Baha'is against such attacks as appear in this book,* which is so typical of the approach of Christian churches. Sooner or later, as you know, these churches will rise against the Cause.

You are therefore requested to consider asking a qualified person or group of persons to prepare suitable materials, perhaps for a booklet, which the friends may use in dealing with misrepresentations of the Baha'i Teachings by Christians.

(18 October 1984 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

*"A Guide to Cults and New Religions", John Boykin

II. "The resistless march of the Faith of Baha'u'llah
(Shoghi Effendi, "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America, p. 51)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Say: Tribulation is a horizon unto My Revelation. The day star of grace shineth above it, and sheddeth a light which neither the clouds of men's idle fancy nor the vain imaginations of the aggressor can obscure.

Follow thou the footsteps of thy Lord, and remember His servants even as He doth remember thee, undeterred by either the clamor of the [152] heedless ones or the sword of the enemy.... Spread abroad the sweet savors of thy Lord, and hesitate not, though it be for less than a moment, in the service of His Cause. The day is approaching when the victory of thy Lord, the Ever,,Forgiving, the Most Bountiful, will be proclaimed.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah", sec. 17, pp. 42-43)

298 Behold how in this Dispensation the worthless and foolish have fondly imagined that by such instruments as massacre, plunder and banishment they can extinguish the Lamp which the Hand of Divine power hath lit, or eclipse the Day Star of everlasting splendor. How utterly unaware they seem to be of the truth that such adversity is the oil that feedeth the flame of this Lamp! Such is God's transforming power. He changeth whatsoever He willeth; He verily hath power over all things....

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, sec. 29, p. 72)

299 Say: The fierce gales and whirlwinds of the world and its peoples can never shake the foundation upon which the rocklike stability of My chosen ones is based. Gracious God! What could have prompted these people to enslave and imprison the loved ones of Him Who is the Eternal Truth? ... The day, however,

is approaching when the faithful will behold the Day Star of justice shining in its full splendor from the Day Spring of glory. Thus instructeth thee the Lord of all being in this, His grievous Prison.

("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah",
sec. 162, pp. 341-342)

300 With every fresh tribulation He manifested a fuller measure of Thy Cause, and exalted more highly Thy word.

("Prayers and Meditations by Baha'u'llah"
(Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1987), sec. 31, p. 37)

301 Should they attempt to conceal His light on the continent, He will assuredly rear His head in the midmost heart of the ocean and, raising His voice, proclaim: "I am the lifegiver of the world!" ... And if they cast Him into a darksome pit, they will find Him seated on earth's loftiest heights calling aloud to all mankind: "Lo, the Desire of the world is come in His majesty, His sovereignty, His transcendent dominion!" And if He be buried beneath the depths of the earth, His Spirit soaring to the apex [153] of heaven shall peal the summons: "Behold ye the coming of the Glory; witness ye the Kingdom of God, the most Holy, the Gracious, the All-Powerful!..."

(Cited in Shoghi Effendi, "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters", p. 108)

302 At this moment We call to remembrance Our loved ones and bring them the joyous tidings of God's unflinching grace and of the things that have been provided for them in My lucid Book. Ye have tolerated the censure of the enemies for the sake of My love and have steadfastly endured in My Path the grievous cruelties which the ungodly have inflicted upon you. Unto this I Myself bear witness, and I am the All-Knowing. How vast the number of places that have been ennobled with your blood for the sake of God. How numerous the cities wherein the voice of your lamentation hath been raised and the wailing of your anguish uplifted. How many the prisons into which ye have been cast by the hosts of tyranny. Know ye of a certainty that He will render you victorious, will exalt you among the peoples of the world and will demonstrate your high rank before the gaze of all nations. Surely He will not suffer the reward of His favoured ones to be lost.

("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas",
(Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), pp. 246-47)

303 Verily God rendereth His Cause victorious at one time through the aid of His enemies and at another by virtue of the assistance of His chosen ones. Concerning those pure and blessed souls, Our Pen of Glory hath revealed that which excelleth the whole world, its treasures and whatsoever existeth therein. Ere long shall the heedless and the doers of wickedness be repaid for that which their hands have wrought.

(From a Tablet, translated from the Persian)

304 Whatsoever occurreth in the world of being is light for His loved ones and fire for the people of sedition and strife. Even if all the losses of the world

were to be sustained by one of the friends of God, he would still profit thereby, whereas true loss would be borne by such as are wayward, [154] ignorant and contemptuous. Although the author* of the following saying had intended it otherwise, yet We find it pertinent to the operation of God's immutable Will:

"Even or odd, thou shalt win the wager." The friends of God shall win and profit under all conditions, and shall attain true wealth. In fire they remain cold, and from water they emerge dry. Their affairs are at variance with the affairs of men. Gain is their lot, whatever the deal. To this testifieth every wise one with a discerning eye, and every fair-minded one with a hearing ear. (From a Tablet, translated from the Persian)

*Sa'di, Muslihu'd-Din of Shiraz (d. 691 A.H./1292 A.D.), famed author of the "Gulistan" and other poetical works.

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

305 The friends of God are supported by the Kingdom on high and they win their victories through the massed armies of the most great guidance. Thus for them every difficulty will be made smooth, every problem will most easily be solved. ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 279)

306 Soon will the Western regions become as radiant as the horizons of the East, and the Sun of Truth shine forth with a refulgence that will cause the darkness of error to fade away and vanish. Great is the multitude who will rise up to oppose you, who will oppress you, heap blame upon you, rejoice at your misfortunes, account you people to be shunned, and visit injury upon you; yet shall your heavenly Father confer upon you such spiritual illumination that ye shall become even as the rays of the sun which, as they chase away the sombre clouds, break forth to flood the surface of the earth with light. It is incumbent upon you, whensoever these tests may overtake you, to stand firm, and to be patient and enduring. Instead of repaying like with like, ye should requite opposition with the utmost benevolence and loving-kindness, and on no account attach importance to cruelties and injuries, but rather regard them as the wanton acts of children. For ultimately the radiance of the Kingdom will overwhelm the darkness of the world of being, and the holy, exalted character of your aims will become unmistakably apparent. Nothing shall [155] remain concealed: the olive oil, though stored within the deepest vault, shall one day burn in brightness from the lamp atop the beacon. The small shall be made great, and the powerless shall be given strength; they that are of tender age shall become the children of the Kingdom, and those that have gone astray shall be guided to their heavenly home. (From a Tablet, translated from the Persian)

307 Thou hadst written concerning the growth in stature of the Cause of God in thy country. There is no doubt that the Faith of God will progress from day to day in that land, for it will be aided by the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit and the confirmation of the Word of God. Nor is there any doubt that members of the Christian clergy will rise up against it in implacable

hostility, wishing to injure and oppress you, and seeking to assail you with doubts; for the spread of the Cause of God will lead to the waning of their fortunes,,as the fortunes of the Pharisees had waned before them,,and entail the loss of the dignity and standing that they now enjoy amongst men.

Reflect upon the time of Jesus and the deeds wrought by the Jewish divines and Pharisees. Such deeds will, in this day, be repeated at the hands of these Christian clergymen. Be not perturbed, however; be firm and constant, for it is certain that a company of souls shall, with infinite love, arise to enter into the Kingdom of God. These souls shall recompense you for the vexations, the humiliations, and disdain to which you are subjected by the clergy: to the injuries inflicted by these latter they shall respond with acts of kindness, until eventually, as the experience of former times hath shown, the children of the Kingdom shall gain the ascendancy, and victory shall be theirs. Rest ye confident of this.

(From a Tablet,,translated from the Persian)

308 All who stand up in the cause of God will be persecuted and misunderstood. It hath ever been so, and will ever be. Let neither enemy nor friend disturb your composure, destroy your happiness, deter your accomplishment. Rely wholly upon God. Then will persecution and slander make you the more radiant. The designs of your enemies will rebound upon them. They, not you, will suffer.

Oppression is the wind that doth fan the fire of the Love of God. Welcome persecution and bitterness. A soldier may bear arms, but until [156] he hath faced the enemy in battle he hath not earned his place in the king's army. Let nothing defeat you. God is your helper. God is invincible. Be firm in the Heavenly Covenant. Pray for strength. It will be given to you, no matter how difficult the conditions.

("Star of the West", vol. 4, no. 5 (5 June 1913),
p. 88,,revised translation)

309 And now, if you act in accordance with the teachings of Baha'u'llah, you may rest assured that you will be aided and confirmed. You will be rendered victorious in all that you undertake, and all the inhabitants of the earth will be unable to withstand you. You are conquerors, because the power of the Holy Spirit assisteth you. Above and beyond all physical and phenomenal forces, the Holy Spirit itself shall aid you.

("Star of the West", vol. 8. no. 8 (1 August 1917),
p. 103,,revised translation)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFENDI:

310 If, in days to come, that land* should be overtaken by diverse afflictions and calamities; if, to the rigours of the present times there should be added the outbreak of widespread civil upheavals; if the country's already dark horizons should become still gloomier and more foreboding, you should neither be filled with trepidation and despondency, nor allow yourselves to be deflected, though it be to the extent of a hair's breadth, from that sound and well-considered course that you have been following up till now ,, from

continuing, in other words, your persistent, tireless, and unremitting labours to increase the number of the Baha'i administrative institutions, to strengthen their foundations, to enhance the fair name that they enjoy, and to consolidate the respect and standing in which they are held. The release of this innocent and wronged community from the bonds of captivity, and its deliverance from the clutches of the enemy and oppressor, cannot but be accompanied by general commotions and disturbances; likewise the attainment by the people of Baha to a position in which they will enjoy true honour, comfort and tranquillity must inevitably encounter the hostility and resistance, the clamorous opposition and tumultuous protests of all those who harbour enmity and rancour towards them. If, therefore, the troubled waters of the sea of adversity should grow yet more [157] turbulent, if the storm of tribulation should increase in vehemence and assail that sore-tried community from all six sides with fresh disasters, then know unhesitatingly and with unwavering conviction, that the hour of deliverance, the appointed time when the promises of old are to reach their glorious fulfilment, has drawn nigh, and that the means for the accomplishment of supreme and overwhelming victory by the hard-pressed followers of the Greatest Name in that land have all been readied and prepared. Fixity of purpose and unfaltering resolution are the qualities that must needs be manifested by the people of Baha if they are successfully to traverse these last remaining stages, and witness, at the highest levels, and in a manner that will fill them with astonishment, the realization of their profoundest hopes and of their most deeply cherished desires. Such is the way of God, "and no change canst thou find in the way of God".**

(From a letter dated 11 January 1928 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia,,translated from the Persian)

*Iran

**Qur'an, 33:62, and 48:23

311 ...it behooves us, while expectantly watching from a distance the moving spectacle of the struggling Faith of Baha'u'llah, to seek abiding solace and strength from the reflection that whatever befalls this Cause, however grievous and humiliating the visitations that from time to time may seem to afflict the organic life or interfere with the functions of the administrative machinery of the Baha'i Faith, such calamities cannot but each eventually prove to be a blessing in disguise designed, by a Wisdom inscrutable to us all, to establish and consolidate the sovereignty of Baha'u'llah on this earth.

(From a letter dated 1 January 1929 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 164)

312 Numerous and powerful have been the forces that have schemed, both from within and from without, in lands both far and near, to quench its light and abolish its holy name. Some have apostatized from its principles, and betrayed ignominiously its cause. Others have hurled against it the fiercest anathemas which the embittered leaders of any ecclesiastical institution are able to pronounce. Still others have heaped [158] upon it the afflictions and

humiliations which sovereign authority can alone, in the plenitude of its power, inflict.

The utmost its avowed and secret enemies could hope to achieve was to retard its growth and obscure momentarily its purpose. What they actually accomplished was to purge and purify its life, to stir it to still greater depths, to galvanize its soul, to prune its institutions, and cement its unity. A schism, a permanent cleavage in the vast body of its adherents, they could never create.

They who betrayed its cause, its lukewarm and faint-hearted supporters, withered away and dropped as dead leaves, powerless to cloud its radiance or to imperil its structure. Its most implacable adversaries, they who assailed it from without, were hurled from power, and, in the most astonishing fashion, met their doom. Persia had been the first to repress and oppose it. Its monarchs had miserably fallen, their dynasty had collapsed, their name was execrated, the hierarchy that had been their ally and had propped their declining state, had been utterly discredited. Turkey, which had thrice banished its Founder and inflicted on Him cruel and lifelong imprisonment, had passed through one of the severest ordeals and far-reaching revolutions that its history has recorded, had shrunk from one of the most powerful empires to a tiny Asiatic republic, its Sultanate obliterated, its dynasty overthrown, its Caliphate, the mightiest institution of Islam, abolished.

Meanwhile the Faith that had been the object of such monstrous betrayals, and the target for such woeful assaults, was going from strength to strength, was forging ahead, undaunted and undivided by the injuries it had received. In the midst of trials it had inspired its loyal followers with a resolution that no obstacle, however formidable, could undermine. It had lighted in their hearts a faith that no misfortune, however black, could quench. It had infused into their hearts a hope that no force, however determined, could shatter.

(From a letter dated 11 March 1936 to the Baha'is of the West, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters" pp. 195-96)

313 ...every apparent trial with which the unfathomable wisdom of the Almighty deems it necessary to afflict His chosen community serves only to demonstrate afresh its essential solidarity and to consolidate its inward strength...

[159] For such demonstrations of the interpositions of an ever watchful Providence they who stand identified with the Community of the Most Great Name must feel eternally grateful. From every fresh token of His unfailing blessing on the one hand, and of His visitation on the other, they cannot but derive immense hope and courage....

Though small in numbers, and circumscribed as yet in your experiences, powers, and resources, yet the Force which energizes your mission is limitless in its range and incalculable in its potency. Though the enemies which every acceleration in the progress of your mission must raise up be fierce, numerous, and unrelenting, yet the invisible Hosts which, if you persevere, must, as

promised, rush forth to your aid, will, in the end, enable you to vanquish their hopes and annihilate their forces. Though the ultimate blessings that must crown the consummation of your mission be undoubted, and the Divine promises given you firm and irrevocable, yet the measure of the goodly reward which every one of you is to reap must depend on the extent to which your daily exertions will have contributed to the expansion of that mission and the hastening of its triumph.

(From a letter dated 25 December 1938 to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "The Advent of Divine Justice" p. 2; p. 16)

314 Dear friends! Manifold, various, and at times extremely perilous, have been the tragic crises which the blind hatred, the unbounded presumption, the incredible folly, the abject perfidy, the vaulting ambition of the enemy have intermittently engendered within the pale of the Faith. From some of its most powerful and renowned votaries, at the hands of its once trusted and ablest propagators, champions, and administrators, from the ranks of its most revered and highly-placed trustees whether as companions, amanuenses, or appointed lieutenants of the Herald of the Faith, of its Author, and of the Centre of His Covenant, from even those who were numbered among the kindred of the Manifestation, not excluding the brother, the sons and daughters of Baha'u'llah, and the nominee of the Bab Himself, a Faith, of such tender age, and enshrining so priceless a promise, has sustained blows as dire and treacherous as any recorded in the world's religious history.

[160] From the record of its tumultuous history, almost every page of which portrays a fresh crisis, is laden with the description of a new calamity, recounts the tale of a base betrayal, and is stained with the account of unspeakable atrocities, there emerges, clear and incontrovertible, the supreme truth that with every fresh outbreak of hostility to the Faith, whether from within or from without, a corresponding measure of outpouring grace, sustaining its defenders and confounding its adversaries, has been providentially released, communicating a fresh impulse to the onward march of the Faith, while this impetus, in its turn, would, through its manifestations, provoke fresh hostility in quarters heretofore unaware of its challenging implications, this increased hostility being accompanied by a still more arresting revelation of Divine Power and a more abundant effusion of celestial grace, which, by enabling the upholders of that Faith to register still more brilliant victories, would thereby generate issues of still more vital import and raise up still more formidable enemies against a Cause that cannot but in the end resolve those issues and crush the resistance of those enemies, through a still more glorious unfoldment of its inherent power.

The resistless march of the Faith of Baha'u'llah, viewed in this light, and propelled by the stimulating influences which the unwisdom of its enemies and the force latent within itself both engender, resolves itself into a series of rhythmic pulsations, precipitated, on the one hand, through the explosive outbursts of its foes, and the vibrations of Divine Power, on the other, which

speed it, with ever-increasing momentum, along that predestined course traced for it by the Hand of the Almighty.

As opposition to the Faith, from whatever source it may spring, whatever form it may assume, however violent its outbursts, is admittedly the motive-power that galvanizes, on the one hand, the souls of its valiant defenders, and taps for them, on the other, fresh springs of that Divine and inexhaustible Energy, we who are called upon to represent, defend, and promote its interests, should, far from regarding any manifestation of hostility as an evidence of the weakening of the pillars of the Faith, acclaim it as both a God-sent gift and a God-sent opportunity which, if we remain undaunted, we can utilize for the furtherance of His Faith and the routing and complete elimination of its adversaries.

The Heroic Age of the Faith, born in anguish, nursed in adversity, and terminating in trials as woeful as those that greeted its birth, has been [161] succeeded by that Formative Period which is to witness the gradual crystallization of those creative energies which the Faith has released, and the consequent emergence of that World Order for which those forces were made to operate.

Fierce and relentless will be the opposition which this crystallization and emergence must provoke. The alarm it must and will awaken, the envy it will certainly arouse, the misrepresentations to which it will remorselessly be subjected, the set-backs it must, sooner or later, sustain, the commotions to which it must eventually give rise, the fruits it must in the end garner, the blessings it must inevitably bestow and the glorious, the Golden Age it must irresistibly usher in, are just beginning to be faintly perceived, and will, as the old Order crumbles beneath the weight of so stupendous a Revelation, become increasingly apparent and arresting.

(From a letter dated 12 August 1941 to the Baha'is of America, published in "Messages to America: Selected Letters and Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America, 1932-1946, pp. 50-52)

315 We can discover a no less distinct gradation in the character of the opposition it has had to encounter ... an opposition which, now, through the rise of a divinely appointed Order in the Christian West, and its initial impact on civil and ecclesiastical institutions, bids fair to include among its supporters established governments and systems associated with the most ancient, the most deeply entrenched sacerdotal hierarchies in Christendom. We can, at the same time, recognize, through the haze of an ever-widening hostility, the progress, painful yet persistent, of certain communities within its pale through the stages of obscurity, of proscription, of emancipation, and of recognition, stages that must needs culminate in the course of succeeding centuries, in the establishment of the Faith, and the founding, in the plenitude of its power and authority, of the world-embracing Baha'i Commonwealth.... ... Despite the blows leveled at its nascent strength, whether by the wielders of temporal and spiritual authority from without, or by

black-hearted foes from within, the Faith of Baha'u'llah had, far from breaking or bending, gone from strength to strength, from victory to victory. Indeed its history, if read aright, may be said to resolve itself into [162] a series of pulsations, of alternating crises and triumphs, leading it ever nearer to its divinely appointed destiny....

The tribulations attending the progressive unfoldment of the Faith of Baha'u'llah have indeed been such as to exceed in gravity those from which the religions of the past have suffered. Unlike those religions, however, these tribulations have failed utterly to impair its unity, or to create, even temporarily, a breach in the ranks of its adherents. It has not only survived these ordeals, but has emerged, purified and inviolate, endowed with greater capacity to face and surmount any crisis which its resistless march may engender in the future.

Whatever may befall this infant Faith of God in future decades or in succeeding centuries, whatever the sorrows, dangers and tribulations which the next stage in its world-wide development may engender, from whatever quarter the assaults to be launched by its present or future adversaries may be unleashed against it, however great the reverses and setbacks it may suffer, we, who have been privileged to apprehend, to the degree our finite minds can fathom, the significance of these marvelous phenomena associated with its rise and establishment, can harbor no doubt that what it has already achieved in the first hundred years of its life provides sufficient guarantee that it will continue to forge ahead, capturing loftier heights, tearing down every obstacle, opening up new horizons and winning still mightier victories until its glorious mission, stretching into the dim ranges of time that lie ahead, is totally fulfilled.

("God Passes By", Foreward p. xvii; p. 409; p.410; p. 412)

316 Such reflections, far from engendering in our minds and hearts the slightest trace of perplexity, of discouragement or doubt, should reinforce the basis of our convictions, demonstrate to us the incorruptibility, the strange workings and the invincibility of a Faith which, despite the assaults which malignant and redoubtable enemies from the ranks of kings, princes and ecclesiastics have repeatedly launched against it, and the violent internal tests that have shaken it for more than a century, and the relative obscurity of its champions, and the unpropitiousness of the times and the perversity of the generations contemporaneous with its rise and growth, has gone from strength to strength, has preserved its unity and integrity, has diffused its light over [163] five continents, reared the institutions of its Administrative Order and spread its ramifications to the four corners of the earth, and launched its systematic campaigns in both the Western and Eastern Hemispheres.

For such benefits, for such an arresting and majestic vindication of the undefeatable powers inherent in our precious Faith, we can but bow our heads in humility, awe and thanksgiving, renew our pledge of fealty to it, and, each covenanting in his own heart, resolve to prove faithful to that pledge, and persevere to the very end, until our earthly share of servitude to so

transcendent and priceless a Cause has been totally and completely fulfilled.
(From a letter dated 15 June 1946 to the Baha'is of America,
published "Messages to America: Selected Letters and
Cablegrams Addressed to the Baha'is of North America,
1932-1946", p. 104)

317 Indeed this fresh ordeal that has, in pursuance of the mysterious dispensations of Providence, afflicted the Faith, at this unexpected hour, far from dealing a fatal blow to its institutions or existence, should be regarded as a blessing in disguise, not a "calamity" but a "providence" of God, not a devastating flood but a "gentle rain" on a "green pasture," a "wick" and "oil" unto the "lamp" of His Faith, a "nurture" for His Cause, "water for that which has been planted in the hearts of men," a "crown set on the head" of His Messenger for this Day.*

Whatever its outcome, this sudden commotion that has seized the Baha'i world, that has revived the hopes and emboldened the host of the adversaries of the Faith intent on quenching its light and obliterating it from the face of the earth, has served as a trumpet call in the sounding of which the press of the world, the cries of its vociferous enemies, the public remonstrances of both men of good will and those in authority have joined, proclaiming far and wide its existence, publicizing its history, defending its verities, unveiling its truths, demonstrating the character of its institutions and advertising its aims and purposes.

...

[164] For though the newly launched World Spiritual Crusade,, constituting at best only the Minor Plan in the execution of the Almighty's design for the redemption of mankind,,has, as a result of this turmoil paralyzing temporarily the vast majority of the organized followers of Baha'u'llah within His birthplace, suffered a severe setback, yet the over-all Plan of God, moving mysteriously and in contrast to the orderly and well-known processes of a clearly devised Plan, has received an impetus the force of which only posterity can adequately assess.

(In a letter dated 20 August 1954 to the Baha'is of the United States, published in "Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947-1957", pp. 139-40)

*"The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah", Arabic no. 51, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985), p. 15

"Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1988), p. 1

318 However severe their trials, and disheartening the present situation may appear, they must remember that the Faith to which they owe allegiance has weathered, not so very long ago, storms of a far greater severity that seemed, at times, capable of engulfing and of obliterating its nascent institutions. The newly planted sapling of a divinely conceived administrative order, having

driven deep its roots in German soil, bent momentarily under the hurricane which so violently swept over it, and no sooner had the tempest spent its force than it righted itself, and, growing with a fresh vigour, put forth branches and offshoots that now overshadow the entire land, and even stretch out as far as the heart of Austria.

The experience of so miraculous a recovery from so devastating an ordeal should, alone, prove sufficient to infuse an invigorating spirit into those who have been subjected to it, as well as into the new generation who are still close enough to those events to appreciate its extreme violence, such as will not only enable them to withstand onslaughts of still greater severity, but impel them, both young and old, men and women alike, to struggle, with redoubled vigour and deeper consecration, to meet the pressing and the manifold requirements of the present hour.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 14 August 1957 written on his behalf to a National Spiritual Assembly, in "The Light of Divine Guidance, vol. 1 (Hofheim-Langenhain: Baha'i-Verlag GmbH, 1982), pp. 303-304)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

319 [165] There is always an important difference between friends and tested friends. No matter how precious the first type may be, the future of the Cause rests upon the latter. Up to the present the German friends were considered as loving Baha'is, from now on they can be ranked as tested ones.

In every country where such difficulties arise, they generally end with added energy and more intensive service of the Cause....

(4 April 1930 to an individual believer, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, pp. 34-35)

320 The friends . . . should not feel bewildered, for they have the assurance of Baha'u'llah that whatever the nature and character of the forces of opposition facing His Cause, its eventual triumph is indubitably certain.

(30 August 1937 to an individual believer)

321 Let them know, however, for a certainty that the onslaught of both the disbeliever and the oppressor will become a means of promulgating this Divine Cause, of proclaiming the Word of God and of consolidating the foundations of His holy Faith; and that its enemies will ultimately be completely overwhelmed, that the Cause of God will emerge victorious, and that His Word will reign supreme.

(21 October 1946 to an individual believer,, translated from the Persian)

322 He very deeply appreciates your Assembly's assurance of its abiding loyalty to him and to the Master's Will and Testament. As you can well imagine this disaffection of the Master's Family has been a very sad and heavy blow to him; but, although for many years he shielded them with his silence, in the end he was forced to speak out in order to protect the Faith. For a hundred years our beloved Cause has suffered from these internal afflictions, and the way the

believers, generation after generation, have met this test with steadfast faith, loyalty and devotion, is one of the signs that this is the Cause of God, divinely protected through the Covenants of Baha'u'llah and the Master. (30 June 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 1, p. 149)

323 [166] He urges you not to be discouraged or depressed, but rest assured that Baha'u'llah will assist you. Every set-back this Cause receives is invariably a means of ensuring a future victory, for God will never permit His Faith to be put out or uprooted. (From a letter dated 26 January 1950 to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Panama)

324 Although this may temporarily prove an embarrassment to your work, and a set-back, there is no doubt that it signalizes a step forward in the advance of the Faith; for we know that our beloved Faith must eventually clash with the entrenched orthodoxies of the past; and that this conflict cannot but lead to greater victories, and to ultimate emancipation, recognition and ascendancy. (From a letter dated 8 April 1951 to two believers)

325 The Faith is moving at a tremendous rate, and with tremendous force at the present time. Certainly if it is suppressed in one place, the power of the Cause is such that it must rise with greater strength in another place; and thus the persecutions of the Persian Baha'is have caused the Faith to surge ahead in Africa. This certainly must be a solace to the suffering of the Baha'is of Persia. (From a letter dated 26 September 1955 to an individual believer)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

326 It should not be surmised that the events which have taken place in all corners of the globe, including the sacred land of Iran, have occurred as isolated incidents without any aim and purpose. According to the words of our beloved Guardian, "The invisible hand is at work and the convulsions taking place on earth are a prelude to the proclamation of the Cause of God". This is but one of the mysterious forces of this supreme Revelation which is causing the limbs of mankind to quake and those who are drunk with pride and negligence to be thunderstruck and shaken....

In such an afflicted time, when mankind is bewildered and the wisest of men are perplexed as to the remedy, the people of Baha, who have confidence in His unfailing grace and divine guidance, are assured that each of these tormenting trials has a cause, a purpose, and a definite [167] result, and all are essential instruments for the establishment of the immutable Will of God on earth. In other words, on the one hand humanity is struck by the scourge of His chastisement which will inevitably bring together the scattered and vanquished tribes of the earth; and on the other, the weak few whom He has nurtured under the protection of His loving guidance are, in this Formative Age and period of transition, continuing to build amidst these tumultuous waves an impregnable

stronghold which will be the sole remaining refuge for those lost multitudes. Therefore, the dear friends of God who have such a broad and clear vision before them are not perturbed by such events, nor are they panic-stricken by such thundering sounds, nor will they face such convulsions with fear and trepidation, nor will they be deterred, even for a moment, from fulfilling their sacred responsibilities.

(10 February 1980 to the Iranian believers resident in other countries throughout the world)

327 The inveterate enemies of the Faith imagine that their persecutions will disrupt the foundations of the Faith and tarnish its glory. Alas! Alas for their ignorance and folly! These acts of oppression, far from weakening the resolve of the friends, have always served to inflame their zeal and galvanize their beings. In the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha, "...they thought that violence and interference would cause extinction and silence and lead to suppression and oblivion; whereas interference in matters of conscience causes stability and firmness and attracts the attention of men's sight and souls, which fact has received experimental proof many times and often."

Every drop of blood shed by the valiant martyrs, every sigh heaved by the silent victims of oppression, every supplication for divine assistance offered by the faithful, has released, and will continue mysteriously to release, forces over which no antagonist of the Faith has any control, and which, as marshalled by an All-Watchful Providence, have served to noise abroad the name and fame of the Faith to the masses of humanity in all continents, millions of whom had previously been totally ignorant of the existence of the Faith or had but a superficial, and oftentimes erroneous, understanding of its teachings and history.

The current persecution has resulted in bringing the name and character of our beloved Faith to the attention of the world as never [168] before in its history. As a direct result of the protests sent by the world-wide community of the Most Great Name to the rulers in Iran, of the representations made to the media when those protests were ignored, of direct approach by Baha'i institutions at national and international level to governments, communities of nations, international agencies and the United Nations itself, the Faith of Baha'u'llah has not only been given sympathetic attention in the world's councils, but also its merits and violated rights have been discussed and resolutions of protest sent to the Iranian authorities by sovereign governments, singly and in unison. The world's leading newspapers, followed by the local press, have presented sympathetic accounts of the Faith to millions of readers, while television and radio stations are increasingly making the persecutions in Iran the subject of their programmes. Commercial publishing houses are beginning to commission books about the Faith. ... Indeed, this new wave of persecution sweeping the Cradle of the Faith may well be seen as a blessing in disguise, a "providence" whose "calamity" is, as always, borne heroically by the beloved Persian community. It may be regarded as the latest move in God's Major Plan, another trumpet blast to awaken the heedless from

their slumber and a golden opportunity offered to the Baha'is to demonstrate once again their unity and fellowship before the eyes of a declining and skeptical world, to proclaim with full force the Message of Baha'u'llah to high and low alike, to establish the reverence of our Faith for Islam and its Prophet, to assert the principles of non-interference in political activities and obedience to government which stand at the very core of our Faith, and to provide comfort and solace to the breasts of the serene sufferers and steadfast heroes in the forefront of a persecuted community....

(26 January 1982 to the Baha'is of the World)

328 Shoghi Effendi perceived in the organic life of the Cause a dialectic of victory and crisis. The unprecedented triumphs, generated by the adamant steadfastness of the Iranian friends, will inevitably provoke opposition to test and increase our strength. Let every Baha'i in the world be assured that whatever may befall this growing Faith of God is but incontrovertible evidence of the loving care with which the King of Glory and His martyred Herald, through the incomparable Centre of His [169] Covenant and our beloved Guardian, are preparing His humble followers for ultimate and magnificent triumph....

(2 January 1986 to the Baha'is of the World)

329 The opening of that Plan coincided with the recrudescence of savage persecution of the Baha'i community in Iran, a deliberate effort to eliminate the Cause of God from the land of its birth. The heroic steadfastness of the Persian friends has been the mainspring of tremendous international attention focussed on the Cause, eventually bringing it to the agenda of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and, together with world-wide publicity in all the media, accomplishing its emergence from the obscurity which characterized and sheltered the first period of its life. This dramatic process impelled the Universal House of Justice to address a Statement on Peace to the Peoples of the World and arrange for its delivery to Heads of State and the generality of the rulers.

(Ridvan 1986 to the Baha'is of the World)

III. "The security of our precious Faith..."

(Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Baha'i World 1950-1957*", p. 123)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BAHU'U'LLAH:

330 ..."Say: O people of God! Beware lest the powers of the earth alarm you, or the might of the nations weaken you, or the tumult of the people of discord deter you, or the exponents of earthly glory sadden you. Be ye as a mountain in the Cause of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Glorious, the Unconstrained."

"Say: Beware, O people of Baha, lest the strong ones of the earth rob you of your strength, or they who rule the world fill you with fear. Put your trust in God, and commit your affairs to His keeping. He, verily, will, through the power of truth, render you victorious, and He, verily, is powerful to do what He willeth, and in His grasp are the reins of omnipotent might." (Cited in Shoghi Effendi "The Advent of Divine Justice", p. 82)

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

arguments of those that have attacked the Faith of God. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Powerful, the Almighty. He that [170] wisheth to promote the Cause of the one true God, let him promote it through his pen and tongue, rather than have recourse to sword or violence.... If any man were to arise to defend, in his writings, the Cause of God against its assailants, such a man, however inconsiderable his share, shall be so honored in the world to come that the Concourse on high would envy his glory. No pen can depict the loftiness of his station, neither can any tongue describe its splendor. For whosoever standeth firm and steadfast in this holy, this glorious, and exalted Revelation, such power shall be given him as to enable him to face and withstand all that is in heaven and on earth. Of this God is Himself a witness. ("Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah" sec. 154, pp.329-30)

332 We exhort the men of the House of Justice and command them to ensure the protection and safeguarding of men, women and children. It is incumbent upon them to have the utmost regard for the interests of the people at all times and under all conditions. Blessed is the ruler who succoureth the captive, and the rich one who careth for the poor, and the just one who secureth from the wrong doer the rights of the downtrodden, and happy the trustee who observeth that which the Ordainer, the Ancient of Days hath prescribed unto him. ("Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas" pp. 69-70)

333 And likewise, He saith: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart: be strong, fear not, behold your God."* This blessed verse is a proof of the greatness of the Revelation, and of the greatness of the Cause, inasmuch as the blast of the trumpet must needs spread confusion throughout the world, and fear and trembling amongst all men. Well is it with him who hath been illumined with the light of trust and detachment. The tribulations of that Day will not hinder or alarm him. Thus hath the Tongue of Utterance spoken, as bidden by Him Who is the All-Merciful. He, verily, is the Strong, the All-Powerful, the All-Subduing, the Almighty.... ("Epistle to the Son of the Wolf", p. 147)

*Isaiah 35:4

334 [171] You should exhort all the friends to patience, to acquiescence, and to tranquillity, saying: O ye loved ones of God in that land! Ye are glorified in all the worlds of God because of your relationship to Him Who is the Eternal Truth, but in your lives on this earthly plane, which pass away as a fleeting moment, ye are afflicted with abasement. For the sake of the one true God, ye have been reviled and persecuted, ye have been imprisoned, and surrendered your lives in His path. Ye should not, however, by reason of the tyrannical acts of some heedless souls, transgress the limits of God's commandments by contending with anyone.

Whatever hath befallen you, hath been for the sake of God. This is the truth, and in this there is no doubt. You should, therefore, leave all your affairs in

His Hands, place your trust in Him, and rely upon Him. He will assuredly not forsake you. In this, likewise, there is no doubt. No father will surrender his sons to devouring beasts; no shepherd will leave his flock to ravening wolves. He will most certainly do his utmost to protect his own.

If, however, for a few days, in compliance with God's all-encompassing wisdom, outward affairs should run their course contrary to one's cherished desire, this is of no consequence and should not matter. Our intent is that all the friends should fix their gaze on the Supreme Horizon, and cling to that which hath been revealed in the Tablets. They should strictly avoid sedition, and refrain from treading the path of dissension and strife. They should champion their one true God, exalted be He, through the hosts of forbearance, of submission, of an upright character, of goodly deeds, and of the choicest and most refined words.

("The Baha'i World" vol. XVIII (Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1986) pp. 10-11)

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

335 O army of God! When calamity striketh, be ye patient and composed. However afflictive your sufferings may be, stay ye undisturbed, and with perfect confidence in the abounding grace of God, brave ye the tempest of tribulations and fiery ordeals.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 74)

336 [172] Wherefore must the loved ones of God, laboriously, with the waters of their striving, tend and nourish and foster this tree of hope. In whatsoever land they dwell, let them with a whole heart befriend and be companions to those who are either close to them, or far removed. Let them, with qualities like unto those of heaven, promote the institutions and the religion of God. Let them never lose heart, never be despondent, never feel afflicted. The more antagonism they meet, the more let them show their own good faith; the more torments and calamities they have to face, the more generously let them pass round the bounteous cup. Such is the spirit which will become the life of the world, such is the spreading light at its heart: and he who may be and do other than this is not worthy to serve at the Holy Threshold of the Lord.

("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha", p. 258)

337 O ye beloved of the Lord! The greatest of all things is the protection of the True Faith of God, the preservation of His Law, the safeguarding of His Cause and service unto His Word....

My supreme obligation, however, of necessity, prompteth me to guard and preserve the Cause of God. Thus, with the greatest regret, I counsel you saying: Guard ye the Cause of God, protect His law and have the utmost fear of discord. This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Baha (may my life be offered up for them)...

("Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha",
(Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 4; p. 19)

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

338 It is incumbent upon them to be vigilant and cautious, discreet and watchful, and protect at all times the Temple of the Cause from the dart of the mischief-maker and the onslaught of the enemy.

(12 March 1923 to the Baha'is of America, Great Britain, Germany, France, Switzerland, Italy, Japan and Australasia, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 38)

339 As the Movement grows in prestige, fame and influence, as the ambitions, malice and ill-will of strangers and enemies correspondingly wax greater, it becomes increasingly important for every individual and [173] Spiritual Assembly to be on their guard lest they fall innocent victims of the evil designs of the malevolent, the self-seeking and greedy.

Touching the publication of articles and pamphlets bearing on the controversial and political issues of the day, I desire to remind my dearly-beloved fellow-workers that at the present stage when the Cause is still in its infancy, any minute and detailed analysis by the friends of subjects that are in the forefront of general discussion would often be misconstrued in certain quarters and give rise to suspicions and misunderstandings that would react unfavorably on the Cause. They would tend to create a misconception of the real object, the true mission, and the fundamental character of the Baha'i Faith. We should, while endeavoring to uphold loyally and expound conscientiously our social and moral principles in all their essence and purity, in all their bearings upon the divers phases of human society, insure that no direct reference or particular criticism in our exposition of the fundamentals of the Faith would tend to antagonize any existing institution, or help to identify a purely spiritual movement with the base clamorings and contentions of warring sects, factions and nations. We should strive in all our utterances to combine the discretion and noble reticence of the wise with the frankness and passionate loyalty of the ardent advocate of an inspiring Faith. While refusing to utter the word that would needlessly alienate or estrange any individual, government or people, we should fearlessly and unhesitatingly uphold and assert in their entirety such truths the knowledge of which we believe is vitally and urgently needed for the good and betterment of mankind.

(10 January 1926 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 102)

340 We can prove ourselves worthy of our Cause only if in our individual conduct and corporate life we sedulously imitate the example of our beloved Master, Whom the terrors of tyranny, the storms of incessant abuse, the oppressiveness of humiliation, never caused to deviate a hair's breadth from the revealed Law of Baha'u'llah.

(12 April 1927 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "Baha'i Administration: Selected Messages 1922-1932", p. 132)

341 [174] Be moreover assured beyond all shadow of doubt that no matter how

strenuously the enemies of God's Faith may exert themselves to extinguish its fire, they will but cause its flame to burn the more fiercely, its light to shine the more brightly, and its heat to grow the more intense. People of wisdom and discernment, who are closely but unobtrusively surveying the progress of the Faith, and are resolved to subject it to the most careful examination and research, will be neither shaken nor swayed by these absurd and baseless claims, these scurrilous publications and self-contradictory pronouncements. So far from being blinded by such propaganda to the verities of the Cause, they will rather be moved by it to pursue their investigations and inquiries with greater meticulousness and enthusiasm than before; to make themselves thoroughly familiar with the teachings, principles and aspirations of the followers of Baha'u'llah; and even, through the grace and guidance of an Almighty and Omniscient Lord, to arise in time of need for the defence and protection of the Cause; to put to rout the hosts of suspicion, doubt and misconception; to raze to its foundations the edifice of calumny and falsehood; and to demonstrate and establish, before the eyes of all the world, the sacred, exalted and indomitable reality of the resistless Faith of God. These various distressful occurrences, contrived and instigated by the enemies and ill-wishers of the Cause, their insidious rumours, their defamatory reports, their flagrant and unprincipled attacks, should be viewed as dispositions and instrumentalities of Providence, designed to hasten the advent of that promised day, that mighty and compelling victory, and that perspicuous triumph, which have been so clearly foretold in the scriptures, and so explicitly and emphatically set forth by the Pen of the Most High.

(From a letter dated August 1927 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia, translated from the Persian)

342 The permanence and stability achieved by any association, group or nation is a result of, and dependent upon, the soundness and worth of the principles upon which it bases the running of its affairs and the direction of its activities. The guiding principles of the Baha'is are: honesty, love, charity and trustworthiness; the setting of the common good above private interest; and the practice of godliness, virtue and moderation. Ultimately, then, their preservation and happiness are [175] assured. Whatever misfortunes they may encounter, wrought by the wiles of the schemer and ill-wisher, shall all pass away like waves, and hardship shall be succeeded by joy. The friends are under the protection of the resistless power and inscrutable providence of God. There is no doubt that every blessed soul who brings his life into harmony with this all-swaying power shall give lustre to his works and win an ample recompense. The actions of those who choose to set themselves against it should provoke not antipathy on our part, but prayers for their guidance. Such was the way of the Baha'is in days gone by, and so must it be, now and for always.

(18 December 1928 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Iran, translated from the Persian)

343 Let them refrain from associating themselves, whether by word or by deed, with the political pursuits of their respective nations, with the policies of their governments and the schemes and programs of parties and factions. In such

controversies they should assign no blame, take no side, further no design, and identify themselves with no system prejudicial to the best interests of that world-wide Fellowship which it is their aim to guard and foster. Let them beware lest they allow themselves to become the tools of unscrupulous politicians, or to be entrapped by the treacherous devices of the plotters and the perfidious among their countrymen. Let them so shape their lives and regulate their conduct that no charge of secrecy, of fraud, of bribery or of intimidation may, however ill-founded, be brought against them. Let them rise above all particularism and partisanship, above the vain disputes, the petty calculations, the transient passions that agitate the face, and engage the attention, of a changing world. It is their duty to strive to distinguish, as clearly as they possibly can, and if needed with the aid of their elected representatives, such posts and functions as are either diplomatic or political from those that are purely administrative in character, and which under no circumstances are affected by the changes and chances that political activities and party government, in every land, must necessarily involve. Let them affirm their unyielding determination to stand, firmly and unreservedly, for the way of Baha'u'llah, to avoid the entanglements and bickerings inseparable from the pursuits of the politician, and to [176] become worthy agencies of that Divine Polity which incarnates God's immutable Purpose for all men.

...

As the number of the Baha'i communities in various parts of the world multiplies and their power, as a social force, becomes increasingly apparent, they will no doubt find themselves increasingly subjected to the pressure which men of authority and influence, in the political domain, will exercise in the hope of obtaining the support they require for the advancement of their aims. These communities will, moreover, feel a growing need of the good-will and the assistance of their respective governments in their efforts to widen the scope, and to consolidate the foundations, of the institutions committed to their charge. Let them beware lest, in their eagerness to further the aims of their beloved Cause, they should be led unwittingly to bargain with their Faith, to compromise with their essential principles, or to sacrifice, in return for any material advantage which their institutions may derive, the integrity of their spiritual ideals. Let them proclaim that in whatever country they reside, and however advanced their institutions, or profound their desire to enforce the laws, and apply the principles, enunciated by Baha'u'llah, they will, unhesitatingly, subordinate the operation of such laws and the application of such principles to the requirements and legal enactments of their respective governments. Theirs is not the purpose, while endeavoring to conduct and perfect the administrative affairs of their Faith, to violate, under any circumstances, the provisions of their country's constitution, much less to allow the machinery of their administration to supersede the government of their respective countries.

It should also be borne in mind that the very extension of the activities in which we are engaged, and the variety of the communities which labor under

divers forms of government, so essentially different in their standards, policies, and methods, make it absolutely essential for all those who are the declared members of any one of these communities to avoid any action that might, by arousing the suspicion or exciting the antagonism of any one government, involve their brethren in fresh persecutions or complicate the nature of their task. How else, might I ask, could such a far-flung Faith, which transcends political and social boundaries, which includes within its pale so great a variety of races and nations, which will have to rely increasingly, as it forges ahead, on the [177] good-will and support of the diversified and contending governments of the earth,,how else could such a Faith succeed in preserving its unity, in safeguarding its interests, and in ensuring the steady and peaceful development of its institutions?

Such an attitude, however, is not dictated by considerations of selfish expediency, but is actuated, first and foremost, by the broad principle that the followers of Baha'u'llah will, under no circumstances, suffer themselves to be involved, whether as individuals or in their collective capacities, in matters that would entail the slightest departure from the fundamental verities and ideals of their Faith. Neither the charges which the uninformed and the malicious may be led to bring against them, nor the allurements of honors and rewards, will ever induce them to surrender their trust or to deviate from their path. Let their words proclaim, and their conduct testify, that they who follow Baha'u'llah, in whatever land they reside, are actuated by no selfish ambition, that they neither thirst for power, nor mind any wave of unpopularity, of distrust or criticism, which a strict adherence to their standards might provoke.

(21 March 1932 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, published in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah: Selected Letters, pp. 6467)

344 Such a rectitude of conduct must manifest itself, with ever-increasing potency, in every verdict which the elected representatives of the Baha'i community, in whatever capacity they may find themselves, may be called upon to pronounce. It must be constantly reflected in the business dealings of all its members, in their domestic lives, in all manner of employment, and in any service they may, in the future, render their government or people. It must be exemplified in the conduct of all Baha'i electors, when exercising their sacred rights and functions. It must characterize the attitude of every loyal believer towards nonacceptance of political posts, nonidentification with political parties, nonparticipation in political controversies, and nonmembership in political organizations and ecclesiastical institutions.... It must be demonstrated in the impartiality of every defender of the Faith against its enemies, in his fair-mindedness in recognizing any merits that enemy may possess, and in his honesty in discharging any obligations he may have towards him....

[178] ... No greater demonstration can be given to the peoples of both continents of the youthful vitality and the vibrant power animating the life,

and the institutions of the nascent Faith of Baha'u'llah than an intelligent, persistent, and effective participation of the Baha'i youth, of every race, nationality, and class, in both the teaching and administrative spheres of Baha'i activity. Through such a participation the critics and enemies of the Faith, watching with varying degrees of skepticism and resentment, the evolutionary processes of the Cause of God and its institutions, can best be convinced of the indubitable truth that such a Cause is intensely alive, is sound to its very core, and its destinies in safe keeping....

(25 December 1938 to the Baha'is of the United States and Canada, published in "The Advent of Divine Justice, pp. 26-27;pp. 69-70)

345 Obstacles, varied and numerous, will no doubt arise to impede the onward march of this community [Australia]. Reverses may temporarily dim the radiance of its mission. The forces of religious orthodoxy may well, at a future date, be leagued against it. The exponents of theories and doctrines fundamentally opposed to its religious tenets and social principles may challenge its infant strength with persistence and severity. The Administrative Order,,the Ark destined to preserve its integrity and carry it to safety,,-must without delay, without exception, claim the attention of the members of this community, its ideals must be continually cherished in their hearts, its purposes studied and kept constantly before their eyes, its requirements wholeheartedly met, its laws scrupulously upheld, its institutions unstintingly supported, its glorious mission noised abroad, and its spirit made the sole motivating purpose of their lives.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 22 August 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia and New Zealand, published in "Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, 1923-1957" (Sydney: National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Australia, 1970), p. 80-81)

346 The strife and bloodshed, with their attendant misery, sorrow and confusion, that have afflicted the entire subcontinent of India, in recent months, have caused me the gravest concern. The disorders, following in [179] the wake of this great crisis in the life of its people, constitute a challenge, which the community of the steadfast followers of Baha'u'llah in that land must resolutely face, and demonstrate in meeting it the quality of their faith, the depth of their devotion, the strength of their unity, the solidity of their institutions and the heroic character of their resolve. They must neither feel alarmed, nor falter or hesitate in the execution of their Plan. Shielded by the institutions which their hands have reared, abiding securely in the strong-hold of their love for Baha'u'llah and their devotion to His Faith, pursuing with unrelaxing vigilance and singleness of purpose the course set by the Plan they themselves have inaugurated, heartened by the initial success already achieved since that Plan was set in motion, they, however much buffeted by present circumstances, and no matter how perilous the path they now tread, must press forward, unafraid of persecution, scorn or

calumny, towards the shining goals they have set themselves to attain.

(In the handwriting of Shoghi Effendi, appended to a letter dated 24 October 1947 written on his behalf to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, Pakistan and Burma, published in "Dawn of a New Day" (New Delhi: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1970), p.127)

347 RECENT EVENTS TRIUMPHANT CONSUMMATION SERIES HISTORIC ENTERPRISES SUCH AS CONSTRUCTION SUPERSTRUCTURE BAB'S SEPULCHRE DEDICATION MOTHER TEMPLE WEST WORLD-WIDE CELEBRATIONS HOLY YEAR CONVOCATION FOUR INTERCONTINENTAL TEACHING CONFERENCES LAUNCHING TEN YEAR CRUSADE UNPRECEDENTED DISPERSAL ITS VALIANT PROSECUTORS FACE GLOBE EXTRAORDINARY PROGRESS AFRICAN PACIFIC CAMPAIGNS RISE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER ARABIAN PENINSULA HEART ISLAMIC WORLD DISCOMFITURE POWERFUL ANTAGONISTS CRADLE FAITH ERECTION INTERNATIONAL ARCHIVES HERALDING ESTABLISHMENT SEAT WORLD ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER HOLY LAND SERVED INFLAME UNQUENCHABLE ANIMOSITY MUSLIM OPPONENTS RAISED UP NEW SET ADVERSARIES CHRISTIAN FOLD ROUSED INTERNAL ENEMIES OLD NEW COVENANT,,BREAKERS FRESH ATTEMPTS ARREST MARCH CAUSE GOD MISREPRESENT ITS PURPOSE [180] DISRUPT ITS ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS DAMPEN ZEAL SAP LOYALTY ITS SUPPORTERS. EVIDENCES INCREASING HOSTILITY WITHOUT PERSISTENT MACHINATIONS WITHIN FORESHADOWING DIRE CONTEST DESTINED RANGE ARMY LIGHT FORCES DARKNESS BOTH SECULAR RELIGIOUS PREDICTED UNEQUIVOCAL LANGUAGE 'ABDU'L,,BAHA NECESSITATE THIS CRUCIAL HOUR CLOSER ASSOCIATION HANDS FIVE CONTINENTS BODIES ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES NATIONAL BAHAI COMMUNITIES WORLD OVER JOINT INVESTIGATION NEFARIOUS ACTIVITIES INTERNAL ENEMIES ADOPTION WISE EFFECTIVE MEASURES COUNTERACT THEIR TREACHEROUS SCHEME PROTECT MASS BELIEVERS ARREST SPREAD EVIL INFLUENCE. CALL UPON HANDS*

NATIONAL ASSEMBLIES EACH CONTINENT SEPARATELY ESTABLISH HENCEFORTH DIRECT CONTACT DELIBERATE WHENEVER FEASIBLE AS FREQUENTLY POSSIBLE EXCHANGE REPORTS BE SUBMITTED TO THEIR RESPECTIVE AUXILIARY BOARDS NATIONAL COMMITTEES EXERCISE UNRELAXING VIGILANCE CARRY OUT UNFLINCHINGLY SACRED INESCAPABLE DUTIES. SECURITY PRECIOUS FAITH PRESERVATION SPIRITUAL HEALTH BAHAI COMMUNITIES VITALITY FAITH ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS PROPER FUNCTIONING ITS LABORIOUSLY ERECTED INSTITUTIONS FRUITION ITS WORLD-WIDE ENTERPRISES FULFILMENT ITS ULTIMATE DESTINY ALL DIRECTLY DEPENDENT BEFITTING DISCHARGE WEIGHTY RESPONSIBILITIES NOW RESTING MEMBERS THESE TWO INSTITUTIONS OCCUPYING WITH UNIVERSAL HOUSE JUSTICE NEXT INSTITUTION

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice dated 24 June 1968 to a Continental Board of Counsellors)

*The Continental Boards of Counselors ... are charged with specific functions relating to the protection and propagation of the Faith in the areas under their jurisdiction. They will operate in a manner similar to that set forth by the beloved Guardian for the Hands of the Cause in his communications outlining the responsibilities they are called upon to discharge in collaboration with National Spiritual Assemblies. We particularly draw your attention to his message of June 4, 1957.

[181] GUARDIANSHIP FOREMOST RANK DIVINELY ORDAINED ADMINISTRATIVE HIERARCHY

WORLD ORDER BAHÁ'U'LLÁH.

(Cablegram dated 4 June 1957 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, published in "Messages to the Baha'i World 1950-1957" (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 122-23)

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF SHOGHI EFFENDI:

348 Undoubtedly, as the influence of God's Faith becomes more pervasive, the number of those who wish to obstruct its progress will also grow; new and increasingly formidable adversaries will come to the fore; and mischief-makers, appearing under various extraordinary guises, will seek surreptitiously to goad to action all those who harbour resentment or bear ill will towards this Cause, and will raise aloft the standards of sedition. Under these circumstances it is essential for the friends on the one hand to be alert and watchful, and on the other to arouse the vigilance and strengthen the allegiance of their fellow-believers, to guard the integrity of the Word of God, and to maintain harmony and unity amongst His loved ones. Herein lies the supreme duty of the friends of God, and the highest means by which they can render service to His Cause.

(24 May 1927 to an individual believer,, translated from the Persian)

349 In the face of such distressing conditions you should realize, more keenly than ever, your supreme obligation of protecting the body of the Cause from any further injuries and attacks, and of adhering scrupulously and intelligently to the spirit and the principles of the Administration....

(12 July 1937 to an individual believer)

350 The matter of refuting attacks and criticisms directed against the Cause through the press is, he feels, one which devolves on the National Spiritual Assembly to consider. This body, whether directly or through the agency of its committees, should decide as to the advisability of answering any such attacks, and also should carefully examine and pass upon any statements which the friends wish to send to the press to this effect. Only through such supervision and control of all Baha'i press activities can the friends hope to avoid confusion and misunderstanding [182] in their own minds and in the mind of the general public whom they can reach through the press.

(28 September 1928 to an individual believer)

351 It is incumbent upon the friends to confront these difficulties with constancy and firmness, thankfulness and patience, unity and solidarity; to endure with fortitude these consecutive disasters; to traverse successfully these last remaining stages in their destined course; and to become neither restive nor disheartened on account of the hardships and exertions, the injustice and oppression that they are constrained to undergo. Let them at all times keep in mind the following clear and solemn warning recorded by the pen of the Centre of the Covenant and, with a tranquil heart, a radiant spirit, a steadfast purpose and a high resolve, watchfully anticipate the unfoldment and fulfilment of the Master's utterance:

Beware the weeping of the wronged and orphaned children and the sighing of the victims of oppression, lest their tears should turn to floods and their breaths should turn to fire.

The violent disturbances, the afflictive trials and overwhelming dangers which now beset the forward band of ill-wishers, mischief-makers and oppressors from every stratum of society, whether in your own or neighbouring countries, and which have assailed their peoples, kings and subjects, governments and citizens alike on every hand, are the results of those grievous trespasses and violations wrought in that land by the hand of the tyrant and the aggressor. Now, after the passage of a century, the baleful outcome of those deeds has become apparent and their evil consequences revealed for all to see. The day is fast approaching when the hosts of hatred and iniquity will be called to answer for their deeds: ere long shall they be seized by the agents of the retributive anger of an All-Powerful and All-Compelling God.

In counselling the friends, and conveying condolences to the victims of this latest outrage, your Assembly should urge them to cleave now as never before to the firm cord of God's holy ordinances and teachings, never to deviate by so much as a hair's breadth from the Straight Path; and to bide the advent of that day when it shall please Him to accomplish [183] His foreordained decree. He, verily, is the Protector of the wronged ones, and He, verily, is the Succourer of all those who stand fast and firm.

(2 July 1942 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia,, translated from the Persian)

352 The Cause of God must be protected from the enemies of the Faith, and from those who sow seeds of doubt in the hearts of the believers, and the greatest of all protections is knowledge...

(11 May 1948 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany and Austria, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance, vol. 1, p. 134)

353 ...the believers need to be deepened in their knowledge and appreciation of the Covenants of both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. This is the stronghold of the Faith of every Baha'i, and that which enables him to withstand every test and the attacks of the enemies outside the Faith, and the far more dangerous, insidious, lukewarm people inside the Faith who have no real attachment to the Covenant, and consequently uphold the intellectual aspect of the teachings while at the same time undermining the spiritual foundation upon which the whole Cause of God rests.

(15 April 1949 to an individual believer, published in "The Light of Divine Guidance", vol. 2, p. 84)

354 Attacks by missionaries, and others, such as that by Elder, should most certainly be vigorously defended publicly by your Assembly and Local Assemblies as well.

(18 August 1949 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States)

EXTRACT FROM LETTER WRITTEN BY THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

355 The need to protect the Faith from the attacks of its enemies is not generally appreciated by the friends because such attacks, particularly in the West, have so far been intermittent. However, we know that these attacks will increase and will become concerted and universal. The writings of our Faith clearly foreshadow not only an intensification of the machinations of internal enemies, but a rise in the hostility and opposition of its external enemies, whether religious or secular, as our [184] beloved Faith pursues its onward march towards ultimate victory. Therefore, in the light of the warnings of Shoghi Effendi, the Auxiliary Boards for Protection should keep "constantly" a "watchful eye" on those "who are known to be enemies or to have been put out of the Faith", discreetly "investigate" their activities, warn intelligently the friends of the opposition inevitably to come, explain how each crisis in God's Faith has always proved to be a blessing in disguise, prepare them for the "dire contests" which are "destined to range the Army of Light against the forces of darkness", and, when the influence of the enemies spreads and reaches their fold, the members of these Auxiliary Boards should be alert to their schemes to "dampen the zeal and sap the loyalty" of the believers and, by adopting "wise and effective measures",* counteract these schemes and arrest the spread of their influence. Above all, the members of the Protection Boards should concentrate on deepening the friends' knowledge of the Covenant and increasing their love and loyalty to it, on clearly and frankly answering, in conformity with the teachings, whatever questions may trouble any of the believers, on fostering the spiritual profundity and strength of their faith and certitude, and on promoting whatever will increase the spirit of loving unity in Baha'i communities.

The primary tasks of the Propagation Boards, however, are to direct the believers' attention to the goals of whatever plans have been placed before them, to stimulate and assist them to promote the teaching work in the fields of proclamation, expansion, consolidation and pioneering, to encourage contributions to the funds, and to act as standard-bearers of the teachers of the Faith, leading them to new achievements in the diffusion of God's Message to their fellow human beings....

It should, furthermore, be remembered that these self-same functions are being carried out by the Assemblies, national and local, and their committees, which have at this time the great responsibility for actually executing the teaching plans and for administering, consolidating and protecting the Baha'i communities. The Auxiliary Board members should thus watch carefully that their work reinforces and complements that of the administrative institutions.

(10 October 1976 to the International Teaching Centre)

*"Messages to the Baha'i World, 1950-1957", p. 123

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE:

356 [185] One of the vital functions of the Protection Boards is the deepening of the friends' knowledge of the Covenant and increasing their love and loyalty

to it, and fostering the spirit of love and unity within the Baha'i community.

It is the duty of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies to refer to the Auxiliary Board members for protection matters which may involve not only possible Covenant-breaking, but also problems of disunity within the community, the removal of voting rights or any other matters in which you feel the guidance and advice of the Protection Boards may be helpful to the institutions of the Faith. The Auxiliary Board members of course keep the Continental Board of Counsellors informed and the Counsellors then take whatever steps they feel are called for.

You are free at any time to refer to the Continental Board of Counsellors and the Auxiliary Board members for protection any matters about which you are not clear involving the security of the Faith in your area and you will always find them willing to assist you in dealing with such problems.

(1 October 1979 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Venezuela)

357 Hostility to the Faith is something all Baha'is can expect; how we react to it is of great importance. You are urged to avoid confrontation and dissension; these would tend to increase the antagonism. Maintain a dignified and friendly attitude and, in order to put forward well-founded reasoning where indicated, make a point of becoming better informed about issues affecting Christianity and the Baha'i Faith.

(12 September 1985 to the National Spiritual Assembly of St. Vincent)

358 ...as the Faith becomes known, we can expect opposition and persecution. Nevertheless, in our presentations and relationships we should always try to build bridges so that our beautiful Teachings can be understood and accepted, and the power which they have to establish unity amongst men will be exemplified.

(18 December 1985 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Tuvalu)